



National Study Tracks Charter Growth, Accountability

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For 2007-08 school year, 347 new charter schools opened in 40 states and DC - an increase of eight percent over previous year

America's first charter school opened in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1992. Fifteen years and 40 states later, the popular charter school movement is still growing steadily.

According to a new study conducted by the Center for Education Reform, the number of charter schools opening this school year is up eight percent from last year. According to the center, more than [4,100 charter schools currently serve over 1.2 million students](#) across the country.

The increase is significant in light of a challenging political environment for school choice in which, among other things, many states are reaching their self-imposed caps on charter schools. Despite continuing opposition and debilitating laws, however, more parents than ever are choosing charter schools over conventional public schools when it comes to educating their children.

"We're seeing more and more charter schools nationally because parents are demanding more and better academic options for their children," Jeanne Allen, President of the Center for Education Reform, said. "In fact, many charter schools must create waiting lists for families seeking to take advantage of this innovative and successful educational opportunity."

Many state laws continue to create obstacles to quality learning opportunities. The Center for Education Reform tracks the environment for healthy charters in each state and provides profiles grading each state's effort. The state profiles can be found at the center's website, www.edreform.com. Of the 40 states with charter school laws and the District of Columbia, only 17 percent received a grade of "A."

Also worth noting in the center's report is the effect of school closings. Since 1992, 560 charter schools have closed as a result of failing to meet the expectations of the communities they serve. Allen, however, sees the closing of failing charter schools as fundamentally necessary for a successful charter school environment.

"We aren't troubled by schools closing - the essence of choice is competition and the essence of competition is quality," Allen said. "If a charter school isn't properly serving its students and parents, it deserves to close, which allows families to choose better options."

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The Center for Education Reform (CER) creates opportunities for and challenges obstacles to better education for America's communities. Founded in 1993, CER combines education policy with grassroots advocacy to foster positive and bold education reforms. For more information, visit www.edreform.com.

