Utah Charter School Study

Prepared for the

Utah State Legislature
Executive Appropriations Committee

By

Andrea K. Rorrer, Ph.D.
Charles Hausman, Ph.D.
Cori Groth, Ph.D.

November, 2006

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THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to the Utah Legislature Executive Appropriations Committee Request for Proposal, the Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC) conducted a study of charter schools in Utah to obtain information about the purpose, authorization, governance, and training associated with charter schools, as well as information about parents' decisions to enroll in or withdraw their students from charter schools. Below is a description of the major features of the study, including the research questions outlined in the RFP and the methodological approach. This is followed by a summary of key findings.

Research Questions

Consistent with the RFP, the research questions addressed in this study included:

1. What should be the purpose of charter schools?
2. Why are charter schools in Utah generally authorized by the State Charter School Board rather than a local school board?
3. How should charter schools be governed?
4. To what extent should charter schools be exempt from state laws and rules regulating public schools?
5. What training do charter school governing board members and administrators need to open and operate a charter school?
6. Why do parents enroll their children in charter schools?
7. Why do parents withdraw their children from charter schools?

Methods

The research team surveyed charter school administrators and board members, district administrators and local board members, and state charter school board members. In addition, the research team surveyed parents regarding their decisions to enroll or withdraw their children from charter schools in Utah. The research team conducted interviews and focus groups with representatives from twelve districts and the corresponding charter schools within those districts. Key findings from across these data sources are presented below.

Purpose

- Those individuals affiliated with charter schools view the primary purposes of charter schools to be improving student learning and providing greater choice for students. Relatively speaking, they also envision providing greater parental involvement in school decision-making as a more important purpose than creating professional opportunities for educators to actively involve them in the design and

implementation of the school's educational program. On the other hand, district administrators and district board members ranked "increasing choice of learning opportunities for students" as the most important purpose of charters and "providing greater opportunities for parental involvement in management decisions at the school level" as the second most important.

- The goals listed most frequently by parents/guardians as most important were academic in nature (i.e., academic excellence, basic skills, and critical thinking). Preparing students for college was the lowest rated academic goal, which was likely the result of a significant percentage of the parents/guardians having elementary age children.

- According to participant interview responses, there were generally four primary drivers for the creation and operation of charters including (1) dissatisfaction with public schools, (2) a desire for something unique and "innovative," (3) the ability of parents/guardians to exercise choice, and (4) the ability of parents/guardians to define and control their child's educational experience. Although charters are touted as serving a niche market, the high percentage of parents/guardians who cited basic skills as the most important goal appears inconsistent with the notion of innovation.

- Many indicated that the purposes specified in law for charter schools seemed appropriate for *all* public schools.

- Only a small number of interviewees suggested actual modifications to the current state law specifying the purpose of charter schools. However, many participants, both those involved in charter schools and those at the district level, voiced concerns about charter schools not fully adhering to the charter school purposes as well as concerns about (1) who charter schools serve, (2) whether they are necessarily unique or innovative, (2) the nature and extent of parental involvement, (4) lack of accountability, (5) lack of professional opportunities for teachers, (6) funding for sustainability, (7) operating a dual system, and (8) privatization of public education.

Authorization

- Both a majority of charter administrators and charter board members agreed or strongly agreed that final approval for charter school authorization should rest with the Utah State Board of Education rather than the local district.

- All groups surveyed, on average, agreed or strongly agreed that the Utah State Charter School Board exhibits sufficient political support for charter schools. All groups also disagreed or strongly disagreed that district administrators and local board members are politically supportive. Groups affiliated with charter schools expressed higher levels of agreement than district representatives that

parents/guardians /community members exercise sufficient levels of political support for charter schools. Yet, district representatives perceived the Utah State Legislature as more politically supportive of charter schools than any of the charter school affiliated groups. Ratings of the Utah State Office of Education's political support for charter schools were relatively tightly clustered across respondent groups and indicative of neutrality to agreement that their political support for charter schools is sufficient.

- Among district administrators and district boards, the greatest levels of agreement regarding how charter schools negatively impact districts were reported by district representatives. There concerns were in two areas: 1) inequity and 2) resources. An additional concern among these two groups was whether charter schools are actually needed.

- Among the criteria for authorization, items that ranked in the top three based on the greatest level of agreement across more than one group included fiscal procedures, detailed business plan, effectiveness goals, and curricular emphasis.

- The charter administrators and charter board members indicated that the priorities for improving the authorization process include: (1) providing a clear set of approval criteria, including a written rubric or scoring scale; (2) facilitating adequate access to resources for starting a charter school; and (3) providing greater access to technical assistance.

- The reasons identified across participants for why districts do not authorize more charter schools included: (1) competition for scarce resources and students, (2) the cost of a dual system is too high, (3) charter schools are a legal liability to the districts, (4) there is no need for charter schools, (5) charter schools stratify students by background and do not serve all students, (6) charter schools have not demonstrated their effectiveness yet, and (7) charter laws are not well understood.

- The emphasis across participants on the suggested criteria for authorizing new charter schools included the following: (1) sound financial plan, (2) sound educational plan (3) plan for and provision of adequate resources for start-up costs and to accomplish what charter schools say they will accomplish, particularly related to their unique features of the charter, (4) a unique focus that is different or contributes something that is not already offered by district (with particular emphasis on the degree to which the charter is innovative), and (5) a plan for serving all students.

- Participants noted that there was "no magic number" of charter schools that should be authorized. However, several suggestions were made for consideration before expanding charter schools. These considerations included the quality of the applications, the funding at the state level to support the charter schools if authorized, and attention to "responsible growth."

- While the authorization was overall not regarded as too lenient or too restrictive, suggestions for modification and refinement were made. These suggestions included (1) remedying problems with conflicts of interest and overly political authorization process, particularly with regard to legislative influence and use of management companies, (2) ease the process for reauthorization, (3) retain rigorous authorization process based on well understood criteria for awarding and denying charters, (4) use reviewers who are representative of field and have sufficient expertise and background experience to provide objective, high-quality contributions to the recommendations for which schools should be authorized, and (5) extend the time between when a charter is authorized and when they may open.

Governance

- All groups indicated that charter school governing boards should be represented most heavily by parents/guardians. Yet, they also reported that parents/guardians are currently overrepresented on governing boards. There is agreement that at least some student representation should be on the board. There is also agreement that there should be significantly greater teacher representation, and slightly more yet not a large number of business and university representatives without children in the school. On the surveys, district administrators and district board members indicated that the district should have representation on the charter board. This is in stark contrast to the charter administrators, charter board members, and State Charter Board members, who disagreed that district representatives should be on the charter boards.

- While most charter administrators indicated that parental involvement was encouraged and not required, 38 percent of parents believed it to be required. The majority of parents/guardians believe that parents/guardians as a whole have a voice in charter school decision-making.

- The State Charter School Board sees themselves as influential on the front end (i.e., the charter application) and the back end (i.e., school performance reviews), which is consistent with how others prefer their involvement. In particular, charter administrators and board members prefer the authorization to provide maximum autonomy.

- Overall, participants believed the governance structure of charter schools should be dependent on the nature of the charter school.

Laws and Rules

- No groups supported significant exemptions for charter schools in terms of fiscal reporting. Charter administrators, charter school board members, and State Charter School Board members were more supportive of required fiscal reports,

but they desired greater autonomy when it comes to how they allocate their budgets and procure supplies.

- No groups expressed much support for exemptions from performance reports to the State Board of Education or from participation in state testing, although charter school representatives expressed a desire for some exemptions from state curriculum requirements (e.g., TLC). They agreed that consistent data should be collected and reported in terms of performance, but charter groups wanted flexibility in how they achieve their performance.

- Charter school representatives indicated support for requirements to conduct teacher evaluations (i.e., reports), although their survey responses indicated a desire for more exemptions related to teacher accreditation standards and professional development.

- Given the infrequency of requested exemptions in most areas, it did not appear that charter officials feel particularly stifled. While charter officials expressed agreement that they should not be exempt from various forms of reporting, namely fiscal, performance, and teacher evaluations, they do seek some additional exemptions presumably related to autonomy and flexibility regarding how they achieve their goals. There was almost no support for exemptions of any type according to district superintendents and board members' responses.

- The perception among most participants was that if a rule or law were required of one entity then it should be required of both.

- The rationale for requests by charter schools for exemptions from particular requirements were based on inadequate resources, such staff and/or facilities, to meet those requirements, including the desire for more administrative support.

Training and Support

- The majority of charter administrators and charter board members indicated that they would benefit from additional professional development in all five areas identified on the survey: (1) school law, (2) school finance, (3) health and safety, (4) accountability requirements, and (5) organizational elements. Interview respondents supported this key finding. Specific areas identified for training and technical assistance included: the state core curriculum, general policies and procedures, fiscal and legal responsibilities, evaluation and assessment, highly qualified teaching requirements as well as mentoring new teachers, special education, English language learners, attendance and general reporting, negotiating with teachers, risk management, emergency response and crisis management, and recruiting students. Numerous participants also cited the issue of certified teachers and administrators as a necessary type of training.

- Participants indicated that training and technical assistance should be offered before and after opening a charter as well as on an on-going basis.

- Notably, participants suggested that the approval time for charters be extended to at least 18 months. This would provide ample time for charter school administrators, board members and staff to prepare for the opening of the schools and to engage in professional development, particularly related to state laws and rules and accountability requirements.

- Additionally, a number of charter board members and administrators recommended some variation of prepackaged or model policies be provided to charters and charter boards so that they do not have to start from scratch in developing policies and procedures.

- Despite noted tensions about whether districts should provide training and support to charter schools, references were made again to the necessity to and benefits of eliminating a "dual system" of training and technical assistance and the value of partnerships.

Parents/Guardians of Current Charter School Students

- The reasons for selecting charter schools clustered into five categories, including safe and inviting climates, academics, dissatisfaction with previous school, individualized attention, and convenience.

- Children receiving individualized attention was the most important reason for choosing a charter school, followed by the quality of the academic program as second, a safe and inviting school climate as third, dissatisfaction with their child's previous school and the belief that their child's needs were not being met as fourth. The least common reasons for choice were ones of convenience.

- Twenty-nine percent of parents indicated that they chose a charter school because they prefer a private school but could not afford it.

- Parents/guardians with children currently enrolled in charter schools in Utah reported being extremely satisfied with their school. Specifically, 94 percent assigned their children's charter school a grade of A or B, while only 2 percent rate the school a D or F. Survey respondents gave charter schools much higher grades than the traditional public schools. In particular, 65 percent of parents/guardians with students currently enrolled in charters awarded their school an A, while only 2 percent of these same parents/guardians gave an A grade to public schools in their community.

- Parents reported a number of ways in which they are satisfied with charter schools, including (1) the ability to exercise choice, (2) the perceived benefits to

their child reflected by the individualization and advancement of their child, (3) the engagement of parents in the school and in decision making, (4) the perceived unique or "innovative" features of charter schools, (5) school discipline and safety, and, (6) the belief that teachers are held to a higher standard and are more accountable for their teaching.

- Some parents identified areas of charter schools with which they have concerns or are dissatisfied, including the lack of preparedness and disorganization and lack of parental involvement on some boards and in certain instances in decision making. Requests were made for additional funding, additional monitoring of charter schools to ensure they were serving their mission, and an expansion of charter school options across grade levels, particularly the high school level. Finally, parents expressed a desire for an end to the "dual system" of education between charters and traditional districts.

Parents of Students Who Were Previously Enrolled in Charter Schools

- Parents of previously enrolled students graded the charter schools somewhat lower than parents of current students, but still reported relatively high satisfaction levels. Of the group who withdrew their children from charter schools and enrolled them in traditional public schools, they rated the former charter school slightly more favorably than they did public schools in their community.

- The most oft cited reason for withdrawing from charter schools was the "child wanted to attend another school." Beyond that, parents who chose to withdraw their children appeared to do so for a wide variety of reasons including convenience (i.e., location), discipline, instruction, school personnel, and a lack of individualization in the program.

In the conclusion of this report, we address the implications of these findings for policy related to charter schools. Specifically, we address considerations for using information learned from parents/guardians who are increasingly dissatisfied with traditional public schools; reasonable and responsible growth of charters; elimination of conflicts of interest; a clear, transparent authorization process with ample time to open schools; increased accountability of charter schools, the elimination of a dual system; additional professional development and technical assistance; and future research.

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INTRODUCTION

> *The most important issue about charter schools is that many, many of them are started at the grassroots level by parents/guardians. Choice is the word that defines all of my reasons for participating in a charter school. (Parent of Currently Enrolled Charter School Student)*

Charter schools are publicly funded yet free of most local and state policies. Health, safety, and anti-discrimination policies are not waived. Generally, charter schools are granted this autonomy in exchange for operating under a contract (i.e., charter) with a state or local district. Their charter specifies who they will serve, how they will serve them, outcomes they expect to achieve, and how they will provide evidence regarding these outcomes. They can be new schools or transformed from existing ones, particularly in the instance of district-sponsored charters. They tend to have small student enrollments in comparison to their traditional public school peers. Nationally, charter terms typically range from three to five years. (Nelson, B., Berman, P., Ericson, J., Kamprath, N., Perry, R., Silverman, D. & Solomon, D., 2000)

The first charter school was established in Minnesota in 1991. At the beginning of 1996, 252 charter schools were operating in ten states. By the end of the year, 15 other states and the District of Columbia had enacted charter legislation. At the beginning of the 1999-2000 school year, 1,484 charter schools were operating (Nelson et al, 2000). Currently, 40 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia have enacted charter legislation. In excess of one million students are being served in 3,400 charter schools (Education Commission of the States, 2006).

The President's 2007 budget provides $214.8 million to continue the Charter School Program, including $200 million to help create new charter schools and an additional $14.8 million in matching funds to States that offer per-pupil financial assistance to charter schools to obtain facilities. Since 2001, more than $1.2 billion has been appropriated for the Charter Schools Program (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Clearly, the number of charter schools and the budgets to support them are expanding at the national level.

Opponents and Proponents of Charter Schools

When conducting a study on charter schools, it is important to understand the cases for and against them. These positions and their supporting rationales highlight important variables to assess. Advocates argue for charter schools on multiple grounds. Their contentions include but are not limited to the following rationales. First, charter schools liberate educators from excessive bureaucracy and union agreements that stifle educational innovation and improvement (Carnoy, Jacobsen, Mishel, & Rothstein, 2005). Consequently, charter schools foster experimentation and help determine if new educational strategies enhance student learning. Second, one size does not fit all (Fantini, 1973). Charter schools offer more tailored strategies to meet the unique learning interests and values of those families who choose to enroll in them. Third, charter school proponents contend that the laws of supply and demand apply to schooling (Carnoy et al, 2005; Friedman, 1955, 1962). In other words, competition will force schools to

improve, and ineffective schools will go out of business as families vote with their feet (Hirschman, 1970). Finally, as a result of the expectations stated in their charters, advocates argue that charter schools are more accountable for student outcomes than traditional public schools (Carnoy et al, 2005).

Opponents of charter schools frame their positions in terms of inequities and inefficiencies. First, they contend that the freedom to choose favors the most affluent and highly educated families (Moore, D & Davenport, S., 1989). Second, opponents argue that it is inefficient to operate dual systems of schooling within the public sector. Finally, they espouse that traditional public schools are performing well in the aggregate, and that policies should facilitate improving low performing schools rather than moving students away from them.

State Comparison of Charter School Policies

State policies regarding charter establishment vary widely. Policies must address key issues, which include but are not limited to how many charter schools are permitted, who can grant charters, who may start charters, and who sets personnel policies (Education Commission of the States, 2006; Nelson et al, 2000).. The Education Commission of the States' has published a Web site comparing state charter school polices on a range of critical variables. Table 1 provides a summary of these comparisons of charter school policies in the United States. As mentioned previously, 40 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have charter school policies and charter schools at this time. The ten states that currently do not have charter schools include Alabama, Kentucky, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia. (See Appendix A for The Utah Charter School legislation.)

Funding for charter schools: In seven states, charter schools are funded exclusively by the state. In twenty states, charter schools are funded exclusively by the district. In twelve states, charter schools are funded by both the state and the district. In Michigan, charter schools are funded by the authorizing body. In the District of Columbia, the charter school is funded by the Mayor. In Puerto Rico, the charter school is funded by the Education Reform Institute. For the purposes of our discussion, funding for charter schools has been divided into two categories: 1) the state standard funding formula; 2) another formula. Sixteen states and the District of Columbia rely on the standard funding formula for funding charter schools. Twenty states and Puerto Rico rely on another formula to fund charter schools. Four states, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, rely on both the standard formula as well as another formula to fund charter schools in their state. For example, Virginia determines funding for charter schools based upon a formula of 100% of per-pupil funding, with fees negotiated.

Facilities: Twenty states and the District of Columbia provide financial assistance to charter schools for facilities. For example, California created a charter schools revolving loan fund that allows charter schools to receive loans for up to $250,000. California allows for up to five years for repayment. The state also requires districts to provide facilities rent free to charter schools who reside in the district. In six states, the state provides state facilities for charter schools to operate. In twelve states, including California, districts provide facilities for charter schools to operate.

Transportation: In ten states, the district must provide transportation for students who attend charter schools. For example, in Massachusetts, the children who reside within the district where the charter school is located shall be provided transportation to the charter school by the district on the same terms and conditions as transportation is provided to children attending local district schools. In eight states, the charter school must provide transportation for students.

Effectiveness: Twenty-nine states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico require the state education agency or another entity to report on the effectiveness of charter schools. In Arkansas, the state board of education must report on the status of the charter school program to the legislature each biennium and to the House and Senate Interim Committees on Education during the interim. In California, the legislative analyst is required to contract for a neutral evaluator to conduct an evaluation of charter schools and report to the governor and the legislature. Connecticut has a similar requirement, the state commissioner of education must prepare an annual report for the legislature's join standing committee on education.

Teacher Certification: Twenty-five states and Puerto Rico require that teachers in a charter school must be certified. Some states allow for a waiver, or allow teachers to teach with alternative certification or teach if there are working toward certification. For example, Connecticut requires that at least 50% of a charter school's teachers have a standard certification and up to 50% of teacher may have alternative certification or temporary certification and be working toward standard certification.

Rules: In twenty-eight states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, charter schools are exempt from some state rules. For example, in Alaska, charter schools are exempt from a school district's textbook, program, curriculum, and scheduling requirements; state law that requires superintendents of schools to select, appoint, and otherwise control school district employees; and school board may exempt a charter school from other district requirements. Other states allow a charter school to request a waiver from state laws, regulations, and policies.

Caps: Twenty-four states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have a cap on the number of charter schools.

Student Preference: Thirty-three states and the District of Columbia allow charter schools to develop preference policies for students. Many states give preference to the siblings of students already enrolled in a charter school. Some states give preference to students who reside within the boundaries of the school district. Seven states and Puerto Rico do not have policies regarding student preference.

Charter Preference: Fourteen states and the District of Columbia have preference policies for the types of charter schools. For example, Rhode Island requires that charter schools that are designed to serve at-risk students must be given preference in the application process.

Training: In twenty-seven states and Puerto Rico, technical assistance is provided to charter schools. In eighteen states, the state office of education exclusively provides the technical assistance. In Arizona, technical assistance is provided by the local school board, the state board of education or the state board for charter schools.

Table 1. Comparison of State Charter School Policies

State	Charters	Funder			Funding		Facilities		
	Yes (x)	State	District	Other	State standard formula	Other than per pupil funding	State funded facilities	District facilities	Facilities assistance
Alabama									
Alaska	Y		Y			Y		Y	
Arizona	Y	Y				Y	Y	Y	Y
Arkansas	Y	Y	Y		Y				
California	Y	Y	Y		Y			Y	Y
Colorado	Y	Y	Y			Y		Y	Y
Connecticut	Y	Y	Y			Y			Y
Delaware	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y	Y	
DC	Y			Y	Y				Y
Florida	Y		Y		Y			Y	Y
Georgia	Y		Y			Y			
Hawaii	Y	Y			Y				
Idaho	Y	Y			Y				Y
Illinois	Y		Y			Y	Y	Y	
Indiana	Y	Y			Y				Y
Iowa	Y		Y		Y				
Kansas	Y		Y			Y			
Kentucky									
Louisiana	Y	Y	Y		Y			Y	Y
Maine									
Maryland	Y		Y		Y				
Massachusetts	Y		Y			Y			Y
Michigan	Y		Y	Y	Y				
Minnesota	Y	Y			Y	Y			Y
Mississippi	Y		Y		Y				
Missouri	Y		Y			Y			Y
Montana									
Nebraska									
Nevada	Y	Y			Y				
New Hampshire	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y			
New Jersey	Y		Y			Y			
New Mexico	Y		Y			Y		Y	Y
New York	Y		Y			Y	Y	Y	Y
North Carolina	Y	Y	Y		Y			Y	Y
North Dakota									
Ohio	Y	Y				Y			Y
Oklahoma	Y		Y			Y			Y
Oregon	Y		Y			Y			
Pennsylvania	Y		Y		Y	Y			Y
Puerto Rico	Y			Y		Y			
Rhode Island	Y	Y	Y			Y			Y
South Carolina	Y		Y			Y	Y		
South Dakota									
Tennessee	Y		Y		Y				Y
Texas	Y	Y	Y			Y			
Utah	Y	Y	Y		Y				Y
Vermont									
Virginia	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y		
Washington									
West Virginia									
Wisconsin	Y	Y	Y			Y			
Wyoming	Y		Y			Y		Y	
	42	19	33	3	21	25	6	12	21

State	Transportation			SEA Reports Effectiveness	Teacher certification	Exemptions Automatic	Caps
	State	District	Charter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Alabama							
Alaska					Y	Y	Y
Arizona						Y	
Arkansas				Y	Y		Y
California				Y	Y	Y	Y
Colorado			Y	Y	Y	Y	
Connecticut		Y		Y			Y
Delaware		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
DC				Y		Y	Y
Florida			Y	Y	Y	Y	
Georgia				Y			
Hawaii					Y	Y	Y
Idaho				Y	Y	Y	Y
Illinois				Y		Y	Y
Indiana					Y	Y	Y
Iowa				Y	Y	Y	Y
Kansas		Y		Y	Y		
Kentucky							
Louisiana				Y		Y	Y
Maine							
Maryland	?	?	?	Y	Y		
Massachusetts		Y					Y
Michigan				Y	Y		Y
Minnesota		Y	Y		Y	Y	
Mississippi				Y	Y	Y	Y
Missouri				Y		Y	Y
Montana							
Nebraska							
Nevada				Y			Y
New Hampshire		Y		Y		Y	Y
New Jersey		Y		Y	Y	Y	
New Mexico					Y		Y
New York				Y		Y	Y
North Carolina			Y	Y		Y	Y
North Dakota							
Ohio		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y
Oklahoma			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Oregon		Y				Y	
Pennsylvania		Y		Y		Y	
Puerto Rico				Y	Y	Y	Y
Rhode Island					Y		Y
South Carolina			Y	Y		Y	
South Dakota							
Tennessee				Y	Y		Y
Texas			Y	Y		Y	Y
Utah				Y		Y	
Vermont							
Virginia				Y	Y		
Washington							
West Virginia							
Wisconsin					Y	Y	
Wyoming					Y	Y	
	0	10	8	31	25	30	26

State	Student preference	Charter preference	Training	Training				
	Yes	Yes	Yes	State Office	State Board of Ed	State Charter Board	District	Other
Alabama								
Alaska			Y	Y				
Arizona	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Arkansas	Y	Y	Y	Y				
California	Y	Y						
Colorado	Y	Y						
Connecticut	Y	Y	Y	Y				
Delaware	Y		Y	Y				
DC	Y	Y						
Florida	Y		Y	Y				
Georgia	Y		Y	Y				
Hawaii		Y	Y					
Idaho	Y		Y	Y				
Illinois	Y	Y	Y					
Indiana	Y		Y					
Iowa	Y							
Kansas			Y	Y				
Kentucky								
Louisiana	Y		Y	Y				
Maine								
Maryland			Y	Y				
Massachusetts	Y	Y	Y					
Michigan	Y							
Minnesota	Y							
Mississippi			Y		Y			
Missouri	Y	Y						
Montana								
Nebraska								
Nevada	Y		Y	Y				
New Hampshire	Y		Y					
New Jersey	Y	Y	Y					
New Mexico	Y		Y	Y				
New York	Y	Y						
North Carolina	Y	Y	Y	Y				
North Dakota								
Ohio	Y		Y	Y				
Oklahoma	Y		Y	Y				
Oregon	Y		Y	Y				
Pennsylvania	Y		Y	Y				
Puerto Rico			Y					Y
Rhode Island	Y	Y						
South Carolina	Y		Y	Y			Y	
South Dakota								
Tennessee	Y							
Texas	Y							
Utah	Y		Y			Y		
Vermont								
Virginia		Y						
Washington								
West Virginia								
Wisconsin	Y	Y						
Wyoming								
	34	15	28	19	2	2	2	1

METHODS

As stated in the Request for Proposal (RFP), this study of charter schools obtained information about the purpose, authorization, governance, rules and laws, and training associated with charter schools. In addition, we studied information about parents/guardians' decisions to enroll in or withdraw their students from charter schools. Due to the insurgence of new charter schools throughout the state and nation, there is increasing interest about how effective charter school policies and practices are in meeting their stated purposes as well as meeting the goals of charter schools generally. This study used both qualitative data and quantitative data to obtain the desired information about charter schools in Utah in relation to the specified research questions. The study received Institutional Review Board approval from the University of Utah prior to its commencement.

The primary research questions outlined by the Utah State Legislature Executive Appropriations Committee included:

1. What should be the purpose of charter schools?
2. Why are charter schools in Utah generally authorized by the State Charter School Board rather than a local school board?
3. How should charter schools be governed?
4. To what extent should charter schools be exempt from state laws and rules regulating public schools?
5. What training do charter school governing board members and administrators need to open and operate a charter school?
6. Why do parents/guardians enroll their children in charter schools?
7. Why do parents/guardians withdraw their children from charter schools?

In the remainder of this report, findings from both the qualitative and quantitative analyses were used to identify information that can be used by the legislature as they consider revisions and/or modifications to current educational policies that relate to districts and charters. In this section, we provide a brief overview of the methods used to collect and analyze the survey and interview data for this study. Data for this study were collected from across the 36 charter schools that were in operation during the 2005-2006 school year.

Overview of Sampling and Survey Methods

Consistent with the RFP, the research team designed surveys for seven groups including: (1) charter school administrators, (2) charter school governing board members, (3) district superintendents and/or their designees, (4) local school board members, (5) state charter school board members, (6) parents/guardians of students who are currently enrolled in charter schools, and (7) parents/guardians whose students were enrolled in a charter school during the 2004-05 school year and were eligible to return in the 2005-06 school year but did not. The survey instruments are included in Appendix B.

Parents/Guardians

The Auditor General's Office of the Utah State Legislature requested permission from the 36 charter schools who chosen to participate in this study to have parents/guardians participate in the study. Twenty charter schools granted permission and provided parent/guardian names and contact information to the Auditor General's Office. The sample for parents/guardians of currently enrolled students included *all* parents/guardians whose children were enrolled during the 2005-06 school year in the charter schools for which approval to participate was granted. The sample for parents/guardians of students who previously enrolled in a charter school included all parents/guardians whose children were enrolled in charter schools during the 2004-2005 and were eligible to return in the 2005-2006 school year but did not. The number of parents/guardians per school ranged from a low of 1 parent in one school to high of 661 parents/guardians in another school. The total number of surveys mailed out and returned in usable formats, both via paper and online versions, is presented in Table 2. A total of 1,095 parent survey envelopes were returned prior to the closing date, suggesting that some of the parent contact information for parents/guardians, available from the USOE, was not up-to-date. (See limitations section below.) An additional 67 surveys were returned after September 30th; thus they were not included in the data analysis.

Table 2. Number of Parents/guardians Contacted and Responded.

	Mailed	Responded
Parents/guardians of currently enrolled students	5,972	1,061 Representing 2,234 charter school students
Parents/guardians of previously enrolled students	777	88 Representing 191 students

The UEPC provided the Auditor General's Office with the survey instruments to be printed for parents/guardians. The Auditor General's Office also prepared the envelopes and labels and mailed the surveys out to parents/guardians. Cover letters and paper versions of the survey were sent to parents/guardians in September with pre-addressed, stamped envelopes for returning the survey to the UEPC. For their convenience, parents were also given the option of using a secured website to complete the survey electronically.

Administrators and Board Members

The sample of charter schools for this study included the 36 charter schools that were in operation during the 2005-06 school year. (There are currently 52 charter schools in Utah representing 19 districts.) As a result of this sample of charter schools, the study includes administrative and board participants and responses from across 16 districts in which these charter schools are located.

The UEPC research team created an e-mail contact database for distributing surveys to charter school administrators, charter board members, district superintendents, local school board members, and the state charter board members and the director of the USOE Charter School Office. This information was compiled from different sources, including the Auditor General's Office, web sites for charter schools and districts, and through communication with schools and districts via telephone and e-mail. A complete list of all charter board members was not available through any office or central location. Further, there were a number of missing and inaccurate e-mail addresses. In an attempt to reach as many stakeholders as possible, the UEPC asked charter administrators for their assistance in forwarding the study invitation to the remaining board members so they would have the opportunity to participate. Given these limitations, the figures presented in Table 3 may not reflect the total number of participants that were actually contacted because not all charter administrators responded to our request for verification that the surveys were distributed. As a result of unavailable, incomplete, and/or inaccurate contact information, the response rates reported in Table 3 for charter board members are likely an underestimate of the actual rates.

Table 3. Number of Administrator and Board Members Contacted and Responded

	Contacted by E-mail	Responded	Response Rate
Charter administrators (e.g., CAO, principal, director)	36	18	50.0%
Charter Board Members	85	50	58.9%
District Superintendents (and/or designees)	18	13	72.2%
Local School Board Members	102	24	23.5%
State Charter Board Members	8*	6	75.0%

* One of the state charter board members contacted had resigned.

The online survey was hosted on the College of Education server at the University of Utah. The information to participate in the secure online survey was only given to participants in the study and was not published or available in any other format than the invitation letters and e-mail announcements. As a result, the online survey could not be accessed by individuals searching for the site.

Again, e-mail announcements were sent out in September inviting participants to complete the survey online through a UEPC Web site. To improve response rates, telephone follow-up calls and e-mail messages were sent as a reminder to those who did not respond to the first e-mail announcement. In addition, telephone calls were also conducted to locate correct e-mail addresses for the bounced e-mail messages.

Overview of Survey Data Analysis

Survey data were collected via two means, hardcopies and on-line via the SurveySolutions Enterprise Portal, version 6.01 created by PERSEUS Corporation (2004). Data from hardcopies were manually entered into SurveySolutions by graduate students from the University of Utah College of Education, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy. Descriptive statistics

were run to confirm data accuracy by each survey item. (See Appendix B for a summary of responses by item.)

Files combining data collected via hardcopy and on-line were then converted to separate tab delimited (tsv) files for each respondent group. The tsv files were then imported into SPSS, a software application for statistical analyses. After individual SPPS files were created for each respondent group, a merged file was created in SPSS to allow for the comparison of common survey items across different respondent groups. Variable and value labels were created for each item on all surveys. Descriptive statistics were run again to confirm data accuracy. Duplicate survey responses from the same individuals were deleted, as were responses with missing data across every item. Twenty-five completed surveys were deleted from the file of parents/guardians with children who previously attended a charter school, because comments indicated that they still had children enrolled in the charter school.

To maintain anonymity, no information was collected at the individual or school level. District level identification was an option for the charter school administrators, charter school board members, district administrators, and representatives of local boards of education. The advantage of this strategy is that it facilitates a data collection environment in which respondents feel safe in expressing candid views. The trade-off is that it creates challenges in establishing population validity since respondents cannot be tracked at the individual or school level.

Given the high response rates for district superintendents (72.2%) and State Charter Board Members (75.0%), threats to population validity are highly unlikely. We are also optimistic about the population validity of the Charter school governing board members (58.9%) and Charter school administrators (50.0%). There are numerous data points that indicate population validity for these two groups. First, the charter school board members represent at least 13 districts, while the charter administrators are from a minimum of nine districts. Second, these districts are of various sizes and located in dispersed geographic regions. Additionally, the charter school board members are from charter schools that have been in operation for different periods of time that mirror the tenures of charter schools for the state as a whole, and the backgrounds of these members are reflective of a diverse set of backgrounds from parents/guardians, to business representatives, to district personnel. Finally, the charter administrators serve schools with a wide range of total enrollments and all grade levels.

The worst case scenario response rate for Local Board of Education officials (23.5%) leads to larger concerns around population validity of this group. However, it is important to emphasize that the 23.5% is calculated based on 24 responses from the 102 board members for whom contact efforts were made. It is unclear how many of these board members actually received notification of the survey. Although only a few of these e-mails bounced back, we cannot determine how many board members accessed those e-mails. With these concerns in mind, the 24 board members who completed surveys represent at least 11 different districts. Moreover, their survey responses are congruent with the data gleaned from focus groups local board members.

With regard to the parent surveys, the research team was pleased with the large number of respondents (1,061) and the even larger number of students in charter schools that are represented by the parent respondents (2,234).

The survey analyses are primarily descriptive (e.g., frequencies and means). Factor analyses were utilized to identify scales comprised of multiple items. Cronbach alphas were computed to confirm the reliability of these variables.

Overview of Qualitative Methods

Interviews were conducted with a sample of twelve charter school administrators and twelve district administrators from the following school districts: Alpine, Carbon, Davis, Granite, Iron, Jordan, Logan, Nebo, Ogden, Provo, Salt Lake City, and Washington. Twelve focus groups were conducted with a sample of charter school board members and twelve focus groups with a sample of district board members from across the same districts. Three focus groups were also conducted with members of the State Charter School Board, State Board of Education, and the USOE Charter School Director/staff. The selection of charter school sample for this study was based on charter school size, geographic location, and type to maximize the breadth and depth of data collected. Moreover, this is consistent with the Executive Appropriation's Committee request to include a broad spectrum of districts and charter schools.

Interviews were conducted with 12 charter administrators and 12 Superintendents and/or designees from Alpine, Carbon, Davis, Granite, Iron, Jordan, Logan, Nebo, Ogden, Provo, Salt Lake City, and Washington. Focus group interviews were conducted with 30 charter board members, and 24 district board members across the same districts. Interview and focus group protocols are included in Appendix C.

All interviews and focus groups were audiotaped; research team members also manually recorded additional field notes. Consistent with IRB standards, consent forms were signed prior to participation in the interviews and focus groups. To preserve confidentiality, tapes were marked with a date and coded for the school or district name(s), role of the respondent(s), and a number assigned to the individual interview or focus group. Upon completion of each interview/focus group, the audiotapes were cataloged and transcribed.

The research team used a qualitative analysis software package, HyperResearch, to analyze the data from interviews, focus groups, and open-ended survey items. The analysis involved a multi-step process of coding the interview and focus group data and the open-ended survey responses. The research team coded in excess of 1,100 pages of interview transcripts and comments from open-ended survey items. Initially, research team members read through surveys from across the participating groups to get a general sense of the nature of responses. Using a constant-comparative method of analysis, the research team was able to determine themes within each category (i.e., purpose, authorization, governance, rules and laws, training and support). To establish trustworthiness of the data, the research team used peer debriefing and triangulation of data. Peer debriefings permitted the research team to review preliminary codes for consistency of meaning and interpretation. Emergent themes were also documented and coded. The coding also

reflected the research questions related to charter school's purpose, authorization, governance, and training, as well as parental perspectives about their experiences with charter schools.

Data for this study are reported at the aggregate level (i.e., parents, charter administrators, charter board members, district administrators, and district board members). The Director of Charter Schools at the USOE and the State Charter Board Members were reported as charter administrators and charter board members to maintain their anonymity.

Study Limitations

A number of limitations to the data collection and analysis procedures for this study were identified. The limitations are generally related to (1) the survey samples and (2) the restrictions on data analysis.

Concerns about Who Was Surveyed

There were several limitations related to who was surveyed. First, there was limited contact information available, particularly for charter board members. To date, no state agency, including the USOE, maintains a list of names or contact information for the charter board members. A few names and contact information for charter school governing board members were available on charter schools' Web sites. In a few instances, the research team was told by charter school CAOs that information regarding the survey would be forwarded to the respective charter boards. However, as a result of these conditions, the UEPC was not able to verify the total number of charter school governing board members for our study. In addition, there was some indication during the interviews that not all board members read their e-mail regularly and may not have seen the announcement.

Second, there are concerns about the accuracy and quality of contact information for the sample of parents/guardians available from the USOE. Concerns about the parent/guardian sample are based on several issues. There was a high volume of returned paper surveys (1,095 returned) due to inaccurate addresses or addressee unknown. It should be noted that parent/guardian contact information is provided by the districts to the USOE. Next, surveys were sent to parents/guardians of students in both categories only when the charter school authorized the use of this information to the Auditor General's Office and provided the names and addresses in electronic form. Further, there were multiple comments from open-ended comments on the parent survey and from parents/guardians who telephoned the UEPC that (1) their children have never been enrolled in a charter school, (2) that they received a survey for parents/guardians of currently enrolled students, as indicated by the USOE information provided, even though their child has not attended the charter school for several years, or (3) that this 2006-2007 is the first year in which their child has been enrolled in a charter school. Each of these issues suggests that an accurate data base on students in charter schools does not exist.

Third, the study did not include surveys of parents/guardians whose children attend the regular public schools. As a result, the findings are limited because they do not include the perspectives of parents/guardians who are *not* choosing charter schools.

Concerns about Data Analysis

There are also concerns about the limited ability to analyze data by district or school in order to determine the degree to which the results are representative at those levels, as opposed to the state as a whole. As noted earlier, the survey instruments did not include items asking for respondents to identify the charter school which their feedback represents. Further, some respondents opted not to respond to the item indicating district affiliation.

FINDINGS

The findings from this study are presented below according to the seven research questions related to (1) charter school purpose, (2) authorization, (3) governance, (4) laws and rules regulating public schools, (5) training and support for charter schools, (6) reasons parents/guardians enrolled their children in charter schools and (7) reasons parents/guardians withdrew their children from charter schools. Findings include both the quantitative and qualitative data gathered from surveys and interviews. We begin with data to contextualize the schools and students who attended the thirty-six schools in 2005-2006, which were sampled for this study.

Utah Charter Schools and Student Demographics

For context, Tables 4, 5, and 6 provide general information about the thirty-six charter schools included in the sample for this study as well as demographic information about the students enrolled in these thirty-six schools. The charter schools in operation two or more years as of 2005-2006 represent sixteen districts in the state: Alpine, Cache/Logan, Carbon, Davis, Grand, Granite, Iron, Jordan, Millard, Nebo, Ogden, Provo, SLCSD, Uintah, Wasatch, and Washington.

Specifically, Table 4 shows the charter schools, the districts in which they are located, how long they have been in operation, which grades are served, the authorizer (state or district), and the total student enrollment. Table 5 shows the student population for each charter school by race/ethnicity. Additional columns provide information on students by specific race and ethnicity. Table 6 lists the percent of students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch, the percent of students who are in special education at the charter school, and the percent of students with limited English proficiency (LEP). This includes students with no proficiency, limited proficiency, fluent in one modality, and students who are monitored for two years. It does not include former LEP students. Table 6 also provides information on the percent of female and male students in each charter school.

The USOE reported that in 2005-06, charter school students were, on average, 84 percent White and 16 percent students of color.[1] Specifically, the charter schools were, on average, 1 percent African American, 4 percent American Indian, 2 percent Asian, 7 percent Latino, 2 percent Pacific Islander, and 84 percent White. Statewide, the USOE reported that in 2005-2006 1.3 percent of students were African American, 1.5 percent were American Indian, 1.6 percent were Asian, 12.2 were Latino, 1.4 percent were Pacific Islander, and 82 percent were White.2 Again, while only eight of the thirty-six charters reported that they served students who were English Language Learners in the 2005-06 school year, 32 of the schools reported serving students identified as needing special education services. Five charter schools reported that between 19 percent and 25 percent of their students were identified as needing special education services.

[1] Charter school data are from the Utah State Office of Education, Data Clearinghouse, S3 Reports for 2005-2006.

[2] Information for the state-wide student demographics were obtained from the USOE Web site at http://www.schools.utah.gov/default/FngrFacts.pdf

The remaining 28 charter schools reported serving between two percent and eleven percent of students identified as needing special education services.

Table 4. Utah Charter School Information

School	District	Opened*	Grades	Authorizer	Total # of students
John Hancock Charter School	Alpine	2002	k-9	State	183
Lincoln Academy	Alpine	2005	k-9	State	490
Odyssey Charter School	Alpine	2005	k-6	State	367
Ranches Academy	Alpine	2004	k-6	State	364
Timpanogos Academy	Alpine	2002	k-8	State	495
UCAS	Alpine	2005	10-11	State	182
Fast Forward High	Cache/Logan	2003	9-12	District	218
Thomas Edison – North	Cache/Logan	2002	k-8	State	365
Thomas Edison – South	Cache/Logan	2005	k-7	State	284
Pinnacle Canyon Academy	Carbon	1999	k-8	State	361
North Davis Preparatory Academy	Davis	2004	k-6	District	501
Wasatch Peak Acdemy	Davis	2005	k-6	State	326
Moab Community School	Grand	2004	k-8	State	32
AMES	Granite	2003	9-12	State	423
Beehive Science & Technology	Granite	2005	7-8	State	78
East Hollywood High	Granite	2004	9-12	State	307
Success School	Granite	1999	7-12	District	75
SUCCESS Academy	Iron	2005	9-11	District	105
American Preparatory Academy	Jordan	2005	k-9	State	526
Itineris Early College High	Jordan	2004	11-12	District	125
Navigator Pointe Academy	Jordan	2005	k-8	State	471
North Star Academy	Jordan	2005	k-8	State	450
Summit Academy	Jordan	2004	k-6	State	536
CBA Center	Millard	1999	9-12	District	31
American Leadership Academy	Nebo	2005	k-12	State	1200
Reagan Academy	Nebo	2005	k-8	State	590
DaVinci Academy	Ogden	2004	9-11	State	259
NUAMES	Ogden	2004	9-12	District	377
Ogden Preparatory Academy	Ogden	2003	k-8	State	533
Freedom Academy	Provo	2003	k-8	State	406
Walden School	Provo	2004	7-10	State	90
City Academy	SLCSD	2000	7-12	State	161
Salt Lake Arts Academy	SLCSD	2003	5-8	State	243
Uintah River High School	Uintah	1999	9-12	State	62
Soldier Hollow	Wasatch	1999	1-6	State	76
Tuacahn High School	Washington	1999	9-12	State	206

Source: USOE, Data Clearinghouse 7/11/2006

* August/September opening

Table 5. Utah Charter School Student Populations by Race/Ethnicity

School	Total # of students	Students of Color	African American	American Indian	Asian	Latino	Pacific Islander	White
State	510,012	18%	1%	2%	2%	12%	1%	82%
John Hancock Charter School	183	10%	0%	1%	3%	3%	3%	90%
Lincoln Academy	490	6%	1%	0%	2%	2%	0.4%	94%
Odyssey Charter School	367	10%	1%	0%	3%	5%	1%	90%
Ranches Academy	364	8%	2%	0.3%	1%	3%	1%	92%
Timpanogos Academy	495	11%	1%	0.2%	4%	4%	2%	89%
UCAS	182	15%	1%	1%	1%	11%	1%	85%
Fast Forward High	218	12%	1%	1%	1%	8%	1%	88%
Thomas Edison – North	365	9%	2%	1%	1%	3%	2%	91%
Thomas Edison – South	284	6%	0%	0%	0.3%	3%	3%	94%
Pinnacle Canyon Academy	361	12%	2%	1%	1%	9%	0%	88%
North Davis Preparatory Academy	501	13%	2%	0.4%	1%	8%	2%	87%
Wasatch Peak Acdemy	326	7%	3%	0%	2%	2%	0.3%	93%
Moab Community School	32	22%	0%	16%	0%	6%	0%	78%
AMES	423	34%	3%	1%	5%	20%	5%	66%
Beehive Science & Technology	78	19%	0%	1%	4%	10%	4%	81%
East Hollywood High	307	24%	2%	3%	3%	13%	3%	76%
Success School	75	48%	1%	3%	1%	36%	7%	52%
SUCCESS Academy	105	10%	1%	1%	0%	8%	0%	89%
American Preparatory Academy	526	6%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	94%
Itineris Early College High	125	20%	1%	3%	4%	9%	3%	80%
Navigator Pointe Academy	471	11%	1%	1%	1%	6%	1%	89%
North Star Academy	450	2%	1%	0.4%	0%	0.4%	0%	98%
Summit Academy	536	5%	1%	0%	2%	2%	0%	95%
CBA Center	31	16%	0%	6%	0%	10%	0%	84%
American Leadership Academy	1200	5%	1%	0%	1%	2%	1%	95%
Reagan Academy	590	10%	1%	1%	2%	5%	1%	90%
DaVinci Academy	259	16%	4%	0%	3%	9%	0%	84%
NUAMES	377	24%	4%	2%	3%	8%	1%	80%
Ogden Preparatory Academy	533	28%	5%	1%	2%	19%	1%	72%
Freedom Academy	406	19%	1%	0.2%	4%	13%	1%	81%
Walden School	90	13%	0%	3%	1%	7%	2%	87%
City Academy	161	20%	2%	2%	2%	12%	2%	80%
Salt Lake Arts Academy	243	18%	3%	0.4%	2%	9%	3%	82%
Uintah River High School	62	97%	0%	97%	0%	0%	0%	3%
Soldier Hollow	76	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	99%
Tuacahn High School	206	5%	0%	1%	0%	2%	2%	95%
Charter School Average	*319*	*16%*	*1%*	*4%*	*2%*	*7%*	*2%*	*84%*

Source: USOE, Data Clearinghouse 7/11/2006
* August/September opening

Table 6. Utah Charter School Student Populations by SES and ELL

School	Total # of students	Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch	Special Ed	LEP	Female	Male
John Hancock Charter School	183	25%	10%	0%	46%	54%
Lincoln Academy	490	4%	7%	0%	50%	50%
Odyssey Charter School	367	0%	4%	0%	51%	49%
Ranches Academy	364	0%	6%	0%	53%	47%
Timpanogos Academy	495	0%	4%	0%	47%	53%
UCAS	182	14%	0%	0%	41%	59%
Fast Forward High	218	17%	25%	0%	47%	53%
Thomas Edison – North	365	0%	8%	0%	45%	55%
Thomas Edison – South	284	0%	9%	0%	52%	48%
Pinnacle Canyon Academy	361	46%	23%	0%	51%	49%
North Davis Preparatory Academy	501	12%	6%	0%	50%	50%
Wasatch Peak Acdemy	326	18%	6%	0%	51%	49%
Moab Community School	32	41%	19%	0%	53%	47%
AMES	423	22%	4%	0%	46%	54%
Beehive Science & Technology	78	0%	4%	3%	32%	68%
East Hollywood High	307	0%	8%	0%	47%	53%
Success School	75	0%	7%	16%	29%	71%
SUCCESS Academy	105	22%	0%	4%	50%	50%
American Preparatory Academy	526	0%	6%	0%	45%	55%
Itineris Early College High	125	18%	0%	6%	50%	50%
Navigator Pointe Academy	471	23%	9%	0%	49%	51%
North Star Academy	450	10%	6%	0%	50%	50%
Summit Academy	536	0%	6%	0%	46%	54%
CBA Center	31	77%	23%	3%	52%	48%
American Leadership Academy	1200	0%	9%	0%	48%	52%
Reagan Academy	590	29%	10%	0%	54%	46%
DaVinci Academy	259	48%	7%	0%	54%	46%
NUAMES	377	28%	2%	1%	41%	59%
Ogden Preparatory Academy	533	50%	11%	1%	51%	49%
Freedom Academy	406	41%	8%	0%	51%	49%
Walden School	90	40%	11%	3%	60%	40%
City Academy	161	47%	20%	0%	45%	55%
Salt Lake Arts Academy	243	0%	7%	0%	54%	46%
Uintah River High School	62	65%	10%	0%	53%	47%
Soldier Hollow	76	3%	7%	0%	54%	46%
Tuacahn High School	206	0%	0%	0%	65%	35%
Source: USOE, Data Clearinghouse 7/11/2006						
* August/September opening						

Purposes of Charter Schools

This study collected information across a broad spectrum of stakeholders about (a) how they would prioritize the purposes of charter schools as specified in Utah state law, (b) what they see as additional reasons charter schools are being created, (c) how they characterize the current state law specifying the purpose of charter schools (e.g., too broad or too restrictive), and (d) whether they believe the current law should be modified. A summary of participants' responses to these questions about the purpose of charter schools in Utah is presented below.

Priorities

Survey participants were asked to prioritize the purposes for creating charter schools as specified in current state law presented above. Utah Code Section 53A-1a-503 outlines seven purposes. The charter school purposes outlined in code are:

1. to continue to improve student learning;
2. to encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
3. to create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school;
4. to increase choice of learning opportunities for students;
5. to establish new models of public schools and a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes and the creation of innovative measurement tools;
6. to provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level; and
7. to expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. Sec. 6301 et seq.

On the surveys administered for this study, one of those purposes was divided into two separate purposes. All seven respondent groups surveyed were asked to rank order these eight purposes for creating charter schools in Utah from most important to eighth in importance. Summary tables are presented for each role below. A discussion of commonalities and differences across roles is presented following the last table.

Rank Order of Purposes within Different Roles

Means are calculated based on 1=most important purpose to 8=8th in terms of importance. Thus, a mean of 1.00 would indicate that all respondents within a role group rated a reason as the most important purpose. The means are reported in descending order. A lower mean indicates that a reason was viewed as more important overall compared to a relatively higher mean.

Table 2. Charter School Administrators

	N	Mean
Increase choice of learning opportunities for students	18	2.50
Improve student learning	18	2.67
Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods	18	4.17
Provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level	18	4.39
Establish new models of public schools	18	4.44
Establish a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes with innovative measurement tools	18	5.28
Create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school	18	5.50
Expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the NCLB Act	18	7.06

Table 3. Charter School Governing Board Members

	N	Mean
Improve student learning	47	2.06
Increase choice of learning opportunities for students	47	2.43
Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods	46	3.67
Provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level	47	4.53
Establish a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes with innovative measurement tools	47	4.98
Establish new models of public schools	46	5.17
Create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school	47	6.23
Expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the NCLB Act	47	6.77

Table 4. State Charter School Board Members

	N	Mean
Improve student learning	6	2.17
Increase choice of learning opportunities for students	6	3.33
Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods	6	3.83
Provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level	6	4.00
Establish a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes with innovative measurement tools	6	4.83
Create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school	6	5.50
Establish new models of public schools	4	5.75
Expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the NCLB Act	6	7.00

Table 5. Parents/guardians with Children Currently Enrolled in a Charter School

	N	Mean
Improve student learning	981	2.00
Increase choice of learning opportunities for students	955	3.04
Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods	945	4.24
Establish a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes with innovative measurement tools	924	4.60
Provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level	941	4.78
Establish new models of public schools	925	4.94
Create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school	934	5.88
Expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the NCLB Act	937	6.19

Table 6. Parents/guardians with Children Who Were Previously Enrolled in Charter School

	N	Mean
Improve student learning	84	2.01
Increase choice of learning opportunities for students	80	3.04
Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods	80	4.39
Establish new models of public schools	79	4.71
Provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level	81	4.77
Establish a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes with innovative measurement tools	78	4.85
Expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the NCLB Act	80	5.94
Create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school	75	6.00

Table 7. District Superintendents (or Their Designees)

	N	Mean
Increase choice of learning opportunities for students	12	2.58
Provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level	12	3.08
Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods	12	4.25
Improve student learning	12	4.67
Establish a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes with innovative measurement tools	12	4.67
Establish new models of public schools	12	4.75
Expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the NCLB Act	12	5.92
Create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school	11	6.36

Table 8. District Board of Education Members

	N	Mean
Increase choice of learning opportunities for students	22	2.95
Provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level	21	3.10
Establish new models of public schools	21	4.14
Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods	21	4.29
Improve student learning	20	4.50
Expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the NCLB Act	20	5.50
Create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school	21	5.52
Establish a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes with innovative measurement tools	21	6.05

The above Tables 2-8 reveal several key findings. First, the rank ordering of purposes across all charter school role groups (charter school administrators, charter board members, State Charter School Board members, and current and previous charter parents/guardians) is highly similar. Across those five groups, all but the charter school administrators ranked "improving student learning" as the most important purpose of charter schools, and the charter administrators ranked it second. Other than the case in which it was ranked most important, these five groups rated "increasing choice of learning opportunities for students" a close second.

Following the top two reasons, there was a significant drop in the mean rating of the third most important reason, which was identified by all five charter roles as "encouraging the use of innovative teaching methods." Four of these five groups rated "providing opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level" as the fourth most important purpose of charter schools, while parents/guardians with students currently enrolled in charter schools rated it fifth. "Establishing new models of public schools" and "establishing a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes with innovative measurement tools" tended to be rated around fifth on average.

"Creating new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school" and "expanding public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the NCLB Act" were consistently ranked as the least important purposes of charter schools.

The message here is clear. Foremost, those individuals affiliated with charter schools view the primary purposes of charter schools to be improving student learning and providing greater choice for students. Relatively speaking, they also envision providing greater parental involvement in school decision-making as a more important purpose than creating professional

opportunities for educators to actively involve them in the design and implementation of the school's educational program.

The rankings of the district superintendents and local board members are aligned with one another for the most part, but they are incongruent with the ratings of the charter school role groups in some important ways. As an example of their agreement with one another, district administrators and board members rank "increasing choice of learning opportunities for students" as the most important purpose of charters and "providing greater opportunities for parental involvement in management decisions at the school level" as the second most important. Both groups also rated "encouraging the use of innovative teaching methods" among their top four on the list.

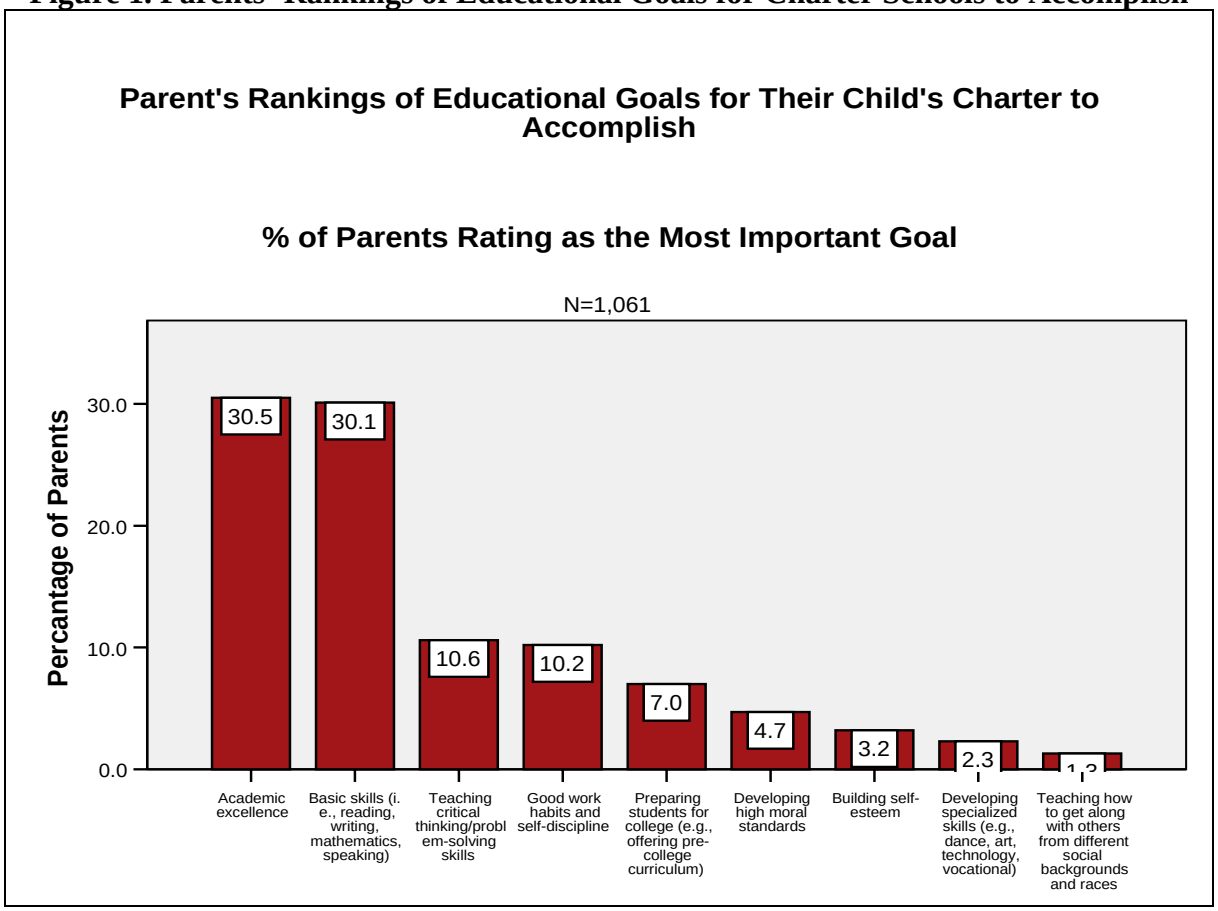
The critical distinctions between the views of district officials and charter representatives are twofold. First, district superintendents and board members rated "improving student learning" on average between the fourth and fifth most important reasons for creating charter schools, while four of the five charter school roles rated it as most important and the other rated it second. This discrepancy is potentially attributable to mixed results from studies assessing the impact of charter schools on student achievement and the belief held by some district representatives that their districts are already performing well, so charter schools are not needed as a tool to improve student achievement. Second, district representatives rated providing greater opportunities for parental involvement as a more important purpose for creating charter schools than all five charter school roles, including current and previous charter school parents/guardians. This is somewhat surprising since parental involvement has been such a driving force for charter schools in Utah and nationally. This also speaks to the issue that districts are not fully aware of how dissatisfied parents/guardians are with traditional public school, as indicated in the parent survey responses.

Educational Goals for Students

From a list of nine educational goals, parents/guardians with students currently enrolled in charter schools were asked to rank order the tope three most important educational goals for their child's charter school to accomplish. Figure 1 below displays the percentage of parents/guardians who rated each of the goals listed on the survey as the most important educational goal for their child's charter school to accomplish.

Clearly, the goals listed most frequently by parents/guardians as most important are academic in nature (i.e., academic excellence, basic skills, and critical thinking). (This is congruent with parent's reasons for choosing charter schools being largely academic in nature, which is reported in the section on parents/guardians' perspectives below.) Preparing students for college was the lowest rated academic goal, which was likely the result of a significant percentage of the parents/guardians having elementary age children.

Figure 1. Parents' Rankings of Educational Goals for Charter Schools to Accomplish



The high percentage of parents/guardians who cited basic skills as the most important goal raises questions regarding the extent to which charter school participants are seeking innovative, more rigorous, or niche opportunities. Low ratings of goals for developing specialized skills (e.g., dance, art, technology, vocational) is also inconsistent with the belief that charter schools are primarily schools that serve a niche with specialized interests. While the most important goals are primarily academic ones, with the exception of "good work habits and self-discipline" (10.2%), they are much less likely to focus on intrapersonal ("developing high moral standards" and "building self-esteem") or interpersonal development. ("teaching how to get along with others from different backgrounds and races.")

Additional Reasons for Creating Charter Schools

During the individual and focus group interviews, we asked participants about the particular reasons that charter schools were created in their local area. According to interview responses, there were generally four primary drivers for the creation and operation of charters including (1) dissatisfaction with public schools, (2) a desire for something unique and "innovative," (3) the ability of parents/guardians to exercise choice, and (4) the ability of parents/guardians to define and control their child's educational experience. Each driver is discussed below.

Dissatisfaction with public schools

One of the drivers for starting charter schools, according to participants of this study, included the perception that the districts were not meeting and/or not being responsive to parental wishes or concerns about their children's experiences in the regular public school settings. This finding is consistent with parent/guardian comments provided on the surveys. A number of charter administrators and charter board members relayed personal experiences about failed attempts to work with the school or district staff to meet the special needs of their children. Dissatisfaction with the district's response to requests for accommodations to meet their child's learning needs was described by a charter school administrator whose child previously attended the local district:

> *I went through, in my mind, every possibility that would work for my child. And I did not believe they were too outrageous. They were reasonable requests…And my response, as a mother, I thought okay, this is a district office that is not receptive to not only parent's needs but student's needs specifically.*

For many, the opportunity to start a charter school provided a vehicle for parents/guardians and others to do something about their concerns with regular public education. One local school board member relayed similar sentiments:

> *I think the purposes of all charter schools on some level is to meet the needs that people, parents/guardians, kids, families, perceive are not being met by the traditional public school. And the language you often hear is, "The public school is one size fits all. And my kid is a different size. My kid is a square peg and I don't think he fits in that round hole." And I think that is a very legitimate voice that we need to listen to in public education. On one level it doesn't matter whether it is subjectively true that the pubic school can't meet my child's needs. If I feel that way, then it is important for me to articulate that. And it is important for public education administrators to try to listen to that voice.*

A desire for something unique and "innovative"

Another driver for creating charter schools expressed by study participants was the perception that charter schools can serve as innovative learning labs for the rest of the state by offering unique curriculum, instructional approaches, or other program features or elements. Examples of the unique and "innovative" charter school features provided by interviewees included small classes, small schools, accelerated coursework, a particular curricular focus or program, college preparation (or for some Early College High Schools), and arts integration or arts focus. A district administrator described this driver in terms of how the charter schools in their district were filling a market niche:

> *Because it was individuals who wanted a particular emphasis in the school and they were excited about that emphasis…One of the schools is designed as part of the governor's high tech schools. One of the schools is designed for autistic children and children with Asperger's syndrome. So it has that specific focus. And they wanted, as opposed to having to have very expensive alternatives, they wanted their children all in one specific setting. So that created a need for it.*

It was noted by a number of interviewees, however, that the desire for something new or unique was often a desire for more of a "back to basics" approach. For example, a charter board member provided the rationale for her school's approach, which was expressed by others across the study:

> *I wasn't really happy with the curriculum in that there were some important things that I thought children should learn that they weren't being taught. When I reviewed the Core Knowledge series I thought, "Ok, this is the kind of things I want my children to learn." You know it's things that every American should know. A foundation of an education. So sort of a back to basics approach I guess. Instead of trying every new thing that comes out.*

Although charters are touted as serving a niche market, as noted above, this push for a back-to-basics approach is inconsistent with general notions of innovation. Perhaps, the emphasis on a back-to-basics approach raises the question of whether some of those who advocate for charters are satisfied with a "choice" to the traditional public school as the innovation rather than seeking vastly different program or curriculum opportunities.

The ability of parents/guardians to exercise choice

The third driver found in this study included the perception that having a choice in itself is what is important. Again, this finding is consistent with the parent/guardian comments provided on the surveys. According to study participants, charter schools offer a menu of options for parents/guardians to choose among for their children. This was particularly important for those who perceive that parents/guardians know best what their children need. A charter board member explained this driver for creating charter schools in his local area:

> *We ended up getting a lot of parents/guardians involved that were very, very similar in their attitude and their hopes and their dreams, their frustrations. I mean a couple hundred of them. And it was very, I guess gratifying to me and satisfying to me and rewarding to me. And just proved that I'm just not the only person out there. There are hundreds and hundreds, maybe thousands of parents/guardians with multiple children that want to have an option, a choice in their educational pursuit of their children. And that they feel and I feel like we really don't have that much of a choice and an option. So that was kind of the biggest reason for me to be involved that way. To give my children options and choices.*

However, in discussions of parental choice, a number of district administrators and board members suggested that parents/guardians already have a good deal of choice within the regular public schools system. A district administrator explained:

> *And then of course the other piece is that parents/guardians have choice. There is so much choice available in the public school system. So parents/guardians have just all kinds of choice. So the implication is, you say well charters schools give parents/guardians choice. Implying there is no other choice to me is kind of mis-advertising. Because the reality is there are all kinds of choices.*

The ability of parents/guardians to define and control their child's educational experience

The fourth driver was similar to the third driver, but also included perceptions that charter schools need autonomy and flexibility from the district. As described by participants in this study, the charter arrangement provides what is perceived as increased parental access and proximity to decision-making authority and often stems from the grass roots efforts of local parent groups. For example, one charter school administrator explained:

> *I think we've got to give parents/guardians a whole lot more credit than we do. Parents/guardians do know what's best most of the time and they can go out, do their research. Yes, it helps to have educational experience, but often times, most of the time they're smart enough to know that and they go out and find educators to help with it. But to say only educators can start a school, no I don't think so.*

From this perspective, charter schools are perceived to offer parents/guardians more opportunities to be involved in the schooling of their children without being limited or burdened by district control. A charter board member described the desire for parents/guardians to be involved in charter schools:

> *I just say that parents/guardians want a different relationship with schools. They don't want to be told, "This is what you get. And there's nothing we can do about that." They want a different relationship.*

However, this was also challenged by some interviewees who indicated that there is often less parental involvement in the decision making in charter schools than is often promoted in the public discourse. For example, a district board member relayed the following:

> *I've had some input from parents/guardians who have taken their kids out of our public school system, put them in a charter school expecting to have some major input on the decision management, decision making. And they're saying it doesn't exist. It's a real concern for them.*

This comment challenges the assumption that parents/guardians are engaging in charter schools at higher levels. Additional perspectives about parental involvement of charter schools are addressed in the section that addresses responses from the parent surveys.

Characterization of Current State Law

During the individual and focus group interviews, we asked participants to characterize the current state law specifying the purpose of charter schools in relation to what they shared about the reasons charter schools were being created in their local areas. For example, we asked which elements of the law are too restrictive and which elements of the law are too broad? Participants in the interviews generally agreed that the purposes outlined in law were appropriate and described a number of ways in which the charter schools were meeting the specified purposes.

Further, many indicated that the specified purposes for charter schools seemed appropriate for *all* schools. For instance, a district board member stated "*why should these goals be set apart for some kind of elite system that runs separate[ly]. I mean that is something that we should all be striving for.*"

However, similar to the survey responses, interview participants suggested that the seventh purpose, "to expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001" was not a driver for the creation or operation of any charter school. In part, participants noted that charters were less likely to open for students in schools that had not made AYP or to open in low income neighborhoods. According to some, the fact that few charter schools were opening in response to schools not making AYP was deemed highly problematic.

Although almost all interviewees generally agreed with the stated purposes of charter schools, a number indicated that further clarification was needed to better understand the intention of the specified purposes. For example, interviewees desired further clarification about what constituted "innovativeness." A charter board member suggested that innovation wasn't a primary driver so much as simply giving parents/guardians a choice:

> *This whole text of this section [in the state law] has an interesting slant. And really the gist of it is that charter schools need to be innovative and different. I feel that one of the main purposes should just be simply to expand public school choice. Because a lot of charter schools if you look at them, they maybe wouldn't really be qualified as innovative or different. They are there to provide an excellent academic experience. But the point is that parents/guardians want a choice because they feel like I can get something better. And you might have to jump through hoops to describe it as innovative. How innovative is a back to basics education? Well, some people could say it's going backwards in time.*

This comment suggests that the real purpose of charter schools is to provide choice for parents/guardians, not necessarily to provide something new or unique. This theme of choice as the central feature of charter schools is discussed in further detail in the following sections, particular among parents/guardians.

Concerns and Suggestions for Modifications to Current State Law on Purpose

Although only a small number of interviewees suggested actual modifications to the current state law specifying the purpose of charter schools, many participants, both those involved in charter schools and those at the district level, voiced concerns about charter schools not fully adhering to the charter school purposes as well as concerns about who charter schools serve, whether they are necessarily unique or innovative, the nature and extent of parental involvement, lack of accountability, lack of professional opportunities for teacher, funding for sustainability, operating a dual system, and privatization.

Who Charter Schools Serve

Interviewees recognized that one of the effects of charter schools is that through the open enrollment and lottery process, the charter schools are not attracting students from more diverse or lower socioeconomic backgrounds. There were also concerns that charters are not as available to students with special education needs or students who are English Language Learners. A district interviewee voiced such concerns:

> *I think purposes are great. We give opportunities. I've got to tell you, right now though the purposes, in that case it's not really attracting a wide spectrum of kids. They're fairly – not affluent kids in all cases but in some cases they are. They are parents/guardians who can afford to transport their kids. Getting to their schools. To know how to apply and how to work the system. They are parents/guardians who have the money to do that. And may not have two parents/guardians working. It's not rich or middle income, lower income families. But lower income's certainly not all. I'm not sure if I walked in those schools I'd see one student of color to tell you the honest truth. Because they are, they really are becoming somewhat elite kind of looking. They're public/private schools in a sense. And we're not getting a wide spectrum of kids.*

A charter board member noted that a "key issue for charter schools" was "*racial and economic diversity - how can charter schools do a better job of recruiting and serving a more representative sample of the state's students?*" A district board member echoed this concern and cited that charter schools in its area did not reflect the districts increasing population of students who were "minority and lower socio-economic." The district board member said that, as a result, "*charter schools are creating a two-tiered system…*" Another district board member stated it this way:

> *Charter schools are designed to give students choice. But my contention is that the poorest of students who have little or no parental involvement still have no choice. Their parents/guardians cannot transport their students to schools other than their local school. They don't have the time or care enough to be involved in volunteering at their schools. Unless transportation is provided to the charter schools, the poorest or most needy of students STILL have no choice. It's essential that we don't let funding affect the quality of our open, public schools in this experiment for "choice."*

Another example of this concern was provided by a district administrator, who explained the litmus test he uses:

> *When I see that the charter schools in an area doesn't represent the background population in their area in terms of disadvantaged students, [or] minority students, then I'd say it's probably not a good idea.*

In contrast, not all study participants believed that charter schools were contributing to patterns of uneven representation of students according to economic or racial backgrounds. For example, counter to the concerns illustrated above, a charter board member noted the following:

> *Lately the big thing is "Charter Schools discriminate against economically or racially disadvantaged." This is a huge lie. Because of charter schools everyone, especially economically or racially disadvantaged families, are given choices in education, whereas prior to charter schools only the wealthy had choices. We can not force disadvantaged families to choose this option, but at least it is available and many do choose it.*

This last comment raises the question of whether charter schools are obligated to ensure equal access and participation to all groups of students and families. It seems appropriate at this point to consider requests for additional resources by charter administrators and charter board members to provide transportation to eliminate this problem, particularly in areas where feasibility to attend a school is based on proximity. Again, few parents/guardians in this study reported proximity as a reason for not attending a charter school. These issues are raised again in the sections below.

The Nature and Extent of Parental Involvement

Interviewees generally agreed that charter schools should "provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level," as specified by state law. However, a number of comments about this purpose indicated that parents/guardians may not be as involved as they would like. Again, this issue is further addressed in the parent survey section.

Not necessarily unique or innovative

In reference to the state law specifying that one purpose of charter schools is to "encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods," a number of study participants noted that some charter schools do not appear to be innovative or unique. This is illustrated by one charter administrator's comments:

> *Well I think the state law is excellent actually. I think that in theory it's, but in practice maybe it isn't always what it purports to be. And maybe this is just my perception but it seems to me that a lot of the same model of charter school is being duplicated in many places. Whereas my understanding of charter schools is that they are supposed to offer new and innovative models--kind of a learning lab for education. And so I've been a little disappointed that there hasn't been a variety of charter methodologies and philosophies.*

Lack of accountability

Referring to the purpose of charter schools, as specified in state law, to "establish new models of public schools and a new form of accountability," a number of participants indicated that charter schools are not held accountable to perform at comparable levels as other public schools. Comments from both district and charter administrators indicated that charter schools typically do not outperform their regular public school counterparts. In addition, a more common response was that interviewees typically do not have evidence that charter schools are being held accountable for meeting their stated purposes. A district administrator notes that even when charter schools propose innovative programs, they may not always follow through successfully:

> *Innovation – there's a few charter schools that are very innovative. There are some charter schools that are innovative on paper but they are not following their own charter. Therefore, it appeases the law, but it doesn't really change the practice.*

One marked departure from the purposes, as noted above, is the expectation for charter schools to expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. A number of interviewees suggested that additional oversight is needed to hold charter schools accountable, not only to the purposes of charter schools as specified in state law, but also to their individual charter purposes, as defined in the charter applications.

Lack of professional opportunities for teachers

In reference to the state law specifying the purpose of charters is to "create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school," a number of study participants were concerned that charter schools do not have the capacity to provide this opportunity for teachers. For example, some mentioned their concern that teachers are not participating in professional development opportunities to the degree that teachers are in the school districts. A charter school administrator explained the dilemma that charter schools face in terms of hiring new teachers and providing adequate professional development opportunities.

> *What puts charter schools at risk is people feeling like they're not getting what they were told they were going to get. And I'm going to tell you something, that's hard to provide when 40 percent of your teachers are brand spanking new out of college. So now you don't have people on your staff that, [for example] when you give them training you have these veteran teachers say, "Oh I see it. Ok..got it." What you have is a whole bunch of new teachers going, "We have to do what? How are you going do that?" Because they have no anchors. No frame of reference. No experience. And so all of these brand new teachers. To pull this off is risky business.*

Indeed, charter schools are attractive to teachers for a number of reasons. This question about professional development for new teachers raises the question of whether the advantages of the flexibility and autonomy from traditional public schools outweigh the benefits of professional development, mentoring, and other types of support mechanisms for teachers that are often in place in larger public school districts. Further investigation would be required to explore these issues from the perspective of charter school teachers.

Funding for sustainability and operating dual systems

Although not among the purposes of charter schools as specified in state law, a number of interviewees suggested that charter schools are not less expensive to operate than public schools. In fact, as illustrated in subsequent sections of this report, charter administrators and board members often argue that they are equally as costly. Further, interviewees reported numerous concerns about the ability of the state to fund two systems of public schools. Given this situation, a district board member voiced concern about insufficient state resources to support both traditional schools and charter schools:

> *It is insane to try to run two parallel programs when you barely have resources to run one. You really don't even have enough to run one.*

Another school board member described more specific challenges and concerns with operating these two types of school systems:

> *[The district] approved opening 3 new neighborhood schools in January 2005. By the time they opened in Fall 2006 there were also 3 charter schools opening in the same areas. This had a significant effect on our projected enrollment. How can we plan to meet the needs of our community long term when there is no long-term planning and coordinating with charter schools? I recognize my community values choice, but we need to all be aware that running a dual system which operates completely independent of each other is not an effective use of our resources. I believe working together we can resolve many of these issues.*

Privatization

A number of interviewees, particularly at the district level, expressed concern about what they perceived as the privatization of public education. For example, a local school board member expressed concern about this issue:

> *A big danger that we face with charter schools is that sort of encroaching privatization. It can be helpful, but it can also be hugely detrimental. And you have now several different management companies that have set up shop… and without some kind of oversight at the state level you really don't know what they are telling people or how they are advising them to run the school.*

The concerns with privatization particularly centered on what a number of study participants viewed as a conflict of interest. This following comment illustrates this concern:

> *I have a problem with the fact that there are legislators making money off of it. I mean I think that's a huge conflict of interest. It's immoral. It's unethical, and I think that that's why the experiment is lasting so long, because I personally think it's a huge failure. They're making money off of it through their school management companies.*

However, the charter administrators and board members whose schools use management companies are grateful for the support and increased capacity that the management companies offer, as illustrated by the following comments from a charter board member:

> *Management companies have been a big help. I know there's a lot of talk about, you know, them getting financial gain. I would rather have a management company get a financial gain then a parent start it for the wrong reasons.*

Concerns about management companies were raised by study participants in relation to a number of topics. This issue will be discussed again in the Authorization section.

Summary of Findings Related to Purpose

In this section, we presented the results from surveys and interviews about the purpose of charter schools in Utah. Findings indicated that charter board members and administrators perceive improved learning and "choice" as the most important purposes of charter schools. Similar to the survey responses, the interviewees described four general drivers, that were also related to choice in terms of programmatic options as well as the ability for parents/guardians to be more involved in the decision making process. Study participants also raised a number of concerns, including the perception that charter schools are not being held accountable to their purposes and the costs of operating "dual systems."

Charter School Authorization

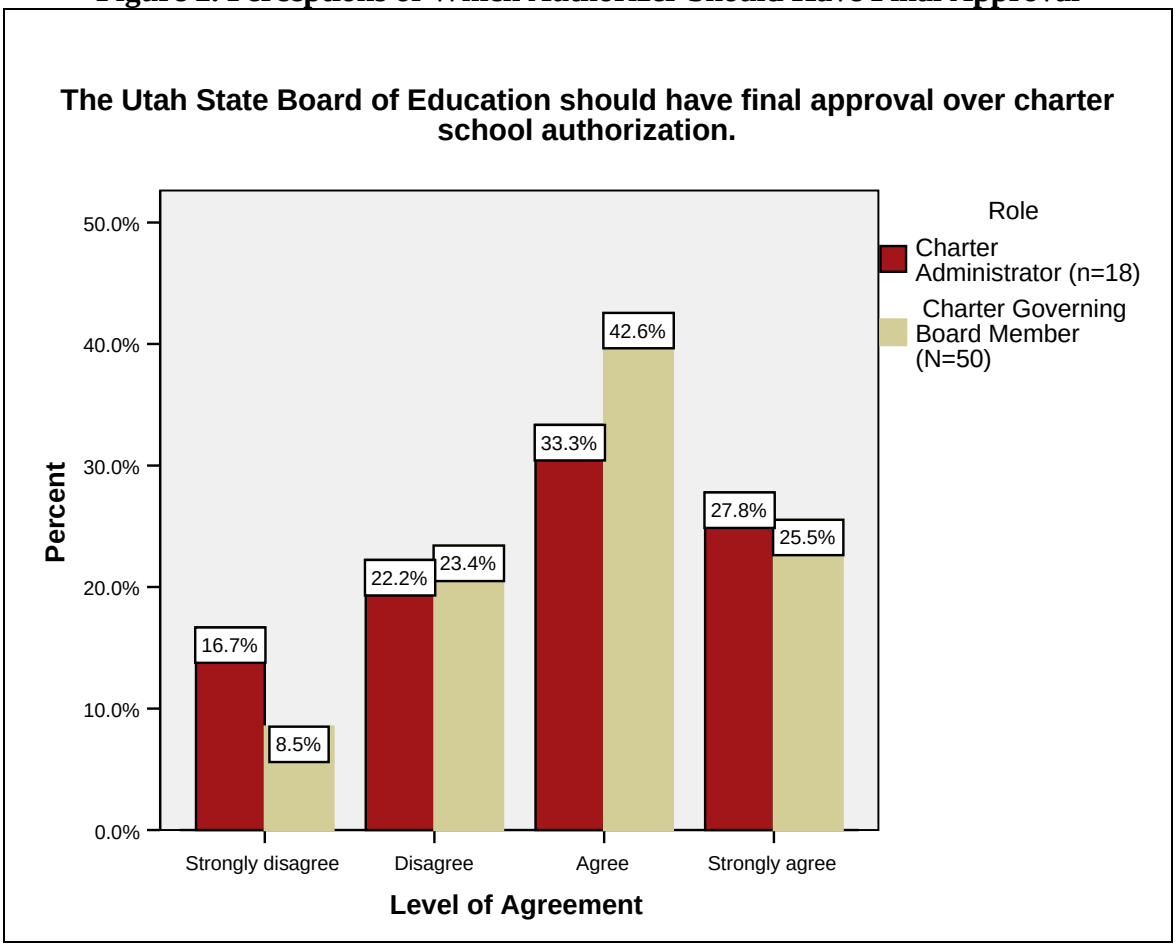
The second primary research question was *why charter schools in Utah are generally authorized by the State Charter School Board rather than local school boards*. To address this overall research question, the research team gathered information from across groups about the reasons local school boards have authorized fewer charter schools and whether changes in state law would result in more districts authorizing charter schools. This section begins with a discussion of the data that were reported on: (1) who should have the authority to approve charters, (2) levels of political support for charter schools, (3) which criteria should be using when making decision about approving charters, and (4) ratings of elements of the charter application process. Additionally, the qualitative data from interviews and open-ended survey items are presented in relation to the degree to which the authorizers are too lenient or too restrictive in awarding charters, what criteria should be used in approving (or disapproving) additional charter school applications, and what limits should be placed on authorizing charters each year. This section ends with a summary of study participants' suggestions for how authorization policies and practices could be improved.

Charter Approval Authority

Charter school administrators and board members were asked to rate their levels of agreement with two statements regarding where authority for charter school approval should reside: 1) "The Utah State Board of Education should have final approval over charter school authorization," and 2) "The local school boards should have some authority in the approval of state-chartered schools."

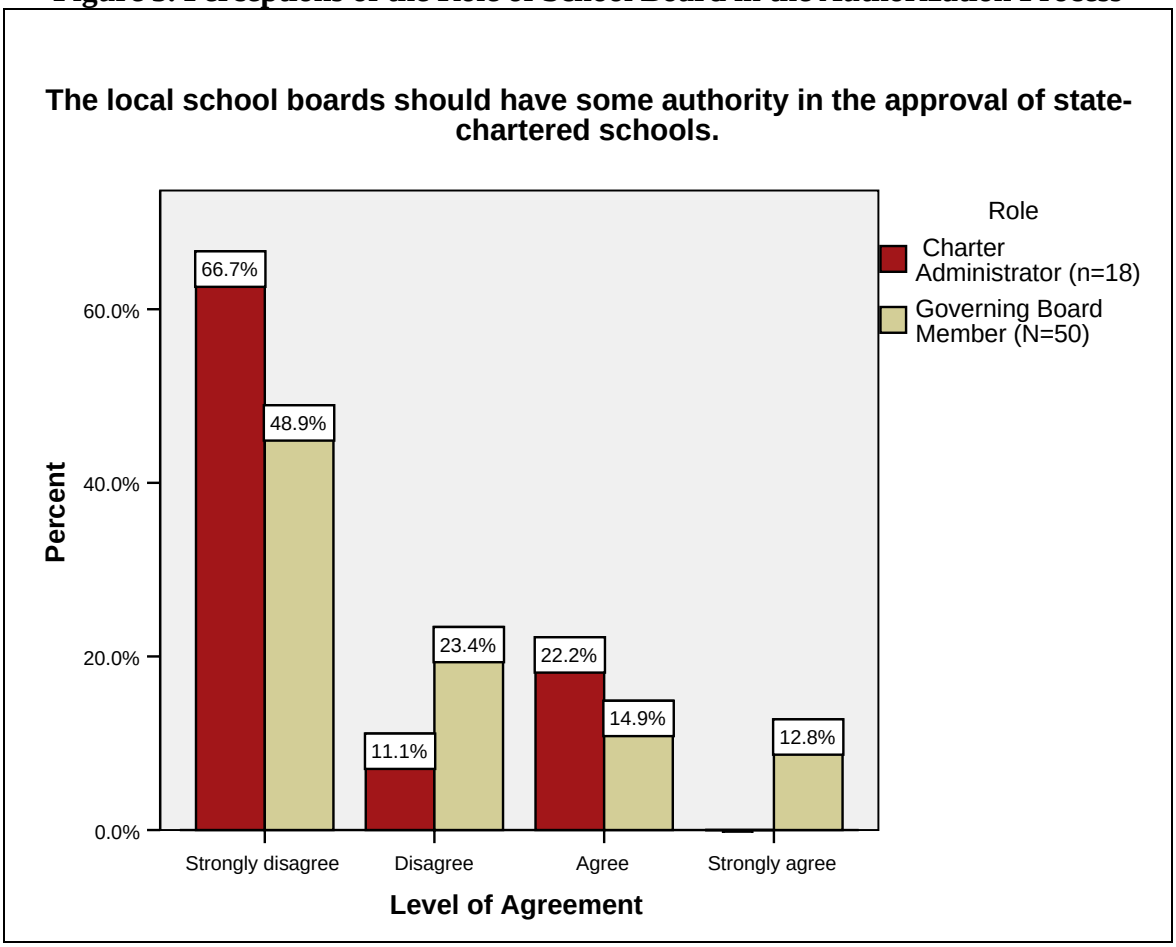
While charter school board members (68.1%) are slightly more likely to agree or strongly agree than charter administrators (61.1%), the majority of both groups agree at some level that the final approval for charter school authorization should rest with the Utah State Board of Education.

Figure 2. Perceptions of Which Authorizer Should Have Final Approval



Charter administrators were also congruent in their disagreement with the local school boards having some authority in the approval of state-chartered schools, although the charter administrators disagreed more adamantly. These views reflect the tensions that exist over charter approval between many charter and district representatives.

Figure 3. Perceptions of the Role of School Board in the Authorization Process



Political Support for Charter Schools

Levels of political support from various groups for charter schools is central to charter school authorization because these levels influence such variables as who controls the authorization process, what resources will be allocated to charter schools, and how many charters will be approved. With that in mind, charter administrators, charter school board members, State Charter School Board representatives, district superintendents, and district board members were asked to indicate the degree to which there is sufficient political support for Utah charter schools from seven constituencies (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree.) Therefore, a higher mean attributed to a constituency indicates the belief that they exhibit greater political support for charter schools. The results appear in the following table.

Table 9. Ratings of Political Support for Utah Charter Schools

Role		Parents/community members	District administrators	Local school board members	Utah State Office of Education	Utah State Legislature	Utah State Board of Education	Utah State Charter School Board
Charter Administrator	Mean	3.39	1.33	1.56	2.50	2.67	2.00	3.11
	N	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Charter School Governi Board Member	Mean	3.22	1.96	2.06	2.70	2.74	2.70	3.65
	N	45	47	47	46	47	47	46
State Charter Board Member	Mean	3.50	1.40	1.33	3.00	3.00	2.83	3.60
	N	6	5	6	6	6	6	5
District Administrator	Mean	2.77	1.92	2.08	2.85	4.00	3.00	3.85
	N	13	12	12	13	13	13	13
District School Board Member	Mean	2.43	1.75	2.00	2.48	3.43	2.57	3.78
	N	23	24	24	23	23	23	23

It is important to review the above table by looking across rows, which reveals how various groups of survey respondents view political support across different constituencies. It is also important to analyze the table by focusing down columns, which leads to conclusions of how the political support levels of each constituency may be viewed differently by the different groups surveyed.

From viewing the results down columns, it is apparent that there are several areas of agreement between the groups surveyed. All respondent groups, on average, agree to strongly agree that the Utah State Charter School Board exhibits sufficient political support for charter schools. All groups also disagree to strongly disagree that district administrators and local board members are politically supportive. Charter school affiliated groups express higher levels of agreement than district representatives that parents/guardians /community members exercise sufficient levels of political support for charter schools. On the contrary, the reverse is true when these groups rate the political support from the Utah State Legislature. Ratings of the Utah State Office of Education's political support for charter schools are relatively tightly clustered across respondent groups and indicative of neutrality to agreement that their political support for charter schools is sufficient.

After viewing the table across rows, two patterns emerge. First, those in charter school roles agree most highly that sufficient political support for charter schools rests with parents/guardians /community members and the Utah State Charter School Board. District representatives agree most strongly that the political support for charter schools resides primarily in the Utah State Legislature and Utah State Charter School Board.

Given the lack of political support for charter schools attributed to superintendent and local board members, it is important to get at the roots of their concerns. To this end, district representatives were asked to rate their levels of agreement with nine statements about the potential effects of charter schools on their districts. The reports are summarized in the two following tables.

Table 10. District Administrators' Perceptions of the Potential Effects of Charter Schools (N=13)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
Approving charter schools costs our district resources.	0	8.3	33.3	58.3	0
Charter schools have a negative impact on other schools in our district by leaving existing schools in the district with enrollments that are too small.	8.3	25.0	50.0	8.3	8.3
Our existing schools are doing well so we do not need charters.	0	7.7	46.2	38.5	7.7
The cost of running a dual system of schools is too high.	0	7.7	30.8	61.5	0
Our students already have sufficient school choice.	0	15.4	30.8	53.8	0
Charter schools stratify students by background.	0	0	16.7	83.3	0
Charter schools are not required to serve all students like traditional public schools.	8.3	8.3	25.0	50.0	8.3
Because of their autonomy, charters are a legal liability to local boards/districts.	0	30.8	15.4	38.5	15.4
Charter schools have not demonstrated their effectiveness yet.	0	7.7	15.4	76.9	0

Table 11. District Board of Education Members' Perceptions of the Potential Effects of Charter Schools (N=24)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
Approving charter schools costs our district resources.	4.3	13.0	47.8	30.4	4.3
Charter schools have a negative impact on other schools in our district by leaving existing schools in the district with enrollments that are too small.	4.2	45.8	25.0	25.0	0
Our existing schools are doing well so we do not need charters.	4.3	26.1	30.4	30.4	8.7
The cost of running a dual system of schools is too high.	4.3	17.4	43.5	30.4	4.3
Our students already have sufficient school choice.	4.2	29.2	33.3	33.3	0
Charter schools stratify students by background.	4.2	20.8	33.3	37.5	4.2
Charter schools are not required to serve all students like traditional public schools.	0	25.0	25.0	50.0	0
Because of their autonomy, charters are a legal liability to local boards/districts.	4.2	37.5	25.0	29.2	4.2
Charter schools have not demonstrated their effectiveness yet.	4.2	4.2	33.3	58.3	0

The results of this table clearly indicate that the majority of district representatives (superintendents and board members) share a wide range of concerns regarding the negative impact of charter schools on their districts. While they are least concerned about the influence of charter schools on other "school enrollments" in the district and the "legal liability" charters bring to local boards, at least 50% of superintendents and board members agree and strongly agree with these areas as concerns. The greatest levels of agreement regarding how charter schools negatively impact districts were reported by district representatives as falling into two areas: 1) inequity and 2) resources. As evidence of the first, the vast majority of district officials agreed or strongly agreed that "charter schools stratify students by background" and "charter schools are not required to serve all students like traditional public school." In reference to the second area of concern, an overwhelming majority of district respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "approving charter schools costs our district resources" and "the cost of running a dual system of schools is too high." Finally, district officials question the relative value of and need for charter schools in general. Specifically, the majority of both groups of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "charter schools have not demonstrated their effectiveness yet," "our students already have sufficient school choice," and "our existing schools are doing well so we do not need charters."

Criteria for Consideration During the Authorization Decision

Charter administrators, charter school board members, State Charter School Board representatives, district superintendents, and district board members were asked to agree with whether a list of 26 criteria should be used to make decisions about approving charter schools (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strongly agree). The following table displays the means in the order of the variables as they appeared on the survey. A higher mean indicates greater agreement that the items should be used to make charter approval decisions. Frequencies for each item appear in the appendices of survey results.

After viewing the above table, several patterns emerge. Collectively, as evidenced by the grand means, there is agreement on average by all roles that the items listed in the aggregate are appropriate to consider in the authorization decision-making process. District administrators (3.48), State Charter Board members (3.30), and local Board members (3.30) express the highest level of agreement with these items on average.

Items that ranked in the top three based on the greatest level of agreement across more than one group include fiscal procedures, detailed business plan, effectiveness goals, and curricular emphasis. Organizational structure, admissions procedures, opportunities for parental involvement, and qualifications of teachers rated in the top three criteria for one group, but not necessarily the same group.

Items rated in the bottom three by multiple groups based on lower levels of agreement that they should be used as criteria during the authorization decision include unit lesson plans, waiver from State Board rule, and employment of relatives. Library, compensation and benefits, and summative assessments were among the bottom three criteria for one group, but not necessarily the same group.

Table 12. Ratings of Whether Criteria Should be Considered during Authorization

Item	Charter Admin. N=18	Charter School Govern. Board N=50	State Charter School Board N=6	District Supt's N=13	District Board Members N=24
Targeted student population	2.47	2.95	3.00	3.33	3.09
Curricular emphasis	3.35	3.60	3.50	3.62	3.52
Effectiveness goals (e.g., student mastery)	3.12	3.66	3.50	3.85	3.65
Unit lesson plans	2.24	2.38	3.17	3.00	2.74
Summative assessments	3.07	3.03	2.80	3.42	3.22
Formative assessments	2.94	3.10	3.00	3.42	3.17
Monitoring	3.00	3.12	3.17	3.75	3.35
Plan to deliver special education	3.24	3.16	3.50	3.62	3.57
Detailed business plan	3.53	3.53	3.67	3.67	3.52
Organizational structure	3.18	3.30	3.67	3.42	3.48
Background information	3.18	3.07	3.50	3.45	3.39
Admissions procedures	3.12	3.22	3.60	3.69	3.65
Dismissal procedures	2.88	3.00	3.17	3.67	3.43
Complaint procedures/ appeals	2.88	2.98	3.17	3.78	3.30
Opportunities for parental involvement	3.12	3.52	3.67	3.54	3.39
Insurance	2.94	2.89	3.50	3.33	3.24
Qualification of teachers	3.41	3.28	3.50	3.77	3.57
Library	2.41	2.78	3.00	3.09	3.00
Administrative/supervisory services	2.82	3.06	3.17	3.67	3.39
Fiscal procedures	3.47	3.51	3.83	3.92	3.61
Employee termination	2.71	2.84	3.17	3.50	3.17
Employee evaluation	2.71	3.02	3.00	3.58	3.43
Employment of relatives	2.65	2.70	2.83	3.25	3.00
Compensation and benefits	2.71	2.70	3.33	3.00	3.09
Conversion schools	2.73	2.89	3.20	3.22	2.75
Waiver from State Board rule	2.40	2.83	3.20	2.83	2.20
Grand Mean	**2.93**	**3.08**	**3.30**	**3.48**	**3.27**

Note: Items shaded in red are the 3 criteria rated highest by each role group. Items highlighted in tan are the three on which there is lowest agreement that they should be used in the authorization decision. Items in tan must be less than 3.0.

Charter Application Process

Charter administrators and charter school governing board members were asked to indicate to what extent several items were in place when their school applied for their initial charter. State Charter Board members were asked to what extent these same items are currently in place for charter schools during the application process (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree). The following tables rank order the means for these items from greatest to lowest agreement within each role. After the tables, a summary of findings is presented.

Table 13. Charter Administrators

	N	Mean
There were ample opportunities for those with quality proposals to obtain a charter.	17	3.12
The overall application review process focused on the quality of our application.	16	3.06
We had adequate time to complete the application.	16	3.00
The instructions in the application packet were clear and easy to follow.	15	2.80
Detailed application timelines were provided.	16	2.69
We had an opportunity to address questions and concerns as part of the application review process.	17	2.65
A comprehensive application packet was easily accessible (e.g., mail, on-line)	17	2.59
Referrals for technical assistance were made available upon request.	16	2.44
Informational meetings were held for interested applicants.	16	2.19
Technical assistance was provided by the authorizer.	17	2.12
There was adequate access to resources for starting a charter school.	17	2.12
We were provided with a clear set of approval criteria, including a written rubric or scoring scale.	15	1.93
We hired consultants or a management group to assist us with the application process.	16	1.88

Table 14. Charter School Governing Board Members

	N	Mean
There were ample opportunities for those with quality proposals to obtain a charter.	24	2.92
We had an opportunity to address questions and concerns as part of the application review process.	21	2.90
We had adequate time to complete the application.	22	2.86
Detailed application timelines were provided.	23	2.83
A comprehensive application packet was easily accessible (e.g., mail, on-line)	23	2.78
The overall application review process focused on the quality of our application.	22	2.68
Technical assistance was provided by the authorizer.	23	2.61
The instructions in the application packet were clear and easy to follow.	21	2.57
Informational meetings were held for interested applicants.	22	2.55
Referrals for technical assistance were made available upon request.	19	2.53
We were provided with a clear set of approval criteria, including a written rubric or scoring scale.	20	2.40
We hired consultants or a management group to assist us with the application process.	19	2.05
There was adequate access to resources for starting a charter school.	24	2.04

Table 15. State Charter School Board Members

	N	Mean
We had adequate time to complete the application.	4	3.50
Informational meetings were held for interested applicants.	5	3.40
The overall application review process focused on the quality of our application.	4	3.25
We had an opportunity to address questions and concerns as part of the application review process.	4	3.25
We hired consultants or a management group to assist us with the application process.	4	3.25
Referrals for technical assistance were made available upon request.	4	3.25
Technical assistance was provided by the authorizer.	4	3.25
A comprehensive application packet was easily accessible (e.g., mail, on-line)	4	3.00
Detailed application timelines were provided.	4	2.75
The instructions in the application packet were clear and easy to follow.	4	2.75
There was adequate access to resources for starting a charter school.	5	2.40
We were provided with a clear set of approval criteria, including a written rubric or scoring scale.	4	2.25
There were ample opportunities for those with quality proposals to obtain a charter.	4	2.00

State Charter Board representatives generally rate the extent to which these items are in place more favorably than charter administrators and charter school board members. This finding was expected since the State Charter Board members are basing their ratings on the current context, while charter school administrators and board members are basing their assessments on the various earlier points in time at which their charter was approved. Presumably, progress has been made over time to improve the application process.

Despite these different referent points, the ratings of charter administrators and board members indicate ample room for improvement since no charter school board members rated any items with a mean equal to three or higher (i.e, agreement), and charter administrators only rated three items with means indicating agreement on average. While most of the areas in the items warrant attention, the priorities for improving the process include: 1) providing a clear set of approval criteria, including a written rubric or scoring scale; 2) facilitating adequate access to resources for starting a charter school; and 3) providing greater access to technical assistance.

Finally, one wide discrepancy was found across roles. While State Charter School Board members expressed the least agreement with “There are ample opportunities for those with quality proposals to obtain a charter” compared to all other items on the list, charter administrators and charter school governing board members actually expressed the highest level of agreement with this item compared to all other items listed. This is not surprising for two reasons. First, the charter school representatives were winners in the process. In other words,

their charter was approved so it is not surprising that they perceived ample opportunities to obtain a charter. Secondly, many of the schools they represent were approved at points in time during which there were more slots available for approval per application than presently exists.

Reasons Local School Boards Have Authorized Fewer Charter Schools

The perceptions of the participants in this study regarding the reasons why local school boards have authorized few charter schools are explored below. These reasons include: competition for scarce resources and students, cost of dual system too high, charter schools are a legal liability to the districts, no need for charter schools, charter schools stratify students by background and they do not serve all students, charter schools have not demonstrated their effectiveness yet, and charter laws are not well understood.

Competition for scarce resources and students

The majority of district administrators and board members who participated in this study indicated that they generally view charter schools as their competition. Similarly to survey responses, a number of participants affiliated with the school districts suggested that charter schools pose a threat due to the loss of funding and loss of students that occurs as charter schools open within their boundaries. A district board member explained the competition for scarce resources perceived by the districts:

> *I think financially because of the competition for resources. You know any school…any students that leave our schools to go to the charter schools that's, you know income lost to the public schools here. And it doesn't necessarily – it's not that you're losing kids from one class so you can reduce a teacher, you know. It's just that there's a competition for resources which in Utah, tax payers are stretched to their limits to fund public education.*

When asked why local school boards do not authorize more charter schools, district administrators and board members often responded that there is "no benefit" or that there is "no incentive" for districts to authorize charter schools. The competition for funding and students are challenging for the districts in terms of staffing, planning, budgeting, and space. A number of study participants explained their perception that districts are at an unfair advantage compared to charter schools. For example, a district board member explained the difficulties in planning and staffing for new schools or in areas where enrollment is declining.

> *The charter schools could go and put schools in anywhere. They don't have to decide if it's a declining area or not. And that draws from other public schools into this school. So it makes numbers less, so you're having to either drop teachers and combine class sizes 'cause your dollars are less, and – very difficult.*

While a majority of the study participants from districts and charters recognized the competition for scarce resources, a number of participants noted the need for charter schools and districts to work together, highlighting the importance of considering connections with a school district to encourage mutually beneficial relationships between charter schools and districts.

Cost of dual system too high

The costs associated with sustaining what was perceived as two public schools systems was noted by many during the interviews and focus groups and on open-ended survey items. Acknowledging the value of choice in the district, a local school board member explained the detriments of operating a "dual system:"

> *I recognize my community values choice, but we need to all be aware that running a dual system which operates completely independent of each other is not an effective use of our resources. I believe working together we can resolve many of these issues.*

A major concern with the dual system is the perception that the traditional schools are not funded adequately, thus tapping into resources that are already exhausted. A charter board member questions the ability of the state to support two systems:

> *I just think that they're diluting their support. Rather than focusing on shoring up and strengthening public education, it seems that in their anxiety to have competition – and to have this wonderful concept that they believe in – they're nurturing one system, and they're definitely not nurturing public education. They say they are, but if you look at our teachers' pay scales, they are not.*

Another local school board member raises similar concerns:

> *The question I think that still remains are, we going to be able to sustain this many layers of public education? Are we going to be able to sustain it financially? Are we going to be able to sustain it in the face of teacher shortages that we're experiencing over the next little while? And will it be sustained on a state level legislatively? Is this a program that's here today and gone tomorrow?...And so will it be something that has enough support legislatively that we're in there for the long haul.*

These comments illustrate a prevailing perception among many who participated in the study about the costs of a dual system. Charter school administrators and board members were equally concerned that the state will adequately support charter schools, although they framed their concerns more in terms of parity or equal funding, rather than the costs of dual systems.

Charter schools are a legal liability to the districts

Similarly to reports on the survey, district representatives reported concerns about being vulnerable to authorizing charters because of issues of risks and liabilities. A number of district board members indicated their position, as illustrated in the following way:

> *There is no benefit for the way it's set up for a local district to charter them. We have all the responsibility and all the accountability, but no benefits, the way that it sets up now.*

The concerns with liabilities include questions about which parties are responsible for school closures, building issues, and even who is held accountable for student performance. The comments of two local school board members illustrates the concerns with the liability that districts may assume if they authorize charter schools in their districts.

> *I think one of our biggest concerns is the liability issue. If something catastrophic happened at one of those charter schools and we were the chartering entity, who was a potential suer going to eventually go back to? It's not fair if the board did not have oversight over that school, and we couldn't say, "Well, you need to look at this area because this is a potential troublesome area."*

The second board member continued:

> *What happens if a charter school fails and who pays – what happens, and are we liable? And…, not just financially, but what about the kids? What if they don't learn? What if – and you know what? If they're not doing well in the charter schools, where do the parents/guardians put them? They put them back in public education. And so – and are we liable for those kids not learning?*

These comments suggest a deeper concern with the loss of perceived control over schools within district boundaries and possibly the concern that charter schools are not adhering to a number of professional norms and practices that characterize the traditional public school settings. For example, district representatives noted concerns about the lack of accountability in charters to meet their stated goals and remain financially stable. In part this is due to the perception of many district representatives that there is a lack of understanding among charter schools about how to operate a school system. While acknowledging the potential and good intentions of charter schools, a district administrator highlights the concerns about professional experience and expertise:

> *Charter schools have tremendous potential in the state of Utah. Often, they are led by individuals who are passionate about education but have little background in education --- and they try to jump tremendous hurdles without adequate support. Even charter management companies who assist charter schools most often have little or no school system leadership background. They may have school-level leadership background, but they need to have system-level leadership background in order to accomplish all the tasks required to provide exceptional education for all children. A positive school district connection would be a tremendous benefit for schools and, therefore, for children.*

Similarly, the following quote illustrates a claim by many district representatives that charter administrators should be required to have an administrative license:

> *I think also the concern of the qualifications for the people who are starting the charter schools is a big thing. We're so used to, you know having administrators be trained in certain ways and have certain professional qualifications before we even consider them for administrative positions. That, you know it's hard to think about people without administrative experience in schools or without those qualifications really knowing what they're doing when they're starting up a school.*

Although charter school administrators and board members described a number of areas in which they were not completely knowledgeable or experienced in operating schools, they generally

reported that they were able to find the needed resources in some way. For example, a number of charter administrators who did not have previous educational administrative backgrounds reported finding the information they needed to open and operate their schools from multiple sources, such as "looking online" or locating resources at the state level or from the Technical Assistance Project.

No need for charter schools

Again, as indicated in the survey responses, a number of comments from district administrators and board member interviews suggest that they do not recognize any need for charter schools because the Existing schools are doing well and that there is already sufficient choice for educational options. For example, a superintendent explained the existing choice that characterizes his district:

> *One of the priorities for me for our district was to have more choices for our parents/guardians. And so the goal for me would be to generate options that we could have some influence in the quality of those options and also help, you know, offer more things to the patrons of the district. Because we have 25 percent of our kids not attending boundary schools. And so, there's incredible amounts of choice already just in terms of schools chosen elementary level, it might be child care, it might be program and there are also some district optional programs where we were trying to encourage people to try something different.*

This perception of existing choice was expressed by a number of the larger school districts. Nevertheless, charter school board members and administrators did not view it the same way, rather citing the need for more choice, particularly because of the dissatisfaction with the typical public school offerings. This issue also highlights possible discrepancies in which the perceived choice in districts is really more narrow due to caps on enrollment and the lack of space in popular "choices." If that is the case, what could districts do to make "choice" more viable.

Charter schools stratify students by background and they do not serve all students

Consistent with the earlier discussion on concerns around the purpose of charter schools as well as survey responses, the majority of district administrators and board members generally agree that charter schools stratify students by background. In many cases, the stratification was explained as an unfair system in which the charter schools are "creaming" the best and brightest students from the regular public schools, leaving the rest of the students in the regular public schools. This perspective is illustrated in the following comments.

> *I don't think we're afraid of competition. But I think we have a little concern that it's not fair because the problems that public schools have. [Charters] don't have children who don't speak English…And also they have all of the parents/guardians are interested in the child's education. And that seems to be the number one indicator of how well a child will do in school. And so if you take the group of kids whose parents/guardians [that] are all interested and committed and willing to volunteer. And then you compare them with a public school who takes anybody who walks through the door. That's unfair to compare that.*

This type of characterization of students and their families highlights several underlying assumptions. For example, these comments suggest that certain groups of students, such as those learning a new language or those eligible for special education services, may be viewed as burdensome for traditional public schools. These comments may also suggest that not all parents/guardians are interested in the education of their child, which is likely not the case. Perhaps, the claims about the unfairness with regard to comparing who is served in traditional or charter schools is a symptom of deeper held beliefs about what it means to educate all students.

Another district board member pointed out the implications for charter schools to “not only stratify the student population” but also “fragment the community.”

> *They discourage the community sense of responsibility and stewardship to the neighborhood public school and I believe that weakens the whole community. It does not reflect an interest in the "common good", giving more weight to individual rights than to community responsibility and the public welfare. The whole concept of a second school system also weakens the local elected school board and the idea of representative government watching out for the good of the whole. These are serious considerations in light of the foundation these principles are to our freedoms and the well-being of our communities.*

These sentiments speak to a broader concern about the role of public schools in communities, including charter schools, and the ability of schools to unite or divide groups according to the values and beliefs of stakeholders. Taken together, these comments illustrate that further attention is needed to ensure that a high quality educational experience is provided for all students and families regardless of their access to exercise alternative choice opportunities.

Charter schools have not demonstrated their effectiveness yet

A number of district administrators and board members voiced concern that charter schools have not demonstrated their effectiveness yet, as indicated above by the survey response. The following comment from a local school board member illustrates their concerns:

> *We need to let them stand the test of time for a bit. And if they really are doing something innovative and wonderful, then by all means, share it with us. Let’s all learn from it. But at this point, we’re not seeing that.*

With the considerable amount of concerns about the performance of charter schools and claims being made about what charter schools can offer, it raises questions about whether more evaluations of the implementation, quality, and outcomes of charter schools would be useful for the state to have as it moves forward with its assessment and support of the charter school program.

Charter laws are not well understood

Overall, there seemed to be considerable misunderstanding about who would benefit if districts authorized more charter schools. Interviewees indicated a lack of understanding about the role and responsibilities of authorizers as well as the authorization process generally. In part, the misunderstanding seems to be exacerbated by an adversarial relationship between districts and

charter schools. District administrators, district board members, charter board members, and charter administrators noted the tensions over who should authorize charters.

A charter school administrator noted, "Instead of honest disagreements between charters and traditional schools, lies are perpetrated against some very honest and honorable efforts on both sides," which this administrator said attributed to an "adversarial relationship." Further, this adversarial relationship is further exacerbated by the fact that:

> *Charters are expected to do so much more of everything with far less of everything. We simply would like the freedom or autonomy to do more innovating with less regulatory control. What we see as charter schools is more regulatory control for what seems to be less money. The legislature means well, but they refuse to adequately fund what is needed in education so that charters are pitted against traditionals.*

A charter administrator lamented the fact that the relationships between districts and charter schools are not more positive given their mutual roles in serving public education students.

> *I think it's important for them to understand that people who start charter schools have incredibly good intentions. That they work harder than any people I know anywhere. I mean all the directors that I have spent time with and talked with, I see them go gray trying to do this job, you know. And I think there's the perception sometimes that there's something devious about what charter schools are trying to do. And I don't understand that. Because I think we all have the welfare of children in mind and at heart. And I don't understand the strange adversarial relationship that's developing between charters and districts or other public schools. Because we're all public schools and we're all trying to do the right thing. So I think we ought to be working together now.*

In general, the reasons that districts have not authorized more charter schools are that they do not perceive there are benefits for the district and that they view charter schools as contributing to negative impacts with regard to stratification and loss of resources to adequately serve their students.

Changes in State Law That May Result in Districts Authorizing More Schools

Interview and focus group participants were asked what changes in state laws or rules may result in local school boards authorizing a greater number of charter schools. Participants' suggestions fell into several categories. First, many believed that it was not changed laws that would result in more districts authorizing but rather an increased understanding of the laws and rules about the role that districts play as authorizers and the potential ways in which districts can benefit from being an authorizer. Conversely, interviewees also indicated that charters schools are choosing not so seek authorization from districts because they do not see any benefits for them. Again, this implies that more district authorization will require a greater understanding and willingness on both sides to invest in such a relationship.

Second, interviewees suggested that districts might consider authorizing more charter schools if they had more control and oversight authority, as well as more funding to cover the costs associated with the increased oversight functions. For example, a district administrator noted that district sponsored charters offer a unique opportunity and in some ways provide advantages to districts to provide choice. This person noted, however, that "District independent charters need to have some oversight by the sponsoring district in order to keep the "competition" card from being played by either side." At the same time that participants suggested more oversight as a way to encourage more district authorization, interviewees also suggested that districts be held harmless to lessen the concerns about liabilities.

Third, from the district administrator perspective, there were concerns that charter schools will "financially break the bank." Indeed, solutions for finding adequate financial support for charter schools seemed to be an elusive goal. A charter administrator commented on the financial problems facing charter schools:

> *More accurately funding Administration at charters who are expected to report out to the state like independent school districts, yet are not treated like them when funds are divvied up, making sure each child in the state has a funding stream for their education should be included as well. Charter Schools are locked into developing land and building facilities that will suck up a good 20-30% of their operating costs from the start and for many years--varies based on the development company or the parental board that is driving the development of the school.*

Charter board members repeatedly noted the lack of financial support for transportation as an issue hurting charters. In addition, securing sufficient start-up costs for buildings and facilities was another notable challenge. A charter board member in the survey explained it this way:

> *In general, charter schools lack the ability and means to finance the construction of facilities. Lending institutions charge them a premium rate of return which means that charter schools have twice the interest cost of a school district using bonds. These interest costs mean they have to operate on such a lean budget that they do not have adequate revenue to pay competitive salaries and benefits. Providing bonds is not enough. There must be money to pay the higher interest rates that lenders charge charter schools or provide financing sources with lower interest payments.*

Further illustrating the need for additional funding, the same board member noted in their comments on their survey:

> *The director is also the business administrator; grant writer, data entry and management official, and an instructor. We all help supervise extra-curricular activities, and we even take turns cleaning the building. We could not survive if we tried to hire all of the personnel we really need.*

Suggesting the need for parity between the charter schools and traditional public schools, a new charter board member reported:

> *Utah students deserve to have the same percentage of their tax funding go with them regardless of their educational choices. They should have equal school facility, administration, and transportation opportunities as other Utah students.*

Another charter board member noted the concern about adequately funding charter schools in their survey response:

> *I do not feel that charter schools have near enough money to run the school in their original chartered intent, or even close to it. Charter schools struggle financially and in training, therefore fail to meet all the chartered goals and mission successfully. Which gives them a bad reputation or at least the sense that they do not have it "all together". It's as if the state wants to see them fail, but will pretend to do all they can. I feel the USOE and charter boards are being extremely irresponsible to grant charters that they can not fund efficiently! Funding needs to be more than enough to meet all the chartered goals successfully in the FIRST year, not the 3rd or 4th. There needs to be a whole year of funding, training and preparation to get everything lined up BEFORE the school is open for enrollment.*

Given the deeply entrenched concerns about charter schools and the history thus far, we wonder if more education across the board about the costs and benefits of district authorization would be a productive process for finding solutions to securing adequate funding and support to ensure the success of charter schools.

Criteria for Approving More Charter Schools

In addition to the survey items, the issue of authorization criteria was further addressed when we asked interview and focus group participants what conditions should be present to award charters. Responses regarding the suggested criteria for authorizing more charter schools included the following: sound financial plan; sound educational plan; plan for and provision of adequate resources for start-up costs and to accomplish what charter schools say they will accomplish, particularly related to their unique features of the charter; a unique focus that is different or contributes something that is not already offered by district (with particular emphasis on the degree to which the charter is innovative); and a plan for serving all students. Overall, these stipulations are consistent with the reasons identified in the previous section on why districts have not authorized more charter schools.

A number of interviewees discussed the importance of maintaining quality as more charter schools are authorized. In these discussions, interviewees described the importance of charter schools to have a solid financial plan as well as a solid plan for the overall educational program. In describing these suggested criteria, interviewees expressed the fear that the "flood gates" will be opened and the implications of not being very careful in how charter schools are awarded. For example, a charter school administrator described her experiences and concerns when charters are awarded too freely:

> *I have had a lot of people come and meet with me who want to start a charter school and I call them the Judy Garland/Mickey Rooney kind of thing where it is like, "Let's have a parade, I know, and we will have elephants and floats and all of these things." And they have no clue what they are doing. And I think that it is, some of it is whimsical. It is idealistic. It is not grounded in research. It is not grounded in best practices. It is some really good hearted folk who have a concept but it is just a slice of the picture. And I think that there have been a slew of those go through.*

For the most part, interviewees recommended that the state plan for "responsible, controlled growth" of charter schools, as illustrated by the following comments:

> *Responsible controlled growth. I think we need some more money in education. Which is more money for charter schools as well as public ed. And here we have a state that has surpluses and we're saying okay, we'll give back what is it again 50 bucks a family or something like that? I think most families would say I'd rather have it go into education. I'd really like to see us not be $2,000.00 behind Mississippi in our per pupil expenditures. Gosh. Isn't education worth anything more than that? I would like to see the big institutions in our state get behind us and say we want more money going into education. The LDS Church. I am an officer in the LDS Church. I think they ought to do it. They won't do it.*

These comments indicate that not only should charter schools be authorized responsibly, that there should also be more funding in general for all public schools.

Limits on the Number of Charter Schools Authorized Each Year

When asked about how many charter schools should be authorized each year, the majority of responses were those indicating that there is "no magic number." Rather, the number of awards should depend on the quality of the applications and the funding at the state level to support the charter schools if authorized. References to responsible growth characterized such comments. For example, a charter board member noted that "I do not feel that as a state we can support 'many' charter schools."

A charter administrator who advocated for eliminating the cap on charter schools because it "will never provide adequate choice to students," also emphasized that "responsibly growing charters is what most charter advocates envision." This charter administrator stated that "Basing this responsible growth on funding students through a backpack of dollars and services is the right way to make sure ALL public schools get what they need and requires ALL public schools to be more accountable for how the money is spent and the services rendered." In contrast, district board members believe that a cap is needed until those that are in existence, demonstrate that they are successful, as discussed previously.

Finally, a concern with authorizing charter schools was raised in relation to the perception that the process is political and rife with conflicts of interest. Examples of conflicts of interest in the

awarding and operating charters were raised numerous times throughout the interviews and open-ended survey items. A charter school board member suggested the following:

> *As a citizen I feel there should be some strategy in the state regarding charter schools. As I interact with other communities and Board members I feel that some schools are set up for personal or political reasons as opposed for educationally sound principles.*

Another comment from a district board member echoed this concern:

> *The greatest problem so far with Utah Charter Schools has been the conflict of interest on the part of several legislators who continue to insist that they are not personally benefiting financially from Charter Schools. There is no faith in Charter Schools because current state legislators refusal to police their own ranks in light of blatantly obvious conflicts of interest.*

A district board member noted the ramifications of such conflicts of interest:

> *We have such limited resources we should not be dividing these resources with entities that are motivated by other motives, ie. investments, particular philosophical orientations, etc.*

Concerns about conflicts of interest cast a pall over the entire charter school program in the state, regardless of how many schools are impacted. Given the accusations and concern with how public money is being spent, this issue may be one that requires public scrutiny and deliberation so that the concerns could be resolved.

Authorizers Too Lenient or Too Restrictive

When asked whether the state charter board is too lenient or too restrictive in awarding charters, responses varied. Some suggested that the process was working well and that the state charter board was authorizing high quality charters. For example, one interviewee stated:

> *I think they're responsible. My experience is, they're reviewing these things. They're looking at the right things. And they're asking the right questions and I think we're getting good charters that get the approval.*

Others indicated that the process was "political." A charter administrator explained the concerns about the review process:

> *Maybe I'm saying too much here but in this last round of chartering I had just some suspicions that maybe a decision to charter, they could only choose three more to charter once that law was passed. And one of the schools that got chartered had some pretty strong ties to a couple of the people on the board. And I had some negative feelings about that. But I, you know I wasn't there. I don't know.*

Another charter board member reported:

> *The selection and approval of charters was a very political issue in past years. It has become better, but the approval of charter is still seen as a political decision and not one based on the merits of the charter.*

Taken together, the responses with regard to the leniency or restrictiveness of the state charter board indicate that the process is working rather well, but that there is still room for refinement. As discussed below.

Suggestions for Improving Authorization Policies and Practices

We asked charter and district representatives what modifications they would suggest for the authorization policies and practices. In terms of policies, a number of respondents suggested that the state find remedies to the perceived problems with conflicts of interest and overly political authorization process, particularly with regard to the legislative influence and use of management companies. A handful of participants also highlighted the challenges with reauthorization, in which charter schools are feeling overly burdened to prove or justify that they are different and unique from the rest of the district schools.

In terms of suggestions for modifying the authorization practices, interviewees suggested that the review process remain rigorous, but clarified so that all parties understand the criteria and strategies used to review and award or deny charters. In addition, interviewees recommended that the review process must be rigorous. Still others suggested that it would be worthwhile to review the make-up of the board to ensure that there is fair representation and sufficient expertise and background experience to provide objective, high-quality contributions to the recommendations for which schools should be authorized. For example, one person noted the short term length of state charter board members as a potential problem.

Finally, there were a number of suggestions to increase the amount of time between the award of a charter and the opening date so that the charter schools have sufficient opportunities to prepare (e.g., time for establishing policies and procedures, engaging in professional development and training, etc.)

Interestingly, districts indicated that they wanted to be informed and have an opportunity to comment on charter school applications and potentially respond to the “need” identified by charters for more support and resources. District administrators noted that charters should not have the ability to by-pass the district board if it says no to a charter, particularly in instances where the charter is duplicating services or not serving all students. Communication between the charters and the districts was noted as weak in many instances. All groups discussed the implications of a lack of communication between the charters and the districts. For instance, a charter board member described the lack of information that is shared between the charter schools and districts related to student enrollment figures:

> *This year in [our county] alone we have nine charter schools. And to be fair to the districts they didn't know – we had families that were enrolled at the district school and two or three charter schools. And so even the charter schools didn't know who was going to land where on the first day of school.*

Numerous participants noted a disconnect between current policy and good practice for enrollment. In one discussion from a charter board interview, board members describe the current situation as a planning as well as ethical issue. They noted that it was similar to putting your name on two waiting lists at adjacent restaurants. This discussion illustrates the tension between offering choice to parents/guardians and maintaining standards for planning and budgeting. A charter board member early in this part of the interview raised an important question, "We're really cannibalizing from each other, aren't we?" In the end, board members suggested that a mutually determined date between the charters and the districts for parents/guardians to indicate where they will place their children would be beneficial to all.

A district administrator who noted that their district has no influence on the authorization process of charters, cautioned:

> *Our district also feels that if it is in the best interests of our students for us to meet certain standards, then charters should not be exempted from these same activities, especially around issues such as highly qualified staff. Often in education we become involved in trends that are not actually supported by solid quantitative research. We would submit that the charter school movement might be such a trend. Expending scarce resources on trends negatively impacts the education of all students in our state. Caution and accountability should be watchwords as we proceed with both the supervision and the authorization of charter schools, as it is in districts.*

Noting that for many parents/guardians this method of enrolling children in multiple schools simultaneously becomes a means of guaranteeing a place, a charter board member suggested perhaps having some stipulation that parents/guardians would have some guarantee of placement would eliminate this practice.

Many participants highlighted the difficulty in charter schools being approved and opening in the same year. A charter board member, who called for a "remedy" for this situation, explained that because funding is not available as quickly to charter schools, many are faced with opening later than the traditional schools, which prompts some students to not enroll leaving the school to "scramble and find more students to attend." A similar issue—admissions timing—was expressed by district board members and district administrators. A district board member stated, "The timing of admissions makes it very difficult to staff the local public school if we don't know how many students from which grades may be attending a charter school in the fall." A district administrator asserted that the timing of admissions and enrollment of students in charter schools can have detrimental effects, including budget implications and staffing implications.

Summary of Findings Related to Authorization

Participants of this study generally agreed that the Utah State Charter School Board exhibits sufficient political support for charter schools, but disagreed that district administrators and local board members are politically supportive of charter schools. There were differences in perceptions that parents/guardians /community members show political support for charter schools. District administrators and district boards generally agreed that charter schools negatively impact districts, particularly in terms of perceptions of inequity between traditional public schools and charter schools and the perceived drain of resources created from charter schools.

When asked about the criteria that should be used for authorization, the most highly ranked criteria included fiscal procedures, detailed business plan, effectiveness goals, and curricular emphasis. The charter administrators and charter board members indicated that the priorities for improving the authorization process included a clear set of approval criteria, including a written rubric or scoring scale, facilitating adequate access to resources for starting a charter school, and providing greater access to technical assistance. When asked how many charter schools should be authorized each year, participants did not specify a specific number of charter schools that should be authorized. However, participants suggested that the state consider the quality of the applications, the funding at the state level to support the charter schools if authorized, and attention to "responsible growth."

The reasons identified across participants for why districts do not authorize more charter schools included a competition for scarce resources and students, the cost of a dual system is too high, charter schools are a legal liability to the districts, there is no need for charter schools, charter schools stratify students by background and do not serve all students, charter schools have not demonstrated their effectiveness yet, and charter laws are not well understood.

Among the suggestions for improving the authorization process were remedying problems with conflicts of interest and overly political authorization process, streamlining the process for reauthorization, retaining a rigorous authorization process based on well understood criteria for awarding and denying charters, using reviewers who are representative of field and have sufficient expertise and background experience, and extending the time between when a charter is authorized and when they may open.

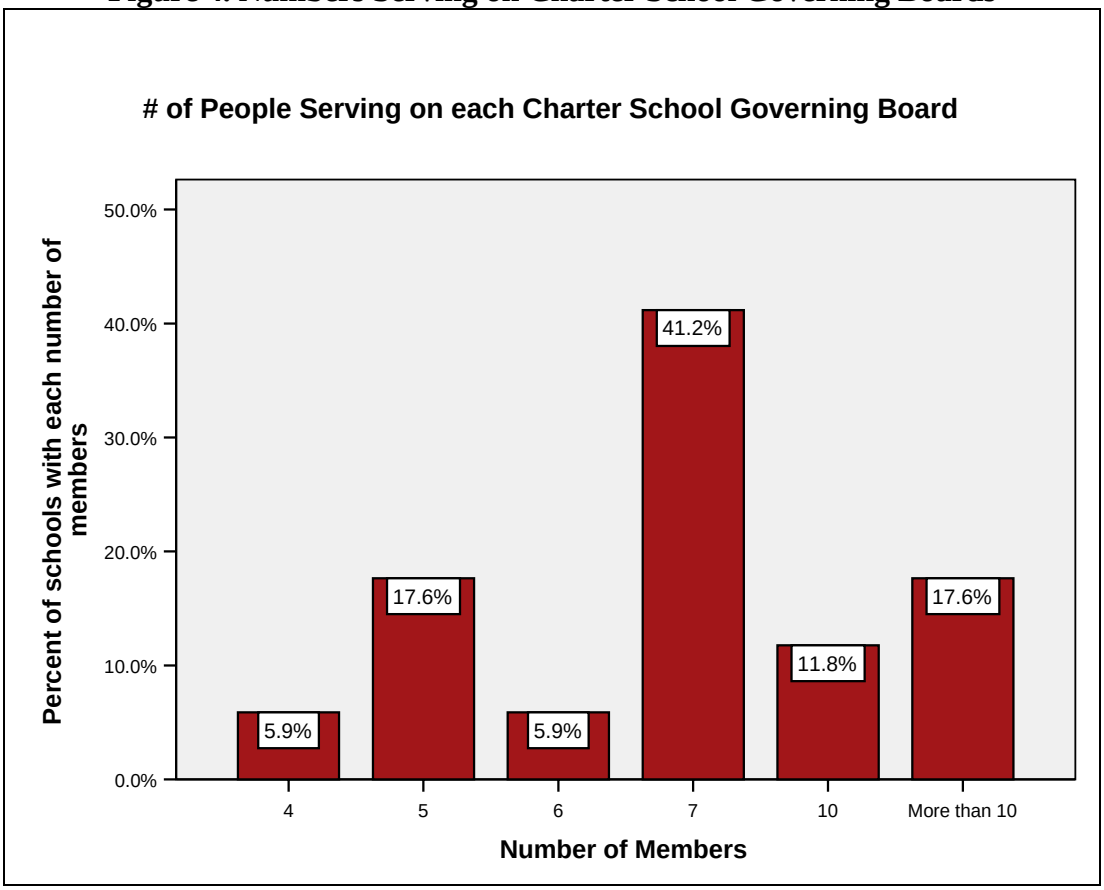
Charter School Governance and Involvement

This section of the report concentrates on charter school governance and involvement. It highlights five specific areas: (1) the composition of the charter school governing boards, (2) requirements of charter school parents/guardians, (3) parent influence on decisions and policies related to their charter school, (4) authorizer influence on decisions and policies related to charter schools, and (5) governance of charter schools with multiple campuses.

Composition of the Charter School Governing Board

Charter school administrators were asked to report how many people serve on the school's governing board. The survey results are displayed in the following graph. The most common composition of governing boards reported by survey respondents was seven board members (41%).

Figure 4. Numbers Serving on Charter School Governing Boards



In addition, charter administrators, charter school board members, and parents/guardians who have children currently attending charter schools were asked to identify the percentage of their charter school's governing board that is CURRENTLY represented by each of ten different groups. The surveys do not allow the research team to match a specific charter administrator's responses to those of charter school board members from the same school who may have responded. Therefore, we are reporting the current composition of charter school boards based solely on charter administrator's responses for several reasons. First, these administrators are in the best position to actually know who serves on these boards. Second, the charter administrators only represent one school each, so no school is overweighted in the responses, which could be the case if several board members responded from the same school. Finally, it was clear that a majority of the parents/guardians were unaware of who serves on their governing board, much less their backgrounds.

As is clear from the Table 16 below, parents/guardians heavily comprise charter school governing boards. On the contrary, no students serve on such boards, and the following percentages of governing boards have no representation from teachers (94.4%), local school board members (94.4%), elected officials (94.4%), school district personnel (88.9%) and university officials who do not have children in the school (77.8%).

Table 16. Charter Administrator's Description of the Current Composition of their Governing Board

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Parents/guardians	5.6	5.6	5.6	16.7	11.1	55.6
Students	100	0	0	0	0	0
Teachers	94.4	5.6	0	0	0	0
Charter school administrator	50.0	38.9	11.1	0	0	0
Business representatives or other professionals who do not have children in the school	44.4	16.7	22.2	16.7	0	0
University officials who do not have children in the school	77.8	16.7	5.6	0	0	0
School district personnel	88.9	0	5.6	5.6	0	0
Local school board members	94.4	0	5.6	0	0	0
Elected officials	94.4	5.6	0	0	0	0
PTSO/PTA	61.1	11.1	11.1	16.7	0	0

In addition to the current composition, the project team sought to learn what all survey respondent groups thought the ideal composition of charter school governing boards should be. The results are presented by role in the following seven tables. The implications are discussed after the seventh table.

Table 17. Charter Administrator's Description of what the Composition of their Governing Board Should Be

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Parents/guardians	0	12.5	12.5	25.0	37.5	12.5
Students	73.3	20.0	6.7	0	0	0
Teachers	40.0	46.7	13.3	0	0	0
Charter school administrator	18.8	62.5	18.8	0	0	0
Business representatives or other professionals who do not have children in the school	5.9	52.9	17.6	23.5	0	0
University officials who do not have children in the school	41.2	41.2	11.8	5.9	0	0
School district personnel	75.0	12.5	6.3	6.3	0	0
Local school board members	93.8	6.3	0	0	0	0
Elected officials	86.7	13.3	0	0	0	0
PTSO/PTA	35.3	35.3	17.6	11.8	0	0

Table 18. Charter Board Member's Description of what the Composition of their Governing Board Should Be

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Parents/guardians	0	10.9	21.7	17.4	30.4	19.6
Students	61.4	27.3	4.5	6.8	0	0
Teachers	44.2	34.9	14.0	4.7	0	2.3
Charter school administrator	33.3	42.2	20.0	2.3	2.2	0
Business representatives or other professionals who do not have children in the school	17.8	28.9	33.3	20.0	0	0
University officials who do not have children in the school	46.5	32.6	18.6	2.3	0	0
School district personnel	66.7	17.8	13.3	2.2	0	0
Local school board members	76.7	18.6	2.3	2.3	0	0
Elected officials	61.4	25.0	9.1	2.3	0	0
PTSO/PTA	33.3	33.3	31.1	2.2	0	0
Other (please specify) Diversity Rep., Founders	40.0	0	0	0	40.0	20.0

Table 19. State Charter School Board Representatives Description of what the Composition of Governing Boards Should Be

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Parents/guardians	0	33.3	0	16.7	16.7	33.3
Students	50.0	33.3	0	0	0	16.7
Teachers	50.0	33.3	0	0	0	16.7
Charter school administrator	33.3	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	0
Business representatives or other professionals who do not have children in the school	33.3	16.7	33.3	16.7	0	0
University officials who do not have children in the school	50.0	33.3	16.7	0	0	0
School district personnel	83.3	0	16.7	0	0	0
Local school board members	83.3	16.7	0	0	0	0

Table 20. Current Charter School Parent's Description of what the Composition of their Governing Board Should Be

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Parents/guardians	0.4	6.8	19.7	24.9	20.7	27.6
Students	36.7	31.6	19.0	7.2	2.8	2.7
Teachers	8.5	25.9	32.8	22.2	6.3	4.3
Charter school administrator	6.9	46.8	24.3	11.0	5.2	5.8
Business representatives or other professionals who do not have children in the school	47.5	30.7	12.7	6.2	1.8	1.1
University officials who do not have children in the school	52.0	30.3	11.0	4.8	0.8	1.1
School district personnel	60.2	27.2	7.7	3.0	1.1	0.8
Local school board members	60.6	23.1	8.2	3.5	3.2	1.3
Elected officials	54.0	20.3	8.8	8.0	4.6	4.3
PTSO/PTA	29.8	34.2	19.1	8.8	3.7	4.5

Table 21. Previous Charter School Parent's Description of what the Composition of their Governing Board Should Be

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Parents/guardians	2.5	10.0	23.8	30.0	22.5	11.3
Students	30.4	48.1	10.1	6.3	0	5.1
Teachers	1.3	17.7	34.2	34.2	8.9	3.8
Charter school administrator	7.7	28.2	28.2	20.5	9.0	6.4
Business representatives or other professionals who do not have children in the school	31.3	37.5	16.3	10.0	3.8	1.3
University officials who do not have children in the school	45.6	39.2	10.1	3.8	1.3	0
School district personnel	41.8	40.5	7.6	7.6	2.5	0
Local school board members	49.4	24.1	16.5	7.6	2.5	0
Elected officials	43.6	38.5	10.3	6.4	1.3	0
PTSO/PTA	17.6	43.2	21.6	12.2	4.1	1.4

Table 22. District Superintendent's Description of what the Composition of Governing Boards Should Be

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Parents/guardians	0	22.2	33.3	22.2	22.2	0
Students	62.5	37.5	0	0	0	0
Teachers	22.2	22.2	33.3	22.2	0	0
Charter school administrator	22.2	44.4	22.2	11.1	0	0
Business representatives or professionals who do not have children in the school	11.1	77.8	11.1	0	0	0
University officials who do not have children in the school	66.7	33.3	0	0	0	0
School district personnel	33.3	55.6	11.1	0	0	0
Local school board members	66.7	11.1	22.2	0	0	0
Elected officials	87.5	12.5	0	0	0	0
PTSO/PTA	22.2	44.4	22.2	11.1	0	0

Table 23. Local Board of Education Member's Description of what the Composition of Governing Boards Should Be

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Parents/guardians	0	4.5	36.4	40.9	9.1	9.1
Students	54.5	40.9	0	4.5	0	0
Teachers	9.1	40.9	36.4	9.1	4.5	0
Charter school administrator	9.1	54.5	27.3	9.1	0	0
Business representatives or other professionals who do not have children in the school	13.6	40.9	36.4	9.1	0	0
University officials who do not have children in the school	47.6	38.1	14.3	0	0	0
School district personnel	33.3	38.1	19.0	9.5	0	0
Local school board members	30.0	45.0	15.0	10.0	0	0
Elected officials	45.5	36.4	9.1	4.5	4.5	0
PTSO/PTA	13.6	36.4	45.5	0	4.5	0
Other (please specify) The only comment was that members should be elected.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

The purpose of these tables is primarily to facilitate comparison of the current composition of charter school governing boards to how various stakeholders' believe they should be comprised, and secondarily, to assess differences between group's reports of what the composition should be.

In terms of the first purpose, 55.6% of charter administrators report that between 76% and 100% of their board members are parents/guardians. On the should be ratings, 33.3% of State Charter Board members (the highest for any group of respondents) indicated that parents/guardians should make-up between 76% and 100% of charter board members. Only 12.5% of charter administrators stated that parents/guardians should make-up such a high percentage of charter school board members, and even charter school parents/guardians desire a greater balance in membership across different roles. While all groups indicated that governing boards should be represented most heavily by parents/guardians, they also reported that parents/guardians currently are overrepresented on governing boards.

A number of charter administrators indicated during interviews that they agree parents/guardians should be represented, but that a broad representation of stakeholders and expertise is also important. For example, one charter administrator explained, " I think that it is really nice to have a broad representation from parents/guardians, educational institutions, business community involvement."

If there is agreement that the percentage of board seats held by parents/guardians with students in the school should decrease, then it is important to ascertain who should replace them. On this issue, there is agreement and disagreement between respondent groups. First, there is agreement that at least some student representation should be on the board. There is also agreement that there should be significantly greater teacher representation, and slightly more yet not a large number of business and university representatives without children in the school. It is likely that these three groups are seen as able to bring valuable expertise to the governing board.

The most significant disagreement is that most local board members reported believing that local boards should be represented on charter boards. Similarly, most superintendents indicated that district personnel should be represented on these boards. A comment from a district superintendent illustrated how district involvement in charter school governing boards can be helpful:

> *So parents/guardians should have tremendous input. But also with that you have to have administrators. And I don't know what percent necessarily. Probably more parents/guardians than – much like our community council mix. Probably that's a good way to look at it. That it should be, there should be more parents/guardians than educational folk. But the educational folks need to be there to help say, you know talk about what we can do legally. What follow the law. What are the liabilities that we incur when certain things happen? To help with pedagogy and the curriculum and say, "Here's some options parents/guardians. Look at these three. Let me talk about pluses and minuses of these. And then make a decision relative to where we're going."*

On the contrary, a large majority of charter administrators, charter school board members, and State Charter School Board officials do not believe that districts official should be represented on charter school governing boards. A charter board member explained the desire to remain separate from the district:

> *Really the charter is its own separate entity. You know and so it gets to a point that you have to sever all those things. You know all those connections that you're used to having there. It has to be separate fiscally. And it has to be separate in every respect…I think it's good that they are involved in there, but it should be a really loose association. Otherwise it can't fulfill what it needs to be which is a separate, independent school.*

The contrasting perspectives raise questions about the benefits and costs of establishing relationships and/or partnerships between charter schools and local school districts. Representation of districts on charter school governing boards may offer one potential strategy to bridge tensions that exists between charter schools and districts might be to include. Such inclusion would enhance communication and understanding and potentially reduce conflicts.

Requirements of Charter School Parents/Guardians

Given that increasing parental involvement is one purpose of charter schools stated in Utah code, charter school administrators were asked what their school "requires from parents/guardians /guardians?" Only two (11.1%) of the administrators reported that they require parents/guardians to sign a contract with the school. In fact, they were adamant in their comments that the forms of parental involvement listed on the survey are "encouraged not required." In contrast to this claim, 37.6% of the over 1,000 parents/guardians with children currently enrolled in charter schools reported that the charter school requires parents/guardians to sign a contract with the school. Furthermore, 97% of these parents/guardians reported fully meeting the agreements/expectations stated in the contract. This disconnect between administrators and parents/guardians is important because "required" parental involvement may serve as a barrier to charter school enrollment for single and low income parents/guardians, as well as for those who have jobs at times that conflict with "required" parental involvement activities. On one hand, it does not matter if these activities are truly "required"; it matters more that many parents/guardians believe that they are. Please see the appendix (question 19 on the Charter Administrator Survey) for the percentages of charter administrators who reported requiring various types of involvement of parents/guardians. This issue also reflects previous discussions about the perception that stratification by background is an unintended consequence of charter schools' enrollment and transportation policies and practices.

Parental Influence on Policies and Decisions Related to their Charter School

All survey respondent groups were asked to rate the level of influence that parents/guardians as a whole have on various types of decisions and policies related to their child's charter school. Responses were not involved, advisory/provide input, and make the decision. The following table summarizes the ratings of parents/guardians who currently have a child enrolled in a charter school.

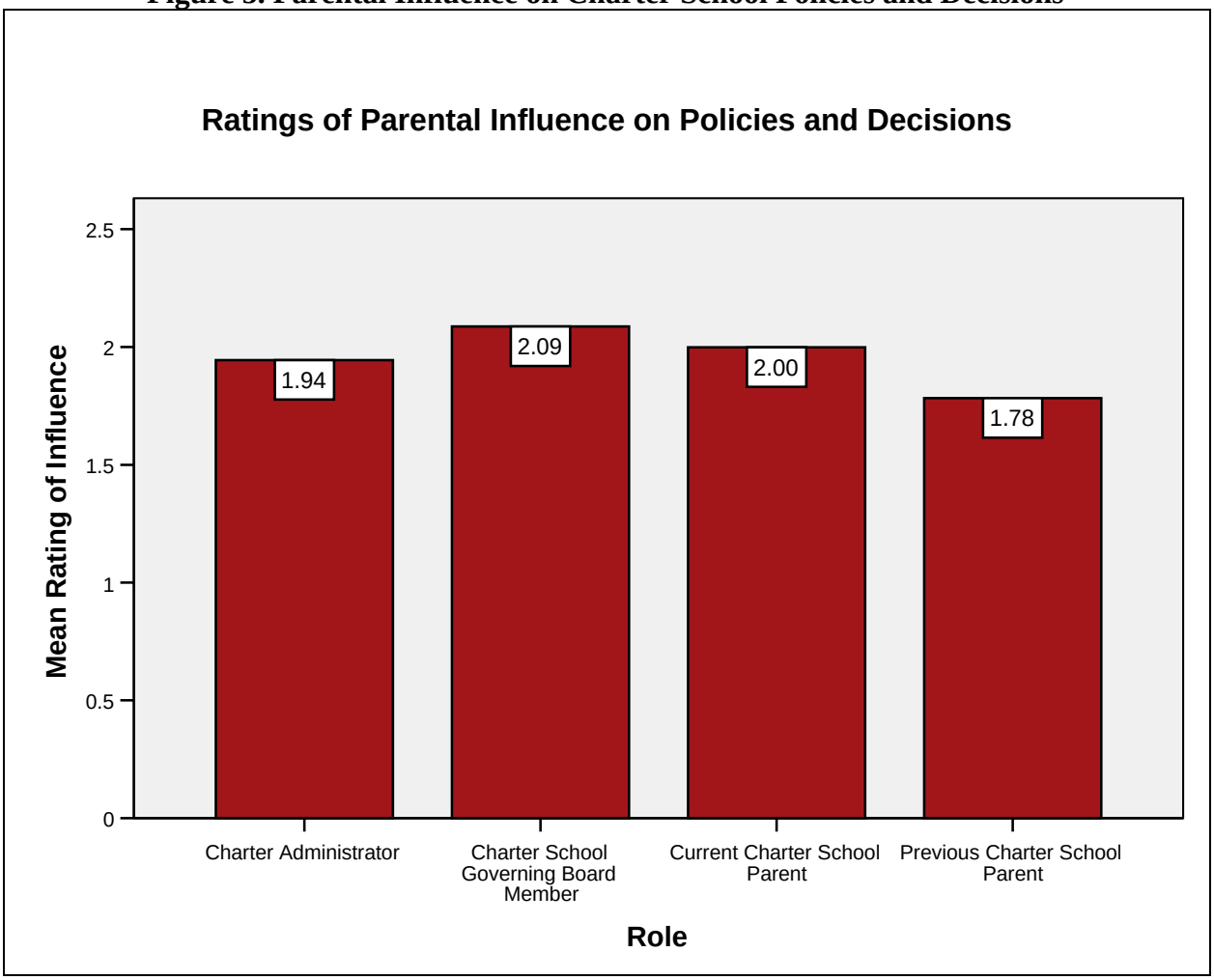
Table 24. Ratings of Parental Influence on Policies and Decisions
Parents/guardians with Children Currently Enrolled in Charter Schools (N=1,061)

	Not involved	Advisory/ Provide Input	Make the Decisions
The charter application process	35.2	40.9	17.4
Purchasing of supplies and equipment	37.1	49.8	10.0
Student disciplinary policies	26.5	60.8	10.9
Student assessment policies	38.8	50.6	8.3
Student admission and dismissal policies	41.6	48.9	7.0
Staff selection	49.9	39.0	8.2
Staff salaries and benefits	69.8	20.7	5.6
Budgetary expenses other than salaries and benefits	46.0	42.7	8.3
School schedule	33.8	54.5	9.7
School calendar	33.2	55.7	8.7
Establishing curriculum	29.9	56.8	11.4
Extracurricular activities	11.8	66.2	20.6
School goals	16.7	65.7	16.6
School performance reviews	30.7	54.7	12.3

These results lend themselves to multiple interpretations. From one perspective, on average, 36% of parents/guardians are not involved at all in the above policy and decision areas, and the lowest reported percentage of non-involvement (11.8%) is in the domain of extracurricular activities, which is more distant from the core technology of schools than the other areas listed. Similarly, only 11% of parents/guardians reported that parents/guardians "make the decisions" across the above domains. In most areas, parents/guardians serve an advisory role and provide input. These ratings of influence do not appear strikingly high, especially in light of the dominant representation of parents/guardians on the governing boards. From another perspective, the question asked parents/guardians to rate the influence of parents/guardians as a whole, not from the perspective of charter school board members or other formal roles that they may hold. From this lens, the results may be interpreted that parents/guardians are very influential in terms of policy and decision-making. While 5.4% of the parents/guardians in this sample serve on governing boards, 11% reported that parents/guardians make the decisions across the above domains. In addition, 51% reported providing input across these decision areas. Therefore, it is clear that the majority of parents/guardians believe that parents/guardians as a whole have a voice in charter school decision-making. The ultimate question here should be one of value-added. Specifically, how would parents/guardians of comparable backgrounds with children enrolled in traditional public schools in Utah rate their levels of influence?

Finally, it is important to assess how charter school parent's self-ratings of their influence on decision-making compares to how others rate the influence of parents/guardians. To highlight these comparisons, this section focuses on influence on arguably one of the most important areas, school goals. To calculate mean ratings of influence, the following values were assigned: 1=not involved, 2=advisory/provide input, and 3=make the decision.) The following graph displays the results.

Figure 5. Parental Influence on Charter School Policies and Decisions



There is no statistically significant difference between how current charter school parents/guardians, charter school administrators, and charter school governing board members rate the influence of parents/guardians on decision-making and policies related to school goals. On the contrary, current charter school parents/guardians rate parental influence significantly higher than do previous charter school parents/guardians (p,.05). Consistent with the nature of comments provided by parents/guardians on the open-ended section of the survey, sometimes parents/guardians feel relatively less influence which is a factor that leads some parents/guardians to withdraw their children from charter schools.

Authorizer Influence on Policies and Decisions Related to Charter Schools

The primary authorizer for this sample of charter schools is the State Charter School Board/State Board of Education (88.9%), while local school boards authorize 11.1%. Therefore, this report focuses on the perceived influence of the State Charter School Board. First, it is important to describe how members of this board rate the influence of the board on the same policy and

decision-making arenas used to assess parental influence. The results are displayed in the following table.

Table 25. Ratings of Influence of the State Charter School Board
State Charter School Board Members (N=6)

	Not involved	Advisory/ Provides Input	Makes the Decisions
The charter application process	0	20.0	80.0
Purchasing of supplies and equipment	60.0	40.0	0
Student disciplinary policies	20.0	80.0	0
Student assessment policies	40.0	60.0	0
Student admission and dismissal policies	40.0	60.0	0
Staff selection	80.0	20.0	0
Staff salaries and benefits	60.0	40.0	0
Budgetary expenses other than salaries and benefits	0	100	0
School schedule	20.0	80.0	0
School calendar	20.0	80.0	0
Establishing curriculum	20.0	80.0	0
Extracurricular activities	40.0	60.0	0
School goals	20.0	80.0	0
Management	20.0	80.0	0
School performance reviews	0	60.0	40.0

The results are very clear. State Charter School Board members see themselves as influential on the front end (i.e., the charter application) and the back end (i.e., school performance reviews). These ratings are consistent with how all other respondent groups viewed the influence of the State Charter School Board. Moreover, this view is consistent with the preferences of other stakeholders. Between the charter approval process and accountability report, their preference is for authorizers to basically stay out of the way and provide them maximum autonomy. The following comments from an interview with a charter school administrator illustrate the desire for a "hands-off" approach from the state:

> *What I found is okay, we've got our charter approved, we did everything we were told to do and all of a sudden, there's assurances they threw at us. Why weren't we informed of those assurances before? Okay fine, we'll do it; whatever. We go through the assurances and there are things that are in direct conflict with our charter. We're not going to sign this because you approved our charter and we were approved saying we could do this and now this assurance is saying we can't. And it's a continual thing with us where they're almost trying to change who we are. But we have a document saying this is who we are. But they don't like that and they want to change us and put that square peg in that round hole.*

This perspective highlights the desire for flexibility and autonomy, as reported in previous sections, but also raises the question about whether charter schools want complete autonomy or if there are certain areas in which they desire or see value in developing relationships with authorizers, either the state or the local school board/districts. As will be discussed in the section

on Charter School Training and Support below, charter board members and administrators suggested that they would benefit from professional development, and particularly noted that the state would be the one to offer that support.

Governance of Charter Schools with Multiple Campuses

We asked charter school administrators, board members, district superintendents, and local school board members for their views on the governance of charter schools with multiple campuses. Below is a summary of their responses and the rationale for supporting one board for all campuses or separate boards for each campus.

For those interviewees that felt one governing body for multiples campuses was best, they suggested also having representation from the various campuses.

> *I would think there could be some logic to having one governing board in that you would have them some representation from each campus that could handle certain things. Probably want to have some kind of a tiered system.*

Citing challenges due to logistics, distance, and the benefits of local control, a number of interviewees supported having one governing body for each campus, as suggested by a charter school administrator:

> *You know, one of the strengths of site based management is that there should be a committee for each campus because each campus is different. So, my though is, every individual school building that has its own staff and its own physical issues and its own building concerns or its own curriculum should have its own governing board.*

Several others noted concerns about one governing body for several campuses, including the concern about management companies franchising charter schools, and creating large, less helpful organizations. For example a charter school administrator explained:

> *I worry that when you have multiple campuses and one central government that you're just sort of buying into a model that takes you right back to what the problem with public school was in the first place-- that you don't get that localized help."*

Highlighting again the notion of autonomy and flexibility, still others suggested that the governance structure should depend on what works best for the particular charter school, as illustrated by the following comments from a charter school board member:

> *I think either way, and again, it gets back to – it could work either way, so why not let it work either way? In my view, if you've got a board that's intact that's doing a wonderful job and the parents/guardians are happy and they don't see a need to create another one, I mean, the regular public schools do it. It gets back to freedom of innovation and new models of public schools and new forms of accountability. Well, let them try whatever model's going to work and be to the benefit of the students.*

Summary of Findings Related to Governance

To summarize, participants of this study indicated that charter school governing boards should be represented most heavily by parents/guardians, although there were also reports that parents/guardians are currently overrepresented on governing boards. The participants of this study also indicated that teachers should have greater representation on governing boards and that there should be slightly more, yet not a large number, of business and university representatives without children in the school to provide greater balance and expertise. On the surveys, district administrators and district board members indicated that the district should have representation on the charter board. This is in stark contrast to the charter administrators, charter board members, and State Charter Board members, who disagreed that district representatives should be on the charter boards.

The State Charter School Board sees themselves as influential on the front end (i.e., the charter application) and the back end (i.e., school performance reviews), which is consistent with how others prefer their involvement. In particular, charter administrators and board members prefer the authorization to provide maximum autonomy.

While most charter administrators indicated that parental involvement was encouraged and not required, 38 percent of parents believed it to be required. The majority of parents/guardians believe that parents/guardians as a whole have a voice in charter school decision-making.

Overall, participants believed the governance structure of charter schools should be dependent on the nature of the charter school. The next section expands on the degree of flexibility and autonomy, with respect to state laws and rules that the participants of this study envision for charter schools.

Laws and Rules Regulating Charter Schools

This section of the report addresses the extent to which charter schools should be exempt from state laws and rules regulating public schools. To obtain feedback on this matter, charter administrators, charter school board members, State Charter School Board members, district superintendents, and local Board of Education members were asked to indicate how often charter schools should be exempt from laws and regulations related to 14 specific areas (1=never, 2=seldom, 3=sometimes, and 4=almost always). The following graphs summarize the mean responses for each group on most of the items. These particular graphs are reported in categories to highlight key themes that emerged from the data. Frequencies for each item are reported on surveys in the Appendix B.

Exemptions Related to Finances

The following three graphs are consistent with other data regarding views on the extent to which exemptions should be granted to charter schools. The first theme is that no groups support significant exemptions for charter schools in terms of fiscal reporting. In fact, district

administrators and school board members essentially report that such exemptions should never be granted. However, charter administrators, charter school board members, and State Charter School Board members are more supportive of exemptions related to funding formulas and even more so procurement. In other words, they appear to be supportive of required fiscal reports, but they desire greater autonomy when it comes to how they allocate their budgets and procure supplies. District support for exemptions on these latter two areas remains low. It is also important to note that the mean levels of requested exemptions are typically in the seldom range. The mean of 2.75 (approaching "sometimes") for procurement is by far the highest support for exemptions.

Figure 6. Ratings of Exemptions from Financial Reports

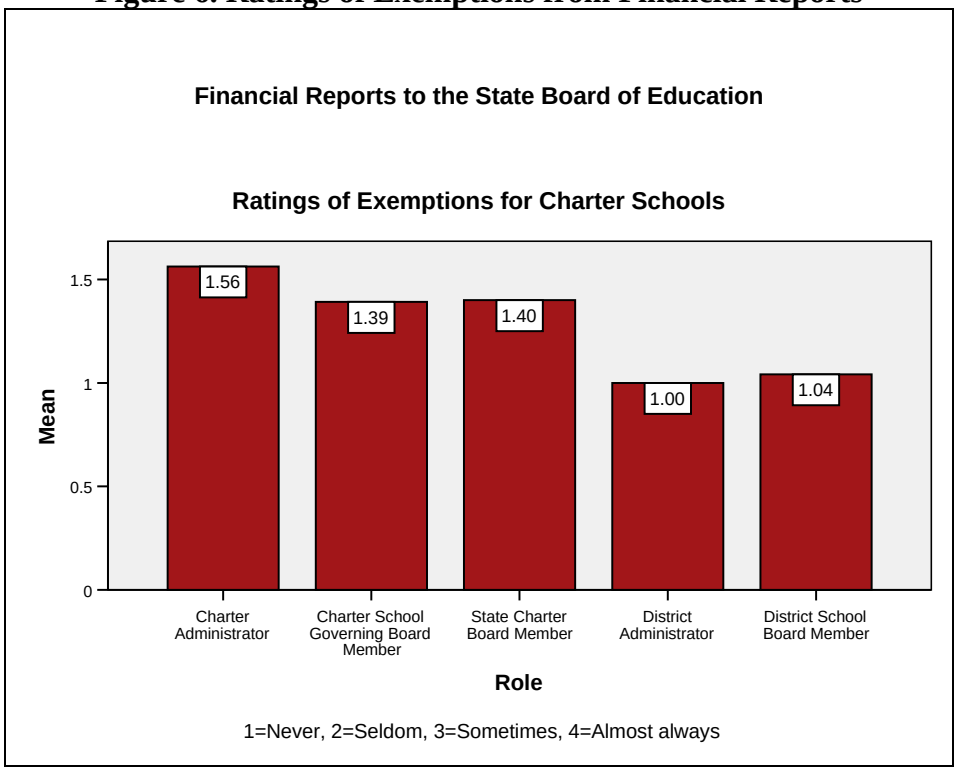


Figure 7. Ratings of Exemptions from Funding Formulas

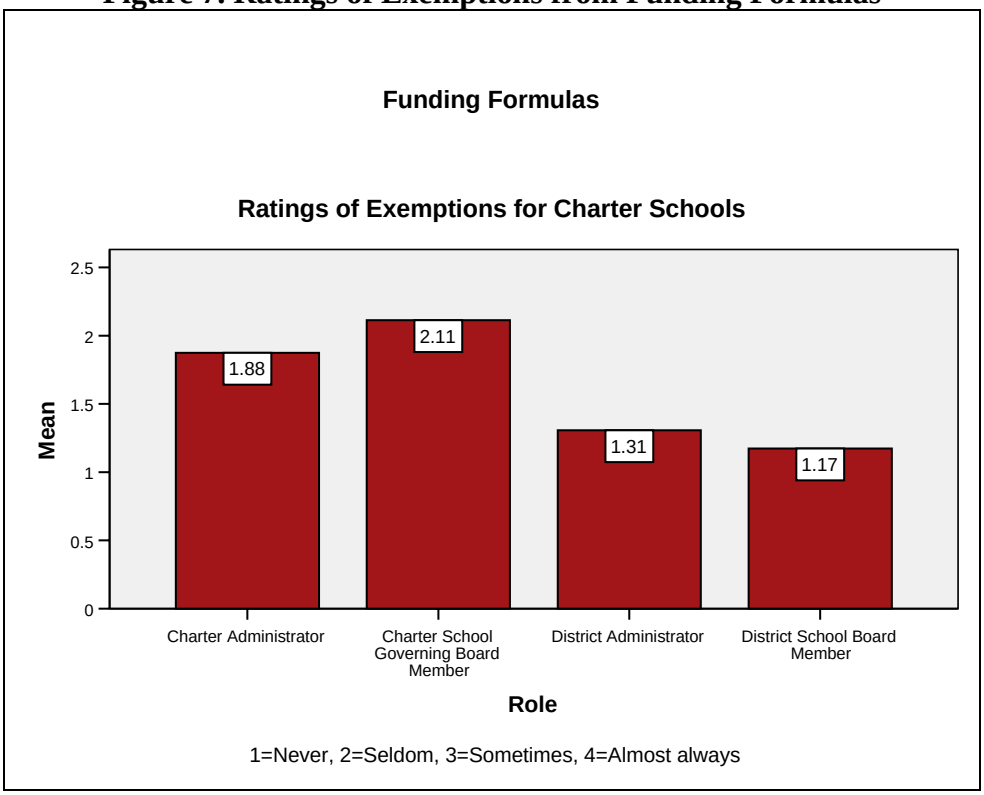
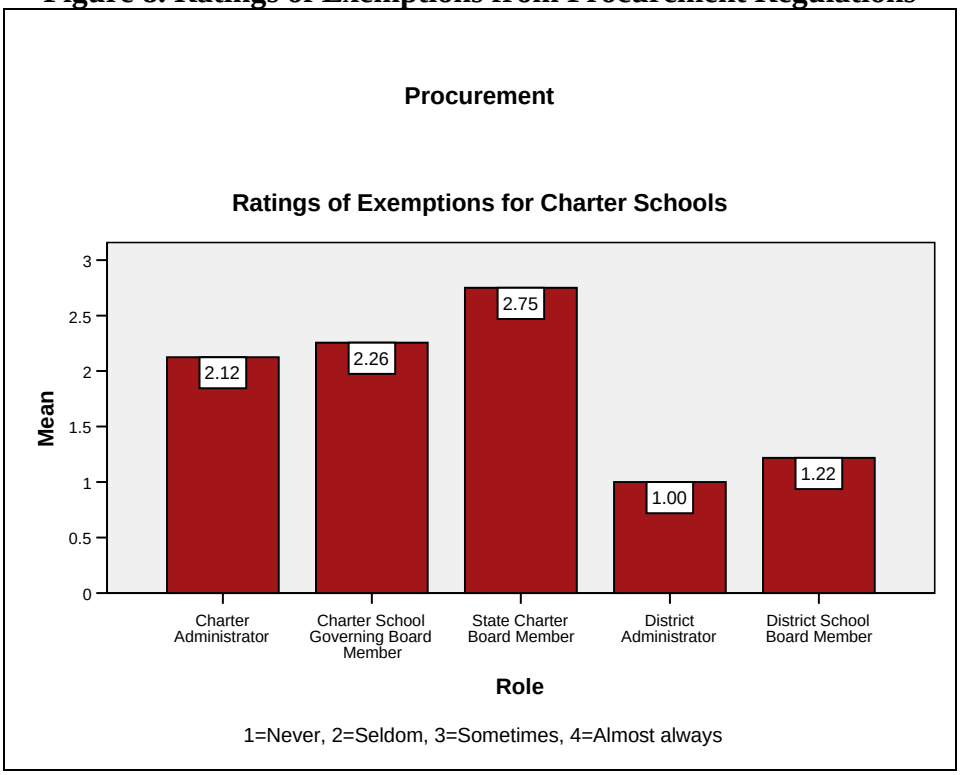


Figure 8. Ratings of Exemptions from Procurement Regulations



Exemptions Related to Student Performance

As the first two graphs in this section display, there is little support for exemptions related to student performance accountability. As examples, no groups expressed much support for exemptions from performance reports to the State Board of Education or from participation in state testing. As was the case with fiscally related exemptions, there was no support for exemptions related to student performance accountability from individuals affiliated with school districts. On the contrary, support for exemptions related to state standards/state curriculum emerges among all charter school roles, although they report that such exemptions should only be granted "seldom." As was the case with the fiscal exemptions, the pattern here seems to be agreement that consistent data should be collected and reported in terms of performance, but charter groups want flexibility in how they achieve their performance.

Figure 9. Ratings of Exemptions from Performance Reports

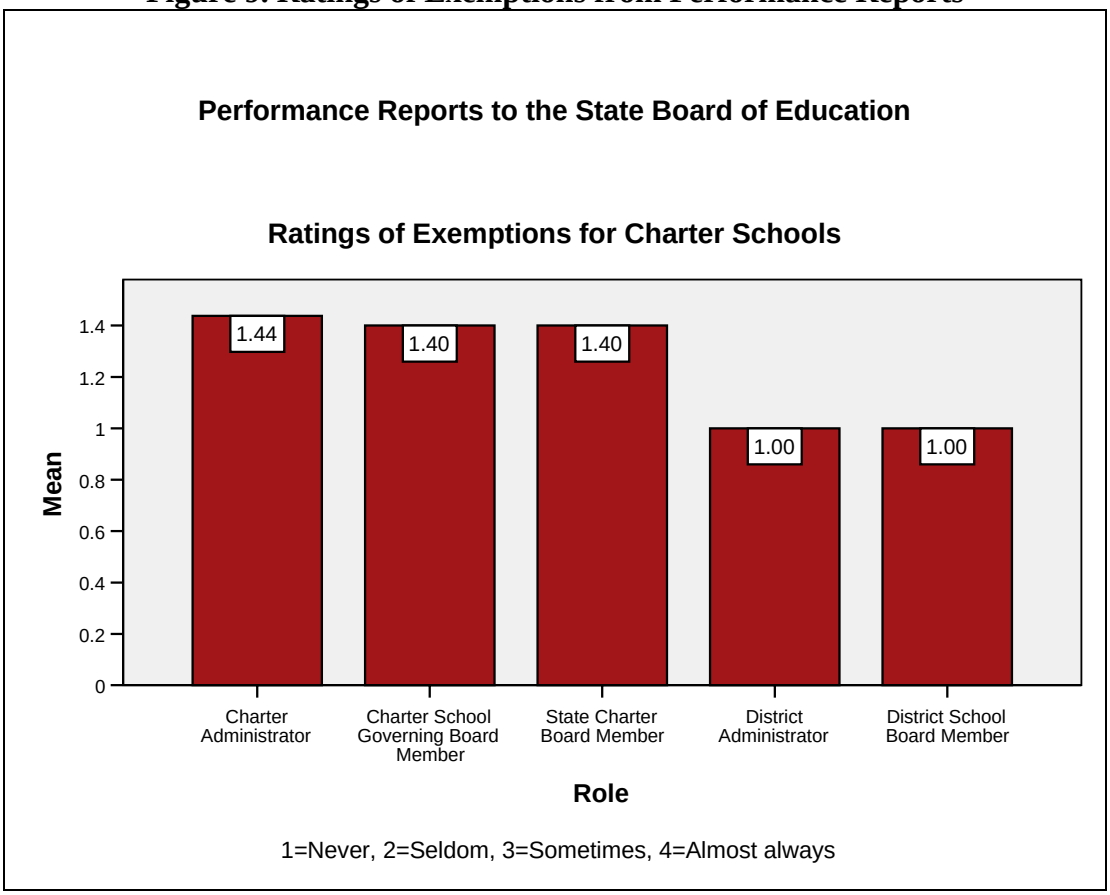


Figure 10. Ratings of Exemptions from Participation in State Testing

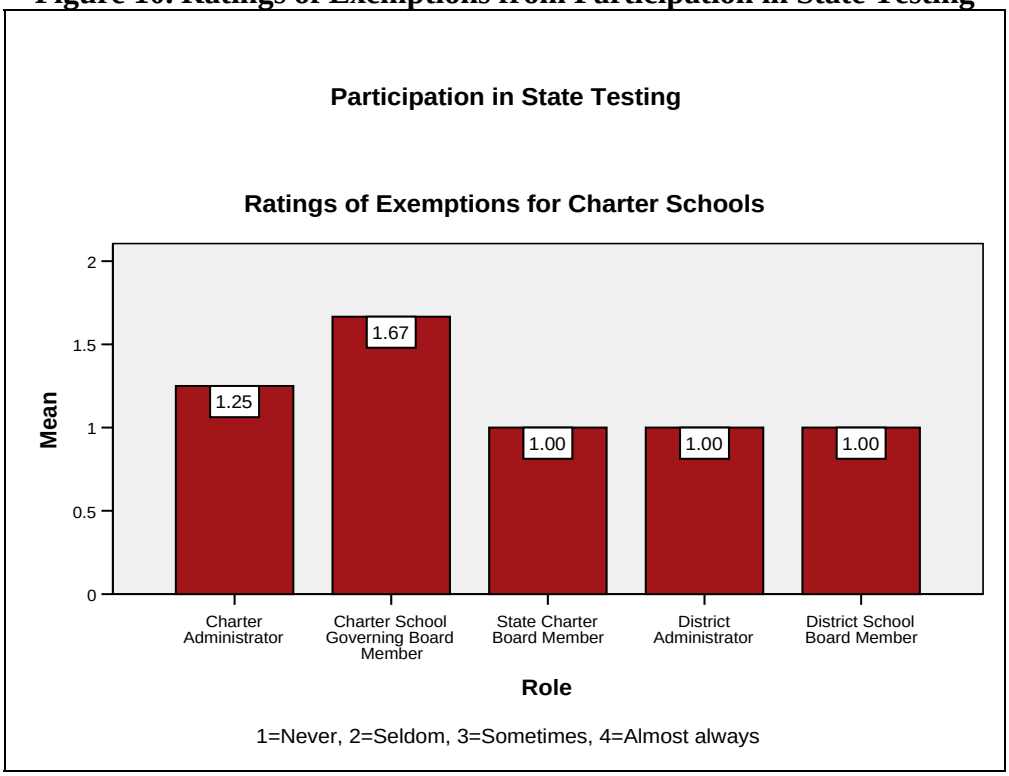
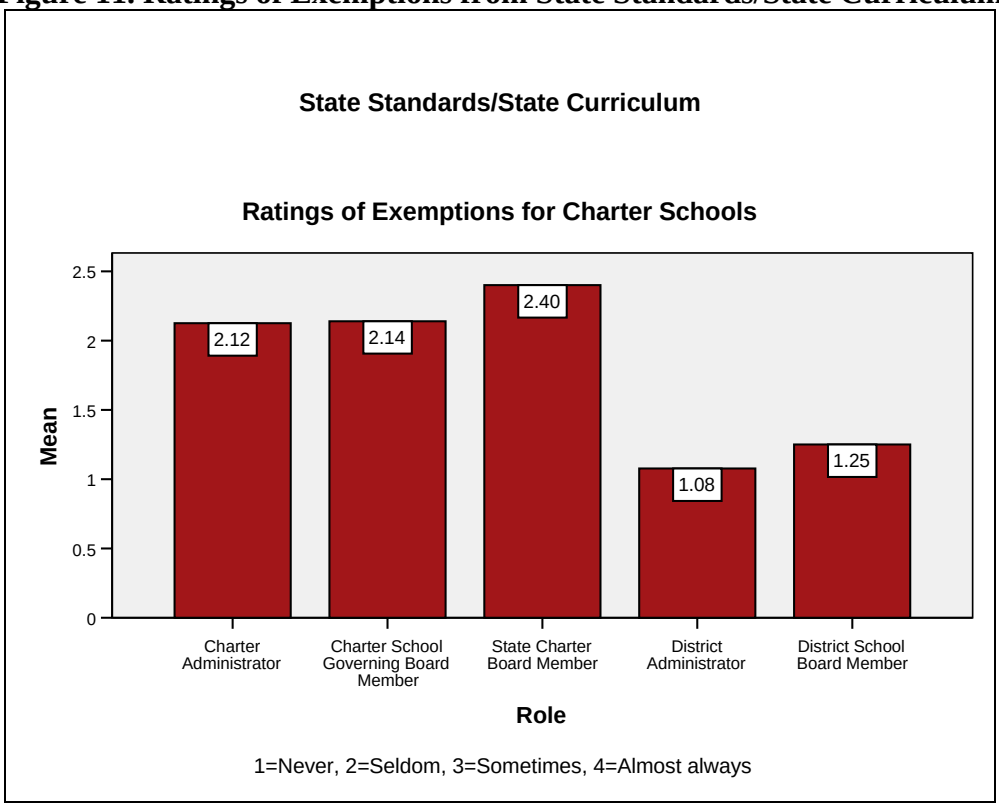


Figure 11. Ratings of Exemptions from State Standards/State Curriculum



Exemptions Related to Teachers

While the differences are not as large as in the previous two sections, the patterns hold in the case of exemptions related to teachers as well. As indicated in the first table, there is relatively less support for exemptions of teacher evaluations than the other potential exemptions related to teachers. The pattern here, which is somewhat comparable to a financial report and a performance report, is that those in charter school roles indicate support of being required to conduct teacher evaluations (i.e., reports). As indicated in the next two graphs, additional support for exemptions related to teacher accreditation standards and professional development emerges.

Figure 12. Ratings of Exemptions from Teacher Evaluations

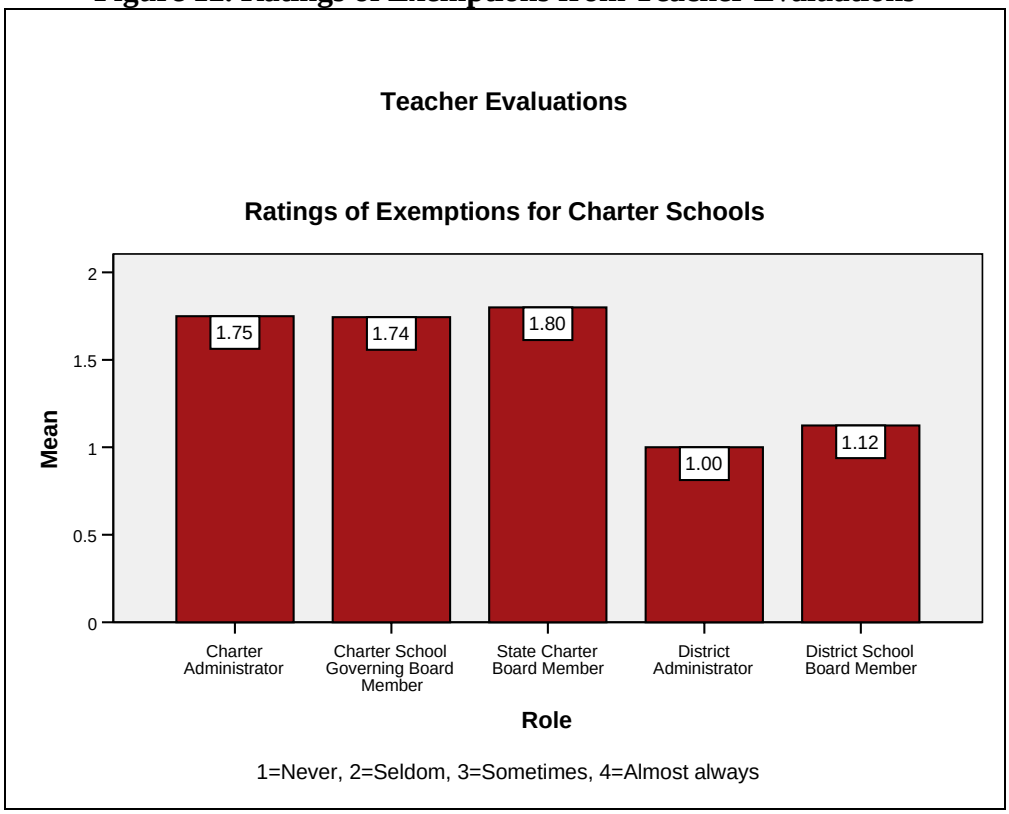


Figure 13. Ratings of Exemptions from Teacher Accreditation Standards

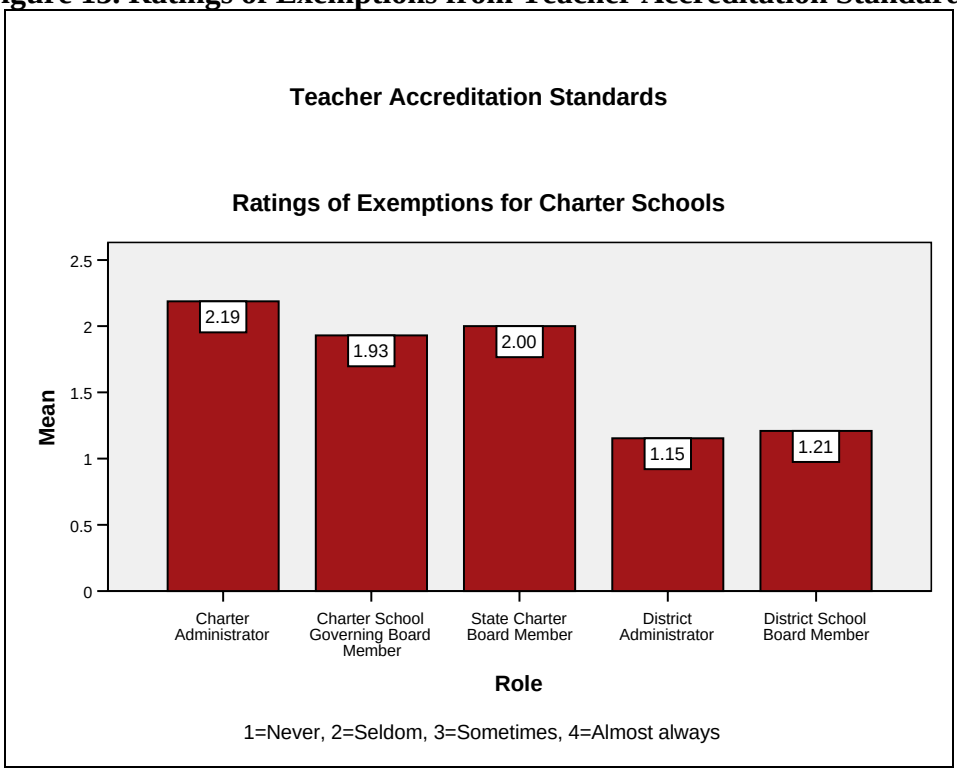
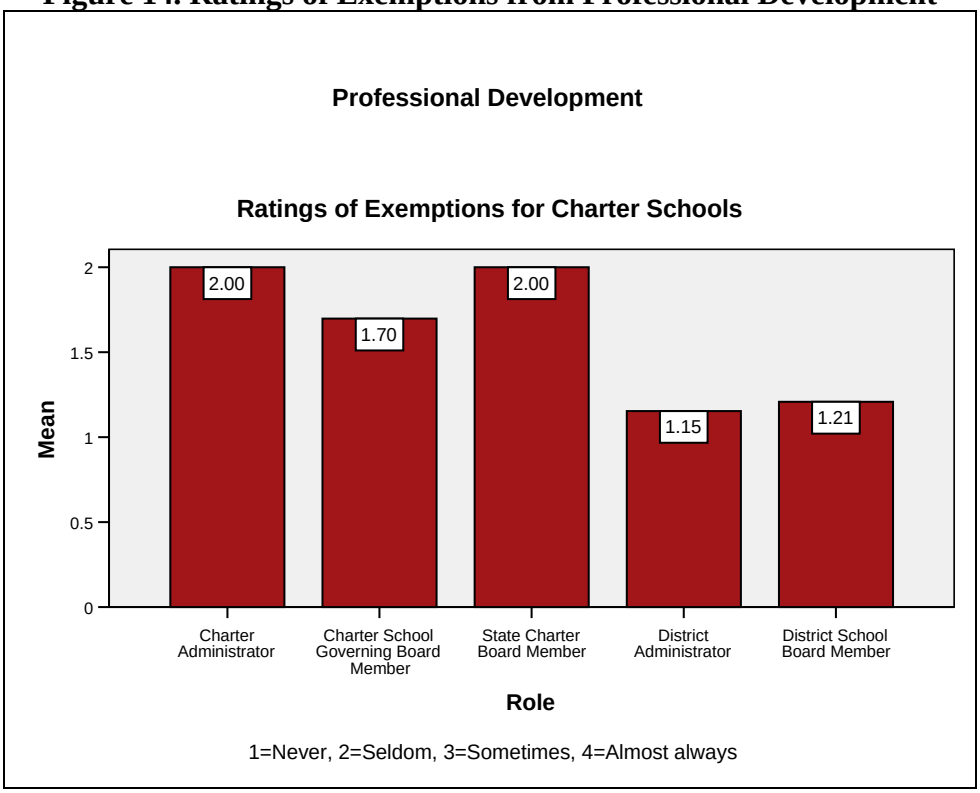


Figure 14. Ratings of Exemptions from Professional Development



Summary of Findings Related to Exemptions

There are three major patterns that emerge from this data. First, there is low support for exemptions across all groups. Even in the areas where there is relatively more support for exemptions, when asked how often charter schools should be exempt from laws and regulations in these areas, the mean responses were in the "seldom" range. This finding is somewhat surprising in light of a widely stated rationale accounting for the purported effectiveness of charter schools, particularly in terms of innovation. That rationale holds that charters are more innovative because they are free from the stifling laws, regulations, and bureaucracies that hinder innovation in traditional public schools. Given the infrequency of requested exemptions in most areas, it does not appear that charter officials feel particularly stifled. Second, charter officials express agreement that they should not be exempt from various forms of reporting, namely fiscal, performance, and teacher evaluations. However, they do seek some additional exemptions presumably related to autonomy and flexibility regarding how they achieve their goals. Finally, there is almost no support for exemptions of any type from district superintendents and board members.

A majority of participants across groups disagreed with the notion that exemptions should be vast or regular occurrences. When exemptions were noted by charter administrators and charter board members, it was in regard to (1) their desire to distinguish charter schools from traditional public schools, or (2) the inadequacy of resources to deliver services or programs, or manage operations. Here we discuss the spectrum of perspectives on the rational for not providing exemptions, providing exemptions to distinguish charter schools from traditional public schools, and the request for exemptions based on inadequate resources.

Exemptions Should Not be Vast or Regular Occurrences

First, most participants noted strong rationales for why charter schools should not be exempt from local, state, and federal rules and regulations. For instance, a charter administrator, who disrupted the idea of being able to operate a school for less money and resources, accentuates the dilemma of trying to determine which laws or regulations charter schools should be exempt from.

> *Here's a thing that you hear a lot—I win the debate and they approve this and it's like, do more for less, okay? That little fantasy land. The idea with that is if you're going to do more for less, then which rules are you going to pull out that you don't have to do? And I don't see very many that we don't have to do.*

A district board member also offered the perspective that the current rules and regulations serve a purpose and should thus be followed by traditional public schools as well as charter schools.

> *That's one thing charter schools have done is made me evaluate the rules we have to follow. Because initially I was saying well, if it's good enough for a charter school, why don't you release us from them? And the bottom line is those rules are in place for a lot of good reasons.*

A charter board member asserted a similar position of faith in the current public school policies, particularly elements that have to date been proven as "good for public schools." They explained "But you are going to have to be very careful in exempting charter schools on things that public policy has proven are good for public schools to follow." Another charter administrator also agreed that regulations regarding accountability, for example, weren't problematic, particularly given that these are the same regulations as traditional public schools must contend with and that charters receive public funds.

> *We should be held accountable. I mean, we are a public school eliciting public money, state and federal funds. We have the same challenges as a traditional public school has. Everybody's having a difficult time finding the highly qualified, meaning the No Child Left Behind, staff. It's not just us, it's everyone.*

While some charter administrators and charter boards explained that they would like exemptions from accountability policies, as one charter administrator put it, to "be accountable for our own results" rather than state or federally dictated requirements, most participants believed the same accountability regulations should be applied to charter schools as traditional schools. For instance, a charter administrator concluded that accountability was a necessity, particularly given that public funds are received.

> *And so there are some things that I think, you know – I think we should take the state core tests. If we're public school we better be accountable. And if they ever give vouchers to private schools I think those private schools should take the same tests. If you're going to get publicly funded you better be accountable for a public outcome. So I don't think the tests are a problem.*

The previous statements are indicative of a perception among most participants that if a rule or law were required of one entity then it should be required of both. Even a charter board member noted "if it's good enough for exempting it from charter schools, let's exempt it from the regular schools, as well." A statement by a district board member was indicative of the general responses given by district administrators and board members with regard to the potential for exemptions of charters from state regulations. That is, charters should not be exempt. The board member reflected:

> *I can't think of any that I would want them exempt from, in the name of the children. I think they are scurrying around some of them. That's my honest opinion, is that they are not necessarily understanding their need to provide special education and all of those things.*

Another district board focus group expressed their concurrence with the stipulation that charters should not be exempt from policies and guidelines.

> *If they're regular public schools, they should abide by the same guidelines, responsibilities, governance as regular public schools.*

> *See, the thing is, is they think they need to know how to do it better, and if we're comparing public education – if it's actual public education, we should be comparing apples to apples, not oranges to apples. And so how can we judge – if charter schools are really going to do any better, like they say they can, then if they're living under the same guidelines and rules, and if you want to call it restrictions or money, then public education.*

A district administrator provided a comparison to the rules for football to illustrate the need for similar application of policies.

> *You know, if we have a playing field, then we should all play by the same rules. You can't allow one team if they're a football team to run out of bounds to score a touchdown. Although if you're going to be able to find a way to improve achievement scores and you could do that, I think that would be wonderful. But I haven't witnessed that nor has any of the other principals or superintendents that have charter schools in their area witnessed that either.*

Exemptions Requested to Maintain the Uniqueness of Charters

Second, there were instances where charter board members and administrators noted that exemptions under particular circumstances would permit charters to be more "creative," "innovative" or "unique." A focus group of charter board members provided this rationale for a recently denied request for a waiver,

> *I think waivers are part of the rock bed foundation of charter schools. The idea for me of charter schools is to try different models and see what works. As an example, [our charter] last year felt it was more important to teach rather than to teach farming and sewing and some of the things that the TLC program provides, they wanted to do some things that their parents were more interested. Like balancing checkbooks and –*
>
> *Or programming. You know some more technical information.*
>
> *Things that are more applicable in this part of the state of Utah. In rural Utah it's still very important to learn about farming.*
>
> *We were quite rudely treated. I mean the attitude was, "How dare you come in here and ask for this!" I mean it was very hostile when we went up to meet with the curriculum committee. It was just a tension in the air.*
>
> *Again it's a one size fits all. Where charter schools we can have these little experiments going in smaller systems and see if it works. And if it doesn't work then we don't have to use it. If it does work then the rest of the state can use it. Financing models are the same thing. There's lots of different things that charter schools could get waivers in.*

Another charter administrator spoke to this issue and the desire to have more latitude in curriculum at the charter school.

> *The flexibility in the law that I would value is that if you have submitted your application as a charter school, this is how we want to do it. This is our vision of curriculum, and that passes, which ours did, then you know, it would be nice to then have the latitude in the codes and the rules and the laws that say, that there is flexibility about how you implement that.*

The following quote from a charter administrator, who emphasized the need for exemptions from the state curriculum, illustrated the point of the school choosing their curricular path. This administrator also addresses the consequences of choosing their own path.

> *Charter schools because we are supposed to be innovative schools should have the chance to deviate from state core curriculum. To come with our own mode of delivering the curriculum that the state feels is important. But, you know for example we're a multiage school. We prefer to have sort of integrated thematic lessons. And it's very frustrating to us that our eighth graders are held accountable for eighth grade core curriculum, specific science topics their eighth grade when they're in a multiage group. And may cover those topics over two years. And not necessarily in the order that the state prescribes. And so therefore their test scores may suffer at the end of the year because of that. And even though our charter gives us that permission we're penalized*

Some comments from charter school administrators were similar to parent comments regarding their appeal to be "other" than the status quo. Again, the intent of charter schools to be "unique" was seen by some as valid reasons to be exempt from particular state required elements such as curriculum, reporting, certification, and finance requirements. The following statement by a charter administrator is illustrative of this point.

> *And yet I think there are certain parts of it that maybe should be undertaken by the state charter board or the TAP organization. Because we want to retain our identity as, you know something separate from the state system too. I get worried that it's going to get so that there really isn't going to be any difference between a regular public school and charter school. It seems like every year there are more and more regulations placed on us to the point that it's going to be indistinguishable.*

A charter board member even expressed his concern for charters not being different enough from traditional schools.

> *If you allow the bureaucrats, for lack of a better term, to determine that charter schools are going to look, act, and breathe just like the regular public schools, you created a Utah State Board for Charter Schools, and then you have a state board, all we're doing is creating two parallel systems that are not different from each other.*

Despite this, participants from the districts explained that the traditional schools are also seeking ways to "be different kinds of schools." For instance, a district board member further expanded

on this idea that traditional public schools would benefit from the ability to be "different" as well.

> *And so maybe some of that is in the hesitancy. You know just this idea of why are we reinventing what we're already doing. We want different kind of schools. Let's make the public schools that we have be different kind of schools. Give them permission to be different kind of schools.*

Exemptions Requested Due to Inadequate Resources

Third, requests by charters for exemptions from particular requirements were based on inadequate resources, including staff and/or facilities, to meet those requirements. For example, charter administrators and boards repeatedly cited instances of lack of administrative support. In the following, a charter administrator emphasizes an earlier point regarding the use of public funds but goes on to illuminate the difficulties of meeting local, state, and federal requirements. "Yeah, it is public money. I mean, I am answerable to taxpayers ultimately who pay taxes to run public schools so I think those expectations are reasonable." Yet, this administrator outlines many of the concerns presented by other charter administrators and boards. Again, the emphasis is on the inadequacy of resources rather than the requirement in and of itself.

> *I think some of the reporting restrictions that we have [are hard to meet]. It is not that they are bad, you know, like keeping track of our numbers and all that kind of stuff, but we don't receive any consideration as a small school district. I have more students at [this school] than they do at [another] school district, yet I receive no additional administrative support unit. So I have me who is responsible for curriculum and testing and everything else. And then I have an office administrator who is responsible for all payroll and so forth. I mean, so I have 430 kids, a staff of probably 30 including full and part time people. That is more than a rural school district, yet, I get no extra administrative support. So, I have to pull the money out of my instructional program to hire a part time fiscal consultant to help us with our books. I have to hire someone out of my instructional program to help me manage my data because you cannot run all the UPASS, Cognos stuff by yourself. And that to me is very unfair.*

Perhaps the perception of "scurrying around," expressed earlier by a district administrator, is attributed to issues such as inadequate funding for administrative services and lack of preparation time between approval of charters and their startup, which are issues addressed below in this section and the next section on training and support.

Teacher certification was one area where there was some dissonance between whether exemptions should be permitted or not. Although it was suggested that waivers for certified personnel could be sought in certain circumstances, participants overwhelmingly believed exemptions in this are should not be allowed. For example, a district administrator said: "They need leeway just like we do on occasion when they can't get everybody you need. We need to have the ability to hire somebody with the objective of getting them certified."

There was some dissonance, as indicated in the surveys, between charter administrator and boards and district administrators and boards. For instance, a charter administrator explained the rationale for adhering to teacher qualification regulations in charter schools.

> *We have faculty from the U teaching one class on our campus and instructors, they are all considered endorsed for one class. I have not found the licensing thing to be that restrictive. I think teachers, if I am a parent and I pay public money I would expect my student to be at least educated by a professionally license and ideally, a highly qualified teacher.*

Another charter administrator, however, rationalized exemptions from teacher certification requirements by citing what is perceived as the "teacher shortage." This charter administrator explained:

> *I think that I would much rather be accountable for results instead of compliance with the process. So I would much rather – the teacher qualifications is one. Particularly in this day and age of teacher shortages.*

Yet another charter administrator countered the need to require certification of administrators because it may limit the perspectives that contribute to charters being considered "unique." This charter administrator shared:

> *I don't feel that it should be too highly regulated because I think that again would zap the life out of charter schools if you start sticking administrators who have certain credentials into charter schools. Well then how are they going to be all that different from public schools? I think you need people from all perspectives. Being able to have the vision and get very excited.*

By addressing the benefits and necessity of certification, district administrators and boards were more emphatic about charter schools following teacher and administrator certification requirements. A district administrator made the following analogy after echoing the idea that there should be certified administrators and staff at charter schools.

> *[If someone] had bypass surgery, I don't think you're going to let [them] do bypass surgery on you because [they've] had it. You know? And that's what the charter school thing is all about.*

Yet, another district administrator provided this rationale for the certification of administrators in charter schools. This administrator noted the implications of having individuals who are not as familiar with education.

> *We've have to make sure our administrators are up to a specific level. The challenge you have with an administrator at a charter is that they're being hired outside of necessarily an educational influence. If a charter board, if someone is trying to start a charter, and they're not coming to the district, they don't really want a district structure, they're going to be asking a whole different set of questions. So an administrator gets hired, they may*

> *not have a clue, because they're at that point, more like a superintendent in some respects than they are even a principal.*

In part, participants emphasized the need to have licensed administrators in charter schools, particularly if they are going to remain as "stand alone[s]." For instance, a district administrator noted:

> *Administrators have to have the same licensure. I think that's important. Particularly for a stand alone. You need that same licensure. You need, just so you have a background. And of course if parents in a governing board are selecting a good leader you'd look for someone with some experience You want that. It's not required in our state. Actually you can hire someone without a license.*

The following comment from a district board meeting raises an important issue for consideration with regard to the possibility of exemption from the certified teacher requirements.

> *The other process I would like to see them do is just an enforcement of the rules that public schools have to obey. For example, for one of the charter schools, I looked on their web site and there were only two members of their faculty that were actually certified teachers. The rest had degrees but they did not have certification. And, you know, we know there's an alternate way to licensure in all those kinds of things. But at the same time what's the best for kids? Do you want a whole school full of people trying to get their degree and teaching? Or do you want people that really know how to teach?*

With regard to licensure requirements, many believed some of the training issues, which are mentioned in the next section, would be minimized, if not eliminated. Numerous charter administrators, who had administrator licenses with the state and experiences in districts agreed that an administrative supervisory certificate was appropriate for charter administrators. For instance, one charter administrator, when asked what additional kind of training they needed said, "Besides what I brought with me? It was invaluable to have been an administrator for nineteen years in the school district as part of my qualification." Another district administrator made the point that certification is a means of ensuring a certain threshold of knowledge and skill: "the certification is the net that catches finance, law, and everything else. So, you know, if you have that, you've got the rest."

Summary of Findings Related to Laws and Rules Regulating Public Schools

In conclusion, survey responses indicated that charter schools should generally be held accountable to the rules and laws regulating public schools. When exemptions were desired, it based on the perception by charter school representatives that there are inadequate resources (e.g., staff and/or facilities) to meet the requirements. In addition, there were concerns among all participants that perhaps there are rules and regulations that neither charters nor traditional public schools should be restricted. For example, a charter board member concluded that there may be some regulations that aren't necessary for either charters or traditional public schools.

> *Now maybe we've got some school laws that public school does follow that they shouldn't have to follow. Why don't we look at the whole thing and say, you know, what is really necessary? Because I think the public schools are under encumbrances that they probably don't need to have.*

A district board member reemphasized the traditional public school's focus on teaching. They explained:

> *I think what needs to happen is we want creative and innovative classes. We want to be able to do some expansion. I think part of the problem is they're not necessarily exempt from some rules, but what we need to do is deregulate some of the garbage being placed on public schools so that they can actually teach.*

Technical Support and Training

This section of the report focuses on technical assistance available to charter schools as well as the desired professional development requested by charter administrators, charter school board members, and local Board of Education officials.

Access to Technical Assistance

All administrators and board members were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement, "There is a well-developed charter school network or association in Utah" (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strongly agree). As noted in the following table, all groups reported means falling somewhere between disagreement and agreement with this statement. While there are minor differences in the means between each group, none of the differences are statistically significant.

Table 26. There is a well-developed charter school network or association in Utah

Role	Mean	N
Charter Administrator	2.56	16
Charter School Governing Board Member	2.51	43
State Charter Board Member	2.80	5
District Administrator	2.58	12
District School Board Member	2.24	21
Total	2.48	97

Next, these same groups were asked whether "There is adequate access to technical assistance." The same Likert scale was utilized. While the responses were slightly lower for this question compared to the previous question, there are no statistically significant differences by role. While all means are between agreement and disagreement, with the exception of the State Charter Board, all groups report means closer to disagreeing on average.

Table 27. Charter schools have adequate access to technical assistance

Role	Mean	N
Charter Administrator	2.18	17
Charter School Governing Board Member	2.40	45
State Charter Board Member	2.80	5
District Administrator	2.30	10
District School Board Member	2.15	20
Total	2.32	97

Following their ratings of access to technical assistance in general, charter administrators, charter school board members, and representatives of the State Charter Board were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with specific types of technical assistance and resources provided by the State Charter School Board (1=very dissatisfied, 2=dissatisfied, 3=satisfied, and 4=very satisfied.) The general pattern is the State Charter School Board members rate their level of satisfaction with the technical assistance they provide higher than charter school board members do, who are more satisfied than charter school administrators. The primary area of concern is "directing interested parties seeking to establish charter schools to sources of funding (charter administrator mean=2.27 and charter school board member mean=2.46). Charter school administrators are also less satisfied with the assistance they receive "to carry out their charter obligations" (mean=2.29) as opposed "to understand their charter obligations" (mean=2.63).

Table 28. Level of Satisfaction with Types of Technical Assistance Provided by the State

Role		Promoting successful charter school models	Facilitating the application process for charter school authorization	Directing interested parties seeking to establish charter schools to sources of funding	Directing interested parties to sources of technical support	Reviewing proposals to help strengthen them before an application for charter school authorization is submitted	Assisting charter schools to understand their charter obligations	Assisting charter schools to carry out their charter obligations
Charter Administrator	Mean	2.50	2.69	2.27	2.67	2.36	2.63	2.29
	N	16	16	15	15	14	16	14
Charter School Governing Board Member	Mean	2.64	2.85	2.46	2.70	2.65	2.78	2.60
	N	39	39	39	37	37	41	40
State Charter Board Member	Mean	2.80	3.00	2.60	2.60	3.00	3.00	3.00
	N	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Total	Mean	2.62	2.82	2.42	2.68	2.61	2.76	2.56
	N	60	60	59	57	56	62	59

Professional Development Needs

Charter school administrators and board members were asked to identify areas in which they would benefit from more professional development. There were 38 topics for training listed on the survey under five larger domains: (1) school law, (2) school finance, (3) health and safety, (4) accountability requirements, and (5) organizational elements. Individuals were asked to respond whether they needed training in each area prior to opening the charter school, now that the charter school is open, both now and prior to opening the school, or not needed at any point.

The range of charter administrators indicating that they did not need training at any point was from 6.3% to 31.3%. An increasing number of administrators, but never over 31.3%, did not want training on traditional education functions (e.g, staff evaluation, discipline, student residency requirements, bussing/transportation). The range of charter school board members indicating that they did not need training at any point spanned from 2.2% to 26.7% with less need for one or two items within each larger domain but quite often managerial functions.

The key finding is that between 68.7% and 97.8% of respondents feel that they would benefit from additional professional development in all 38 areas. Furthermore, the majority believe that such training would be beneficial both before and after the charter school opens. On the lower number of items included on the survey of District Board members, they also overwhelming expressed that additional professional development on charter school law, property matters related to charter schools, student admissions to charter schools, charter school funding, charter school accountability requirements, and evaluating charter school performance would be personally beneficial.

This finding of a widespread need for training is not surprising for several reasons. First, charter schools are in their infancy. Second, many of the laws and regulations around them are complex. Third, charter school board members are often lay people with no previous experience as professional educators or overseeing the governance of schools. Last, preliminary evidence suggests that these roles turnover frequently, so as new people obtain seats on these boards, ongoing training must be provided. If all stakeholders basically want ongoing professional development in 38 areas (and possibly others not listed on the survey), considerable thought must be given to how to prioritize and deliver this training, as well as how to build capacity and form partnerships to deliver it.

Who Should Provide Technical Assistance

In the interviews and focus groups, participants discussed who should provide training and technical assistance, when it should be offered (discuss what they had when they entered), and what types of training and technical assistance should be provided.

First, there was consensus that the training and technical assistance needs of charters could not be managed solely by the minimal staff at the USOE. For example, a charter board member expressed first their concern over the ability of the USOE to manage the requests for technical

assistance and, second, their concern over the implications of the "old school thought" invading the philosophical stance of charters.

> *But there's not enough hours in their days to make sure charters are right, make sure they're answering all the support questions. There's just not enough. And another problem up there is they don't know who they work for. They are in the Office of Education. And they're surrounded by old school thought and you have to do everything this way and it's all very compliance oriented.*

There was less agreement in the interviews about whether the primary responsibility should rest with the authorizer, the state office, the district, the state board of education, or the charter themselves. Others suggested that charter boards should have a stronger affiliation with the Utah School Board Association and the Utah Association of School Business Officers. Several charter board members commented that they did not know that the Utah School Board Association existed.

A charter board member suggested that because the legislature has created charter schools as an alternative or choice that additional resources should be given to train and administer charters. This board member explained,

> *I mean this concept of charter schools is I think politically it's an attractive alternative for the legislature because they can say look what we're doing for the schools. We made all these charters. They're wildly successful. But then they don't put any money into training or administering them. It seems inconsistent to me. But that is what they've done.*

Comments from another district board focus group illustrate a similar response and the need for additional resources:

> *You know, they expect us to attend some of those kind of things. We have all kinds of work sessions that we're supposed to attend to learn. I'm not so sure that they are provided any of those kinds of opportunities. And there should be some. If the state's going to, you know, agree to have them, then there ought to be some place some where there's a group set aside to train them and make sure that they're following what they're supposed to follow.*

Multiple suggestions were made about the most efficient and effective ways to provide training and technical assistance. These suggestions included a central office, additional staff and resources at and from the USOE and the State Charter School Office, TAP (Technical Assistance Project) or a similar functioning group, the districts in which charters are located, and/or the sponsor of the charter (i.e., district or state). A charter board member explained the usefulness of a central office which would provide the types of training and technical assistance needed:

> *It would make a lot of sense on the support side to have a state level charter district office which has staffing for things like reporting personnel, purchasing, some of these things where if you have to go through all of these rules then you have some technical assistance. Someone there who could even do some of the work.*

Again, while charter school administrators and boards requested additional support from the state office and legislature, the nature and extent of training and technical assistance needed was perceived as beyond their capacity. A charter administrator explained:

> *John Broberg, Marlies Burns, and TAP are the best resources charter schools have in Utah. We are eternally grateful for their professional, kindly assistance. We need less oversight (paperwork, paperwork, paperwork) and more technical assistance. I doubt any typical public school is under as much scrutiny as the charter schools.*

This illustrates the kind of constant comparisons with districts that were made by charter administrators and boards.

Of the assistance that the USOE and State Charter Office could provide, one suggestion was to offer separate meetings for administrators who recently opened a charter school versus those who have been in operation for some time. Another charter administrator emphasized the need for additional training at this level, specifically "a more organized process-based training."

> *They need tons more training then they're getting. That's a huge, huge deficit. I do it with Special Ed because we have a project. If it were not for TAPS, our people would be starting out not knowing what they're doing. You've got to look at what's happening here. We have 52 schools; we have three staff members, which is two more than we've ever had at the state office. But they are gun shot level. Okay, they're running out. "Okay, I've got this fire and I've got that fire." There's no way in heaven's name that those three people would have five minutes to go, "Let me organize a statewide conference and sit down and train you." I mean, to ask them to do that is ludicrous.*
>
> *Now I've been begging for a statewide conference for four years. One of these days I'm just going to get mad and do it, okay, because I know it can be done. I don't know what the answer is. Do you have 50 more people? I don't know. But – but you do need a more organized process-based training, not this come once a month and they throw stuff at you.*

While generally charter board members and charter administrators were complimentary about the services provided by the State Charter Office, many shared their frustration with the bureaucracy and requirements for data reporting and regulations that apply to charter schools. Again, they explained that while districts have an infrastructure to handle these requirements, charters do not. "Instead of pointing at the errors charter schools make as weaknesses of the charter schools, perhaps the error is in the lack of support to prevent these errors from happening in the first place."

Numerous district board members and administrators suggested that districts would offer professional development or training to charter administrators and charter boards if there were compensation so as not to present a financial drain on the district. One district board member explained, "It's no different than if we need any of our teachers or administration to be trained, we pay for it. We send them somewhere and train them." This was iterated by a district

administrator, who highlighted that the reason more training is provided by the districts isn't "because they're in competition."

> *As I mentioned earlier, if we brought them in, we would have to eliminate some of our own teachers. So we don't have money to be able to spread that training throughout. It would really be nice to bring them in because when their children don't succeed and they come back to us, they're so far behind that we have to then take our resources and apply them to the children which it is only right to do. But if we could bring them into our training where they were learning the same things and the best practices that we're putting in place and the research based activities or strategies, then we wouldn't have this. But I need money.*

In other cases, districts discussed the fact that charters within their district bounds already use district resources. For example, a district board member said: "They haven't spent the time or the energy doing policies, and a lot of them will piggyback onto our calendar, they piggyback on our policies. So really, they're a free agency using some of our stuff." There were several instances throughout the interviews where relations between districts and charters was characterized differently. For instance, a district provides "the full menu of professional development opportunities we offer. Any of the teachers in charter schools are welcome to attend."

Here a district board member illustrates the tension between the districts and the charter schools, particularly with regard to who should provide training and technical assistance.

> *Except I know, this new charter school had one of our employees in special ed had a phone call from a parent who said, "I've just been put in part of special ed. You know what can you tell me about it?" And this, our employee said, "Well, you know I really can't talk to you about it now because I'm employed by the school district and I'm on there time. You can call me at home and I'll help you much as I can. But are you aware that if you don't identify students who need special ed and then if you don't meet their needs you can go to jail. And the parent said, 'Oh, I think I'm in way over my head." So they don't have the specialized training.*

Others commented that they did not believe charters wanted assistance from the districts. Another district board member asserted that charter schools seem like "they wanted to be an island," which they perceived as attributing to the charter not asking for help.

Despite noted tensions, references were made again to the necessity to and benefits of eliminating a "dual system" of training and technical assistance and the value of partnerships. For example, a district administrator said, "I think they should be brought under that same umbrella. I think – again – to try and run a parallel program to train them is redundant, and it's wasteful." In another instance, district board members discussed the difficulty of the state operating what was referred to as "two public education systems." The board emphasized, "What the state legislature should hear, explain to me how we can afford two public education systems, when we are the lowest funded education system in the country." Highlighting the need for responsibility and accountability to be with the district, another district board focus group concurred that a dual system was not effective.

> *I mean they're – that's just a big – to me, there needs to be – to me, that's why I personally think that they all ought to go underneath the districts. I mean this is my own opinion. I think all charter schools ought to go underneath the districts.*

When, Where, and How It Should Be Offered

The findings here are similar to the survey findings. That is, participants believed that training and technical assistance should be offered before and after opening a charter as well as on an on-going basis. A charter board member spotlighted the rationale for offering training and technical assistance after the charter schools have opened, drawing parallels to the learning curve of any administrator or board member:

> *I don't know how you would give somebody that or train them. I don't know how you would train them to start a charter school. Because even with our administrator's long background in public education and my background on the board you're still just, you know you're making it up as you go quite frankly. You know because of all the details that have to work out. You're thinking things through and just, you know trying to come up with that. So whether somebody should have training it would definitely be helpful. But I don't know, you know where you would get that.*

Other participants suggested that the approval time for charters be extended to at least 18 months. For example, a district administrator explained that this time frame would give charter boards ample time to get established and spend "12 months worth of time going to probably monthly trainings on state laws…. regular trainings on what IDEA means, what 504 means, what it means to meet no child left behind requirements."

Participants noted that the lack of local training or technical assistance was an issue that needed to be addressed, particularly given limited resources. For instance, a charter board member stated that not providing local training was a "handicap for rural charters, and by not offering training locally you are condemning the charter to have problems." Others suggested offering training or technical assistance via satellite or internet may lessen the costs associated with the training. One charter board member added, "I would appreciate it if they made training opportunities available on weekends, non-business hours so that board members can attend without having to take time off work."

Types of Training and Technical Assistance that Should be Provided

First, participants identified general requirements of opening and operating a charter school as a needed area for training and technical assistance. Areas identified for training and technical assistance included: the state core curriculum, general policies and procedures, fiscal and legal responsibilities, evaluation and assessment, highly qualified issues as well as mentoring new teachers, special education, English language learners, attendance and general reporting, negotiating with teachers, risk management, emergency response and crisis management, and

recruiting students. Numerous participants also cited the issue of certified teachers and administrators as a necessary type of training, as indicated in the Rules and Laws section of this report.

Across groups, participants concurred and recommended that the boards, for example, receive training in all aspects of operating a school, hiring and staffing, evaluation. A district board stated "I think they need a crash course in what is expected of them, and maybe all of the rules and regulations that all public schools are required to know." Another charter administrator explained the importance of having training upfront.

> *We went out, you know it's pathetic, I read the Utah state code for fun. I was really going out, being proactive, finding out what we do and don't do or have to do. We didn't have anybody saying you know, there's this report due here. It was always after the fact somebody said you miss this report. Okay, what report? Okay, fine, we'll go do it. We learned. We learned that a mechanism in place to tell people up front okay, here's your list of reports. But you know what, even when we put out, we have as an association put out that list of reports, there's always something missing. They change the dates. They add a report. They drop a report. There's always something going on. It's never consistent. It's really hard. And so it's not just the reporting, it's just what you can and can't do in regards to discipline. Did you know that if you didn't fill out your immunizations, you get no money? Those kinds of things that would be very helpful to know up front.*

The same charter administrator noted that now the group of charter schools is attempting to help other charters by letting them "know okay, this is what you need to do." Although the helpfulness of the TAP (Technical Assistance Project) was addressed, a charter administrator explained the necessity of charter school administrators and charter boards receiving training and technical assistance. This administrator said, "It was amazing the learning curve. We didn't know what we were getting into. We had no clue what we were getting into. And I think I would have run the other way to be frank." Another charter board member explained the trepidation of board members to access the USOE as a resource for training and technical assistance. This board member said:

> *As you're starting a charter school you're afraid to call the Office of Education because what if my question's a stupid question and they think there's a bunch of morons down there running the school? If I have a friendly face I can say, 'You know what? This is a stupid question probably. But what's an RFP or what's a, you know." And ask these questions that the education establishment understands all the idiosyncrasies. And we're just parents and we really don't.*

Another charter administrator provided the following summary.

> *And then there should probably be some kind of a charter school –sort of a general charter school synopsis, where you learn about charter school governance, who the charter school board is, what their role is, the different types of reporting, and budgeting*

> *and finance and governance, things like that. Maybe it could be a class that someone qualified could teach.*

Many recognized the risks of not having training and technical assistance in terms of liability issues. For example, a charter board member explained:

> *That's probably the most likely candidate to do that. I mean, it really is a liability issue, too, for the state. If you have a board that doesn't understand how these things work in a board setting, there's some liability there with a lawsuit.*

As a result of their understanding of the risks and liabilities, another charter board member even recommended that charter boards consider having legal counsel either on the board or as an advisor.

> *But I would guess that for another organization, another group wanting to start a charter school, they really ought to have somebody who's a lawyer at least involved if not a board member so that he can understand the legal implications.*

Generally, training in general policies and legal issues was seen as an imperative. In the area of general regulations for public schools, a charter administrator explained that they had not received training on No Child Left Behind regulations, including AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress).

> *Anyway, it's – I look at this school here, you know, we failed AYP I think, because we didn't have enough students take the test. They passed it, I think, academically. I could be wrong but nobody's really trained me on what AYP is, really. I probably should know what that means, being a director of this big of a school. I know it's meant to – No Child Left Behind, which is presented to us by the state as one horrible thing. Or from the legislature, it's like something we have to do but nobody believes in it, you know? I mean, that's how it's presented.*

Consistent with this recommendation, others suggested that additional training and technical assistance was needed on the state core curriculum. For instance, a district board member, who noted that the district would be willing to help, explained their district's experience:

> *We have a little bit of concern because some of the charter school administrators contacted our school district and really very basic questions. They don't know what the core curriculum is. They know they're supposed to teach the core curriculum but they don't know what it is. And they don't know what, you know textbooks they need or what they need to be operating that core curriculum. And that's a concern. Because they are required to be teaching it and yet they don't know what it is. And so there must be some – I mean we don't give that. We would love to help with any of that. But we've offered and offered and offered.*

A district administrator reiterated a theme—accountability--found across many areas of this study when the suggestion of additional training on curriculum was necessary.

> *School curriculum, I think is a big one. They need to see that if they're accepting public funds, they just can't go out on their own tangent and they need to follow some guidelines that the state requires.*

As noted in the previous section on Rules and Laws, teacher and administrator certification were cited as imperative training for those working in charter schools. Here a charter administrator, for instance, noted the need for additional training and technical assistance because the school employed primarily new teachers due to the difficultly of recruiting more veteran teachers without the opportunity to offer state benefits:

> *Almost half – last year I only had three level two teachers on my whole staff. I had to hire professional mentors, other retired teachers, to come in here and help teach it. And so new teachers I had no idea – and I knew that a bunch of new teachers was going to present a whole bunch of issues. I just didn't know what they were. And I'm telling you new teachers do not know how to – where is it on here? Participate in designing and implement. They bless their hearts, you know don't know how to do this stuff yet. They just don't know how to do it yet. And so the fact that you are dealing with new teachers and I just can't tell you how overwhelming that is. What needs to be in place so that new teachers can be successful. I mean there is – it completely caught me off guard and anticipated it and still got caught off guard.*

Finally, a number of charter board members and administrators recommended some variation of prepackaged or model policies be provided to charters and charter boards. A charter board member explained that receiving "some guidelines and recommendations for the best of breed models [on building and funding of facilities]" would assist the charters to focus on opening and operating the school rather than serving as "a distraction to the real objectives of the charter and the value to the students."

Summary of Findings Related to Training and Technical Assistance

Charter administrators and charter board members generally reported that they would benefit from additional professional development in school law, school finance, health and safety regulations, accountability requirements, and organizational elements. Additional areas identified for training and technical assistance reported during interviews included: the state core curriculum, general policies and procedures, fiscal and legal responsibilities, evaluation and assessment, highly qualified teaching requirements as well as mentoring new teachers, special education, English language learners, attendance and general reporting, negotiating with teachers, risk management, emergency response and crisis management, and recruiting students. Numerous participants also cited the issue of certified teachers and administrators as a necessary type of training.

In addition, participants indicated that training and technical assistance should be offered before and after opening a charter as well as on an on-going basis. Participants also suggested that the approval time for charters be extended to at least 18 months to provide ample time for charter school administrators, board members and staff to prepare for the opening of the schools and to

engage in professional development, particularly related to state laws and rules and accountability requirements. A number of charter board members and administrators recommended some assistance with policies and procedures so that they do not have to start from scratch in developing their own.

Despite noted tensions about whether districts should provide training and support to charter schools, references were made again to the necessity to and benefits of eliminating a "dual system" of training and technical assistance and the value of partnerships.

Reasons for Enrolling or Withdrawing Students from Charter Schools

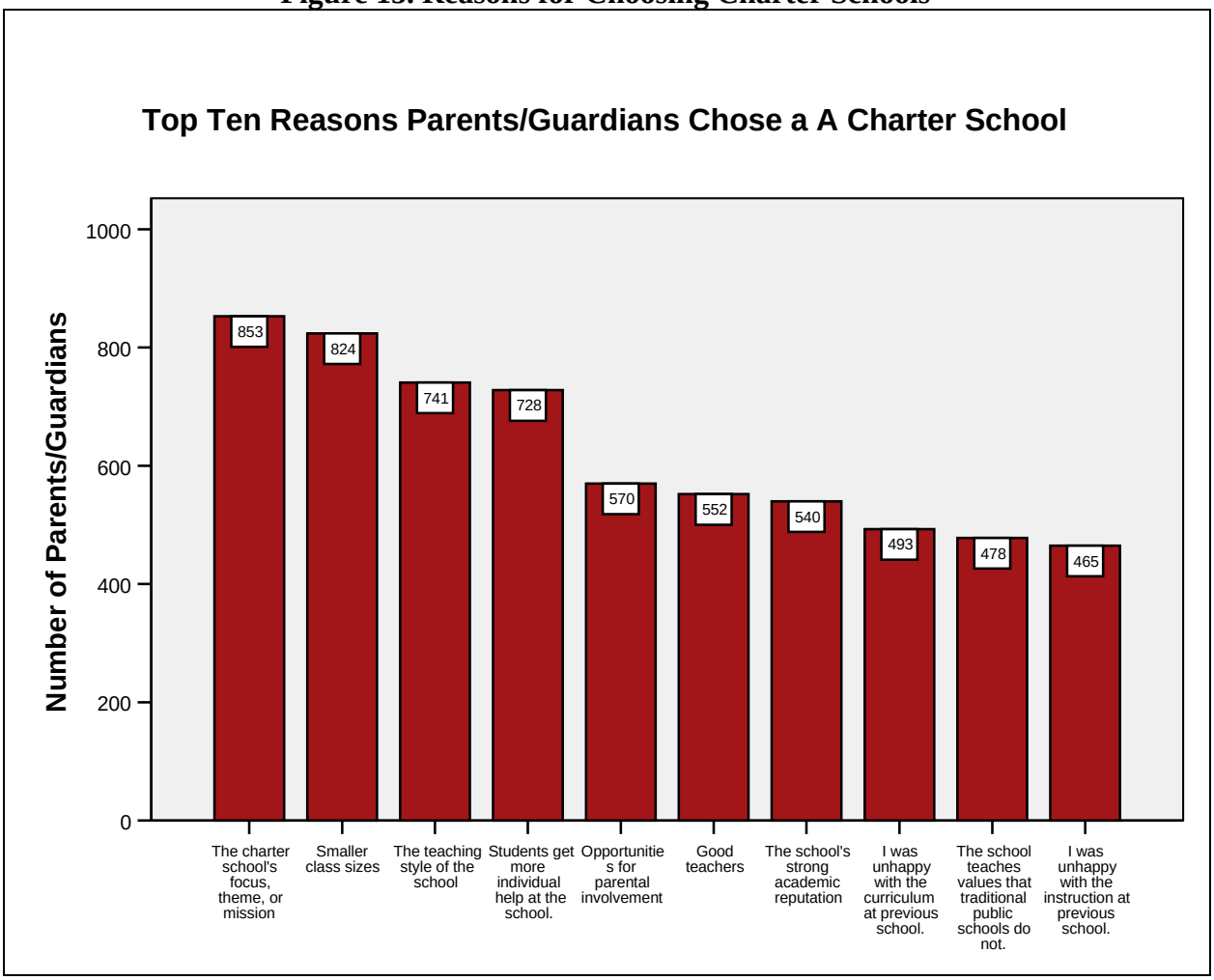
This section of the report presents findings from the surveys of parents whose children are currently enrolled in charter schools and those whose children were withdrawn from charter schools.

Charter School Selection: Reasons for Choice

To ascertain why parents/guardians enroll their children in charter schools, parents/guardians were asked to mark all of the reasons they considered from a list of 27 potential reasons when choosing a charter school. The following graphs highlight the ten most frequently marked reasons followed by the ten least frequently marked reasons.

As the first graph depicts, the top four reasons four choice were cited by over two-thirds of the respondents: (1) the charter school's focus, theme or mission (80.4%); (2) smaller class sizes (77.7%); 3) the teaching style of the school (69.8%); and 4) students get more individual help (68.6%). These results are not surprising since charters tend to market themselves as being based on a specialized theme typically around curriculum and instruction which they deliver in more individualized ways.

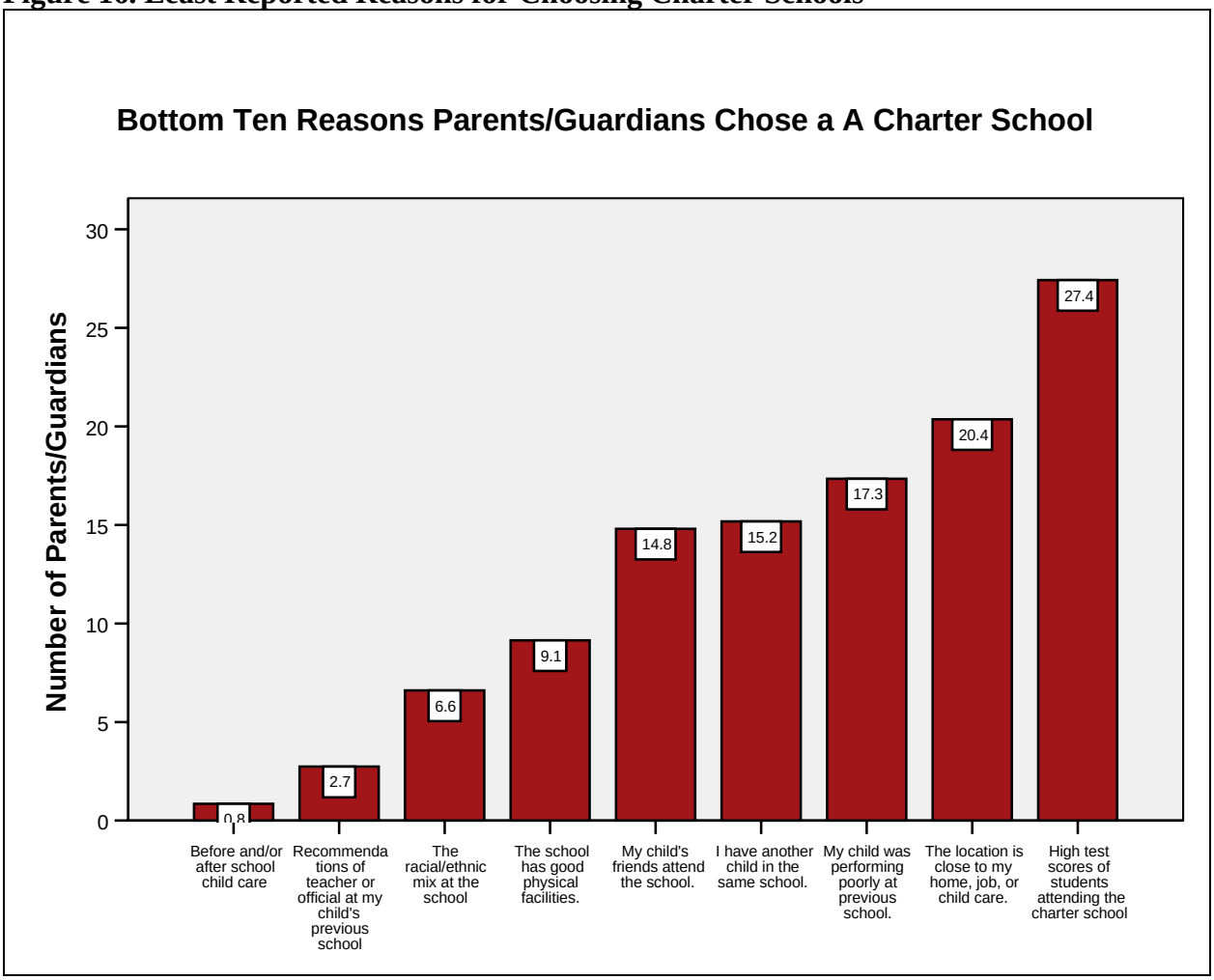
Figure 15. Reasons for Choosing Charter Schools



The ten least frequently cited reasons for choice are presented in the next graph. Less than ten percent of the parents/guardians reported considering: 1) before and/or after school child care (.8%); 2) a recommendation of teacher or official at my child's previous school (2.7%); 3) the racial/ethnic mix at the school (6.6%); and 4) the school's good facilities (9.1%).

One item that underlines tension between some charter school supporters and opponents warrants addressing. Of the parents/guardians in this sample, 28.8% marked "I prefer a private school but could not afford it" as a reason for choosing a charter school. This is an important acknowledgement because many traditional public school supporters criticize charter schools for serving an elite population and often mistakenly refer to these schools as private ones.

Figure 16. Least Reported Reasons for Choosing Charter Schools



After considering each reason for item individually, a factor analysis was run to ascertain broader patterns in the data. The factor analysis revealed that the bulk of the reasons for choice items clustered into four larger variables: 1) safe and inviting climate; 2) academics; 3) dissatisfaction with previous school; 4) individualized attention; and 5) convenience. The following table reports the individual items comprising these variables, as well as the mean percentage of parents who considered the variables as a whole as reasons for choice.

These results indicate that getting their children individualized attention (59.6%) is the most important reason for choosing a charter school. This individualized attention emerges from the child wanting to attend the school with its specialized mission and programs suited to his or her interests. At the classroom level, parents also believe the student will get more individual help as a result of smaller class sizes. The quality of the academic program (47.5%) is the second most important reason for choice. This quality is reflected by the school's academic reputation, teachers, principal, and achievement test scores. Third, parents consider the charter school's climate, specifically whether it is safe and inviting (39.3%). The safety dimension is reflected in such items as "discipline", "the school is safe", and "the school teaches values that traditional public schools do not." Interestingly, the items "I prefer a private school but could not afford

one" and "Opportunities for parental involvement" correlate more highly with "The school is safe" than they do with any other item. "Opportunities for parental involvement" and "My interest in being involved in an educational reform effort" are representative of the importance of a climate that is inviting to parents. Fourth, a significant number of parent's reasons for choice center on dissatisfaction (33.5%) with their child's previous school and the belief that their child's needs were not being met. The previous schools are predominantly traditional neighborhood public schools. With this in mind, it is appears that a significant number of parents/guardians are running away from neighborhood schools as opposed to being drawn to charter schools. Finally, it is important to emphasize that the least common reasons for choice are ones of convenience (16.8%). This is important because reasons of convenience are typically beyond the control of schools and are therefore the least likely to drive school improvement.

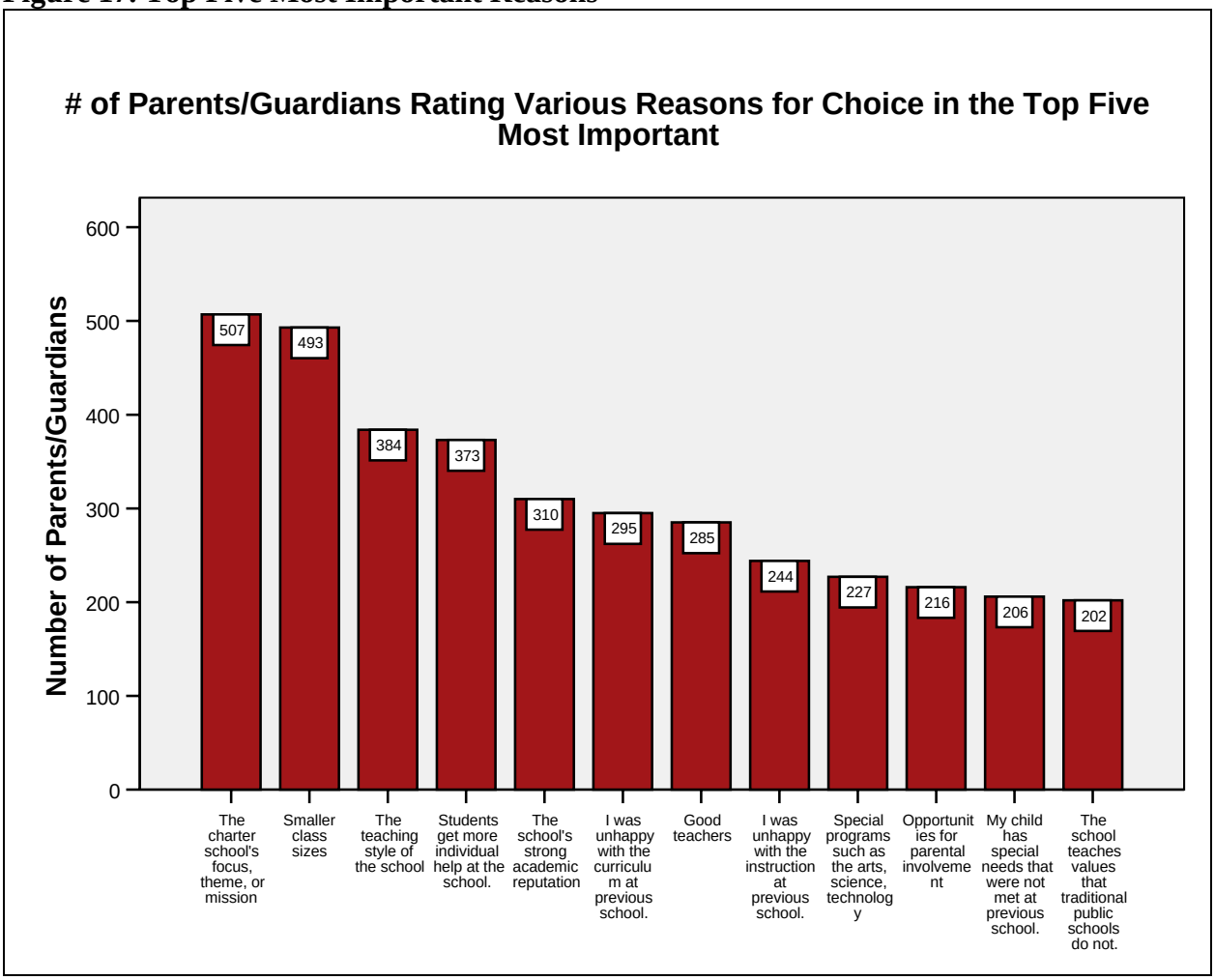
Table 29. Reasons Organized by Category

Safe/Inviting Climate	Academics	Dissatisfaction	Individualization	Convenience
I prefer a private school but could not afford it.	The school's strong academic reputation	My child has special needs that were not met at previous school.	The charter school's focus, theme, or mission	The location is close to my home, job, or child care.
Discipline	The principal	My child was performing poorly at previous school.	Students get more individual help at the school.	My child's friends attend the school.
Opportunities for parental involvement	Good teachers	I was unhappy with the curriculum at previous school.	Special programs such as the arts, science, technology	I have another child in the same school.
The school is safe.	High test scores of students attending the charter school	I was unhappy with the instruction at previous school.	Smaller class sizes	
My interest in being involved in an educational reform effort	The teaching style of the school		My child wanted to attend this school.	
The school teaches values that traditional public schools do not.				
Mean=39.3%	**Mean=47.5%**	**Mean=33.5%**	**Mean=59.6%**	**Mean=16.8%**

After being asked to identify all of their reasons for choosing a charter school, parents/guardians were asked to rank order their five most important reasons. Four reasons were identified by a higher percentage of parents/guardians as the most important reason: 1) "My child has special needs that were not met at previous school" (N=127); 2) "The charter school's focus, theme, or mission" (N=122); 3) "The school's strong academic reputation" (N=118); and 4) "I was unhappy with the curriculum at previous school" (N=97). A critical finding here is that reasons of dissatisfaction account for two of the top four rankings of the single most important reason for choosing a charter school. When collectively considering the four items that comprise the Dissatisfaction variable, a total of 314 or 30.9% of the entire sample ranked an indicator of dissatisfaction as their most important reason for choosing a charter school.

As an indication of the scope of parent's/guardian's reasons for choice, over 200 parents/guardians rated twelve different individual items among their top five most important reasons for choice. These reasons are summarized in the following graph.

Figure 17. Top Five Most Important Reasons

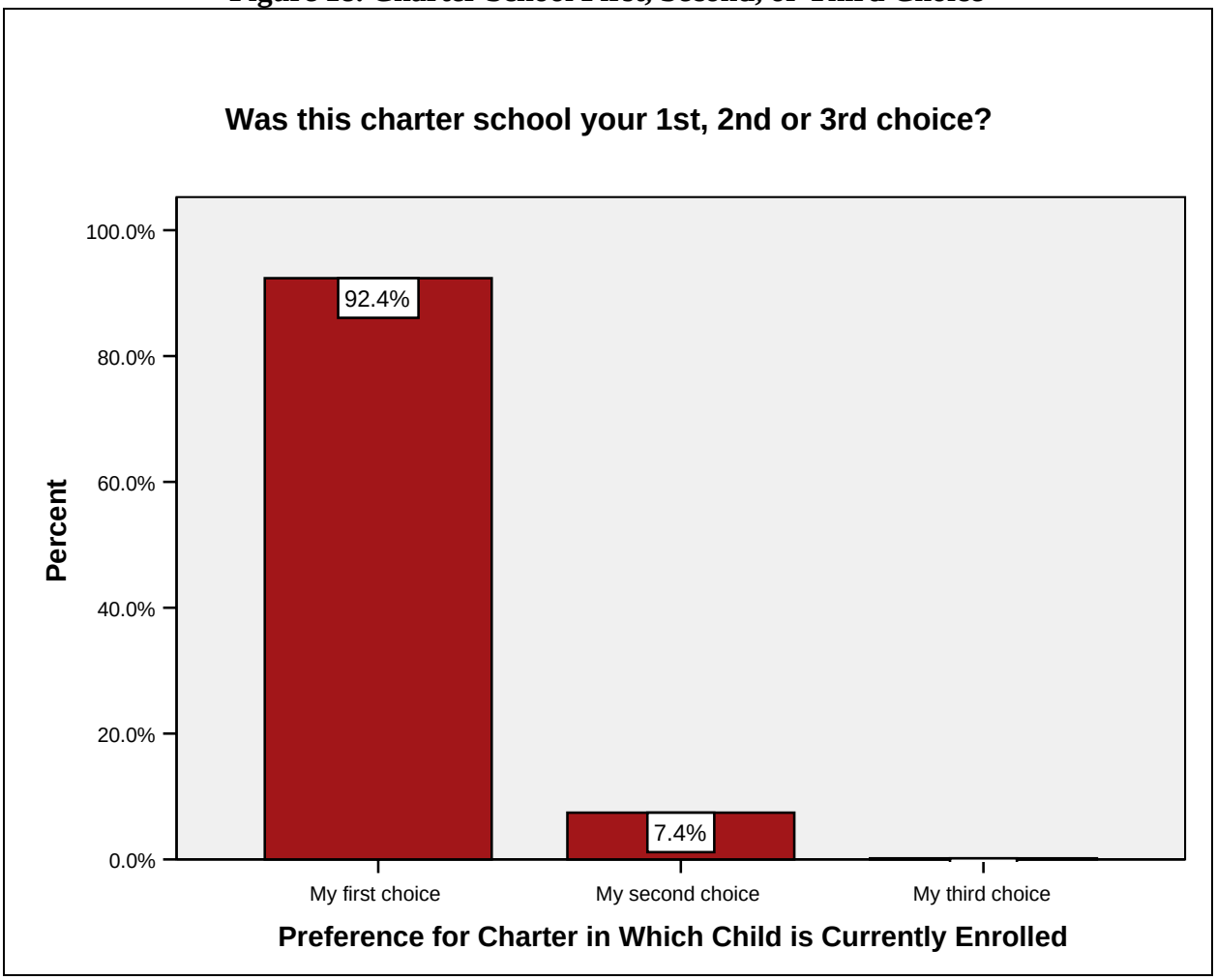


Charter School Selection: Choice Received

When deciding where to send their child to school, as displayed in the following graph, the charter school in which their child is currently enrolled was the parent's first choice an overwhelming majority of the time (92.4%). Approximately 50% of parents/guardians in this sample travel over five miles, and 20% travel more than ten miles to attend their current charter. Despite this percentage of parents who are willing <u>and</u> able to travel these distances, 14.9% of the sample also reported that there were other schools that they did not consider choosing for their child because of a lack of available transportation from home to the school. Transportation was a greater constraint on choice for parents/guardians with lower education levels (24% for those with a vocational degree or lower versus 15% for those with a college degree or higher).

The correlation between education and income levels is well documented. Transportation is also likely a larger barrier in rural areas where greater distances tend to separate schools.

Figure 18. Charter School First, Second, or Third Choice



Parental Satisfaction with Charter Schools

Parents/guardians with children currently enrolled in charter schools in Utah are extremely satisfied with their school. Specifically, 93.9% assign the charter school a grade of A or B, while only 2.3% rate the school a D or F. Congruently, 90.4% indicated that, if given the opportunity, they would choose the charter again for their child. Only 4.6% indicated they would not choose the charter again, and 5.0% were unsure.

These ratings are in stark contrast to how these charter school parents grade the public schools in their community. A higher percentage of parents assign public schools in their community a D or F (30.2%) than an A or B (23.9%). To highlight this difference in satisfaction levels, 64.9% of parents/guardians with students currently enrolled in charters awarded their school an A, while only 2.4% of these same parents/guardians gave an A grade to public schools in their community. On average, these parents assigned charter schools a grade 1.68 levels higher than the grade they gave to public schools in their community. (Moving from an A to B is a change of one level; A to C is a change of two levels…). The results are summarized in the following table.

Table 30. Parental Ratings of the Charter School their Child Currently Attends

Grade Assigned to the Charter School	Percent	Grade assigned to Public Schools in Your Community	Percent
A	64.9%	A	2.4%
B	29.0%	B	21.5%
C	3.8%	C	45.8%
D	1.4%	D	21.8%
F	0.9%	F	8.4%

Given the high levels of parental satisfaction with charter schools, efforts were undertaken to explain what variables predict or correlate with satisfaction. First, a multivariate linear regression was run on parental grade assigned to the charter school with parents' reasons for choice as the independent/predictor variables. The model was significant at the .0000 level; therefore, knowing parent's reasons for choosing charter schools enables one to predict their satisfaction levels with charter schools better than chance alone. Collectively, reasons for choice explain 15.1% of the variance in parental satisfaction levels. Three of the five reasons for choice (safe/inviting climate, academics, individualization) are positive, statistically significant predictors of parent satisfaction. In other words, the more parents choose for these reasons, the more satisfied they are with the school and vice versa. Parents who choose for academic reasons are the most satisfied. Academic reasons are four times more predictive of parental satisfaction than individualization and safe/inviting climate. Convenience is also a significant predictor, but in a negative sense. Parents who choose for reasons of convenience are actually more likely to be dissatisfied with their charter school. Finally, dissatisfaction with the child's previous school is a non-significant predictor of satisfaction with the charter school. In other words, choosing because of dissatisfaction with the previous school does not predict an individual's satisfaction level with the new school.

To ascertain other potential relations with parental satisfaction, two bivariate correlations were run. First, distance from home to the charter school is not significantly related to satisfaction. On the contrary, number of years attending the charter school is significantly, positively correlated with satisfaction, but the correlation is a modest one (r=.18).

As a final assessment of satisfaction, parents/guardians were asked to rate specific aspects of the charter school their child attends. The ratings used a Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strongly agree. The results are reported for each item in the following table. In short, charter school parents are highly satisfied with almost all aspects of the school. A mean of 3.0 indicates agreement with the statement, and only three items are rated below this level. Parents/guardians are highly satisfied with the school's core educational program, sense of community, accountability, and safety. While they are still satisfied, they are relatively less satisfied with the scope of the school's program in a broader sense as evidenced by lower ratings of the school's extracurricular activities, number of elective courses, and extent to which the school is meeting the social needs of their child that could not be met in another school. Lastly, parents reported the lowest mean (2.58) and mixed levels of agreement with "This school has sufficient financial resources." Slightly over 40% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement.

Table 31. Parental Ratings of Characteristics of the Charter School Their Child Currently Attends

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean
Teachers care about the students.	1038	3.67
This school has high standards and expectations for students.	1027	3.67
I am comfortable spending time at my child's school.	1006	3.61
My child enjoys this school.	1030	3.60
This charter school helps students reach their highest potential.	1035	3.56
I am satisfied with the school's curriculum.	1030	3.56
Teachers in this school involve parents.	1034	3.55
Parents are actively involved in our school.	1018	3.55
I am satisfied with the instruction offered.	1023	3.52
Students are held accountable for their own achievement/performance.	1015	3.51
This school is meeting my child's academic needs that could not be met at other local schools.	988	3.47
I am satisfied with safety at the school.	1021	3.47
Parents, students, and teachers have a good working relationship.	1025	3.44
Teachers are held accountable for their effectiveness.	972	3.41
Teachers are involved in decision making at this school.	937	3.34
The school's neighborhood is safe.	1002	3.33
School leaders are held accountable for student achievement/performance.	950	3.31
Class sizes are too large at this charter school.(Item has been reverse coded to calculate the mean.	1061	3.17
This school has good physical facilities.	1011	3.15
This school offers a sufficient number of extracurricular activities for my child.	975	3.01
This school offers a sufficient number of elective courses.	866	2.98
This school is meeting my child's social needs that could not be met at other local schools.	935	2.93
This school has sufficient financial resources.	983	2.58

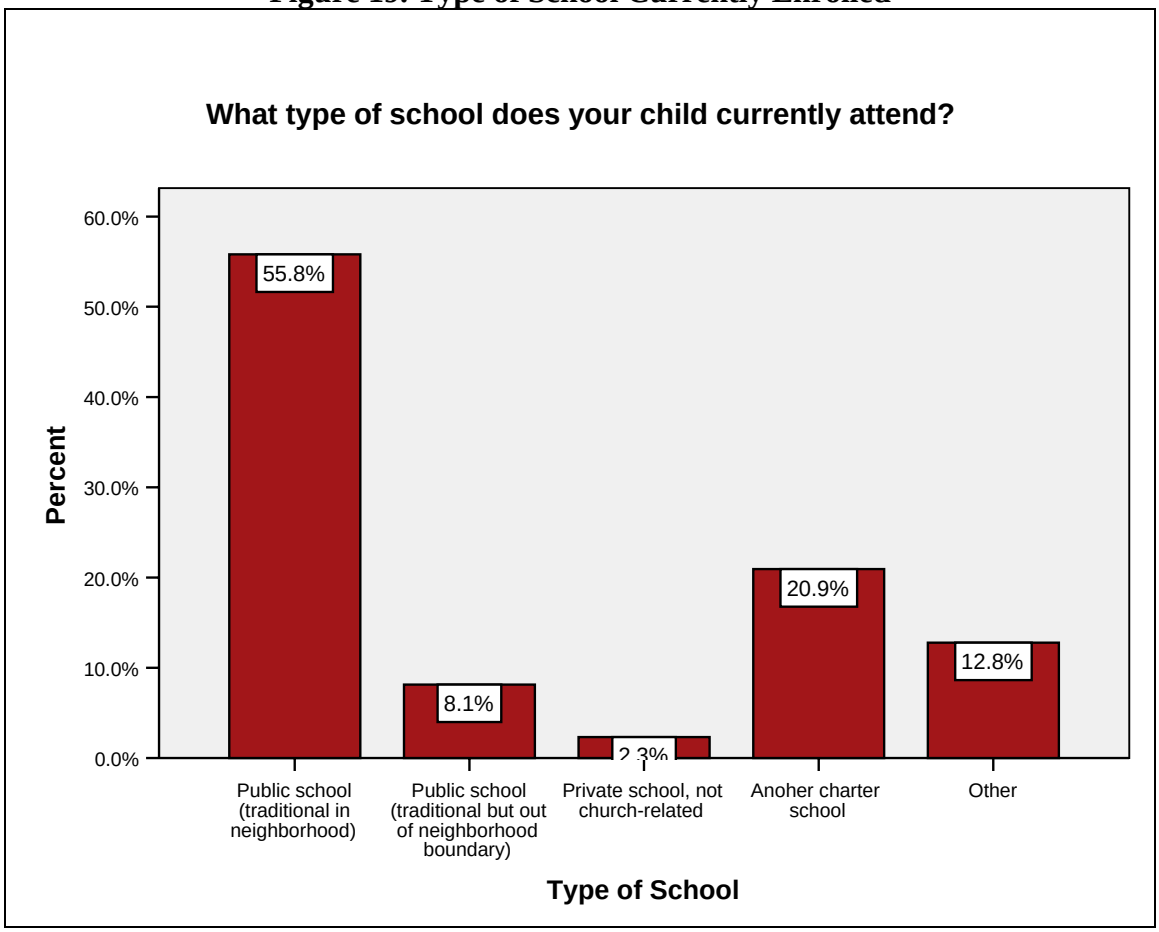
Parents/Guardians of Students Who Previously Attended Charter Schools

The final sample of parents/guardians who had a child enrolled in a charter school during the 2004-05 school year but did not enroll her/him for the 2005-06 academic year includes 88 parents/guardians. They are very similar in terms of their homogeneity to the parents who currently have children in charter schools. Specifically, 83.1% are female, and 16.9% are male. Of the respondents, 95.2% are Caucasian, and no other race/ethnicity was identified by more than one individual. Over 50% reported having a college degree or higher, while 67% of their spouses are educated at such a level.

They are also similar to current charter school parents in terms of their proximity to and engagement with the charter school which their child previously attended. For example, 27.6% traveled 10 or more miles to attend the school. Moreover, 5.7% served on the school's governing board. Finally, one-third reported that the school required them to sign a contract, and over 96% stated that they fully met the expectations of the requirements in the parent contract.

The withdrawn children were primarily enrolled in grades k-8. After being withdrawn from a charter school, 63.8% of parents/guardians indicated that they placed the students back in a traditional public school, while 20.9% enrolled their child in another charter school. Thus, it appears that at least some charter schools are competing with other charter schools for the same students. Only 2.3% placed them in a private school, which is slightly below the percentage of students served in private schools statewide. 12.8% of parents/guardians identified "other" as the type of school to which they moved their child; however, they did not specify any school types that were not already listed on the survey. These results are summarized in the following graph.

Figure 19. Type of School Currently Enrolled



The following sections of the report focus on why some parents withdraw their children from a charter school. Particular attention will be paid to satisfaction levels with the school overall as well as with specific characteristics of the school.

Satisfaction with the School Overall

When asked what grade they would assign to the charter school their child once attended but to which they did not return by choice the following year, 64.0% of these parents still awarded the school an A or B, while 16.3% rated the school with a D or F. Although these ratings are significantly below those assigned by parents to the charter school in which their child is currently enrolled, they are still higher than the ratings given to public schools in the community. By comparison, 29.8% of parents/guardians with children previously enrolled in a charter school assigned an A or B, and 27.4% assigned a D or F to public schools in their community. On average, these parents give a grade .88 levels higher to the charter school from which they have withdrawn a child that they do public schools in their community. The results are summarized in he table below.

Table 32. Parental Ratings of the Charter School from which their Child Withdrew

Grade Assigned to the previous Charter School	Percent	Grade assigned to Public Schools in Your Community	Percent
A	34.9%	A	6.0%
B	29.1%	B	23.8%
C	19.8%	C	42.9%
D	11.6%	D	17.9%
F	4.7%	F	9.5%

Given these satisfaction levels, it is not surprising that over 20% of this sample who withdraws from a charter school sends their child to a different charter school. In fact, of the parents who withdrew their child from one charter school and placed them in another charter school, 61.1% awarded the previous charter an A, and the remainder of the sample all assigned a B or C. Thus, there is a significant number of parents/guardians who withdraw their child from a charter school with which they were relatively satisfied to place them in a presumably more effective charter school.

Of the group who withdrew their child from a charter school and enrolled her/him in a traditional public school, they rated the former charter school slightly more favorably than they did public schools in their community. It appears that they are willing to place their child in a school with which they expect to be less satisfied with on overall compared to the one they are leaving. Please see the comparisons in the following table.

Table 33. Parental Ratings of the Charter School from which their Child Withdrew and enrolled in a Traditional Public School vs. Public Schools in their Community (N=54)

Grade Assigned to the previous Charter School	Percent	Grade assigned to Public Schools in Your Community	Percent
A	24.1	A	7.5
B	31.5	B	32.1
C	22.2	C	43.4
D	14.8	D	9.4
F	7.4	F	7.5

Satisfaction with Characteristics of the Charter School from which they Withdrew

Parents were asked to rate their agreement with 23 statements potentially describing various characteristics of the school. A Likert scale was used with 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strongly disagree. The means of these characteristics are reported in the subsequent table; a mean of 3.0 represents agreement with the statement on average.

While these ratings are not as favorable as those of parents who currently have a child enrolled in a charter school, they do not paint a picture of high dissatisfaction either. Similar to the parents of currently enrolled charter students, these parents are most concerned with the number of electives offered (mean=2.57), the number of extracurricular activities available (mean=2.60), and the extent to which the school is meeting their child's social needs that could not be met at other schools (mean=2.50). They are also somewhat slightly dissatisfied with the school's facilities and report mixed agreement that the school has sufficient financial resources.

The critical item that differs most between parents with current charter students compared to parents who withdrew their child from a charter is "The charter school met my child's academic needs that could not be met at other local schools." This item received a mean rating of 3.47 from parents with students currently enrolled in a charter compared to a 2.80 from parents who withdrew their child from the charter. Moreover, only 10.6% of current charter school parents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, while 43.5% of previously enrolled charter parents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

It does not appear that parents who withdrew their child from the charter did so because of academic concerns given the high levels of agreement with (1) students were held accountable for their own achievement/performance, (2) this school had high standard and expectations for students, and (3) this charter school helped students reach their highest potential. Therefore, the disagreement between current and previous charter parents is that the latter believe there are other local school options that can meet their child's academic needs, and they have made the change in part based on this belief. It is also likely that more electives and extracurricular options are seen as a means to better meet their child's social needs in the new school setting, which is most frequently a traditional public school. The results are summarized in the following table with the items in the order from most to least favorable.

Table 34. Satisfaction with Previous Charter School

Descriptive Statistics

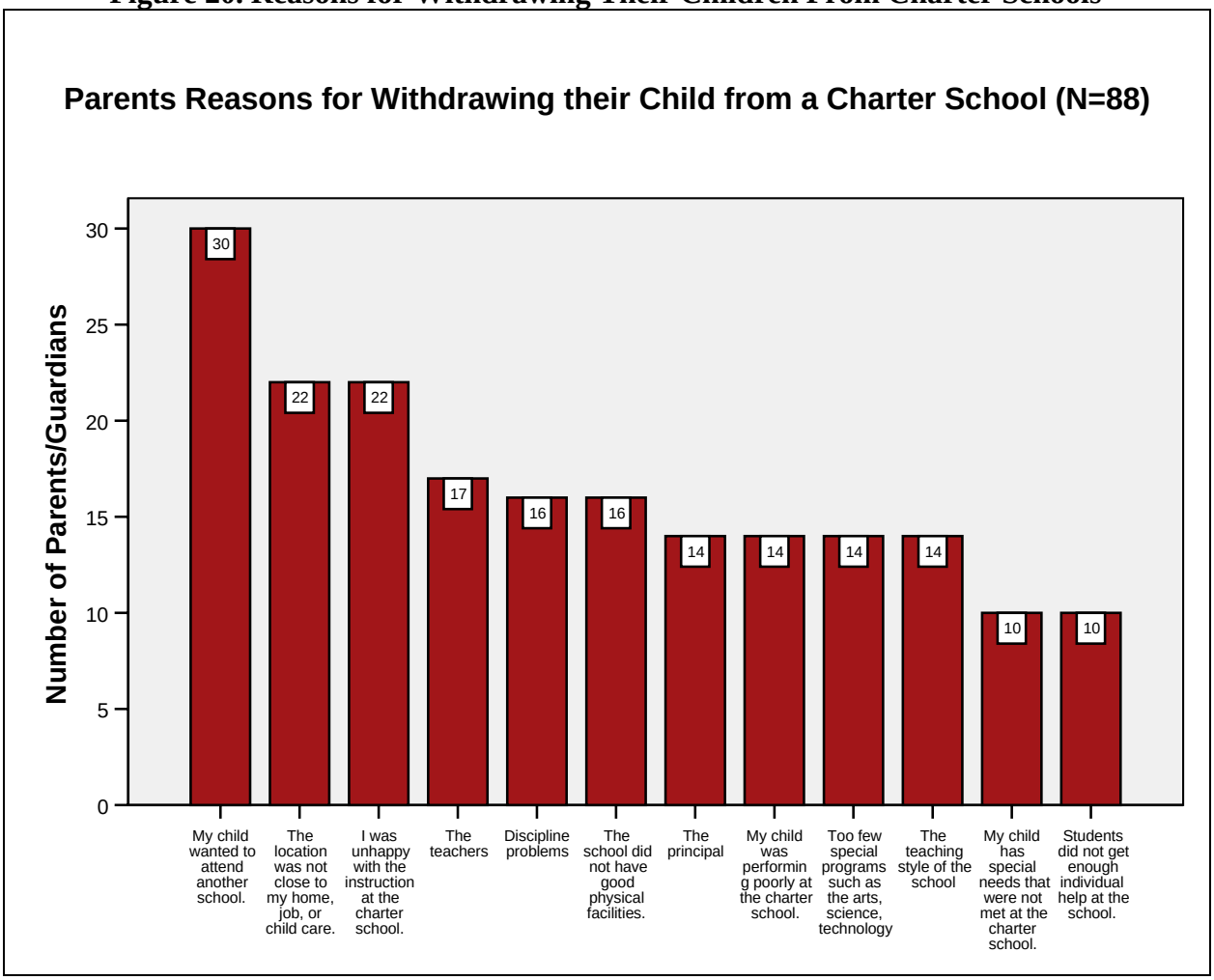
	N	Mean
The school's neighborhood was safe.	82	3.43
Teachers cared about the students.	86	3.40
Teachers in the charter school involved parents.	85	3.38
Parents were actively involved in the charter school.	79	3.34
I was comfortable spending time at the charter school.	82	3.32
I am satisfied with safety at the school.	84	3.31
Students were held accountable for their own achievement/performance.	81	3.30
This school had high standards and expectations for students.	84	3.23
I was satisfied with the school's curriculum.	84	3.18
Teachers were involved in decision making at the school.	78	3.15
This charter school helped students reach their highest potential.	87	3.11
My child enjoyed the charter school.	86	3.10
Parents, students, and teachers had a good working relationship.	84	3.10
Teachers were held accountable for their effectiveness.	78	3.05
I was satisfied with the instruction offered.	83	3.02
Class sizes were too large. (Item has been reverse coded to calculate the mean).	88	2.98
School leaders were held accountable for student achievement/performance.	75	2.91
The charter school met my child's academic needs that could not be met at other local schools.	85	2.80
The school had good physical facilities.	84	2.79
The charter school offered a sufficient number of extracurricular activities for my child.	78	2.60
This school had sufficient financial resources.	79	2.57
This school offers a sufficient number of elective courses.	74	2.57
The charter school met my child's social needs that could not be met at other local schools.	76	2.50

Reasons for Withdrawing their Child from the Charter School

Parents were asked why they withdrew their child from the charter school. Specifically, they were provided a list of 27 possible reasons and asked to mark all that apply. These 27 potential reasons were the same reasons current charter school parents were asked to assess if they were reasons they chose the charter school they did for their child to attend. The only difference is that some of the reasons are stated negatively on this survey (e.g., the school was not safe) and positively on the current charter school parent survey (e.g., the school is safe).

The following graph displays the top 12 reasons parents withdrew their child from a charter school. These reasons were cited by 10 (11.4%) to 30 (30.4%) respondents.

Figure 20. Reasons for Withdrawing Their Children From Charter Schools



The most oft cited reason for withdrawing from the charter was the "child wanted to attend another school." Beyond that, parents who chose to withdraw their child appeared to do so for a wide variety of reasons including convenience (i.e., location), discipline, instruction, school personnel, and a lack of individualization in the program. Since these same indicators were rated very favorably by parents with students currently enrolled in charters and the backgrounds of these two groups of parents are very similar, in future studies, it is important to look for a school effect. Are higher numbers of parents/guardians withdrawing from certain schools?

Written Comments from Parents of Current Charter School Students

In this section, we address the reasons parents chose to place their children in charter schools, as indicated by their additional comments on the parent survey.[3] There were two overarching themes to parent/guardian feedback regarding charter schools. These themes included (1) their dissatisfaction with aspects of the neighborhood school/district, and (2) the charter school presented an opportunity for their child. Often these opportunities were discussed by parents as "unique" and/or "innovative." Moreover, these opportunities were seen as a contrast to their child's experience in or potential experience in "traditional" schools.

One of the most prevalent reasons parents/guardians who responded to the surveys provided for choosing charter schools was their dissatisfaction with the neighborhood school or district and the services provided. The dissatisfaction fell along two dimensions. These were dissatisfaction with issues regarding (1) the parent's child, and (2) school or district factors. In other instances, parents/guardians explained that they were dissatisfied with the local school because of "prejudice against my child from school and discrimination for racial and religious background."

First, dissatisfaction with issues regarding the child included, for instance, their child not excelling in the "traditional" school and the traditional school not individualizing/meeting their child's needs; the school/district not being receptive to their requests or involvement, and threats to their child's safety or well being. In particular, they explained that their child was not able to excel in the traditional school, which they often attributed to the school's inability or unwillingness to individualize or meet their child's needs. Repeatedly, parents/guardians of students in charter schools emphasized the "public schools failure to help my child succeed," and the lack of challenge for their child.

Second, parents/guardians who responded to the survey situated their comments for choosing charter schools within the context of their dissatisfaction with the traditional public school, particularly issues parents/guardians perceived as endemic to the traditional school/district. For example, dissatisfaction in this category of issues regarding the school/district included the (1) curriculum; (2) safety and discipline; (3) lack of accountability for student learning; and (4) large class sizes. A number of parents pointed out that they want their exit to be a signal to the districts. This is captured in the following statement by a parent, "I also hope that school districts, especially [our district], will take notice of their unhappy "clients" who are leaving for another place that will treat them better."

Many parents/guardians of students who are currently enrolled in charter schools described their dissatisfaction generally in terms of a "bad experiences" with, a "dislike" for the neighborhood school/district. Sometimes these experiences were based on here-say rather than personal experiences. For the purposes of this discussion, only those items reported by parents/guardians as personal experiences are included here.

[3] Please note that insufficient information was provided by parents/guardians of previously enrolled students to include those data as a part of the qualitative findings presented here.

In the area of curriculum, frequently, a particular mathematics program, which is considered to be a back to basics program, was targeted by parents/guardians. Citing the mathematics program as their rationale for going to charters, parents/guardians stated things such as “Our children need a better opportunity for getting a good education than is offered locally,” particularly because as one parent/guardian noted their child had felt “lost” at the traditional school.

Parents/guardians often pointed out their dissatisfaction with teachers or perceived “top heavy” administration or the way students, in general, were treated. Some of the more intense comments were similar to the following statement by a parent/guardian, “Prior dealing with the mixture of incompetence, apathy, ignorance, and uncertainty found with school administrators, teachers, councilors, special educators, and district personal within [this] District.” Another parent/guardian said, “teachers treat the kids as equals not as second class citizen [in our charter school], and I was unhappy with the way my child was treated by teachers in public school.” Another parent/guardian compared the teachers in charters to teachers in traditional schools, noting:

> *While I recognize I give up some aspects of convenience that public schools provide, I cannot emphasize enough that teachers in public schools think and behave as though the parent is the enemy. They take no feedback and sit too long on the "overworked/underpaid" pity pot. That makes ALL the difference.*

School safety and discipline were another area that parents/guardians were dissatisfied with the traditional schools. For instance, parents/guardians commented on the “lack of adult supervision” or incidents that occurred to their child. As another parent/guardian shared, “my child almost died from the result seriously injured on an accident on the school grounds at his old school.” Another parent/guardian, who saw charter schools as an alternative to what was seen as unsafe environment for her child, describes her experience:

> *The board members refuse to listen to concerns of parents/guardians and have refused to listen for many years. Fortunately, I was able to get my children in a charter school before they were too affected. The principal at our local school where my child first attended showed by her actions that she hated children. She yelled at them often and refused to do anything to prevent bullying. My first grader came home in tears everyday saying he never wanted to go to school again. He did not feel safe. He was treated very poorly by some of his teachers. These and other bad experiences prompted me to leave the local school. I am so glad I did, as many of my neighbors spend hundreds of dollars and/or hundreds of hours tutoring their children to make up for the lack of a decent math curriculum.*

The dissatisfaction among parents for the traditional school is embedded in comments of those parents/guardians who call for restructuring of the traditional public school. For instance, one parent explained:

> *I am a public school teacher and wish I could feel more confidence in the public middle schools. However, due to funding issues our schools are too large and students easily "fall through the cracks". There is also a required set of "school skills" for a student to*

> *succeed; any deviation from this and the system cannot support that student. We need smaller class sizes and restructuring of the middle schools. If this were to occur, I would gladly support public schools. I feel guilty everyday, but from the perspective of a mother I choose charter.*

Numerous parents/guardians echoed the point that they too would return to the public schools if they were "different." For instance, another parent characterized their dissatisfaction in terms of the perceived "mediocrity" of the neighborhood school and accolades for their charter school.

> *In our neighborhood public school mediocrity appeared to be the standard for everything. Our intelligent (but not unusually gifted) children were bored out of their minds. The only solution we were offered was that our children could read more books, quietly at their desk, when they had finished their assignments. At the charter school, they have come alive, having been awakened to academic challenges.*

Other parents/guardians directed comments towards a state-level organization and attributed a lack of accountability among teachers to their efforts. The following statement by a parent/guardian reflects the sentiment made by some parents/guardians.

> *"The [state] organization is worried about losing control of these schools. What they should be worried about is how poorly the current system performs."*

Frequently, parents of charter school students described the "excellence" in charter schools as a contrast to what they perceived as traditional school focusing on "slower learners."

Numerous parents/guardians highlighted their dissatisfaction with the traditional schools' "lack of commitment to stop bullying." For many parents, concerns over safety and discipline were attributed to a "losing the battle in enforcing their dress code policy & discipline policies."

Parents/guardians also remarked repeatedly, as will be discussed further below, on the size of classes and schools in Utah as a source of their dissatisfaction. The following statement by a parent/guardian reflects the nature of concerns expressed:

> *The public schools in UT are overcrowded, making it difficult for even the good teachers to effectively help all of their students. Charters schools have really helped all students in our area by easing the burden of the public schools. One of my children, who struggles in school, was in a class of 37 students and one great teacher, who was unable to keep track of whether or not he was keeping up on his work, and completely unable to give the help he needed. In the charter school (with smaller class sizes and more help available) he is progressing very well. … The high schools here are very overcrowded [as a result] we need charter schools that are closer to home for our high school age students.*

Many parents contrasted the traditional public school experience with their experience in charter schools. These comparisons illustrate both their dissatisfaction with the traditional school as well as their satisfaction with the charter school.

Here, we discuss six areas of satisfaction which parents noted in the surveys. These areas include:

1. the ability to exercise choice
2. the perceived benefits to their child reflected by the individualization and advancement of their child;
3. the engagement of parents in the school and in decision making;
4. the perceived unique or “innovative” features of charter schools;
5. school discipline and safety; and
6. the belief that teachers are held to a higher standard and are more accountable for their teaching.

First, one of the primary areas parents/guardians were satisfied with was their ability to exercise their right to choose a school for their child. In essence, choice matters to the parents/guardians who responded. Other parents/guardians, similar to charter administrators and charter board members, communicated that simply having a choice of where to send their child was meaningful. The following parent/guardian statement best captures this notion:

> *The most important issue about charter schools is that many, many of them are started at the grassroots level by parents. Choice is the word that defines all of my reasons for participating in a charter school. Also, in my opinion (for what it's worth) charter schools must be evaluated individually & not all lumped into one general category.*

Another parent/guardian emphasizes the value of charters:

> *If each charter school has a waiting list that represents hundreds of children. Shouldn't that be a wake up call that this is something that parents want? Why are we spending money to research something that isn't broken here in Utah. Our School was the best thing that ever happened to our children. I am so grateful that even though we don't have much money my children are getting the best education ever. I can give time in return and that is all that is expected.*

Numerous parents/guardians also noted that charter schools were an alternative to both private and home-schooling. For example, one parent indicated that “my personal definition of a charter school is [it] ‘gives a child a private school education without charging tuition.’" Another parent remarked, “We have more and more charter schools opening up in [this area] because of the lack of public schools and money to support the public schools. Hence we are all moving to either "free" private schools-charters-,or paying for private.” Yet, another parent indicated that charters should be the “next best choice to a private school.”

Second, most parents/guardians who responded to the surveys expressed satisfaction with their experiences at charter schools, particularly relative to their own child’s experiences. For instance, a parent/guardian highlighted some of the aspects seen as good in the charter school their child attends.

> *This charter school allows my children to learn and excel because it is a privilege to attend (meaning children or families who refuse to allow the learning process to take place will be kick out permanently and will have to return to mainstream public school where teachers are babysitters first and teachers second). Uniforms, strict behavioral policies, parental involvement, and a rich curriculum are also huge reasons for attending this charter school.*

Another parent said, "I am so very happy with my charter school. They have been able to meet my child's needs in ways the Public School would not even consider." A parent/guardian of a student with special needs illustrated a similar idea echoed by many.

> *I have a child with special needs. Traditional schools were not able nor willing to provide guidance and help so he could succeed in school. They would not /were not able to think out side the box. They were not well educated in his area of disability - they did not have time to make sure he was getting things done and handed in -they just signed his tracker and sent him to the next class. They could not help him in a smaller class size, [and] resources class. Because they just assumed that since he had difficulties learning of any kind- he was dumb and should be taught much about his abilities. Our charter schools hired an aid immediately-no questions asked. He is now in a charter high school focusing on children at risk for a variety of reasons. They have adjusted their teaching to reflect that. They have 6 weeks terms- they teach 3 classes a term in the blocks so homework is done in class. This is so much better!*

Although a number of parents remarked on and were disappointed in the lack of preparedness and disorganization of among some charter schools even after their first year of opening, most parents/guardians who responded explained that they had not regretted their decision to enroll their child in the charter school. For instance, a parent/guardian wrote:

> *What no survey can measure is the way a student feels when he walks through the door--successful, important, and capable of learning. That atmosphere is created by a collective staff who believe in the students and work together to help students to succeed. Our school's behavior management program is also very successful, based on positive reinforcement.*

A third aspect of satisfaction among parents/guardians was the degree of expected parental involvement and engagement in the child's charter school. Parents/guardians throughout their comments on the survey reported that they were enthusiastic about the degree to which the charters seemed to encourage their participation rather than discourage them from participating in their child's education, operations of the school, and decision making at the school. For instance, a parent/guardian said, "[I] absolutely love the charter school my children attend. I also like the fact that parents are required to provide 40 hours of volunteering for the school each year." While many parents responded to the survey that parental involvement was required by their charter school, charter board members and charter administrators contend that it is not a requirement. However, it seems that statements, such as the following, which is found on a charter school website, contributes to the perception that parental involvement is mandatory.

Note that the statement emphasizes that parents are “strongly encouraged to volunteer.” Yet, it does say that parents are “asked to sign a contract.”

> Parent involvement will be vital to the success of [this charter school]. All parents are strongly encouraged to volunteer a minimum of 40 hours per family per year for the school. Parents will be asked to sign a contract to commit to volunteering at the [this charter school]. This volunteerism will accomplish two goals:
>
> 1. Improve the quality of education by relieving some of the burdens on the teachers and staff.
> 2. Allow parents to feel ownership in the school and their children's education.
>
> The Parent Council (PC) will be the official organization representing the parents. This organization will spearhead and coordinate the volunteer efforts needed for the school.
>
> Parents will be encouraged to volunteer in a variety of ways that can include, but are not limited to:
> Art, Field Trips, Lunch Room, Recess Duty, Assemblies, Food Services, Music, Room Parents, Bulletin Board, Foreign Languages, Office Help, Special Productions, Classroom Help, Fundraising, Pianist, Technology, Clinic Help, Playground, Tutor/Mentor, Committees, Library, PC

Regardless of the nature of parental involvement, parents/guardians overwhelming were satisfied with it. For example, another parent/guardian said,

> *We have found the element of parental involvement very enjoyable. Some people I've spoken with have argued that public schools welcome parental involvement as well. I'm sure that's true but the charter school sets an expectation and structure that foster a deep level of involvement.*

We must note that despite the overall positive comments on parental involvement, there were a number of parents/guardians who indicated that parental involvement was not positive or as pervasive. For instance, a parent/guardian illustrates the contrast to the previous statements: “Parents have no input in the governance board or policies/decisions. It's pretty much run like a privileged school. If you’re lucky enough to have your children picked, you’re expected to help out and be quiet.” Another parent/guardian further accentuated the discontent felt by some.

> *Since most of our board is made of up parents of children at the charter school, the above decisions are made by them. However, all the other parents really do not have much input into these areas, except for being able to come to board meetings monthly to listen and also to give input when asked. They also distributed a survey to all parents at the end of last year, asking for input, but not necessarily into the above subjects. That is one area I think our school could improve on. There seems to be a bit of a "that's our secret" attitude on the part of the administration and board. They are not willing to share information or decision making power with "regular parents."*

Fourth, many parents noted in their examples what was referred to throughout the comments from survey and interview participants as a "back to basics" focus. Other parents/guardians discussed that one of the strongest appeals of charter schools is their "uniqueness" and "innovativeness." For instance, a parent/guardian explained, the "single most important element at this charter school for my family was the innovative teaching style, including: more attention to creative thinkers, multi-faceted projects, team/group project assignments, student held to higher level of accountability." Another parent added,

> *I am a supporter of the idea of charter schools, although there are many charter schools that I would not choose to enroll my children in. I chose the school I did because I believed in the mission it promoted, I was impressed by the curriculum and method of delivering that curriculum, and I felt it provided an atmosphere of academic excellence my local school did not.*

The advantage of charter schools over traditional schools was addressed by the perspective of this parent/guardian:

> *Teachers in "classic" public schools have been handicapped by government bureaucracy to the point that the quality of education received by students today is lacking, watered down and of poor quality. Charter schools are fresh, innovative and free from the oppressive chains of mainstream education.*

In describing their charter schools, parents/guardians of students attending charter schools with few exceptions addressed the niche that their school filled. One exception was a parent/guardian who highlighted that their child's charter school provided access to and utilization of "community facilities (recreation center, library, museums, etc.) which provided opportunities to learn practical skills (use of public transit, etc), public courtesy, good citizenship, independence and self-esteem, and especially a sense of connection with the broader community." While another parent commented on their charter's unique focus and features, they also explained that the academic program "lacked substance:"

> *My son benefited from the small class size and casual atmosphere at [his charter]. This school offered many opportunities to learn and work hands on with the [technology] not available in other high schools. The kids seemed to really feel valued and accepted and I loved the way they address the faculty by their first names. The academic program, however, I felt really lacked substance. My son started at [another high school]. Halfway through his Jr. year, he had completed all of his academic graduation requirements at [that school]. If this had not been the case, we may not have transferred him. The specialized curriculum was the driving force behind the transfer, but my son came away with many new friends and a stronger sense of self. He was no longer just a face in a sea of students.*

As noted previously, parents/guardians are dissatisfied with the class sizes in traditional public schools. In sharp contrast, they perceive class sizes in charters to be more appropriate.

Fifth, as illustrated before, parents/guardians have remarked on their dissatisfaction with the safety and discipline at traditional schools. Again, in contrast they perceive charters to be safer

and to have higher standards of discipline. In part, many parents attribute this difference to the use of uniforms. The comment from a parent/guardian illustrates the responses we received:

> *Most charter schools require school uniforms. The difference in overall behavior is amazing. The children are calmer, more disciplined, and I believe more interested in learning than if they are wondering where someone got a pair of skate shoes or some other fad item, no matter what it costs. Our children are in school to learn--not to compete to be fashion plates.*

Another parent/guardian remarked:

> *My charter school created a safe atmosphere where the children can do their best and excel at their own pace. They love school and therefore love to learn. They rise to their best because they are lovingly encouraged to do so. The high standards of values encouraged a safe environment.*

Sixth, teacher accountability is the last area that parents/guardians were highly satisfied with at their charter schools. For instance, the following comment is representative of other parents/guardians who provided feedback.

> *One of the things that we REALLY like about the charter school is teacher accountability. Last year, one of our children had a teacher who really wasn't making it. She was disorganized, ineffective, flustered, etc. The staff of the school worked with her, but at the 60 day evaluation, let her go. Hooray! You'd never see that in a public school, unfortunately. I'm not an advocate for firing teachers, but I do feel that the students and their learning are the MOST important thing.*

Another parent contrasted the perceived practice at charter schools with traditional schools,

> *Charter schools give parents a choice. Parents have a voice regarding good and bad teachers. Bad teachers stay in public schools because school districts can't fire them and the schools districts don't care if many parents agree that certain teachers are ineffective.*

Another parent/guardian extended the discussion on accountability in charter schools. They explained that in their charter a “small K-8 and 400 kids, [the] teacher is accountable to principal, [the] principal is accountable to board, [the] board is parents & community.”

In addition to their explicit reasons for choosing charter schools, some parents also identified areas of charter schools with which they have concerns or were dissatisfied with, including the lack of preparedness and disorganization and lack of parental involvement on some boards and in certain instances in decision making, which were both mentioned previously. In addition, requests were made for additional funding, additional monitoring of charter schools to ensure they were serving their mission, and an expansion of charter school options across grade levels, particularly the high school level. A final issue, which has been addressed by participants in interviews and focus groups, was a desire for an end to the “dual system” of education between

charters and traditional districts. Again, insufficient written comments were provided by parents of students of who previously attended charter schools, to be included in this analysis.

Summary of Reasons for Enrolling or Withdrawing Students from Charter Schools

Overall, the comments from parents/guardians of both students currently enrolled and those who previously attended charters illustrate that education in charter schools seems parallel to their traditional school equivalents in several ways. First, given the comments from survey responses, the educational experience of each parent and child is very much dependent on the individual school at any given point in time. The implication of this is the definition of a "good school" is based primarily on the experience of their child as well as their personal interactions and/or engagement with the school. Second, misinformation about charter schools is as prevalent as misinformation about traditional schools, including what constitutes choice, innovation, engagement, and success. For instance, many individuals believe that "back to basics" is innovative and that traditional schools cannot be the place for trying new ideas. There is one area in particular, accountability, where comments from parents/guardians of students currently and previously enrolled disconnects with the rhetoric around public schools. Parents/guardians who provided comments on the survey demonstrated the desire for more accountability, not less, for teachers, students, schools, boards, and parents.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we collected data including surveys from charter and district administrators and charter and district board as well as parents, and interviews with a broad spectrum of charter school and district stakeholders across the state. We gathered information about charter school purpose, authorization, governance, laws and regulations, training and technical assistance, as well as the reasons parents enroll or withdraw their children from charter schools. In this section, we highlight eight conclusions derived from the findings presented above. These conclusions provide guidance for addressing policies relevant to Utah's charter school program.

First, this study demonstrated that many parents of students who currently attend charter schools chose to leave traditional public schools because they were dissatisfied with their local schools and/or districts. As one parent noted, charter schools are "an affordable alternative to the failing public school system." The areas of greatest concern and dissatisfaction for parents were lack of individualized attention, lack of success or progress for their child, class sizes, safety concerns generally, lack of accountability for student learning, and interactions with district or school officials who were reportedly unwilling to work with parents to find solutions. While many participants questioned whether charter schools were as "unique" and "innovative" as they considered themselves, evidence from this study suggests that we should consider what it takes to be innovative or unique. For example, much of what we learned here demonstrates that frequently parents, charter administrators, and boards believe that the unique and innovative feature of charter schools is the ability of parents to exercise their right to choose the school their child should attend. In light of the dissatisfaction among parents with traditional public schools and the fact that many current charter schools have what would be considered a traditional (sometimes referred to as a "back-to-basics") approach, perhaps greater understanding of these issues and communication with parents/guardians would be beneficial to serving students and improving schools all public schools.

Second, an interest in and desire for charter schools exists, but growth of charter schools should be contingent upon the resources and infrastructure to support reasonable and "responsible growth." In fact, with regard to whether charter schools should be expanded, the participants in this study suggested that further attention needs to be given to issues of expanding charters based on the ability of the state to support that expansion with sufficient resources and infrastructure (e.g., financial, training, technical assistance). Moreover, responsible growth would not lead to the destruction of traditional public schools.

Next, another significant issue addressed by participants was conflicts of interest, particularly with regard to legislators. A number of participants in this study were skeptical about conflicts of interests and how these conflicts of interest influenced the expansion, authorization, and operation of charter schools. The legitimacy of efforts to have "responsible growth" of charters would be vastly improved if the conflicts of interest, such as those identified by participants, were eliminated in the expansion, authorization, and operation of charter schools.

Fourth, participants of this study emphasized the need for a clear, transparent authorization process, which is consistent with the two preceding conclusions. They specified important criteria that should be used to authorize schools, such as a sound business plan, a sound

educational program, and requirements for qualified personnel. They also suggested the need for an expanded timeline for authorizing charter schools so that sufficient time is available for the school to open, prepared and organized around its mission. This suggested feature of the authorization process would allow schools ample time to plan and prepare for opening charters and would give the host district enough time to plan for changes in staffing or facility utilization due to charter school openings.

Fifth, the majority of participants in this study indicated that charter schools should be accountable to the public to operate high quality schools, accountable for high student performance levels, as are traditional public schools, and accountable for the purposes they identify in their charter and for the purposes that are specified in state law. For instance, while a few participants noted that bureaucracies and micromanaging should be avoided, many parents, administrators, and board members noted the need for additional oversight and increased accountability. The types of accountability participants believed warranted additional attention included financial, student performance, qualified teachers, and serving the mission of the charter. For instance, a parent/guardian explained, “The idea of a charter school is great - especially those that are unique but they need to be managed by the right people and hire better teachers.”

Sixth, insufficient resources and the costs of duplicated services resulted in concerns about the ability of the state to support and operate two systems (i.e., charter schools and traditional public schools). In response to this concern, many participants recommended the elimination of the “dual system” between charters and traditional public schools. If this were heeded, perhaps alternatives to the current system could be sought. For example, eliminating the current dual system between charters and districts may (1) open additional choice opportunities for parents/guardians within the district, thus potentially expanding the programmatic alternatives for students in both the charter as well as traditional school environment, (2) increase the availability of resources to charters who can then utilize the district (and state) infrastructure, and (3) improve autonomy of charters while increasing accountability. Moreover, eliminating the dual system creates less of a zero-sum environment.

Seventh, participants identified the need for extensive professional development and technical assistance both prior to opening charter schools and on an ongoing basis. While some aspects of operating charter schools are distinct from the traditional public schools, most are the same and could be addressed within the existing structure of support and technical assistance for the traditional public schools. This suggestion emerged within discussions of eliminating the dual system of schooling and having charters, as schools, operate within their host districts.

Finally, the findings from this study illustrated a number of disagreements regarding the implications of reported competition between charter schools and traditional public schools. For instance, there is a perception among many charter board members, charter administrators, and parents of students in charter schools that charter schools infuse competition into the educational arena and raise the expectations for all schools. Advocates for charter schools believe this type of market competition results in increased quality among all schools. Yet, other participants throughout the study raised significant caution in declaring the competition created by charter schools successful or beneficial. For instance, many believed that charter schools, as they

currently exist, lead to segregation, are not needed, drain resources from the operation of public schools, and have not demonstrated that they provide anything different or better.

Given the previous point as well as the combined findings of the current study, further research is needed on charter schools in the state. For example, whether charters actually do serve as a means to improve traditional public schools and whether they are actually making a difference in the operation of traditional public schools was not addressed in this study. Consequently, the degree to which charter schools are operating in competition to the traditional public schools and the ways in which that competition affects traditional schools is unknown. To date, an evaluation of the quality of charter schools in the state has not been conducted. For instance, there remain a number of questions regarding (1) the ways in which charter schools operate, including how they adhere to their stated purpose and those specified by state law; (2) the degree to which they provide unique or innovative experiences that public schools do not offer; (3) the success of charter schools in individualizing the curriculum and improving student performance; and (4) how parents become more engaged in charter schools and decision making at charter schools. Moreover, empirical research has not explored how student performance in charter schools or other organizational factors compare to that of the traditional school. Additional research and evaluation studies of charter schools would provide valuable information about the operation and outcomes of charter schools and ways to improve the charter school program in the state.

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APPENDIX A

UTAH CHARTER SCHOOL LEGISLATION

53A-1a-501. Short title.

This part is known as "The Utah Charter Schools Act."

Enacted by Chapter 231, 1998 General Session

53A-1a-501.3. Definitions.

As used in this part, "chartering entity" means the entity that authorizes the establishment of a charter school.

Enacted by Chapter 251, 2004 General Session

53A-1a-501.5. State Charter School Board created.

(1) (a) The State Charter School Board is created consisting of the following members appointed by the governor:

(i) two members who have expertise in finance or small business management;

(ii) three members who are appointed from a slate of at least six candidates nominated by Utah's charter schools; and

(iii) two members who are appointed from a slate of at least four candidates nominated by the State Board of Education.

(b) Each appointee shall have demonstrated dedication to the purposes of charter schools as outlined in Section **53A-1a-503**.

(2) (a) State Charter School Board members shall serve four-year terms, except three of the initial members appointed by the governor shall be appointed for a two-year term.

(b) If a vacancy occurs, the governor shall appoint a replacement for the unexpired term.

(3) (a) The State Charter School Board shall annually elect a chair from its membership.

(b) Four members of the board shall constitute a quorum.

(c) Meetings may be called by the chair or upon request of three members of the board.

(4) (a) (i) Members who are not state government employees shall receive no compensation or benefits for their services, but may receive per diem and expenses incurred in the performance of the members' official duties at the rates established by the Division of Finance under Sections **63A-3-106** and **63A-3-107**.

(ii) Members may decline to receive per diem and expenses for their service.

(b) (i) State government officer and employee members who do not receive salary, per diem, or expenses from their agency for their service may receive per diem and expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties from the State Charter School Board at the rates established by the Division of Finance under Sections **63A-3-106** and **63A-3-107**.

(ii) State government officer and employee members may decline to receive per diem and expenses for their service.

Enacted by Chapter 251, 2004 General Session

53A-1a-501.6. Power and duties of State Charter School Board.

(1) The State Charter School Board shall:

(a) authorize and promote the establishment of charter schools, subject to the procedures in Section **53A-1a-505**;

(b) annually review and evaluate the performance of charter schools authorized by the State Charter School Board and hold the schools accountable for their performance;

(c) monitor charter schools authorized by the State Charter School Board for compliance with federal and state laws, rules, and regulations;

(d) provide technical support to charter schools and persons seeking to establish charter schools by:

(i) identifying and promoting successful charter school models;

(ii) facilitating the application and approval process for charter school authorization;

(iii) directing charter schools and persons seeking to establish charter schools to sources of private funding and support;

(iv) reviewing and evaluating proposals to establish charter schools for the purpose of supporting and strengthening proposals before an application for charter school authorization is submitted to the State Charter School Board or a local school board; and

(v) assisting charter schools to understand and carry out their charter obligations;

(e) provide technical support, as requested, to a local school board relating to charter schools;

(f) make recommendations on legislation and rules pertaining to charter schools to the Legislature and State Board of Education, respectively; and

(g) make recommendations to the State Board of Education on the funding of charter schools.

(2) The State Charter School Board may:

(a) contract;

(b) sue and be sued; and

(c) (i) at the discretion of the charter school, provide administrative services to, or perform other school functions for, charter schools authorized by the State Charter School Board; and

(ii) charge fees for the provision of services or functions.

Amended by Chapter 291, 2005 General Session

53A-1a-501.7. State Charter School Board -- Staff director -- Facilities.

(1) (a) The staff director for the State Charter School Board shall be appointed by the superintendent of public instruction, with the consent of the State Charter School Board.

(b) If the State Charter School Board withholds consent of an appointment, the board shall state its reasons in writing to the superintendent of public instruction.

(c) The State Charter School Board may petition the superintendent of public instruction for removal of the staff director for cause; however, the superintendent of public instruction shall have sole authority to remove the staff director.

(d) The position of staff director is exempt from the career service provisions of Title 67, Chapter 19, Utah State Personnel Management Act.

(2) The superintendent of public instruction shall provide space for staff of the State Charter School Board in facilities occupied by the Utah State Office of Education, with costs charged for the facilities equal to those charged other sections and divisions within the Utah State Office of Education and Utah State Office of Rehabilitation.

Enacted by Chapter 251, 2004 General Session

53A-1a-501.8. Charter schools authorized by the State Board of Education.

(1) Effective May 3, 2004, the State Board of Education may not authorize the establishment of new charter schools.

(2) (a) The State Board of Education shall dissolve each charter or charter agreement it has with a charter school, and the State Charter School Board shall enter into a charter agreement with each of those schools.

(b) The charter agreement made with the State Charter School Board shall contain provisions, consistent with this part, giving the charter school the rights and privileges it had under its

charter with the State Board of Education.
Enacted by Chapter 251, 2004 General Session

53A-1a-502.5. State Charter School Board to authorize the establishment of charter schools.

The State Charter School Board may only authorize:

(1) a maximum of five charter schools that will begin operation in the 2007-08 school year; and

(2) a combined maximum student capacity of 5,000 students for the charter schools authorized in accordance with Subsection (1).
Enacted by Chapter 354, 2006 General Session

53A-1a-503. Purpose.

The purposes of charter schools are to:

(1) continue to improve student learning;

(2) encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;

(3) create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school;

(4) increase choice of learning opportunities for students;

(5) establish new models of public schools and a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes and the creation of innovative measurement tools;

(6) provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level; and

(7) expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. Sec. 6301 et seq.
Amended by Chapter 251, 2004 General Session

53A-1a-503.5. Status of charter schools.

(1) Charter schools are:

(a) considered to be public schools within the state's public education system; and

(b) subject to Subsection **53A-1-401**(3).

(2) A charter school may be established by creating a new school or converting an existing public school to charter status.
Enacted by Chapter 251, 2004 General Session

53A-1a-504. Proposal.

(1) A proposal to establish a charter school may be made by an individual or groups of individuals, including teachers and parents/guardians or guardians of students who will attend the school, or a not-for-profit legal entity organized under the laws of this state.

(2) (a) The principal, teachers, or parents/guardians of students at an existing public school may submit a proposal to convert the school or a portion of the school to charter status.

(b) (i) At least 2/3 of the licensed educators employed at the school and at least two-thirds of the parents/guardians or guardians of students enrolled at the school must have signed a petition approving the proposal prior to its submission to the chartering entity if the entire school is

applying for charter status.

(ii) The percentage is reduced to a simple majority if the conversion is for only a portion of the school.

(c) A proposal submitted under Subsection (2)(a) must first be approved by the local school board based on its determination that:

(i) students opting not to attend the proposed converted school would have access to a comparable public education alternative; and

(ii) current teachers who choose not to teach at the converted charter school or who are not retained by the school at the time of its conversion would receive a first preference for transfer to open teaching positions for which they qualify within the school district. If no positions are open, contract provisions or board policy regarding reduction in staff would apply.

(3) A parochial school or home school is not eligible for charter school status.

Amended by Chapter 291, 2005 General Session

53A-1a-505. Application process -- Contract.

(1) (a) An applicant seeking authorization of a charter school from the State Charter School Board shall provide a copy of the application to the local school board of the school district in which the proposed charter school shall be located either before or at the same time it files its application with the State Charter School Board.

(b) The local board may review the application and may offer suggestions or recommendations to the applicant or the State Charter School Board prior to its acting on the application.

(c) The State Charter School Board shall give due consideration to suggestions or recommendations made by the local school board under Subsection (1)(b).

(d) The State Charter School Board shall review and, by majority vote, either approve or deny the application.

(e) The State Board of Education shall, by majority vote, within 60 days after action by the State Charter School Board under Subsection (1)(d):

(i) approve or deny an application approved by the State Charter School Board; or

(ii) hear an appeal, if any, of an application denied by the State Charter School Board.

(f) The State Board of Education's action under Subsection (1)(d) is final action subject to judicial review.

(g) A charter school application may not be denied on the basis that the establishment of the charter school will have any or all of the following impacts on a public school, including another charter school:

(i) an enrollment decline;

(ii) a decrease in funding; or

(iii) a modification of programs or services.

(2) The State Board of Education shall make a rule providing a timeline for the opening of a charter school following the approval of a charter school application by the State Charter School Board.

(3) (a) After approval of a charter school application, the applicant and the State Charter School Board shall set forth the terms and conditions for the operation of the charter school in a written contractual agreement.

(b) The agreement is the school's charter.

(4) (a) A school holding a charter granted by a local school board may request a charter from

the State Charter School Board.

(b) This section shall govern the application and approval of a charter requested under Subsection (4)(a).

Amended by Chapter 291, 2005 General Session

53A-1a-506. Eligible students.

(1) All resident students of the state qualify for admission to a charter school, subject to the limitations set forth in this section.

(2) (a) A charter school shall enroll an eligible student who submits a timely application, unless the number of applications exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or the school.

(b) (i) If the number of applications exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or the school, then students shall be selected on a random basis, except that the school may give preference to:

(A) a student of a parent who has actively participated in the development of the school;

(B) siblings of students presently enrolled in the school;

(C) a student of a parent who is employed by the school;

(D) students articulating between charter schools offering similar programs that are governed by the same governing body; and

(E) students articulating from one charter school to another pursuant to an articulation agreement between the charter schools that is approved by the State Charter School Board.

(ii) The school may give preference to students who reside within:

(A) the school district in which the school is located;

(B) the municipality in which the school is located; or

(C) a two-mile radius from the school.

(c) When a public school converts to charter status, the school shall give enrollment preference to students who would have otherwise attended it as a regular public school.

(3) A charter school may not discriminate in its admission policies or practices on the same basis as other public schools may not discriminate in their admission policies and practices.

Amended by Chapter 301, 2005 General Session

Amended by Chapter 291, 2005 General Session

53A-1a-507. Requirements for charter schools.

(1) A charter school shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and operations.

(2) A charter school may not charge tuition or fees, except those fees normally charged by other public schools.

(3) A charter school shall meet all applicable federal, state, and local health, safety, and civil rights requirements.

(4) (a) A charter school shall make the same annual reports required of other public schools under Title 53A, State System of Public Education, including an annual financial audit report.

(b) A charter school shall file its annual financial audit report with the Office of the State Auditor within six months of the end of the fiscal year.

(5) A charter school shall be accountable to its chartering entity for performance as provided in the school's charter.

(6) A charter school may not advocate unlawful behavior.
Amended by Chapter 251, 2004 General Session

53A-1a-507.1. Charter school innovative practices -- Report to State Charter School Board.

Prior to July 31 of each year, a charter school may identify and report to the State Charter School Board its innovative practices which fulfill the purposes of charter schools as outlined in Section **53A-1a-503**, including:

(1) unique learning opportunities providing increased choice in education;

(2) new public school models;

(3) innovative teaching practices;

(4) opportunities for educators to actively participate in the design and implementation of the learning program;

(5) new forms of accountability emphasizing the measurement of learning outcomes and the creation of new measurement tools;

(6) opportunities for greater parental involvement, including involvement in management decisions; and

(7) the impact of the innovative practices on student achievement.
Enacted by Chapter 74, 2005 General Session

53A-1a-508. Content of a charter -- Modification of charter.

(1) The major issues involving the operation of a charter school shall be considered in advance by the applicant for a charter school and written into the school's charter.

(2) The governing body of the charter school and the chartering entity shall sign the charter.

(3) The charter shall include:

(a) the age or grade levels to be served by the school;

(b) the projected maximum number of students to be enrolled in the school and the projected enrollment in each of the first three years of operations;

(c) the governance structure of the school;

(d) the financial plan for the school and the provisions which will be made for auditing the school under Subsection **53A-1a-507**(4);

(e) the mission and education goals of the school, the curriculum offered, and the methods of assessing whether students are meeting educational goals, to include at a minimum participation in the Utah Performance Assessment System for Students under Chapter 1, Part 6, Achievement Tests;

(f) admission and dismissal procedures, including suspension procedures;

(g) procedures to review complaints of parents/guardians regarding the operation of the school;

(h) the opportunity for parental involvement at the school;

(i) how the school will provide adequate liability and other appropriate insurance for the school, its governing body, and its employees;

(j) the proposed school calendar, including the length of the school day and school year;

(k) whether any agreements have been entered into or plans developed with school districts regarding participation of charter school students in extracurricular activities within the school districts;

(l) the district within which the school will be located and the address of the school's physical

facility, if known at the time the charter is signed;
(m) the qualifications to be required of the teachers;
(n) in the case of an existing public school converting to charter status, alternative arrangements for current students who choose not to attend the charter school and for current teachers who choose not to teach at the school after its conversion to charter status;
(o) the school's intention to create a library;
(p) a description of school administrative and supervisory services;
(q) fiscal procedures to be used by the school; and
(r) the school's policies and procedures regarding:
(i) employee evaluation; and
(ii) employment of relatives.
(4) A charter may be modified by mutual agreement of the board and the governing body of the school.
Amended by Chapter 291, 2005 General Session

53A-1a-509. Noncompliance -- Rulemaking.
(1) (a) If a charter school is found to be out of compliance with the requirements of Section **53A-1a-507** or the school's charter, the chartering entity shall notify the school's governing board in writing that the school has a reasonable time to remedy the deficiency, except as otherwise provided in Subsection **53A-1a-510**(3)(a).
(b) If the school does not remedy the deficiency within the established timeline, the chartering entity may:
(i) remove a school director or finance officer;
(ii) remove governing board members;
(iii) appoint an interim director or mentor to work with the charter school; or
(iv) terminate the school's charter.
(c) The costs of an interim director or mentor appointed pursuant to Subsection (1)(b) shall be paid from the funds of the charter school for which the interim director or mentor is working.
(2) In accordance with Title 63, Chapter 46a, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, the State Board of Education shall make rules:
(a) specifying the timeline for remedying deficiencies under Subsection (1)(a); and
(b) ensuring the compliance of a charter school with its approved charter.
Amended by Chapter 291, 2005 General Session

53A-1a-510. Termination of a charter.
(1) A chartering entity may terminate a school's charter for any of the following reasons:
(a) failure of the school to meet the requirements stated in the charter;
(b) failure to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management;
(c) subject to Subsection (5), failure to make adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. Sec. 6301 et seq.;
(d) violation of law; or
(e) other good cause shown.
(2) (a) The chartering entity shall notify the governing body of the school of the proposed termination in writing, state the grounds for the termination, and stipulate that the governing body may request an informal hearing before the chartering entity.
(b) The chartering entity shall conduct the hearing in accordance with Title 63, Chapter 46b,

Administrative Procedures Act, within 30 days after receiving a written request under Subsection (2)(a).

(c) If the chartering entity, by majority vote, approves a motion to terminate a charter school, the governing body of the charter school may appeal the decision to the State Board of Education.

(d) (i) The State Board of Education shall hear an appeal of a termination made pursuant to Subsection (2)(c).

(ii) The State Board of Education's action is final action subject to judicial review.

(3) The chartering entity may terminate a charter immediately if good cause has been shown or if the health, safety, or welfare of the students at the school is threatened.

(4) If a charter is terminated during a school year:

(a) the school district in which the school is located may assume operation of the school; or

(b) a private management company may be hired to operate the school.

(5) (a) If a charter is terminated, a student who attended the school may apply to and shall be enrolled in another public school under the enrollment provisions of Title 53A, Chapter 2, Part 2, District of Residency, subject to space availability.

(b) Normal application deadlines shall be disregarded under Subsection (5)(a).

(6) A chartering entity may terminate a charter pursuant to Subsection (1)(c) under the same circumstances that local educational agencies are required to implement alternative governance arrangements under 20 U.S.C. Sec. 6316.

Amended by Chapter 291, 2005 General Session

53A-1a-511. Waivers from state board rules -- Application of statutes and rules to charter schools.

(1) A charter school shall operate in accordance with its charter and is subject to Title 53A, State System of Public Education, and other state laws applicable to public schools, except as otherwise provided in this part.

(2) (a) A charter school or any other public school or school district may apply to the State Board of Education for a waiver of any state board rule that inhibits or hinders the school or the school district from accomplishing its mission or educational goals set out in its strategic plan or charter.

(b) The state board may grant the waiver, unless:

(i) the waiver would cause the school district or the school to be in violation of state or federal law; or

(ii) the waiver would threaten the health, safety, or welfare of students in the district or at the school.

(c) If the State Board of Education denies the waiver, the reason for the denial shall be provided in writing to the waiver applicant.

(3) (a) Except as provided in Subsection (3)(b), State Board of Education rules governing the following do not apply to a charter school:

(i) school libraries;

(ii) required school administrative and supervisory services; and

(iii) required expenditures for instructional supplies.

(b) A charter school shall comply with rules implementing statutes that prescribe how state appropriations may be spent.

(4) The following provisions of Title 53A, State System of Public Education, and rules

adopted under those provisions, do not apply to a charter school:

(a) Sections **53A-1a-108** and **53A-1a-108.5**, requiring the establishment of a school community council and school improvement plan;

(b) Sections **53A-3-413** and **53A-3-414**, pertaining to the use of school buildings as civic centers;

(c) Section **53A-3-420**, requiring the use of activity disclosure statements;

(d) Section **53A-12-207**, requiring notification of intent to dispose of textbooks;

(e) Section **53A-13-107**, requiring annual presentations on adoption; and

(f) Chapter 19, Part 1, Fiscal Procedures, pertaining to fiscal procedures of school districts and local school boards.

(5) For the purposes of Title 63, Chapter 56, Utah Procurement Code, a charter school shall be considered a local public procurement unit.

(6) Each charter school shall be subject to:

(a) Title 52, Chapter 4, Open and Public Meetings Act; and

(b) Title 63, Chapter 2, Government Records Access and Management Act.

(7) (a) The State Charter School Board shall, in concert with the charter schools, study existing state law and administrative rules for the purpose of determining from which laws and rules charter schools should be exempt.

(b) (i) The State Charter School Board shall present recommendations for exemption to the State Board of Education for consideration.

(ii) The State Board of Education shall consider the recommendations of the State Charter School Board and respond within 60 days.

(c) Annually, the State Charter School Board shall report the results of its review of state laws and administrative rules, along with the responses received from the State Board of Education, to the Education Interim Committee by October 1.

Amended by Chapter 14, 2006 General Session

53A-1a-512. Employees of charter schools.

(1) A charter school shall select its own employees.

(2) The school's governing body shall determine the level of compensation and all terms and conditions of employment, except as otherwise provided in Subsections (7) and (8) and under this part.

(3) The following statutes governing public employees and officers do not apply to charter schools:

(a) Chapter 8, Utah Orderly School Termination Procedures Act;

(b) Chapter 10, Educator Evaluation; and

(c) Title 52, Chapter 3, Prohibiting Employment of Relatives.

(4) (a) To accommodate differentiated staffing and better meet student needs, a charter school, under rules adopted by the State Board of Education, shall employ teachers who:

(i) are licensed; or

(ii) on the basis of demonstrated competency, would qualify to teach under alternative certification or authorization programs.

(b) The school's governing body shall disclose the qualifications of its teachers to the parents/guardians of its students.

(5) State Board of Education rules governing the licensing or certification of administrative and supervisory personnel do not apply to charter schools.

(6) (a) An employee of a school district may request a leave of absence in order to work in a charter school upon approval of the local school board.

(b) While on leave, the employee may retain seniority accrued in the school district and may continue to be covered by the benefit program of the district if the charter school and the locally elected school board mutually agree.

(7) Except as provided under Subsection (8), an employee of a charter school shall be a member of a retirement system under Title 49, Utah State Retirement and Insurance Act.

(8) (a) At the time of application for a charter school, whether the chartering entity is the State Charter School Board or a school district, a proposed charter school may make an election of nonparticipation as an employer for retirement programs under Title 49, Chapter 12, Public Employees' Contributory Retirement Act and under Title 49, Chapter 13, Public Employees' Noncontributory Retirement Act.

(b) A charter school that was approved prior to July 1, 2004 may make an election of nonparticipation prior to December 31, 2004.

(c) An election provided under this Subsection (8):

(i) is a one-time election made at the time specified under Subsection (8)(a) or (b);

(ii) shall be documented by a resolution adopted by the governing body of the charter school;

(iii) is irrevocable; and

(iv) applies to the charter school as the employer and to all employees of the charter school.

(d) The governing body of a charter school may offer employee benefit plans for its employees:

(i) under Title 49, Chapter 20, Public Employees' Benefit and Insurance Program Act; or

(ii) under any other program.

(9) The governing body of a charter school shall ensure that, prior to the beginning of

each school year, each of its employees signs a document acknowledging that the employee:

(a) has received:

(i) the disclosure required under Section **63A-4-204.5** if the charter school participates in the Risk Management Fund; or

(ii) written disclosure similar to the disclosure required under Section **63A-4-204.5** if the charter school does not participate in the Risk Management Fund; and

(b) understands the legal liability protection provided to the employee and what is not covered, as explained in the disclosure.

Amended by Chapter 285, 2005 General Session

Amended by Chapter 291, 2005 General Session

53A-1a-512.5. Criminal background checks on school personnel -- Notice -- Payment of cost -- Request for review.

(1) The chief administrative officer of a charter school:

(a) shall require a potential employee or a volunteer who will be given significant unsupervised access to a student in connection with the volunteer's assignment to submit to a criminal background check as a condition for employment or appointment; and

(b) where reasonable cause exists, may require an existing employee or volunteer to submit to a criminal background check.

(2) The applicant, volunteer, or employee shall receive written notice that the background check has been requested.

(3) (a) Fingerprints of the individual shall be taken, and the Criminal Investigations and Technical Services Division of the Department of Public Safety, established in Section **53-10-103**, shall release the individual's full record of criminal convictions to the administrator requesting the information.

(b) The division shall maintain a separate file of fingerprints submitted under Subsection (3)(a) and notify the State Office of Education when a new entry is made against a person whose fingerprints are held in the file regarding:

(i) any matters involving an alleged sexual offense;

(ii) any matters involving an alleged felony or class A misdemeanor drug offense; or

(iii) any matters involving an alleged offense against the person under Title 76, Chapter 5, Offenses Against the Person.

(c) The cost of maintaining the separate file shall be paid by the State Office of Education from fees charged to those submitting fingerprints.

(4) The chief administrative officer or governing body of a charter school shall consider only those convictions which are job-related in deciding whether to employ, appoint, or dismiss an employee, applicant, or volunteer.

(5) (a) The charter school shall pay the cost of the background check, except as otherwise provided in Subsection (5)(b), and the monies collected shall be credited to the Criminal Investigations and Technical Services Division to offset its expenses.

(b) The charter school may require an applicant to pay the costs of a background check as a condition for consideration for employment or appointment, if the applicant:

(i) has passed an initial review;

(ii) is one of a pool of no more than five candidates for a position; and

(iii) has not been the subject of a criminal background check of similar scope during the preceding two years that was requested by a potential employer or the State Board of Education.

(6) The Criminal Investigations and Technical Services Division shall, upon request, seek additional information from regional or national criminal data files in responding to inquiries under this section.

(7) (a) The applicant, volunteer, or employee shall have the opportunity to respond to any information received as a result of the background check.

(b) A charter school shall resolve any request for review by an applicant, volunteer, or employee seeking employment or employed by the charter school through normal administrative procedures established by the charter school.

(8) If a person is denied employment or is dismissed from employment because of information obtained through a criminal background check, the person shall receive written notice of the reasons for denial or dismissal and have an opportunity to respond to the reasons under the procedures set forth in Subsection (7).

(9) Information obtained under this part is confidential and may only be disclosed as provided in this section.

Enacted by Chapter 199, 2003 General Session

53A-1a-513. Funding for charter schools.

(1) (a) Charter schools shall receive funding as described in this section, except Subsections (2) through (7) do not apply to charter schools described in Subsection (1)(b).

(b) Charter schools authorized by local school boards that are converted from district schools or operate in district facilities without paying reasonable rent shall receive funding as prescribed

in Section **53A-1a-515**.

(2) (a) Except as provided in Subsection (2)(b), a charter school shall receive state funds, as applicable, on the same basis as a school district receives funds.

(b) In distributing funds under Title 53A, Chapter 17a, Minimum School Program Act, to charter schools, charter school pupils shall be weighted, where applicable, as follows:

(i) .55 for kindergarten pupils;

(ii) .9 for pupils in grades 1-6;

(iii) .99 for pupils in grades 7-8; and

(iv) 1.2 for pupils in grades 9-12.

(c) The State Board of Education shall make rules in accordance with Title 63, Chapter 46a, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, to administer Subsection (2)(b), including hold harmless provisions to maintain a charter elementary school's funding level for a period of two years after the effective date of the distribution formula.

(d) Subsection (2)(b) does not apply to funds appropriated to charter schools to replace local property tax revenues.

(3) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to provide for the distribution of monies to charter schools under this section.

(4) (a) The Legislature shall provide an appropriation for charter schools for each of their students to replace some of the local property tax revenues that are not available to charter schools. The amount of money provided for each charter school student shall be determined by:

(i) calculating the sum of:

(A) school districts' operations and maintenance revenues derived from local property taxes, except revenues from imposing a minimum basic tax rate pursuant to Section **53A-17a-135**;

(B) school districts' capital projects revenues derived from local property taxes; and

(C) school districts' expenditures for interest on debt; and

(ii) dividing the sum by the total average daily membership of the districts' schools.

(b) Of the monies provided to a charter school under Subsection (4)(a), 10% shall be expended for funding school facilities only.

(c) To qualify for money under Subsection (4)(a), a new charter school shall, by September 30 of the school year prior to the school year it intends to begin operations:

(i) obtain approval of its application for a charter from:

(A) the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section **53A-1a-505**; or

(B) a local school board, pursuant to Section **53A-1a-515**; and

(ii) submit to the chartering entity an estimate of the charter school's first year enrollment.

(d) Subsection (4)(c) does not apply to charter schools beginning operations in the 2005-06 school year.

(e) By December 1, the State Charter School Board shall submit to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget and the Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst an estimate of total

charter school enrollment in the state for the following school year.

(5) Charter schools are eligible to receive federal funds if they meet all applicable federal requirements and comply with relevant federal regulations.

(6) The State Board of Education shall distribute funds for charter school students directly to the charter school.

(7) (a) Notwithstanding Subsection (2), a charter school is not eligible to receive state transportation funding.

(b) The board shall also adopt rules relating to the transportation of students to and from charter schools, taking into account Sections **53A-2-210** and **53A-17a-127**.

(c) The governing body of the charter school may provide transportation through an agreement or contract with the local school board, a private provider, or with parents/guardians .

(8) (a) (i) The state superintendent of public instruction may allocate grants for both start-up and ongoing costs to eligible charter school applicants from monies appropriated for the implementation of this part.

(ii) Applications for the grants shall be filed on a form determined by the state superintendent and in conjunction with the application for a charter.

(iii) The amount of a grant may vary based upon the size, scope, and special circumstances of the charter school.

(iv) The governing board of the charter school shall use the grant to meet the expenses of the school as established in the school's charter.

(b) The State Board of Education shall coordinate the distribution of federal monies appropriated to help fund costs for establishing and maintaining charter schools within the state.

(9) (a) A charter school may receive, hold, manage and use any devise, bequest, grant, endowment, gift, or donation of any property made to the school for any of the purposes of this part.

(b) It is unlawful for any person affiliated with a charter school to demand or request any gift, donation, or contribution from a parent, teacher, employee, or other person affiliated with the charter school as a condition for employment or enrollment at the school or continued attendance at the school.

(10) The State Office of Education shall use up to $1,044,000 of funding provided for new growth to fund additional growth needs in charter schools in fiscal year 2005.

Amended by Chapter 291, 2005 General Session

Amended by Chapter 9, 2005 General Session

53A-1a-514. Tort liability.

(1) An employee of a charter school is a public employee and the governing body is a public employer in the same manner as a local school board for purposes of tort liability.

(2) The governing body of a charter school and the school are solely liable for any damages resulting from a legal challenge involving the operation of the school.

Enacted by Chapter 231, 1998 General Session

APPENDIX B

SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

2006 Charter School Study
State Charter School Board Member and Director Survey Results
N=6

Note: Except when otherwise noted immediately following a question, the numbers entered following each survey item represent valid percentages. Valid percentages are calculated based on only those respondents who answered a particular item.

Section A: Purpose of Charter Schools

1. Please rank-order the following reasons for creating charter schools in Utah. (Mark only one for each row and one for each column.)

Values in Each Column Represent Number Responding

	Ranking							
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
a. Improve student learning	4	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
b. Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods	0	1	1	2	2	0	0	0
c. Create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school	0	0	1	0	1	3	1	0
d. Increase choice of learning opportunities for students	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	1
e. Establish new models of public schools	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	2 N/A
f. Establish a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes with innovative measurement tools	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	1
g. Provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level	0	2	0	1	2	1	0	0
h. Expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	3

Section B: Charter School Authorization

2. Please indicate the degree to which there is sufficient political support for Utah charter schools, as a whole, from the following entities.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
a. Parents/community members	0	0	50.0	50.0	0
b. District administrators	60.0	40.0	0	0	0
c. Local school board members	66.7	33.3	0	0	0
d. Utah State Office of Education	0	16.7	66.7	16.7	0

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
e. Utah State Legislature	0	16.7	66.7	16.7	0
f. Utah State Board of Education	0	16.7	83.3	0	0
g. Utah State Charter School Board	0	0	40.0	60.0	0

3. Please indicate to what extent the following are in place for charter schools during the application process.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	NA/Don't Know
a. There are ample opportunities for those with quality proposals to obtain a charter.	0	66.7	0	0	33.3
b. There is adequate access to resources for starting a charter school.	0	50.0	33.3	0	16.7
c. A comprehensive application packet is easily accessible (e.g., mail, on-line).	0	0	66.7	0	33.3
d. The instructions in the application packet are clear and easy to follow.	0	16.7	50.0	0	33.3
e. Detailed application timelines are provided.	0	16.7	50.0	0	33.3
f. Charter applicants are provided with a clear set of approval criteria, including a written rubric or scoring scale.	0	50.0	16.7	0	33.3
g. Informational meetings are held for interested applicants.	0	0	50.0	33.3	16.7
h. Technical assistance is provided by the authorizer.	0	0	50.0	16.7	33.3
i. Referrals for technical assistance are made available upon request.	0	0	50.0	16.7	33.3
j. Applicants have access to consultants or a management group to assist them with the application process.	0	0	50.0	16.7	33.3
k. Applicants have an opportunity to address questions and concerns as part of the application review process.	0	0	50.0	16.7	33.3
l. The overall application review process is focused on the quality of applications.	0	0	50.0	16.7	33.3
m. There is adequate time to complete the application.	0	0	33.3	33.3	33.3

4. Please indicate whether the following criteria should be used to make decisions about approving charter schools.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
a. Targeted student population	0	16.7	66.7	16.7	0
b. Curricular emphasis	0	0	50.0	50.0	0
c. Effectiveness goals (e.g., student mastery)	0	0	50.0	50.0	0

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
d. Unit lesson plans	0	0	83.3	16.7	0
e. Summative assessments	0	16.7	66.7	0	16.7
f. Formative assessments	0	16.7	50.0	16.7	16.7
g. Monitoring	0	16.7	50.0	33.3	0
h. Plan to deliver special education	0	0	50.0	50.0	0
i. Detailed business plan	0	0	33.3	66.7	0
j. Organizational structure	0	0	33.3	66.7	0
k. Background information	0	0	50.0	50.0	0
l. Admissions procedures	0	0	40.0	60.0	0
m. Dismissal procedures	0	16.7	50.0	33.3	0
n. Complaint procedures/appeals	0	16.7	50.0	33.3	0
o. Opportunities for parent involvement	0	0	33.3	66.7	0
p. Insurance	0	0	50.0	50.0	0
q. Qualifications of teachers	0	0	50.0	50.0	0
r. Library	0	33.3	33.3	33.3	0
s. Administrative / supervisory services	0	16.7	50.0	33.3	0
t. Fiscal procedures	0	0	16.7	83.3	0
u. Employee termination	0	16.7	50.0	33.3	0
v. Employee evaluation	0	33.3	33.3	33.3	0
w. Employment of relatives	0	50.0	16.7	33.3	0
x. Compensations and benefits	0	16.7	33.3	50.0	0
y. Conversion schools	0	16.7	33.3	33.3	16.7
z. Waiver from state board rule	0	16.7	33.3	33.3	16.7

Section C: Charter School Governance and Involvement

5. Please indicate what you think <u>should</u> be the percentage that each of the following is represented on charter school governing boards. (e.g., 1 parent out of 10 governing board members would be 10%.) When answering this question, please consider the boards that have authority to hire and dismiss personnel and set policy.

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
a. Parents	0	33.3	0	16.7	16.7	33.3
b. Students	50.0	33.3	0	0	0	16.7
c. Teachers	50.0	33.3	0	0	0	16.7
d. Charter school administrator	33.3	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	0
e. Business representatives or other professionals who do not have children in the school	33.3	16.7	33.3	16.7	0	0
f. University officials who do not have children in the school	50.0	33.3	16.7	0	0	0
g. School district personnel	83.3	0	16.7	0	0	0
h. Local school board members	83.3	16.7	0	0	0	0

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
i. Elected officials	50.0	33.3	0	0	16.7	0
j. PTSO/PTA	16.7	66.7	0	0	0	16.7
k. Other (please specify) "School's discretion"	0	0	0	0	0	100

6. What influence does the State Charter School Board have in the following types of decisions and policies related to charter schools?

	Not involved	Advisory/ Provides Input	Makes the Decisions	Not applicable
a. The charter application process	0	20.0	80.0	0
b. Purchasing of supplies and equipment	60.0	40.0	0	0
c. Student disciplinary policies	20.0	80.0	0	0
d. Student assessment policies	40.0	60.0	0	0
e. Student admission and dismissal policies	40.0	60.0	0	0
f. Staff selection	80.0	20.0	0	0
g. Staff salaries and benefits	60.0	40.0	0	0
h. Budgetary expenses other than salaries and benefits	0	100	0	0
i. School schedule	20.0	80.0	0	0
j. School calendar	20.0	80.0	0	0
k. Establishing curriculum	20.0	80.0	0	0
l. Extracurricular activities	40.0	60.0	0	0
m. School goals	20.0	80.0	0	0
n. Management	20.0	80.0	0	0
o. School performance reviews	0	60.0	40.0	0

Section D: Laws and Rules Regulating Charter Schools

7. Please indicate how often charter schools should be exempt from the following laws and regulations.

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Almost always	Not applicable
a. School fees	40.0	60.0	0	0	0
b. School tuition	40.0	20.0	0	20.0	20.0
c. Financial reports to the State Board of Education	80.0	0	20.0	0	0
d. Performance reports to the State Board of Education	80.0	0	20.0	0	0
e. Comprehensive school improvement plans	60.0	20.0	20.0	0	0
f. Participation in state testing	100	0	0	0	0
g. Religion in school (e.g., legal restrictions related to curriculum)	80.0	0	0	20.0	0
h. Admission of students	20.0	20.0	40.0	20.0	0

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Almost always	Not applicable
i. School accreditation	40.0	40.0	20.0	0	0
j. Teacher accreditation standards	40.0	20.0	40.0	0	0
k. Professional development	40.0	20.0	40.0	0	0
l. Teacher evaluations	40.0	40.0	20.0	0	0
m. State standards/state curriculum	20.0	20.0	60.0	0	0
n. Procurement	0	25.0	75.0	0	0

Section F: Technical Support and Training

8. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
a. There is a well-developed charter school network or association in Utah	0	40.0	40.0	20.0	0
b. Charter schools have adequate access to technical assistance.	0	20.0	80.0	0	0

9. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the assistance and resources that the State Charter School Board provides to those leading individual charter schools.

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Not applicable
a. Promoting successful charter school models.	0	40.0	40.0	20.0	0
b. Facilitating the application process for charter school authorization.	0	20.0	60.0	20.0	0
c. Directing interested parties seeking to establish charter schools to sources of *funding*.	0	40.0	60.0	0	0
d. Directing interested parties to sources of *technical support*.	0	40.0	60.0	0	0
e. Reviewing proposals to help strengthen them before an application for charter school authorization is submitted.	0	20.0	60.0	20.0	0
f. Assisting charter schools to understand their charter obligations.	0	20.0	60.0	20.0	0
g. Assisting charter schools to carry out their charter obligations.	0	20.0	60.0	20.0	0

Conclusion

10. We want to make sure that we have not missed anything that you consider to be an important issue related to charter schools in Utah. Please include below, or as an attachment, anything that you would like us to know about that has not already been captured in this survey.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The information you have provided will help to better understand the issues surrounding charter schools that will ultimately provide better educational opportunities for the children of Utah.

2006 Charter School Study
Charter Administrator Survey Results
N=18

Note: Except when otherwise noted immediately following a question, the numbers entered following each survey item represent valid percentages. Valid percentages are calculated based on only those respondents who answered a particular item.

Section A: School Characteristics

1. In what year did your charter school begin operation?

1999 11.1%	2002 11.1%	2005 27.8%
2000 0%	2003 11.1%	2006 0%
2001 0%	2004 27.8%	

2. What was your charter school's total student enrollment on October 1, 2005?

< 50	0%	301-400	44.4%	701-800	0%
51-100	5.6%	401-500	5.6%	801-900	5.6%
101-200	5.6%	501-600	11.1%	901-1000	0%
201-300	16.7%	601-700	0%	> 1000	5.6%

3. What grade levels did your charter school serve in the 2005-2006 school year? (Please mark all that apply.)

kindergarten	61.1%	fifth	66.7%	tenth	38.9%
first	61.1%	sixth	66.7%	eleventh	33.3%
second	61.1%	seventh	50.0%	twelfth	27.8%
third	61.1%	eighth	50.0%		
fourth	61.1%	ninth	50.0%		

4. Please describe the size of the public school district in which your charter school is located.

Less than 5,000 students	50.0%	10,000-25,000 students	6.3%
5,000-10,000 students	0%	More than 25,000 students	43.8%

5. Please indicate the district in which your charter school is located. (Optional)

Alpine	20.0%	Iron	0%	Ogden	6.7%
Cache	0%	Jordan	6.7%	Provo	6.7%
Carbon	13.3%	Logan	0%	Salt Lake City	6.7%
Davis	13.3%	Millard	0%	Uintah	0%
Grand	0%	Murray	0%	Wasatch	0%
Granite	13.3%	Nebo	13.3%	Washington	0%

6. Did your school have more eligible applicants than the school could serve at the beginning of this school year (2006-2007)?

Yes 77.8% No 22.2%

6.a. If yes, how many students at each grade level were on the waiting list at the start of the 2006-2007 school year?

Values below reflect # of administrators reporting wait lists by size and grade level

Number of Students on Waiting List

	1-10	11-25	26-50	51-75	76-100	> 100	NA/ Missing
Kindergarten	0	0	1	0	2	5	10
First	2	0	3	0	2	3	8
Second	0	0	2	2	1	3	10
Third	0	0	2	2	2	1	11
Fourth	0	1	3	1	1	1	11
Fifth	0	2	4	0	1	1	10
Sixth	3	2	3	1	0	1	8
Seventh	1	1	2	1	0	1	12
Eighth	0	4	0	2	0	0	12
Ninth	1	0	1	1	0	2	13
Tenth	1	0	0	0	0	0	17
Eleventh	1	0	0	0	0	0	17
Twelfth	0	0	0	0	0	0	18

7. What percentage of your students received special education services?

0 – 5% 11.1%
6 – 10% 27.8%
11 – 15% 44.4%
16+% 16.7%

8. What percentage of your students are identified in the following groups?

	Free or reduced price lunch	English language learners	African American/ Black	Asian	Caucasian	Hispanic/ Latino	Native American/ Alaskan Native	Pacific Islander
0 – 20%	33.3	100	100	100	11.1	94.4	100	100
21 – 40%	50.0	0	0	0	0	5.6	0	0
41 – 60%	16.7	0	0	0	11.1	0	0	0
61 – 80%	0	0	0	0	22.2	0	0	0
81 – 100%	0	0	0	0	55.6	0	0	0

9. Identify the authorizing agency you are currently chartered by:

State Charter School Board/State Board of Education	88.9%
Local School Board	11.1%

10. Please indicate your charter school's program emphasis. (Mark all that apply.)

Values represent the number of administrators indicating each area as a program emphasis.

Math	8
Science	8
Technology	8
English/Language Arts	5
Social Studies/History	5
Performing Arts	2
Visual Arts	5
Health/Physical Education	2
Other (Please specify.)	13

Other emphases included Spanish (2), Back to Basic to Basics (2), service learning (2), parent involvement (2), and film production (1). Additional responses overlapped with categories on the survey.

Section B: Purpose of Charter Schools

11. Please rank-order the following reasons for creating charter schools in Utah. (Mark only one for each row and one for each column.)

	Ranking							
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
i. Improve student learning	44.4	16.7	11.1	11.1	0	5.6	11.1	0
j. Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods	0	5.6	33.3	16.7	27.8	16.7	0	0
k. Create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school	0	0	0	27.8	27.8	22.2	11.1	11.1
l. Increase choice of learning opportunities for students	22.2	22.2	38.9	16.7	0	0	0	0
m. Establish new models of public schools	5.6	27.8	5.6	11.1	16.7	0	27.8	5.6
n. Establish a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes with innovative measurement tools	0	16.7	5.6	5.6	16.7	27.8	16.7	11.1
o. Provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level	27.8	5.6	0	11.1	11.1	16.7	22.2	5.6
p. Expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001	0	5.6	5.6	0	0	11.1	11.1	66.6

Section C: Charter School Authorization

12. Please indicate the degree to which there is sufficient political support for Utah charter schools, as a whole, from the following entities.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
h. Parents/community members	0	0	61.1	38.9	0
i. District administrators	72.2	22.2	5.6	0	0
j. Local school board members	61.1	27.8	5.6	5.6	0
k. Utah State Office of Education	11.1	27.8	61.1	0	0
l. Utah State Legislature	11.1	22.2	55.6	11.1	0
m. Utah State Board of Education	44.4	11.1	44.4	0	0
n. Utah State Charter School Board	5.6	22.2	27.8	44.4	0

13. When your school applied for your initial charter, please indicate to what extent the following were in place.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't Know
n. There were ample opportunities for those with quality proposals to obtain a charter.	5.6	5.6	55.6	27.8	5.6
o. There was adequate access to resources for starting a charter school.	33.3	22.2	33.3	5.6	5.6
p. A comprehensive application packet was easily accessible (e.g., mail, on-line).	5.6	33.3	50.0	5.6	5.6
q. The instructions in the application packet were clear and easy to follow.	0	23.5	58.8	5.9	11.8
r. Detailed application timelines were provided.	5.9	23.5	58.8	5.9	5.9
s. We were provided with a clear set of approval criteria, including a written rubric or scoring scale.	23.5	47.1	17.6	0	11.8
t. Informational meetings were held for interested applicants.	16.7	38.9	33.3	0	11.1
u. Technical assistance was provided by the authorizer.	27.8	27.8	38.9	0	5.6
v. Referrals for technical assistance were made available upon request.	11.1	33.3	38.9	5.6	11.1
w. We hired consultants or a management group to assist us with the application process.	50.0	5.6	27.8	5.6	11.1
x. We had an opportunity to address questions and concerns as part of the application review process.	5.6	27.8	55.6	5.6	5.6
y. The overall application review process focused on the quality of our application.	5.9	5.9	58.8	23.5	5.9
z. We had adequate time to complete the application.	0	17.6	58.8	17.6	5.9

14. Please indicate whether the following criteria should be used to make decisions about approving charter schools.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
aa. Targeted student population	17.6	29.4	41.2	11.8	0
bb. Curricular emphasis	0	17.6	29.4	52.9	0
cc. Effectiveness goals (e.g., student mastery)	0	17.6	52.9	29.4	0
dd. Unit lesson plans	17.6	41.2	41.2	0	0
ee. Summative assessments	0	13.3	66.7	20.0	0
ff. Formative assessments	0	18.8	68.8	12.5	0
gg. Monitoring	0	17.6	64.7	17.6	0
hh. Plan to deliver special education	0	5.9	64.7	29.4	0
ii. Detailed business plan	0	0	47.1	52.9	0
jj. Organizational structure	5.9	5.9	52.9	35.3	0
kk. Background information	0	17.6	47.1	35.3	0
ll. Admissions procedures	0	11.8	64.7	23.5	0
mm. Dismissal procedures	5.9	11.8	70.6	11.8	0
nn. Complaint procedures/appeals	5.9	11.8	70.6	11.8	0
oo. Opportunities for parent involvement	0	0	88.2	11.8	0
pp. Insurance	5.9	11.8	64.7	17.6	0
qq. Qualifications of teachers	0	0	58.8	41.2	0
rr. Library	5.9	58.8	23.5	11.8	0
ss. Administrative / supervisory services	17.6	11.8	41.2	29.4	0
tt. Fiscal procedures	0	5.9	41.2	52.9	0
uu. Employee termination	5.9	29.4	52.9	11.8	0
vv. Employee evaluation	5.9	29.4	52.9	11.8	0
ww. Employment of relatives	11.8	35.3	29.4	23.5	0
xx. Compensations and benefits	5.9	29.4	52.9	11.8	0
yy. Conversion schools	0	37.5	43.8	12.5	6.3
zz. Waiver from state board rule	12.5	37.5	37.5	6.3	6.3

15. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
a. The Utah State Board of Education should have final approval over charter school authorization.	16.7	22.2	33.3	27.8	0
b. The local school boards should have some authority in the approval of state-chartered schools.	66.7	11.1	22.2	0	0

Section D: Charter School Governance and Involvement

16. How many people are on the governing board of your charter school?

1 0%
2 0%
3 0%
4 5.9%
5 17.6%
6 5.9%
7 41.2%
8 0%
9 0%
10 11.8%
More than 10 17.6%

17. What percentage of your charter school's governing board is CURRENTLY represented by each of the following? (e.g., 1 parent out of 10 governing board members would be 10%.) When answering this question, please consider the board that has authority to hire and dismiss personnel and set policy.

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
a. Parents	5.6	5.6	5.6	16.7	11.1	55.6
b. Students	100	0	0	0	0	0
c. Teachers	94.4	5.6	0	0	0	0
d. Charter school administrator	50.0	38.9	11.1	0	0	0
e. Business representatives or other professionals who do not have children in the school	44.4	16.7	22.2	16.7	0	0
f. University officials who do not have children in the school	77.8	16.7	5.6	0	0	0
g. School district personnel	88.9	0	5.6	5.6	0	0
h. Local school board members	94.4	0	5.6	0	0	0
i. Elected officials	94.4	5.6	0	0	0	0
j. PTSO/PTA	61.1	11.1	11.1	16.7	0	0
k. Other (please specify) Grandparent only other listed	75.0	25.0	0	0	0	0

18. What percentage of your charter school's governing board do you think SHOULD be represented by each of the following? (e.g., 1 parent out of 10 governing board members would be 10%.)

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
a. Parents	0	12.5	12.5	25.0	37.5	12.5
b. Students	73.3	20.0	6.7	0	0	0
c. Teachers	40.0	46.7	13.3	0	0	0
d. Charter school administrator	18.8	62.5	18.8	0	0	0
e. Business representatives or other professionals who do not have children in the school	5.9	52.9	17.6	23.5	0	0
f. University officials who do not have children in the school	41.2	41.2	11.8	5.9	0	0
g. School district personnel	75.0	12.5	6.3	6.3	0	0
	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
h. Local school board members	93.8	6.3	0	0	0	0
i. Elected officials	86.7	13.3	0	0	0	0
j. PTSO/PTA	35.3	35.3	17.6	11.8	0	0
k. Other (please specify)	100	0	0	0	0	0

19. Which of the following does your school require from parents/guardians? (Please mark all that apply.)

Sign a contract with the school 11.1%
Participate in a minimum number of hours at the school 11.1%
Participate in a minimum number of activities at the school 0%
Participate in a minimum number of hours of learning activities at home 5.6%
Participate on the governance board 0%
Serve on committees 0%
Attend parent meetings 27.8%
Other (Please specify.) 50% All comments emphasized that the above forms of parental involvement are encouraged not required.

20. What influence do parents/guardians as a whole have in the following types of decisions and policies related to your charter school?

	Not involved	Advisory/ Provide Input	Make the Decisions	Not applicable
a. The charter application process	33.3	44.4	16.7	5.6
b. Purchasing of supplies and equipment	64.7	29.4	5.9	0
c. Student disciplinary policies	33.3	55.6	11.1	0
d. Student assessment policies	66.7	27.8	5.6	0
e. Student admission and dismissal policies	35.3	47.1	17.6	0
f. Staff selection	61.1	38.9	0	0
g. Staff salaries and benefits	66.7	27.8	5.6	0
h. Budgetary expenses other than salaries and benefits	52.9	41.2	5.9	0
i. School schedule	22.2	77.8	0	0
j. School calendar	16.7	83.3	0	0
k. Establishing curriculum	55.6	38.9	5.6	0
l. Extracurricular activities	22.2	72.2	5.6	0
m. School goals	16.7	72.2	11.1	0
n. School performance reviews	22.2	66.7	11.1	0

21. What influence does the authorizer (i.e., State Charter School Board or Local School Board) have in the following types of decisions and policies related to your charter school?

	Not involved	Advisory/ Provide Input	Make the Decisions	Not applicable
p. The charter application process	17.6	17.6	47.1	17.6
q. Purchasing of supplies and equipment	64.7	23.5	0	11.8
r. Student disciplinary policies	58.8	29.4	0	11.8
s. Student assessment policies	58.8	29.4	0	11.8
t. Student admission and dismissal policies	50.0	37.5	0	12.5
u. Staff selection	81.3	6.3	0	12.5
v. Staff salaries and benefits	81.3	6.3	0	12.5
w. Budgetary expenses other than salaries and benefits	68.8	25.0	0	6.3

	Not involved	Advisory/ Provide Input	Make the Decisions	Not applicable
x. School schedule	75.0	18.8	0	6.3
y. School calendar	75.0	18.8	0	6.3
z. Establishing curriculum	62.5	31.3	0	6.3
aa. Extracurricular activities	81.3	12.5	0	6.3
bb. School goals	75.0	18.8	0	6.3
cc. School performance reviews	37.5	43.8	12.5	6.3

Section E: Laws and Rules Regulating Charter Schools

22. Please indicate how often charter schools should be exempt from the following laws and regulations.

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Almost always	Not applicable
a. School fees	37.5	18.8	18.8	18.8	6.3
b. School tuition	68.8	0	6.3	12.5	12.5
c. Financial reports to the State Board of Education	68.8	12.5	12.5	6.3	0
d. Performance reports to the State Board of Education	68.8	25.0	0	6.3	0
e. Comprehensive school improvement plans	43.8	12.5	37.5	6.3	0
f. Participation in state testing	87.5	0	12.5	0	0
g. Religion in school (e.g., legal restrictions related to curriculum)	87.5	0	0	6.3	6.3
h. Funding formulas	50.0	18.8	25.0	6.3	0
i. Admission of students	68.8	18.8	12.5	0	0
j. School accreditation	75.0	6.3	18.8	0	0
k. Teacher accreditation standards	43.8	6.3	37.5	12.5	0
l. Professional development	43.8	25.0	18.8	12.5	0
m. Teacher evaluations	62.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	0
n. State standards/state curriculum	43.8	6.3	43.8	6.3	0
o. Procurement	43.8	18.8	18.8	18.8	0

Section F: Technical Support and Training

23. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
c. There is a well-developed charter school network or association in Utah	12.5	31.3	43.8	12.5	0
d. Charter schools have adequate access to technical assistance.	35.3	17.6	41.2	5.9	0

24. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the following types of technical assistance and resources provided by the State Charter School Board to your charter school.

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Not applicable
a. Promoting successful charter school models.	6.3	37.5	56.3	0	0
b. Facilitating the application process for charter school authorization.	12.5	12.5	68.8	6.3	0
c. Directing interested parties seeking to establish charter schools to sources of *funding*.	6.7	60.0	33.3	0	0
d. Directing interested parties to sources of *technical support*.	0	40.0	53.3	6.7	0
e. Reviewing proposals to help strengthen them before an application for charter school authorization is submitted.	13.3	40.0	33.3	6.7	6.7
f. Assisting charter schools to understand their charter obligations.	12.5	25.0	50.0	12.5	0
g. Assisting charter schools to carry out their charter obligations.	18.8	25.0	43.8	0	12.5

25. In which of the following areas do you think you would benefit from more professional development?

	Prior to opening charter school	Now that charter is opened	Both now and prior to opening	Not needed at any point
School Law:				
Utah laws and regulations specific to Charter Schools	12.5	6.3	68.8	12.5
Utah laws and regulations related to Public Education	6.3	6.3	75.0	12.5
Federal laws and regulations specific to Charter Schools	12.5	6.3	68.8	12.5
Federal laws and regulations related to Public Education	6.7	6.7	80.0	6.7
Human resources/personnel management	25.0	18.8	43.8	12.5
Open meeting requirements	31.3	6.3	50.0	12.5
Public records requirements	25.0	6.3	56.3	12.5
Nepotism	33.3	13.3	40.0	13.3
Conflicts of interest	31.3	6.3	50.0	12.5
Student residency requirements	37.5	12.5	25.0	25.0
School Finance:				
Funding formulas	18.8	6.3	62.5	12.5
Accounting procedures	25.0	6.3	56.3	12.5
Federal funding regulations	25.0	6.3	56.3	12.5
Property management/facility leasing	25.0	6.3	56.3	12.5
Busing/transportation	31.3	6.3	37.5	25.0
Purchasing of supplies and management	25.0	6.3	56.3	12.5
Fundraising	18.8	12.5	56.3	12.5
Financial duties specific to members of the governing body of a charter school	25.0	6.3	56.3	12.5
Bank depository contracts	33.3	6.7	46.7	13.3
Capital financing	25.0	6.3	56.3	12.5
Budget administration	25.0	6.3	56.3	12.5
Grant administration	18.8	6.3	68.8	6.3
Health and Safety:				
Health codes	18.8	6.3	56.3	18.8
Maintenance	18.8	6.3	56.3	18.8
Student discipline	12.5	18.8	43.8	25.0
Safe schools	18.8	12.5	50.0	18.8
Accountability Requirements:				
Administration of state assessments	18.8	18.8	50.0	12.5
Student data	25.0	25.0	37.5	12.5
Personnel data	25.0	12.5	43.8	18.8
Fiscal audits	25.0	18.8	43.8	12.5
Staff evaluations	18.8	12.5	37.5	31.3
Duties and liabilities of a trustee under Utah law	25.0	12.5	50.0	12.5

	Prior to opening charter school	Now that charter is opened	Both now and prior to opening	Not needed at any point
Organizational Elements:				
Developing and approving charter school policy	50.0	6.3	25.0	18.8
Evaluating school goals	18.8	6.3	56.3	18.8
Evaluating student performance	12.5	31.3	43.8	12.5
Office management	31.3	12.5	37.5	18.8
Information management	25.0	18.8	43.8	12.5
Marketing/student recruitment	31.3	6.3	43.8	18.8

Conclusion

26. We want to make sure that we have not missed anything that you consider to be an important issue related to charter schools in Utah. Please include below anything that you would like us to know about that has not already been captured in this survey.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The information you have provided will help to better understand the issues surrounding charter schools that will ultimately provide better educational opportunities for the children of Utah.

2006 Charter School Study
Charter School Governing Board Survey Results
N=50

Note: The numbers entered following each survey item represent valid percentages. Valid percentages are calculated based on only those respondents who answered a particular item. For example, on question one, of the respondents who identified the size of the district in which their charter school was located, 45.5% replied that the district enrollment is less than 5,000 students.

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Section A: Background Information

1. Please describe the size of your school district.

Less than 5,000 students	45.5%	10,000-25,000 students	13.6%
5,000-10,000 students	4.5%	More than 25,000 students	36.4%

2. Please indicate the district in which your charter school is located. (Optional)

Alpine	6.7%	Iron	0%	Ogden	2.2%
Cache	11.1%	Jordan	13.3%	Provo	4.4%
Carbon	0%	Logan	2.2%	Salt Lake City	8.9%
Davis	6.7%	Millard	0%	Uintah	8.9%
Grand	4.4%	Murray	0%	Wasatch	8.9%
Granite	11.1%	Nebo	11.1%	Washington	0%

3. Including this school year, how long have you served as a Governing Board member at this charter school?

1 year 23.4% 2 years 31.9% 3 years 34.0% 4 years 8.5% 5 or more years 2.1%

4. Please identify your role that lead to you obtaining a seat on the Governing Board. (If more than one role applies, mark the one that describes your role the best.)

Parent	44.7%	University representative (no children in this school)	2.1%
Teacher	0%	Principal/CEO of the school	4.3%
Business representative (no children in this school)	6.4%	Local school district personnel	8.5%
Student	0%	Local school board members	2.1%
Elected official	6.4%	PTA/PTSO member	2.1%
		Other (e.g., Founders)	23.4%

Section B: Purpose of Charter Schools

5. Please rank-order the following reasons for creating charter schools in Utah. (Mark only one for each row and one for each column.)

	Ranking							
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
q. Improve student learning	46.8	23.4	21.3	2.1	2.1	2.1	0	2.1
r. Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods	6.5	26.1	17.4	15.2	19.6	10.9	2.2	2.2
s. Create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school	0	4.3	6.4	8.5	8.5	10.6	38.3	23.4
t. Increase choice of learning opportunities for students	36.2	25.5	14.9	14.9	4.3	0	4.3	0
u. Establish new models of public schools	2.2	2.2	15.2	21.7	10.9	21.7	15.2	10.9
v. Establish a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes with innovative measurement tools	0	4.3	10.6	21.3	25.5	25.5	10.6	2.1
w. Provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level	6.4	12.8	10.6	14.9	21.3	17.0	14.9	2.1
x. Expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001	2.1	2.1	4.3	2.1	8.5	12.8	14.9	53.2

Section C: Charter School Authorization

6. Please indicate the degree to which there is sufficient political support for Utah charter schools, as a whole, from the following entities.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
o. Parents/community members	4.4	8.9	46.7	40.0	0
p. District administrators	36.2	38.3	19.1	6.4	0
q. Local school board members	29.8	42.6	19.1	8.5	0
r. Utah State Office of Education	0	36.2	55.3	6.4	2.1
s. Utah State Legislature	2.1	34.0	51.1	12.8	0
t. Utah State Board of Education	0	40.4	48.9	10.6	0
u. Utah State Charter School Board	0	2.1	29.8	66.0	2.1

7. When you applied for your initial charter, please indicate to what extent the following were in place. If you were *not involved* with the charter school during the application process, please skip to the next question.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
aa. There were ample opportunities for those with quality proposals to obtain a charter.	4.2	20.8	54.2	20.8	0
bb. There was adequate access to resources for starting a charter school.	25.0	50.0	20.8	4.2	0
cc. A comprehensive application packet was easily accessible (e.g., mail, on-line).	8.3	16.7	58.3	12.5	4.2
dd. The instructions in the application packet were clear and easy to follow.	4.3	34.8	47.8	4.3	8.7
ee. Detailed application timelines were provided.	4.3	17.4	69.6	8.7	0
ff. We were provided with a clear set of approval criteria, including a written rubric or scoring scale.	14.3	38.1	33.3	9.5	4.8
gg. Informational meetings were held for interested applicants.	0	52.2	34.8	8.7	4.3
hh. Technical assistance was provided by the authorizer.	16.7	12.5	58.3	8.3	4.2
ii. Referrals for technical assistance were made available upon request.	14.3	19.0	52.4	4.8	9.5
jj. We hired consultants or a management group to assist us with the application process.	40.9	18.2	9.1	18.2	13.6
kk. We had an opportunity to address questions and concerns as part of the application review process.	9.1	4.5	68.2	13.6	4.5
ll. The overall application review process focused on the quality of our application.	9.1	18.2	68.2	4.5	0
mm. We had adequate time to complete the application.	9.1	0	86.4	4.5	0

8. Please indicate whether the following criteria should be used to make decisions about approving charter schools.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
aaa. Targeted student population	9.1	20.5	34.1	34.1	2.3
bbb. Curricular emphasis	2.1	0	34.0	63.8	0
ccc. Effectiveness goals (e.g., student mastery)	0	6.4	21.3	72.3	0
ddd. Unit lesson plans	19.1	31.9	40.4	8.5	0
eee. Summative assessments	2.4	16.7	52.4	23.8	4.8
fff. Formative assessments	2.4	16.7	45.2	31.0	4.8
ggg. Monitoring	2.3	11.6	58.1	27.9	0
hhh. Plan to deliver special education	2.2	15.6	46.7	35.6	0
iii. Detailed business plan	0	8.5	29.8	61.7	0
jjj. Organizational structure	2.1	14.9	34.0	48.9	0
kkk. Background information	2.2	21.7	43.5	32.6	0
lll. Admissions procedures	2.1	14.9	40.4	40.4	2.1
mmm. Dismissal procedures	2.1	23.4	44.7	27.7	2.1
nnn. Complaint procedures/appeals	4.3	21.3	46.8	27.7	0
ooo. Opportunities for parent involvement	0	6.7	33.3	57.8	2.2
ppp. Insurance	2.2	26.1	50.0	19.6	2.2
qqq. Qualifications of teachers	2.1	8.5	46.8	40.4	2.1
rrr. Library	2.1	38.3	36.2	21.3	2.1
sss. Administrative / supervisory services	0	19.1	55.3	25.5	0
ttt. Fiscal procedures	0	6.4	34.0	55.3	4.3
uuu. Employee termination	4.4	31.1	40.0	24.4	0
vvv. Employee evaluation	4.3	23.4	36.2	34.0	2.1
www. Employment of relatives	10.9	28.3	34.8	21.7	4.3
xxx. Compensations and benefits	8.5	23.4	55.3	10.6	2.1
yyy. Conversion schools	2.6	23.1	51.3	17.9	5.1
zzz. Waiver from state board rule	4.8	26.2	45.2	19.0	4.8

9. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
c. The Utah State Board of Education should have final approval over charter school authorization.	8.5	23.4	42.6	25.5	0
d. The local school boards should have some authority in the approval of state-chartered schools.	48.9	23.4	14.9	12.8	0

Section D: Charter School Governance and Involvement

10. How many people are on the governing board of your charter school?

0 1
0 2
0 3
1 4
9 5
9 6
10 7
3 8
1 9
5 10
6 More than 10

11. What percentage of your charter school's governing board is CURRENTLY represented by each of the following? (e.g., 1 parent out of 10 governing board members would be 10%.) When answering this question, please consider the board that has authority to hire and dismiss personnel and set policy.

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
a. Parents	14.6	6.3	12.5	8.3	14.6	43.8
b. Students	95.6	2.2	0	0	0	2.2
c. Teachers	68.9	17.8	6.7	4.4	0	2.2
d. Charter school administrator	46.8	27.7	21.3	0	0	4.3
e. Business representatives or other professionals who do not have children in the school	36.2	12.8	25.5	21.3	0	4.3
f. University officials who do not have children in the school	70.2	12.8	14.9	2.1	0	0
g. School district personnel	79.2	8.3	8.3	4.2	0	0
h. Local school board members	91.3	0	2.2	2.2	0	4.3
i. Elected officials	84.8	4.3	6.5	2.2	0	2.2
j. PTSO/PTA	60.9	17.4	17.4	4.3	0	0
k. Other (please specify)	57.1	14.3	0	0	0	28.6

Diversity Representation

12. What percentage of your charter school's governing board do you think SHOULD be represented by each of the following? (e.g., 1 parent out of 10 governing board members would be 10%.)

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
a. Parents	0	10.9	21.7	17.4	30.4	19.6
b. Students	61.4	27.3	4.5	6.8	0	0
c. Teachers	44.2	34.9	14.0	4.7	0	2.3
d. Charter school administrator	33.3	42.2	20.0	2.3	2.2	0
e. Business representatives or other professionals who do not have children in the school	17.8	28.9	33.3	20.0	0	0

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
f. University officials who do not have children in the school	46.5	32.6	18.6	2.3	0	0
g. School district personnel	66.7	17.8	13.3	2.2	0	0
h. Local school board members	76.7	18.6	2.3	2.3	0	0
i. Elected officials	61.4	25.0	9.1	2.3	0	0
j. PTSO/PTA	33.3	33.3	31.1	2.2	0	0
k. Other (please specify) Diversity Rep., Founders	40.0	0	0	0	40.0	20.0

13. What influence do parents/guardians as a whole have in the following types of decisions and policies related to your charter school?

	Not involved	Advisory/ Provide Input	Make the Decisions	Not applicable
o. The charter application process	23.9	43.5	26.1	6.5
p. Purchasing of supplies and equipment	48.9	44.7	4.3	2.1
q. Student disciplinary policies	25.5	66.0	6.4	2.1
r. Student assessment policies	28.9	55.6	8.9	6.7
s. Student admission and dismissal policies	31.9	51.1	12.8	4.3
t. Staff selection	48.9	38.3	10.6	2.1
u. Staff salaries and benefits	65.2	17.4	10.9	6.5
v. Budgetary expenses other than salaries and benefits	48.9	34.0	14.9	2.1
w. School schedule	19.1	61.7	12.8	6.4
x. School calendar	21.3	61.7	10.6	6.4
y. Establishing curriculum	30.4	54.3	10.9	4.3
z. Extra curricular activities	8.5	66.0	23.4	2.1
aa. School goals	8.5	72.3	17.0	2.1
bb. School performance reviews	21.7	60.9	15.2	2.2

14. What influence does the authorizer (i.e., State Charter School Board or Local School Board) have in the following types of decisions and policies related to your charter school?

	Not involved	Advisory/ Provide Input	Make the Decisions	Not applicable
a. The charter application process	12.2	29.3	53.7	4.9
b. Purchasing of supplies and equipment	76.7	18.6	2.3	2.3
c. Student disciplinary policies	51.2	44.2	2.3	2.3
d. Student assessment policies	42.9	47.6	9.5	0
e. Student admission and dismissal policies	44.2	48.8	4.7	2.3
f. Staff selection	76.7	16.3	4.7	2.3
g. Staff salaries and benefits	76.7	14.0	7.0	2.3
h. Budgetary expenses other than salaries and benefits	65.1	25.6	7.0	2.3
i. School schedule	67.4	27.9	2.3	2.3
j. School calendar	58.1	37.2	2.3	2.3
k. Establishing curriculum	47.6	50.0	2.4	0
l. Extracurricular activities	79.1	14.0	2.3	4.7
m. School goals	55.8	41.9	2.3	0
n. School performance reviews	34.9	53.5	11.6	0

Section E: Laws and Rules Regulating Charter Schools

15. Please indicate how often charter schools should be exempt from the following laws and regulations.

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Almost always	Not applicable
a. School fees	34.1	22.7	27.3	13.6	2.3
b. School tuition	48.9	11.1	17.8	17.8	4.4
c. Financial reports to the State Board of Education	73.9	15.2	8.7	2.2	0
d. Performance reports to the State Board of Education	71.1	17.8	11.1	0	0
e. Comprehensive school improvement plans	61.4	18.2	13.6	4.5	2.3
f. Participation in state testing	60.0	17.8	17.8	4.4	0
g. Religion in school (e.g., legal restrictions related to curriculum)	44.4	17.8	22.2	13.3	2.2
h. Funding formulas	34.1	25.0	36.4	4.5	0
i. Admission of students	48.8	18.6	25.6	7.0	0
j. School accreditation	54.5	20.5	15.9	6.8	0
k. Teacher accreditation standards	52.3	9.1	27.3	9.1	2.3
l. Professional development	54.5	22.7	15.9	4.5	2.3
m. Teacher evaluations	59.1	15.9	11.4	11.4	2.3
n. State standards/state curriculum	34.1	27.3	25.0	11.4	2.3
o. Procurement	31.0	19.0	31.0	11.9	7.1

Section F: Technical Support and Training

16. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
e. There is a well-developed charter school network or association in Utah	6.7	35.6	51.1	2.2	4.4
f. Charter schools have adequate access to technical assistance.	8.7	43.5	43.5	2.2	2.2

17. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the following types of technical assistance and resources provided by the State Charter School Board to your charter school.

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Not applicable
a. Promoting successful charter school models.	0	37.2	48.8	4.7	9.3
b. Facilitating the application process for charter school authorization.	0	18.6	67.4	4.7	9.3
c. Directing interested parties seeking to establish charter schools to sources of *funding*.	7.1	42.9	35.7	7.1	7.1
d. Directing interested parties to sources of *technical support*.	2.4	29.3	51.2	7.3	9.8
e. Reviewing proposals to help strengthen them before an application for charter school authorization is submitted.	2.4	34.1	46.3	7.3	9.8
f. Assisting charter schools to understand their charter obligations.	4.7	25.6	51.2	14.0	4.7
g. Assisting charter schools to carry out their charter obligations.	9.5	28.6	47.6	9.5	4.8

18. As a board member, in which of the following areas do you think you would benefit from more professional development?

	Prior to opening charter school	Now that charter is opened	Both now and prior to opening	Not Needed At any Point
School Law:				
Utah laws and regulations specific to Charter Schools	11.1	11.1	71.1	6.7
Utah laws and regulations related to Public Education	13.3	13.3	62.2	11.1
Federal laws and regulations specific to Charter Schools	6.8	13.6	75.0	4.5
Federal laws and regulations related to Public Education	9.3	18.6	60.5	11.6
Human resources/personnel management	9.1	20.5	54.5	15.9
Open meeting requirements	15.9	18.2	59.1	6.8
Public records requirements	15.9	13.6	63.6	6.8
Nepotism	18.2	9.1	50.0	22.7
Conflicts of interest	13.6	11.4	63.6	11.4
Student residency requirements	16.3	7.0	53.5	23.3
School Finance:				
Funding formulas	17.4	10.9	69.6	2.2
Accounting procedures	13.0	13.0	58.7	15.2
Federal funding regulations	13.3	11.1	73.3	2.2
Property management/facility leasing	28.3	6.5	45.7	19.6
Busing/transportation	20.0	13.3	42.2	24.4
Purchasing of supplies and management	15.2	10.9	47.8	26.1
Fundraising	8.9	15.6	62.2	13.3
Financial duties specific to members of the governing body of a charter school	10.9	10.9	71.7	6.5
Bank depository contracts	21.7	10.9	43.5	23.9
Capital financing	15.2	8.7	65.2	10.9
Budget administration	10.9	4.3	63.0	21.7
Grant administration	11.1	11.1	64.4	13.3
Health and Safety:				
Health codes	19.6	19.6	39.1	21.7
Maintenance	10.9	32.6	32.6	23.9
Student discipline	13.0	23.9	37.0	26.1
Safe schools	15.2	17.4	47.8	19.6
Accountability Requirements:	15.9	22.7	54.5	6.8
Administration of state assessments	8.7	23.9	50.0	17.4
Student data	8.7	17.4	56.5	17.4
Personnel data	8.7	19.6	50.0	21.7
Fiscal audits	10.9	17.4	56.5	15.2
Staff evaluations	6.5	23.9	43.5	26.1
Duties and liabilities of a trustee under Utah law	17.4	15.2	63.0	4.3

	Prior to opening charter school	Now that charter is opened	Both now and prior to opening	Not Needed At any Point
Organizational Elements:				
Developing and approving charter school policy	21.7	10.9	58.7	8.7
Evaluating school goals	4.3	19.6	60.9	15.2
Evaluating student performance	6.5	8.7	71.7	13.0
Office management	8.9	17.8	46.7	26.7
Information management	11.1	15.6	51.1	22.2
Marketing/student recruitment	10.9	10.9	60.9	17.4

Conclusion

19. We want to make sure that we have not missed anything that you consider to be an important issue related to charter schools in Utah. Please include below, or as an attachment, anything that you would like us to know about that has not already been captured in this survey.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The information you have provided will help to better understand the issues surrounding charter schools that will ultimately provide better educational opportunities for the children of Utah.

2006 Charter School Study
District Administrator (or designee) Survey Results
N=13

Note: Except when otherwise noted immediately following a question, the numbers entered following each survey item represent valid percentages. Valid percentages are calculated based on only those respondents who answered a particular item.

Section A: Background Information

1. Please describe the size of your school district.

Less than 5,000 students	15.4%	10,000-25,000 students	23.1%
5,000-10,000 students	15.4%	More than 25,000 students	46.2%

2. Please indicate your district. (Optional)
8 respondents identified their district; 5 skipped this question.

Alpine	0	Iron	0	Ogden	0
Cache	1	Jordan	0	Provo	1
Carbon	1	Logan	1	Salt Lake City	0
Davis	1	Millard	0	Uintah	0
Grand	1	Murray	0	Wasatch	0
Granite	2	Nebo	0	Washington	0

3. How many formal applications to become a district-sponsored charter school have been submitted to your school district since 1998? (Please count charter developers that submitted more than one application for a particular school only once.)

Formal applications: Total of 28 across all districts responding with a range of 0 to 7 per district

4. Of this number of formal applications submitted, how many were ultimately approved by your district, denied by your district, withdrawn by the applicant, and are still pending?

approved 14 (50.0%)

denied 11 (39.3%)

withdrawn 2 (7.1%)

pending 0 (0%)

other 1 (3.6%)

5. Why has the district denied approval for charter school applications? (Please mark all that apply.)

30.8% Not applicable; district has not denied charter applications that it has received
15.4% Not applicable; district has not received any applications requesting district sponsorship
0% Lack of parent/community support
0% Projected enrollment of the charter school was too small
23.1% Inadequate instructional program or instructional emphasis
15.4% Insufficient district resources to support a charter school
15.4% Inadequate financial management or financial accountability system of the proposed charter school
30.8% Inadequate accountability system for student learning/outcomes
0% Opposition of the teacher union
30.8% Our school board was not supportive of the charter school concept
30.8% Other (please specify) 1) "Charter schools were not accountable to the District Board of Education"; 2) "Early legislation had financial liabilities for the local District; some of those limitations have been improved."; 3) "Inappropriate instructional program"; 4) "Since the creation of the State Charter School Board, our Board of Education has decided not to review applications."

Section B: Purpose of Charter Schools

6. Please rank-order the following reasons for creating charter schools in Utah. (Mark only one for each row and one for each column.)

	Ranking							
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
y. Improve student learning	8.3	16.7	0	25.0	16.7	8.3	8.3	16.7
z. Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods	8.3	8.3	33.3	0	16.7	16.7	16.7	0
aa. Create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school	0	0	0	9.1	18.2	18.2	36.4	18.2
bb. Increase choice of learning opportunities for students	41.7	25.0	8.3	8.3	8.3	0	0	8.3
cc. Establish new models of public schools	0	0	33.3	16.7	8.3	25.0	16.7	0
dd. Establish a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes with innovative measurement tools	0	8.3	8.3	33.3	33.3	0	8.3	8.3

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
ee. Provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level	25.0	33.3	8.3	8.3	0	16.7	8.3	0
ff. Expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001	16.7	8.3	0	0	0	16.7	8.3	50.0

Section C: Charter School Authorization

7. Please indicate the degree to which there is sufficient political support for Utah charter schools, as a whole, from the following entities.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
v. Parents/community members	0	23.1	76.9	0	0
w. District administrators	38.5	23.1	30.8	0	7.7
x. Local school board members	23.1	38.5	30.8	0	7.7
y. Utah State Office of Education	0	15.4	84.6	0	0
z. Utah State Legislature	0	0	0	100	0
aa. Utah State Board of Education	0	7.7	84.6	7.7	0
bb. Utah State Charter School Board	0	0	15.4	84.6	0

8. Please indicate whether the following criteria should be used to make decisions about approving charter schools.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
aaaa. Targeted student population	7.7	0	38.5	46.2	0
bbbb. Curricular emphasis	0	0	38.5	61.5	0
cccc. Effectiveness goals (e.g., student mastery)	0	0	15.4	84.6	0
dddd. Unit lesson plans	0	33.3	8.3	33.3	25.0
eeee. Summative assessments	0	8.3	41.7	50.0	0
ffff. Formative assessments	0	16.7	25.0	58.3	0
gggg. Monitoring	0	0	23.1	69.2	7.7
hhhh. Plan to deliver special education	7.7	0	15.4	76.9	0
iiii. Detailed business plan	0	0	30.8	61.5	7.7
jjjj. Organizational structure	0	8.3	41.7	50.0	0
kkkk. Background information	0	9.1	36.4	54.5	0
llll. Admissions procedures	0	0	30.8	69.2	0
mmmm. Dismissal procedures	0	0	33.3	66.7	0
nnnn. Complaint procedures/appeals	0	0	25.0	75.0	0
oooo. Opportunities for parent involvement	7.7	0	23.1	69.2	0
pppp. Insurance	0	0	66.7	33.3	0

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
qqqq. Qualifications of teachers	0	0	23.1	76.9	0
rrrr. Library	0	16.7	50.0	25.0	8.3
ssss. Administrative / supervisory services	0	0	33.3	66.7	0
tttt. Fiscal procedures	0	0	7.7	92.3	0
uuuu. Employee termination	0	0	50.0	50.0	0
vvvv. Employee evaluation	0	0	41.7	58.3	0
wwww. Employment of relatives	15.4	0	23.1	53.8	7.7
xxxx. Compensations and benefits	0	18.2	54.5	18.2	9.1
yyyy. Conversion schools	0	10.0	50.0	30.0	10.0
zzzz. Waiver from state board rule	30.8	0	15.4	46.2	7.7

9. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements about the effects of charter schools on your district.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
a. Approving charter schools costs our district resources.	0	8.3	33.3	58.3	0
b. Charter schools have a negative impact on other schools in our district by leaving existing schools in the district with enrollments that are too small.	8.3	25.0	50.0	8.3	8.3
c. Our existing schools are doing well so we do not need charters.	0	7.7	46.2	38.5	7.7
d. The cost of running a dual system of schools is too high.	0	7.7	30.8	61.5	0
e. Our students already have sufficient school choice.	0	15.4	30.8	53.8	0
f. Charter schools stratify students by background.	0	0	16.7	83.3	0
g. Charter schools are not required to serve all students like traditional public schools.	8.3	8.3	25.0	50.0	8.3
h. Because of their autonomy, charters are a legal liability to local boards/districts.	0	30.8	15.4	38.5	15.4
i. Charter schools have not demonstrated their effectiveness yet.	0	7.7	15.4	76.9	0

Section D: Charter School Governance and Involvement

10. What percentage of charter school's governing boards do you think SHOULD be represented by each of the following? (e.g., 1 parent out of 10 governing board members would be 10%.) When answering this question, please consider the board that has authority to hire and dismiss personnel and set policy.

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
a. Parents	0	22.2	33.3	22.2	22.2	0
b. Students	62.5	37.5	0	0	0	0
c. Teachers	22.2	22.2	33.3	22.2	0	0
d. Charter school administrator	22.2	44.4	22.2	11.1	0	0
e. Business representatives or professionals who do not have children in the school	11.1	77.8	11.1	0	0	0
f. University officials who do not have children in the school	66.7	33.3	0	0	0	0
g. School district personnel	33.3	55.6	11.1	0	0	0
h. Local school board members	66.7	11.1	22.2	0	0	0
i. Elected officials	87.5	12.5	0	0	0	0
j. PTSO/PTA	22.2	44.4	22.2	11.1	0	0
k. Other (please specify)	0	0	0	0	0	0

11. What role does your school district currently have in influencing the following types of decisions and policies related to the state-chartered schools in your district?

	Not involved	Advisory/ Provide Input	Make the Decisions	Not applicable
a. The charter application process	66.7	25.0	0	8.3
b. Purchasing of supplies and equipment	83.3	8.3	0	8.3
c. Student disciplinary policies	75.0	16.7	0	8.3
d. Student assessment policies	83.3	8.3	0	8.3
e. Student admission and dismissal policies	75.0	16.7	0	8.3
f. Staff selection	91.7	0	0	8.3
g. Staff salaries and benefits	83.3	8.3	0	8.3
h. Budgetary expenses other than salaries and benefits	83.3	8.3	0	8.3
i. School schedule	91.7	0	0	8.3
j. School calendar	91.7	0	0	8.3
k. Establishing curriculum	91.7	0	0	8.3
l. Extracurricular activities	83.3	8.3	0	8.3
m. School goals	91.7	0	0	8.3
n. Management	75.0	16.7	0	8.3
o. School performance reviews	91.7	0	0	8.3

Section E: Laws and Rules Regulating Charter Schools

12. Please indicate how often charter schools should be exempt from the following laws and regulations.

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Almost always	Not applicable
a. School fees	84.6	15.4	0	0	0
b. School tuition	75.0	0	0	16.7	8.3
c. Financial reports to the State Board of Education	100	0	0	0	0
d. Performance reports to the State Board of Education	100	0	0	0	0
e. Comprehensive school improvement plans	100	0	0	0	0
f. Participation in state testing	100	0	0	0	0
g. Religion in school (e.g., legal restrictions related to curriculum)	84.6	0	0	15.4	0
h. Funding formulas	84.6	0	15.4	0	0
i. Admission of students	100	0	0	0	0
j. School accreditation	100	0	0	0	0
k. Teacher accreditation standards	92.3	0	7.7	0	0
l. Professional development	92.3	0	7.7	0	0
m. Teacher evaluations	100	0	0	0	0
n. State standards/state curriculum	92.3	7.7	0	0	0
o. Procurement	100	0	0	0	0

Section F: Technical Support and Training

13. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
a. There is a well-developed charter school network or association in Utah	16.7	25.0	41.7	16.7	0
b. Charter schools have adequate access to technical assistance.	16.7	25.0	41.7	16.7	0

Conclusion

14. We want to make sure that we have not missed anything that you consider to be an important issue related to charter schools in Utah. Please include below, or as an attachment, anything that you would like us to know about that has not already been captured in this survey.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The information you have provided will help to better understand the issues surrounding charter schools that will ultimately provide better educational opportunities for the children of Utah.

2006 Charter School Study
District School Board Member Survey Results
N=24

Note: Except when otherwise noted immediately following a question, the numbers entered following each survey item represent valid percentages. Valid percentages are calculated based on only those respondents who answered a particular item.

Section A: Background Information

1. Please describe the size of your school district.

Less than 5,000 students	12.5%	10,000-25,000 students	33.3%
5,000-10,000 students	12.5%	More than 25,000 students	41.7%

2. Please indicate your district. (Optional)

Alpine	11.1%
Cache	5.6%
Carbon	0%
Davis	11.1%
Grand	0%
Granite	0%
Iron	0%
Jordan	5.6%
Logan	22.2%
Millard	0%
Murray	0%
Nebo	11.1%
Ogden	11.1%
Provo	0%
Salt Lake City	5/6%
Uintah	5.6%
Wasatch	5.6%
Washington	5.6%

3. Please indicate why the district has denied approval for charter school applications. (Please mark all that apply.)

41.7% Not applicable; district has not denied charter applications that it has received
8.3% Not applicable; district has not received any applications requesting district sponsorship
4.3% Lack of parent/community support
0% Projected enrollment of the charter school was too small
25.0% Inadequate instructional program or instructional emphasis
25.0% Insufficient district resources to support a charter school
29.2% Inadequate financial management or financial accountability system of the proposed charter school
37.5% Inadequate accountability system for student learning/outcomes
0% Opposition of the teacher union
16.7% Our school board was not supportive of the charter school concept
25.0% Other (please specify) Concerns over governance, finances, and liability.

Section B: Purpose of Charter Schools

4. Please rank-order the following reasons for creating charter schools in Utah. (Mark only one for each row and one for each column.)

	Ranking							
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
a. Improve student learning	15.0	0	20.0	20.0	20.0	0	5.0	20.0
b. Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods	4.8	9.5	23.8	14.3	23.8	9.5	14.3	0
c. Create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school	0	0	4.8	28.6	19.0	9.5	33.3	4.8
d. Increase choice of learning opportunities for students	31.8	22.7	18.2	4.5	4.5	9.1	4.5	4.5
e. Establish new models of public schools	9.5	23.8	9.5	9.5	19.0	14.3	4.8	9.5
f. Establish a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes with innovative measurement tools	0	4.8	9.5	9.5	0	33.3	14.3	28.6
g. Provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level	23.8	33.3	9.5	9.5	4.8	4.8	14.3	0
h. Expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001	15.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	10.0	15.0	10.0	35.0

Section C: Charter School Authorization

5. Please indicate the degree to which there is sufficient political support for Utah charter schools, as a whole, from the following entities.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
a. Parents/community members	8.7	43.5	43.5	4.3	0
b. District administrators	41.7	41.7	16.7	0	0
c. Local school board members	33.3	37.5	25.0	4.2	0
d. Utah State Office of Education	8.3	41.7	37.5	8.3	4.2
e. Utah State Legislature	0	12.5	29.2	54.2	4.2
f. Utah State Board of Education	4.3	39.1	52.2	4.3	0
g. Utah State Charter School Board	0	0	20.8	75.0	4.2

6. Please indicate whether the following criteria should be used to make decisions about approving charter schools.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
a. Targeted student population	9.1	9.1	45.5	36.4	0
b. Curricular emphasis	0	8.7	30.4	60.9	0
c. Effectiveness goals (e.g., student mastery)	0	8.7	17.4	73.9	0
d. Unit lesson plans	0	43.5	39.1	17.4	0
e. Summative assessments	0	21.7	34.8	43.5	0
f. Formative assessments	0	21.7	39.1	39.1	0
g. Monitoring	0	17.4	30.4	52.2	0
h. Plan to deliver special education	0	8.7	26.1	65.2	0
i. Detailed business plan	0	8.7	30.4	60.9	0
j. Organizational structure	0	8.7	34.8	56.5	0
k. Background information	0	4.3	52.2	43.5	0
l. Admissions procedures	0	8.7	17.4	73.9	0
m. Dismissal procedures	0	13.0	30.4	56.5	0
n. Complaint procedures/appeals	0	17.4	34.8	47.8	0
o. Opportunities for parent involvement	0	8.7	43.5	47.8	0
p. Insurance	0	9.1	54.5	31.8	4.5
q. Qualifications of teachers	4.3	0	30.4	65.2	0
r. Library	4.3	17.4	47.8	26.1	4.3
s. Administrative / supervisory services	0	4.3	52.2	43.5	0
t. Fiscal procedures	0	4.3	30.4	65.2	0
u. Employee termination	0	17.4	47.8	34.8	0
v. Employee evaluation	0	13.0	30.4	56.5	0
w. Employment of relatives	0	26.1	47.8	26.1	0
x. Compensations and benefits	0	17.4	56.5	26.1	0
y. Conversion schools	4.5	27.3	45.5	13.6	9.1
z. Waiver from state board rule	27.3	31.8	18.2	13.6	9.1

7. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements about the effects of charter schools on your district.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
a. Approving charter schools costs our district resources.	4.3	13.0	47.8	30.4	4.3
b. Charter schools have a negative impact on other schools in our district by leaving existing schools in the district with enrollments that are too small.	4.2	45.8	25.0	25.0	0
c. Our existing schools are doing well so we do not need charters.	4.3	26.1	30.4	30.4	8.7
d. The cost of running a dual system of schools is too high.	4.3	17.4	43.5	30.4	4.3
e. Our students already have sufficient school choice.	4.2	29.2	33.3	33.3	0
f. Charter schools stratify students by background.	4.2	20.8	33.3	37.5	4.2
g. Charter schools are not required to serve all students like traditional public schools.	0	25.0	25.0	50.0	0
h. Because of their autonomy, charters are a legal liability to local boards/districts.	4.2	37.5	25.0	29.2	4.2
i. Charter schools have not demonstrated their effectiveness yet.	4.2	4.2	33.3	58.3	0

Section D: Charter School Governance and Involvement

8. What percentage of charter schools' governing boards do you think <u>SHOULD</u> be represented by each of the following? (e.g., 1 parent out of 10 governing board members would be 10%.) When answering this question, please consider the board that has authority to hire and dismiss personnel and set policy.

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
a. Parents	0	4.5	36.4	40.9	9.1	9.1
b. Students	54.5	40.9	0	4.5	0	0
c. Teachers	9.1	40.9	36.4	9.1	4.5	0
d. Charter school administrator	9.1	54.5	27.3	9.1	0	0
e. Business representatives or other professionals who do not have children in the school	13.6	40.9	36.4	9.1	0	0
f. University officials who do not have children in the school	47.6	38.1	14.3	0	0	0
g. School district personnel	33.3	38.1	19.0	9.5	0	0
h. Local school board members	30.0	45.0	15.0	10.0	0	0
i. Elected officials	45.5	36.4	9.1	4.5	4.5	0

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
j. PTSO/PTA	13.6	36.4	45.5	0	4.5	0
k. Other (please specify) The only comment was that members should be elected.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

9. What influence does your local school board have in the following types of decisions and policies related to charter schools in your district?

	Not involved	Advisory/ Provide Input	Make the Decisions	Not applicable
a. Application process	54.2	29.2	16.7	0
b. Purchasing of supplies and equipment	75.0	25.0	0	0
c. Student disciplinary policies	75.0	20.8	4.2	0
d. Student assessment policies	70.8	25.0	4.2	0
e. Student admission and dismissal policies	62.5	29.2	8.3	0
f. Staff selection	91.7	8.3	0	0
g. Staff salaries and benefits	91.7	8.3	0	0
h. Budgetary expenses other than salaries and benefits	73.9	21.7	4.3	0
i. School schedule	79.2	20.8	0	0
j. School calendar	75.0	20.8	4.2	0
k. Establishing curriculum	79.2	16.7	4.2	0
l. Extracurricular activities	83.3	16.7	0	0
m. School goals	79.2	16.7	4.2	0
n. Management	78.3	13.0	8.7	0
o. School performance reviews	69.6	21.7	8.7	0

Section E: Laws and Rules Regulating Charter Schools

10. Please indicate how often charter schools should be <u>exempt</u> from the following laws and regulations.

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Almost always	Not applicable
a. School fees	65.2	17.4	17.4	0	0
b. School tuition	60.9	4.3	17.4	8.7	8.7
c. Financial reports to the State Board of Education	95.8	4.2	0	0	0
d. Performance reports to the State Board of Education	100	0	0	0	0
e. Comprehensive school improvement plans	100	0	0	0	0
f. Participation in state testing	100	0	0	0	0
g. Religion in school (e.g., legal restrictions related to curriculum)	65.2	21.7	4.3	4.3	4.3
h. Funding formulas	87.0	8.7	4.3	0	0

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Almost always	Not applicable
i. Admission of students	95.8	4.2	0	0	0
j. School accreditation	95.7	0	4.3	0	0
k. Teacher accreditation standards	87.5	4.2	8.3	0	0
l. Professional development	83.3	12.5	4.2	0	0
m. Teacher evaluations	91.7	4.2	4.2	0	0
n. State standards/state curriculum	87.5	4.2	4.2	4.2	0
o. Procurement	82.6	13.0	4.3	0	0

Section F: Technical Support and Training

11. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
c. There is a well-developed charter school network or association in Utah	9.1	54.5	31.8	0	4.5
d. Charter schools have adequate access to technical assistance.	8.7	56.5	21.7	0	13.0

12. In which of the following areas do you think you would benefit from more professional development?

	Prior to authorizing charter schools	Now that charter schools are opened	Both now and prior to opening	Not needed at any point
a. Utah laws and regulations specific to Charter Schools	18.2	45.5	31.8	4.5
b. Federal laws and regulations specific to Charter Schools	18.2	54.5	22.7	4.5
c. Property matters related to charter schools	22.7	36.4	31.8	9.1
d. Student admissions to charter schools	22.7	31.8	31.8	13.6
e. Charter school funding	18.2	40.9	36.4	4.5
f. Charter school accountability requirements	13.6	45.5	36.4	4.5
g. Evaluating charter school performance	13.6	45.5	31.8	9.1

Conclusion

13. We want to make sure that we have not missed anything that you consider to be an important issue related to charter schools in Utah. Please include below, or as an attachment, anything that you would like us to know about that has not already been captured in this survey.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The information you have provided will help to better understand the issues surrounding charter schools that will ultimately provide better educational opportunities for the children of Utah.

2006 Charter School Study
Parent/Guardian Survey Results
Child Currently Attends a Charter School
N=1,061

Note: Except when otherwise noted immediately following a question, the numbers entered following each survey item represent valid percentages. Valid percentages are calculated based on only those respondents who answered a particular item.

Section A: Background Information

1. In what grades do you have children currently enrolled in a charter school? (Please mark a grade level for each child you have enrolled.)

Child 1 (N=1,002)	Child 2 (N=646)	Child 3 (N=280)	Child 4 (N=82)
Kindergarten 7.1%	Kindergarten 5.3%	Kindergarten 11.1%	Kindergarten 18.3%
1st Grade 12.3%	1st Grade 8.7%	1st Grade 10.0%	1st Grade 11.0%
2nd Grade 8.8%	2nd Grade 11.8%	2nd Grade 13.2%	2nd Grade 8.5%
3rd Grade 9.0%	3rd Grade 15.8%	3rd Grade 9.3%	3rd Grade 4.9%
4th Grade 7.1%	4th Grade 15.8%	4th Grade 8.9%	4th Grade 1.2%
5th Grade 9.5%	5th Grade 11.0%	5th Grade 10.7%	5th Grade 2.4%
6th Grade 9.8%	6th Grade 11.1%	6th Grade 11.1%	6th Grade 6.1%
7th Grade 8.1%	7th Grade 6.0%	7th Grade 7.1%	7th Grade 13.4%
8th Grade 8.3%	8th Grade 3.6%	8th Grade 8.9%	8th Grade 9.8%
9th Grade 5.9%	9th Grade 4.2%	9th Grade 2.9%	9th Grade 13.4%
10th Grade 4.3%	10th Grade 3.3%	10th Grade 3.2%	10th Grade 4.9%
11th Grade 5.8%	11th Grade 2.6%	11th Grade 1.4%	11th Grade 1.2%
12th Grade 4.2%	12th Grade 0.9%	12th Grade 2.1%	12th Grade 4.9%

2. Do you have other school-age children not attending a charter school?
Yes 37.3% No 62.7%

2.a. If yes, in what type of school(s) are your other children enrolled? (Mark all that apply)
N=396
Public school (traditional) 87.6%
Private school, not church-related 2.8%
Parochial/church-related school 2.8%
Home schooled 3.3%

3. What kind of school did your child previously attend before this charter school? (If two or more children were enrolled at the same time consider the oldest child.)

None, this is first year in school 5.0%
Public school (traditional in neighborhood 66.8%
Public school (traditional but out of neighborhood boundary) 7.0%
Private school, not church-related 4.5%
Parochial/church-related school 1.6%
Home schooled 3.5%
Another charter school 5.7%
Other (Please specify) 5.9%
Some combination of the above and early childhood programs

4. Including this school year, how many years has your child (the oldest if more than one) attended this charter school?

This is the first year	12.4%	4 years	13.2%
2 years	47.0%	5 or more years	6.4%
3 years	21.0%		

5. Approximately how many miles do you live from your child's charter school?

1-2 miles	18.1%	10-20 miles	17.5%
3-5 miles	29.9%	More than 20 miles	2.4%
5-10 miles	32.1%		

6. Approximately how many miles do you live from the nearest public school at which your child could be enrolled?

1-2 miles	76.7%	10-20 miles	0.8%
3-5 miles	16.7%	More than 20 miles	0.3%
5-10 miles	5.5%		

7. Do you serve on the governing board for your child's charter school?

Yes 5.4% No 94.6%

8. Does the charter school require parents/guardians to sign a contract with the school?

Yes 37.6% No 62.4%

8.a. If yes, did you fully meet the agreements/expectations stated in the contract for the 2005-2006 school year?

Yes 97.0% No 3.0%

9. What is your gender (Optional)?

Male 20.5% Female 79.5%

10. What is your racial/ethnic background? (Optional)

African American/Black	0.6%	Native American/Alaskan Native	1.0%
Asian	1.7%	Pacific Islander	0.6%
Caucasian	92.3%	Other	2.0%
Hispanic/Latino	1.8%		

11. How much schooling did you complete? (Optional) If there are two parents/guardians living in the same household, please fill in schooling completed for both. If not, please fill in your column and leave the other blank.

Yourself		Your Spouse/Partner
1.0%	a. Did not complete high school	2.9%
9.8%	b. High school diploma or GED	10.3%
7.3%	c. Vocational or trade school	7.4%
30.5%	d. Less than four years of college	22.7%
31.1%	e. College graduate (BA/BS)	27.6%
5.8%	f. Graduate courses, no degree	5.5%
14.6%	g. Graduate/professional degree	23.6%

Section B: Charter School Enrollment and Satisfaction

12. What kinds of information did you use in making your decision to send your child to this charter school? (Please mark all that apply.)

Achievement test scores for the charter school 18.2%
Charter school open house or other school visits/tours 43.8%
School newsletter or flier 12.9%
Informational meetings at the school 36.2%
Informational meetings at your church 0.4%
Informational meetings at another community organization 16.1%
Television 1.1%
Newspaper 7.9%
Radio 2.2%
Utah State Charter School Board
Other educational Web sites 13.1%
Website 13.8%

Your child 36.9%
Your other childrens' experience at the charter school 16.6%
Talks with teachers 31.2%
Talks with principals 29.8%
Talks with guidance counselors 6.1%
Talks with other family members 18.9%
Talks with friends 53.7%
Talks with neighbors 36.6%
Talks with other parents 46.6%
Other 25.9% Examples were almost exclusively reasons for choice as opposed to sources of information.

13. Please mark the TOP FIVE most important types of information used in making your decision to send your child to this charter school. (Mark only one item as the most important, one as 2nd, and so on. The information that was not among the top five in importance will remain blank.)

Types of information used	Values below reflect # of responses: Most Important	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	**Total 1st-5th**
a. Achievement test scores for the charter school	99	77	41	35	38	**290**
b. Charter school open house or other school visits/tours	63	105	87	66	57	**378**
c. Charter school parent information center	25	25	30	26	18	**124**
d. School newsletter or flier	15	19	31	37	26	**128**
e. Informational meetings at the school	86	78	66	49	35	**314**
f. Informational meetings at your church	1	5	5	5	11	**27**
g. Informational meetings at another community organization	61	31	30	21	21	**164**
h. Television	5	2	2	3	12	**24**
i. Newspaper	7	14	12	14	23	**70**
j. Radio	4	5	2	6	13	**30**
k. Utah State Charter School Board Web site	16	20	26	21	34	**117**
l. Other educational Web sites	23	32	29	30	34	**148**
m. Your child	216	86	71	54	43	**470**
n. Your other children's experience at the charter school	59	51	37	22	40	**209**
o. Talks with teachers	45	68	73	66	62	**314**
p. Talks with principals	56	69	65	77	49	**316**
q. Talks with guidance counselors	9	15	14	16	16	**70**
r. Talks with other family members	27	36	39	35	35	**172**
s. Talks with friends	65	94	102	92	68	**421**
t. Talks with neighbors	31	45	59	67	50	**252**
u. Talks with other parents	70	99	82	90	106	**447**
v. Other	193	43	30	27	38	**331**

14. When deciding where to send your child to school, was this charter school your first choice, second choice, or third choice? (Please mark only one response.)

My first choice 92.4%
My second choice 7.4%
My third choice 0.2%

15. Were there other schools that you did not consider choosing for your child because of a lack of available transportation from your home to the school?

Yes 14.9% No 85.1%

16. Why did you choose the charter school for your child to attend? (Please mark all that apply.)

	Values below reflect # of responses and (% of Sample)
My child has special needs that were not met at previous school	269 (25.4%)
The location is close to my home, job, or child care	216 (20.4%)
My child's friends attend the school	157 (14.8%)
The school's strong academic reputation	540 (50.9%)
The principal	394 (37.1%)
Good teachers	552 (52.0%)
I prefer a private school but could not afford it	306 (28.8%)
My child was performing poorly at previous school	184 (17.3%)
The charter school's focus, theme, or mission	853 (80.4%)
Students get more individual help at the school	728 (68.6%)
High test scores of students attending the charter school	291 (27.4%)
Special programs such as the arts, science, technology	427 (40.2%)
This school has good physical facilities	97 (9.1%)
The racial/ethnic mix at the school	70 (6.6%)
Smaller class sizes	824 (77.7%)
The teaching style of the school	741 (69.8%)
Before and/or after school child care	9 (0.8%)
Discipline	391 (36.9%)
Opportunities for parental involvement	570 (53.7%)
The school is safe	379 (35.7%)
My child wanted to attend this school	330 (31.1%)
My interest in being involved in an educational reform effort	380 (35.8%)
The school teaches values that traditional public schools do not	478 (45.1%)
I have another child in the same school	161 (15.2%)
I was unhappy with the curriculum at previous school	493 (46.5%)
I was unhappy with the instruction at previous school	465 (43.8%)
Recommendations of teacher or official at my child's previous school	29 (2.7%)
Other	238 (22.4%)

Most reasons cited under "other" were encompassed in other choices above. Common additional reasons included uniforms; feeling like their child was more challenged, particularly in ability grouped classes; and full-day kindergarten.

17. Please mark the TOP FIVE most important reasons for choosing this charter school. (Please mark only one item as the most important, one as 2nd, and so on. The reasons that were not among the top five in importance will remain blank.)

Reasons for choosing the charter school	Values below reflect # of responses: Most Important	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	**Total 1st-5th**
a. My child has special needs that were not met at previous school	127	21	17	19	22	**206**
b. The location is close to my home, job, or child care	31	38	25	16	43	**153**
c. My child's friends attend the school	13	21	21	24	25	**104**
d. The school's strong academic reputation	118	74	48	37	33	**310**
e. The principal	25	47	36	23	37	**168**
f. Good teachers	49	72	68	57	39	**285**
g. I prefer a private school but could not afford it	55	39	22	32	45	**193**
h. My child was performing poorly at previous school	42	34	16	21	14	**127**
i. The charter school's focus, theme, or mission	122	129	107	79	70	**507**
j. Students get more individual help at the school	74	98	79	66	56	**373**
k. High test scores of students attending the charter school	15	20	28	19	24	**106**
l. Special programs such as the arts, science, technology	39	48	45	52	43	**227**
m. This school has good physical facilities	3	2	7	4	7	**23**
n. The racial/ethnic mix at the school	8	7	15	10	14	**54**
o. Smaller class sizes	79	123	118	111	62	**493**
p. The teaching style of the school	56	61	97	98	72	**384**
q. Before and/or after school child care	1	1	6	10	18	**36**
r. Discipline	12	20	35	30	39	**136**
s. Opportunities for parental involvement	16	26	47	57	70	**216**
t. The school is safe	14	11	18	23	17	**83**
u. My child wanted to attend this school	57	17	26	25	36	**161**
v. My interest in being involved in an educational reform effort	23	14	32	44	42	**155**
w. The school teaches values that traditional public schools do not	29	36	48	45	44	**202**
x. I have another child in the same school	7	7	8	7	21	**50**
y. I was unhappy with the curriculum at previous school	97	60	38	55	45	**295**
z. I was unhappy with the instruction at previous school	48	59	35	32	70	**244**
aa. Recommendations of teacher or official at my child's previous school	2	0	5	7	14	**28**
bb. Other	73	21	17	10	21	**142**

18. If given the opportunity, would you choose this charter school again for your child?

Yes 90.4% No 4.6% Not sure 5.0%

19. What overall grade would you give to this charter school? (Please mark only one.)

A 64.9% B 29.0% C 3.8% D 1.4% F 0.9%

20. What overall grade would you give the public schools in your community? (Please mark only one.)

A 2.4% B 21.5% C 45.8% D 21.8% F 8.4%

21. Please rate your agreement with each statement below about the charter school your child attends.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
a. This charter school helps students reach their highest potential.	1.6	4.1	30.3	63.5	0.4
b. Teachers care about the students.	0.9	1.4	27.1	70.5	0.1
c. Teachers in this school involve parents.	1.1	4.0	33.3	61.1	0.6
d. My child enjoys this school.	2.1	2.9	27.7	66.7	0.6
e. The school's neighborhood is safe.	1.7	7.1	45.4	42.8	3.0
f. I am comfortable spending time at my child's school.	1.3	3.0	28.7	64.8	2.2
g. This school has good physical facilities.	3.1	12.0	50.2	32.9	1.7
h. This school is meeting my child's academic needs that could not be met at other local schools.	2.9	7.7	26.6	58.5	4.3
i. This school is meeting my child's social needs that could not be met at other local schools.	3.8	23.3	39.4	24.5	9.0
j. Class sizes are too large at this charter school. **(Reverse coded item)**	40.4	49.0	7.4	2.8	.7
k. This school has sufficient financial resources.	9.7	31.9	45.4	10.1	3.0
l. Parents, students, and teachers have a good working relationship.	1.6	3.0	44.8	50.2	0.5
m. This school offers a sufficient number of extracurricular activities for my child.	3.1	19.7	44.9	27.0	5.3
n. This school offers a sufficient number of elective courses.	2.2	17.3	44.8	19.8	15.8
o. This school has high standards and expectations for students.	1.5	2.2	24.0	71.3	0.9
p. I am satisfied with the school's curriculum.	1.6	3.8	31.7	62.1	0.8
q. I am satisfied with the instruction offered.	1.8	3.8	34.3	59.3	0.8
r. I am satisfied with safety at the school.	1.2	2.8	43.6	51.4	1.0
s. Parents are actively involved in our school.	1.7	4.4	30.8	62.0	1.2
t. Teachers are involved in decision making at this school.	2.0	4.6	46.9	40.7	5.7

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
u. Teachers are held accountable for their effectiveness.	1.6	4.3	43.4	47.0	3.8
v. School leaders are held accountable for student achievement/performance.	2.3	6.2	45.8	40.7	4.9
w. Students are held accountable for their own achievement/performance.	1.4	2.2	39.8	55.1	1.6

Section C: Purpose of Charter Schools in Utah

22. Please rank-order the following reasons for creating charter schools in Utah. (Please mark only one for each row and one for each column.)

	Ranking							
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
i. Improve student learning	56.1	19.1	9.1	7.5	3.8	2.4	1.0	1.0
j. Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods	4.0	18.5	19.0	16.3	14.1	11.4	10.9	5.7
k. Create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school	1.1	3.2	8.7	10.5	13.1	19.3	22.6	21.6
l. Increase choice of learning opportunities for students	18.7	27.0	20.3	14.2	9.7	6.5	2.2	1.3
m. Establish new models of public schools	4.2	7.8	11.8	16.9	20.0	14.1	14.9	10.4
n. Establish a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes with innovative measurement tools	7.5	10.3	13.6	14.6	15.0	20.7	12.8	5.5
o. Provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level	5.6	12.4	12.4	13.9	15.3	13.8	17.0	9.5
p. Expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001	4.6	4.6	6.9	6.5	7.6	10.5	16.6	42.7

23. Please mark the TOP THREE most important educational goals for your child's charter school to accomplish. (Mark only one item as the most important, one as 2nd, and so on. The goals that were not among your top three in importance will remain blank.)

Values below reflect # of responses

	Most Important	2nd	3rd	**Total 1st-3rd**
a. Basic skills (i.e., reading, writing, mathematics, speaking)	337	108	73	**518**
b. Academic excellence	341	216	137	**694**
c. Good work habits and self-discipline	114	237	248	**599**
d. Teaching how to get along with others from different social backgrounds and races	15	21	50	**86**
e. Developing high moral standards	53	75	92	**220**
f. Teaching critical thinking/problem-solving skills	119	212	187	**518**
g. Building self-esteem	36	61	82	**179**
	Most Important	2nd	3rd	**Total 1st-3rd**
h. Preparing students for college (e.g., offering pre-college curriculum)	78	74	99	**251**
i. Developing specialized skills (e.g., dance, art, technology, vocational)	26	26	51	**103**

Section D: Charter School Governance and Involvement

24. What percentage of your charter school's governing board is CURRENTLY represented by each of the following? (e.g., 1 parent out of 10 governing board members would be 10%.) When answering this question, please consider the board that has authority to hire and dismiss personnel and set policy.

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
a. Parents	3.1	11.3	8.7	14.4	15.9	46.6
b. Students	72.8	15.9	3.7	3.4	1.7	2.6
c. Teachers	39.6	25.4	17.0	10.5	4.1	3.4
d. Charter school administrator	13.3	44.3	18.6	7.4	6.5	10.0
e. Business representatives or professionals who do not have children in the school	51.7	26.6	12.6	5.0	2.7	1.4
f. University officials who do not have children in the school	78.4	12.3	5.3	3.2	0.8	0
g. School district personnel	80.2	11.2	4.1	2.9	0.8	0.8
h. Local school board members	75.5	9.6	5.6	4.0	1.8	3.4
i. Elected officials	62.3	14.7	8.4	7.9	2.2	4.5
j. PTSO/PTA	41.0	28.9	14.4	7.2	4.9	3.5
k. Other (please specify) Most common response was they are unsure who is on the Governing Board.	84.3	4.5	2.2	4.5	2.2	2.2

25. What percentage of your charter school's governing board do you think SHOULD be represented by each of the following?

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
a. Parents	0.4	6.8	19.7	24.9	20.7	27.6
b. Students	36.7	31.6	19.0	7.2	2.8	2.7
c. Teachers	8.5	25.9	32.8	22.2	6.3	4.3
d. Charter school administrator	6.9	46.8	24.3	11.0	5.2	5.8
e. Business representatives or other professionals who do not have children in the school	47.5	30.7	12.7	6.2	1.8	1.1
	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
f. University officials who do not have children in the school	52.0	30.3	11.0	4.8	0.8	1.1
g. School district personnel	60.2	27.2	7.7	3.0	1.1	0.8
h. Local school board members	60.6	23.1	8.2	3.5	3.2	1.3
i. Elected officials	54.0	20.3	8.8	8.0	4.6	4.3
j. PTSO/PTA	29.8	34.2	19.1	8.8	3.7	4.5
k. Other (No additional groups were noted by more than 2 respondents)	85.6	6.2	2.1	2.1	1.0	3.1

26. What influence do parents/guardians as a whole have in the following types of decisions and policies related to your charter school?

	Not involved	Advisory/ Provide Input	Make the Decisions	Not applicable
a. The charter application process	35.2	40.9	17.4	6.4
b. Purchasing of supplies and equipment	37.1	49.8	10.0	3.2
c. Student disciplinary policies	26.5	60.8	10.9	1.8
d. Student assessment policies	38.8	50.6	8.3	2.3
e. Student admission and dismissal policies	41.6	48.9	7.0	2.4
f. Staff selection	49.9	39.0	8.2	2.9
g. Staff salaries and benefits	69.8	20.7	5.6	3.9
h. Budgetary expenses other than salaries and benefits	46.0	42.7	8.3	3.0
i. School schedule	33.8	54.5	9.7	2.0
j. School calendar	33.2	55.7	8.7	2.3
k. Establishing curriculum	29.9	56.8	11.4	1.8
l. Extracurricular activities	11.8	66.2	20.6	1.5
m. School goals	16.7	65.7	16.6	1.0
n. School performance reviews	30.7	54.7	12.3	2.4

Conclusion

27. We want to make sure that we have not missed anything that you consider to be an important issue related to charter schools in Utah. Please include below, or as an attachment, anything that you would like us to know about that has not already been captured above.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The information you have provided will help to better understand the issues surrounding charter schools that will ultimately provide better educational opportunities for the children of Utah.

2006 Charter School Study
Survey Results of Parents/Guardians of Students
Who Previously Attended Charter Schools
N=88

Note: Except when otherwise noted immediately following a question, the numbers entered following each survey item represent valid percentages. Valid percentages are calculated based on only those respondents who answered a particular item.

Section A: Background Information

1. In what grades did you have children enrolled in a charter school? (Mark a grade level for each child you had enrolled.)

Child 1 (N=83)	Child 2 (N=56)	Child 3 (N=25)	Child 4 (N=16)
Kindergarten 6.0%	Kindergarten 3.6%	Kindergarten 12.0%	Kindergarten 0%
1st Grade 7.2%	1st Grade 3.6%	1st Grade 0%	1st Grade 25.0%
2nd Grade 13.3%	2nd Grade 8.9%	2nd Grade 16.0%	2nd Grade 6.3%
3rd Grade 2.4%	3rd Grade 8.9%	3rd Grade 12.0%	3rd Grade 6.3%
4th Grade 6.0%	4th Grade 16.1%	4th Grade 12.0%	4th Grade 18.8%
5th Grade 9.6%	5th Grade 16.1%	5th Grade 20.0%	5th Grade 0%
6th Grade 10.8%	6th Grade 16.1%	6th Grade 20.0%	6th Grade 12.5%
7th Grade 8.4%	7th Grade 3.6%	7th Grade 0%	7th Grade 12.5%
8th Grade 10.8%	8th Grade 7.1%	8th Grade 4.0%	8th Grade 12.5%
9th Grade 6.0%	9th Grade 7.1%	9th Grade 4.0%	9th Grade 0%
10th Grade 13.3%	10th Grade 3.6%	10th Grade 0%	10th Grade 6.3%
11th Grade 6.0%	11th Grade 5.4%	11th Grade 0%	11th Grade 0%
12th Grade 0%	12th Grade 0%	12th Grade 0%	12th Grade 0%

2. What kind of school does your child who attended the charter school currently attend? (If two or more children were previously enrolled in a charter school at the same time, consider the oldest child.)

Public school (traditional in neighborhood 55.8%
Public school (traditional but out of neighborhood boundary) 8.1%
Private school, not church-related 2.3%
Parochial/church-related school 0%
Home schooled 0%
Another charter school 20.9%
Other (Please specify) 12.8%
No additional category was identified more than once.

3. Including the 2004-2005 school year, how many years did your child (the oldest if more than one) attend the charter school?

1 year 37.6%
2 years 32.9%
3 years 14.1%
4 years 9.4%
5 or more years 5.9%

4. Approximately how many miles did you live from your child's charter school?

1-2 miles	17.2%	10-20 miles	23.0%
3-5 miles	21.8%	More than 20 miles	4.6%
5-10 miles	33.3%		

5. Approximately how many miles do you live from the nearest public school at which your child could be enrolled?

1-2 miles	80.5%	10-20 miles	2.3%
3-5 miles	14.9%	More than 20 miles	0%
5-10 miles	2.3%		

6. Did you serve on the governing board for your child's charter school?

Yes 5.7% No 94.3%

7. Did the charter school require parents/guardians to sign a contract with the school?

Yes 33.3% No 66.7%

7.a. If yes, did you fully meet the agreements/expectations stated in the contract for the 2004-2005 school year?

Yes 96.2% No 3.8%

8. What is your gender (Optional)?

Male 16.9% Female 83.1%

9. What is your racial/ethnic background? (Optional)

African American/Black	1.2%	Native American/Alaskan Native	0%
Asian	1.2%	Pacific Islander	0%
Caucasian/White	95.2%	Other (Not specified)	1.2%
Hispanic/Latino	1.2%		

10. How much schooling did you complete? (Optional) If there are two parents/guardians living in the same household, please fill in schooling completed for both. If not, please fill in your column and leave the other blank.

Yourself		Your Spouse/Partner
3.5%	a. Did not complete high school	1.0%
2.6%	b. High school diploma or GED	9.7%
7.0%	c. Vocational or trade school	3.9%
36.0%	d. Less than four years of college	18.4%
35.1%	e. College graduate (BA/BS)	31.1%
5.3%	f. Graduate courses, no degree	4.9%
10.5%	g. Graduate/professional degree	31.1%

Section B: Charter School Enrollment and Satisfaction

11. What kinds of information did you use in making your decision to send your child to a charter school? (Please mark all that apply.)

14.8% Achievement test scores for the charter school
47.7% Charter school open house or other school visits/tours
8.0 % School newsletter or flier
39.8% Informational meetings at the school
1.1% Informational meetings at your church
2.3% Informational meetings at another community organization
13.6% Television
9.1% Newspaper
4.5% Radio
10.2% Utah State Charter School Board Web site
11.4% Other educational Web sites
34.1% Your child
17.0% Your other childrens' experience at the charter school
29.5% Talks with teachers
29.5% Talks with principals
8.0% Talks with guidance counselors
14.8% Talks with other family members
43.2% Talks with friends
26.1% Talks with neighbors
40.9% Talks with other parents
29.5% Other (Information listed actually falls under the Reasons for Choice question.)

12. Please mark the TOP FIVE most important types of information used in making your decision to send your child to a charter school. (Mark only one item as the most important, one as 2nd, and so on. The information that was not among the top five in importance will remain blank.)

Values below reflect # of responses

	Most Important	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	**Total 1sr-5th**
a. Achievement test scores for the charter school	9	4	3	3	3	**22**
b. Charter school open house or other school visits/tours	13	8	8	5	3	**37**
c. Charter school parent information center	2	1	1	2	3	**9**
d. School newsletter or flier	1	0	1	0	1	**5**
e. Informational meetings at the school	12	6	6	1	4	**29**
f. Informational meetings at your church	0	0	0	0	1	**1**
g. Informational meetings at another community organization	1	3	3	1	1	**9**
h. Television	0	0	0	1	0	**1**
i. Newspaper	1	1	1	4	1	**8**
j. Radio	0	0	0	0	1	**1**
k. Utah State Charter School Board Website	2	1	0	1	3	**7**
l. Other educational websites	1	5	1	2	4	**13**
m. Your child	20	5	5	7	1	**38**
n. Your other children's experience at the charter school	2	4	2	1	0	**9**
o. Talks with teachers	3	6	10	5	0	**24**
p. Talks with principals	5	5	8	4	2	**24**
q. Talks with guidance counselors	0	1	1	1	0	**3**
r. Talks with other family members	4	3	3	3	0	**13**
s. Talks with friends	1	11	5	3	3	**23**
t. Talks with neighbors	0	1	4	3	7	**15**
u. Talks with other parents	5	7	1	9	10	**32**
v. Other (Reasons for choice not types of info.)	18	4	3	1	1	**27**

13. When you were deciding where to send your child to school, was the charter school that your child attended your first choice, second choice, or third choice? (Please mark only one response.)

My first choice 83.3%
My second choice 16.7%
My third choice 0%

14. What overall grade would you give to the charter school your child attended? (Please mark only one.)

A 34.9% B 29.1% C 19.8% D 11.6% F 4.7%

15. What overall grade would you give the public schools in your community? (Please mark only one.)

A 6.0% B 23.8% C 42.9% D 17.9% F 9.5%

16. Why did you withdraw your child from the charter school? (Please mark all that apply.)

Values below reflect # of responses and (% of Sample)

10 (11.4%)	My child has special needs that were not met at the charter school
22 (25.0%)	The location was not close to my home, job, or child care
8 (9.1%)	My child's friends did not attend the school
7 (8.0%)	The school's academic reputation
14 (15.9%	The principal
17 (19.3%)	The teachers
14 (15.9%)	My child was performing poorly at the charter school
4 (4.5%)	I did not agree with the charter school's focus, theme, or mission
10 (11.4%)	Students did not get enough individual help at the school
4 (4.5%)	Low test scores of students attending the charter school
14 (15.9%)	Too few special programs such as the arts, science, technology
16 (18.2%)	This school did not have good physical facilities
1 (1.1%)	The racial/ethnic mix at the school
4 (4.5%)	Large class sizes
14 (15.9%)	The teaching style of the school
2 (2.3%)	Lack of before and/or after school child care
16 (18.2%)	Discipline problems
5 (5.7%)	Too many opportunities for parental involvement
3 (3.4%)	Too few opportunities for parental involvement
4 (4.5%)	The school was not safe
30 (34.1%)	My child wanted to attend another school
3 (3.4%)	Was not meeting m interest in being involved in an educational reform effort
3 (3.4%)	Did not agree with the values taught by the school
4 (4.5%)	I have other child in a different school and wanted them to attend the same school
7 (8.0)%	I was unhappy with the curriculum at the charter school
22 (25.0%)	I was unhappy with the instruction at the charter school
3 (3.4%)	Recommendations of teacher or official at the charter school

17. Please rate your agreement with each statement below about the charter school your child attended.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
a. This charter school helped students reach their highest potential.	3.4	20.7	36.8	39.1	0
b. Teachers cared about the students.	1.2	9.3	38.4	51.2	0
c. Teachers in the charter school involved parents.	2.3	10.3	33.3	51.7	2.3
d. My child enjoyed the charter school.	8.1	12.8	39.5	39.5	0
e. The school's neighborhood was safe.	0	6.0	44.0	47.6	2.4
f. I was comfortable spending time at the charter school.	0	9.5	47.6	40.5	2.4
g. The school had good physical facilities.	7.1	29.4	40.0	22.4	1.2
h. The charter school met my child's academic needs that could not be met at other local schools.	14.1	29.4	18.8	37.6	0
i. The school met my child's social needs that could not be met at other local schools.	7.1	41.7	31.0	10.7	9.5
j. Class sizes were too large.	32.1	53.6	9.5	3.6	1.2
k. This school had sufficient financial resources.	12.0	31.3	37.3	14.5	4.8
l. Parents, students, and teachers had a good working relationship.	1.2	19.0	48.8	31.0	0
m. The charter school offered a sufficient number of extracurricular activities for my child.	3.6	38.6	43.4	8.4	6.0
n. This school offers a sufficient number of elective courses.	8.3	33.3	34.5	11.9	11.9
o. This school had high standards and expectations for students.	7.1	11.9	32.1	48.8	0
p. I was satisfied with the school's curriculum.	3.6	15.5	40.5	40.5	0
q. I was satisfied with the instruction offered.	4.8	25.3	32.5	37.3	0
r. I am satisfied with safety at the school.	2.4	4.7	51.8	40.0	1.2
s. Parents were actively involved in the charter school.	3.7	7.4	38.3	48.1	2.5
t. Teachers were involved in decision making at the school.	3.6	9.5	48.8	31.0	7.1
u. Teachers were held accountable for their effectiveness.	3.6	19.0	39.3	31.0	7.1
v. School leaders were held accountable for student achievement/performance.	10.0	15.0	42.5	26.3	6.3
w. Students were held accountable for their own achievement/performance.	2.4	8.4	44.6	42.2	2.4

Section C: Purpose of Charter Schools in Utah

18. Please rank-order the following reasons for creating charter schools in Utah. (Please mark only one for each row and one for each column.)

	Ranking							
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
a. Improve student learning	57.1	16.7	9.5	6.0	7.1	2.4	1.2	0
b. Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods	5.0	10.0	27.5	10.0	15.0	15.0	13.8	3.8
c. Create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school	1.3	8.0	4.0	9.3	12.0	14.7	20.0	30.7
d. Increase choice of learning opportunities for students	117.5	31.3	17.5	15.0	6.3	10.0	0	2.5
e. Establish new models of public schools	3.8	10.1	13.9	19.0	19.0	10.1	19.0	5.1
f. Establish a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes with innovative measurement tools	2.6	11.5	9.0	15.4	20.5	24.4	11.5	5.1
g. Provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level	9.9	9.9	13.6	13.6	11.1	11.1	17.3	13.6
h. Expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001	3.8	6.3	6.3	12.5	7.5	12.5	13.8	37.5

Section D: Charter School Governance and Involvement

19. What percentage of charter schools' governing boards do you think SHOULD be represented by each of the following? (e.g., 1 parent out of 10 governing board members would be 10%.) When answering this question, please consider the board that has authority to hire and dismiss personnel and set policy.

	None	10% or fewer	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
a. Parents	2.5	10.0	23.8	30.0	22.5	11.3
b. Students	30.4	48.1	10.1	6.3	0	5.1
c. Teachers	1.3	17.7	34.2	34.2	8.9	3.8
d. Charter school administrator	7.7	28.2	28.2	20.5	9.0	6.4
e. Business representatives or other professionals who do not have children in the school	31.3	37.5	16.3	10.0	3.8	1.3
f. University officials who do not have children in the school	45.6	39.2	10.1	3.8	1.3	0
g. School district personnel	41.8	40.5	7.6	7.6	2.5	0
h. Local school board members	49.4	24.1	16.5	7.6	2.5	0
i. Elected officials	43.6	38.5	10.3	6.4	1.3	0
j. PTSO/PTA	17.6	43.2	21.6	12.2	4.1	1.4
k. Other (None specified)	63.6	27.3	0	9.1	0	0

20. What influence did parents/guardians as a whole have in the following types of decisions and policies related to the charter school that your child attended?

	Not involved	Advisory/ Provided Input	Made the Decisions	Not applicable
a. The charter application process	40.8	34.2	15.8	9.2
b. Purchasing of supplies and equipment	45.3	42.7	8.0	4.0
c. Student disciplinary policies	40.3	45.8	9.7	4.2
d. Student assessment policies	56.2	34.2	8.2	1.4
e. Student admission and dismissal policies	54.9	36.6	7.0	1.4
f. Staff selection	62.5	27.8	8.3	1.4
g. Staff salaries and benefits	80.0	12.9	4.3	2.9
h. Budgetary expenses other than salaries and benefits	65.7	21.4	8.6	4.3
i. School schedule	50.0	40.0	7.1	2.9
j. School calendar	49.3	39.4	8.5	2.8
k. Establishing curriculum	37.5	47.2	12.5	2.8
l. Extracurricular activities	31.0	47.9	15.5	5.6
m. School goals	34.7	47.2	13.9	4.2
n. School performance reviews	51.4	34.7	9.7	4.2

Conclusion

21. We want to make sure that we have not missed anything that you consider to be an important issue related to charter schools in Utah. Please include below, or as an attachment, anything that you would like us to know about that has not already been captured above.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The information you have provided will help to better understand the issues surrounding charter schools that will ultimately provide better educational opportunities for the children of Utah.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS

District Superintendent (or Designee) Interview Protocol
September 2006

District: _____
Name & Title: _____
Date: _____
Researcher: _____

Pre-Interview Notes: (description of setting/contextual issues that may influence focus group)
_____
_____
_____

Interview Set-up

- Take cover letter regarding survey; invite administrator to complete survey if they haven't yet
- Put business cards (including Andrea's and Cori's), and candy (optional) on the table
- Prepare tape recorder, microphone, and interview protocol; Test microphone and recorders (double tape)
- Be sure tape recorder is on
- Take adequate consent forms and hand out (give two copies to each participant; collect one copy and leave one with participants.

Introduction, Purpose, and Procedure
Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. This interview should take approximately 30-45 minutes. In addition to the consent form which I have just handed to you, I have a few additional comments.

The interviews that the Utah Education Policy Center are conducting accompany a statewide survey of charter school administrators and board members, district administrators and school board members, state charter board members, and parents/guardians of charter school students. In these interviews we are particularly interested in your perspectives as the principal or director about charter school purpose, authorization, governance, and training.

I also want to clarify that we are NOT evaluating individual charter schools or districts, but rather we are focusing our analysis at the state level by addressing the research questions that were requested by the Utah state legislature.

I plan to tape record this interview so I am able to capture the ideas you share with me instead of being distracted by taking notes. The tapes will only be listened to by members of the UEPC research team. We want to assure you that the tape will be for our use only. No one will be identified individually or by school in any reports generated from this interview.

We are very interested in your opinions and encourage frank answers. The more you share with us, the better able we are to use this information to identify the important issues about charter schools in Utah. Findings from the interviews will be synthesized and included in a final report that we will submit to the state legislature.

Again, the summary report will not identify individual interviewees or schools. Where quotes are included to provide context to findings, individuals and schools will be anonymous.

The consent form that you have been handed explains your rights as a participant in this study, including that your participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

(Notes to research team: The questions in this focus group protocol are intended to guide a discussion about the charter schools, covering each of the proposed research questions. If the answer to any question has already been addressed in an early part of the interview, please continue to the next question.)

Purpose
I'd like to start with some questions about the purpose of charter schools in Utah.

1. What were the reasons for creating charter schools in your district?

> [Probes only if there is a district chartered school]:
> Who was involved?
> How long did it take for approval to be attained?

2. Current Utah state law specifies several purposes of charter schools? [Refer to attached handout that lists the state purposes] Given what we have just discussed, how should current state law specifying the purposes of charter schools be modified, if at all?

Probes:

> What elements of the law are too restrictive?
>
> What elements of the law are too broad?

Authorization

Next I'd like to ask a few questions about how charter schools are authorized.

3. I understand that your district has authorized _____ charter schools and that the state charter board has authorized _____ charter schools. How many schools have petitioned the district for charter status?

Probe: What reasons have schools been denied charters?

4. What has the district's experience been as schools have applied to become charter schools (both district chartered and state chartered)?

Probes:
What aspects of the authorization process were beneficial?

What aspects of the authorization process were not beneficial or cumbersome?

5. What have been local school boards' issues and concerns with authorizing charter schools in Utah?

Probes:
Why do you think local school boards have authorized few charter schools in Utah?

6. What changes in state laws or rules would result in local school boards authorizing a greater number of charter schools?

7. Given your experience, in what ways is the state charter board too lenient or too restrictive in awarding charters?

8. What modifications would you suggest for the authorization policies?

Probes:
What modifications or other considerations to the criteria used to approve or disapprove an application to establish a charter school should be used?

9. What conditions should be present to authorize additional charter schools?

Probes:
How many charter schools should be authorized each year?

Should the number of new charter schools each year be limited?

What should be the maximum number of new charter schools each year?

Governance
Next I will ask some questions about how charter schools are governed.

10. How should stakeholders and constituents (parents/guardians , business, teachers, authorizers, district administrators, district board members, etc.) be involved in the governance of charter schools?

Probe: Please explain the rationale for the degree of involvement for each group.

11. What suggestions do you have for improving the role that stakeholders and constituents play in the governance of charter schools?

12. Who should govern charter schools with multiple campuses (e.g., one governing body, governing body at each campus)?

State Laws and Rules
Another goal of this study is to determine to what extent charter schools should be exempt from state laws and rules regulating public schools.

13. In your experience, from what state laws or rules that regulate public schools should charter schools be exempt?

Probe: When and under what circumstances should charter schools be exempt from state laws or rules that regulate public schools? (Rationale for above question)

14. What have been your experiences with the state reporting requirements?

Probe: Are they manageable or are they too much?

Training

Finally, I have several questions about the experience and training that charter school administrators and governing board members need to be successful in opening and operating a charter school

15. What kind of training and support does the district offer for charter school administrators or board members to open and operate a charter school?

16. What type of training should be required for charter schools to open and operate?

Probes:
For administrators?
For governing board members?
For teachers?

17. Who should be responsible for the additional training and support needed?

Conclusion

18. What additional information is relevant or necessary for the Utah state legislature to know and understand about the purpose, authorization, governance or support of charter schools that has not been addressed here?

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I'll leave mine and Andrea's card in case you have any questions about the study or if you think of something else that you think would be important for us to know about your charter school.

Charter School Administrator Interview Protocol
September 2006

Charter School: _____
Name & Title: _____
Date: _____
Researcher: _____

Pre-Interview Notes: (description of setting/contextual issues that may influence focus group)
_____
_____
_____

Interview Set-up

- Take cover letter regarding survey; invite administrator to complete survey if they haven't yet
- Put business cards (including Andrea's and Cori's), and candy (optional) on the table
- Prepare tape recorder, microphone, and interview protocol; Test microphone and recorders (double tape)
- Be sure tape recorder is on
- Take adequate consent forms and hand out (give two copies to each participant; collect one copy and leave one with participants.

Introduction, Purpose, and Procedure
Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. This interview should take approximately 30-45 minutes. In addition to the consent form which I have just handed to you, I have a few additional comments.

The interviews that the Utah Education Policy Center are conducting accompany a statewide survey of charter school administrators and board members, district administrators and school board members, state charter board members, and parents/guardians of charter school students. In these interviews we are particularly interested in your perspectives as the principal or director about charter school purpose, authorization, governance, and training.

I also want to clarify that we are NOT evaluating individual charter schools or districts, but rather we are focusing our analysis at the state level by addressing the research questions that were requested by the Utah state legislature.

I plan to tape record this interview so I am able to capture the ideas you share with me instead of being distracted by taking notes. The tapes will only be listened to by members of the UEPC research team. We want to assure you that the tape will be for our use only. No one will be identified individually or by school in any reports generated from this interview.

We are very interested in your opinions and encourage frank answers. The more you share with us, the better able we are to use this information to identify the important issues about charter schools in Utah. Findings from the interviews will be synthesized and included in a final report that we will submit to the state legislature.

Again, the summary report will not identify individual interviewees or schools. Where quotes are included to provide context to findings, individuals and schools will be anonymous.

The consent form that you have been handed explains your rights as a participant in this study, including that your participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

(Notes to research team: The questions in this interview protocol are intended to guide a discussion about the charter schools, covering each of the proposed research questions. If the answer to any question has already been addressed in an early part of the interview, please continue to the next question.)

Purpose
I'd like to start with some questions about the purpose of charter schools in Utah. We'll start with your experiences at _____ charter school

1. What were the reasons for creating your charter school?

Probes:
Who was involved?

How long did it take for approval to be attained?

2. Current Utah state law specifies several purposes of charter schools? [Refer to attached handout that lists the state purposes] Given what we have just discussed, how should current state law specifying the purposes of charter schools be modified, if at all?

Probes:
What elements of the law are too restrictive?

What elements of the law are too broad?

Authorization
Next I'd like to ask a few questions about how charter schools are authorized.

3. What was your experience when you applied to become a charter school?

Probes:
What aspects of the authorization process were beneficial?

What aspects of the authorization process were not beneficial or cumbersome?

What additional information did you provide to the state charter school board as part of the application review process and what information do you wish you could have supplied?

[if state-chartered] Did you consider seeking charter status from the district school board?

4. What have been local school boards' issues and concerns with authorizing charter schools in Utah?

Probes:
Why do you think local school boards have authorized few charter schools in Utah?

5. What changes in state laws or rules would result in local school boards authorizing a greater number of charter schools?

6. Given your experience, in what ways is the state charter board too lenient or too restrictive in awarding charters?

7. What modifications would you suggest for the authorization policies?

Probes:
What modifications or other considerations to the criteria used to approve or disapprove an application to establish a charter school should be used?

8. What conditions should be present to authorize additional charter schools?

Probes:
How many charter schools should be authorized each year?

Should the number of new charter schools each year be limited?

What should be the maximum number of new charter schools each year?

Governance
Next I will ask some questions about how charter schools are governed.

9. How should stakeholders and constituents (parents/guardians , business, teachers, authorizers, district administrators, district board members, etc.) be involved in the governance of charter schools?

Probe: Please explain the rationale for the degree of involvement for each group.

10. What suggestions do you have for improving the role that stakeholders and constituents play in the governance of charter schools?

11. Who should govern charter schools with multiple campuses (e.g., one governing body, governing body at each campus)?

State Laws and Rules
Another goal of this study is to determine to what extent charter schools should be exempt from state laws and rules regulating public schools.

12. In your experience, from what state laws or rules that regulate public schools should charter schools be exempt?

Probe: When and under what circumstances should charter schools be exempt from state laws or rules that regulate public schools? (Rationale for above question)

13. What have been your experiences with the state reporting requirements?

Probe: Are they manageable or are they too much?

Training

Finally, I have several questions about the experience and training that charter school administrators need to be successful in opening and operating a charter school

14. First, what kind of training and support did you have for opening and operating this charter school?

Probes:
Your staff?
Your governing board members?

15. Who provided this training and how beneficial was the training and support?

16. What type of training and support should be required for charter schools to open and operate?

Probes:
For administrators?
For governing board members?

17. Who should be responsible for the additional training and support needed?

Conclusion

18. What additional information is relevant or necessary for the Utah state legislature to know and understand about the purpose, authorization, governance or support of charter schools that has not been addressed here?

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I'll leave mine and Andrea's card in case you have any questions about the study or if you think of something else that you think would be important for us to know about your charter school.

Charter School Board Member Focus Group Protocol
September 2006

Charter School(s): _____
_____
_____

Date: _____
Researcher: _____

Pre-Interview Notes: (description of setting/contextual issues that may influence focus gruop)
_____
_____
_____

Focus Group Set-up

- Take cover letter regarding survey; invite administrator to complete survey if they haven't yet
- Put sign-in sheet, business cards (including Andrea's and Cori's), and candy (optional) on the table
- Prepare tape recorder, microphone, and interview protocol; Test microphone and recorders (double tape)
- Greet people, direct them to sign in and pick up an agenda
- Take adequate consent forms and hand out (give two copies to each participant; collect one copy and leave one with participants.
- Be sure tape recorder is on

Introduction, Purpose, and Procedure
Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. This focus group should take approximately 45 minutes. In addition to the consent form which I have just handed to you, I have a few additional comments.

The interviews that the Utah Education Policy Center are conducting accompany a statewide survey of charter school administrators and board members, district administrators and school board members, state charter board members, and parents/guardians of charter school students. In these interviews we are particularly interested in your perspectives as the principal or director about charter school purpose, authorization, governance, and training.

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The consent form that you have been handed explains your rights as a participant in this study, including that your participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Focus Group Questions

(Notes to research team: The questions in this focus group protocol are intended to guide a discussion about the charter schools, covering each of the proposed research questions. If the answer to any question has already been addressed in an early part of the interview, please continue to the next question.)

Purpose
I'd like to start with some questions about the purpose of charter schools in Utah. We'll start with the experiences you all have had with your charter schools.

1. What were the reasons for creating your charter school?

> Probes:
> Who was involved?
>
> How long did it take for approval to be attained?

2. Current Utah state law specifies several purposes of charter schools? [Refer to attached handout that lists the state purposes] Given what we have just discussed, how should current state law specifying the purposes of charter schools be modified, if at all?

Probes:

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What elements of the law are too broad?

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Next I'd like to ask a few questions about how charter schools are authorized.

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What additional information did you provide to the state charter school board as part of the application review process and what information do you wish you could have supplied?

[if state-chartered] Did you consider seeking charter status from the district school board?

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Probes:

Why do you think local school boards have authorized few charter schools in Utah?

5. What changes in state laws or rules would result in local school boards authorizing a greater number of charter schools?

6. Given your experience, in what ways is the state charter board too lenient or too restrictive in awarding charters?

7. What modifications would you suggest for the authorization policies?

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10. What suggestions do you have for improving the role that stakeholders and constituents play in the governance of charter schools?

11. Who should govern charter schools with multiple campuses (e.g., one governing body, governing body at each campus)?

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Another goal of this study is to determine to what extent charter schools should be exempt from state laws and rules regulating public schools.

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13. What have been your experiences with the state reporting requirements?

Probe: Are they manageable or are they too much?

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Your staff?
Your governing board members?

15. Who provided this training and how beneficial was the training and support?

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Probes:
For administrators?
For governing board members?

17. Who should be responsible for the additional training and support needed?

Conclusion

18. What additional information is relevant or necessary for the Utah state legislature to know and understand about the purpose, authorization, governance or support of charter schools that has not been addressed here?

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I'll leave my card in case you have any questions about the study or if you think of something else that you think would be important for us to know about your charter school.

District School Board Member Focus Group Protocol
September 2006

District(s): _____
_____
_____

Date: _____
Researcher: _____

Pre-Interview Notes: (description of setting/contextual issues that may influence focus gruop)
_____
_____
_____

Focus Group Set-up

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- Prepare tape recorder, microphone, and interview protocol; Test microphone and recorders (double tape)
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- Be sure tape recorder is on

Introduction, Purpose, and Procedure
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We are very interested in your opinions and encourage frank answers. The more you share with us, the better able we are to use this information to identify the important issues about charter schools in Utah. Findings from the interviews will be synthesized and included in a final report that we will submit to the state legislature.

Again, the summary report will not identify individual interviewees or schools. Where quotes are included to provide context to findings, individuals and schools will be anonymous.

The consent form that you have been handed explains your rights as a participant in this study, including that your participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Focus Group Questions

(Notes to research team: The questions in this focus group protocol are intended to guide a discussion about the charter schools, covering each of the proposed research questions. If the answer to any question has already been addressed in an early part of the interview, please continue to the next question.)

Purpose
I'd like to start with some questions about the purpose of charter schools in Utah.

1. What were the reasons for creating charter schools in your district?

[Probes only if there is a district chartered school]:
Who was involved?
How long did it take for approval to be attained?

2. Current Utah state law specifies several purposes of charter schools? [Refer to attached handout that lists the state purposes] Given what we have just discussed, how should current state law specifying the purposes of charter schools be modified, if at all?

Probes:
What elements of the law are too restrictive?

What elements of the law are too broad?

Authorization
Next I'd like to ask a few questions about how charter schools are authorized.

3. I understand that your district has authorized _____ charter schools and that the state charter board has authorized _____ charter schools. How many schools have petitioned the district for charter status?

Probe: What reasons have schools been denied charters?

4. What has the district's experience been as schools have applied to become charter schools (both district chartered and state chartered)?

Probes:
What aspects of the authorization process were beneficial?

What aspects of the authorization process were not beneficial or cumbersome?

5. What have been local school boards' issues and concerns with authorizing charter schools in Utah?

Probes:
Why do you think local school boards have authorized few charter schools in Utah?

6. What changes in state laws or rules would result in local school boards authorizing a greater number of charter schools?

7. Given your experience, in what ways is the state charter board too lenient or too restrictive in awarding charters?

8. What modifications would you suggest for the authorization policies?

Probes:
What modifications or other considerations to the criteria used to approve or disapprove an application to establish a charter school should be used?

9. What conditions should be present to authorize additional charter schools?

Probes:
How many charter schools should be authorized each year?

Should the number of new charter schools each year be limited?

What should be the maximum number of new charter schools each year?

Governance

Next I will ask some questions about how charter schools are governed.

10. How should stakeholders and constituents (parents/guardians , business, teachers, authorizers, district administrators, district board members, etc.) be involved in the governance of charter schools?

Probe: Please explain the rationale for the degree of involvement for each group.

11. What suggestions do you have for improving the role that stakeholders and constituents play in the governance of charter schools?

12. Who should govern charter schools with multiple campuses (e.g., one governing body, governing body at each campus)?

State Laws and Rules

Another goal of this study is to determine to what extent charter schools should be exempt from state laws and rules regulating public schools.

13. In your experience, from what state laws or rules that regulate public schools should charter schools be exempt?

Probe: When and under what circumstances should charter schools be exempt from state laws or rules that regulate public schools? (Rationale for above question)

14. What have been your experiences with the state reporting requirements?

Probe: Are they manageable or are they too much?

Training

Finally, I have several questions about the experience and training that charter school administrators and governing board members need to be successful in opening and operating a charter school

15. What kind of training and support does the district offer for charter school administrators or board members to open and operate a charter school?

16. What type of training should be required for charter schools to open and operate?

Probes:
For administrators?
For governing board members?
For teachers?

17. Who should be responsible for the additional training and support needed?

Conclusion

18. What additional information is relevant or necessary for the Utah state legislature to know and understand about the purpose, authorization, governance or support of charter schools that has not been addressed here?

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I'll leave mine and Andrea's card in case you have any questions about the study or if you think of something else that you think would be important for us to know about your charter school.

53A-1a-503. Purpose.
The purposes of charter schools are to:

(1) continue to improve student learning;

(2) encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;

(3) create new professional opportunities for educators that will allow them to actively participate in designing and implementing the learning program at the school;

(4) increase choice of learning opportunities for students;

(5) establish new models of public schools and a new form of accountability for schools that emphasizes the measurement of learning outcomes and the creation of innovative measurement tools;

(6) provide opportunities for greater parental involvement in management decisions at the school level; and

(7) expand public school choice in areas where schools have been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. Sec. 6301 et seq.

State Director Interview Protocol
September 2006

Date: _____
Researcher: _____

Pre-Interview Notes: (description of setting/contextual issues that may influence focus group)
_____
_____
_____

Interview Set-up

- Take cover letter regarding survey; invite director to complete survey if he haven't yet
- Put business cards (including Andrea's and Cori's), and candy (optional) on the table
- Prepare tape recorder, microphone, and interview protocol; Test microphone and recorders (double tape)
- Be sure tape recorder is on
- Take adequate consent forms and hand out (give two copies to each participant; collect one copy and leave one with participants.

Introduction, Purpose, and Procedure
Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. This interview should take approximately 45 minutes. In addition to the consent form which I have just handed to you, I have a few additional comments.

The interviews that the Utah Education Policy Center are conducting accompany a statewide survey of charter school administrators and board members, district administrators and school board members, state charter board members, and parents/guardians of charter school students. In these interviews we are particularly interested in your perspectives as the principal or director about charter school purpose, authorization, governance, and training.

I also want to clarify that we are NOT evaluating individual charter schools or districts, but rather we are focusing our analysis at the state level by addressing the research questions that were requested by the Utah state legislature.

I plan to tape record this interview so I am able to capture the ideas you share with me instead of being distracted by taking notes. The tapes will only be listened to by members of the UEPC research team. We want to assure you that the tape will be for our use only. No one will be identified individually or by school in any reports generated from this interview.

We are very interested in your opinions and encourage frank answers. The more you share with us, the better able we are to use this information to identify the important issues about charter schools in Utah. Findings from the interviews will be synthesized and included in a final report that we will submit to the state legislature.

Again, the summary report will not identify individual interviewees or schools. Where quotes are included to provide context to findings, individuals and schools will be anonymous.

The consent form that you have been handed explains your rights as a participant in this study, including that your participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

(Notes to research team: The questions in this focus group protocol are intended to guide a discussion about the charter schools, covering each of the proposed research questions. If the answer to any question has already been addressed in an early part of the interview, please continue to the next question.)

Purpose
I'd like to start with some questions about the purpose of charter schools in Utah.

1. What are the main reason(s) for creating charter schools in Utah?

Probes:
Who is typically involved?
How long does it typically take for approval to be attained?

2. Current Utah state law specifies several purposes of charter schools? [Refer to attached handout that lists the state purposes] Given what we have just discussed, how should current state law specifying the purposes of charter schools be modified, if at all?

Probes:
What elements of the law are too restrictive?

What elements of the law are too broad?

Authorization

Next I'd like to ask a few questions about how charter schools are authorized.

3. What has the State Charter Board's experience been as schools have applied to become charter schools?

Probes:
What aspects of the authorization process have been beneficial?

What aspects of the authorization process have not been beneficial or cumbersome?

4. What have been local school boards' issues and concerns with authorizing charter schools in Utah?

Probes:
Why do you think local school boards have authorized few charter schools in Utah?

5. What changes in state laws or rules would result in local school boards authorizing a greater number of charter schools?

6. Given your experience, in what ways is the state charter board too lenient or too restrictive in awarding charters?

7. What modifications would you suggest for the authorization policies?

Probes:
What modifications or other considerations to the criteria used to approve or disapprove an application to establish a charter school should be used?

9. What conditions should be present to authorize additional charter schools?

Probes:
How many charter schools should be authorized each year?

Should the number of new charter schools each year be limited?

What should be the maximum number of new charter schools each year?

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Next I will ask some questions about how charter schools are governed.

10. How should stakeholders and constituents (parents/guardians , business, teachers, authorizers, district administrators, district board members, etc.) be involved in the governance of charter schools?

Probe: Please explain the rationale for the degree of involvement for each group.

11. What suggestions do you have for improving the role that stakeholders and constituents play in the governance of charter schools?

12. Who should govern charter schools with multiple campuses (e.g., one governing body, governing body at each campus)?

State Laws and Rules
Another goal of this study is to determine to what extent charter schools should be exempt from state laws and rules regulating public schools.

13. In your experience, from what state laws or rules that regulate public schools should charter schools be exempt?

Probe: When and under what circumstances should charter schools be exempt from state laws or rules that regulate public schools? (Rationale for above question)

14. What have been your experiences with the state reporting requirements?

Probe: Are they manageable or are they too much?

Training
Finally, I have several questions about the experience, training, and support that charter school administrators and governing board members need to be successful in opening and operating a charter school

15. Does the state charter board offer any training for charter school administrators or board members to open and operate a charter school?

Probe: How does the state board work with the Technical Assistance Project to coordinate services and support for charter schools?

16. What type of training should be required for charter schools to open and operate?

Probes:

For administrators?
For governing board members?
For teachers?

17. Who should be responsible for the additional training and support needed?

Conclusion

18. What additional information is relevant or necessary for the Utah state legislature to know and understand about the purpose, authorization, governance or support of charter schools that has not been addressed here?

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I'll leave mine and Andrea's card in case you have any questions about the study or if you think of something else that you think would be important for us to know about your charter school.