

To: Cheryl Hillen
From: Kara Kerwin
Date: April 2, 2009
Re: Wyoming Timeline of Activities

The Center for Education Reform has long looked at Wyoming as a state to watch and help cultivate its charter school movement.

August 2007 - a young first-term legislator became extremely interested in the charter school issue. Representative Amy Edmonds teamed up with Steve and took the helm of the Association, while also contemplating legislation that would vastly improve their state's law. Again, CER was asked to get involved.

October 2007 - CER commissioned Kellyanne Conway and the Polling Company to host a focus group in Jackson and again in early November in Cheyenne. Throughout November, December and January CER worked with Amy Edmonds on preparing legislation, a statewide survey instrument and Jeanne and I participated on several conference calls with her board at the Association.

February 14, 2008 - CER orchestrated a press conference for the Wyoming Association of Public Charter Schools in the statehouse. The purpose of the press conference was to release the results of the extensive public opinion research results on the same day that Rep. Edmonds introduced HB 152. Her legislative proposal was extremely strong and incorporated CER's model legislation in which an independent charter school authorizer would be created in Wyoming. In Wyoming, you need 2/3 majority for introduction in a special 20-day budget session. But Rep. Edmonds and her legislative allies had really done their homework in the legislature. The bill lost by one vote (a legislator changed his vote at the last minute, and one of our allies left early because she "had a headache"). Going into the legislative session, we were well aware this would be the likely case, but the bill did much better than we could have believed in a tight budget session.

In preparation for the press conference CER:

- * drafted and released a press release on behalf of the Association, provided follow-up calls to local media to secure coverage of press conference.
- * developed talking points for the chair of the Wyoming Association of Public Charter Schools, Representative Edmonds and a parent representative.
- * produced posters and briefing packets on the public opinion research results to display and distribute at the press conference and to every member of the Wyoming House of Representatives upon introduction of the proposal.
- * CER's director of external affairs attended the press conference and spent the day visiting legislative offices and conducting outreach to press

with parents and advocates representing the association. CER visited the *Wyoming Tribune Eagle* to hand-deliver the press release and to secure an article for the following day.

The effort and outreach that day created a great buzz and the press conference was well-attended (for Wyoming). We had approximately 15-20 parents, at least 5 legislators that stayed for the entirety of our announcement with a few staffers and additional legislators stopping by as they crossed the rotunda, and more than five reporters, including state-house television (who told us they couldn't fit us into their schedule). Overall, the local group was impressed and energetic.

March - April 2008 – Over the next two months, CER and the Wyoming Association of Public Charter Schools assessed the landscape and what worked and what didn't surrounding the 2008 legislative session. CER conducted several conference calls with the association team and a few board members. By the end of April, CER and the Association came to a partnership agreement to support efforts to raise public awareness across the state about charters and the need for better options.

May 2008 – CER and the Association's effort officially launched on May 19, 2008. At which point the following activities occurred:

- * identified the 5-7 target communities to focus outreach efforts on.
- * developed lists of legislators, media, potential grassroots contacts and business and community leaders in the target communities for the association to maintain.
- * CER commissioned a temporary logo for the association.
- * CER provided content and guidance for the association's new website.

June 2008 – On June 2, 2008, CER invited Representative Edmonds to Washington, DC to share her successes and obstacles in the legislature to bring about education reform at our *Leaders Forum: Lessons from the States*. This was part of CER's broader effort to bring both national and local attention to Wyoming's charter school movement.

Throughout June, CER and Representative Edmonds worked to secure several events for early July. We developed an outreach strategy through the local chambers of commerce and developed invitations and newspaper advertisements to attract attendees. Also in June, CER developed a brochure for the Association to share at these events and beyond to help educate the public and legislature alike about charter schools.

July 2008 – CER helped jumpstart the Association's public awareness efforts with two events in early July. On July 9, 2008, Jeanne Allen addressed community leaders in Jackson, Wyoming. Approximately 30 parents, legislators, press and community leaders were in attendance. CER worked closely with the Association and Steve Friess of the Jackson Hole Institute to plan the event. CER's team developed talking points for both Mr. Friess and Representative Edmonds.

After traveling across the state that week, on July 14, 2008, Jeanne Allen addressed another group of local leaders in the state's capital city of Cheyenne. Again, the message was well-received and CER developed talking points for Representative Edmonds and Cheyenne parent activist Carie Aslor.

August – September 2008 – Throughout the month of August, CER and the Association worked to secure additional events across the state through partnerships with other legislators and as agreed to by members of the Association's board. However, Representative Edmonds was not successful in securing more active participation from the allies and board members who had previously agreed to support the awareness campaign by hosting events.

On September 16, 2008, Representative Edmonds planned another event in Wyoming. CER secured Dr. Yvonne Chan, a leading charter school activist, California State Board of Education member and nationally recognized education reformer to address the crowd in Cheyenne. Again, the meeting was attended by approximately 30 local leaders and was well-received.

September – December 2008 – After the September event, Representative Edmonds became extremely tied up in her reelection bid. Education reform was however front and center of the local elections in Wyoming and charter schools were debated throughout the race and in the press. CER covered the election results in Wyoming in our Election Center 2008 blog and website.

On November 11, 2008, CER had a conference call with Representative Edmonds regarding future efforts in the state. At this time she was still assessing what the next steps needed to be, but mentioned that she would be focusing on several different legislative efforts for the 2009 session. Also at this time she wanted to take new directions in terms of the public awareness efforts. The Association was short-staffed and Representative Edmonds chose to focus on more content development for the website, radio, newspaper and billboard advertising of issue in addition to planning a few more legislator-centric events.

Throughout December, CER's team spent time updating its legislative lists to reflect the changes from the 2008 election. All 90 Wyoming legislators' contact information was updated and imported into CER's master contacts database.

January – February 2009 – On January 19, 2009, Representative Edmonds sent four bills that were to be introduced to the Center's team to review. Two of the bills addressed charter school authorizing and two addressed funding inequity and regulatory guidance. Despite securing several legislative champions, the bills did not make it out of committee. However one bill did succeed but its effect on improving Wyoming's charter school law is minimal if at all. It does however provide stricter guidance for local school boards to be more transparent and timely in the charter authorizing process.

In the first week of February, CER sent all 90 legislators in Wyoming a copy of our publication, *Mandate for Change*. This monograph provided a 5-part cure for education reform. Representative Edmonds remarked that the report was well-

received and she personally followed-up with her colleagues in the legislature to encourage them to read it.

March 2009 – On March 19, 2009 CER and Representative Edmonds participated in a call to discuss next steps. Representative Edmonds plans to continue efforts to raise public awareness of charter schools throughout Wyoming and plans to go back our original plans of organizing events and coffees throughout the state in order to do so. CER looks forward to continuing its work with the Wyoming Association of Public Charter Schools throughout 2009-2010.

Wyoming Media Impressions

According to CER's records there were 22 articles published in Wyoming's two major news outlets in 2007. In 2008 there were 52 articles mentioning charter schools in the same news outlets – nearly a 125 percent (TK check number) increase over one year. The Center for Education Reform was mentioned in five of these 52 articles as our efforts were intended to boost recognition of local efforts, not CER.