



Maine Association for Charter Schools

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MACS News

June 2010

Where does the time go? It has been a year since the Maine House surprised everyone and voted to pass a charter school bill! Of course the Senate refused to go along, but so much has happened since then.

First, our October Forum focused statewide attention on the Race to the Top. Then in November the Governor's surprise capitulation to the Unions, announcing he would not introduce a charter school bill in the second legislative session.

Then, this spring, our surprise – with the help of Rep. Alan Casavant on the Education Committee, we led an effort to turn the Governor's weak "innovative schools" bill into a real public charter school bill. Although unsuccessful, this effort kept charter schools in the news and helped more policymakers understand what is required to have truly autonomous, innovative public schools that prepare our children for career and college.

Now, with candidates for governor seeking voter support, all but two from both parties support introducing public charter schools in Maine. If you have an opportunity, we encourage you to ask any candidates you meet to support public charter schools and other public education options.

This will be a busy summer for MACS, as you can see from the activities outlined below. Feel free to call us with questions and suggestions. We look forward to working with everybody to make this year's campaign a success.

National Charter Schools Week, May 5-8, was a great success nationally, celebrating almost 5,000 public charter schools enrolling 1.6 million children in 40 states. MACS Director Roger Brainerd and Board Chair Judith Jones were invited by the National Alliance to participate in the annual lobbying day on Capitol Hill. We visited all four of Maine's delegates to Congress to ask their support for increased federal grants and for the All Star charter school bill. Sen. Susan Collins reminded us that she called for charter schools when she ran for governor in 1994!

National Charter Schools Convention, Chicago, June 28-July 1 – There is a group rate, so contact MACS if you plan to attend. See our website for more information. Key note speakers are Bill Gates, Co-Chair, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Reed Hastings, Founder, Chairman & CEO Netflix; Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education; and Joe Scarborough, Host of MSNBC's Morning Joe.

MACS Community Organizer – we have just posted advertisements for an experienced community organizer to work with us to expand our network of supporters statewide in preparation for the next campaign. We want to ensure the passage of a strong law allowing charter schools in Maine, and thereafter we want to support local and state-wide efforts to develop quality charter schools and charter school authorizers. (See our website for the job description.)

Email: macs@mainecharterschools.org

Website: www.mainecharterschools.org

MACS Fundraising Drive – We are launching a new fundraising effort in June to support our highest priority – to increase our capacity as an organization to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

We have been fortunate to obtain a \$20,000 challenge grant from an anonymous donor that has allowed us to pay two part-time staff since April. Now we need to raise the matching funds!

We have also been fortunate to receive a grant from the National Alliance to fund the community organizer position. We need to raise additional funds to support this position and other initiatives with full time office staff.

If you are in a position to help, at any level, **NOW IS A GREAT TIME** to visit the MACS web site to donate online using PAY PAL. You can also send a check to MACS, 1018 Depot Road, Union, ME 04862. Remember that donations to MACS are fully tax deductible.

MACS – Current Priorities

1. Build the MACS board with dedicated people who have the variety of skills needed to develop a high-quality public charter school sector in Maine.
2. Raise the funds necessary to maintain a full-time office staff and carry out our mission effectively.
3. Work with our new Community Organizer to increase public awareness and recruit volunteers in an effective statewide network to support charter schools and other public education options. (If you are ready to VOLUNTEER now, please contact MACS.)
4. Work with candidates for Governor and the Legislature to make sure they understand public school choice and charter schools.

Meanwhile, at MACS we continue...

- to keep public school choice and charter schools in the news,
- to monitor the state of public education in Maine, such as the rate of high school and college dropouts and the number of students unable to read proficiently by fourth grade.
- to collaborate with other Maine organizations interested in public school improvement, charter schools, and other forms of school choice.
- to network with national and other state organizations supporting public school improvement, charter schools, and other forms of school choice.
- to identify potential charter school organizers and authorizers in Maine.

Have a great summer!

