

THE Center for Education Reform



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TAKING AMERICANS BACK-TO-SCHOOL ON CHARTER SCHOOLS *Building public support for charter schools*

Today there are more than 3,600 charter schools serving nearly 1.1 million students in communities across the country. And these innovative public schools are helping their students succeed at rates higher than their counterparts in traditional public schools. It is an exciting reality the pioneers of the charter school movement could not have imagined a decade ago.

But our work is not done. How do we, as leaders in the charter school movement, ensure that there is continued quality, growth and success for charter schools over the *next* ten years. The Center for Education Reform (CER) has just completed groundbreaking public opinion research that can help us develop the road map we need to get there.

Our research reveals that the awareness and support necessary to take charter schools to the next level does not currently exist in our communities. A national CER public opinion survey found that only one in five people even know what a charter school is. When asked to describe a charter school, a full third of respondents could not even venture a guess.

Without public support, charter schools will plateau. Lawmakers will not - cannot - be champions for strong charter school laws without engaged constituents who support the charter concept. Charter schools will never overcome discrimination in funding unless the public begins to perceive them as mainstream, public options. And parents cannot rally around charter schools if they continue to hold the same common misperceptions that plagued charters in the early years.

CER is launching a campaign -- **Taking Americans Back-to-School** -- to get thought leaders in communities across the country together to examine this new public opinion research and develop strategies to build the public support necessary for the continued success of charter schools in their communities and across the country.

CER will host the events in partnership with local individuals and organizations. They will be small, collaborative events where ideas can be shared, in the form of roundtable discussions, small luncheons or cocktail receptions, as appropriate in each market. At-a-glance, the program will include:

- **Kellyanne Conway, president, The Polling Company**, will present new national survey findings examining public perceptions of charter schools.
- **Jeanne Allen, president, The Center for Education Reform**, will share with participants what lessons charter school advocates can and must learn from this research, and why public support for charter schools is critical to their success.
- **A small panel** consisting of two to three local advocates, school-based reformers and/or philanthropists will join Kellyanne Conway and Jeanne Allen to discuss ways the local allies can increase public support for charter schools, from handing out fliers in local neighborhoods and parent events to more sophisticated advertising and grassroots programs.

For more information on how you or your organization can become a part of the **Taking Americans Back-to-School** effort, call (202) 822-9000.

