

Feb 13, 2019 Senate Education Committee Presentation Notes

Public Charter School Commission – Chairman Alan Reed and Director Tamara Baysinger

### KEY QUESTION

Key question the Commission is asking: Are we moving the needle? Are we, as a charter sector, achieving positive change for students?

A recent CREDO report cited several positive outcomes for Idaho's charter students, but it's important to the Commission that this applies to all our kids, across demographic groups, in both the charter and traditional sectors.

### SCOPE OF OPTIONS

A broadening scope of educational options is now available as rate of new petition submissions increases.

In addition to the Harbor, classical, and virtual models you're familiar with, we are also seeing proposals for schools designed to:

- prepare at-risk students to meet needs identified by community business leaders
- bring STEM education to low-income, elementary-age students
- integrate outdoor and place-based learning into the core curriculum
- offer International Baccalaureate programs outside major urban centers
- leverage the strong suits of both online and in-person delivery in blended classrooms

### DEMOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY

Demographic diversity in Idaho's charters is an issue the PCSC cares deeply about. This is an area in which an authorizer such as ourselves can encourage, but not enforce, change.

The majority of Idaho's charters are less diverse than their surrounding districts in the demographic categories tracked by the state: FRL eligibility, Special Needs, Non-White, English Language Learner, & at-risk. However, there are clear exceptions.

Many charter schools are focusing their efforts on meeting the needs of underserved students.

- Future Public School – low income (Garden City)
- Elevate Academy – at-risk (Caldwell)
- Chief Tahgee Elementary Academy – Native American students (Blackfoot)
- Alturus International – low income (Idaho Falls)
- Another Choice –special needs (Treasure Valley)
- ICON – institutionalized students (statewide)
- Heritage Community Charter School – Hispanic students (Caldwell)
- KBA – credit recovery (Coeur d'Alene)

Leaders from two of these schools are here today to share a bit about their experiences and goals.

## BOARD CAPACITY BUILDING

Over the past couple years, our staff has increased its focus on identifying and shoring up weak areas with regard to services available to public charter schools. We've surveyed schools, analyzed our own observations, and worked with other entities, such as the SDE and ISBA, to determine what tools are already available and how we can fill any gaps. In short, our goal is to provide schools – especially young or struggling schools – with the best possible resources to maximize their chances of success.

As Terry indicated, our ability to continue this work will be assisted by the federal grant. A portion of grant funds is dedicated to helping authorizers increase technical assistance to schools. (Some of you who serve on JFAC are wondering how this will work with regard to spending authority. The answer is that the grant funds will flow only through Bluum, who will contract with individuals to support this work, rather than through any state agency.)

One of the greatest areas of need we've identified is for specific, ongoing training both for new and evolving charter school boards. We plan to develop modules focusing on the basics of school governance, overseeing school finances, and using academic data to effect meaningful change.

We'd also like to build out training for administrators who are new to charter schools, where they often find themselves performing a broader scope of work than they may have encountered in the traditional sector.

Finally, we're looking forward to participating in training for other potential authorizers, such as school districts or nonsectarian institutions of higher learning.