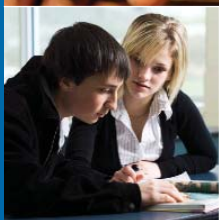


PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS FOR QUALITY CHARTER SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS



National Alliance for
Public Charter Schools



CHARTER SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS:

An engine for achieving quality at scale.

From modest beginnings in 1992, the public charter school movement has grown to serve over a million students in 40 states and the District of Columbia. Across the United States, public charter schools are demonstrating that operating autonomy for schools, combined with clear, outcomes-based accountability, is a powerful combination. Charters are creating new, public education options for students in all kinds of communities. Most important, they're leading to new levels of achievement for students previously "left behind."

Because charter schools operate outside the traditional district structure, and are often misunderstood or engender political opposition, they bring distinct challenges and practical needs. Their drive for excellence has created a new kind of entity – "charter support organizations" that provide a predigous array of services and supports. Some CSOs are membership associations that focus on legislative, policy and public advocacy. Others are free-standing "resource centers" that provide technical assistance in areas as diverse as facilities acquisition, special education, and board development.

Charter support organizations (CSOs) play an integral role in promoting high-quality charter schooling. In many states, they serve as an engine for achieving quality charter schools at scale, while forming the foundation of a new service infrastructure designed to address the unique needs, challenges and opportunities of charter schools.

The drive toward quality in charter schooling has been propelled by a number of efforts to identify "best practices" and establish essential professional standards for key actors in the charter school sector. One prominent effort has been the *Principles and Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing* developed by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers. This volume attempts to create a parallel set of fundamental operating standards for the rapidly growing CSO field.

With support from the Daniels Fund, the Alliance has engaged leaders from across the charter movement, including the leaders or chief executives of most CSOs operating today, to create these *Principles and Standards*. These standards of practice can form the basis for professional growth and organizational strategic planning for CSOs nationwide. In addition, we provide real-world examples from CSOs around the country to illustrate each principle and related standards in action.

We should note at the outset that these *Principles and Standards* are driven more by the insights of CSO professionals than by hard empirical data. It's difficult to draw a straight line between any particular practice and consequent improvement of student achievement – which is, of course, the ultimate objective. In coming years, we will be looking for much clearer evidence about which CSO strategies produce the biggest "bang for the buck," and we will refine these *Principles and Standards* accordingly. For now, these standards are grounded in the same kind of field experience and peer evaluation that informed early standards-setting in medicine, law, accounting, and other fields.

We thank the Daniels Fund and the individuals who have supported and participated in the development of this important work.

Sincerely,

Nelson Smith

President
NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC
CHARTER SCHOOLS

DESCRIPTION

WHAT IS A CHARTER SUPPORT ORGANIZATION?

Charter support organizations (CSOs) are a phenomenon that arose and quickly developed in the last decade – independent nonprofit organizations dedicated to serving and advocating for quality charter schools as a powerful reform strategy for public education. CSOs now exist in some form in every state as well as many major cities that are active in the charter school movement.

CSOs vary state by state, from a multimillion-dollar nonprofit with several state offices to one person working part-time with a phone. Some are membership organizations while others are freestanding resource centers. They have grown to serve a wide range of needs, from technical assistance to advocacy around key issues such as charter “caps” and funding. Some CSOs serve a statewide community, while others, like New Schools for New Orleans or the New York Center for Charter School Excellence, focus on an urban center. These *Principles and Standards* address the full range of charter support organizations operating nationwide, allowing for broad or selective adoption as appropriate for the roles and responsibilities each CSO assumes.

WHY DO WE NEED PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS?

Some CSOs have developed brilliant, innovative strategies to

foster a positive environment for the growth and development of excellent charter schools. Others, unfortunately, have failed to serve the needs of their members or stakeholders, doing little to support or insist on charter school quality.

Through these *Principles and Standards*, we hope to provide a framework for new, growing CSOs as well as a path to improvement for CSOs already established. With CSOs implementing successful strategies across the country every day, there is no reason for any CSO to reinvent the wheel.

HOW WERE THE PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS DEVELOPED?

Beginning in early 2007, the Alliance hosted a series of focus groups to pinpoint the roles and responsibilities of effective CSOs. Nearly 50 CSO leaders, school leaders, education consultants, and education researchers participated in identifying, developing, and editing these *Principles and Standards*.

In the focus groups, we received input from CSO leaders from Colorado, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, and Missouri. For further feedback, we presented the *Principles and Standards* in draft form at a conference on charter school quality in California to additional

CSO leaders from Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, and Utah. Prior to publication, we circulated these *Principles and Standards* for public comment to all CSO leaders and other interested parties.

With substantial input from these charter sector leaders, the Alliance has identified six common operating principles and priorities of effective, well-operated CSOs. In particular, a quality CSO:

- makes quality a top priority for the charter schools in its jurisdiction;
- adopts sustainable business practices;
- advocates effectively for charter schools and the larger movement;
- provides valuable services to its stakeholders;
- creates a community of support; and
- continues to cultivate and nurture quality charter schools.

Those involved in the making of this document agree: If CSOs incorporate the following *Principles and Standards* into their work, they will be more successful in making charter schools excellent learning institutions that fulfill their promise to students and families.

PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS DEFINED

PRINCIPLES are the fundamental pillars of a quality CSO. The six principles for effective CSOs are *quality, sustainability, advocacy, stakeholder services, community, and growth*.

STANDARDS describe the essential responsibilities and practices that align with the overarching principle.

Together, principles and standards describe both the fundamental values and the corresponding actions of effective CSOs.

A Living Document. The principles, standards, and promising practices set forth in these pages provide a snapshot of the work of successful CSOs today. As young organizations, CSOs will continue to evolve to meet the needs of the charter movement

in their states and cities. Likewise, these *Principles and Standards* are a work in progress, and they will continue to develop and change as the charter sector grows.

We recognize the diverse types of CSOs operating across the states, and that every CSO's services and activities are shaped in part by its particular state or local operating environment. Nevertheless, the *Principles and Standards* described here, taken as a whole, are intended to be broad enough to be meaningful for all CSOs, whether they are membership associations, technical assistance resource centers, or hybrid organizations.

At the same time, not every

single principle and standard shared here will apply to every CSO. This publication aims to reflect and address the full range of roles and responsibilities that successful CSOs have undertaken to date. We do not intend to suggest a one-size-fits-all model for how every CSO should be organized and run.

To illustrate the *Principles and Standards* in action today, we include promising practices from some of the nation's leading CSOs that reflect each principle. We include these experiences not to indicate “one right way” for CSOs to operate, but simply to offer examples of real-world practice that demonstrate the particular principle and meet one or more of the supporting standards.¹

¹ While the Alliance recognizes each featured CSO's effectiveness in implementing the particular promising practice described, the inclusion of any organization in this publication for a promising practice does not constitute general endorsement of that organization.



QUALITY

PRINCIPLE:

An effective charter support organization cultivates quality within the charter sector by emphasizing the importance of quality and accountability in schools and offering support to develop strategies for improving school quality.

PROMISING PRACTICES:

Commitment to Quality is the Price of Admission: California Charter School Association

The California Charter School Association (CCSA) is at the forefront of promoting and supporting quality in the charter school sector. CCSA has taken a proactive and energetic stance on charter school quality, preventing charter opponents from appropriating the issue of quality to undermine the movement. CCSA has created multiple programs to improve the quality of California's charter schools at all stages of development, from groups in the beginning phases of writing a charter application to long-established schools.

In 2004, CCSA developed a set of Charter School Quality Standards, which were examined extensively and ratified by its

The following standards support and illustrate this principle.

A quality charter support organization:	
Leadership	Creates quality principles and standards for charter schools.
	Encourages schools to adopt quality principles and standards.
	Meaningfully works to tie membership to quality principles and standards.
School Support	Develops and executes programs that support charter quality.
	Supports the creation and use of school level data that allows for student achievement measurement and school-to- school comparison.*

members. Through these Quality Standards, CCSA has identified and articulated essential elements of charter school excellence, centering on student academic achievement, ethical leadership, a continuous focus on increasing quality, responsible governance, and fiscal responsibility.

In late 2004, CCSA made commitment to the Quality Standards a requirement for Association membership; and in January of 2007, CCSA likewise adopted a third-party review process, aligned with the Quality Standards, as a requirement for all member schools. Most recently, CCSA has developed a charter school certification process based on the Quality Standards. Member schools must commit to an exhaustive review process and demonstrate

alignment with the Quality Standards in order to become a certified charter school. CCSA member schools that have not completed this review process are considered candidates for certification. The association reserves the right to deny or revoke membership to schools who do not engage in the certification process and to withhold Certification at its discretion. Attaining certification demonstrates to stakeholders the school's commitment to quality and transparency and, more broadly, creates one standard for all charter schools to meet, promoting the success of charter schools statewide.

Guiding Charter Applicants to Quality: Friends of Choice in Urban Schools

Over the past four years, almost every charter school in Washington, D.C. approved by the D.C. Public Charter School Board has worked with the Friends of Choice in Urban Schools (FOCUS) to develop its application. FOCUS provides a comprehensive start-up program for groups writing charter applications, and in their planning year, post authorization. Through this work, the organization helps to build quality in charter schools from the earliest days of planning. FOCUS is selective about the groups it works with in order to ensure a successful process that results in a quality school.

FOCUS offers a public information session about how to open a charter school and then works closely with selected groups throughout their application development and planning years by offering a series of design workshops; individualized business planning; assessment and literacy assistance; and intensive reviews of application drafts. FOCUS also offers workshops on employment law, governance, and recruitment as well as curriculum and literacy

consulting during the planning phase. In order to be selected to work with FOCUS, prospective applicants must demonstrate that they have a strong founding group and a concrete vision for their school by submitting a document that lays out the school's intended mission; philosophy; educational needs and focus; goals; initial portions of the business plan; and biographies of the school's founders. Through review of this document and an initial interview with the prospective

school, FOCUS determines whether or not to work with the particular group. Through consultants as well as its own staff, FOCUS offers specific, constructive criticism for the charter applicants taking part in its program. Most important, FOCUS has created a 700-page guidebook for preparing successful applications, which includes: information on assembling a school team; developing standards and curriculum; creating a business plan; finding a school building;

continued



QUALITY (CONTINUED)

and other important steps to developing a successful charter proposal. Additionally, the application guide offers examples of successful responses for each section of the D.C. Public Charter School Board’s application packet, focusing directly on the requirements and specifications of the D.C. authorizer.

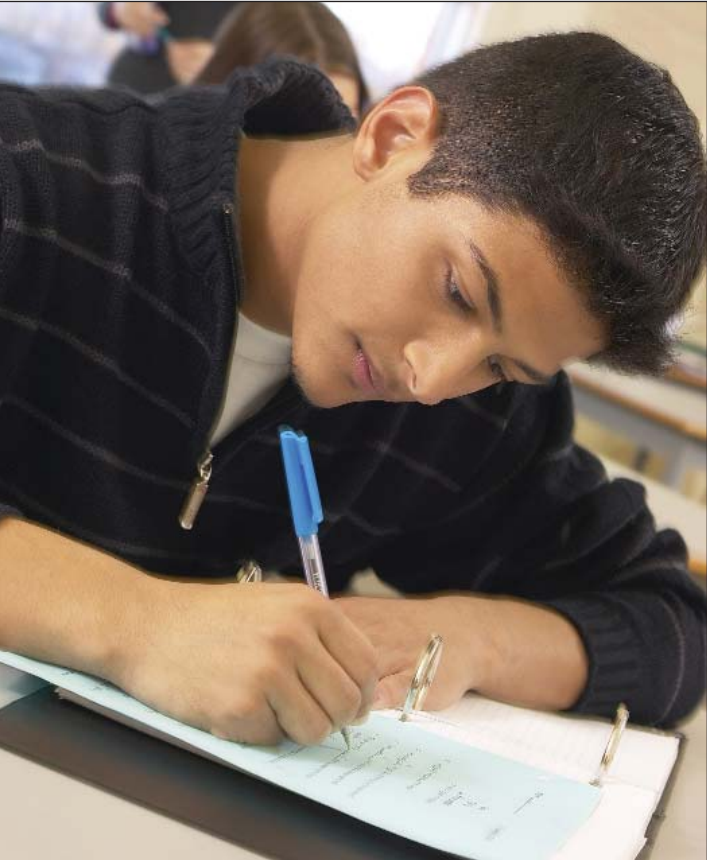
Teaching Performance Management A-Z: Colorado League of Charter Schools

The Colorado League of Charter Schools (CLCS) offers a robust set of services to train and help charter schools across the state build capacity in all aspects of performance management, including: accountability planning and goal-setting; longitudinal growth analysis and other data analysis; assessment strategies and data management; and

school quality reviews and evaluation. The League offers these services to all new and existing schools in short consultations, full or multi-day engagements, or on an ongoing basis.

In addition, with grant support, CLCS has created a statewide learning community called the Colorado Education Performance Network to amplify its work on school quality and accountability. For this voluntary network of approximately twenty schools,

the League provides more intensive guidance, support and expert services at no cost. CLCS’ services for this network include: conducting student-level longitudinal growth analyses; selecting and training schools in the use of particular benchmark assessments and data management systems; and providing rigorous professional development for teachers and school leaders in using the results of individual student growth analysis to improve classroom instruction.



SUSTAINABILITY

PRINCIPLE:

An effective charter support organization creates strong organizational structures, designates appropriate financial and human resources to support its mission, and remains focused on outreach to stakeholders.

PROMISING PRACTICES:

A Diverse Board and Membership: California Charter School Association

The California Charter School Association (CCSA) has a Board of Directors with a wide range of backgrounds, including teachers, school leaders, charter operators, foundation representatives, and business and political leaders. CCSA also has a Member Council composed mainly of charter school leaders elected from different regions of California. Member parents, students, and employees may also hold a seat on the Member Council. This body gives members a voice to offer recommendations to the Board of Directors.

CCSA offers four different categories of membership targeted to a variety of stakeholder groups, including charter development groups as well as operating schools, authorizers, charter management organizations, and educators. Each type of membership offers a different set of services and

The following standards support and illustrate this principle.

A quality charter support organization:	
Organizational Structures	Develops a board and governance structure that is broadly representative of diverse stakeholders, with experience in education, business, politics, nonprofit management, and other domains critical to the success of charter schools.
Financial Resources	Develops a financial plan with a revenue mix that balances philanthropic support with earned income through membership, workshops/conferences, consulting, or other business ventures.
	Maintains fiscal integrity and financial stewardship of organization resources.
Human Resources	Hires skilled and competent staff members who are dedicated to quality, have appropriate industry and content knowledge, and whose diversity reflects that of families and students their charter schools serve.
Focus on Stakeholders	Recruits charter schools as members/clients and demonstrates its value proposition.
	Recruits statewide charter stakeholders as supporters and associate members/clients.

support, demonstrating a clear value proposition for prospective members.

Multiple Sustainability Practices: Michigan Association of Public School Academies

The Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA) builds sustainability practices into multiple facets of its program. To start, MAPSA identifies and partners with preferred service providers to offer member schools an insurance plan; employee benefits plan; bundling opportunities such as an

energy program; and a collective purchasing plan. Contracted services are another earned-income opportunity for MAPSA. For example, MAPSA has contracted with the Department of Education to facilitate special education services in member schools and is developing grant services to assist schools in need of additional funds. Each of these arrangements provides services at a discounted cost to member schools while providing income for the association.

ADVOCACY

PRINCIPLE:

An effective charter support organization advocates for its state’s charter schools and the larger charter movement through legislative, political, and public advocacy.

PROMISING PRACTICES:

Lifting the Cap on Charter Schools: New York Charter School Association

In 2007, the New York Charter School Association (NYCSA), a nonprofit member organization, successfully led the charge to lift the cap on charter schools in New York. The Association employed several strategies to accomplish this goal. First, its leaders worked heavily on top-down legislative and executive advocacy. They set a single, clear legislative goal – lifting the charter school cap – and used both internal personnel and contracted lobbyists to pinpoint key votes, identifying important political support and working to sway hostile legislators to a neutral position. Staff worked with other CSOs in the state to create a united message for lifting the cap; conducted energetic outreach; and collaborated with business, civic, and other high-powered groups to secure the legislative goal.

The following standards support and illustrate this principle.

A quality charter support organization:	
Legislative and Political Advocacy	Plans and adopts a legislative agenda that proactively addresses the priorities of the state's charter schools.
	Maintains a regular presence at the capitol with either internal personnel or contracted lobbyists in order to influence state charter policy development.
	Develops effective plans for direct and grassroots advocacy, including the creation of a parent network.
Public Advocacy and Communications	Creates a powerful, strategic public relations messaging campaign that communicates effectively with the public about charter school issues.
	Builds and maintains a statewide network of supporters.
	Collects and acts on data about public opinion.
	Forms relationships with local media outlets, editorial boards, and opinion leaders to communicate regularly about charter issues.
	Creates opportunities for charter leaders and stakeholders to express their opinions in various media outlets.

In addition to a top-down legislative strategy, NYCSA also leveraged its grassroots network to connect legislators with charter school constituents. For example, the Association provided schools with contact information and talking points to help them establish relationships with legislators for their districts and encouraged other constituents, such as parents, to contact their legislators directly. This strategy sprang from NYCSA’s finding that when legislators have a connection with a school, they are much less

inclined to vote against a new charter law or support a bill that would weaken the charter movement.

A Broad Reform Agenda and Grassroots Mobilization: The Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now

As an education reform advocacy organization, the Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now (ConnCAN) is focused on building public support for a broad set of



policy changes that can work in concert to close the state’s worst-in-the-nation achievement gap. ConnCAN has presented legislators with a five-point Great Schools for All plan that includes key investments in early education, turnaround tools for traditional public schools, teacher and principal recruitment and statewide accountability systems, and expansion of high performing charter schools.

Because ConnCAN’s advocacy for charter schools is an integral part of a broader reform plan scaled to address the needs of all the state’s public schools, policymakers have an opportunity to move beyond the notion that charter schools and traditional public schools are locked in a “zero-sum” conflict. Rather, by supporting the Great Schools for All plan as a whole, legislators can place their support for charter schools in the context of a gameplan that benefits all of the state’s children, and leverages the power of high performing charter schools to maximum

effect. Indeed, in the 2007 legislative session three key provisions of ConnCAN’s “Great Schools for All” plan—expanding high-quality preschool, creating innovative new public schools, and ensuring greater accountability for results—received a significant boost with \$123 million in new funding over two years in the State Budget. Included in this total was \$17.7 million in additional funding for charter schools.

continued

ADVOCACY (CONTINUED)

Another key factor in ConnCAN's success on behalf of the state's charter schools is the consistency and sheer persistence of the group's legislative advocacy over time. After four years of bringing the same urgent charter school issues to the Capitol, support within the legislature has grown steadily. Lawmakers have dramatically increased state funding for charter schools annually and ConnCAN has won approval for enough new charter school seats to allow substantial growth from year to year.

Mobilization of grassroots advocacy is another of ConnCAN's strengths. By building personal relationships with each of the state's 16 charter school leaders, ConnCAN has fostered close collaboration with these schools. This allows ConnCAN to harness significant support from the charter school community and its extensive parent network for efforts such as letter-writing campaigns, petition drives, and group representation at the Capitol. For example, on Valentine's night 2008, more than 200 charter school parents and community members gathered at the Capitol, joining

with many others who came out to support other aspects of the 5 point "Great Schools for All Plan." The event was made festive with flowers and candy in honor of the day, and it highlighted the common interest that charter school supporters and a broader set of community advocates have in ensuring "Great Schools for All."



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SERVICES

PRINCIPLE:

An effective charter support organization offers services that support the development and improvement of a school from its inception through renewal.

PROMISING PRACTICES:

A Broad Menu of Services: Colorado League of Charter Schools

The Colorado League of Charter Schools (CLCS) began its member services in 1994 with a focus on two fundamental responsibilities: providing networking opportunities and serving as an information clearinghouse for charter schools and developers across the state. Since then, the League has steadily provided networking events, most prominently a statewide conference, while building its reputation as the go-to source in Colorado for any questions from or about charter schools.

Currently, CLCS' technical assistance and services for schools cover ten different areas:

1. Professional Growth –

Member schools have access to a team of talented professionals and professional trainings, workshops, roundtables, Charter Schools' Board Retreat and the Annual Colorado Charter Schools Conference.

The following standards support and illustrate this principle.

A quality support charter organization:	
Responsive Outreach	Identifies the needs of the state's charter community through surveys, needs assessments, and direct contact with charter schools.
	Fosters a support infrastructure to make quality services from a range of providers available and affordable to charter schools.
Planning Support	Provides charter application and start-up assistance and works to ensure quality prior to school opening.
	Helps schools identify sources of competitive and non-competitive funds.
	Provides resources to help charters identify secure, and finance facilities.
	Provides or arranges training for schools on the responsibilities of charter school governing boards and other essential topics.
Sustained Support	Disseminates relevant policy interpretation and guidance to school leaders and trustees.
	Offers guidance or assistance in succession planning and leadership development for quality, replicable schools.
	Helps schools obtain quality goods and services by reviewing vendor quality, hosting open houses for operators and vendors, facilitating economies of scale like bulk purchasing, and creating associate memberships for vendors, if applicable.
	Promotes robust and effective school performance management systems.

2. Governance Training

and Support – In addition to a number of professional workshops and the conference, the League offers training packages that are customized to meet the particular needs of member schools. These packages can include a basic introduction to board

roles and responsibilities and effective practices; an overview of essential policies; and the development of school improvement plans and goal setting.

continued

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SERVICES (CONTINUED)

3. Performance Management

Support – A Quality and Accountability team is in place to assist schools and their authorizers in setting goals, measuring results, and implementing data management and assessment strategies.

4. Legal Assistance –

The Legal Advocacy Fund (LAF) provides financial and technical resources to maintain, exercise, and assert schools' legal rights in litigation, other legal proceedings, and other legal matters that are significant to Colorado charter schools.

5. Community –

CLCS makes connections to critical groups of people on behalf of member schools through parent referrals, a job postings website, attendance at teacher employment fairs, the Vendor Guide program, and work with the USDOE and CDE. They also facilitate regional meetings to enable charter leaders to network, share, and learn from each other.

6. Savings On Products & Services –

CLCS's Member Business Services aims to deliver supply chain savings through Group Purchasing

contracts with product and service vendors who recognize the collective buying power of the membership. The Vendor Guide program connects members with a wide variety of suppliers that are dedicated to serving the Colorado charter school market.

7. Discounts and Subsidies –

Member schools receive discounts on workshops, the annual conference, and other trainings. CLCS assists in pulling schools together as a group to receive trainings, services, etc., thus lowering the cost to each individual school.

8. Technical Assistance –

CLCS staff members and consultants provide primarily no cost, along with a few, fee-based, services, as well as on-going technical assistance to members on a wide range of charter school needs.

9. National Presence –

CLCS staff members serve on national charter school boards and committees and work with federal policy makers. These national activities allow CLCS leaders to gain a broader perspective on how to better serve Colorado schools and to keep up on national trends, resources, and best practice.

10. Access To Resources –

CLCS provides members with resources and publications that directly relate to charter school work.

League services have generally developed strictly in response to member demand. For instance, the demand for group purchasing grew as the number of charter schools across the state increased. Similarly, a growing number of charter schools in Colorado are seeking help to develop their performance management knowledge and capacities, including data systems, assessment strategies and accountability practices. As the schools' needs grow and change, the League responds, hiring new employees or rearranging current staffing to meet the new demands.

CLCS uses conference and event evaluations plus annual membership needs assessments to gauge member satisfaction and identify new and ongoing needs. Staff communicate regularly with members about current events and programs, legislative issues of interest, and networking opportunities via newsletters, weekly emails, and the League's website.

Proactively Responding to Members' Needs: The Illinois Network of Charter Schools

Founded in 2003, the Illinois Network of Charter Schools (INCS) initially focused its technical service offerings on back-office support and professional development. Using a needs assessment survey, INCS conducted a market analysis of charter school needs and began hosting governance training and board recruitment workshops. They established themselves as a resource broker and arranged opportunities for schools to learn from each other. In addition, INCS offered benchmarking reports to member schools, citing the most promising practices among charter schools across Illinois in operations, teacher compensation, and leadership. INCS is now embarking on phase two of its School Supports activities, aiming to make them more comprehensive and collaborative.

Across the board, the new School Support program offers training sessions and activities where charter schools can turn for assistance meeting daily operational challenges, specifically in the areas of knowledge exchange and management; resource matching; governance; and charter school data-driven management and technology. INCS has also built recruiting resources for charter school

board members and teachers, matching 11 new board members with charter school boards and hosting 61 schools and 350 teachers at the INCS Teacher Job Fair in 2007. This year, over 500 teachers and 56 schools attended the Teacher Job Fair. To aid leadership and governance, INCS created Charter School Governance 101 Training for new board members with the first training session in February 2008. The most progressive services are Operational Cooperatives that jointly affect member schools in three areas: college readiness, information technology, and special education. Through intensive seminars, workshops, and comprehensive resource offerings these cooperatives serve as both a value-added service for INCS' members and as a model for providing a range of district-administered functions. Also, because the

charter school movement has been focused primarily in Chicago, INCS developed Charter Starter, a statewide outreach initiative to mobilize community groups, business people, parents and school districts to accept and start new charters.

To ensure that it meets its members' needs, INCS created a database to track weekly contact with member schools across a range of activities. INCS staff analyzes the data on a quarterly basis, rating the schools with a relationship score. From this information, INCS creates a list of priority schools for the upcoming year, deciding which schools to target. In 2008, INCS finished its first independent market research on member needs and satisfaction. The results will inform the marketing and sales of INCS's new suite of services and the development of future products and services.



COMMUNITY

PRINCIPLE:

An effective charter support organization builds a supportive community for schools, operators, policymakers, financial supporters and other stakeholders.

PROMISING PRACTICES:

An Incredible Annual Conference: Michigan Association of Public School Academies

Over 3000 charter school operators, leaders, teachers, and parents from Michigan and Ohio attended the 10th Annual Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA) Conference in November 2007. This represents nearly tenfold growth over the past decade (the first MAPSA Conference in 1997 drew 350 attendees).

Funded by registration fees, sponsors, and vendors, the conference included over 100 speakers, experts on a wide range of topics. MAPSA organized all the breakout sessions into numerous “tracks” targeted to the diverse groups attending the conference, such as elementary, middle or high school teachers; administrators; parents and board members. In addition to the breakout sessions, the conference offered a variety of events and activities including workshops, keynote addresses, networking opportunities, and an exhibitor hall for vendors. The conference

The following standards support and illustrate this principle.

A quality charter support organization:	
Sharing Promising Practices	Presents quality statewide charter school programming, including conferences and workshops.
	Stays in regular contact with schools through means such as web-based forums or newsletters.
Making Connections	Arranges networking opportunities for charter school board members and leaders.
	Forms relationships with other local, state, and national charter support organizations, charter authorizers, and other organizations whose work impacts charter schools.

also offered 20 “Table Talk” conversations between presenters and attendees – opportunities for intimate, participatory learning sessions on relevant topics in education.

Papers, Presentations, a Book, Films, and Study Tours: Massachusetts Charter Public School Association

The Massachusetts Charter Public School Association (MCPSA) began disseminating charter school best practices from its inception in 2000. From 2000 to 2006, MCPSA offered teachers, administrators, and board members the chance to document their innovative practices in fellowship papers. Authors of these papers received stipends, professional editing, training, and the opportunity to present at MCPSA’s annual convention. Approximately 76 of these papers as well as 15 whole school papers, are available to the charter school

community on the MCPSA website.

In addition, MCPSA is currently midway through a three-year documentation, dissemination and replication project, *Keeping the Promise*, which is funded by a U.S. Department of Education grant. Through this project, MCPSA is examining five high - performing urban charter schools. The goal of the research is not to focus on a single best practice but to identify a package of common practices, policies, and procedures that are important in the success of these schools. The collaboration will produce a book, a documentary, and study tours of each of the five schools. The day-long study tours are opportunities for educators and school leaders to learn about the research, see the featured schools in action, take part in workshops, and receive support should they decide to adopt any exhibited practices.

GROWTH OF A HIGH-QUALITY SECTOR

PRINCIPLE:

An effective charter school organization fosters the incubation, growth, and expansion of quality charter schools and operators.

PROMISING PRACTICES:

Partnering to Support New Leaders, Excellent Principals and Upcoming Teachers: New York City Center for Charter School Excellence

The New York City Center for Charter School Excellence (the Center) was launched in 2004 as a partnership between the New York City Department of Education and the city’s philanthropic community. The Center focuses on identifying and spreading promising practices in public charter schools to improve student achievement citywide.

The Center works closely with other education reform organizations to improve leadership in charter schools. In 2007, the Center supported eight New Leaders for New Schools principals, three Building Excellent Schools principals, and 40 Teach for America teachers in city charter schools. The Center focuses on connecting highly motivated, talented individuals to opportunities. Furthering its

The following standards support and illustrate this principle.

A quality charter support organization:	
Increasing Quality Leadership	Identifies, actively recruits, and nurtures a high-, quality diverse pool of charter operators and school leaders.
	Partners veteran school leaders with emerging leaders for mentoring relationships.
Expansion Strategy	Helps successful charter operators develop replication strategies and business plans.
	Facilitates access to sources of start-up funding for expansion.

focus on cultivating high quality charter leaders, in 2006 the Center created an Emerging Leader Fellowship designed to train and support excellent secondary leaders from within their own schools. The fellowship’s first cohort started the program in July 2007.

The Center also offers extensive services to charter schools and has published guides on charter school planning, funding, advocacy operations, fundraising, governance, facilities, and personnel. It offers teacher certification resources; operates a listserv for school leaders interested in governance, grants and operations; and hosts monthly leadership meetings for school operators. In addition, the Center offers grants for planning and development, school start-up, leadership development, technical assistance, board resource development, academic

enhancement, teacher development, public information campaigns, and shared campus improvements.

Creating a Community of Charter Schools: New Schools for New Orleans

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the education system in New Orleans has been rebuilt largely as a network of public charter schools. Today, 57 percent of New Orleans public school students attend charter schools – the highest percentage of any city in the nation. New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) works to develop and support strong charter schools while improving the overall system of public education.

NSNO has helped to create a community of charter schools through three main areas of

continued

GROWTH OF A HIGH-QUALITY SECTOR (CONTINUED)

focus: attracting and preparing outstanding teachers and leaders; incubating new schools; and providing school information to parents and the public. For the first initiative, NSNO works closely with training programs such as Teach NOLA and New Leaders for New Schools to provide teachers and leaders for charter schools, traditional public schools, and schools within the Recovery School District.

Second, NSNO's Incubation Program incubates quality new charter schools. Through this program, NSNO recruits and selects exemplary school founders to launch outstanding new schools in New Orleans and provides extensive financial and operational support to help this select group of school leaders prepare for opening day. NSNO also offers board and leadership training and development.

Third, NSNO serves as a voice for excellent schools in New Orleans and advocates on their behalf in community, district, and state relations. It also sponsors public and parent information initiatives to ensure that parents and community members understand the opportunities within the city's new landscape of schools and provides targeted grants to improve the performance of existing schools who demonstrate the ability to capitalize on NSNO's investment.

Funding Charter School Growth: California Charter School Association

To encourage and support the replication of quality charter schools, the California Charter School Association (CCSA) offers two types of "High Quality Charter Grants" to assist start-up and planning for charter school developers. Applicants must demonstrate the potential to deliver excellent academic results, serve significant low-income student populations, and agree to participate in a charter school evaluation process. With support from the Walton Family Foundation, more than 200 of these new, high-quality public charter schools have opened in California since 2004.

Another CCSA resource for new charter schools is the Charter Schools Growth Loan Program. This program, supported in part by the Raza Development Fund, Girard Foundation, and Orange County Community Foundation, offers rapidly growing charter schools additional funds throughout the school year. The program is designed to encourage and support the expansion of successful charter schools that are constrained by a lack of funds. Since 2004, the Growth Loan Program has lent \$32 million to growing charter schools, enabling those schools to serve an additional 9,500 students.

Leadership training is another area where CCSA works to develop a charter school culture that is focused on student achievement and the replication of quality practices. The Association encourages sharing of best practices among school leaders by offering free workshops on a variety of topics to member schools. The California Charter Quality Institute Leadership and Support program, also for member schools, is designed to provide new schools with professional development, executive coaching and on-site support during their first crucial years.

Each of these CCSA programs helps school leaders align their schools with the five pillars of quality established by CCSA: academic achievement first, ethical leadership, continuous focus on increasing quality, responsible governance and fiscal accountability. By embedding its Quality Standards in the development and start-up of new schools, CCSA can ensure that schools are well-developed and focused on quality from their earliest planning days. CCSA's Quality Standards and related support programs are fostering a statewide movement that encourages leadership and growth of high-quality schools.

RESOURCES:

California Charter Schools Association

<http://www.myschool.org>

Charter Growth Fund application:

<http://www.myschool.org/association/programs-fundingCSGLP>

Quality Certification process:

<http://www.myschool.org/association/qualitystandards>

Colorado League of Charter Schools

<http://www.coloradoleague.org>

Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now

<http://www.conncan.org>

Friends of Choice for Urban Schools DC

<http://www.focusdc.org>

Illinois Network of Charter Schools

<http://www.incs.org>

Massachusetts Charter Public School Association

<http://www.masscharterschools.org>

Fellowship Papers:

<http://www.masscharterschools.org/fellowships/papers.html>

Michigan Association of Public School Academies

<http://www.charterschools.org>

National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

<http://www.publiccharters.org>

National Association of Charter School Authorizers

<http://www.qualitycharters.org>

Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing

<http://www.qualitycharters.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3393>

New Schools for New Orleans

<http://www.newschoolsforneworleans.org>

New York Charter School Association

<http://www.nycsa.org>

New York City Center for Charter School Excellence

<http://www.nycchartercenter.org>



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