

TO: STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
FROM: CHARTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE
DATE: 08/27/08

RECOMMENDATION 4: The Charter Advisory Committee (CAC) recommends that no cap be placed in State Board Rule(s) regarding a maximum number of Charter System petitions that might be approved annually. Currently, the proposed State Rule allows the State Board to approve only three Charter System petitions per year, regardless of the number of quality petitions received.

RATIONALE: The CAC recommendation is based on a unanimous vote of seven CAC members who participated in a conference call on 08/25/08. The CAC believes that the current process to consider Charter System petitions, and a "market-driven approach" to the development of Charter Systems, will yield sufficient conditions to govern the number of System Charters approved annually. The process, as developed in the first year of implementing the Charter Systems Act (during the 2007-8 school year) yielded only four Charter Systems while five were allowed by statute in the first year of implementation. A robust process, already in place, limited the number of petitions approved.

The process to consider Charter System petitions, in general terms, and not precisely in this order, includes, among other steps:

1. statement of interest recorded by the System and local Board;
2. local planning and public hearing efforts to develop the petition;
3. approval of the petition by the local Board of Education;
4. submission of the petition to the Department;
5. consideration and analysis by the CAC;
6. consideration and analysis by the Department;
7. consideration and analysis by the Charter Committee;
8. statements from the Department identifying any petition deficiencies;
9. recommendation/lack of recommendation from the CAC;
10. recommendation/lack of recommendation from the Department;
11. recommendation/lack of recommendation from the Charter Committee;
12. consideration and vote by the State Board.

CAC has observed that the four petitioners approved last year were already "District Accredited" by SACS (please see Recommendation 2 from CAC to State Board). The SACS (School) System Accreditation process is a quality assurance tool that helps to ensure the capacity within a System to properly utilize additional freedom. The System Accreditation process rests on "Standards for Quality Systems" that have been applied and tested nationally. Tests have concluded that clear evidence of attainment of specific criteria within these standards best ensures that quality services are delivered today and in the future.

1. Vision and Purpose
2. Governance and Leadership
3. Teaching and Learning
4. Documenting and Using Results
5. Resources and Support Systems
6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships
7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

PRACTICAL APPLICATION/ABILITY TO DELIVER RECOMMENDATION:

CAC believes that the process established ensures that petitioners will work with the Department to provide satisfactory petitions. The process practically prescribes a vetting process that includes at least seven groups.

1. Charter System candidate
2. Local Board of Education
3. Local community involved (at least) through public hearings
4. State Department of Education
5. Charter Advisory Committee (CAC)
6. Charter Committee of State Board of Education
7. State Board of Education

These seven groups, and the significant analysis yielded through this robust process should ensure that quality petitions are received, analyzed, and that only quality petitions are approved. These seven groups, and the significant analysis yielded through this process, should ensure that Charter System status, once granted by the State Board, after the State Board's consideration of recommendations from the CAC, is properly implemented.

The robust process, already in place, the significant engagement of at least seven groups involved in that process, and the market-driven "choice" of local systems to engage in this process, can effectively govern the number of Charter System petitions approved within each year.