

## **CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE NOT KEEPING UP WITH THE DEMAND, WHY?**

Whether in Los Angeles, California or Idaho, Charter Schools are becoming so successful that they are not able to keep up with the demand. Consequently there are huge waiting lists. In L. A. a charter school network plans to expand the number of Charter Schools from 13 to 35 in only four years. These schools will enroll one in four students and more than half of the high school students. The wait list for some of the existing schools has at times exceeded 6,000 kids. It is no wonder as they have a tremendous track record, particularly with black and Hispanic students. These schools which are not restrained by union rules on staffing and curriculum regularly outperform surrounding traditional public schools.

In the L. A. public school system one in three students quit before graduation and nearly one-half of black students quit, numbers that have grown by 80% in just the past five years. Not so, with Charter School students. In the L. A. flagship Charter high school, 100% of the past two graduation classes have been accepted to college. These schools have been very successful for black and Hispanic students on the reading and math tests.

Despite all of this success the powerful California Teacher's Union continues to oppose Charter Schools and have "pushed" for amendments to the Charter School Law to make it virtually impossible to open a new Charter School. The Teacher's Unions around the nation continue to oppose Charter Schools and Idaho is no exception!

In Idaho, the demand for Charter Schools is expanding at an accelerated rate and to the point that the artificial "cap" placed on the number of schools that can be authorized is becoming an issue. Idaho now has 31 operating Charter Schools with over 10,700 students enrolled. Additionally, there are 11 more in the authorization process, and the wait list continues to grow, now with over 7,000 students being denied the school of their choice. The restriction of not more than six new charter schools in one year is unrealistic, knowing that there are more than 7,000 students on waiting lists.

While the artificial "cap" is an issue and needs to be addressed by the Legislature, Idaho's lack of support for charter school facilities needs to be addressed as well. Idaho currently provides facility support for our traditional public schools through a bond interest support program. Idaho does NOT provide any facility support for charter schools and as a result Idaho is not eligible for Federal Assistance. The guidelines for this assistance are specific. "States eligible for these grants are those with per-pupil aid programs to assist charter schools with their facility costs. Federal Funds are used to match programs with non-federal dollars that make payments on a per-pupil basis, to provide charter schools with facilities financing."

Legislators: Idaho's 31 Charter Schools are providing over 10,000 students with an equal or better education than our traditional schools and they are doing it at LESS cost to the taxpayer. Isn't it time to take off their "restraints" and let them flourish?

Students rarely are successful in school without the support and involvement of a parent, the surest way to involve parents in a meaningful way is to EMPOWER them with choice!