

NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

2013

# DELIVERING ON **THE DREAM**

ANNUAL REPORT



*“I am not only a charter school advocate—I am a charter school parent. Every day, I see firsthand how my children are becoming highly-motivated, lifelong learners thanks to the educators in the charter schools they attend. I am grateful to all of you for making charter schools a reality.”*

ARMANDO CHRISTIAN PÉREZ, AKA “PITBULL,”  
CHARTER SCHOOL PARENT AND  
FOUNDER OF SLAM PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL IN MIAMI

# letter from THE PRESIDENT



**H**aving completed my first full year as head of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, I am thrilled with what we have accomplished and excited about what lies ahead. The past year brought major victories in every phase of our work, as we focused our agenda on the areas in which we can have the greatest impact.

In federal advocacy, we worked closely with key members of the House of Representatives to ensure that its reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act placed a greater emphasis on growing high-quality charter schools.

We also led the sector in advocating for increased funding for charter school startup, replication, and expansion in the federal Charter Schools Program during the 2014 budget process. We increased the number of charter supporters among members of Congress and underscored the National Alliance's role as the go-to charter school organization for Hill and administration staff.

Our state work has been focused on enacting laws in the remaining eight states without charter laws and improving the quality of the laws in the states with extremely weak laws. Given the popularity of our model law and charter law rankings report and our strong relationships with state and other national advocacy organizations, we are uniquely positioned to continue affecting progress in states.

In partnership with a broad local coalition, we successfully improved the Mississippi charter school law in 2013. Fifteen new stand-alone charter schools will be allowed to open each year in the state, compared to zero in the recent past. Our collaborative work in Mississippi earned a nomination for an Eddies! Award for "Best Ensemble Cast" from the PIE Network. Additionally, after years of working closely with local charter support organizations, we saw dramatic improvements in Idaho's charter law

and successfully defended against anticharter legislation in Maine. To gear up for 2014, we kicked off our efforts to pass a charter school law in Kentucky with an August event launching the new Kentucky Charter Schools Association.

We had great success this year in placing and contributing to articles in major national news outlets ranging from *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, and *Newsweek* to NPR, *Politico*, and *Education Week*. And I was able to spread the good news about charter schools via nearly two dozen speaking engagements, an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal*, and since August, a weekly online column for *U.S. News & World Report*.

Over the summer, more than 4,000 charter school teachers, leaders, and advocates descended on Washington, D.C., for the National Charter Schools Conference. Attracting recording artist—and charter school parent—Pitbull to the conference made it buzz worthy and a big hit on Twitter! In the fall, we co-hosted, with Harvard University's Program on Education Policy and Governance, a daylong meeting of leading researchers, practitioners, and funders to explore the next set of research questions that should be explored as we work to improve charter school quality.



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One of the most exciting and moving events for me in 2013 was marching across the Brooklyn Bridge with nearly 20,000 parents, teachers, students, and school leaders who told New York's incoming mayor, Bill de Blasio, how important public charter schools are in their lives. In 2014, our whole movement will have to work together to convince Mayor de Blasio that public charter schools are vital to giving every New York City student the best shot at success.

Having spent the year traveling the country, meeting with hundreds of charter school leaders and advocates, and walking the halls of so many high-performing charter schools, it's clearer than ever that our best charter schools are changing lives. I am continually energized by the promise of these amazing schools and proud to work alongside my team at the National Alliance—and with all of you—to help deliver on the dream of a high-quality education for every student.

Thank you for your support in 2013, and I look forward to even greater success in 2014!

NINA REES  
*President and CEO*



# Advocating at the Federal Level

Federal advocacy is at the core of the National Alliance's work. We communicate with members of Congress and the administration, their staffs, and partners and advocates in the education community to advance our goals of increasing federal funding for charter schools, expanding the number of high-quality charter schools, and protecting charter schools' freedom to innovate in their curriculum and operations.

Our work in Washington takes many forms. We advocate for increased funding for public charter schools; provide input to Congress to develop and improve proposed legislation; work with the White House, U.S. Department of Education, and other agencies to advance our priorities; and organize joint communications that demonstrate the unity of the charter school movement on the replication and expansion of high-quality charter schools. We also serve as a bridge between the federal government and state-level charter school organizations, helping to bring grassroots concerns to the attention of federal policymakers and to explain the impact of federal policy in states and local districts.

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OUR WORK IN WASHINGTON TAKES MANY FORMS.  
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LEGISLATION TO WORKING WITH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION AND OTHER AGENCIES, WE SERVE AS A BRIDGE  
BETWEEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE CHARTER  
SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

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Students at Boston  
Collegiate Charter School  
Boston, Massachusetts

We're pleased to report that the number of vocal charter school advocates on Capitol Hill keeps growing. In 2013, we added 24 members of Congress as new active supporters, bringing our total to 75 members who have signed on to appropriations requests, co-sponsored procharter school bills, offered floor speeches, or visited a charter school. As we boost these numbers, we improve our ability to advocate for Congress to increase the appropriations levels for charter schools and positively influence legislation and regulation.

While we see the impact of the National Alliance's work nearly every day, two successes at the federal level in 2013 are particularly noteworthy.

First, the National Alliance made a substantive and positive contribution to the development and passage of the House reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The House bill, known as H.R. 5 or the Student Success Act, includes many recommendations the National Alliance proposed in our paper on ESEA reauthorization, *Free to Succeed*.

“Advocating for best interests and fair treatment of charter school students, teachers, and leaders is at the core of our work.”

Student at E.L. Haynes Public Charter School  
Washington, D.C.



H.R. 5 advances funding equity by requiring that charter school representatives have a seat at the table during state and local discussions about the use of Title I funds. The bill ensures that public charter school representatives are consulted in the same manner as other public school representatives.

H.R. 5 also adds charter support organizations to the list of eligible entities that can apply for Charter Schools Program (CSP) state grant funds, rather than just relying on state education agency officials to administer the program. Authorized uses of CSP funds were also expanded to allow charter school leaders the flexibility to use these funds for supporting teacher preparation, purchasing instructional materials, implementing teacher and principal professional development programs, and providing necessary renovations and minor facilities repairs.

Even though our efforts had a significant impact on the final House legislation, much work remains to be done. As of the end of 2013, legislation to reauthorize ESEA had not advanced in the Senate, and the future of ESEA reauthorization is unclear. We anticipate a new charter school bill will be considered by the House in early 2014, and the National Alliance will continue to be involved every step of the way as Congress moves forward, ensuring that the perspective and priorities of the charter school movement are fully reflected in any final bill.

Our federal advocacy efforts notched another major achievement: ending U.S. Department of Defense discrimination against online charter school students. In June, the House of Representatives passed an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act that prohibits the Defense Department from requiring online charter school and homeschool students to score higher on the Armed Forces Qualification Test than students at traditional public schools. Just before adjourning for the year, the Senate followed suit, and the prohibition is now law. This victory ensures that students who attend online charter schools are treated no differently than their traditional public school peers.

The National Alliance will continue to serve as the primary voice of the charter school movement to the 535 members of Congress and numerous administration regulators who influence charter schools' ability to deliver on the dream of a high-quality education for every student.

We've got momentum in D.C., and we're excited to keep building on it in the year ahead.

# *Progress in the States*

**B**ecause state laws determine whether public charter schools will exist in a state or not, states are vital to the success of charter schools. Our strategy in the states is twofold – enacting charter school laws in the remaining eight states without them and improving the quality of the laws in states with extremely weak ones. When asked, we also provide ongoing support to state-based organizations advocating for their charter school communities.

Five years ago, we developed a model state charter school law that continues to set the standard for giving educators, policymakers, and parents a clear picture of how their state measures up in allowing innovative, high-quality public charter schools to thrive and grow. In 2013, we were actively engaged in several states, seizing opportunities to make the policy environment more hospitable to charters.

## MISSISSIPPI

How does a state go from 43 out of 43 to 14 in our annual ranking of charter school laws? In 2013, Mississippi proved that it takes unified and active support from stakeholder groups like the National Alliance, commitment from parents and educators, and strong political leadership.

Mississippi's original charter law, enacted in 1997, was widely considered the nation's weakest. The law allowed only six traditional public schools to convert to charter schools and didn't permit anyone to start a new charter school from scratch. During the 12 years that the law was on the books, only one traditional public school converted to a charter. The situation was so bad that state and national organizations supporting charters—including the National Alliance—pushed to let the law sunset in 2009 so the state could start over.



**Student at Walton  
Rural Life Center**  
Walton, Kansas

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OUR STRATEGY IN THE STATES IS TWOFOLD—  
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Unfortunately, the law that followed in 2010 was even worse. Not only did the bill limit charter school creation to conversions, but it also included numerous additional restrictions that weren't in the 1997 law.

The lack of progress convinced charter advocates to take action from the ground up. A coalition of organizations led by the National Alliance, the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), Mississippi First, the Mississippi Center for Public Policy, and Better Education for Mississippi set out to inform lawmakers, parents, educators, and others about charter schools. By building support





Students from Maine's first charter school, Cornville Regional Charter School  
Cornville, Maine

in communities across the state, the coalition sowed the seeds for broad public support that would translate into political action.

In 2013, through bipartisan support in the legislature and leadership from Lieutenant Governor Tate Reeves, Senate Education Committee Chairman Gray Tollison, and House Education Committee Chairman John Moore, Mississippi enacted a charter school law that establishes a solid foundation for creating autonomous, accountable public charter schools in the state.

For the first time in the state's history, 15 new stand-alone charter schools will be allowed to open each year. The new law also provides public charter schools with the flexibility to innovate, while ensuring that charters will be held to a high standard of accountability for results. And funding equity between charters and district schools gets a boost from provisions requiring local, state, and federal funding to follow a student that chooses to attend a public charter school.

While the law can still be improved—and the National Alliance will continue to be active in pushing for positive changes—2013 marked a major step forward for Mississippi students, particularly low-income, African-American students who have too often been underserved by the state's schools and given few options for improvement.

This success would not have been possible without the collective efforts of public charter school supporters and key lawmakers. Thanks to their work, Mississippi's families and educators will have access to high-quality public charter schools and the future of public education in Mississippi is looking brighter.

## MAINE

In 2011, Maine became the 41st state to allow charter schools by enacting bipartisan legislation strongly aligned with the National Alliance model law. The National Alliance worked with Maine advocates and lawmakers over multiple years to get this law on the books.

As of fall 2013, there were already five charters open in Maine and demand for more, as seven applications for new charters were filed with the statewide charter authorizer.

Notwithstanding a strong law and a solid beginning to the implementation of the law, politics are already threatening to derail charter schools. In January 2013, after successful efforts to politicize charters in the state's 2012 elections, new anticharter school majorities took charge in the Maine House and Senate.

Defending Maine's law against aggressive efforts to weaken it became a top priority for the National Alliance. During the 2013 session, 26 anticharter school bills were put forward, several sponsored by the Senate president and speaker of the House. The bills aimed to cut charter funding, enact moratoriums on charter growth, and politicize the charter approval process.

Throughout the session, the National Alliance provided support to the Maine Association of Charter Schools by helping to shape expert testimony on several bills, reviewing bill drafts, and holding weekly calls with our advocacy partners in the state. In February, our staff traveled to Maine to speak against several charter bills in the Joint Education Committee and to meet with new charter school leaders.

As expected, several of the anticharter bills passed the legislature. However, Governor Paul LePage—a charter supporter—vetoed the anticharter bills, and the legislature failed to override his vetoes.

While the National Alliance and our partners were successful in defending a strong law from aggressive efforts to weaken it, we expect the 2014 session to be another difficult one given the deep opposition to charter schools within the legislature. We've been working to build the capacity of the Maine Association of Charter Schools to lead this fight going forward, and we will continue to work with the organization to make sure charters can grow to serve more Maine families.

## IDAHO

In 2013, the Idaho legislature strengthened the state's charter law—the culmination of a multiyear effort that was supported by the National Alliance.

Working closely with the Idaho Network of Charter Schools, the National Alliance worked closely with the Network's executive director and board president, provided policy recommendations and draft legislation for improving the state's law, advised the executive director on ways to rally the Network's membership to support advocacy efforts, assisted in preparing talking points to use with legislators, and drafted press releases for the Network's public communications.



**Students learn in the field  
at the Sage International  
School of Boise.**  
Boise, Idaho

The National Alliance also maintained contact with Idaho State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna, Governor Butch Otter's office, and the Idaho Public School Commission staff.

An initial victory in 2012, which saw the state lift caps on charter schools, was followed up with 2013 laws expanding the types of entities that can serve as authorizers, assuring performance frameworks are part of all charter contracts, providing five-year charter renewals, and funding a per-pupil annual lease and mortgage relief formula to help offset charter school facility costs. With all these changes, Idaho's charter law ranking rose to 20 from 32 (out of 43) in just one year.

The National Alliance will continue to support the Network and its new executive director as regulations to execute the new law are written.





Student Elliott Kelly explains how he would benefit from a charter school as U.S. Senators Rand Paul and Mitch McConnell listen.

## looking ahead KENTUCKY

A major focus for the National Alliance over the next few years will be helping to turn Kentucky into the 44th jurisdiction with a charter law (42 states and D.C. already have charter school laws).

In 2013, we built a growing coalition of state and national partners, including the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, and Kentucky Youth Advocates, and worked collaboratively to lay a strong foundation for action.

In August, National Alliance President and CEO Nina Rees traveled to Louisville to help launch the new Kentucky Charter Schools Association and kick off a robust legislative effort. Nina took part in an impressively bipartisan event, featuring Republican U.S. Senators Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul and representatives of BAEO and Democrats for Education Reform.

In September, leaders from the Kentucky Charter Schools Association and BAEO testified before a joint hearing of the state House and Senate education committees on charter schools. The legislation under consideration would create a charter school pilot program in Kentucky that would allow 20 schools to open over the next five years. Charters would have the flexibility to innovate while being held to high standards for student learning.

In addition to working on the legislative front, the National Alliance sponsored a statewide public opinion poll. The poll found that 80 percent of Kentucky voters support more public school options, 52 percent believe that more options will improve the school system, and 71 percent support charter schools after being given information about what they are.

The outlook for passing a bill in the Senate is promising, but there's still work to do to pass a bill in the House. Charter school opponents are also organizing to stop the momentum building in Kentucky. The National Alliance will continue to work with our partners on a charter school victory.



# *Seeing is Believing*

U.S. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor visits with students at Two Rivers Public Charter School.  
Washington, D.C.

One of the most vivid ways to demonstrate how public charter schools are delivering on the dream of a high-quality public education for all children is to bring policymakers into schools so they can see firsthand the amazing work teachers and school leaders are doing.

In July, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-Va., House Education and Workforce Committee Chairman John Kline, R-Minn., Representative Todd Rokita, R-Ind., Representative Martha Roby, R-Ala., and Representative Luke Messer, R-Ind., visited Two Rivers Public Charter School in Washington, D.C. Two Rivers is producing outstanding outcomes for students, with 73 percent proficiency in math and 74 percent proficiency in reading on state tests compared with just 20 percent of students who are proficient in math and 18 percent who are proficient in reading among all public schools in D.C. Accompanied by the National Alliance's Nina Rees, the members took a tour of the school, met with students, participated in a roundtable with parents and charter school leaders, and held a press conference to highlight the House bill reauthorizing ESEA and its charter school legislation.

In June, the National Alliance staff, along with staff members from several Congressional offices, visited E.L. Haynes Public Charter School. E.L. Haynes serves 950 students from grades pre-K through 10





**Congresswoman Martha Roby visits Two Rivers Public Charter School.**  
Washington, D.C.



**Congressman Jared Polis, D-Colo, visits DC Prep.**  
Washington, D.C.



**Congressman John Kline visits Two Rivers Public Charter School.**  
Washington, D.C.

and will continue to grow through grade 12. Despite the challenges of serving a student body where 68 percent of the students are low income, E.L. Haynes is closing the achievement gap and preparing all students for success in college and life. The school also prides itself on being a center for systemic reform focused on innovation in the classroom, developing great teachers, and shaping education policy.

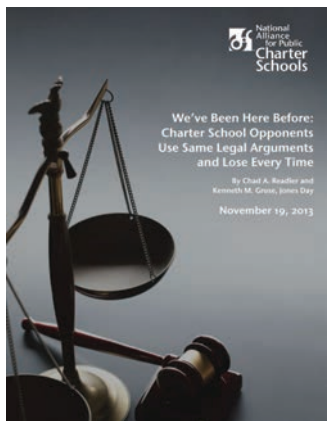
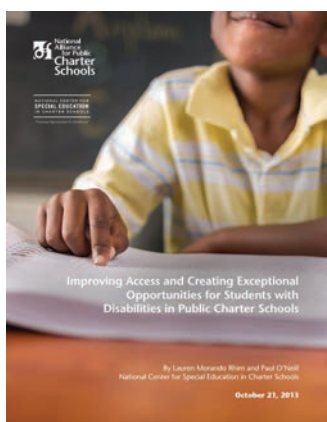
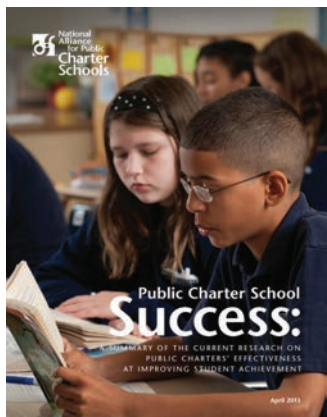
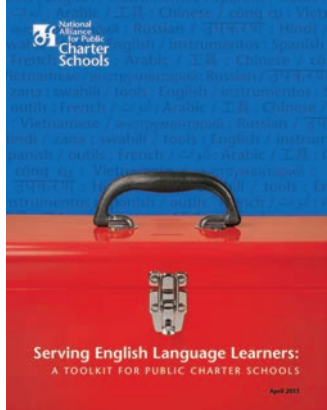


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WE BRING POLICYMAKERS INTO SCHOOLS  
SO THEY CAN SEE FIRSTHAND THE  
AMAZING WORK TEACHERS AND SCHOOL  
LEADERS ARE DOING.

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Harvard's Marty West leads a discussion at the Charter School Research 2.0 conference.

# *Making Research Actionable*

**T**he National Alliance continued to fulfill our role as the clearinghouse for information about charter schools, charter school policy, and emerging trends and issues in the sector through comprehensive data collection, original research, and legal analyses.

The National Alliance published 12 research reports in 2013. Our most widely referenced report is our annual charter school law ranking, which compares each state's charter school law to the model law developed and advocated by the National Alliance. The ranking report details how each state's charter school law could be improved and is given to state lawmakers and governors nationwide.

2013 marked the eighth year that the National Alliance tracked charter school enrollment growth. More than 2.5 million children are enrolled in more than 6,000 charter schools nationwide. In 16 school districts around the country, at least 25 percent of the students attend charter schools. New Orleans, Detroit, and Washington, D.C., have the largest percentage of children in charter schools.

One of the most powerful data points we can use to spur policymakers to action is the number of children on charter school waitlists. Each year we collect these data to demonstrate how important it is to increase support for new and expanding charter schools and to change policies that limit charter school growth. In 2013, there were nearly 1 million names on charter school waitlists nationwide.


The National Alliance also published two reports aimed at helping charter school leaders better serve some of our most vulnerable children: students with special needs and students learning English. Both reports identified charter schools that are doing well at serving these special students and explained how their best practices can be implemented in other states.

Over the years, charters have undergone intense study to determine their effects on academic achievement, but too little work has been done to determine what makes a charter school successful in boosting academic achievement.

To advance research on improving charter school quality, the National Alliance, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, co-sponsored a daylong conference with the Program on Education Policy and Governance at Harvard University. The conference, called "Charter School Research 2.0: Generating the Evidence Needed for the Charter Sector to Reach its Potential," was held in October and included leading researchers, practitioners, and funders from across the education and philanthropy sectors, including Angela Duckworth, a research psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania who was awarded a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant" in 2013; Macke Raymond, the director of Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes; and Robin Lake, the director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education.

The conference identified the most pressing and policy-relevant research questions facing charter schools, school management organizations, and authorizers—as well as strategies and specific research opportunities to address these questions. The National Alliance will take the lead in disseminating the findings to help seed and shape the next wave of research that can enhance charter school quality and effectiveness.





## *Building Capacity Among Charter Leaders*

Attendees at an Alliance of Public Charter School Attorneys conference

**A**s part of our efforts to strengthen and support charter school associations and advocates around the country, the National Alliance hosts two ongoing series designed to build expertise and foster collaborative relationships among charter school leaders.

The Alliance of Public Charter School Attorneys (APCSA) is a national attorney network that has grown to include more than 300 lawyers across America and continues to attract new members. APCSA welcomes any attorney who represents charter schools in any kind of legal matter—from contract negotiations to state and federal litigation—and strives to support all member attorneys as they deepen and refine their areas of practice.

Since its inception, APCSA has convened 10 legal seminars for its members. In 2013, the network partnered with Stanford Law School and Loyola University Chicago School of Law for spring and fall seminars, respectively. Each seminar was a two-day affair, providing a combination of large-group discussion and small-group breakout sessions, along with networking happy hours and breakfasts.

Participants identified the most cutting-edge legal trends and threats facing charter schools around the country and discussed the best responses—everything from enhanced compliance efforts to filing aggressive litigation. Participants earned up to nine hours of Continuing Legal Education credit. In 2013, APCSA welcomed nearly 70 attendees at each seminar, virtually doubling 2012 attendance.





Clint Bolick, former legal counsel to the Arizona Charter Schools Association



Denise Pierce, general counsel to the Texas Charter Schools Association

For several years, the National Alliance has also hosted a training series for Charter Support Organization (CSO) leaders and staff, thanks to a subgrant from the U.S. Department of Education. These “master classes” have focused on a variety of relevant and timely topics, including quality and accountability, advocacy, communications and public relations, new school development, closing underperforming schools, performance management, and sustainability. The 2013 master classes focused on improving charter school quality through improved data and measurement and on building family and community engagement.

Master classes are designed to build the capacity of CSOs to support new and existing charter schools in their states through training from leading practitioners. Classes also help to create and foster relationships among CSO staff nationwide, which increases communication and collaboration among sector stakeholders. The National Alliance’s master classes have been highly rated, winning praise for building practical knowledge and expertise that can be applied to immediate and ongoing challenges. Many participants come back multiple times.

By building the capacity of CSO staff, master classes help to ensure that our nation’s charter schools receive the support they need to deliver on the dream for their students—and grow to serve even more.

# National Charter Schools Week



Jeremiah Grace (left), Connecticut state director for the Northeast Charter Schools Network, and Carlos Perez (right), president of the New Jersey Charter Schools Association, brief Congressional staff.

During National Charter Schools Week in early May, the National Alliance celebrated the accomplishments of the public charter school movement by hosting the leaders of state charter school associations for two days of policy and advocacy meetings. These charter school community leaders met with key Congressional staff, members of Congress, and officials at the U.S. Department of Education to discuss top charter school issues, including our legislative priorities in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and increased funding for the federal Charter Schools Program.

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NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOLS WEEK  
SPOTLIGHTS HOW THE QUALITY AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY OF CHARTER SCHOOLS IS  
TRANSFORMING PUBLIC EDUCATION.

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The highlight of the week was a reception in the United States Capitol honoring elected officials who have done outstanding work promoting charter schools. At the reception, the National Alliance presented federal, state, and local officials from across the country with the Champions for Charters Award.



Rep. John Kline, R-Minn., chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee, was recognized for his stewardship of a bipartisan charter schools bill through the House of Representatives.



Senator Dick Durbin, D-Ill, assistant majority leader, was recognized for his advocacy for charter schools in the U.S. Senate and the hands-on support he has provided to charter schools in Illinois.



Mississippi Lieutenant Governor Tate Reeves, R, and State Senator Gray Tollison, R, were honored for their leadership in transforming Mississippi's charter school law (see page 5).



Finally, Nashville Mayor Karl Dean was recognized for his recruitment of successful charter school operators to Nashville and his support for the creation of the Tennessee Charter School Incubator, the first statewide charter school incubator in the country.

National Charter Schools Week offers an opportunity each year to advocate for a more favorable policy environment for charter schools and put a spotlight on how the quality and accountability of charter schools is transforming public education and improving the lives of more than 2.5 million students.





National Alliance staff members and state charter school organizations brief Congressman Jared Polis , D-Colo (at the head of the table), and his staff.



Mississippi State Senator Gray Tollison



Illinois Network of Charter Schools President Andrew Broy (left) presents Illinois Senator Dick Durbin (right) with a Champion for Charters award.



Arizona Charter Schools Association President Eileen Sigmund and Mississippi Lieutenant Governor Tate Reeves (right)



# national charter schools CONFERENCE



TV personality Jane Pauley (far left) moderates a panel on educating tomorrow's leaders featuring Margaret Spellings (second from left), former secretary of the U.S. Department of Education; Dr. Michael L. Lomax (center), president & CEO of the United Negro College Fund; Ana Ponce (second from right), CEO of Camino Nuevo Charter School; and Dr. Craig R. Barrett (far right), former CEO and chairman of the board of Intel Corporation.

The National Charter Schools Conference (NCSC), held in Washington, D.C., from June 30 to July 3, 2013, was once again the sector's premier event, bringing together more than 4,200 charter school operators, teachers, policymakers, and other friends of the movement from all over the country.

The theme of the conference—Delivering on the Dream—inspired participants to explore and share practical ways they're delivering a high-quality public education to millions of students. Popular discussion topics included promoting charter schools to elected officials and the public, improving academic rigor, recruiting and retaining outstanding teachers, and being an effective charter school board member. A campaign to encourage support for federal Charter Schools Program funding resulted in more than 1,400 letters being sent to legislators.

In-person attendees and followers all around the country turned this year's event into a major social media event, as Twitter hashtag #NCSC13 became the top trending topic in the United States.



Armando Christian Pérez (Pitbull) speaking at the NCSC.

The conference kicked off with a powerful speech by Armando Christian Pérez, better known as the platinum-selling musician Pitbull. Mr. Pérez discussed his role in launching the Sports Leadership and Management (SLAM) Public Charter School in Miami, which started operations in fall 2013. He also revealed that he is a public charter school parent and praised charter schools for giving great teachers the freedom to deliver a high-quality education to their students. "I stand with the millions of families today who simply want a good school for their kids," said Mr. Pérez.

Each year at the NCSC, the National Alliance inducts outstanding charter school advocates into the National Charter Schools Hall of Fame. Inductees are honored for their pioneering efforts to develop and grow charter schools, develop and implement innovative education reform ideas, and inspire others in the charter school movement.





Linda Moore, founder of the Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom Public Charter School in Washington, D.C.



Arne Duncan, secretary of the U.S. Department of Education



Brett Peiser, CEO of the Uncommon Schools Network, accepts the Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools.

This year's inductees were:



Lisa Graham Keegan, recognized for her 25 years in education reform and her influential role in passing Arizona's charter school law;



Linda Moore, recognized for her innovative work as the founder and executive director of Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom Public Charter School, one of the premier public schools in Washington, D.C.; and



The Walton Family Foundation, recognized for its unprecedented financial support to charter schools and education reform organizations across the country over the past decade.

For the past two years, the conference has also served as a forum to announce the Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools, which honors a charter management organization (CMO) that has demonstrated the most outstanding overall student improvement among the country's largest urban CMOs, while reducing the gap for poor and minority students.

Uncommon Schools won the 2013 Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools and was awarded \$250,000 for its college-readiness efforts. The Uncommon Schools network consists of 32 public charter schools and nearly 8,000 students—more than 78 percent of whom are from low-income backgrounds and are outperforming their peers statewide. As Nina Rees noted, “Results like this are indeed uncommon—and, by all measures, inspiring to us all. Generations of student lives will be changed because of your good work.”

Participants left the 2013 National Charter Schools Conference energized for the school year ahead. Planning is well under way for the 2014 conference, which will be held in Las Vegas, June 30–July 2. We hope to see you there!



Nina Rees and Becky Pringle, secretary-treasurer of the National Education Association, at POLITICO Pro's Deep Dive: STEM Policy's Next Steps panel

## *Sharing Charter School Successes*

In her first full year as president and CEO of the National Alliance, Nina Rees helped solidify our role as the go-to voice on charter school issues, speaking to audiences of educators, charter school operators, policy leaders, parents, and other advocates around the country.

Nina offered keynote addresses at several state charter school conferences including Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, and South Carolina and served as a panelist and moderator at events in the nation's capital and beyond.

Nina addressed issues critical to delivering on the dream of charter schools, including the importance of raising quality, closing achievement gaps, and preparing students for college and the workplace; how charters can thrive in states implementing new Common Core State Standards; trends in federal and state legislation and regulation; and the pivotal role charters are playing in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education.

In a recent national survey, more than 20 percent of public charter schools indicated a STEM or math/science instructional focus. Nina touted charter schools' success in introducing more children to STEM education at a POLITICO panel discussion on the current state of STEM education and at the *U.S. News & World Report's* STEM Solutions conference. She also discussed the key role that charter schools are playing in ensuring that their students not only enter but also graduate from college with the skills they need to enter the workforce on a panel hosted by *National Journal*.

Recognizing the vital role of private funders in advancing the work of charter schools, Nina also made the case for more investment in public charter schools at a Capitol Roundtable conference and the BMO



Capital Markets Back-to-School Conference. She shared how the flexibilities and freedoms inherent in the structure of public charter schools allow the charter sector to evolve far faster than most traditional public schools.

At every stop, Nina highlighted how our best public charter schools have excelled at what many said was impossible—giving children from every background and in every neighborhood access to a high-quality education that prepares them for college and career.

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## *Making the Case for Charter Schools*

In 2013, the National Alliance worked to solidify our role as the voice of the national charter school community in the media. The National Alliance was quoted in nearly 500 news stories nationwide, including some of the most influential and most read newspapers and news websites and most listened to radio programs.

**The New York Times**

**The Washington Post**

**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**

**HOUSTON  
CHRONICLE**

**The Philadelphia Inquirer**

**The Dallas Morning News**

**THE  
HUFFINGTON  
POST**

**StarTribune**  
NEWSPAPER OF THE TWIN CITIES

**POLITICO**

**U.S. News**  
& WORLD REPORT

**EDUCATION WEEK**

**n p r**

**USA  
TODAY**

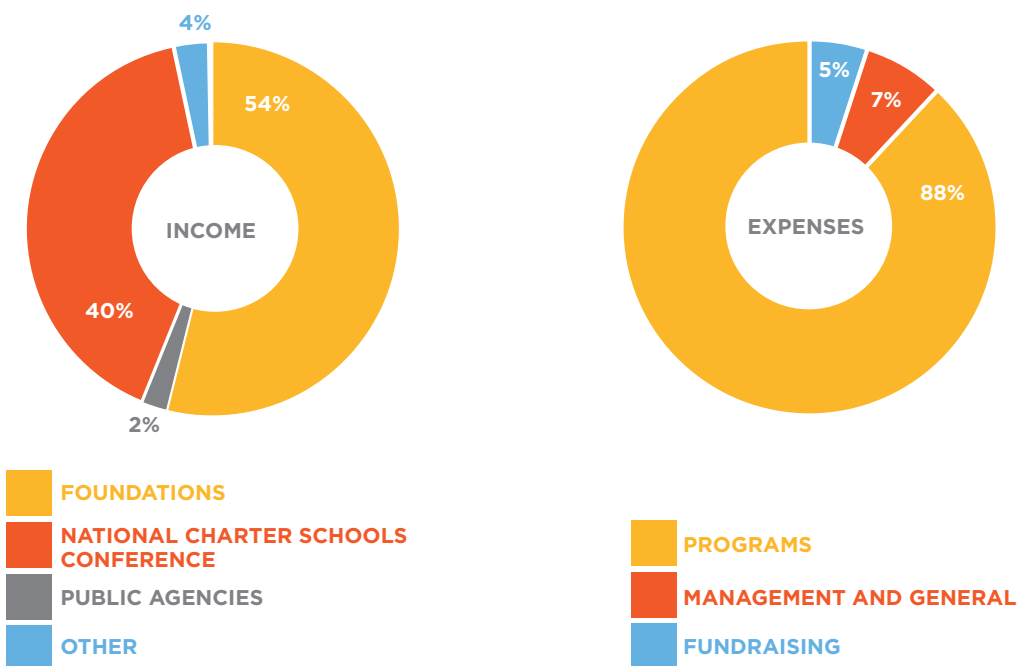
**The  
Economist**



Students at KIPP Delta  
Helena, Arkansas

# Financial Summary

The National Alliance has historically relied on a handful of foundations for the bulk of our funding. In 2013, we undertook an effort to diversify our funding base and ask for support from individuals for the first time. While we will continue the effort to diversify, we remain a strong investment and excellent steward of our financial resources. In 2013, the National Alliance had an operating budget of \$7,106,401.







Students at Walton Rural Life Center  
Walton, Kansas



Students at Crestone Charter School  
Crestone, Colorado

## Funders

Thank you to our funders for making our work to ensure every child has access to a great public school possible.

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**SCHWAB** *foundation*

Kern | FAMILY FOUNDATION

*Carnegie*  
CORPORATION  
OF NEW YORK

*f* WILLIAM E. SIMON  
FOUNDATION

BILL & MELINDA  
GATES *foundation*

*The*  
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FOUNDATION



DORIS & DONALD FISHER FUND

Ewing Marion  
KAUFFMAN  
Foundation

*tjaf*  
laura and john arnold foundation®

ROBERTSON  
FOUNDATION



## *The Team*

Front row, from left: Wentana Gebru, Starlee Rhoades, Christy Wolfe, Jill Poppe, Natalie Ethridge, Nina Rees, Laura Katzin, Katherine Bathgate, Kim Kober, Gina Mahony; Back row from left: Nora Kern, Russ Simnick, Renita Thukral, Eric Paisner, Angela Christophe, Marlene Voelker, Pamela Davidson, Todd Ziebarth, Lisa Grover, Nick Fickler

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Association

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*Leading public  
education to  
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levels of academic  
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all students*

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