

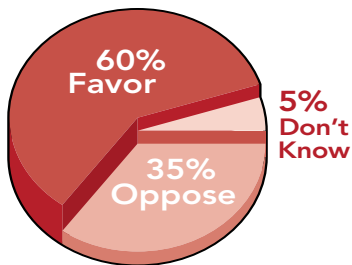


OAPCS

INSIGHT

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CHARTER SCHOOLS
PUBLIC SUPPORT
2007

See story on page 6.

At the top of the page...

you'll notice that we have a new logo. The new mark is a better representation of our mission, our values, and the resources and services we provide.

It conveys a sense of quality education, as well as the bright horizons made possible by charter schools' innovative methods. We hope you like the look of it!

Join us in Detroit
Nov. 1-2!

Night lights covering the waterfront and downtown areas of Detroit, Michigan

One of the largest and most successful charter school conferences in the United States is rolling out the red carpet for Ohio's charter schools.

Ohio charter school personnel will be special guests of the Michigan Association of Public School Academies for MAPSA's 10th annual Michigan Charter Schools Conference, which will be held Nov. 1-2 at the Cobo Center in Detroit.

The Michigan Charter Schools Conference attracts approximately 3,000 attendees each year, presenting dozens and dozens of workshops and seminars tailored to the needs of school administrators, teachers, board members and parents.

"We hope charter school personnel from throughout Ohio will take advantage of this special opportunity to attend the Michigan conference," said Bill Sims, OAPCS president and CEO. He pointed out that the deadline for registration is rapidly approaching.

"As a relatively new organization, the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools simply is not in a position to offer a statewide conference on such a tremendous scale this year," Sims explained. "But MAPSA extended a special invitation to us - an invitation for Ohio charter school representatives to be special guests at their conference on Nov. 1-2. We greatly appreciate their willingness to include us in an event that is widely recognized as one of the premier charter school conferences in the nation."

The MAPSA conference features two general sessions as well as dozens of breakout sessions that are organized into 11 "tracks." The 11 tracks include board members, support staff, administrative leadership, high school teachers, middle school teachers, elementary teachers, fine arts teachers, special education, specialist teachers, general education and parents.

In addition, four Ohio-specific breakout sessions have been scheduled for the two-day conference.

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Walton Foundation offers grants for start-up schools

The Walton Family Foundation has announced it will provide planning and start-up grants totaling as much as \$250,000 for qualifying public charter schools that plan to serve students in either Cleveland or Columbus.

The Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools is assisting the Walton Foundation in identifying and recommending schools for funding.

"The Walton Family Foundation awards planning and start-up grants to public charter schools that demonstrate potential for academic excellence, serve significant low-income student populations, and draw a majority of their students from one of the foundation's targeted districts," said Bill Sims, OAPCS president and CEO. "We are delighted to

serve as the grant partner and access point in this program, which will provide funds to start-up charter schools that are committed to quality and excellence.

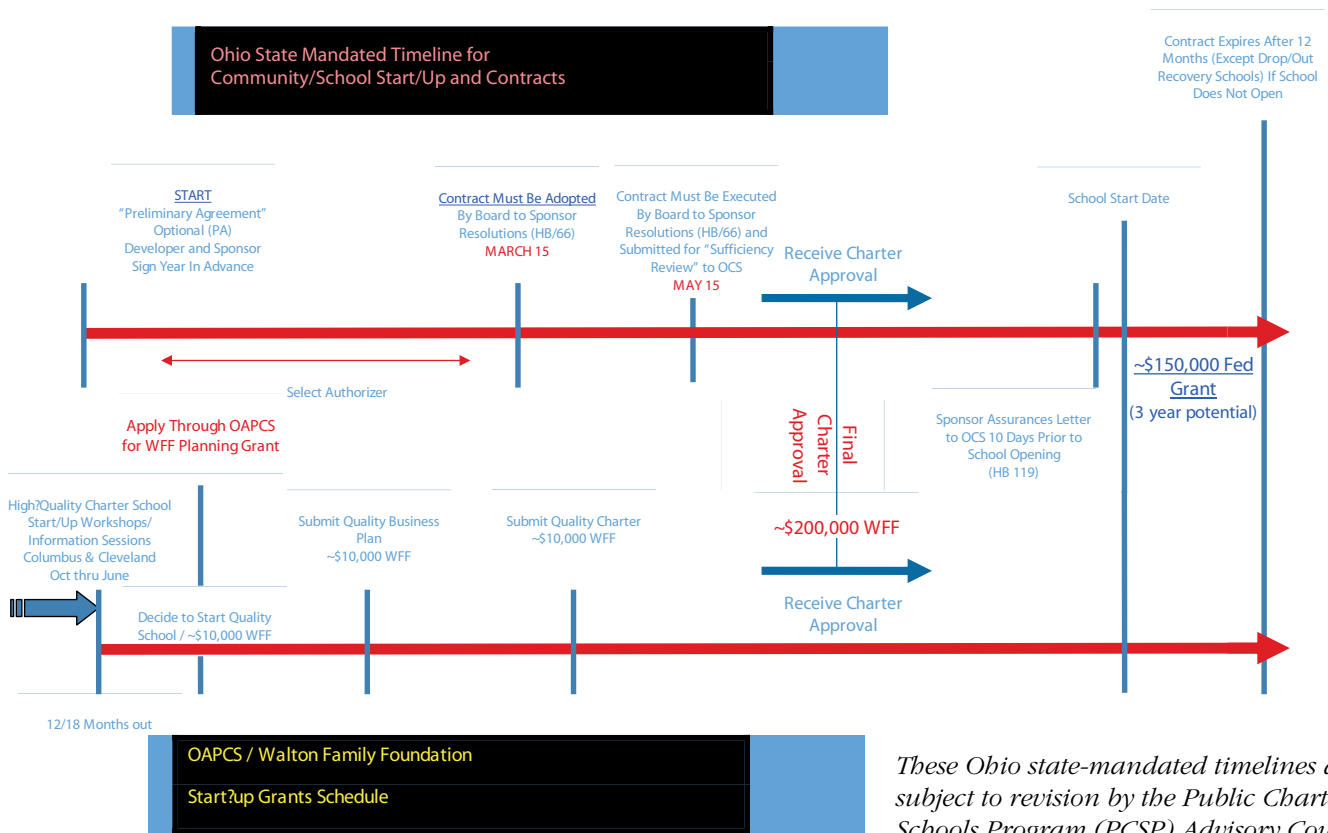
"Just as an infant requires proper nutrition in order to grow and thrive, a start-up charter school needs a healthy financial formula in order to operate successfully and provide quality instruction in its start-up years," Sims said. "Quality performance is the key to the future success and growth of the charter school movement in Ohio, and the Walton Family Foundation grants will certainly help facilitate that level of performance."

The Walton Foundation has divided the charter school development process into a four-stage pipeline. School founders are eligible to apply for

(continued on page 2)



INTEGRATED OHIO COMMUNITY SCHOOL START/UP TIMELINE:



These Ohio state-mandated timelines are subject to revision by the Public Charter Schools Program (PCSP) Advisory Council.

(continued from page 1)

grants at each of the four stages. The foundation’s goal is to frontload funding, when founders are typically most in need of assistance, in order to encourage the kind of planning that leads to quality schools. The four phases are as follows:

Phase I: Business Planning Grant

To encourage strong candidates to begin the planning process early, the Walton Foundation may award up to \$10,000 to qualified candidates so they can develop a formal charter school business plan. School founders can apply for these \$10,000 grants between six and 12 months before the deadlines for submission of charter petitions.

Phase II: Charter Petition Grant

School founders who receive a Business Planning Grant are eligible to apply for up to \$10,000 in additional funding in order to: (1) develop a formal charter school petition; (2) begin implementation of the school’s business plan; and (3) support participation in student information systems training through a Web-based application called JumpStart.

Phase III: Pre-Authorization Start-Up Grant

To give school founders financial assistance after a charter petition is submitted but before an authorizer approves the petition, the Walton Foundation may award a Pre-Authorization Start-Up Grant of as much as \$30,000. An applicant interested in receiving a Pre-Authorization Start-Up Grant must

submit an executive summary of the charter petition, the school business plan and a Walton Foundation Public Charter School Start-Up Proposal. In addition, the applicant will be required to undergo a formal interview.

Phase IV: Post-Authorization Grant

Once a school is approved by an authorizer, it is eligible to apply for a Walton Foundation Post-Authorization Start-Up Grant. Applicants that have received a Pre-Authorization Start-Up Grant may be eligible for as much as \$200,000 in funding, while other applicants may be eligible for as much as \$230,000.

The foundation’s Post-Authorization Grants are awarded only during the period between formal authorization and the end of the school’s first year of operation. This grant is also paired with resources worth about \$25,000 to help the school adopt a student information system.

Start-up charter schools may also qualify for federal grants of as much as \$150,000 per year for a three-year period — a total of \$450,000 in assistance.

Interested in applying for a Walton Foundation Grant? Attend the High-Quality Charter School Workshop on October 17 in Cleveland or October 29 in Columbus. (See page 11 for more details.) To register, send an e-mail to events@oapcs.org.

“The foundation’s goal is to front-load funding, when founders are typically most in need of assistance...”



OAPCS developing Quality Standards, Principles

“Any organization that is going to take a stand for quality has to have a framework of standards and principles.”

That’s the comment you’re likely to hear from Bill Sims, president and CEO of the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools, when you ask him why the OAPCS has launched an effort to develop a set of Quality Standards and Principles.

“This is clearly one of the most important things the Ohio Alliance will be doing in its first year of operation,” Sims emphasized. “Quality performance is the key to the sustainability and growth of the charter school movement in Ohio.

“One of the challenges we’re facing in developing our standards and principles is the fact that Ohio’s community charter schools are not monolithic in type,” Sims said. “There’s a genuine diversity among charter schools in the state. We have wonderful charter schools that are focused on helping children with learning disabilities. We have charter schools that concentrate on helping young people who had previously dropped out of school. We have charter schools that are immersed in the arts, in the latest technology, or in college preparatory programs. And we have e-schools, offering distance learning.

“It’s very important that our standards and principles are flexible and adaptable enough to work for all of these different types of public charter schools,” he said.

The concept of quality standards and principles is by no means unique to Ohio, Sims pointed out. “Numerous other state associations of charter schools have adopted standards and principles,” he said. “We have the advantage of being able to construct ours based on these best practices from across the country and, in fact, we are borrowing from a variety of different sources.”

Sims said the standards and principles adopted by the California Charter Schools Association have been especially helpful in putting together the first draft – a “straw man,” in Sims’ words – of Ohio’s principles. “We are heavily indebted to the California association for its help,” he noted.

California’s standards focus on five major areas: student academic achievement, ethical leadership, continuous improvement, responsible governance and

fiscal responsibility. “But if you look at the footnote at the end of California’s standards, you’ll find they have adapted and modified their standards from a number of other sources, as well,” Sims pointed out.

The first draft of Ohio’s Quality Standards and Principles for charter schools was unveiled Sept. 20 at the initial meeting of the OAPCS Charter Advisory Council in Columbus. Advisory Council members reviewed and discussed the proposed standards, making numerous comments and suggestions.

Development of Ohio’s proposed standards and principles will be one of the topics covered during the Ohio Alliance breakout session at the 10th annual Michigan Charter Schools Conference in Detroit on Nov. 1–2. Ohio charter school personnel are special guests of the Michigan Association of Public School Academies at this event, which is one of the largest charter school conferences in the nation.

Quality Standards and Principles will also be one of the prime subjects at the Ohio Charter School Leadership Summit, which will be held Dec. 5 in Columbus.

“What we’re striving for is a very inclusive process that maximizes opportunities for the participation and input of individual charter schools, so that these standards and principles can become their own,” Sims said. “Our mission at the Ohio Alliance is to improve the quality and foster the growth of Ohio’s public charter schools, and we believe this is a vitally important step in that process.”

Sims added that the Ohio Alliance is also developing a process by which high-performing charter schools in the state can be certified and accredited. More details about certification and accreditation will be announced in the near future.

The most recent draft of the OAPCS Quality Standards and Principles can be viewed in its entirety on the Alliance’s Web site, www.oapcs.org. Comments and suggestions regarding the standards and principles are welcomed. ■

“It’s very important that our standards and principles are flexible and adaptable enough to work for all of these different types of public charter schools,”



Focus on the best way to educate a child

BAEO co-founder tells Columbus audience

“We should not, as a nation, be worried about where our children are going to school – whether it’s a traditional school, a private school, a charter school or a home school. We should worry about what happens once they get there.”

That was the message from Dr. Howard J. Fuller, co-founder of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), when he spoke at a Columbus breakfast session co-sponsored by the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools, School Choice Ohio, and BAEO.

“The traditional system doesn’t work for all kids, so how do we work together to make sure all of our children are educated?” asked Fuller, a former superintendent of the Milwaukee Public Schools who now serves as director of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University.

“Just as there are not any cookie-cutter kids, there should not be any cookie-cutter schools,” Fuller emphasized. “We should create a variety of different delivery mechanisms for elementary and secondary education. The focus has to be on what is the best way to educate a young person.

“The world is going to require a greater degree of intellectual capacity than it did just 10 years ago,” he said. Thousands of people in India are answering telephones in call-center and customer-service positions for American companies, “so you’re not competing against kids from Dayton or Columbus or Toledo anymore, you’re competing against the world.

“Even though I’m an advocate of choice, I’m an advocate of kids first,” Fuller commented. “I’m trying to make the traditional schools better, but we need to have these other options available.” The rigid and highly structured traditional public school model, he said, has become a bankrupt industrial-age paradigm.

“What’s going to happen to a group of kids who can’t read, write, analyze or compute?” he asked. “You can’t build enough gated communities to separate yourself from them. And you can’t have a democracy without an educated public.”

Fuller shared the story of the gazelle and the lion from Thomas L. Friedman’s book, *The World is Flat*, and compared the tale to the worldwide race in

academic achievement. The gazelle wakes up every morning, realizing that he must run faster than the fastest lion or he may not survive, while the lion wakes up every morning, realizing that he must run faster than the slowest gazelle or else he might starve. Both animals, he noted, are constantly on the run.

“The reality,” Fuller said, “is that our young people in the United States are not running as fast as the young people in other parts of the world. Our responsibility is to speed up the pace at which our young people are running.”

Explaining how he became a supporter of school choice, Fuller said, “If you have money, you have choice. At the end of the day, without school choice, the only kids that have to stay in the failing (traditional) schools are the low-income, disadvantaged students. I believe that’s morally indefensible.”

College students can use Pell grants, funded by the government, to attend whatever college or university they believe is best for them, he noted. “Why can’t we apply that same principle to elementary and secondary education?”

Fuller said he favors accountability systems for schools that include a value-added component, where a student’s skills are measured longitudinally. If a child enters a school’s third-grade class as a non-reader and advances to the second-grade level in reading, that’s a tremendous accomplishment. However, without a value-added component, those gains won’t count for anything if the child fails the third-grade reading test.

Asked about the presidential election in 2008, Fuller said, “We need to be on the ground, building a grass-roots movement, so that school choice will survive no matter who the president is. Education in America is a state function, so our focus should be on the state legislatures, and perhaps also the city councils.”

The single most important factor needed for a school to be successful, Fuller concluded, is quality teachers, focused on learning, who love their students.

“In this instance, love means refusing to accept mediocrity,” he said. “I tell our students that no one is going to care if they’ve had a difficult life. Your only chance is to get an education. I tell them when they come through those doors, we’re going to push them in ways they’ve never been pushed before.” ■

“The traditional system doesn’t work for all kids, so how do we work together to make sure all of our children are educated?”



The quality of our public schools has to be high priority

By Bill Sims, OAPCS President and CEO



You may have noticed a recurring theme associated with the Ohio Alliance – “quality.”

I’ve often thought that all grandmothers and grandfathers must have had one common ancestor who told them to pass this advice on from one generation to the next: “If a job is worth doing, it’s worth doing well.” Quality does matter. Our dynamism as a nation depends upon a foundation of high-quality and competitive public schools. In a country and state that cherishes its democratic and free-market values, the quality and excellence of our public schools has to be among the highest of our priorities.

This notion of quality and excellence is what drives the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools to emphasize its Quality Standards and Principles for membership. Over the course of the next nine months, the Ohio Alliance will refine these standards and principles with critical input from its members and other community charter school leaders in the state. The “straw man” for these standards and principles can be found on our Web site, www.oapcs.org, and we welcome input from all those inclined to weigh in on these important community school values. I’d also like to draw your attention to an article on page 3 of this newsletter about the development of these standards and principles.

What concerns me most about the discourse related to education reform and charter schools in Ohio is the obstructive proposition that the charter school movement and the traditional public schools are in a “zero-sum game.” If the charter schools “win” (succeed), then they do so at the expense of the traditional public schools, or vice versa.

That American public education needs to be one of the best in the world for our country to remain competitive leaves little time for zero-sum equations. What does matter is which schools, traditional or charter, are most effective with student performance and successful innovation. Which schools are meeting the differentiated needs of parents and students? Which schools are most effective at making progress with individual students and how are they doing it? Which schools are successful in providing safe and conducive learning environments?

The United States is best known in the world for its competitive and innovative culture. But we work best when there is a positive, not negative, tension to our competition. Ultimately, the winners and losers in this “game” are our children, who will compete internationally as never before.

Dr. Howard Fuller, the former superintendent of the Milwaukee Public Schools and now chairman of the Black Alliance for Educational Options, is fond of an allegory that describes how every day on the great African plains a gazelle gets up in the morning and asks herself, “Am I fast enough today to stay ahead of the quickest lion so that I may live to see another day?” And every day a lion gets up in the morning and asks herself, “Will I be fast enough today to catch the slowest gazelle so that I may live to see another day?”

Figuratively speaking, our world is not so different. We want our children to succeed and prevail. Performance and quality matter. Bickering doesn’t matter. It’s that simple. ■

“We want our children to succeed and prevail. Performance and quality matter. Bickering doesn’t matter. It’s that simple.”





Support for charter schools growing, national poll shows

“The poll results show a growing appreciation that charter schools can provide a safe, encouraging and parent-friendly learning environment for students.”

Public support for charter schools is growing, according to the 39th Annual Phi Beta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes toward the Public Schools.

than the general population. Some 63% of public school parents said they favor charter schools, while 34% were opposed. Public school parents comprised 24% of the survey sample.

Results of the 2007 poll show 60% of Americans support charter schools, while 35% oppose them. That’s an improvement from 2006, when 53% of the respondents said they favored charter schools, while 34% were opposed and 13% were undecided.

Seven years ago, in 2000, the poll showed more Americans opposed charter schools than supported them. That year, 47% of the respondents were against charter schools, with just 42% in favor. In 2002, those favoring charter schools outnumbered opponents by a 44%-43% margin. Proponents of charter schools had a 49%-41% edge in the 2005 poll.

The 2007 poll showed that parents of public school students support charter schools slightly more

National Totals			
Year	Favor Charter Schools	Oppose Charter Schools	Don't Know
2007	60%	35%	5%
2006	53%	34%	13%
2005	49%	41%	10%
2002	44%	43%	13%
2000	42%	47%	11%

Public School Parents			
Year	Favor Charter Schools	Oppose Charter Schools	Don't Know
2007	63%	34%	3%
2006	59%	31%	10%
2005	48%	43%	9%
2002	44%	44%	12%
2000	40%	47%	13%

“Poll results from recent years indicate a growing awareness on the part of the American public of the value of charter schools as a positive alternative to traditional public schools,” said Bill Sims, OAPCS president and CEO. “The poll results show a growing appreciation that charter schools can provide a safe, encouraging and parent-friendly learning environment for students.” ■

OAPCS responds to Attorney General’s actions against charters

On Sept. 12, Ohio Attorney General Marc Dann filed complaints to shut down two Dayton charter schools (and subsequently a third) on the basis that their failure to meet state academic and financial standards violates their non-profit trust status.

The Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools feels that Attorney General Dann’s actions “completely disregard the legislative provisions specifically aimed at addressing charter school performance and threaten not just two schools, but the Ohio charter school movement,” said Bill Sims, president and CEO of the Ohio Alliance.

As a result of the Attorney General’s legal filing, the Ohio Education Association (OEA) has agreed to withdraw its lawsuit against the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and the State Board of Education. The OEA had contended that the ODE and the State Board of Education were failing to hold charter schools accountable.

“We do not support the Attorney General’s circum-

venting the legislative provisions for closing underperforming charter schools,” Sims said, referring to legislation passed by the Ohio Senate and House of Representatives to force chronically underperforming charter schools to close. “It appears that he is settling the pending lawsuit against the ODE simply as a disguise for filing new legal actions against charter schools.”

The OAPCS filed public records requests in order to obtain copies of all communications between the OEA, ODE and the Attorney General’s Office regarding settlement of the OEA lawsuit. On Oct. 2, the Ohio Alliance received copies of those records and is reviewing all relevant correspondence between the Attorney General’s Office and the OEA.

“It will be interesting to see if the Attorney General is willing to apply the same ‘legal theories’ used to attempt to close charter schools to the failing traditional public schools that meet the same criteria,” Sims said. ■



Join OAPCS now and save 50% on dues!

October, November and December are great months to become an OAPCS member!

The Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools has launched its first-ever membership campaign, and charter schools from throughout the Buckeye State are invited to sign up as members. The Ohio Alliance is making membership easy and affordable by offering a 50% discount in first-year membership fees for charter schools and other organizations that join the OAPCS by Dec. 31.

Membership dues for established charter schools, for example, are \$2.50 per student, a 50% reduction from the standard dues of \$5.00 per student, for schools that join OAPCS before the end of the year. Start-up charter schools can join for just \$250, half off the regular price of \$500.

Charter school sponsors, educational management companies, non-profit organizations and businesses are invited to become associate members of the Ohio Alliance.

First-year membership dues for charter school sponsors and educational management companies are \$500, half off the regular price of \$1,000. Sponsors and management companies that have all of their charter schools enrolled as OAPCS members receive a special reduced rate of \$100.

Membership dues for non-profit organizations are \$250 for the first year, a 50% reduction from the standard rate of \$500, while vendors and other businesses may join by paying dues of \$500, half off the regular price of \$1,000. Vendors and other businesses that become associate members are recognized as “Charter Champions.”

In recent weeks, the Ohio Alliance has received some enthusiastic endorsements from leaders in the education arena about the Alliance’s ability to

promote quality education and provide a unified voice for the charter school community.

Nelson Smith, president of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, said, “The challenges faced by Ohio charter schools are as tough and persistent as any in the country. The only way to respond is by speaking with a unified voice — and by making charters a high-quality brand in public education. With its professional, proactive approach, the Ohio Alliance will be an invaluable ally on both fronts.”

“The Ohio Alliance is a strong advocate for quality charter schools,” said James Merriman, chief executive officer of the New York City Center for Charter School Excellence. “Anyone interested in seeing that charters in Ohio meet the promises they’ve made to students, parents and Ohio’s taxpayers should support the Alliance’s work.”

“The future of Ohio’s charter schools — hence of thousands of Ohio’s neediest children — depends in no small part on the success of the new Alliance, which is well led, off to a strong start, and primed for action,” said Chester E. Finn, Jr., president of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.

Tracie Craft, state director of the Black Alliance for Educational Options, said her organization “is excited to welcome the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools to the Choice movement. We believe that OAPCS will assist in providing Ohio’s charter schools with a stronger foundation and the much-needed support they deserve.”

Membership registration forms are included with this issue of *OAPCS Insight*. The OAPCS Web site, www.oapcs.org, also contains complete information about membership categories and dues, as well as membership registration forms that can be completed and sent to the Alliance’s headquarters in Columbus.



“Anyone interested in seeing that charters in Ohio meet the promises they’ve made to students, parents and Ohio’s taxpayers should support the Alliance’s work.”

— James Merriman

Brief. Timely. To the point.

Those are apt descriptions of the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools’ new electronic newsletter, *OAPCS Insight Online*, which is issued every other week, on alternate Mondays.

OAPCS Insight Online features the latest news about Ohio’s charter school community, as well as information about upcoming OAPCS events.

So when you’re checking your e-mail, be sure to look for *OAPCS Insight Online*. If for some reason you’re not receiving it, call Steve Hiles, OAPCS director of communications and member services, at (614) 744-2266 to be added to the distribution list, or send him an e-mail at shiles@oapcs.org.



OAPCS Charter Advisory Council holds first meeting

Howard Walters of the Toledo School for the Arts didn't hesitate when it was his turn to relate why he decided to join the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools' newly formed Charter Advisory Council.

"We are all in the same boat. We're all in this together," Walters emphasized. And, he added, if charter schools don't row together, "we will all sink separately."

Dona Kaufman of the Bridges Community Academy in Tiffin explained that she was looking forward to sharing ideas and discussing issues with other charter school leaders. "I don't want to go it alone," she said.

Tami Augustine of Life Skills Centers said she believes that "focusing on quality will be essential to our future success." She added that, "We need alliances like this that lift us all up."

Walters, Kaufman and Augustine were three of the 23 representatives of Ohio's public charter schools, charter school sponsors and educational management companies who attended the first-ever meeting of the Ohio Alliance's Charter Advisory Council on Sept. 20 in Columbus.

"You represent a broad spectrum within the community school movement in Ohio," said Bill Sims, OAPCS president and CEO, in welcoming the group. "Each one of you is an architect of success in your own right. We need your input and we need your perspective. We need you to help keep us focused on big ideas."

Sims told the Advisory Council members that "nothing is more important to this movement right now than unity of voice." He said, "The time is now to build community, build unity and do it in a professional manner."

Much of the day's agenda was focused on reviewing and discussing the Ohio Alliance's proposed Quality Standards and Principles. To create and adopt a set of standards and principles is a "herculean task," Sims said, noting that the task might take anywhere from nine to 18 months.

The California Charter Schools Association needed three years to adopt its set of standards and principles, Sims pointed out, but the Ohio Alliance now has the advantage of being able to use California's document

as a draft, or "straw man," for Ohio charter schools to review and comment upon.

Advisory Council members made a number of suggestions regarding the proposed standards and principles. Regarding references to grade level in the draft of standards and principles, they pointed out that a number of Ohio charter schools are not organized by traditional grade levels. They also felt that parents should receive more prominent mention in the standards.

Members of the Advisory Council also discussed the plight of some charter schools that are making significant strides with their students, but still not achieving passing grades on the state's achievement tests because their students started out so far behind their peers.

"The schools that deserve the highest accolades are the ones that have taken the poorest and the weakest and have taken them the furthest, even if the school is still in academic emergency," said Terry Dodds of the W. C. Cupe Schools in Columbus.

Will Coutts of the Mound Street Academies in Dayton concurred, noting that such emphasis on the state's report cards "could actually encourage schools to turn their backs on the weakest and the neediest. To close schools that are working specifically with that population is a disservice to society."

Sims gave Advisory Council members an overview of the Ohio Alliance's initiatives, including its partnership with the Walton Family Foundation in identifying and recommending start-up charter schools for as much as \$250,000 in grants, and its pilot project with Stanford University and three other state charter schools associations in the area of student performance measurement.

During the Advocacy Roundtable session, Mike Dawson, a consultant with the Ohio Alliance, urged charter school leaders to invite their state senator and state representative to visit their school. Personal visits, he said, are the most effective way for legislators to see the good work that charter schools are doing.

"I've seen many attempts at organization (of the charter school community in Ohio)," said Mike Carder of the Treca Digital Academy in Marion. "I think the direction you're going is pretty good." ■

"We need your input and we need your perspective. We need you to help keep us focused on big ideas."



OAPCS President and CEO Bill Sims makes a point at the first-ever meeting of the Ohio Alliance's Charter Advisory Council.



Test scores have fundamental flaw, Sims says

Commenting on Ohio Public Radio and for Gongwer News Service about the release of test scores for public schools, OAPCS President and CEO Bill Sims noted that both community schools' and traditional public schools' grade reports were impacted by the new social studies and science tests.

But Sims emphasized that the debate over test scores often masks a "fundamental flaw" in how the state measures progress and achievement. Noting that many community charter schools in the state are working with a disproportionate number of disadvantaged and behind-grade-level students, Sims said that the state's testing method overlooks progress that low-achieving students often make in charter schools.

"Until you use student-level, value-added or gains testing to show exactly how these charter schools are dealing with individual children, you're not going to get the true story," Sims said. He added that the state, to its credit, is beginning to move in the direction of value-added testing.

"If a student is functioning at three grade levels behind in reading when he or she walks in the door

of a charter school, and then gains two grade levels in one year, that student will still not measure adequate proficiency on the state achievement tests," Sims indicated. "However, that school and teacher have gone beyond proficient in terms of affecting that student's reading progress."

Sims said that community charter schools are "absolutely on notice regarding performance," emphasizing that the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools supports the laws and regulations in place to account for both traditional and charter school performance. "Unlike traditional public schools, chronically underperforming charter schools face closure – not reorganization and guaranteed transition funding, but closure."

Sims asserted that some of the top performing charter schools in the state are "remarkable illustrations of innovation and education reform."

The Ohio Alliance will be featuring some of these top-performing and innovative community charter schools in a series that will appear in future issues of *Insight*. ■

More than 230 attend State Auditor's training sessions

More than 230 charter school leaders attended one of the four charter school training sessions on school financial and general fiduciary responsibilities conducted by Ohio Auditor of State Mary Taylor.

The four sessions were held in Akron, Columbus, Dayton and Toledo in late July and early August.

In a letter to OAPCS President and CEO Bill Sims, State Auditor Taylor expressed her "sincere appreciation for your contribution and support of the Auditor of State Community School Training Program. Your assistance in getting the word out to the various community school representatives throughout the state helped make this conference a great success."

Topics covered during the full-day training sessions included legal requirements for charter schools, fraud prevention, how to prepare for an audit, financial forecasting, business plan development, grants for charter schools, tools to avoid the most common audit citations, and ways to eliminate findings for recovery.

In her letter to Sims, the auditor said she appreciates "that your organization is also working toward fiscal responsibility for all schools. We look forward to working with you to continue our training efforts in the future." ■

"Until you use student-level, value-added or gains testing to show exactly how these charter schools are dealing with individual children, you're not going to get the true story."



(continued from page 1)

Here are thumbnail descriptions of those four sessions:

• **Ohio Charter School Law**

(Nov. 1, 2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.) — This session is designed for Ohio charter school leaders seeking an overview of key applicable Ohio laws or a refresher to ensure compliance. Are you exempt or not exempt? Find out.

• **OAPCS: Your Association, Your Voice and Your Quality Assurance**

(Nov. 1, 3:45 p.m. - 5 p.m.) This session will offer attendees a great opportunity to learn about OAPCS and to offer input on the organization's direction and initiatives. It's also an opportunity for attendees to play a role in developing the OAPCS Quality Standards and Principles, and to learn about initial efforts aimed at helping Ohio's charter schools achieve and sustain quality performance.

• **Charter Authorizing**

(Nov. 1, 2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.) Ohio authorizers will share the strategies they use in performing oversight duties in a manner that balances school autonomy with authorizers' responsibilities to monitor – and sometimes intervene – in school operations.

• **Public Relations:**

The Need-to-Know Essentials

(Nov. 2, 8:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.) This session will present the basics in communicating effectively with the news media, parents and the community at large. Understanding your audience and delivering targeted messages can make a world of difference.

In addition, a special social event is being scheduled for Ohio attendees on the evening of Nov. 1.

To obtain a registration form, visit the OAPCS Web site at www.oapcs.org or call the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools at (614) 744-2266. Completed registration forms may be returned to OAPCS by mail or by fax at (614) 744-2255. ■

2007 CONFERENCE AGENDA

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1

- 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Conference registration and continental breakfast
- 8:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. Pre-conference workshops
- 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Exhibits and lunch
- 12:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. General session – Rita Pierson
- 2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Breakout sessions
- 3:15 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. Exhibits
- 3:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Breakout sessions

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2

- 7:30 a.m. – 8:15 a.m. Registration
- 8:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. Breakout sessions
- 9:45 a.m. – 10:05 a.m. Exhibitor time
- 10:05 a.m. – 11:20 a.m. Breakout sessions
- 11:20 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. Exhibitor time
- 11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Breakout sessions
- 1:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Lunch, awards ceremony & keynote speaker, Zach Clement

A SAMPLING OF SESSIONS

Space limitations prevent us from publishing the entire list of breakout sessions that are being offered at the 2007 Michigan Charter Schools Conference. Here, however, is a small sampling of the breakout sessions on the conference's agenda.

- Fundamentals of Effective Grant Programs
- No Gym? No Problem!
- Poetry for Middle Schoolers
- Science and Literacy: A Successful Combination
- Bullying Prevention
- Avoiding Legal Trouble in Charter School Finance





OAPCS launching series of workshops to promote high-quality schools

To help foster quality in Ohio's community charter schools, the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools is launching a series of workshops covering the essential elements of starting, building and sustaining a high-quality charter school.

"These workshops are intended to provide an opportunity for focused dialogue and a community forum on issues affecting both established and start-up charter schools," said Kate Kennedy, OAPCS director of school performance and accountability.

Kennedy said that the High-Quality Charter School Workshops will be held on a monthly basis at locations in Cleveland and Columbus. The first workshops – scheduled for Oct. 17 in Cleveland and Oct. 29 in Columbus – will focus on starting a high-quality charter school in Ohio. The October workshops will include information about the Walton Family Foundation's grants for qualifying start-up charter schools in Columbus and Cleveland.

November's workshops — "Show Me the Money: Raising Funds for Your High-Quality Charter School"

— will be held on Nov. 19 in Columbus and Nov. 28 in Cleveland. No workshops have been scheduled for December due to the holiday season.

January's subject is "Creating a Quality School: Mission, Vision and Implementation."

Future monthly workshops will cover a wide range of topics, Kennedy said, including – but not limited to – subjects such as recruiting board members, hiring high quality teachers and school-sponsor relationships.

All of the workshops will be held from 4:30 p.m. until 6 p.m. Additional details – including names of guest speakers – will be announced at a later date.

"These workshops will be an invaluable resource and networking opportunity for school leaders who are committed to quality education," Kennedy said. "We believe they will be a vital part of the development, growth and expansion of high-performing charter schools in Ohio."

To register for a workshop, send an e-mail to events@oapcs.org. ■

"These workshops are intended to provide an opportunity for focused dialogue and a community forum on issues affecting both established and start-up charter schools."

Five Great Reasons To Become a Member of the OAPCS

Because quality matters: The Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools aspires to provide children with greater educational opportunities by improving the quality and fostering the growth of Ohio's public charter schools. Quality performance is the key to the healthy growth and sustainability of the charter school movement in Ohio.

Because your school and students are important: OAPCS members have access to technical assistance programs, professional development, best practices, financial resources, networking opportunities, a content-rich Web site and more. The Alliance will also have a set of Quality Standards and Principles, as well as certification and accreditation programs. Many of the conferences, seminars and programs offered by the OAPCS will be available for members only; others will be offered at substantially reduced rates for members.

Because dollars and cents count: Members have opportunities to save money through cooperative

purchasing of property and liability insurance, computers and other valuable products and services. Conferences and seminars will be held around surveyed needs in the areas of financial management and liability. Sharing of best practices can also save OAPCS members both time and money.

Because unity is paramount: Community school leaders understand the importance of a vital and united community school movement. The Ohio Alliance provides a strong and effective voice with elected officials, regulatory agencies and opinion leaders on issues affecting charter schools.

Because you can't afford not to! With the high stakes these days for community schools – from the events in the political arena to the test results of students at your school – you can't afford not to join the Ohio Alliance! And the Alliance is making it easy to join with a special 50% discount for first-year membership. Don't go it alone – contribute to the vitality of the movement and join today! ■



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

OCTOBER

Oct. 17- Cleveland
OAPCS High-Quality Charter School
Workshop: Introduction to Starting a High-Quality Community Charter School in Ohio (4:30 p.m. – 6 p.m.)

Oct. 29 - Columbus
OAPCS High-Quality Charter School
Workshop: Introduction to Starting a High-Quality Community Charter School in Ohio (4:30 p.m. – 6 p.m.)

NOVEMBER

Nov. 1-2 - Detroit
Michigan Association of Public School Academies' 10th annual conference in Detroit (Ohio charter schools are special guests at this event.)

Nov. 19 - Columbus
OAPCS High-Quality Charter School
Workshop: Show Me the Money: Raising Funds for Your High-Quality Charter School (4:30 p.m. – 6 p.m.)

Nov. 28 - Cleveland
OAPCS High-Quality Charter School
Workshop: Show Me the Money: Raising Funds for Your High-Quality Charter School (4:30 p.m. – 6 p.m.)

DECEMBER

Dec. 5 - Columbus
OAPCS Charter School Leadership Summit

JANUARY

Jan. 7 - Columbus
OAPCS Regional Meeting

Jan. 14 - Columbus
OAPCS High-Quality Charter School
Workshop: Quality Schools: Mission, Vision and Implementation (4:30 p.m. – 6 p.m.)

Jan. 16 - Cleveland
OAPCS Regional Meeting

Jan. 16 - Cleveland
OAPCS High-Quality Charter School
Workshop: Quality Schools: Mission, Vision and Implementation (4:30 p.m. – 6 p.m.)

Jan. 22 - Youngstown
OAPCS Regional Meeting

Jan. 28 - Toledo
OAPCS Regional Meeting

