

# THE Center for Education Reform



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## NOTICE TO ALL CHARTER SCHOOL LEADERS JOIN THE CELEBRATION FOR AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK

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Did you know that **only twenty percent** of Americans correctly identify a charter school as a public school?

There's no time like the present to help Americans get an education on these innovative public schools serving nearly **1.1 million students in over 3,600 schools in 41 states** across the country.

This week marks the 84<sup>th</sup> annual *American Education Week*, which is traditionally sponsored by the National Education Association (NEA). The theme chosen by the NEA this year is "A Strong America starts with Great Public Schools." Traditionally, charter schools are left out of this celebration and it is time to let your communities know how your great public charter school is changing the face of American education in your neighborhood. You don't have to wait until National Charter Schools Week in the spring to help your community understand that you operate a great public school.

With the "We CAN and ARE doing better" banner raised high, innovative public charter schools are shaking up the education establishment and producing results worth celebrating this week. Recent data released in the 2005 NAEP or "the Nation's Report Card," offers first time comparative data about charter school achievement. Since the 2003 NAEP results, charter schools have made significant gains where conventional schools have remained stagnant. Because of this evidence of success, the number of charter schools continues to grow.

*American Education Week* should be a time to celebrate what works and acknowledge that a "We can do better" attitude is working among the nation's charter schools. Use the suggestions below to help celebrate the innovations and progress you've made, and communicate to your community what accountable public schools are all about!

### RECOMMENDED THEMES AND ACTIVITIES:

Pick a theme for each day this week and next, and use the recommendations that follow to invite attention to your school:

Accountable Public Schools for All Children



Charter Teachers Break the Mold



Success: Charter School Students Do Better!



Charter Parents Are More Involved



## GET THE MESSAGE OUT

The following are just a few ideas from The Center for Education Reform (CER) you can use to get the word out to local media about your school...

- Write a press release about your school's achievements, awards, and other highlights announcing that your school will be celebrating these successes over *American Education Week*. Be sure to point out that your school is indeed a **public school**.

*Need some more ammunition?*

Take a look at CER's charter school Research Fact Sheet series for the latest available information:

Part I - [Charter Schools By the Numbers](#)

Part II - [America Needs an Education on Charter Schools](#)

Part III - [Charter Schools Get High Marks](#)

- Give **reporters** you have worked with a quick call and let them know that your charter school is celebrating *American Education Week* and that you'd love to share some highlights with them.
- Invite the reporters to come see your successes for themselves!
- Remember, it's okay if the reporter doesn't write a story right away – it's important that he or she have the information for future stories.
- Draft an **opinion-editorial** that outlines your school's achievements. Include local numbers and anecdotal stories and even data from last year's Harvard University report that found charters scoring higher than the nearest, comparable neighborhood public school. Remember! – no matter how great a story you have to tell – keep it under 650 words!
- Write a **letter-to-the-editor**, or better yet, ask your parents to write a letter-to-the-editor to your local paper with your three key messages – remember to include local statistics from the latest charter data. Keep the letter under 150 words.

## REACH OUT TO YOUR LAWMAKERS

- Invite **local leaders** to come and take a tour of your school and talk to students. Your students can get a quick civics lesson and your school will get another story to share with the media. Reporters love to cover every move lawmakers make. Why not capture your school's achievements at the same time.

## ACTIVATE THE STUDENT VOICE

Invite your **students to write articles** or send letters to your local newspapers or elected officials inviting them to visit and experience your school's success first hand. No matter what level of sophistication these letters will have impact just as Tamara, a second grader at University Academy in Kansas City, Missouri wrote:



## SALUTE OUR TEACHERS

*American Education Week* is the perfect time for your school community to **thank your teachers** for their dedication to your students and to the mission of your school.

- Take this opportunity to highlight your schools model for teacher excellence. Whether it be in pay incentives, longer hours, open parent-teacher communication, tutoring or after school programs – there is something your teachers are doing differently that works. Don't be shy to share this recipe for success!
- Have students write essays about their favorite teachers and encourage.
- Dedicate a lunch celebration in honor of your teachers this week.
- Encourage your teachers to share their story with the media.

## DON'T FORGET THE PARENTS!

Parental involvement is key to the model of success for charter schools. This aspect of your school needs to be highlighted.

- Include in your press release information about the efforts of you parent volunteers.
- Invite parents to reach out to the media, or come and meet the reporters when they visit your school. Encourage them to talk about their child's success as a result of their public charter school. As you know, parents rarely turn down an opportunity to boast about their children's achievement – use this opportunity to funnel those personal stories to get the message out about your school!
- Encourage your **parents to get active**. Does your school even have a parent group? If not, start one! CER can help.

## ANY QUESTIONS?

Need advice on your press release or finding news outlets in your community?

***CER can help!***

Do your parents need direction on starting a group or getting more active?

***CER can help!***

Interested in learning about best practices or the latest charter school research?

***CER can help!***

Trying to get in touch with lawmakers?

***CER can help!***

We encourage you to give us a call at (202) 822-9000 or shoot us an email at [cer@edreform.com](mailto:cer@edreform.com). Visit [www.edreform.com](http://www.edreform.com) for the latest information on charter schools.