



Back-to-School Bulletin #3

CER's Back-to-School Bulletins are designed to provide you the real news behind the headlines, giving you the information you need to improve education for America's school children, and your own.

In light of last week's tragedy, we thought it inappropriate to issue our weekly Newswire or a Back to School report at that time. Yet, education remains one of the most important spokes in the wheel of civilized society, and one of the best things we can do is to re-establish our routines and get back to work. Hence we offer our third Back to School Bulletin, even as we continue to offer our fervent prayers for last week's victims.

1.3 MILLION AMERICANS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN CHARTER SCHOOLS 2001-2002 SCHOOL YEAR FIGURES RELEASED

(Washington, DC, 9/17/01) The number of parents, children and charter school staff reached nearly one and a half million this month, according to new figures released today by The Center for Education Reform. These figures reflect the number of people involved in nearly 2,400 charter schools operating in 34 states and the District of Columbia (only Indiana, New Hampshire and Wyoming have laws but no operating schools).

The number of new charter schools operating this year as of September soared to 369, with nearly 70 approved to open next year. A total of 2,372 charter schools are serving more than 576,000 children, an increase of nearly 12 percent from last year.

"These numbers show incredible growth in the popularity and use of charter schools," said CER president Jeanne Allen. "More importantly, they point out to lawmakers the powerful impact their policy decisions have on a growing number of constituents."

Allen noted that 61 of 65 recently analyzed studies of charter schools show that the schools are having a positive impact on children, and a positive ripple effect on their surrounding districts.

"Policy and law should be aimed at strengthening and duplicating ideas that work," Allen said. "Yet even today, state and federal lawmakers often seem bent on eliminating the flexibility and results-driven accountability measures that have made these schools successful."

"It's time we celebrated what works."

CER notes that enrollment figures may shift slightly once schools report final counts later this Fall. Additional growth will also be reflected by applications being considered in most states over the next few months.

For a state-by-state information on charter school numbers and enrollment, go to:

<http://www.edreform.com/>

(more)



PUTTING A FACE ON THE NUMBERS

Along with the cold numbers of new charters come warm stories of parents and teachers uniting to bring new opportunities and innovations to the children in their communities. Many have formed their charters against all odds, and here are some of the stories about new charter schools that add texture to any “Back to School” stories.

GEORGIA – The Fulton County Charter High School for Math and Science has turned showrooms into classrooms in Roswell. Located in a La-Z-Boy storefront, the school has opened to 240 students, and while it may not be a multi-million dollar free-standing building, that’s not what counts to the kids. “It’s not really important to me the way it looks,” said ninth grader Lily Atangcho. “What’s more important is that it’s a good school.”

FLORIDA – The Deerwood Academy in Pasco County, Florida didn’t exist six months ago. But it opened last month, thanks to the vision of founder Hank Johnson. Deerwood uses the same curriculum used in Department of Defense schools around the world, and has hired a mix of teachers – from fresh out of college to former traditional public school teachers to private school teachers with a quarter century of experience. To get it going, he borrowed \$30,000 from a local bank, and got a computer company to donate 160 classroom computers.

ARIZONA – Some of the teenagers at the James Sandoval Preparatory High School are arriving at a third-grade reading level, and all of them come with a troubled past – from fights and truancy, to jail time, pregnancy, drugs and gangs. But the Phoenix Hispanic community, led by the New Beginnings Community Church, has banded together to offer a chance to the kids by creating a school with small classes targeting at-risk students. As pastor Eli Marez notes, “More than anything else, we want these kids to be the entrepreneurs and the landowners and the business owners and corporate people.”

CALIFORNIA – Twenty-five years ago, anyone suggesting then-Governor Jerry Brown would sponsor a military school would have been laughed out of town. But that’s exactly what now-Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown fought for in response to the city’s devastating public school system, which once embraced ebonics. In cooperation with the Department of Defense and the California National Guard, the Oakland Military Institute Charter School emphasizes a high-performance environment for training leaders. Its students are 60 percent male, 90 percent minority and, according to Brown, “the goal is to enable every student to qualify for the University of California, Harvard or Yale.” Brown’s next project: A charter school for the performing arts.

MICHIGAN – Education was so important to the immigrant families of St. Stanislaus Catholic Church that in 1900 they built a school next to their Detroit building. Closed more than a decade ago and deteriorated to the point that it had no roof, no windows and was full of birds, the school has been reborn as the Detroit Academy of Arts and Sciences Charter School, run by Edison Schools, Inc. The school, which serves grades six to 10, is the brainchild of Rev. Jim Holley, pastor of Little Rock Baptist Church and board chairman of Detroit Academy. For inspiration, Holley drew upon his youth in West Virginia: “You either graduated from high school and went into the mines or you dropped out of high school and went into the mines. My grandmother, who raised me, told me I had to make a choice. I could educate my way out. I want our children to have options.”

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The Center for Education Reform is a national, independent, non-profit advocacy organization providing support and guidance to individuals, community and civic groups, policymakers and others who are working to bring fundamental reforms to their schools. For further information, please call (202) 822-9000 or visit our website at <http://edreform.com>.

THE CENTER FOR EDUCATION REFORM

Charter Schools and Enrollment By State

<i>State</i>	<i>Schools Newly Operating 2001-02</i>	<i>Schools Opened by Fall, 2001</i>	<i>Enrollment as of Fall, 2001</i>
Alaska	0	16	1,989
Arizona	68	437	78,517
Arkansas	3	7	1,846
California	42	350	129,163
Colorado	16	88	23,246
Connecticut	0	16	2,445
Delaware	2	11	4,335
District of Columbia	5	42	11,691
Florida	41	182	37,587
Georgia	8	46	24,971
Hawaii	16	22	3,306
Idaho	2	11	1,350
Illinois	6	28	4,985
Kansas	17	28	2,129
Louisiana	7	26	5,925
Massachusetts	3	43	13,904
Michigan	4	188	55,526
Minnesota	12	77	10,500
Mississippi	0	1	334
Missouri	1	21	5,088
Nevada	2	9	1,486
New Jersey	8	57	14,272
New Mexico	12	21	3,107
New York	12	32	6,761
North Carolina	9	96	20,109
Ohio	1	69	15,273
Oklahoma	3	9	1,269
Oregon	5	17	1,002
Pennsylvania	13	78	26,531
Rhode Island	3	6	783
South Carolina	0	9	667
Texas	36	220	53,523
Utah	1	9	587
Virginia	5	5	760
Wisconsin	6	95	11,331
Nationwide Total	369	2,372	576,298

*** Numbers above are based on projections and may vary as much as 10%. CER will be continuing to research and update – new numbers will be released semi-annually.*