



Charter Districts

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Charter Districts: The State of the Field

By Bryan Hassel and Todd Ziebarth

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Overview

When we started examining the concept of charter districts a few years ago, we defined a charter district as a school district in which all or most of the schools are charter schools or contract schools. Rather than operating schools themselves, these districts enter into charters or contracts with individuals and entities to run schools – which may be newly created charter or contract schools or existing schools that convert to charter or contract status. Through mutually agreed-upon, legally binding charters or contracts, such districts extend autonomy and resources to schools and at the same time hold them accountable for student achievement. This *ECS StateNote* presents our observations and insights as we have followed what is happening across the country in charter districts.

Existing Districts: Using Chartering as a District Strategy

First, we have observed that few small districts are converting all or most of their schools to charter or contract schools in a way that fits our initial definition.¹ According to our research, only five small districts have moved, or are moving, in this direction. Two one-school districts have converted their school to charter status – Taliaferro County School District in Georgia and Paisley School District 11 in Oregon. In the San Carlos School District in California, seven of the eight schools are charter schools. The Twin Ridges Elementary School District in California has two traditional schools within its boundaries and has sponsored 10 charter schools outside of its boundaries.

In Pennsylvania, after the commonwealth took over the Chester-Upland School District, the state-appointed board of control contracted with a for-profit organization to run eight of the district's schools. The district directly operates two schools and additionally has two charter schools. Another small district – the Cartersville City Public Schools in Georgia – converted all four of its schools to charter status in 1996, but did not seek renewal of the charters in 2001.

Second, while medium to large school districts are not converting all of their schools into charter or contract schools, several are undertaking significant chartering or contracting initiatives as part of broader efforts to improve their public schools. These initiatives are larger in scope in some districts than in others, but the common denominator is a commitment by district leadership to support the creation of a significant number of charter or contract schools within the district – sort of a charter district within the larger district. As an example of a medium sized district, the 42-school, 26,000-student Chula Vista

School District in California has authorized six charter schools which serve approximately 3,500 students. And, the 31-school, 15,000-student Appleton Area School District in Wisconsin has authorized nine charter schools which serve about 1,000 students.

There is also a wide array of activity within large districts – from established, evolving efforts to new, fledgling efforts. The Chicago Public Schools – the nation’s third-largest district – has undertaken bold steps around charter schools. The district has sponsored 18 charter schools and two contract schools, and has announced a new initiative – Renaissance 2010 – to close up to 20 high schools and 40 to 50 elementary schools and reopen them as 100 or more small schools within six years. One-third of the new schools will be charter schools, one-third will be contract schools, and one-third will be operated directly by the district.

In another innovative undertaking, the Philadelphia School District is moving on two separate but related tracks. First, the district has authorized 52 charter schools. Second, subsequent to a state intervention that created a new school board appointed by the governor and the mayor, the district has contracted with six for-profit and non-profit organizations to run 45 schools. Moreover, the district superintendent has predicted that half of Philadelphia’s schools will be run by private companies or universities within four years.²

In New York City, the schools chancellor has authorized 11 charter schools serving over 2,700 students. While these numbers are small within the context of the nation’s largest school district, the schools chancellor has announced plans to expand chartering activity in the district, including an initiative to open 50 new charter schools in five years as part of a larger effort to create 200 new small schools during this time period. To support this initiative, several policy changes will be implemented, including the provision of public buildings for charter schools.

To expand options available to students, the San Diego Unified School District is authorizing a growing number of charter schools – so far, 24 schools serving over 10,000 students. In addition, as one way to deal with chronically low-performing schools identified by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the district is closing four schools and reopening them as charter schools.³ In Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Public Schools district has authorized two types of charter schools. Fifteen of these schools operate within the district with personnel designated as employees of the district; 12 schools operate independently of the district and personnel are employed by the school. After initially resisting the opening of charter schools, the Denver Public Schools (DPS) district has become one of the most supportive for charter schools in Colorado. DPS has authorized 17 charter schools as well as created four contract schools.

In Florida, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools are supporting the creation of a viable sector of charter schools as a way to provide more options to students and to deal with overcrowding in schools. Forty charter schools are in operation, 27 charter schools have received approval to open, and 28 charter applications are pending.⁴ The 154-school, 84,000-student Polk County Public Schools has authorized 27 charter schools. What is unique about Polk County’s chartering activities is that they have created a charter district of conversion schools – the Lake Wales Charter District – within the larger district. Each of the five conversion schools within the charter district applied individually to the Polk County school board for its charter.

Finally, in one of the more controversial incidents, the Buffalo (New York) School District decided to more aggressively authorize charter schools in response to financial pressures from the loss of students and dollars to charter schools in Buffalo that are authorized by either the New York Board of Regents or the State University of New York. The teachers’ union opposed the district’s decision and successfully fought to get a new group of candidates elected to the school board. The new school board has since voted to put in place a one-year moratorium on the authorization of charter schools.

See Appendix A for a list of existing districts that are converting all or a part of the district to a charter district.

New “Districts”: Alternative Authorizers of Charter Schools

We have observed that much of the charter district action is actually occurring among alternative authorizers of charter schools. In these cases, entities other than traditional districts are granting charters in a systematic way across an entire district, region, or state. These entities are essentially creating new charter districts. In our research, we have identified seven types of alternative authorizers.

1. Independent Charter Boards. Before 2004, only two independent charter boards existed: the Arizona State Charter School Board, which is the largest charter authorizer in the state (and the country), with 279 schools at 366 sites; and the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, which has authorized 26 schools at 31 sites serving 11,500 students. In 2004, three states – Colorado, Idaho, and Utah – created state independent charter boards, which are now up and running.

2. Universities and Colleges. Universities and colleges are authorizing charter schools in seven states: Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, and Wisconsin. In most of these states, universities and colleges throughout the state can authorize charter schools. Missouri, however, has granted chartering power to public universities only within its two largest cities, Kansas City and St. Louis. Also, Wisconsin has empowered three institutions beyond the Milwaukee Public Schools – the Milwaukee Common Council (the city’s governing body), the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Area Technical College – to issue charters within the City of Milwaukee. The largest university authorizer in the country is Central Michigan University, which has authorized 57 schools serving over 25,000 students. The State University of New York is another large authorizer, approving 32 schools serving over 10,000 students.

3. State Boards/Commissioners/Departments of Education. In 12 states, the state board of education, the state commissioner of education, or the state department of education is authorizing charter schools. The entities that have undertaken the most authorizing activity are the Arizona State Board of Education (62 schools at 90 sites), the Massachusetts Board of Education (40 schools serving 15,000 students), the New Jersey Commissioner of Education (50 schools serving 14,000 students), the North Carolina Board of Education (97 schools serving 25,000 students), and the Texas Board of Education (190 schools serving 60,000 students). The Ohio Board of Education has authorized 101 charter schools, but it is getting out of the authorizing business as a recent state law ordered schools to find new authorizers.

4. Mayors. In Indiana, the mayor of Indianapolis has the authority to issue charters within his 11-district jurisdiction. The current mayor has embraced his chartering authority and has authorized 10 schools serving 1,900 students.

5. City Councils. In Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Common Council may authorize charter schools within the City of Milwaukee. To date, the Common Council has authorized four schools serving over 800 students.

6. Nonprofit Organizations. Nonprofit organizations are allowed to authorize charter schools in two states, Ohio and Minnesota. Ohio just recently allowed nonprofits to serve as charter authorizers; in Minnesota 12 nonprofit organizations sponsor charter schools and thereby play a growing role in Minnesota’s charter movement.⁵

7. Regional School Districts. In four states – California, Michigan, Minnesota and Ohio – regional school districts authorizing charter schools. In California, 23 county boards of education have authorized charter schools. Eleven intermediate school districts in Michigan have issued charters, as have three intermediate school districts in Minnesota, and and, two regional entities in Ohio.

See Appendix B for a list of new charter districts and Appendix C for the types of entities that are allowed to authorize charter schools in each state.

Looking Ahead

The charter district movement is still in an early stage of development, however, two factors likely will contribute to efforts by state and district leaders to create more charter districts in the coming years. One factor is that many parents in urban districts remain dissatisfied with the public schools in their communities so they are open to new choices for their children. This dissatisfaction, and willingness to entertain new opportunities, is particularly prevalent among young minority parents, who will be sending their children to urban schools in increasing numbers in the near future.

A second issue is the No Child Left Behind legislation, which requires that students in low-performing schools be given the opportunity to choose higher performing schools. In many urban districts, the demand for higher performing schools exceeds supply. In addition, suburban districts are not offering sufficient enrollment to the large numbers of students in urban districts who are eligible for new choices. A clear remedy will be to authorize more charter districts.

How will these pressures effect charter districts? Based upon our research, we offer two predictions. First, we expect medium and large districts to increase chartering efforts in the coming years, some to increasingly significant scales. As we have seen already, many innovative district leaders will take a proactive approach to chartering because they see the value in it. In addition, the chartering activity generated within district boundaries by alternative authorizers likely will also force some district leaders to engage in chartering to attract and retain students and dollars.

Second, we expect that much of the charter district action will continue, and intensify, among alternative authorizers of charter schools. As noted earlier, three states created state independent charter boards in 2004. In the 2005 sessions, efforts are underway to grant authorizing power to new or existing agencies in six states – Arizona, California, Florida, New Mexico, South Carolina, and Wisconsin. In addition to new alternative authorizers that open for business in the coming years, existing alternative authorizers will continue to open new schools.

In conclusion, as states, districts, and alternative authorizers engage in chartering on increasingly larger scales, they will encounter the challenges that this new form of public school oversight entails, such as finding a supply of high-quality charter operators and striking the delicate balance between autonomy and accountability. As charter-granting has expanded, the help available to charter districts also has grown, from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers to the existence of more “peers” who can provide assistance. Still, the field is young and developing. In the coming years, additional research and accumulating experience will provide even more guidance on this new role.

Appendix A Existing Districts: Using Chartering as a District Strategy

This appendix lists districts that are converting wholly or in part to a charter district.

State	System	# of Public Schools (Including Contract/Charter Schools)	# of Contract/Charter Schools	# of Students (Including Contract/Charter School Students)	# of Contract/Charter School Students
California⁶					
	Chula Vista Elementary School District	42	6	26,100	3,472
	Los Angeles Unified School District	857	68	746,610	30,000
	San Carlos School District	8	7	2,600	2,030
	San Diego Unified School District	187	24	137,400	10,400
	Twin Ridges Elementary School District	12	10	2,000	1,898
Colorado					
	Denver Public Schools	148	21 (17 charter schools and four contract schools)	72,489	N/A
Florida⁷					
	Miami-Dade County Public Schools	340	40	360,000	14,000
	Polk County Public Schools ⁸	154	27	84,000	N/A
Georgia⁹					
	Taliaferro County School District	1	1	280	280
Illinois					
	Chicago Public Schools	613	20 (18 charter schools and two contract schools)	434,419	10,600
New York					
	Buffalo Public Schools	70	2	40,000	960
	New York City Public Schools	1,200	11	1,100,000	2,740
Oregon					
	Paisley School District 11	1	1	103	103
Pennsylvania					
	Chester-Upland School District	12	10 (eight contract)	7,500	N/A

State	System	# of Public Schools (Including Contract/Charter Schools)	# of Contract/Charter Schools	# of Students (Including Contract/Charter School Students)	# of Contract/Charter School Students
			schools and two charter schools)		
	Philadelphia Public Schools	312	97 (52 charter schools and 45 contract schools)	220,000	51,000 (21,000 in charter schools and 30,000 in contract schools)
Texas					
	Houston Independent School District	307	23	211,499	9,735
Wisconsin					
	Appleton Area School District	32	9	15,000	1,000
	Milwaukee Public Schools	229	27	105,000	9,700

Appendix B

New “Districts”: Alternative Authorizers of Charter Schools

This appendix lists new charter districts. These entities may grant charters either within a specific district, within a specific region of a state or throughout an entire state. An asterisk indicates that student enrollment data was available for some but not all of the charter schools that the entity has authorized.

State	System	# of Schools	# of Students
Arizona			
	State Board of Education	62 (at 90 sites)	N/A
	State Board for Charter Schools	279 (at 366 sites)	N/A
California			
	State Board of Education	6	618*
	County Offices of Education		
	Butte County Office of Education	2	431*
	Calaveras County Office of Education	1	N/A
	Del Norte County Office of Education	1	N/A
	El Dorado County Office of Education	4	501*
	Fresno County Office of Education	1	446
	Glenn County Office of Education	1	126
	Kern County Office of Education	1	N/A
	Kings County Office of Education	1	96
	Los Angeles County Office of Education	3	143*
	Madera County Office of Education	1	N/A
	Marin County Office of Education	1	N/A
	Merced County Office of Education	1	N/A
	Mono County Office of Education	1	N/A
	Monterey County Office of Education	1	326
	Nevada County Office of Education	1	N/A
	San Diego County Office of Education	1	146
	San Joaquin County Office of Education	1	N/A
	San Luis Obispo County Office of Education	1	N/A
	Santa Clara County Office of Education	2	N/A
	Santa Cruz County Office of Education	1	297
	Stanislaus County Office of Education	4	123
	Tulare County Board of Education	2	69*
	Yuba County Board of Education	1	446

State	System	# of Schools	# of Students
Colorado			
	State Charter Schools Institute	0	0
Connecticut			
	State Board of Education	14	2,693
Delaware			
	State Board of Education	13	6,554
District of Columbia			
	District of Columbia Public Charter School Board	26 (at 31 sites)	11,500
Hawaii			
	State Board of Education	27	3,267
Idaho			
	State Charter School Commission	0	0
Indiana			
	Ball State University	10	2,054
	Mayor of Indianapolis	10	1,900
Massachusetts			
	State Board of Education	40	15,000
Michigan			
	Community Colleges/State Public Universities		
	Bay Mills Community College	28	3,560*
	Central Michigan University	57	25,125*
	Eastern Michigan University	8	3,572
	Ferris State University	16	5,841*
	Grand Valley State University	29	11,896*
	Kellogg Community College	1	96
	Lake Superior State University	7	3,297
	Northern Michigan University	5	1,825
	Oakland University	7	6,071
	Saginaw Valley State University	18	6,136
	Washtenaw Community College	1	338
	Intermediate School Districts		
	Allegan County Intermediate School District	1	15
	Bay-Arenac Intermediate School District	1	125
	Cheboygan-Otsego-Presque Isle Educational Service District	1	43
	Hillsdale County Intermediate School District	2	307
	Macomb Intermediate School District	1	262
	Manistee Intermediate School District	2	94*
	Midland County Educational Service Agency	1	106
	Saginaw Intermediate School District	2	446

State	System	# of Schools	# of Students
	St. Clair County Intermediate School District	9	53*
	Washtenaw Intermediate School District	1	140
	Wayne County Educational Service Agency	8	2,335
Minnesota			
	State Department of Education	10	1,243
	Intermediate Districts		
	Intermediate District #917	1	101
	Northeast Metro Intermediate District #916	2	388
	Nonprofit Organizations		
	Audubon Center of the North Woods	3	164
	EdVisions, Inc.	1	83
	Friends of Ascension	5	541
	Islamic Relief Worldwide	1	215
	Lao Family Community	1	127
	Northwoods Children's Services	2	839
	Pillsbury United Communities	6	1,872
	Project for Pride in Living	1	170
	St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce	1	365
	Volunteers of America	6	903
	Wolfe Ridge Environmental Center	1	243
	YMCA	1	208
	Public Postsecondary Institutions/Private Colleges		
	Alexandria Technical Community College	1	60
	Alfred Adler Graduate School	1	113
	Augsberg College	2	199
	Bethel College	3	933
	Century College	3	790
	Concordia College	1	105
	College of St. Catherine	2	157
	Concordia University	3	369
	Hamline College	5	599
	Inver Hills Community College	1	87
	Metropolitan State University	1	89
	North Central University	1	190
	Rochester Community and Technical College	1	110
	St. Cloud State University	1	63
	St. Mary's University	1	177
	Saint Paul College	1	72
	University of St. Thomas	3	1,123
Missouri			

State	System	# of Schools	# of Students
	Central Missouri State University	10	2,939
	Harris-Stowe State College	1	250
	Southeast Missouri State University	1	240
	University of Missouri – Kansas City	7	2,542
	University of Missouri – Rolla	2	1,451
	University of Missouri – St. Louis	2	1,946
New Jersey			
	State Commissioner of Education	50	14,000
New York			
	New York State Board of Regents	16	4,100
	State University of New York Board of Regents	32	10,485
North Carolina			
	State Board of Education	97	25,333
Ohio			
	Lucas County Educational Service Center	9	5,320
	State Board of Education	101	N/A
	Tri-Rivers Career Center Board of Education	1	N/A
	University of Toledo	7	2,724
Texas			
	State Board of Education	190	60,833
Utah			
	State Charter School Board	19	4,211
Wisconsin			
	City of Milwaukee	4	826
	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	7	3,008
	University of Wisconsin-Parkside	1	338

Appendix C

Who Can Authorize Charter Schools in Each State?

State	Local School Boards	Independent Charter Boards	Universities and Colleges	State Boards/Commissioners/ Departments of Education	Mayors	City Councils	Nonprofit Organizations	Regional School Districts
Alaska	Dual approval from local board and state board of education (SBE)			Dual approval from local board and SBE				
Arizona	Yes	Arizona State Board for Charter Schools		SBE				
Arkansas	Dual approval from local board and SBE			Dual approval from local board and SBE; denied applicants may appeal to SBE				
California	Yes			SBE if sites across multiple counties; applicants denied by county boards may appeal to SBE				County boards may approve multi-site schools within county; applicants denied locally may appeal to county boards
Colorado	Yes ¹⁰	Colorado Charter Schools Institute		Denied applicants may appeal to SBE				
Connecticut	Dual approval from local board and SBE			SBE can approve directly or jointly with local or regional board				Dual approval from regional board and SBE

State	Local School Boards	Independent Charter Boards	Universities and Colleges	State Boards/Commissioners/ Departments of Education	Mayors	City Councils	Nonprofit Organizations	Regional School Districts
Delaware	Yes			Start-ups, with approval of both SBE and state secretary of education				
District of Columbia	Yes	District of Columbia Public Charter Schools Board						
Florida	Yes		State universities and community college district boards ¹¹	Denied applicants may appeal to SBE				
Georgia	Dual approval from local board and SBE			Dual approval from local board and SBE; denied applicants may appeal to SBE				
Hawaii				SBE upon recommendation of charter school review panel				
Idaho	Yes	State public charter school commission may approve start-ups		Denied applicants may appeal to state commissioner of education (SCE), then SBE				
Illinois	Yes			If local voters approve charter in referendum, then SBE must approve it; denied applicants may appeal to SBE				
Indiana	Yes ¹²	Denied applicants may appeal to a state charter school	Public universities for applicants outside of Marion county		Indianapolis only			

State	Local School Boards	Independent Charter Boards	Universities and Colleges	State Boards/Commissioners/ Departments of Education	Mayors	City Councils	Nonprofit Organizations	Regional School Districts
		review panel						
Iowa	Dual approval from local board and SBE			Dual approval from local board and SBE; denied applicants may appeal to SBE				
Kansas	Dual approval from local board and SBE			Dual approval from local board and SBE				
Louisiana	Yes			SBE; denied applicants may appeal to SBE				
Maryland	Yes			SBE on appeal of local rejection or when restructuring a school as a charter school				
Massachusetts	Dual approval from local board and SBE for Horace Mann charter schools			SBE for Commonwealth charter schools and dual approval from local board and SBE for Horace Mann charter schools				
Michigan	Yes		Community colleges or state public universities					Intermediate school boards
Minnesota	Yes, subject to approval by SCE		Public postsecondary institutions or private colleges, subject to approval by SCE	SCE must approve all charters; denied applicants may appeal to SCE			Cooperatives and non-profits organizations, subject to approval by SCE	Intermediate school boards, subject to approval by SCE

State	Local School Boards	Independent Charter Boards	Universities and Colleges	State Boards/Commissioners/ Departments of Education	Mayors	City Councils	Nonprofit Organizations	Regional School Districts
Mississippi	Dual approval from local board and state department of education (SDE)			Dual approval from local board and SDE; denied applicants may appeal to SBE				
Missouri	Kansas City and St. Louis school boards		Community college or a public four year college or university in or near the Kansas City or St. Louis school districts	SBE may disapprove the granting of a charter				
Nevada	Dual approval from local board and SDE			Dual approval from local board and SDE; charter schools serving special education students must be approved by SDE; denied applicants may appeal to SBE				
New Hampshire	Dual approval from local board and SDE			SBE directly ¹³ or dual approval from local board and SDE; denied applicants may appeal to SBE				
New Jersey				SCE; denied applicants may appeal to SBE				
New Mexico	Yes			Denied applicants may appeal to SBE ¹⁴				
New York	Local school boards and the New York City Chancellor		State University of New York board of trustees may approve start-ups	State Board of Regents (SBR) may approve start-ups; all other authorizer decisions subject to SBR approval				

State	Local School Boards	Independent Charter Boards	Universities and Colleges	State Boards/Commissioners/ Departments of Education	Mayors	City Councils	Nonprofit Organizations	Regional School Districts
North Carolina	Dual approval from local board and SBE		Dual approval from any campus in UNC system and SBE	SBE directly or dual approval with local or university boards; denied applicants may appeal to SBE				
Ohio ¹⁵	Yes		State universities as approved by SDE may approve start-ups	SDE when another authorizer fails to comply with its obligation as sponsor			Federally tax-exempt entities, as approved by SDE may approve start-ups	Boards of joint vocational school districts and educational service centers for start-ups
Oklahoma ¹⁶	Yes							Area vocational-technical school district
Oregon	Yes			Denied applicants may appeal to SBE				
Pennsylvania	Yes	Denied applicants may appeal to a state charter school appeals board						
Rhode Island	Dual approval from local board and State Board of Regents			State Board of Regents after approval by local board or SCE				
South Carolina	Yes, after review by the state charter advisory committee			Denied applicants may appeal to SBE				

State	Local School Boards	Independent Charter Boards	Universities and Colleges	State Boards/Commissioners/ Departments of Education	Mayors	City Councils	Nonprofit Organizations	Regional School Districts
Tennessee	Yes			Denied applicants for start-up "alternative charter schools" may appeal to SBE				
Texas	Yes for district approved charters			SBE for open-enrollment charters				
Utah	Yes, subject to SBE approval	State charter school board directly or on appeal of local rejection, subject to SBE approval		SBE must ratify others' approval; applicants denied by state charter school board may appeal to SBE				
Virginia	Yes							
Wisconsin	Yes		Three specific public institutions only ¹⁷	Applicants rejected by local board in Milwaukee may appeal to state superintendent of public instruction		Common Council of Milwaukee only		
Wyoming	Yes			Denied applicants may appeal to SBE				

This policy brief was written by Bryan Hassel of Public Impact and Todd Ziebarth of Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates, with financial support from the U.S. Department of Education's Public Charter Schools Program.

ENDNOTES

¹ Two states – California and Florida – are creating charter districts, but in a different way than our concept of them. In these states, districts that have entered into charters or contracts with their states (eight in California and four in Florida) are granted freedom from state mandates in exchange for increased accountability. While these governance changes are noteworthy, such arrangements usually leave the relationship between the district and its schools unchanged – a critical component in our definition of charter districts.

² “Philadelphia schools experiment seen as model,” Reuters, December 23, 2004.

³ Robin Lake, “School Districts Choosing to Charter,” Alexandria, VA: National Association of Charter School Authorizers, November 2004.

⁴ Lake, November 2004.

⁵ education/evolving, “Trend Accelerating Toward an ‘Open Sector’ in Public Education: Growth in Non-District Choices Especially Evident in Minneapolis and St. Paul,” December 2004.

⁶ Eight charter districts in California, through legal agreement with the state, are granted freedom from state mandates in exchange for increased accountability. These districts have not entered into such agreements with their individual schools – a critical component of our conception of charter districts. The districts are: Alvina Elementary School District, Delta View Joint Union Elementary School District, Hickman Elementary School District, Island Union Elementary School District, Jacoby Creek Elementary School District, Kings-River-Hardwick Elementary School District, Kingsburg Joint Union Elementary School District, and Pioneer Union Elementary School District.

⁷ Four charter districts in Florida, through legal agreement with the state, are granted freedom from state mandates in exchange for increased accountability. These districts have not entered into such agreements with their individual schools – a critical component of our conception of charter districts. These districts are Hillsborough County Public Schools, Orange County Public Schools, Palm Beach County Public Schools, and Volusia County Public Schools.

⁸ The 154-school, 84,000-student Polk County Public Schools in Florida has authorized 27 charter schools. What is unique about Polk County’s chartering activities is that they have created a charter district of conversion schools – the Lake Wales Charter District – within the larger district. Each of the five conversion schools within the charter district applied individually to the Polk County school board for their charter.

⁹ Cartersville City Public Schools in Georgia converted all four of its schools to charter status in 1996, but did not seek renewal of the charters in 2001.

¹⁰ A charter school applicant may submit an application to the local board or, if the school district in which the charter school is to be located has not retained exclusive authority to authorize charter schools from the SBE, to the state charter schools institute.

¹¹ A state university may grant a charter to a lab school. A community college district board of trustees may grant a charter to a charter technical career center.

¹² When 50% of the students in a district will attend a charter school, a local school board must get approval from the state department of education.

¹³ Direct approval by SBE only available between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2013.

¹⁴ SBE may also review local board decisions on its own motion. Approved applicants may also appeal unacceptable conditions imposed by local boards to SBE.

¹⁵ In Ohio, start-up charter schools are limited to “big eight” school districts, “academic emergency” school districts, “academic watch” school districts, and school districts that are part of a “pilot project area.”

¹⁶ Charter schools may only be sponsored by a school district or an area vocational-technical school district in districts with an average daily membership of 5,000 or more, and in which all or part of the district is located in a county having more than 500,000 residents or in a county which is contiguous with a county having 500,000 residents.

¹⁷ University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Milwaukee Area Technical College may serve as charter authorizers in Milwaukee. The University of Wisconsin-Parkside may sponsor one charter school in Racine.

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