



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

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### **VISIT A CHARTER SCHOOL TODAY!** *National Campaign for Charter Schools Kicks Off*

**(Washington, DC 5/1/2000)** What would make Mesa, Arizona start an advertising campaign to showcase the benefits of the district school system? Where did 86 percent 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade students in a Colorado elementary school succeed in gaining a “proficient” or “advanced” ranking on the state assessment? Where are waiting lists long, the curriculum varied, and evidence of gains in reading, math and parental satisfaction is high? The answer is charter schools!

Charter Schools and their impact on the American educational scene will be celebrated May 1-5, 2000 in communities around the nation and is being sponsored by about 50 local and state groups in cooperation with the Charter Friends Network. To understand the change that charter schools have made on the American educational scene CER would like to encourage you to *Visit a Charter School Today*.

Since the first charter school opened its doors in 1992, nearly 1,700 charter schools around the country are open serving some 433,000 children. Charter schools are law in 37 states including the District of Columbia.

Although public schools currently outnumber charter schools by more than 35,000 to 1, the ripple effect being created by charter schools is remarkable. Wherever a large number of charters are clustered, traditional schools have begun to behave differently in order to keep up and in many states their presence is accelerating system-wide school improvement. Former Los Angeles Superintendent Ruben Zacarias has said, “...we have to give credit to charter schools for taking the lid off and making administrators think about what is possible.”

Innovations in charter schools have begun to produce results. To date, more than 50 reports on the progress, success rate and achievement of charters across a number of indicators have been completed by states, universities and regional and national groups. More than 80 percent show that charter schools are achieving their goals.

For example:

- At the Academy of Charter Schools in **Denver CO**, students gained more than one grade level for each of their first three years.
- At the Passport School in **Orlando, FL**, parents say that for the first time their children are happy to come to school.
- The Healthy Start Academy in **Durham, NC** continues to post impressive scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, improving in reading, language and math scores from the 47<sup>th</sup> to 82<sup>nd</sup> percentile in only seven months.
- In 1997, the Vaughn Next Learning Center in **Los Angeles, CA** was named one of 34 National Blue Ribbon Schools. In 1998, Vaughn reported scores that were twice that of comparable schools in the area.
- At the KIPP Academy in **Houston, TX** 100 percent of students passed the reading, math and science portion of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills in 1999.

Sue Bragato, Executive Director of the California Network of Educational Charters and Co-Chair of the National Charter Schools Week Steering Committee remarked, "In just eight years, charter schools have had a measurably positive impact on the health of traditional public schools and have often shown enormous achievement among even some of the nation's poorest children. The effect of charter schools on the American scene is now beginning to provide lessons for everyone concerned with the quality of education in America."

CER conducted a survey of charter schools. The results include data compiled from the 1997-1998 and 1998-1999 school years. Responses were received from 305 of 1,208 charters operating as of June 1999. It is the largest sample to date of activity in and around charter schools nationwide.

Among the major findings:

- Small is beautiful
- Charter schools serve large percentages of children who are typically under-served in America's schools.
- Charters offer more choices.
- Charter schools have responded to students' and parents' well-documented demand for higher standards and more specific, comprehensive schools curricula.

During National Charter Schools' Week May 1-5, visit a charter school and see what parents, teachers, civic and community leaders in communities across America have already found out. Charter schools aren't going away! They are here to stay. For information on a charter school near you, call the Center at (202) 822-9000. Also check out CER's award-winning website at [www.edreform.com](http://www.edreform.com) to get a listing of activities at charter schools near you. See what all the fuss is about -- visit a charter school today!

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*For more information on charter schools, contact The Center for Education Reform. CER is a national, independent, non-profit advocacy organization founded in 1993 to provide support and guidance to individuals, community and civic groups, policymakers and others who are working to bring fundamental reforms to their schools.*