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A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF  
NEW JERSEY'S CHARTER  
SCHOOLS

by  
Carol Sowney Datz

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division  
of Rowan University  
April 30, 1997

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
Professor

Date Approved May, 1997

## ABSTRACT

Carol Sowney Datz  
A Preliminary Study of New Jersey's Charter Schools  
1997  
Louis Molinari, Advisor  
Master of Arts in Elementary School Teaching

Charter schools have recently become an innovative method of educating a portion of today's students. A charter school is a deregulated public school that is performance-based. It operates under a charter (contract) between people who want to start a school and an official body authorized to grant a charter.

On January 11, 1996 New Jersey Governor, Christine T. Whitman, signed into law The Charter School Program Act of 1995. This act enabled the beginning of New Jersey charter schools. This study investigates the paths New Jersey's eighteen approved charter schools are taking. Becoming familiar with the Charter School Program Act of 1995 was essential in this study. A summary of its contents are presented. A survey concerning staff, funding, facilities and enrollment was sent to each charter school. To complete the study there was an analysis of the charter schools' mission statements to determine the focus of philosophies and curriculums.

It was found that the majority of New Jersey's charter schools are elementary schools. The majority of curriculums are focusing on establishing self-esteem and civic responsibility. Technology is incorporated into most areas of the curriculum. A majority of the charter schools are located in urban areas. Additional funding will most likely be the largest negative in their existences.

## MINI-ABSTRACT

Carol Sowney Datz  
A Preliminary Study of New Jersey's Charter Schools  
1997  
Louis Molinari, Advisor  
Master of Arts in Elementary School Teaching

New Jersey's Governor, Christine T. Whitman, signed the New Jersey Charter School Act of 1995 on January 11, 1996. This study focuses on what the eighteen approved New Jersey charter schools are including in their programs, who is attending and how they are implement them. Most of the charter schools are elementary institutions located in urban areas with curriculums strong in technology, self-esteem, civic responsibility, and parental involvement.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF NEW JERSEY'S CHARTER SCHOOLS

#### THE PROBLEM

##### Significance of the Study

In 1991, Minnesota became the first state to pass a charter school law. The Minnesota legislation enabled school districts to "charter" schools organized by teachers. These schools were freed of most state and local regulations and operated as nonprofit cooperatives that were legally autonomous.

Within four years, charter school laws had been adopted across the country. At the end of 1994, eleven states had some form of charter school law on the books and 134 charter schools had been approved. By summer 1996, twenty-five states and the District of Columbia had passed charter school laws. The number of charter schools approved had jumped to 246, of which 110 were up and running (Molnar, 1996).

What is a charter school? A charter school can have a myriad of names, structures, and practices. But basically a charter school is a deregulated, autonomous public school that is performance-based and site-funded. It operates under a charter (a contract) between people who want to start a school and an official body authorized to grant a charter, be it a school board, the state superintendent, or a university. The contract spells out how the school will be run, what will be taught, and how it will be held accountable. Charter schools are public institutions. They cannot charge tuition,



have a religious affiliation, or hand-pick students (NAESP, 1996). Charter schools must meet their stated student performance goals within the time frame of the charter (usually from three to five years)(NEA,1996). If the performance goals are met within the allotted time frame, the school's charter is usually renewed. They face revocation of their charter if they fail to achieve the stated performance goals.

The goal of the charter movement is not just to establish innovative schools, but also to help improve the public education system. Charter schools provide families with choices and give skilled educators an opportunity, with accountability, to create more effective public schools. They also allow fair competition for public school districts (Nathan, 1996).

In 1988 San Diego's O'Farrell Community School opened as an innovative public middle school. Its emphasis was restructuring, teacher and community empowerment, interagency collaboration, and interdisciplinary teaching (Nathan, 1996). In 1990 O'Farrell was having phenomenal successes with its innovative program and wanted greater responsibility for decision making and control of its budget; therefore, it converted to charter status. Nathan (1996) states that the O'Farrell Community School is having an impact beyond its own walls. Its staff is aiding other public school teachers establish charters. With so many states on the charter school road to education, it is likely that this concept of educational reform will be with us for some time.

New Jersey is one of the states that has recently adopted charter school legislation and is at the beginning of its charter school existence. For New Jersey to

be a successful entity in the realm of charter schools many questions need to be addressed. Does the legislation that was passed establishing charter schools in New Jersey provide all the information required to establish a charter school in the state? How is achievement measured for accountability, and are all charter schools measured equally? Are the charter schools being established to provide more school choices, or are there other reasons for their establishments? What are the major differences in the charter schools? Are the differences within the curriculum or the philosophy? The charter school movement presents a whole new aspect to public school education in New Jersey. For educators, parents and students to be able to understand the choices presented by charter schools, information concerning the topic is of utmost importance.

#### Statement of the Problem

New Jersey is just beginning its reformation of education with passage of legislation to allow charter schools to operate within the state. As of April 1997, eighteen charter schools have been approved by the Commissioner of Education to operate in New Jersey. How are the schools filling professional positions? What facilities are being utilized to house the schools? Are the eighteen charter schools approved for operation in New Jersey funding their programs solely with the 90% of the local levy budget per pupil for the specific grade level? What will be the nature of the schools' populations? Do the charter schools' curriculums differ in content and philosophy? These are the questions being researched..

## Hypothesis

New Jersey passed legislation in 1996 to allow the establishment of charter schools within the state. The charter schools that have been approved for operation in the State of New Jersey will provide a variety of educational philosophies and curriculum to diversified populations. Schools will be staffed with qualified educators who implement approved assessment procedures.

## Limitations of the Study

New Jersey's charter schools are new public institutions of learning in the state. They are embarking in an area of innovative educational reform. Because of this new method of educating the state's students, many of the responses to this study are tentative. As there are only eighteen approved charter schools in the State of New Jersey and six schools did not respond to the survey, calculations of the data was determined by the mission statements of the unresponsive charter schools.

## Definitions of Terms Used

*alternate route* - a program in which a district may hire a degreed teacher in a specified subject area without first having an appropriate New Jersey teaching certificate

*alternative school* - a public school which is assigned alienated, disruptive, and unsuccessful students

charter school - a public school which operates independently of the local board of education under a charter

magnet school - a public school with specialized curricula designed to attract particular students from throughout a school district

## Organization for the Dissertation

### Chapter One

Chapter One introduces the study of charter schools. In it the significance of charter schools is addressed. Questions concerning philosophies of charter schools, the type of curricula being offered, the staffing of a charter school, assessment practices, and funding are presented. The obstacles that may prevent accurate calculations of the data are presented in the limitations of the study. A list of terms used in the context are clarified.

### Chapter Two

Chapter Two presents a review of the literature concerning charter schools. It presents the background necessary to understand the charter school movement. An overview of New Jersey's Charter School Program Act of 1995 is discussed to provide an understanding of the existing New Jersey Charter School Law.

### Chapter Three

Chapter Three identifies the subjects, the materials, and methods of the study.

The New Jersey charter schools investigated and their locations are named. The materials used in the study are presented. The procedures followed in acquiring pertinent information are stated.

#### Chapter Four

In Chapter Four of the study the information concerning the New Jersey charter schools is presented. In this presentation, the data collected from the mission statements of the schools concerning philosophies and curriculum along with the results from a survey concerning staff procurement, funding issues, facilities, and student populations is revealed.

#### Chapter Five

Chapter Five draws the findings of the study to a conclusion. The establishment of charter schools in New Jersey as innovative public institutions is reviewed. Recommendations are made for further studies of New Jersey's charter schools after their first year of operation.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### *Introduction*

In 1991 there was not a single charter school in the nation. But in that year Minnesota was the first state to pass charter school legislation. Since that time twenty-five states have adopted some form of charter legislation. By mid-1996 almost three hundred charter schools were in operation across the country. Let's look at why this type of educational reform is having such a powerful impact on today's educational society.

#### What is a Charter School?

The charter school idea is about the creation of more accountable public schools, and the removal of the "exclusive franchise" (Kolderie, 1990) or authoritative control that local school boards presently have. Nathan (1996) states the definition of charter schools as:

Public, nonsectarian schools that do not have admissions tests but that operate under a written contract, or *charter*, from a local school board or some other organization, such as a state school board. These contracts specify how the school will be held accountable for

improved student achievement, in exchange for a waiver of most rules and regulations governing how they operate. Charter schools that improve achievement have their contracts renewed. Charter schools that do not improve student achievement over the contract's period are closed. The term charter comes from the contracts given to European explorers, which specified expectations and responsibilities of both the explorer and his sponsors. (p. XIV)

The charter school idea is spreading more rapidly and attracting much more attention than the usual educational reform. (Nathan, 1996) In his 1996 State of the Union address, President Clinton asked "each state to let teachers form new schools with a charter they can keep only if they do a good job." Support for charter schools is not only coming from politicians but also from parents who feel their children are not receiving the best education possible in today's public schools. Support is also coming from teachers who are frustrated by the administrative bureaucracy that sometimes stifles their creativity.

Perhaps it is the creativity of dedicated educators that has taken on the commitment of establishing charter schools that have made them such a powerful entity. They are so committed to producing successful educational programs that they are willing to put their jobs on the line by saying that, " If we don't meet our designated goal, then close our schools." Since many initiators of these schools have dedicated teachers, it seems reasonable to expect that these schools will improve the students' educational achievement tests. Without students' achievement, the schools

would lose their charters.

According to a Gallup poll, 65 percent of Americans think public school choice is a good idea. (Gallup, 1993) Nathan (1996) believes by providing a school choice with a charter school, the public can seek the best possible educational environment to meet the specific needs of its students.

### Charter School Beginnings

The idea of innovative public schools began in the late 1960s and early 1970s when parents and some educators wanted to design distinctive educational options, or choices. Another influence was the courts mandating "forced busing" which assigned students to schools outside of their neighborhoods. Magnet schools were also created, but many of them required admission testing. In the late 1970s disruptive and unsuccessful students were sent to alternative schools. (Nathan, 1996)

Many innovative schools were finding they had less control over their budgets and faculty. Nathan, (1996) states, "the innovators found they could do relatively little to affect the way school boards and policy makers were altering the ideas and choices the innovators had pioneered in their small distinctive schools within the public school system." (p. 57)

In 1985, Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich introduced proposals for several public school choice programs. His proposals were met with approval by the Minnesota PTA, directors of the War on Poverty agencies, individual teachers, administrators, parents, and the Minnesota Business Partnership. By 1988, the



Minnesota legislature had adopted three key parts to Perpich's proposals:

1. *Postsecondary options.* This allows public high school juniors and seniors to take all or part of their coursework in colleges and universities, with their state funds following them and paying all tuition, book and equipment fees. (Nathan, 1996)

2. *Options to attend other public schools.* This allows teenagers and adults who have not previously succeeded in school to attend public schools outside their district.

3. *Open enrollment.* This legislation allows K-12 students to apply to attend public schools outside their district, as long as the receiving district has room and their transfer does not increase racial segregation.

Minnesota's innovative programs had a tremendous effect on the secondary population. Learner at risk students were graduating from high school and some were even going on to postsecondary education. (Jorgenson, 1993)

Minnesotans felt that the existing laws gave families more choice, but not enough choices. State Senator Ember Reichgott looked for ways to expand the choices for families and educators. At a Minneapolis Foundation Conference, she heard two dynamic speakers. Sy Fliegel, an educator from East Harlem who had helped dozen of educators start new schools and schools within schools in poverty areas of New York City. The second speaker was American Federation of Teachers president, Albert Shanker. Shanker spoke about Ray Budde's *Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts*. (Budde, 1988) Budde recommended districts be reorganized and that innovative teachers be given explicit permission by the school

board to create innovative programs, and report back their discoveries.

Shanker liked Budde's idea of giving teachers a chance to create innovative new programs and extended it to include entire new schools. Shanker suggested that both the school board and the majority of teachers working in a school be required to approve these new schools. Shanker urged the AFT to endorse the charter school idea, which it did at its 1988 annual convention.

Senator Ember Reichgott became the principal legislative champion of the charter school concept. She moved the charter idea through the Minnesota Senate in 1990, but the house rejected it (Nathan, 1996). With many revisions to satisfy legislators and teacher union officials, the Minnesota legislature passed the charter school law in 1991. There have been many amendments to Minnesota's original charter school law, but it set a path that has beckoned other states to follow. On January 11, 1996 New Jersey became one of the followers.

### New Jersey's Charter School Law

The following is a description of some of the major highlights of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995.

#### The Charter School Program Act of 1995

The Charter School Program Act of 1995 authorizes the Commissioner of Education to establish a charter school program. In New Jersey, a charter school is a

public school which will operate independently of a local board of education under a charter granted by the Commissioner. The act permits the establishment of up to 135 charter schools with a minimum of three charter schools allotted per county during the 48 months following the effective date of the act. Charter schools established during this 48 month period are limited to an enrollment of 500 students or no greater than 25% of the student body of the school district in which the charter school is established, whichever is less. However, public schools that convert to charter status may exceed the 500 enrollment limit. The Commissioner has the authority to grant a charter for a four year period which may then be renewed for a five year period. A private or parochial school is not eligible for charter school status (New Jersey Department of Education (NJDE), 1996).

#### New Jersey Charter School Establishment

Charter schools will be managed by a board of trustees who will guide and supervise the charter school within the terms of the charter. A charter school can be established by different groups of individuals, such as a group of teaching staff members, parents with children attending the schools of the district, or a combination of teaching staff members and parents. In addition, an institution of higher education, or a private entity located within the state in conjunction with teaching staff members and parents with children attending the schools of the district, may establish a charter school. However, private entities cannot constitute a majority of the trustees of the charter school, cannot realize a net profit from operating a charter school, and cannot

use the name of the entity in the name of the charter school (NJDE, 1996).

### Funding

State aid will follow all students from their district of residence to the charter school. The act establishes a presumptive amount equal to 90% of the local levy budget per pupil for the specific grade level in the district as the amount that the district of residence must pay directly to the charter school for each student enrolled. However, the act also provides the Commissioner with the discretion to set the funding percentage above or below the 90% amount, not to exceed 100%. The charter school may, at its discretion, calculate its proposed budget based on less than the presumptive 90%. The charter school may also request, in the charter school application, a rate greater than the presumptive 90%, not to exceed 100% (NJDE, 1996).

The charter school will submit average daily enrollment counts on October 15 and February 15 of the first school year, and for every year thereafter on June 15, October 15, and February 15. State aid will be adjusted according to average daily enrollment counts from the inception of the program. Charter school aid is split between the local tax levy and state aid/categorical aid. The local tax levy portion of the presumptive 90% will be paid by the district of residence in 12 installments beginning July 15 based on the student count of registered students on June 15. The resident district will also pay the state aid portion of the presumptive 90% and categorical aid in 20 installment on the second and sixteenth of each month from September through June, three business days after receipt of the state aid payments.

The district of residence must also pay directly to the charter school any federal and categorical aid attributable to the student, so long as categorical services are provided (NJDE, 1996).

Charter schools may not charge tuition, and the act also puts a cap on costs for non-resident students. The per-pupil payments to the charter school shall not exceed the local levy budget per pupil for the specific grade level of the district in which the charter school is located. For example, if the charter school is located in a district where the local levy budget per pupil for the specific grade level is \$7,000 and the non-resident student's district's local levy budget per pupil for the specific grade level is \$10,000, then that district would pay no more than \$7,000 to the charter school. However, if the non-resident student's district's local levy budget per pupil for the specific grade level was \$5,000, then that district would pay \$5,000 to the charter school (NJDE, 1996).

#### **Admissions**

The charter school must open its doors to all students and shall not discriminate in its admissions policies and practices on the basis of intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a handicapped person, proficiency in the English language, or any other basis that would be illegal if used by a school district. The charter school must also comply with applicable state and federal anti-discrimination statutes. However, a charter school may limit admissions to a particular grade level, or to areas of concentration of the school, such as

mathematics, science, or the arts. Furthermore, a charter school may establish reasonable criteria to evaluate prospective students which must be outlined in the school's charter. The act requires the charter school to seek the enrollment of a cross section of the community including racial and academic factors.

Students who reside in the school district where the charter school is located must be given preference in enrollment. If a charter school receives more applications than there are spaces available, the charter school must use a random selection process. If available spaces permit, charter schools can enroll non resident students. A charter school may give priority to the enrollment of a sibling of a student enrolled in the school. Students can withdraw from a charter school at any time, and can be expelled from the charter school by the board of trustees pursuant to criteria established by the school and approved by the Commissioner in the charter consistent with existing expulsion requirements (NJDE, 1996).

#### Transportation

Transportation shall be provided on the same terms and conditions as transportation is provided to students attending the schools of the district. Therefore, the transportation of students to the charter school will be the responsibility of the district in which the student resides. Non resident charter school students must be provided with an application for transportation as they enroll. This application must then be forwarded to the resident district board of education by May 15 of the preceding school year in which the transportation is being requested (NJDE, 1996).

## Personnel Issues

All classroom teachers and professional support staff must hold appropriate New Jersey certification. The Commissioner may make appropriate adjustments to expedite the alternate route program to provide for certification of persons who are qualified by education and experience.

A charter school (NJDE, 1996) can hire employees from both within and outside the local school district. A public school employee (tenured or non-tenured) can request a leave of absence of up to three years from a local district to work in a charter school. Approval for a leave of absence shall not be unreasonably withheld. Employees on a leave of absence shall not accrue tenure in the public school system, but shall retain tenure and shall continue to accrue seniority in the public school system if they return to their non-charter school when the leave ends. If that employee remains in the charter school beyond the three year leave of absence, that employee relinquishes tenure and seniority rights in the home district.

During this leave, the employee remains in the existing retirement system and continues to make retirement contributions. Such employees on leave shall be enrolled in the health benefits plan of the school district where the charter school is located. The charter school must make the employer contributions to that district's health plan.

The charter school board of trustees (NJDE, 1996) have no collective bargaining obligation at the onset of the charter schools establishment. The board has the authority to contract individually or collectively with all employees. Charter school employees are public employees, hence they can organize themselves and choose

union representation as per N.J.S.34:13A-1 et. seq.

The salary range for teachers in the charter school is established by the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995. The board of trustees cannot set a teacher's salary below the required minimum salary of \$18,500, nor exceed the highest step in the salary guide in the district in which the charter school is located (NJDE, 1996).

#### Assessment and Accountability

The Charter School Program Act of 1995 (NJDE, 1996) requires charter schools to meet the same academic performance standards as established by law and regulation for public school students, which requires implementation of the core curriculum content standards. Thorough and efficient monitoring standards also apply to charter schools. The charter school act requires all charter school students to meet the same testing and academic performance standards as established by law and regulation for public school students.

The Commissioner of Education will annually assess whether each charter school is meeting the goals of its charter. The charter school is required to file an annual report to the local board of education, the county superintendent, and the Commissioner. The charter school must also provide a copy of the report to parents of all students.



CHAPTER THREE  
DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The Subjects

The subjects of this study were the eighteen charter schools approved by the Commissioner of Education in the State of New Jersey. These schools are:

1. Galloway Kindergarten Charter School, Galloway Township, New Jersey
2. LEAP Academy Charter School, Camden, New Jersey
3. North Star Academy Charter School of Newark, Newark, New Jersey
4. Robert Treat Academy Charter School, Newark, New Jersey
5. Elysian Charter School, Hoboken, New Jersey
6. Gateway Charter School, Jersey City, New Jersey
7. Hoboken Charter School, Hoboken, New Jersey
8. Jersey City Golden Door Charter School, Jersey City, New Jersey
9. Soaring Heights Charter School, Jersey City, New Jersey
10. Community Charter School, Jersey City, New Jersey
11. Jersey City Community Charter School, Jersey City, New Jersey
12. Princeton Charter School, Princeton, New Jersey
13. Samuel DeWitt Proctor Academy Charter School, Ewing Township, New Jersey

14. Trenton Community Charter School, Trenton, New Jersey
15. Greater Brunswick Regional Charter School, Edison, Highland Park, Milltown, and New Brunswick, New Jersey
16. Unity Charter School, Morris, New Jersey
17. Sussex County Charter School for Technology, Sparta, New Jersey
18. Red Bank Charter School, Red Bank, New Jersey

Five of the approved New Jersey charter schools studied were located in suburban areas. Thirteen of the approved New Jersey charter schools studied were located in urban areas.

#### Materials

To facilitate this study a list of the approved charter schools in New Jersey received from the New Jersey Department of Education in Trenton, New Jersey was used for the study. A second list of the same approved charter schools in New Jersey was received from the Charter School Resource Center in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

The New Jersey Department of Education provided a copy of the New Jersey Charter School Act of 1995, along with a summary of the mission statements from each of the approved New Jersey charter schools. A questionnaire concerning the funding, the facilities, the hiring of professional staff, and the student enrollment was sent to each of the approved New Jersey charter schools.

## Procedures

To compile the information needed to conduct this study, each of the approved charter schools of New Jersey was sent a questionnaire concerning the funding, the facilities, the hiring of professional staff and the student enrollment for their respective schools. Upon receipt of the questionnaires, there was a tabulation of the responses to determine the percentages affiliated with each area of questioning.

The mission statements for each New Jersey approved charter schools were read. In reading the mission statements, it was noted where the schools were going to focus their philosophies and or curriculum. The categories identified were: students at risk, civic responsibility, class size, high academic standards, length of school day and year, parental involvement, self-directed curriculum, self-esteem, technology driven curriculum, tolerance, and wearing of school uniforms.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

#### Grade Levels of New Jersey Charter Schools

The focus of the grade levels of the approved New Jersey charter schools was of interest in this study. In a school's charter, it establishes the grade levels that will be the focus of education. It was found that the greatest area of grade level concentration in New Jersey's charter schools was in the kindergarten to second grade area (33.3 percent). Twenty-seven and eight tenths percent (27.8 percent) of the charter schools were addressing the educational needs of students in grades kindergarten to fifth. Approved charter schools focusing in the low-middle to middle school grades of fourth through eighth amounted to 27.8 percent. The smallest area of grade level concentration was in the high school grades of nine to twelve (11.1 percent). See figure 1.

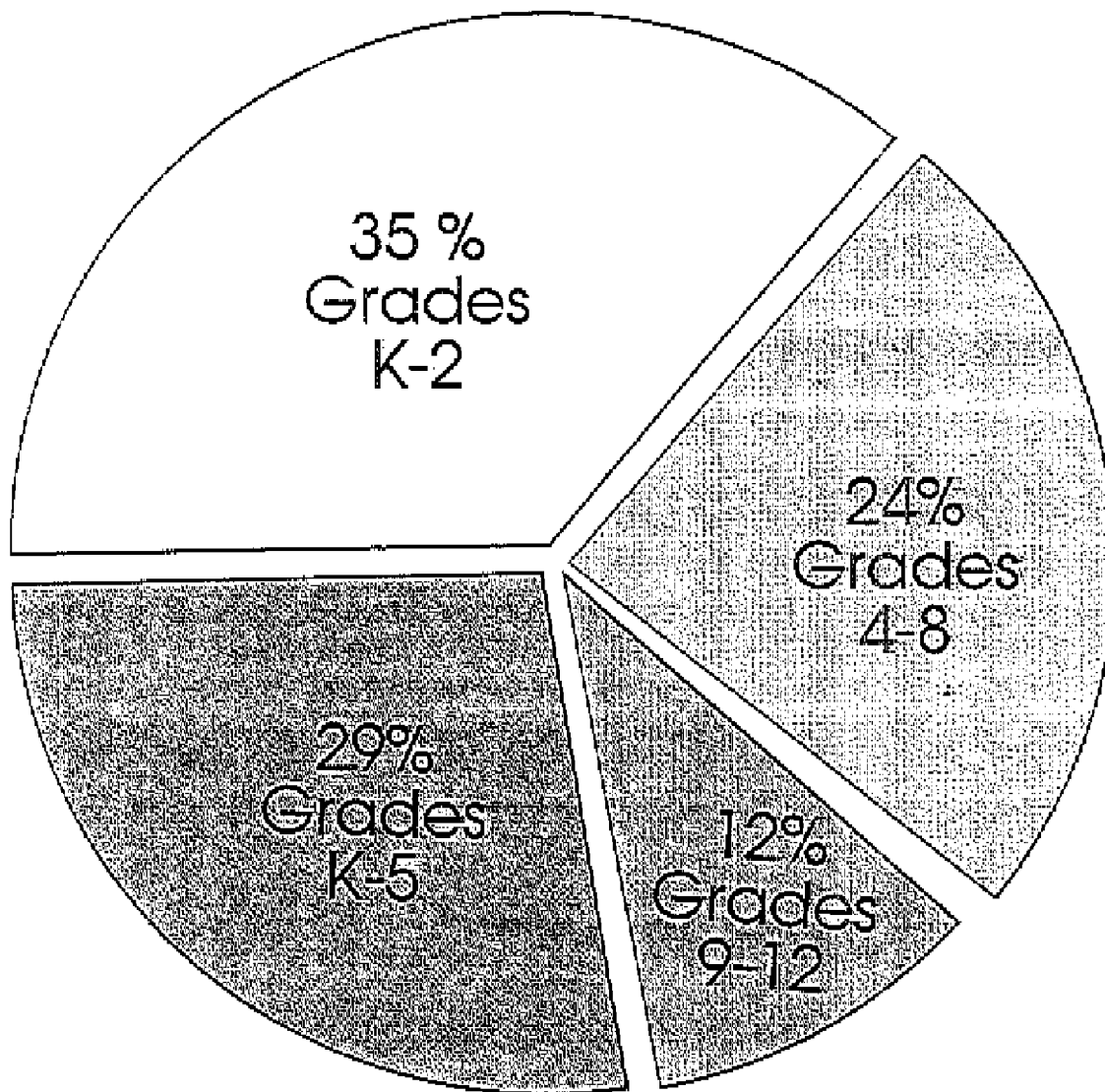


Figure 1. Grade Distribution of Charter Schools

### Staffing, Facility, Funding, and Enrollment

The New Jersey approved charter schools are staffing their schools with qualified educational personnel. The qualified educational personnel are being derived from teachers within the resident district, recent teacher certified graduates, and alternate route teacher candidates.

New Jersey approved schools are exempt from public school facility regulations except for those pertaining to the health or safety of the students. It was found that most of the New Jersey approved charter schools are leasing their facilities from private concerns. One school in particular, Trenton Community Charter School, had the use of a facility donated.

New Jersey Approved charter schools are funded on the basis of their student enrollment. The local districts will pay 90% of the local levy budget per pupil for the specific grade level in the district. Additional funding for the charter schools is being procured through fund raisers, donations, grants and foundations.

New Jersey approved charter schools are required to provide the Department of Education with student counts of registered students on June 15 of the year prior to the schools' operations. As of the April 1996, some of the New Jersey approved charter schools have not met the stated student enrollments as identified in their charters.

### Analysis of Mission Statements and Curriculum

The results of the analysis of reading the mission statements for the New Jersey approved charter schools is shown in Figure 2. The figure shows that the New Jersey approved charter schools provide diversified philosophies and offer a variety of educational curricula.

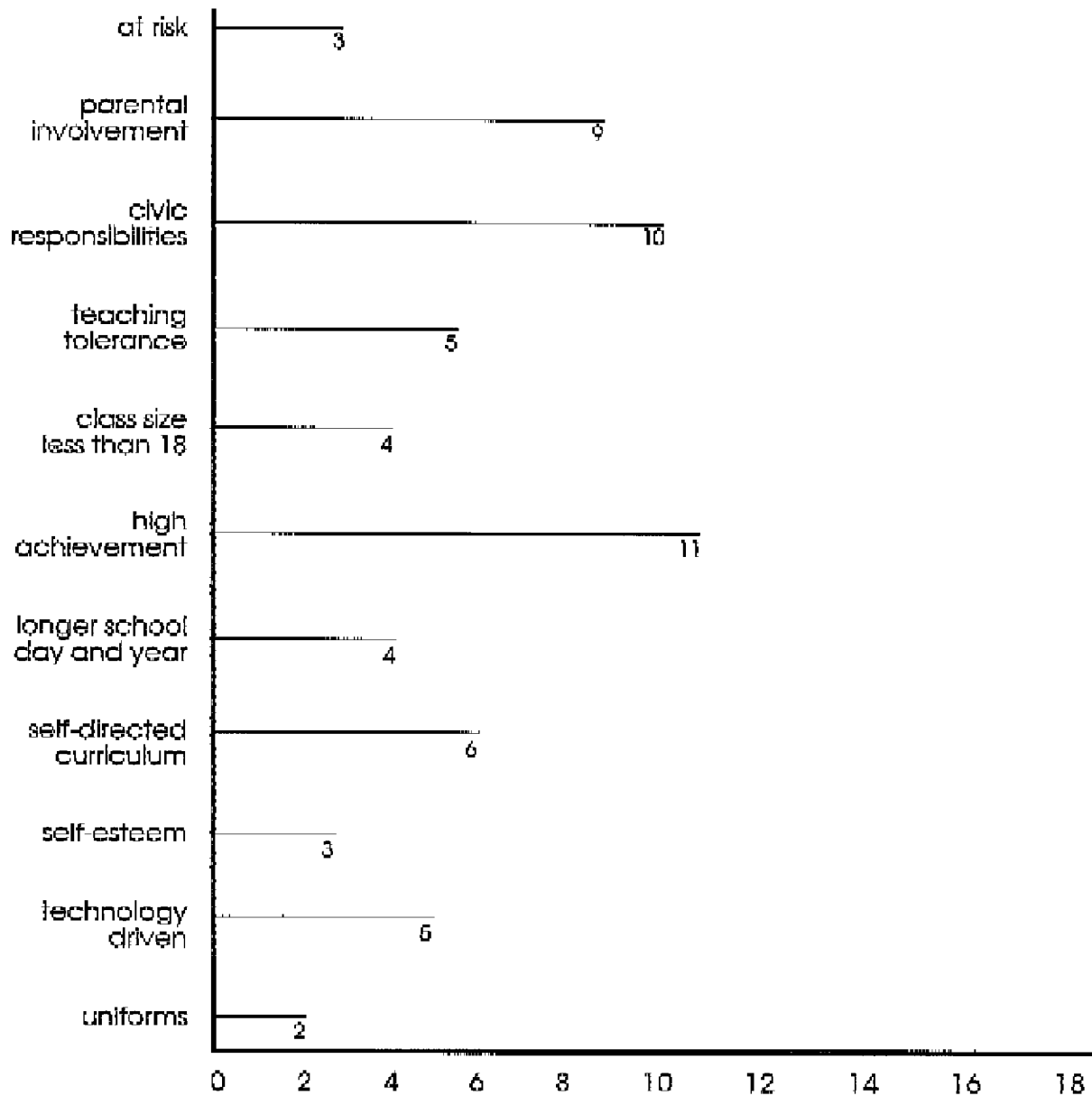


Figure 2. Analysis of Mission Statements and Curriculum

In this analysis, if a topic was cited in the mission statement it was categorized. Of the eighteen New Jersey approved charter schools three were aiming their enrollment to encompass students who were at risk. This includes students who were at risk academically, and students whose home environment puts them in an at risk category. Nine of the charter schools are requiring parental involvement within the school community. Stated in the mission statements of ten of the New Jersey approved charter schools are references to establishing a strong civic responsibility and community involvement of its students, and five schools are focusing their teaching to tolerance of diversified populations in their curriculums. Four of the New Jersey approved charter schools were having class sizes of less than eighteen students.

One of the stipulations in the New Jersey Charter School Act of 1995 states that there is to be academic and non-academic goals which will promote high student achievement. Eleven New Jersey approved charter schools make a reference to high student achievement in their mission statements. A longer school day and a longer school year will be established in four of the New Jersey approved charter schools. A self-directed curriculum will be implemented in six schools. Promoting self-esteem is a goal of three of the New Jersey approved charter schools. A technology driven curriculum will be established in five of the schools. Uniforms will be required to be worn in two of the New Jersey approved charter schools.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

New Jersey in its establishing a charter school law has embarked on an innovative approach to educating a small portion of the state's student population. This approach has proved to be successful in many states across the country. With New Jersey's charter school legislation being one of the strongest (having the most guidelines) in the nation, it is possible that the success of its charter schools will not be undermined. The Department of Education has left little room for these schools to fail with so many rules established in the legislation. Its true that the local school boards are not accountable for the educational outcomes of the New Jersey charter schools, but the State Department of Education has deemed so much accountability into the law that it would be difficult for the students not to acquire high achievements.

The New Jersey approved charter schools in this inaugural year are located in primarily urban areas. Some of these are areas where the local school districts are not having the educational successes deemed necessary by the State. By establishing charter schools in these areas, the local school districts are going to have to achieve more educational success with their programs because with each student that enrolls in a charter school, the local district will be losing funds. Perhaps this fact will have

these districts striving for more success.

As a majority of the New Jersey approved charter schools are targeting the primary grade levels in their first year, the theory that building a strong foundation for the educational process is evident. Building strong ethics for social responsibility and community service is at the core of most curriculums.

Technology in our lives is ever increasing. In order for our leaders of tomorrow to be capable of succeeding in a technological society, the charter schools are implementing technology education in their curriculums. To illustrate the importance of this point the Robert Treat Academy Charter School with its grades consisting only of kindergarten and first has a technology driven program.

The facts presented in the mission statements of the New Jersey approved charter schools shows that they are going to provide a variety of educational philosophies and curriculum to diversified populations. The results of the questionnaire give evidence that the charter schools of New Jersey will staff their schools with qualified educators. As the New Jersey approved charter schools have not been in operation as of the time of this study, assessment procedures cannot be concluded.

The majority of the charter school denied operation by the Commissioner of Education were for reasons of budgeting difficulties in their applications. Therefore, adequate funding for the operation of the approved charter schools will be critical to their successes. As so many of the schools will be relying on fundraisers, donations, grants and foundations for money to supplement the local levy from the resident

*districts, financial difficulties could hinder the successes of the charters.*

*Charter schools in the State of New Jersey are going to be viable institutions for learning in the next few years. They are going to be monitored, scrutinized, praised, and criticized for what they accomplish in the field of educating the state's children. Taking a scientific look at the results of the first years of the charter schools' existence will be of value to the charter schools in existence and to the educators who may show an interest in establishing their own charter schools. If positive results are shown in the establishment of charter schools, they can only enhance the whole public education system in the State of New Jersey.*

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## APPENDIX

Please answer the following questions by circling the response that best applies to your charter school's establishment.

**1. The school will primarily be staffed by**

- a. teachers from within the resident district.
- b. recent teacher certified graduates.
- c. alternate route teacher candidates.
- d. other. \_\_\_\_\_

**2. The facility to house the charter school will be**

- a. a school building within the resident district.
- b. a public building other than an existing school.
- c. leased from a private concern.
- d. a new construction.

**3. Additional revenue sources will be derived from**

- a. private donations.
- b. fund raisers.
- c. no other sources
- d. other. \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Projected enrollment has**

- a. been met.
- b. not been achieved.