

Series 2002-2003

Circular Letter: C-18

To: Superintendents of Schools

From: Theodore S. Sergi, Commissioner of Education

Date: November 1, 2002

Subject: Charter Schools

As you know, in 1997, the State Board of Education approved applications for the first charter schools to operate in Connecticut. Since that time, some additional schools have opened, and a few have closed, so that, at present, there are thirteen state charter schools in operation in Connecticut. Enclosed is a list of those schools, which includes a brief description of the types of programs offered.

Connecticut charter schools are, by law, public schools. This letter is to remind you that under our law, provisions exist which assign responsibilities to you or affect the operation of your schools in relation to a charter school which may be located in your district or to a child from your town who attends a charter school. Some of the pertinent provisions of the law are as follows:

ECS – If you have students residing in your school district who attend a state charter school, you may not count those students as enrolled for ECS purposes. The charter school receives a per pupil allocation from the State for each such student.

Transportation – The local board of education in which a charter school is located must provide transportation services to students attending the charter school who reside in the district. Local boards must accommodate the regular program schedule of the charter school, and I would urge you to maintain good communication levels with your charter schools in order to provide effective scheduling. **Please note:** Charter schools operate on a very limited per pupil allotment. They have all expressed a desire to accept students from surrounding communities as a means to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation. I am very supportive of these goals; however, since charter schools operate on such limited budgets they are not able to accept out of district students unless they pay the transportation costs themselves or require students to obtain their own transportation. If you have any ability to give these schools assistance in transporting out of district students, I hope that you will do so. For example, if you have students attending schools in other districts for which you provide transportation, you may be able to allow a charter

school student to ride too. Any help that you can provide in this area will be appreciated by the charter schools and by me.

Leaves of absence for teachers – School professionals employed by local or regional boards of education are entitled to a two year leave of absence, without compensation, in order to be employed in a charter school and this leave must be extended for an additional two years on request. At any time, or on completion of the leave of absence, the employee is entitled to return to work in his or her previous or a comparable position.

Special Education – Section 10-66ee requires the school district in which a special education student attending a state charter school resides to (a) hold the PPT meeting for such a student and invite representatives of the charter school to participate and (b) pay the state charter school, on a quarterly basis, an amount equal to the difference between the reasonable cost of educating the student and the sum of the amount received by the state charter school for such child from all sources. The law is specific that the charter schools have the ultimate responsibility for the provision of services; however, in most instances, school districts and charter schools have worked together to determine how those services are provided. All students are eligible to attend charter schools and the expectation is that all students will be included, regardless of any disability. Every effort must be made to accommodate and program for special education students. Only in the event that a student could not achieve satisfactorily even with the use of supplementary aids and services in the educational environment could it be found that placement in a charter school was not appropriate. If you have any questions about the provision of special education and related services or payment therefor, please contact Dr. Nancy Cappello, Bureau of Special Education and Pupil Services, at (860) 807-2035.

Federal Grants – Titles I, II (Parts A and D), III, IV and V and Carl Perkins are the major federal entitlement programs in which charter schools are entitled to participate. Our policy concerning the participation of students attending charter schools is as follows:

- ? We have advised charter schools that their eligibility for Title I funding will depend on the identification of public school attendance areas for Title I, and on the public school allocation of funds per poor child. Generally, if a student from a participating school attendance area attends a charter school, that child may generate funds or services for the charter school depending on the child's poverty status. I urge you to work with the charter schools which your students attend to determine whether you will give charter schools funding to provide their own Title I services or you will provide the services directly. Title I funding is generally calculated using prior year data; however, if a new charter school opens in your district, children attending the school are required to be served in the first year of operation.

- ? Local school districts are required to allocate a portion of their Title II (Parts A and D), III, IV and V funds to students attending charter schools based on enrollment. These calculations are provided by the State Department of

Education and listed in the Federal Consolidated Application. Whether the charter school allocation is by way of funding or by way of services can be decided by the local district; however, we suggest that the preference of the charter school be taken into consideration.

State law provides that charter schools are eligible to apply for all competitive state grants, and our policy is that they are also entitled to apply for all federal competitive grants. They are subject to all state laws and regulations, unless, in the case of laws under the jurisdiction of the State Board of Education, they are waived. The law permits the charter schools to contract or enter into agreements for the provision of administrative or other support services, and in some cases, charter schools have successfully worked with superintendents in various areas. I hope that each of you will assist the charter schools whenever possible in serving your community.

If you have any questions with regard to the foregoing, please contact Mark O. Linabury, Charter School Manager, at (860) 713-6588.

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