

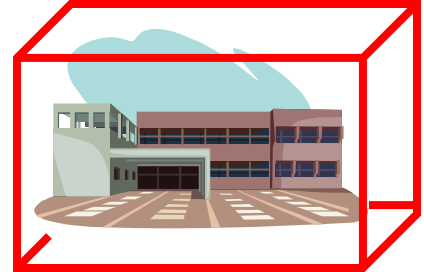


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We Need to Get Our Children

Outside the Box!



Can Maine Encourage Innovative Public Schools ?

Current top-down, consolidated, one-size-fits-all approaches to educating our young people do not encourage creativity in education in Maine!

Because of widely varying educational needs among children across Maine, families need affordable access to many different kinds of programs, not merely what their local school may offer down the street or across town.

Families need choice among public school programs, with already dedicated funds following each child to the public school chosen to meet that child's needs.

When this happens, as it has in 40 other states in the U.S., the dynamics among parents, students, and staff change. It leads to greater parental involvement, increased student and teacher commitment, and greater responsiveness of school staff to the needs of individual children.

Because creating and supporting new schools is hard work, certain conditions are needed to encourage educators to start specialized educational programs. Critical lessons have been learned during the past 15 years with the creation of 4,100 new publicly chartered schools in the United States.

Lessons learned include the need for:

- 1) A clear set of rules for designing and implementing new programs;
- 2) A guaranteed period of operation so budget cuts and shifting board politics can't derail new programs unfairly;
- 3) A guaranteed stream of operating income based on the number of students enrolled;
- 4) Significant budgetary autonomy at the school level,
- 5) And support from community members with complementary skills to help with legal, economic, and other aspects of managing a school.

Minnesota has already pioneered a variety of public school choice mechanisms over the past 25 years: diverse programs available through intra-district choice; inter-district choice; alternative

schools managed by social service agencies; magnet schools; and, beginning in 1992, public charter schools. Subsequently, in the United States there are now 1,200,000 children enrolled in over 4,100 public charter schools in 40 states and the District of Columbia.

Enabling laws for public charter schools set out the rules, designate which groups can authorize, monitor, and renew charter contracts, and provide the context for educators and communities to voluntarily set up programs.

Maine does not have to “re-invent this wheel”. Maine’s Legislature has considered a number of bills to enable publicly chartered schools, but has yet to pass an enabling law which would get new programs started quickly, and on a very solid foundation of learning from across the United States.

In Maine, recent education reform efforts have been driven by mandates from the state and federal government. Local districts may also start new programs by themselves, but most local programs are short lived and few are truly held accountable for educational and financial results. Success of state and federal education reform programs has not been adequately demonstrated.

**Research has documented the success of public charter schools.
And they are held accountable financially and educationally by law.**

Maine’s new consolidation law, however, could be an issue effecting public charter schools. With districts continuing to control all the taxpayer resources, existing school systems will likely continue their reluctance to allow families to choose among any public education options that might exist to best meet their child’s individual needs. A good charter school law, however, will guarantee families that choice.

What are the Benefits of public school choice?

- ✚ More children will succeed in school, in work, and in college if their needs are addressed early and well through appropriate and affordable public school options.
- ✚ Specialty public schools will support the “creative economy” and “smart growth” through theme-focused schools that contribute to revitalized downtowns.
- ✚ Rural charter schools will help small communities retain their public schools at reasonable cost.
- ✚ Vocational charter schools will support economic development and trades.
- ✚ Schools for students at-risk of failing will help reduce drop-out rates and provide second chances for disengaged youth and youth offenders.
- ✚ Policies promoting public school choices will help groups develop regional and statewide options that will respond to students’ needs.

For a listing of the 4,100 existing publicly chartered schools in other states, visit the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools: www.publiccharters.org.

Also See:

www.uscharterschools.org

www.educationevolving.org

www.edexcellence.net/fundthechild/proposal

For more information, for answers to your questions, and to add your creative juices to our important cause, please contact MACS. Thank You.

Examples among the 4,100 Existing Publicly Chartered Schools in Other States.

Theme-based Schools in the Arts, Technology, Health Sciences, Languages, and Schools for students at-risk in traditional public schools:

Arizona School for the Arts, Phoenix, AZ
Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter HS, Hadley, MA
Livingston Technical Academy, Howell, MI
Success School , Taylorsville, UT
Athenian Academy, Dunedin, FL

Career & Technical Schools

Agriculture, Hospitality, YouthBuild construction trades:
Louisiana High School for Agricultural Sciences, Bunkie, LA
Marriott Hospitality Public Charter School, Washington, DC
Technical Career Academy of Northeast Georgia, Athens, GA

Rural & Small Schools:

Agricultural and Food Science Academy, Vadnais Heights, Minnesota,
Minnesota New Country Charter School, Henderson, MN
Lakes Area Charter School, Osakis, MN

Schools with Special Approaches:

Project Based - Edvisions Teacher Cooperatives, www.edvisions.coop
Special Needs - Spectrum Charter School, Inc. , Monroeville, PA
Virtual public schools - Minnesota K-12 On-line Learning Alliance, Lindstrom, MN;
Pennsylvania Cyber Charter Schools:
For a list, see www.pde.state.pa.us/charter_schools.

For more listings, visit the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools,

www.publiccharters.org; Also, www.uscharterschools.org,
www.educationevolving.org, www.edexcellence.net/fundthechild/proposal.

For a Directory of all publicly chartered Schools in the U.S., for more information, and for answers to your questions, please contact MACS.