

***An Evaluation
of the
Maryland Charter School
Program***



**A Report to the
Maryland State Board of Education
October 2006**

Maryland State Board Of Education
2006-2007

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Submitted to the Maryland State Department of Education

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Harford County Public Schools	The Empowerment Academy
Howard County Public Schools	Washington County Public Schools
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Information provided by personnel from these organizations informed the evaluation. However, any errors of omission or fact are the responsibility of the authors alone.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Maryland General Assembly adopted the Maryland Public Charter School Act in 2003. During the 2005–2006 academic year, there were 15 charter schools operating in Maryland serving 3,363 students.¹ An additional 10 charter schools have been approved, 8 of which were due to open in fall of 2006. This evaluation was mandated through the Maryland Public Charter Schools Act of 2003 codified in the Code of Maryland, Education Article, §9-101, et seq. The primary objective of the evaluation as outlined in the Act is to submit on or before October 1, 2006, to the General Assembly, in accordance with §2-1246 of the State Government Article, a report including an evaluation of the public charter school program. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the advisability of the “continuation, modification, expansion, or termination” of the Maryland Charter School Program.

Methodology

A team from the University of Maryland, College Park conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the state charter school program. To document the status of the program and thereafter assess and make recommendations about the program’s future, the evaluation team:

- reviewed school system charter school policies;
- reviewed school system charter school application and authorization procedures;
- documented the number and status of charter school applications and appeals;
- determined parents’ reasons for choosing charter schools and their level of satisfaction with specific aspects of the schools;
- summarized demographics of students attending charter schools according to total enrollment, race/ethnicity, gender, and eligibility for free or reduced priced meals, special education, and English-language-learner services;
- detailed the number and status of federal charter school grants awarded in Maryland; and
- identified barriers and issues influencing the growth of charter schools.

Data were collected between April and August 2006 and consisted of an examination of local school system charter school–related policies and procedures, a review of relevant documents, surveys of parents of students enrolled in charter schools, and interviews with charter school operators and other key stakeholders knowledgeable about charter schools in Maryland. The resulting evaluation is primarily qualitative in nature.

Evaluation Findings

The evaluation revealed that in the three years since the General Assembly adopted the public charter school law, the Maryland State Board of Education, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), local school systems, and charter school operators have devoted significant human and fiscal resources to creating a growing cohort of charter schools in Maryland. There remains ambiguity in state charter school and related district policies that requires thoughtful

¹ Enrollment as of September 2005.

examination. Furthermore, we documented mixed levels of interest in authorizing charter schools on the part of local school systems. Nonetheless, individual districts and charter developers are working within the confines of the law to develop cogent policies and practices. Their collective efforts are fostering development of charter schools that provide new educational opportunities for children while simultaneously balancing the interests of traditional public schools.

Key findings from the evaluation include:

- Since the passage of the law in 2003, when one charter school was already operating in Frederick County, an additional 14 schools opened or converted to charter status. Eight more schools were due to open in fall 2006 and additional groups are negotiating contracts or seeking approval.
- The 15 existing charter schools are clustered in three districts: Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Baltimore City Public Schools, and Frederick County Public Schools.
- The Maryland State Department of Education successfully applied for a federal charter school grant from the U.S. Department of Education and developed a state office to help local school systems and charter developers navigate issues associated with creating a new sector of public schools.
- As dictated by the state charter school law, all 24 local school systems developed charter school policies. Multiple districts expanded upon the state law in their individual policies including specific requirements related to the application, approval, and charter renewal/revocation process.
- Local school systems are developing unique charter school application and authorization policies and procedures. Districts are working to implement rigorous application procedures to ensure that only qualified applicants receive charters but in some cases the process appears unnecessarily bureaucratic.
- The charter application process and resultant local school system decisions have generated multiple appeals to the State Board of Education. The appeals are procedural as well as substantive in nature. Conflicts associated with per-pupil funding continue to be a key focus of appeals to the state and litigation between applicants and authorizers.
- Statewide, 41 charter school applications have been submitted; 26 were approved, 22 were denied, 5 were recommended for resubmission, and 6 led to appeals submitted to the State Board of Education.
- In order of frequency, the following are the most prevalent reasons parents characterized as influential in their decision to enroll their children in charter schools: safety for their child, good teachers and high quality of instruction, academic reputation/high standards, and educational philosophy.
- Overall, parents are satisfied with the charter schools their children attend and the vast majority of parents with students enrolled in spring of 2006 planned to continue to enroll their child in the charter school in fall 2006.

- The majority of the students (61%) enrolled in charter schools previously enrolled in traditional public schools. Furthermore, 63% of the parents reported that if their child were not enrolled in a charter school, he or she would be enrolled in a traditional public school.
- As of June 2006, a total of 3,313 students were enrolled in the 15 operating charter schools. The students enrolled in charter schools represent a diverse cross-section of the population in traditional public schools, according to race/ethnicity, gender, and eligibility for special services such as free/reduced priced meals, special education, and English as a second language.
- Since the first grant cycle in spring of 2004, MSDE has awarded a total of 80 grants out of 122 applications (66% approval rate); 39 for preplanning, 26 for planning and design, and 16 for implementation. The state has awarded \$5.4 million overall. Charter developers in 14 jurisdictions have submitted grant applications.
- Multiple barriers are perceived to influence the charter application and approval process and consequently, the number of charter schools approved. The primary barriers identified in interviews and documents are: newness of the charter sector, access to facilities and facilities financing, ambiguity regarding per-pupil allocation, single authorizer system, and limited operational autonomy.

Conclusions and Recommendations

According to the state charter school statute, the purpose of charter schools in Maryland is to “establish an alternative means within the existing public school system in order to provide innovative learning opportunities and creative educational approaches to improve the education of students.” This evaluation did not aim to assess whether charter schools are offering “innovative learning opportunities” but rather, what charter-related policy development and activity has occurred since the passage of the charter school law.

After three years, the Maryland Charter School Program has created new educational opportunities within the existing public school system. Yet, charter schools in Maryland face substantial barriers to success—barriers that if not addressed may undermine the ability of these schools to sustain their operations. Demand for charter schools, demonstrated by the number of applicants and enrollment data and apparent parent satisfaction, leads us to conclude that there is support for the continuation of the Maryland Charter School Program. In recognition of the identified challenges, successful continuation of the program is contingent upon modifications to state law, refinement of authorizer policies, and development of high quality charter applicants. Such modifications will ensure that the charter schools created can provide students with the opportunities envisioned in the state charter school statute. Based on the evaluation data, we propose the following recommendations regarding the continuation, modification, expansion, or termination of the program.

- We recommend that the General Assembly build on the innovative practices developed in other states to assist charter school operators access appropriate facilities and additional resources to purchase, lease, and/or renovate facilities. Related to supply, we suggest that the General Assembly consider offering incentives to districts or businesses that offer charter schools

opportunities to either co-locate with existing schools or lease appropriate facilities. Related to financing, we recommend that the General Assembly consider charter school facilities finance programs similar to those offered to charter schools in other states.

- The development of the Maryland charter school sector is limited by the multiple barriers associated with requiring local school systems to take risks, develop new systems, and collaborate with new schools explicitly created with the goal of competing with traditional public schools. An alternate authorizer would relieve local school systems of the responsibility of granting and monitoring charter schools and potentially provide new charter schools the opportunity to realize greater levels of autonomy to fulfill their missions. Potential alternative authorizers that should be examined to assess the legal and fiscal implications of their serving as charter school authorizers are the State Board of Education, colleges or universities, or a new 25th district that would be responsible for granting charters. Central to contemplating the creation of an alternate authorizer would be developing accountability mechanisms that would enable the state to hold the authorizer accountable under the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB).
- The notion of commensurate funds requires additional scrutiny that carefully weighs the funding needs of both traditional and chartered public schools. The recent Court of Special Appeals decision reaffirms the State Board of Education's 2005 ruling defining commensurate funding and emphasizes the importance of local school systems providing dollars rather than services. Local school systems need to adjust their charter school funding policies to reflect the State Board of Education's definition of commensurate.² Furthermore, we propose that it is not unreasonable for shifts in enrollment, driven by the creation of charter schools, to serve as a catalyst for district central offices to consider the efficacy of how they allocate funds and specifically, funds that support services at the central office.
- Statewide, districts have demonstrated reticence to grant new charter schools substantial autonomy. Part of the reticence is reasonable given the newness of the initiative and the reality that to some degree, local school systems will ultimately be held responsible for charter schools' shortcomings. Local school systems should strive to delegate responsibilities to charter schools in order for them to operate autonomously enough to realize the fundamental goals of the charter construct. A critical component of successfully balancing autonomy and liability is rigorous authorizing that enables the authorizer to ensure that the charter school applicant has the capacity to successfully fulfill their responsibilities.
- The Maryland charter school law is ambiguous about key operational issues (i.e., degree of autonomy, facilities, and finances) and this ambiguity has led to tension between local school systems and charter school operators regarding their individual roles and responsibilities. The State Board of Education and the MSDE have made progress toward clarifying specific aspects

² On September 1, 2006, the Maryland Court of Special Appeals reversed the Circuit Court's decision and upheld the State Board's ruling regarding the definition of commensurate funding. Based on a complaint by City Neighbors Charter School v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, the Court affirmed the State Board's 2005 decision regarding a formula to calculate commensurate funding for charter schools. Specifically, the court ruled that charter schools are entitled to commensurate funding and that commensurate includes funds generally allocated for a variety of central office services and entails actual dollars rather than services in lieu of dollars. At the time this evaluation was concluded, the full implication of the Court of Special Appeals' decision was unclear (*City Neighbors Charter School v. Baltimore City Board of Commissioners*, August 31, 2006).

of the law but ambiguity remains. We recommend that the State Board of Education and MSDE continue to take a proactive role in offering additional guidance and if appropriate, regulations, to clarify areas in the law that are ambiguous.

- Local school systems that have approved charter applications and granted charter contracts have dedicated significant human resources to reviewing applications and negotiating the charter contracts. Yet, local school systems need to develop more efficient charter authorization policies and practices. Local school systems have multiple examples from which they can cull recommendations related to charter school authorization best practices and MSDE has developed systems to help local school systems develop their authorization practices (e.g., training seminars, monthly stakeholder meetings, and model documents). Key stakeholders should continue to collaborate to provide authorizers with guidance regarding how to balance a commitment to rigor with actions perceived as obstructionist to new charter schools. The establishment of a single application cycle and an authorizer advisory council charged with developing effective authorizer policies will foster meaningful and efficient charter application reviews.
- MSDE, local foundations, the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, and charter advocates should continue to collaborate to build and expand the technical assistance already available to both authorizers and operators. For instance, based on the evaluation data, we propose that local school systems embarking upon authorizing for the first time will continue to need technical assistance and existing authorizers will need guidance regarding effective monitoring and accountability procedures. New charter applicants will continue to need guidance developing strong proposals and new operators will need assistance acquiring facilities, implementing their program, and developing strong board governance.
- Our evaluation documented multiple factors that may limit equal access to charter schools. We recommend that steps should be taken to ensure that policies related to issues such as funding, transportation, and parental contracts do not limit charter schools as viable options for students. Equal access to open enrollment schools is more symbolic than real if students cannot attend the school due to limitations associated with their income, geographic location, or parental behavior.
- Charter schools are accountable for the standards established by NCLB (i.e., Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP), as are all public schools. However, in light of the ongoing national discussion regarding how best to assess academic performance of students who enroll in charter schools relative to students in traditional public schools, we recommend that charter schools in Maryland establish data management systems that will enable future evaluations to assess the academic growth of individual students who enroll in charter schools over time.

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INTRODUCTION

The Maryland General Assembly adopted the Maryland Public Charter School Act (hereafter referred to as the Charter School Act) in spring 2003. According to the state charter school statute, “the general purpose of the program is to establish an alternative means within the existing public school system in order to provide innovative learning opportunities and creative educational approaches to improve the education of students” (Maryland Public Charter School Act, 2003). The statute defines a charter school as a public school that:

- is nonsectarian;
- is a school to which parents choose to send their children;
- is open to all students on a space-available basis and admits students on a lottery basis if more students apply than can be accommodated;
- is a new public school or a conversion of an existing public school;
- provides a program of elementary or secondary education or both;
- operates in pursuit of a specific set of educational objectives;
- is tuition-free to appropriate students;
- is subject to federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination;
- is in compliance with all applicable health and safety regulations;
- operates under the supervision of the public chartering authority from which its charter is granted and in accordance with its charter and, with specified exceptions, the provisions of laws and regulations governing other public schools;
- requires students to be physically present on school premises for a period of time substantially similar to that which other public school students spend on school premises; and
- is created in accordance with this title and the appropriate county board policy.

Charter schools in Maryland are granted their charters by local school systems (LSSs), but the statute contains a provision whereby in certain limited situations, the State Board of Education may also authorize a charter school based on the appeal of the decision of an LSS, or in the case of school restructuring under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). Multiple entities—including the staff of a public school, parents, nonsectarian nonprofits, and institutions of higher education—are permitted to apply for a charter. Entities that are considered private, parochial, or home schools are explicitly not permitted to obtain a charter. LSSs have 120 days to review charter applications, with an abbreviated timeline in the case of a restructured school. Maryland charter schoolteachers are public school employees and as such, are required to hold Maryland certification and are considered a part of their LSS collective bargaining agreement. Charter schools must comply with rules and regulations that govern all public schools, although they are granted the opportunity to seek waivers for requirements other than those related to audits, state academic achievement assessments, and health, safety, or civil rights.

LSSs are required to provide charter schools with a commensurate share of local, state, and federal money dispersed to other public schools. While not required, the State Board of Education and LSSs are permitted to give surplus education materials, supplies, furniture, and other equipment to charter schools. The law is silent regarding charter school facilities.

The state charter school law requires LSSs to develop a policy that articulates how the district will (a) evaluate charter applicants, (b) revoke charters, (c) manage reporting requirements, and (d) implement financial, programmatic, or compliance audits of charter schools. The law also stipulates that chartering authorities are prohibited from granting charter schools that would be inconsistent with public policy initiatives, court orders, or federal improvement plans related to special education. And, charter authorities are required to ensure that charter applicants address their roles and responsibilities related to educating students with disabilities and to ensure that operators are aware of the human, fiscal, and operational capacity required to handle those tasks.

Interestingly, Maryland already had one charter school operating in the state prior to the General Assembly passing the charter legislation in 2003. In 2001, Frederick County Public Schools awarded the first charter in Maryland to the Monocacy Montessori Communities, Inc., to open the Monocacy Valley Montessori Charter School. A charter application was also submitted to Montgomery County Public Schools prior to the passage of the law but that application was denied.

Since the Charter School Act was passed in 2003, an additional 14 charter schools have been created.³ These schools, seven of them conversion schools and seven new start-ups, began operating as charter schools in fall 2005. During the 2005–2006 school year, the 15 charter schools enrolled a total of 3,363 students. (The official enrollment count decreased during the year, totaling 3,313 in June 2006.) Two of the charter schools were operating in Anne Arundel County, 12 in Baltimore City, and 1 in Frederick County. An additional 10 charter schools have been approved, 8 of which were due to open in fall 2006—4 in Baltimore City, 3 in Prince George’s County, and 1 in Harford County. The remaining two approved schools are expected to open in fall 2007, one in Prince George’s County and one in St. Mary’s County. Additional applicants are in various stages of completing charter applications in multiple jurisdictions across the state. Table 1 presents a summary of the charter schools approved to date.

Table 1: Operating and Approved Charter Schools

LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM	OPERATING CHARTER SCHOOLS	APPROVED TO OPEN	TOTAL
Anne Arundel County Public Schools	2	-	2
Baltimore City Public Schools	12	3 (1*)	16
Frederick County Public Schools	1	-	1
Harford County Public Schools	-	1	1
Prince George’s County Public Schools	-	4	4
St. Mary’s County Public Schools	-	(1*)	1
Total	15	10	25

Source: Interviews with local school system representatives.

**School approved but not scheduled to open until fall of 2007*

In line with provisions of the state charter statute, in 2003 MSDE created and disseminated model policy language to each LSS. MSDE convened a workgroup to develop “clearly written, comprehensive and supportive local policies and procedures” (Maryland State Department of Education, 2003a). The members of the workgroup were representatives from LSSs, community based organizations, the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, MSDE, and national

³ This evaluation did not aim to assess whether charter schools are offering “innovative learning opportunities.” Rather, as outlined in the Maryland Charter School Law, the evaluation sought to assess the advisability of the “continuation, modification, expansion, or termination of the Maryland Charter School Program.”

experts. The workgroups developed the Maryland Public Charter Schools Model Policy and Resource Guide. The purpose of the guide is to outline LSS administrative responsibilities and provide guidance regarding how LSSs can create an environment that supports the creation and operation of charter schools. In addition to developing the model policy and resource guide, MSDE invited the National Association of Charter School Authorizers to train LSSs on authorizer best practices on two separate occasions. And, MSDE hosted a third authorizer training conference to assist local school districts with application policies and procedures.

To further support the emerging charter school sector, MSDE successfully applied for a federal charter school grant and in addition to awarding planning, development, and implementation grants to charter school applicants, MSDE provides guidance to potential applicants by sponsoring a pre-proposal conference prior to each application cycle. MSDE has hosted conferences to provide charter applicants with guidance about facilities and board governance. In addition, MSDE has awarded a grant to the Maryland Charter School Network to provide technical assistance directly to charter applicants, operators, and authorizers, and also hosts monthly charter school stakeholder meetings designed to engage key individuals to develop thoughtful charter school policies and practices statewide.

EVALUATION PURPOSE

This evaluation was mandated through the Maryland Public Charter Schools Act of 2003 codified in the Code of Maryland, Education Article, §9-101, et seq. The objective of the evaluation as outlined in the Act is to submit on or before October 1, 2006, to the General Assembly, in accordance with §2-1246 of the State Government Article, a report including an evaluation of the public charter school program. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the advisability of the “continuation, modification, expansion, or termination” of the Maryland Charter School Program (MCSP). The statute dictates that the evaluation must solicit information from “local school boards and the public.” Based on the parameters articulated in the call for proposals released by MSDE, the evaluation team:

- reviewed school system charter school policies;
- reviewed school system charter school application and authorization policies and procedures;
- documented the number and status of charter school applications and appeals;
- determined parents’ reasons for choosing charter schools and their level of satisfaction with particular aspects of the schools;
- summarized demographics of students attending charter schools according to total enrollment, ethnicity, gender, and eligibility for free or reduced priced meals, special education, and English-language-learner services;
- detailed the number and status of federal charter school grants awarded in Maryland; and
- identified barriers and issues related to growth of charter schools.

Given the newness of the statewide initiative (i.e., 14 of the 15 operating charter schools did not open as charter schools until fall 2005) and the methodological challenges associated with attempting to meaningfully assess school performance during the first year of operation (e.g., means to control for confounding variables associated with parental choice), our evaluation explicitly and intentionally did not examine the academic outcomes of individual charter schools. Assessing the

academic outcomes of charter schools is critically important to assessing the state charter school program overall and should be an essential component of future evaluations. However, this first-year evaluation sought to document what has occurred since the law was passed and to provide the General Assembly, MSDE, and authorizers with data that can inform future policy and practice.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was conducted between April 2006 and August 2006. The evaluation team consisted of a lead evaluator based at the University of Maryland, College Park and two consultants. The evaluation was guided by the program evaluation standards developed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994). These standards dictate that evaluations must serve intended needs and be feasible, legal, ethical, and accurate. The data for the evaluation came from primary and secondary documents; interviews with LSS representatives, charter school operators, and other key stakeholders; and a survey of, as well as interviews with, parents. The resulting evaluation is primarily qualitative in nature. These data sources and procedures are described below.

Primary and Secondary Documents

Our analyses of LSS policies and application procedures aimed to document the procedures individual districts have developed related to authorizing charter schools. We obtained and analyzed LSS charter school policies from all 24 jurisdictions and 13 LSSs' charter applications and related supporting documents. The state provided LSSs with guidance regarding how to develop their individual charter school policies. However, by definition, these policies are the responsibility of each individual district and, therefore, potentially unique. The review of all 24 policies provided information regarding the ways that districts have sought to clarify or refine the state charter school law. The final report from the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) Commission on Charter School Authorization (2005) provided yet another source of data regarding authorizer policies. Our review of application documents developed by the LSSs revealed how districts are processing applications and enabled us to identify unique procedures that individual LSSs have devised to manage the charter schools they authorize.

In addition to reviewing district policies and applications, we analyzed data collected by MSDE and published on the MSDE Report Card website (<http://mdreportcard.org/>) to create demographic profiles of the existing charter schools. The demographic profiles include data on total enrollment, racial and gender composition of student population, and total number of students receiving free or reduced priced meals, special education, and English-language-learner services.

Interviews

We interviewed 74 individuals in the process of conducting our evaluation of the MCSP. The interviewees were identified based on their position (e.g., LSS representative or charter school operator) or using a snowball technique wherein MSDE and LSS personnel were asked to identify key stakeholders knowledgeable about the MCSP. We interviewed 30 LSS officials representing 23

districts in Maryland;⁴ 17 parents representing four charter schools; 19 founders/principals representing 14 operating charter schools and 3 applicants that have been granted a charter but have not yet opened; and 8 other individuals we characterized as stakeholders (i.e., MSDE personnel and representatives from the Maryland Charter School Network, Maryland Association of Boards of Education, the Goldseker Foundation, Foundations Inc., and Imagine Schools Inc.). For a more detailed description of the interview pool, see Appendix A.

The interviews were conducted in person or over the telephone and were semi-structured, using protocols based on the seven identified evaluation tasks. Semi-structured interviews ensured that all needed information was collected but also allowed for a fluid discussion about emerging issues. The interviews lasted from 15 minutes to 2 hours, with most taking about an hour.

Parent Satisfaction Survey

In order to determine (a) why parents choose to enroll their children in charter schools, (b) why they continue to enroll their children in charter schools, and (c) their overall satisfaction level regarding a variety of characteristics (e.g., facilities, services, teachers, curriculum, and academic performance), we surveyed parents of children enrolled in all 15 charter schools operating during the 2005–2006 academic year. We used a modified version of a parent survey instrument developed by the Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University. The Evaluation Center survey instrument had been extensively field-tested and used as part of evaluations conducted in multiple states with charter schools (e.g., Connecticut, Delaware, and Pennsylvania).

We consulted with charter school and district leaders to determine the best way to disseminate the surveys. Due to the fact that the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) had disseminated a parent satisfaction survey in January 2006, we modified the survey we gave to charter schools in Baltimore to eliminate seven duplicative questions. In turn, personnel from the BCPSS Division of Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Accountability shared data for the seven duplicative questions that they had collected from parents of students enrolled in the Baltimore charter schools. Including data from a survey administered by a different entity raised some methodological challenges. For instance, parents may have responded differently to a survey disseminated by BCPSS than a survey disseminated by the University of Maryland. However, given that our use of the data was limited to basic descriptive analyses, we determined that the benefits of using the data outweighed any methodological concerns.

The schools distributed our surveys to parents using standard dissemination practices (e.g., backpack mail or Friday folder) in 13 of the 15 charter schools. In one school, the surveys were given to parents directly during morning drop-off, and in another, the survey was disseminated only to parents of students attending summer school. All parents were provided with a postage-paid response envelope.

Given that we had a very short time frame to conduct the parent survey and consequently, very limited opportunities to conduct follow-up with non-respondents, we opted to distribute the survey to 100% of the parents with children enrolled in charter schools to ensure that we would receive

⁴ We attempted to interview representatives from all 24 Maryland school districts. However, after multiple attempts we were not successful in reaching one of the districts. We were able to obtain a copy of the district's charter school policy. According to MSDE personnel, the district has not approved a charter school application to date.

enough responses to have a generalizable sample. Based on the fact that there were 3,313 children enrolled in charter schools in Maryland at the time the surveys were disseminated, we sought to obtain a minimum of 508 responses to be able to generalize with 95% confidence and a 4% confidence interval (Henry, 1990). A total of 557 parents responded to the parent satisfaction survey. This response rate exceeded our generalizability requirements. For the seven questions that overlapped with the survey disseminated by the BCPSS, the number of respondents increased to 1,127.⁵

A response rate or percentage is difficult to calculate because while we know that 3,313 students were enrolled in charter schools at the time the survey was conducted, these students don't directly correspond to individual families. In fact, we know from the survey that at least 130 of the survey respondents had two or more children enrolled in a charter school during the 2005–2006 school year. So, while 557 surveys represents approximately 16% of the *students*, the response rate may actually be far greater if it were calculated based on number of *families* with children enrolled in the charter schools.

We attributed the relatively low parent response rate to the fact that the evaluation was conducted at the end of the academic year when many parents are busy with end-of-the-year activities and there was limited opportunity to follow-up with non-respondents. Furthermore, response rates may have been suppressed due to the practical reality that these parents had already received one or more surveys from other groups interested in learning more about charter school operations.

While we obtained the desired minimal number of responses, bias associated with non-respondents was a concern. We analyzed the responses according to response rate per school, per county, and per type of charter school (i.e., conversion versus new start-ups). The per-school response rates for our survey (i.e., explicitly excluding the responses shared by BCPSS) ranged from a low of 7.38% to a high of 38.14% (mean 20.86%). When analyzed according to the county in which the charter school is located, BCPSS is slightly under-represented in the sample relative to the total enrollment in charter schools in the city. The exception to this is the response rate on the seven questions for which we obtained data from BCPSS. For these seven questions, parents from Baltimore are over-represented.

When analyzed according to conversion versus new start-up, conversion schools averaged a 15% response rate while the new start-ups averaged 25%. With the exception of the seven questions for which we obtained data from BCPSS, the parent satisfaction survey may under-represent parents with children enrolled in the conversion charter schools. However, given the relatively homogeneity of responses across the survey questions (i.e., small standard deviations), we did not perceive the under-representation to be a substantive concern when interpreting the parent satisfaction data. Furthermore, the purpose of the survey was to document parents' levels of satisfaction *statewide* as opposed to a more refined analysis of satisfaction according to district or school. For more details regarding the survey response rate and our analyses, see Appendix B.

Given the challenges associated with obtaining adequate response rates from parents, we also conducted two targeted parent focus groups designed to verify and augment the data collected in the surveys. During the focus groups, we led a structured discussion regarding why parents are

⁵ The 1,127 who responded to the seven duplicate question include 194 respondents to our survey and 933 respondents who responded to the survey distributed by Baltimore City Public Schools.

selecting charter schools and their overall satisfaction level with their specific schools. In addition, two parents sought out the evaluation team (using the contact information provided on the surveys) and asked to speak to us about their charter school experiences to date.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

The purpose of this report is to present the findings from our evaluation of the MCSP mandated by the General Assembly and make recommendations regarding advisability of the continuation, modification, expansion, or termination of the program. We present the evaluation findings according to the seven evaluation tasks. An eighth section presents our recommendations based on our findings.

1. Local School System Charter School Policies

The Maryland charter school statute required all districts to adopt charter school policies, and as noted previously, MSDE subsequently developed a model policy that was disseminated to districts as a framework for developing their own potentially unique policies. In the Maryland Public Charter Schools Model Policy and Resource Guide, MSDE (2003b) refers to the model policy as a “starting point for the development of local policies and procedures” (p. 5). MSDE’s model charter school policy has six major sections: (1) purpose, (2) definition, (3) policy statement, (4) policy guidelines, (5) legal authority, and (6) effective date.

To document the current status of charter school policy development in all 24 jurisdictions and specifically, to ascertain how LSSs have expanded upon the model policy, we examined each LSS charter policy. We used the MSDE model policy’s sections and sub-sections as the framework to analyze all 24 LSSs’ policies. Given that state statute supersedes LSS policy, absence of language in LSS policies does not indicate that the district is out of compliance or that charter schools in the district don’t have to comply with that provision of the law. Rather, the absence of specific provisions indicates that the district has not opted to reiterate or expand upon individual provisions of the state charter school statute. Table 2 resents a summary of our analysis of LSS charter school policies.

Purpose

The model policy incorporates language from the Maryland charter school law that states that the purpose of charter schools is to provide parents and students an alternative means within the existing public school system for additional innovative learning opportunities and creative educational approaches to improve the education of students. While the majority of the LSSs adopted this language, five have policy purposes that expand upon the MSDE model policy. For example, one LSS added language regarding its philosophy about charter schools and specifically, its firm belief that authority to establish schools should remain with local boards of education. Another LSS noted that the purpose of the charter policy is to "set forth guidelines for the application, evaluation, approval, implementation, and ongoing monitoring process for public charter schools."

Table 2: LSS Charter School Policy Provisions

LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM	PURPOSE	DEFINITION	POLICY STATEMENT	POLICY GUIDELINES											LEGAL AUTHORITY	EFFECTIVE DATE	REGULATIONS TO BE DEVELOPED
				General Information	Restructured Schools	Employees at a Public Charter School	Charter School Facilities	Student Admission	Compliance with Laws, Policies, and Regulations	Evaluation of Public Charter Schools	Revocation of a Charter	Reporting Requirements	Financial, Programmatic, or Compliance Audit	Application Process			
<i>Allegany County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Anne Arundel County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
<i>Baltimore City Public Schools</i>	✓	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X
<i>Baltimore County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X
<i>Calvert County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Caroline County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
<i>Carroll County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓
<i>Cecil County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
<i>Charles County Public Schools</i>	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓
<i>Dorchester County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
<i>Frederick County Public Schools</i>	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓
<i>Garrett County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
<i>Harford County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Howard County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
<i>Kent County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
<i>Montgomery County Public Schools</i>	X	X	X	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
<i>Prince George's County Public Schools</i>	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Queen Anne's County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>St. Mary's County Public Schools</i>	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓
<i>Somerset County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Talbot County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Washington County Public Schools</i>	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Wicomico County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
<i>Worcester County Public Schools</i>	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓

Source: Local school system charter school policies obtained from LSS representatives and public websites.

Key: ✓ = LSS policy is the same or does not include model policy language X = LSS policy is different than model policy language or includes additional provisions

Definition

In line with the Maryland charter school law, the model policy contains the following suggested language regarding the definition of a charter school:

- Is nonsectarian in all its programs, policies, and operations.
- Is a school to which parents choose to send their children.
- Is open to all students on a space-available basis and admits students on a lottery basis if more students apply than can be accommodated.
- Is a new public school or a conversion of an existing public school.
- Provides a program of elementary or secondary education or both.
- Operates in pursuit of a specific set of educational objectives.
- Is tuition-free for all students who are eligible to attend any other _____ County/City school tuition-free.
- Is subject to federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination.
- Is in compliance with all applicable health and safety laws.
- Requires students to be physically present on school premises for a period of time substantially similar to that which other _____ County/City Public School students spend on school premises.
- Is created in accordance with state law and regulations, and under the supervision of the Board of Education of _____ County/City.

Four LSSs have adopted policies that expand upon the definition. Examples of language that LSSs have added to the definition include “[charter schools are] required to meet all accountability outcomes that other schools in the [district] must meet,” and “[charter schools] must comply with federal, state, and local provisions for all students.”

Policy Statement

Under the heading of policy statement, the model policy dictates that “In keeping with the local board of education’s interest in providing varied innovative and creative instructional programs, a public charter school may be established in (County/City).” Ten LSSs developed a different policy statement. Eight of the LSS policies explicitly note that “under certain conditions, a non-traditional program may provide alternative educational opportunities for students.” Other examples of language that LSSs have added include the following: “All charter schools shall be created after the [LSS] has established that it is in the best interest of the school district to do so, that the school system has the capacity to provide the appropriate technical support to the charter school, and that the approval does not negatively impact finances for the school system,” and “Criteria with which to consider proposals for granting and overseeing approved public charter schools are essential to this endeavor.”

Policy Guidelines

The core of the model policy lies in the policy guidelines. These guidelines fall into 11 subsections that pertain to (a) general information; (b) restructured schools; (c) employees; (d) facilities;

(e) student admission; (f) compliance with laws, policies, and regulations; (g) the evaluation of charter schools; (h) revocation of a charter; (i) reporting requirements; (j) financial, programmatic, or compliance audits; and (k) the application process.

General Information

Four LSS policies include additional general information provided under charter school guidelines. Examples of differences between the model policy and the LSS policies are (a) the inclusion of information about the need to submit a letter of intent and concept proposal; (b) the inclusion of the statement that “any methodology implemented to improve student performance at a public charter school shall be considered the property of the school district and the school district has the right to replicate proven strategies or pedagogies in other public schools within the system for no additional costs”; (c) the inclusion of a specific application process for the LSS; and (d) the inclusion of timelines for finalizing charter agreements.

Restructured Schools

Four LSS charter school policies treat the topic of restructured schools differently than the MSDE model policy does. Additions to the model policy are the following: (a) the inclusion of references to the *Annotated Code of Maryland* or Maryland law; (b) the inclusion of a timeline to review and finalize a charter agreement; and (c) the inclusion of language indicating that LSSs will have access to and control of instructional methods developed by charter school personnel.

Employees at a Public Charter School

Three LSS policies on public charter school employees include additional provisions not included in the MSDE model policy. Provisions that LSSs added to the model policy include (a) the inclusion of the LSS’s approval for other employee contracts and staff services that obligate the LSS; (b) the inclusion of a staffing plan; and (c) the inclusion of the requirement for representatives from specific local employee associations and local governmental boards to be part of employee-related negotiations.

Public Charter School Facilities

Five LSS policies on the use of facilities differ from the MSDE model policy. Examples of differences between the model policy and the LSS policies include (a) references to LSS procedure manuals; (b) the inclusion of the required facilities plan “that specifies cost, location, available space and its use, and, if it is a lease, the terms and conditions”; (c) the inclusion of the requirement for information on the cost of utilities; (d) the inclusion of the facilities’ need to “include all necessary equipment”; (e) the inclusion of the need for the state superintendent’s approval of the facilities; and (f) the inclusion of the LSS board’s inspection of the site and proof of insurance.

Student Admission

Three LSS student admission policies are different than the MSDE model policy. Examples of differences are (a) inclusion of references to other LSS policies; (b) statements granting charter school students access to extracurricular activities at their school of residence; (c) the inclusion of statements that allocations for students with an IEP will remain with the student; (d) the inclusion of statements noting exceptions to the student admission procedures in charter schools, such as preferences given to families of founders, children whose parents participate in school improvement

groups or leadership teams, and siblings of students already enrolled in the charter school; and (e) the inclusion of the school board's right to supervise the random selection process of student admissions.

Compliance With Laws, Policies, and Regulations

Five LSS policies expand upon MSDE's model policy on the statements related to "Compliance With Laws, Policies, and Regulations." Examples of differences between the model policy and the LSS policies are the following: (a) the identification of the superintendent's responsibility to make charter operators aware of state technical assistance; and (b) students with special education identification will adhere to the normal IEP process and additional resources allocated to a student, via the approved individualized education plan, will remain with the student going to the public charter school.

Evaluation of Public Charter Schools

Four LSS policies have additional statements about the evaluation of public charter schools. Examples of elements that LSSs added to the model policy include (a) references to other LSS policies; (b) reference to an annual evaluation; (c) the requirement that charter schools meet the needs of the students, maintain a high degree of parent involvement and student enrollment, and remain accountable under the charter agreement in order to stay open; (d) the statement that the policy will be reviewed and changed based on the State Board of Education's decisions; and (e) a provision noting that an annual report and monitoring are to be specified in the charter agreement.

Revocation of a Charter

Twelve LSS policy statements on revocation of charters expand upon the model policy. Ten LSSs added language related to the LSS's ability to revoke a charter if the charter school is not in the "best interest" of the students or the public. One LSS allows a charter to be revoked because "a school fails to meet AYP, as defined by the federal No Child Left Behind Act, for two consecutive years." Another LSS permits revocation if the school is not able to maintain high levels of parent involvement and student enrollment. Other elements the LSS policies added to the model policy include (a) the superintendent's overseeing of the charter school and the need for his/her recommendation on the renewal, non-renewal, or revocation of the charter; (b) a statement about where the students and staff will go in the case of revocation; (c) a statement about what happens if revocation occurs during the school year; (d) charter agreement procedures and timelines/deadlines for renewal; and (e) a statement about adhering to school board requests for audits.

Reporting Requirements

Two LSS policies have different statements concerning charter school reporting. Examples of items present in LSS policies but not in the model policy include references to requirements in other LSS policies or procedures and the requirement for interim reports to be submitted by the charter school at a midyear date.

Financial, Programmatic, or Compliance Audits of Public Charter Schools

Five LSS policies have statements that differ from the model policy regarding financial, programmatic, or compliance audits of charter schools. Examples of modifications of the model policy include (a) adding the requirement that charter schools establish a financial plan; (b) adding

the phrase “per-pupil allocations”; and (c) adding a general description of how the local board will determine per-pupil allocations.

Public Charter School Application Process

Twelve LSS policies have additional statements about the application process that differ from the model policy. Elements that appear in LSS policies but not in the model policy include (a) the requirement that the charter school application set forth “a facilities plan that specifies cost, location, available space and its use, and the terms and conditions of the facility acquisition and necessary utilities”; (b) a description of the application review process; (c) the statement that the superintendent will create criteria and a system for reviewing and evaluating applications; (d) the requirement to meet with the superintendent or designee before submitting an application; (e) the requirement to submit a letter of intent before starting the application process; (f) a description of the superintendent’s role of providing advice and technical assistance to charter school applicants; (g) the requirement to describe the charter school’s human resource procedures, practices, and training; (h) the requirement for the application to become part of the contract/agreement between the LSS and the charter school; (i) the inclusion of the requirement to meet and align academic plans with AYP requirements and School Improvement Plans; (j) a description of the superintendent’s responsibility to make recommendations to the local school board; and (k) the requirement that “public charter school decisions must not have an unduly detrimental impact on other [LSS] public schools.”

Legal Authority and Effective Date

The model policy states that the policy is consistent with Title 9 of the Education Article, *Annotated Code of Maryland*, known as the “Maryland Charter School Program,” and designates a place for LSSs to indicate the effective date. All 24 LSSs have opted to adopt the model policy language or language regarding these issues in their policy.

Regulations

The model policy does not contain language regarding creation of LSS charter school regulations. However, six LSSs’ charter school policies reference the fact that the superintendent will develop charter school regulations and/or guidelines.

Summary of Key Findings

- LSS charter school policies represent individual districts’ plans for how they will implement the state charter school law.
- The majority of the LSSs in the state have adopted the spirit if not the letter of the model charter policy developed by MSDE but five LSSs (i.e., Baltimore City, Frederick, Montgomery, and St. Mary’s) have opted to expand upon the model language and craft distinct policies.
- Eight districts include language that acknowledges the potential value of a charter school (i.e., “under certain conditions, a non-traditional program may provide alternative educational opportunities for students.”)

- In some instances, the modifications are simply semantic or provide helpful details regarding how charter applications will be processed and the relationship between the authorizing LSS and its charter schools.
- Other modifications introduce additional hurdles or unrealistic and ambiguous burdens that may impede charter applicants. For instance, requirements predicated charter approval or revocation on what is in the “best interest” of the LSS incorporated in 11 policies may be virtually impossible for applicants to fulfill.
- Other modifications establish policies that may be difficult to uphold if legally challenged (e.g., language indicating that practices developed by charter schools are the sole propriety of LSSs).

Table 3 outlines a frequency count of LSS policy provisions we deemed potentially problematic due to the burden they placed on charter applicants or operators.

Table 3: Local School System Charter Policy Provisions (*Italics added to identify issue*)

A district may revoke a charter if the charter school is not in the <i>best interest</i> of the public or the students of the district. (n=11)
A charter may only be granted if approval does not <i>negatively impact</i> finances of the school system. (n=1)
The <i>applicant must submit a facilities plan that specifies location</i> , available space and its use, and the terms and conditions of the facility acquisition and necessary utilities. The facility must include all necessary equipment. (n=3)
Concept proposal must be submitted by January 1 of the year preceding the proposed starting date (<i>approximately 20 months prior to start</i>). If conceptual approval is granted, the complete charter school proposal must be submitted by September 1 of the year prior to the proposal starting date (approximately 12 months prior to start). <i>A public charter school may begin operation in the school year following the date the charter is granted, provided approval is granted no later than the last board meeting in December of the preceding school year.</i> The board retains the right to accept, modify or deny any charter school proposal. In making a final decision, the board shall consider the merits of the proposal, current and <i>long-term fiscal status of [LSS]</i> , <i>curricular and instructional needs of [LSS]</i> , community issues and <i>any other factors any board member deems relevant</i> . (n=1)
Applicants must clearly define the governance structure that will be in place for the public charter school. <i>Staff, parents and the community must be represented in the governance structure.</i> (n=1)
<i>Any methodology implemented to improve student performance</i> at a public charter school shall be <i>considered the property of the school district</i> and the school district has the right to replicate proven strategies or pedagogies in other public schools within the system for no additional costs. (n=2)
A charter <i>may be revoked if the school is not able to maintain high levels of parent involvement</i> and student enrollment. (n=1)

Source: *Local school system charter school policies obtained from LSS representatives.*

2. Charter School Applications, Authorization, and Oversight Procedures

The Maryland charter school law and resultant LSS charter policies are the foundation upon which LSS-level charter school application, authorization, and oversight procedures are developed. Our analyses of LSS applications, supporting documents, State Board of Education rulings, and interviews with both LSS representatives and charter school founders or principals revealed multiple variations on charter applications, charter contract negotiations, application appeals, and authorizer oversight and technical assistance.

Charter Applications

Based on an electronic search of LSS websites, we obtained and analyzed charter school application packets and policy guidance from 13 jurisdictions. The application packet sample was not selected randomly but rather, represents an opportunistic sample of application materials that we were able to access from public websites. However, the sample includes the three districts with operating charter schools during the 2005–2006 school year (i.e., Anne Arundel, Baltimore City, and Frederick) as well as the two districts due to open charter schools in fall of 2006 (i.e., Prince George’s and Harford). Therefore, while not necessarily representative of the entire state, our analysis includes all of the districts with operating charter schools. Table 4 presents a summary of the application analysis.

In addition to reviewing application documents, we asked LSSs, charter school personnel, and other key stakeholders to provide information about the application process in individual districts. The LSS representatives we interviewed were the individuals designated by their LSS as the key point person on charter school issues.

The application packets articulate the LSS application process and outline specific information that applications must include. A number of the application packets expand upon the LSS charter school policies by increasing the application requirements beyond those included in the state law and MSDE model policy. Multiple applications provide detailed guidance and assistance to potential applicants. Overall, the document review and interviews revealed that authorization processes are evolving and LSSs are continually developing, revising, and refining the process each time they review an application.

Application Procedures

In addition to the formal application, 11 of the 13 LSS packets stipulate that applicants are required to submit a letter of intent or an intention form. Ten LSSs require the submission of a concept proposal or prospectus. Because the concept proposal is not considered a formal application, submission does not signal the start of the 120-day application review timeline outlined in the state charter law. Eight LSSs require applicant interviews.

Discussions with LSS representatives revealed that districts have added these requirements as a means to ensure contact with charter applicants prior to submitting formal applications and as an additional means to assess applicants’ capacity. Both LSS representatives and charter founders identified the interview as a critical aspect of assessing an applicant’s ability to operate a successful school. Reviewing the written proposal provides the applicant review team with information about the applicant’s plan, but the in-person interview was repeatedly cited as an important opportunity to verify the applicant’s credibility and ability to fulfill the goals and objectives articulated in the application. One district official described the interview as “an opportunity for the applicant to demonstrate passion and to expand some elements of the application that are difficult to put into words.” Echoing the statements of multiple charter founders, a charter principal characterized the interview as “a great opportunity to supplement our written application.”

At this time, the state has ruled that LSSs cannot establish a single annual application deadline. As a result, LSSs are dealing with what amounts to a rolling application cycle in that they may receive a

charter application at any time and be required to initiate the charter review process in a timely fashion. In the interest of efficiency, LSS representatives noted that they would prefer to have a single annual application deadline that would enable them to prepare to review applications in a timely and efficient manner. An LSS representative explained, “We would like thoughtfully vetted charter schools in order to ensure that we are enabling good charter schools. We would like to receive proposals once a year in order to engage an intelligent, thoughtful process.” Another district representative noted: “The application cycle is not working. To ask [the LSS] to conduct a thorough top quality process at the drop of a hat is unreasonable. The process is staff and time intensive.”

In the six LSSs that have granted at least one charter, district personnel are struggling to balance the need for thoroughness with what charter founders characterized as an unnecessarily cumbersome process. For instance, one stakeholder explained, “Districts are asking half their staff [to review applications]. It is way too intensive, including every single department in the review of the proposal. Furthermore, they get them involved way too early.” When asked about the human resources dedicated to managing charter applications, an LSS official estimated that approximately 50 central office personnel review every charter application that is submitted. Another experienced LSS authorizer lamented the layers of bureaucracy that charter applications must travel through during the review process. Given the number of children enrolling in charter schools relative to the LSS as a whole, engaging a large contingent of central office professionals to review an application does not appear to be an efficient allocation of central office resources.

Application Assistance

The 13 application packets we examined provide assistance and/or guidance to charter school applicants regarding how to prepare a strong application. LSS representatives reported that they developed application tools to help applicants understand how to complete the application and create a viable charter school.

Examples of items that we characterize as tools that help applicants complete applications are (a) question-and-answer documents, (b) forms and templates, (c) lists of charter school resources, (d) flow charts, lists of deadlines, or timelines, (e) application checklists, and (f) evaluation criteria. Three LSSs provide a question-and-answer section of the application packet covering definitions, the application process, funding, laws, and regulations. Ten LSSs provide forms and templates (e.g., budgets) to help applicants complete application requirements. In some cases, the application provides links to websites that the applicant can access to print out or view these forms and templates as well. Nine LSSs also provide a list of charter school resources, mostly web-based, that offer applicants ideas and answers to technical as well as substantive questions.

Ten LSSs’ application packets provided one or more of the following: (a) a flow chart of the application review process; (b) a list of deadlines; and (c) a timeline of the process. Nine LSSs provide an application checklist for the charter school applicants and, in most cases, the act of checking off each item on the checklist and submitting the checked off list was part of the application requirements.

Table 4: Local School System Application Procedures and Provisions

Local School System	APPLICATION PROVISIONS														
	Letter of intent or intent form	Concept proposal or prospectus	Interviews	Question-and-answer section	Necessary forms and/or templates	List of charter school resources	Flowchart/ list of deadlines/ timeline	Application checklist	Includes evaluation criteria	Information sessions	Meeting with school district during application process	“Note” boxes	Key issues to be scrutinized or potential problems	Guiding questions or guiding statements	Detailed website for applicants
Anne Arundel County Public Schools	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Baltimore City Public Schools	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-
Baltimore County Public Schools	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Carroll County Public Schools	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Cecil County Public Schools	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Charles County Public Schools	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	-
Dorchester County Public Schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-
Frederick County Public Schools	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Garrett County Public Schools	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-
Harford County Public Schools	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-
Prince George’s County Public Schools	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓
Queen Anne’s County Public Schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-
Washington County Public Schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-
Total	11	10	8	3	10	9	10	9	10	2	9	4	5	5	1

Source: Local school system charter school applications and policy guidance obtained from public websites.

In addition to general guidance, LSSs have developed rubrics that they use to guide the review. Ten of the 13 LSSs' applications we examined provide applicants with evaluation criteria for charter school applications. Some of the evaluation criteria are very general, while others are very specific. Charter founders we interviewed reported being familiar with the rubric their LSS used to assess their applications. Explicit evaluation criteria introduce a degree of transparency and fairness to the application process. Following are a sampling of the criteria districts are providing to potential applicants:

"In determining the success of the academic program consider clarity of the school's measurable academic goals and if they reflect high expectations as well as meeting the school's mission. Also, what kinds of curriculum and objectives as well as course outlines are in place? Are they clear and consistent with the mission?"

"Before approving any charter, the Board of Education will consider whether the public charter school plans to offer innovative teaching methods and curriculum approaches in order to improve student achievement, and whether there is consistency between the school's mission, goals, curriculum, and student population to be served."

"A stable, effective, and comprehensive school management model consistent with the mission is a key in clearly defining roles of the board and its interaction with staff. Appropriate teacher and parent input [should be considered] in school decision-making. A well-developed viable administrative management structure and knowledge of and compliance with public information laws are important in establishing a public charter school."

"Reviews will look for evidence that the applicant group:
has viable options for an adequate school facility in the proposed area of service; the facility has been evaluated and approved for occupancy meeting all fire, health, safety, and building codes; has financing options that are sound; has a proposed transportation plan that will serve all eligible students; and includes all contract agreements."

Two LSSs offer information sessions to introduce applicants to the charter school application process. Nine LSSs require applicants to meet with a school system special committee or a superintendent designee to discuss and finalize the application and to provide technical assistance to the applicants as they finalize the application. Four LSSs include "note" boxes calling attention to specific regulatory requirements or highlight other considerations. Five LSSs identify key issues that will be scrutinized in the application process and key areas of potential problems for charter school applicants, and five provide guiding questions or statements to help applicants write responses to application requirements.

One LSS has a charter school website that provides applicants with materials and information to assist them as they plan and complete their application. The website provides links to (a) the PowerPoint presentation from an information session on the application process; (b) questions posted by possible applicants and answers provided by the LSS; (c) the application packet; (d) the updated per-pupil allocation; and (e) the completed and approved applications for charter schools

opening this year. The PowerPoint presentation also provides links to other helpful websites, such as the COMAR website, the LSS technology standards and plan, and an example of the LSS emergency plan.

Charter Contract Negotiations

In Maryland, the charter *application* is a proposal to operate a charter school and the charter *contract* is the legally binding document that articulates the specifics of how the school will operate as well as the roles and responsibilities of the LSS and the charter school. Once charter applicants receive approval to operate a school, they engage in the task of negotiating their contract with their authorizer. The legally binding contract is the document in which the LSS and the charter founder must attempt to clarify multiple roles and responsibilities that are not articulated in the state charter school law. The process of negotiating contracts was described by LSS and charter founders as prolonged, tense, and frustrating. In four LSSs, charter founders lamented that the contract was not finalized until a few weeks before schools opened and stakeholders recalled that the protracted negotiations significantly impeded charter operators' ability to adequately prepare to open the school.

According to interviews with LSS representatives and charter operators, a core focus of the contract negotiations is the per-pupil allocation that the charter school will receive and how that allocation will be divided between a cash allotment and services provided by the LSS. The three districts with operating charter schools during the 2005–2006 academic year provided their charter schools with an average of \$6,990 per pupil (AACPS = \$8,754, BCPSS = \$5,379, and FCPS = \$6,838). Based on interviews with the LSS representatives and in order of frequency, the 13 LSSs that have created plans for how they intend to negotiate responsibilities with charter schools plan to provide the following services to the charter schools they authorize in lieu of cash disbursements:

- human resource management ($n = 7$),
- professional development ($n = 6$),
- special education ($n = 6$),
- school lunch ($n = 5$),
- discipline policies and procedures ($n = 4$),
- procurement ($n = 3$),
- facility ($n = 2$),
- curriculum ($n = 2$),
- facility maintenance ($n = 1$), and
- transportation ($n = 1$).

Determining the per-pupil allocation and services to be provided by districts to charter schools has been highly contentious and in multiple districts, litigious. In contrast to how LSSs typically manage budgets, defining *commensurate funding* requires that districts quantify the value of services provided on an individual student basis. Furthermore, determining how much charter schools will receive in cash versus services entails defining the degree of autonomy that charter schools will be granted. Whereas charter schools seek a high level of autonomy in order to implement their vision and mission, in practice, the experience to date in the three districts with charter schools is that their autonomy is relatively restricted. Echoing the sentiments of nearly all of the charter founders interviewed, one founder recalled, “We struggled negotiating the contracts. We had to argue and push for every little piece of autonomy. We did not prevail on most battles.”

Besides funding, the application for waivers from district rules and regulations has been problematic. Multiple schools have appealed to the State Board of Education regarding both the process of seeking waivers and regarding the substance of the policies for which they have sought waivers.

Charter Application Appeals to the State Board of Education

The process of reviewing and granting charters and subsequently negotiating binding charter school contracts has generated both appeals to the Maryland State Board of Education and formal litigation. The majority of the appeals and legal complaints have stemmed from ambiguity in the state charter school statute and related questions pertaining to how authorizers interpret the statute. Based on a review of the appeals filed to date, we developed a summary organized according to the subject of the appeals. See Appendix C for a more detailed description of the individual cases.

Deadlines and Timelines

The state charter law dictates that LSSs must render a decision on a charter application within 120 days of receipt. Multiple charter applicants filed appeals to the State Board of Education because LSSs did not abide by the 120-day timeline. In each case, the State Board reiterated that statutory requirement and ruled that LSSs cannot delay or defer decisions regarding applications past the 120-day deadline or create an arbitrary annual application deadline.

Limits on the Establishment of Charter Schools

The state charter statute does not include a cap on the number of charter schools. An LSS attempted to limit the number of applications it would approve each year and the State Board ruled that such limits are not legal.

Funding

Charter applicants in multiple districts have filed appeals to the State Board regarding the definition of the term “commensurate funding.” In an attempt to resolve the issue, the State Board proposed a formula that divided a district’s total budget by total enrollment and included adjustments for reasonable central office functions. However, additional appeals have asked the State Board to address the ambiguity associated with the cost and nature of central office functions to determine whether commensurate is synonymous with equal. The State Board ruled that charter schools should have access to restricted funds based on number of students eligible for specialized programs (i.e., Title I, special education, and free/reduced priced meals) but that commensurate does not necessarily mean equal dollars. Rather, commensurate may represent a combination of dollars and services provided by the district. Numerous legal challenges regarding the definition of commensurate are currently pending.

On September 1, 2006, the Court of Special Appeals issued a decision pertaining to funding that upheld the State Board of Education’s ruling regarding the definition of a commensurate funding formula. While the full implications of the ruling had not been fully considered at the time this evaluation was completed, the ruling represents a significant change in the amount of funding that should be provided directly to charter schools.

Timeline for Finalizing Charter Agreement

Similar to the appeals related to deadlines and timelines, multiple charter school applicants appealed to the state regarding long delays negotiating charter agreements. The State Board ruled that LSSs must process the agreements in a timely manner (e.g., 30 days after date of approval).

Application Review Process

Multiple charter schools in multiple districts have filed appeals regarding the process LSSs implemented to review charter applications. The substance of the appeals pertained to the (a) amount of technical assistance provided to applicants, (b) ability of LSSs to reject applications on merit, and (c) development of review procedures. The State Board ruled that LSSs are not required to provide technical assistance to applicants and LSSs are permitted to reject an application if the review process leads to the conclusion that the application does not have merit. But, lack of an established review process is not an acceptable reason to reject an application.

Evaluation of Application

Two charter applicants filed appeals to the State Board regarding how their LSS evaluated their application. The State Board determined that LSSs must provide criteria for how they will evaluate applications and a rationale for their approval or denial of a charter.

Local Board's Explanation

Related to the appeals pertaining to the application evaluation process, appeals regarding how LSSs explain their charter school applications decisions resulted in the State Board reiterating that LSSs must provide a rationale for their decisions. Furthermore, the rationale may be presented either orally or in writing but that the decision and rationale should be communicated in the same manner (i.e., both orally or both in writing).

Hearing on a Board Decision

After being denied a charter by an LSS, the applicant filed an appeal to the State Board alleging that the absence of a hearing regarding the applicant amounted to a denial of due process. The State Board determined that LSSs are not legally required to hold hearings related to charter applications.

Nonprofit Status

After being denied a charter by an LSS in part due to the fact that the applicant had not demonstrated that it was a nonprofit organization, the applicant filed an appeal to the State Board. The State Board ruled that the standard for demonstrating nonprofit status is an appropriate federal tax identification number.

Comparing a Grant Approval to a Charter Approval

After being denied a charter by an LSS, the applicant filed an appeal to the State Board arguing that receipt of a charter planning and design grant from MSDE should be sufficient to receive approval of a charter application from the LSS. The State Board ruled that receiving a grant from MSDE is not relevant to the LSS charter application process.

Waivers

The state charter law permits charter applicants to apply for waivers of state and district policies. However, the law is relatively vague about the process of applying for waivers. Two appeals to the State Board sought clarity related to waivers. The appeals were both procedural in nature and pertained to when an applicant could seek a waiver. Two charter schools appealed to the State Board to receive waivers regarding employment policy and the State Board ruled that such waivers should not be sought through the appeal process but rather, as part of the charter application to the district.

Authorizer Oversight and Technical Assistance

Representatives from LSS reported varying levels of knowledge about the authorization process depending upon whether their districts had received any formal applications. In the districts that have not received any inquiries or official applications, LSS representatives are dedicating few if any hours to charter school related issues. However, in the districts that have either operating schools in their system or have granted a charter, they are dedicating 100% of their time, or what they characterized as a “disproportionate amount of their time” relative to their other responsibilities. For instance, 79% of the LSS representatives interviewed ($N = 23$) provide support to charter school applicants through telephone communication and via email, 54% hold in-person meetings with applicants or operators, and 38% reported that they have regular informal communication with potential charter school applicants. Six LSS representatives reported that they have held meetings with charter school personnel prior to the school opening, and five reported that they provide informal support to charter school applicants.

A central tenet of the charter school concept is accountability for outcomes and this is a key responsibility of charter school authorizers. When asked whether they have developed systems to hold the charter schools in their districts accountable for fulfilling their unique goals and objectives, nine respondents said that they have not yet developed a system, seven plan to review goals and objectives on a quarterly basis, three plan to review them twice annually, four plan to review them on an annual basis, and two plan to follow the three to five year charter school renewal cycle. Eight districts have developed charter renewal policies and procedures and 15 have not. Statewide, the key means of holding charter schools accountable is demonstrating Adequate Yearly Progress as defined by MSDE (i.e., attendance, scores on the Maryland School Assessment, and participation rates).

Navigating the balance of oversight and technical assistance is a challenge for LSSs and multiple informants spoke about the challenges associated with attempting to achieve equilibrium. In the words of a charter founder, “Is it a parenting relationship or a renter relationship? What is the relationship?” An LSS representative with experience granting charters described the relationship as analogous to raising a teenager who wants independence but wants to be able to return home for guidance when needed. A stakeholder noted, “From the authorizer perspective, their apprehension about charter schools is to be expected; they are ultimately responsible.” In large part due simply to the newness of the charter sector in Maryland, nearly all key stakeholders expressed frustration and impatience with the pace of policy development at the state and district level. These sentiments echo the findings of the MABE Commission on Charter School Authorization that documented

apprehension associated with developing sound practice in the evolving charter school context (Maryland Association of Boards of Education, 2005).

Yet, we also documented somewhat contradictory opinions regarding the role of MSDE and the State Board of Education regarding policy development. For instance, while districts want guidance regarding charter school policies, they also expressed concern about state-level policymakers issuing decisions that LSSs perceive should be within their sole authority (e.g., funding formulas). The apparent contradictory messages create a challenging climate for state policy leaders attempting to provide guidance without infringing on LSSs' authority.

Summary of Key Findings

- Application packets articulate the LSS application process and outline specific information that applications must include. All 13 application packets examined expand upon the LSS charter school policies by increasing the application requirements beyond those included in the state law and MSDE model policy.
- 11 of 13 LSS application packets provide detailed guidance and assistance to potential applicants.
- Districts are requiring applicants to submit an intention form or letter of intent ($n = 11$), a concept proposal or prospectus ($n = 10$), and an applicant interview ($n = 8$).
- All LSS representatives with experience granting charters and negotiating contracts reported struggling to balance the need for thoroughness with what charter founders characterized as an unnecessarily cumbersome processes.
- Explicit evaluation criteria introduce a degree of transparency and fairness to the application process.
- A website with links to key guidance documents and relevant forms provides potential applicants with easy and equal access to information.
- The process of negotiating charter contracts has been time consuming and prolonged in four of the six LSSs that have granted a charter.
- Determining the per-pupil allocation and services to be provided by districts to charter schools are key sources of conflict between authorizers and charter boards.
- The process of reviewing and granting charters and negotiating binding charter school contracts has generated both appeals to the Maryland State Board of Education and formal litigation.
- The State Board of Education confirmed that districts must render authorization decisions in a timely manner and that authorization decisions cannot be arbitrary but rather, must be based on explicit criteria known to applicants and related to the application's substance as opposed to external factors such as district-imposed caps. Receipt of a federal charter grant is not considered relevant when districts review applications. Applicants are not guaranteed a hearing regarding the decision on their application but they are entitled to an explanation if their charter is rejected. District funding formulas must consider multiple factors to ensure that charter school students receive commensurate funds or services.
- For the districts that have not received any inquiries or official applications, LSS representatives are dedicating few if any hours to charter school related issues, but the districts that have either operating schools in their system or have granted a charter are dedicating significant resources to charter school issues relative to their other responsibilities.

- The key means of holding charter schools accountable is demonstrating Adequate Yearly Progress as defined by MSDE.

3. Number and Status of Charter School Applications Statewide

To date, 41 original charter school applications have been submitted to LSSs across the state; 2 prior to the passage of the charter school law, and 39 after. The designation of “original” is relative to an application that is the resubmission of a previously denied or withdrawn application. See Table 5. Based on the number of proposals submitted to MSDE for federal charter pre-planning grants, an additional 13 charter school applications are in the early stages of development.

Table 5: Number of Charter Applications Submitted to Local School Systems⁶

<i>Local School System</i>	<i>2001-2002</i>	<i>2002-2003</i>	<i>2003-2004</i>	<i>2004-2005</i>	<i>2005-2006</i>	<i>County Totals</i>
Anne Arundel County Public Schools	0	0	0	2	0	2
Baltimore City Public Schools	0	0	1	17	6 (1*)(2**)	24
Baltimore County Public Schools	0	0	1	0	0	1
Cecil County Public Schools	0	0	(1**)	0	0	0
Dorchester County Public Schools	0	0	1	0	0	1
Frederick County Public Schools	1***	0	0	0	0	1
Harford County Public Schools	0	0	0	3	(2*)	3
Howard County Public Schools	0	0	1	(1*)	(1*)	1
Montgomery County Public Schools	1***	0	0	0	0	1
Prince George’s County Public Schools	0	0	1	2(1*)	3(1*)	6
St. Mary’s County Public Schools	0	0	0	1	0	1
Somerset County Public Schools	0	0	0	(1**)	0	0
Wicomico County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	(1 **)	0
Statewide Total Applications Reviewed	2	0	5(1**)	25 (2*)(1**)	9(5*)(3**)	41

Source: Interviews with local school system representatives and MSDE personnel, 2006

*Denotes application that represents the resubmission of a previously denied or withdrawn application

**Denotes an application that was submitted and withdrawn before review

*** These applications predate the Maryland public charter school law

Of the 41 distinct applications submitted, 25 were approved and 16 were ultimately denied; 6 of those denied led to appeals submitted to the State Board of Education.⁷ Table 6 presents a summary of the decisions according to academic years. These figures, and the resulting decisions, include applications that were submitted multiple times. Appendix D contains a more detailed description of the applications submitted to date according to year, status, and LSS.

⁶ For purposes of tracking applications, we defined a “complete” application as a document that was submitted and reviewed by the LSS and that led to an official decision of approval or denial.

⁷ These figures are not mutually exclusive. For instance, applications that were denied one year were resubmitted and then either approved, denied, withdrawn, or asked to resubmit the following year.

Table 6: Statewide Charter Application Approvals, Denials, Resubmits, and Appeals Since 2003⁸

	2001-2002				2002-2003				2003-2004				2004-2005				2005-2006			
	Approved	Denied	Resubmitted	Appealed	Approved	Denied	Resubmitted	Appealed	Approved	Denied	Resubmitted	Appealed	Approved	Denied	Resubmitted	Appealed	Approved	Denied	Resubmitted	Appealed
State Total	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	2	17	9	3	1	7	7	1	3

Source: Interviews with local school system representatives and MSDE personnel, 2006.

As noted previously, the first charter school opened in Frederick County in fall of 2002. After passage of the state charter school law in 2003, an additional 14 charter schools began operating in fall of 2005; 7 conversion schools and 7 new start-up schools. See Appendix E for a listing of the approved charter schools.

The seven conversion schools are all located in Baltimore City. These schools previously operated under the auspices of the New Schools Initiative that, dating back to as early as 1996, granted the schools autonomy from select district rules and regulations and fostered partnerships with external entities (e.g., Baltimore Curriculum Project, Coppin State College, and KIPP Schools). When asked why they converted to charter school status, representatives of the conversion schools universally stated that charter status gave them (a) a formal and potentially more stable future due to the existence of a state law as opposed to their existence depending on a district initiative that could be eliminated and (b) access to additional per-pupil as well as federal grant funds. To date, no traditional public schools have opted to convert to charter school status.

Summary of Key Findings

- A total of 41 original applications have been submitted resulting in 25 approved charter schools and 22 denials.
- During the 2005–2006 academic year, there were 15 operating charter schools in Maryland.
- In fall of 2006, an additional 8 schools were scheduled to open.
- Besides the schools that previously operated as New Schools Initiative schools in Baltimore City, no traditional public schools have sought to convert to charter school status.

4. Parental Choice and Satisfaction With Charter Schools

A key defining purpose of the Maryland charter school law is to increase parents' educational choices in the public sector. We sought to document why parents choose to enroll their children in charter schools and to assess their level of satisfaction according to multiple criteria. A summary of our survey findings and parent focus groups are presented below. Please see Appendix F for a copy of the survey and Appendix G for a more detailed presentation of the survey data.

⁸ The total number of applications approved or denied includes applications that were resubmitted after being denied or withdrawn.

More than half of the parents that completed the survey (53%) reported that the 2005–2006 school year was the first year their child attended a charter school. This finding is due in part to the practical reality that 7 of the 15 operating charter schools are conversion schools, which are newly operating as charter schools but are not new schools. According to charter school operators, conversion schools for the most part maintained the same student population after converting to charter status. Sixty-one percent of the respondents reported that prior to enrolling in the charter school, their child attended a traditional public school. In order of frequency, the remaining parents reported that previously their child was enrolled in a private school (11%), were not school age (10%), was enrolled in a parochial or church-related school (5%), was home schooled (3%), or attended an “other” type of school (11%).⁹ The majority of the “other” responses reported that their child had been in preschool (45%), Head Start (26%), or daycare (12%).

When asked where their child would attend if not enrolled in a charter school, the majority (63%) reported that their child would attend a traditional public school. In order of frequency, the remaining respondents indicated that their child would attend a private school (18%) or a parochial or church-related school (7%), be home schooled (4%), attend a different charter school (4%), or attend an “other” type of school (4%).

In theory, one of the unique features of a charter school is a distinct mission (e.g., arts based, math and science focused, or Montessori method). When asked if they are aware of their school’s mission, 92% of the parents reported yes. When asked whether they perceive that their school is following its mission, 45% reported that their school is following its mission “very well,” 39% reported “well,” 12% reported “fair,” and 4% reported “not very well.”

The top four reasons identified by more than two-thirds of parents as either important or very important factors that influenced their decision to enroll their child in the charter school were: good teachers and high quality of instruction (94.9%), safety (93.9%), the emphasis and educational philosophy of the school (88.1%), academic reputation/high standards (87.5%), my interest in being involved in an education reform effort (75.9%), and promises made by charter school spokesperson (70.1%).

When asked whether they plan to enroll their child in the charter school next year (i.e., 2006–2007), the majority of the parent respondents (93%) indicated that they do. In order of frequency, the most prevalent reasons parents reported for planning to re-enroll their children in charter schools were as follows: my child is motivated to learn (88%), the quality of instruction is high (82%), my child’s achievement level is improving (80%), the school is supporting innovative practices (71%), my child receives sufficient individual attention (68%), and there is good communication between the school and my household (67%). Interviews with parents confirmed the survey findings. In particular, in interviews parents cited small class sizes, parental involvement, particular instructional approaches, and academic rigor as key factors that led them to charter schools and the reason they remain at the school.

When asked to report their level of agreement with statements about the school designed to discern their level of satisfaction, 93.4% of parents reported that they agree that their child is safe at school, 93% reported that the charter school sets high standards for academic performance, 92.3% of the parents reported that they are overall satisfied with their child’s school, 92.3% reported that if their

⁹ Total does not add up to 100% due to rounding.

child is having problems at school they know who they can talk to, 83% reported that parents have opportunity to provide input into the school's programmatic decisions, 79.7% reported that they are satisfied with the instruction offered, and 77.2% reported that they are satisfied with the curriculum. The areas where parents report the greatest levels of satisfaction align with the factors that led them to select the charter school and to re-enroll.

Areas that were identified by other stakeholders as key challenges (i.e., resources and facilities) did not emerge as problematic to parents according to their survey responses. For instance, only 28% of the parents disagreed with the statement that their charter school has good physical facilities, and only 38% disagreed with the statement that their school has sufficient resources.

However, interviews with parents revealed concerns about school resources. For instance, capturing the sentiments of the parents who participated in the focus groups, one parent lamented: "There are so many facilities issues. They say that we get commensurate funding but it is the biggest obstacle. Parents are so drained trying to go to the Board of Education. They can't even focus on the academic excellence of the school. It defeats the purpose of the charter." While parents expressed frustration with the unique challenges associated with enrolling their child in a charter school, the parents identified parental involvement and a sense of community as key characteristics that attracted them to charter schools.

Summary of Key Findings

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- Most charter school students were previously enrolled in public schools and would return to public schools if they did not attend a charter school.
 - Parents are aware of charter schools' missions and generally report that their school is fulfilling its mission.
 - School safety, high quality teachers and instructional methods, academic reputation, and educational philosophy are the primary reasons parents are enrolling their children in charter schools.
 - Parents are generally satisfied with charter schools and intend to continue to enroll their child in a charter school.
 - To varying degrees, parents are concerned about the challenges associated with securing adequate school facilities.

5. Charter School Demographic Data¹⁰

Charter schools are public schools and as such, are required to offer open enrollment. In Baltimore City, the conversion schools have been allowed to continue to prioritize students from specific zones, but operators of the conversion schools reported they must reserve a percentage of their enrollment for citywide applicants' enrollment.

Charter school student enrollment varies across the 15 charter schools according to grades served, total enrollment, race/ethnicity, gender, and special programs. Given that our objective was to

¹⁰ To publicly report enrollment data, sub-groups of students must enroll at least 5 students. In a number of instances, enrollment of students in specific groups falls under the minimum reporting number established by the state. While these schools do enroll students who qualify for special services, we could not include these schools in our analyses of these specific sub-groups. See asterisks in data tables.

assess the current status of the charter program statewide as opposed to evaluating any specific charter school, our analyses of charter school demographics were limited to simply describing who, according to age, ethnicity, gender, and enrollment in specialized program categories, has elected to enroll in the charter schools.

We provide data regarding the relevant LSS enrollment for the purpose of context. However, given the size of most Maryland jurisdictions and the practical reality that individual charter schools generally draw from a distinct neighborhood or region as opposed to the entire jurisdiction, with the exception of attendance rates, gender, and enrollment in special education which typically do not fluctuate by neighborhood, it is inappropriate to evaluate charter school enrollment data relative to the entire district. Conducting a more nuanced analysis of enrollment in neighborhood schools or regions was beyond the focus or scope of this evaluation. See Tables 7, 8, and 9 for a summary of enrollment data. See Appendix H for more details regarding statewide charter school demographics.

Total Enrollment

In fall 2005, the 15 operating charter schools enrolled a total of 3,365 students, with enrollment at individual schools ranging from a low of 62 to a high of 495, averaging 244. Charter school enrollment decreased slightly during the course of the school year, totaling 3,313 in June 2006 (Maryland Department of Education, 2006a).

With the exception of the conversion schools, the new charter schools were all chartered with the explicit plan to grow one grade per year until they expand to offer the grades anticipated (i.e., a K–2 that will expand one grade per year until it is a K–5). Therefore, assuming the charter schools are successful in recruiting students, the total enrollment of the new charter schools will presumably grow for the near future. Due to the previously mentioned challenges associated with limited resources and in particular, access to facilities, the future of most of the charter schools depends in part on their ability to increase their total enrollment, and consequently their per-pupil allocation, in order to better manage their fixed operating expenses.

Attendance

Maryland aims to attain 94% average daily attendance by 2012. While all of the charter schools are within 5% of the traditional public schools' average attendance rates, Inner Harbor East, Monocacy Valley Montessori, Patterson Park, and Southwest Baltimore Charter Academy reported lower attendance rates than their LSS and did not attain 94% average daily attendance during the 2005–2006 academic year (Maryland State Department of Education, 2006a). Eleven charter schools reported higher levels of daily attendance.

Ethnicity

During the 2005–2006 school year, charter schools enrolled a diverse array of students according to race and ethnicity. Reflecting state and relevant LSS enrollment trends, charter schools enrolled primarily African American and Caucasian students. The proportion of African American students ranged from a low of 5% to a high of 100% with an average of 73.42%. The proportion of Caucasian students ranged from a low of 0% to a high of 89.9% with an average of 20.55%. Enrollment of Native American students ranged from 0% to 4.9% with an average 0.57%. Enrollment of Asian students ranged from 0.0% to 4.9% with an average of .92%. See Table 7.

Gender

Overall, the charter schools enrolled approximately the same proportion of males as females. The one notable exception to this finding is the Chesapeake Science Point Charter School in Anne Arundel County, where enrollment was 63.9% male and 36.1% female (Maryland State Department of Education, 2006a).

Free or Reduced Priced Meals

For the elementary charter schools, the percentage of students who qualified for free or reduced priced meals ranged from a low of 4.7% to a high of 94.6%, with an average rate of 67.2%. For the middle schools, the percentage of students who qualified for free or reduced priced meals ranged from 14.4% to 93.5%, with an average rate of 70% (Maryland State Department of Education, 2006a).

Special Education

The publicly reported enrollment of students with disabilities in charter schools serving elementary school grades ranged from a low of 5.3% to a high of 14.4%, with an average of 9.9%. The enrollment of students with disabilities in charter schools serving middle school grades ranged from 0% to 25%, with an average of 13.3% (Maryland State Department of Education, 2006a).

Unlike ethnicity or poverty, special education enrollment generally does not fluctuate significantly by school or location within an LSS. Therefore, it is appropriate to compare charter school special education enrollment figures to LSS averages. In all three jurisdictions, the percentage of elementary school children who enrolled in charter schools and qualified for special education was below LSS averages. The difference was particularly pronounced in Baltimore where 14.5% of the elementary school population but only 9.9% of the charter school population received special education services.

Overall, charter middle schools in both Anne Arundel and Baltimore City enrolled fewer students with disabilities than traditional public schools. However, a single charter school in Baltimore—Collington Square—enrolled more middle school students with disabilities (18.8% versus 17.9%). In Frederick County, the Monocacy Valley Montessori School enrolled a greater percentage of middle school students with disabilities than the traditional public middle schools in the district (25% versus 11.7%).

English Language Learners

The enrollment of English language learners in charter schools serving elementary school grades ranges from a low of 0% to a high of 13.9%, with an average of 2.9%. The enrollment of English language learners in charter schools serving middle school grades was 0% (Maryland State Department of Education, 2006a).

Table 7: District and Charter School Attendance and Enrollment According to Race/Ethnicity and Gender¹¹

<i>School Name</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Attendance¹²</i>	<i>%Native American</i>	<i>%Asian</i>	<i>%African American</i>	<i>%White</i>	<i>%His- panic</i>	<i>%Male</i>	<i>%Female</i>
<i>Anne Arundel County Public Schools</i>	73,565	95.70% (Elem.) 94.40% (Middle)	0.41%	3.44%	21.92%	69.49%	4.73%	51.28%	48.72%
KIPP Harbor Academy	62	94.90% (Elem.)	0.00%	1.61%	83.87%	1.61%	12.90%	43.55%	56.45%
Chesapeake Science Point	119	98.10% (Middle)	0.84%	3.36%	29.41%	63.87%	2.52%	63.87%	36.13%
<i>Baltimore City Public Schools</i>	85,468	94.10% (Elem.) 88.20% (Middle)	0.28%	0.64%	88.85%	8.33%	1.90%	50.07%	49.93%
City Neighborhood Charter School	120	96.90% (Elem.)	0.00%	0.00%	55.00%	45.00%	0.00%	51.67%	48.33%
City Springs School	383	96.30% (Elem./Middle)	0.52%	0.00%	98.43%	0.78%	0.26%	47.78%	52.22%
Collington Square School	495	96.10% (Elem./Middle)	0.20%	0.00%	99.60%	0.20%	0.00%	48.28%	51.72%
The Crossroads School	148	95.40% (Elem./Middle)	0.68%	0.00%	83.11%	4.73%	11.49%	43.92%	56.08%
Empowerment Academy	150	95.20% (Elem.)	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	44.67%	55.33%
Hampstead Hill Academy	467	95.30% (Elem./Middle)	4.93%	0.64%	23.98%	57.17%	13.28%	53.96%	46.04%
Inner Harbor East Academy	184	93.20% (Elem.)	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	48.91%	51.09%
KIPP Ujima Village Academy	305	96.30% (Elem./Middle)	0.33%	0.00%	99.34%	0.33%	0.00%	45.90%	54.10%
Midtown Academy	184	95.40% (Elem./Middle)	0.00%	4.89%	69.02%	24.46%	1.63%	48.91%	51.09%
Northwood Community Academy	113	94.60% (Elem.)	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	49.56%	50.44%
Patterson Park Public Charter School	312	93.50% (Elem.)	0.64%	0.64%	68.59%	7.69%	22.44%	51.28%	48.72%
Southwest Baltimore Charter School	64	90.60% (Elem.)	0.00%	0.00%	85.94%	12.50%	1.56%	43.75%	56.25%
<i>Frederick County Public Schools</i>	39,672	95.50% (Elem.) 94.80% (Middle)	0.32%	3.79%	10.80%	79.12%	5.97%	51.24%	48.76%
Monocacy Valley Montessori School	257	93.00% (Elem./Middle)	0.39%	2.72%	5.06%	89.88%	1.95%	48.25%	51.75%

Source: <http://www.mdreportcard.org>

¹¹Data are drawn from the 2006 Maryland State Report Card: <http://mdreportcard.org/>. Total enrollment, race/ethnicity, and gender data reflect the official count of students enrolled in the school as of September 30, 2005, the most recent date for which data are available.

¹²MSDE reports average attendance rate by school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school). Schools that are purely elementary schools (i.e., K–5) are classified as elementary schools as are those that are purely middle schools (i.e., 6–8). Schools that serve K–6 or K–8 are classified as Elem./Middle schools.

Table 8: Elementary School Enrollment According to Special Services¹³

<i>School Name (Grades served)</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%Free/Reduced Priced Meals</i>	<i>% Special Education</i>	<i>% English Language Learners</i>
<i>Anne Arundel County Public Schools</i>	<i>34,511</i>	<i>24.5%</i>	<i>11.0%</i>	<i>2.6%</i>
KIPP Harbor Academy (5)	54	75.9%	9.3%	13.0%
<i>Baltimore City Public Schools</i>	<i>42,505</i>	<i>82.3%</i>	<i>14.5%</i>	<i>2.2%</i>
City Neighborhood Charter School (K–5)	120	34.2%	11.8%	0.0%
City Springs School (Pre-K–5)	304	94.1%	10.2%	0.0%
Collington Square School (Pre-K–5)	351	94.6%	8.5%	0.0%
Empowerment Academy (Pre-K–4)	149	77.2%	*	0.0%
Hampstead Hill Academy (Pre-K–5)	380	77.9%	5.3%	8.7%
Inner Harbor East Academy (K–3)	174	90.2%	8.6%	0.0%
KIPP Ujima Village Academy (5)	90	87.8%	14.4%	0.0%
Midtown Academy (K–5)	121	33.1%	9.9%	0.0%
Northwood Community Academy (K–2)	101	55.4%	9.9%	0.0%
Patterson Park Public Charter School (K–4)	295	73.6%	10.2%	13.9%
Southwest Baltimore Charter School (K–1)	65	75.4%	*	0.0%
<i>Frederick County Public Schools</i>	<i>18,713</i>	<i>18.1%</i>	<i>11.6%</i>	<i>5.4%</i>
Monocacy Valley Montessori School (Pre-K–5)	213	4.7%	10.3%	*

Source: <http://www.mdreportcard.org>

* Indicates school population of this sub-group is too small to publish enrollment data.

Table 9: Middle School Enrollment According to Special Services

<i>School Name (Grades Served)</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%Free/Reduced Priced Meals</i>	<i>%Special Education</i>	<i>%English Language Learners</i>
<i>Anne Arundel County Public Schools</i>	<i>17,699</i>	<i>21.9%</i>	<i>12.7%</i>	<i>1.2%</i>
Chesapeake Science Point (6–7)	97	14.4%	9.3%	0.0%
<i>Baltimore City Public Schools</i>	<i>21,860</i>	<i>78.1%</i>	<i>17.9%</i>	<i>0.8%</i>
City Springs School (6–8)	89	93.3%	*	0.0%
Collington Square School (6–8)	154	93.5%	18.8%	0.0%
The Crossroads School (6–8)	147	85%	10.9%	*
Hampstead Hill Academy (6–7)	100	80%	13%	0.0%
KIPP Ujima Village Academy (6–8)	208	88%	2.9%	0.0%
Midtown Academy (6–8)	61	36.1%	0.0%	0.0%
<i>Frederick County Public Schools</i>	<i>9,505</i>	<i>15.1%</i>	<i>11.7%</i>	<i>2.5%</i>
Monocacy Valley Montessori School (6–8)	40	*	25%	0.0%

Source: <http://www.mdreportcard.org>

*Indicates school population of this sub-group is too small to publish enrollment data.

¹³ The tables present official student data counts as of June 16, 2006. In most instances, the total enrollment count for June is different from the count in September.

Summary of Key Findings

- In fall 2005, the 15 operating charter schools enrolled a total of 3,365 students, but that enrollment decreased slightly during the course of the school year.
- Four charter schools reported average daily attendance rates below the state goal of 94% and 11 reported rates above 94%.
- Charter schools are enrolling a diverse student population according to race, gender, and eligibility for free or reduced priced meals, special education, and English language learner services.
- With the exception of two charter schools serving middle school students, the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in charter schools is below the LSS average in all three LSSs with charter schools.

6. Number and Status of Federal Charter School Grants

In spring 2004, the MSDE successfully applied for a \$14.3 million grant from the Public Charter School Program within the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Education and Improvement. According to the grant application materials and interviews with MSDE officials, the primary purpose of the grant is to increase and expand the number of high quality charter schools by providing potential applicants and operators with financial assistance for planning, program design, and implementation (Maryland State Department of Education, 2005). The state is required to disperse 95% of the grant to charter schools and it can retain 5% for related administrative costs within the MSDE.

Within the parameters articulated in the federal grant guidelines, MSDE created a statewide grant program wherein interested groups that qualify to apply for a charter can apply for one of three types of grants: preplanning, planning and program design, and program implementation. Prior to each application cycle, MSDE conducts a mandatory pre-proposal conference for all organizations interested in submitting an application. The purpose of the conference is to educate applicants about the application and review process. In line with the requirements of the federal grant, MSDE developed a grant review process whereby the state invites applications and all applications are reviewed by panels of at least three individuals knowledgeable about charter schools. The review teams are generally composed of internal MSDE personnel and external professionals identified by MSDE. MSDE runs charter school grant competitions on a quarterly basis.

The funding allocation is graduated in accordance with expectations for how the money will be used. Preplanning grants of up to \$10,000 are intended to assist potential applicants in writing their charter application. Planning and design grants of up to \$100,000 are meant to provide LSS-approved applicants with financial assistance to further develop and refine their educational plan prior to operating their charter school. Implementation grants of up to \$300,000 are intended to assist new or conversion charter schools in implementing their vision.

Since the first grant cycle in spring of 2004, MSDE has awarded a total of 80 grants out of 122 applications (66% approval rate), 39 for preplanning, 26 for planning and design, and 16 for implementation, representing \$5.4 million overall. Grant applications have been submitted from

interested charter developers in a total of 14 jurisdictions (Maryland State Department of Education, 2006b).

Ideally, each preplanning grant recipient will be able to submit a high quality charter application that eventually leads to the creation of a charter school. Yet, part of the purpose of the preplanning grant is to permit potential founders to explore their vision for a school, and MSDE officials noted that it is not unexpected that some of these groups decide not to submit an application. Nevertheless, as responsible stewards of the federal grant dollars, the state has a vested interest in working to ensure that the majority of the preplanning grant awardees progress to the formal charter application phase.

Multiple sources characterized the initial grant review panels as relatively generous with the preplanning grants. Informants questioned how easy it was to obtain a preplanning grant and the reality that a number of the grantees spent their grant dollars but did not submit formal charter applications. In part due to concern about the number of preplanning grants that did not culminate in actual charter applications, MSDE increased the rigor of the preplanning grant review process in late 2005. MSDE also ended the policy of allocating 15% up-front seed money to grant recipients and transitioned to a system of 100% invoice-driven disbursement wherein grant recipients can only access their grant award by submitting invoices for specific services. If grant awardees decide not to pursue a charter, the state expects the grantee to return unused funds.

Summary of Key Findings

- MSDE successfully applied for a \$14.3 million dollar grant from the federal Public Charter School Program.
- MSDE awards preplanning, planning and development, and implementation grants to charter school applicants.
- Since spring of 2004, MSDE has awarded 80 grants totaling \$5.4 million.

7. Barriers and Issues Influencing Maryland Charter Sector

Our evaluation revealed multiple barriers and issues perceived to influence the growth of charter schools in Maryland. While there was near consensus on some barriers (i.e., facilities and per-pupil funding), the identification of other barriers was largely dependent upon individual perspectives (i.e., that of an LSS representative, charter founder, advocate, or other stakeholder). Our examination of barriers was conducted in two phases: (1) a statewide count of factors identified by LSS representatives that foster or hinder creation of charter schools and (2) an analysis of issues emerging in districts with experience reviewing, granting, and operating charter schools.

Structured interviews with 23 LSS representatives provided statewide data regarding issues perceived to foster and conversely hinder creation of charter schools. These data provide a broad perspective on charter school issues. Additional interviews with LSS representatives, charter founders and principals, parents, and other stakeholders with experience with charter schools along with reviews of relevant primary and secondary documents (i.e., LSS applications, MABE report, State Board of Education decisions) provided a more in-depth understanding of the key issues emerging in the districts with the most concentrated experience with charter schools. Our findings

are presented according to statewide perceptions and the perceptions of key stakeholders with tangible experience with charter schools in Maryland.

Statewide Barriers and Issues

In interviews with LSS officials, we asked representatives to identify the issues they perceive are either fostering or hindering the application and approval process and consequently, the creation of charter schools. The general attitude of district-level administrators toward charter school applicants was positive. Yet, many of the LSS officials have very limited experience with the charter application process and their responses varied notably from district to district. In many instances, issues that one LSS representative viewed as fostering charter school creation, another viewed as a barrier (e.g., charter school law, funding and qualifications of applicants). With the exception of identifying issues related to facilities, there was not a consensus regarding factors that are fostering or hindering creation of charter schools statewide.

In order of frequency, the issues LSS officials perceive are *fostering* the creation of charter schools in Maryland are (a) the state charter school law, (b) application procedures, (c) flexibility, (d) planning-grant opportunities from the state, (e) qualifications of applicants, (f) special education concerns, (g) funding, (h) policy and procedural ambiguity, (i) the duration of the application process, (j) negative media coverage of traditional public schools compared to charter schools, (k) advocates at state level, and (l) collective bargaining agreements.

Conversely, the factors identified by LSS representatives as *hindering* the creation of charter schools, in order of frequency, are (a) access to facilities, (b) funding, (c) qualifications of applicants, (d) policies and procedural ambiguity, (e) the duration of the application process, (f) special education concerns, (g) the state charter school law, (h) the application procedures, and (i) flexibility. This information is presented in greater detail in Table 10.

Table 10: Issues Identified by Local School System Representatives as Fostering or Hindering Creation of Charter Schools

Fostering Creation Of Charter Schools	Count (N=23)	Hindering Creation Of Charter Schools	Count (N=23)
Passage of state charter school law	7 (30%)	Access to facilities	16 (70%)
Application procedures	6 (26%)	Funding	8 (35%)
Flexibility	5 (22%)	Qualifications of applicants	6 (25%)
Planning grant opportunities from state	5 (22%)	Policies and procedural ambiguity	5 (22%)
Qualifications of applicants	3 (13%)	Duration of the application process	4 (17%)
Special education concerns	3 (13%)	Special education concerns	3 (13%)
Funding	3 (13%)	State charter school law	2 (8%)
Policies and procedural ambiguity	3 (13%)	The application procedures	1 (4%)
Duration of the application process	1 (4%)	Flexibility	1 (4%)
Media coverage of traditional public schools versus charter schools	1 (4%)		
Advocates at state level	1 (4%)		
Collective bargaining agreements	1 (4%)		

Source: Interviews with local school system representatives, 2006.

When asked what changes they would make to improve the Maryland Charter School Program, LSS officials suggested the following: (a) revise the state charter school law ($n = 8$), (b) develop waiver procedures ($n = 4$), (c) develop appeal procedures ($n = 4$), (d) modify the application process ($n = 2$), (e) streamline application procedures ($n = 2$), and (f) increase funding ($n = 1$).

Barriers and Issues Emerging From Experience

LSS officials in districts that have granted charters (i.e., Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Baltimore City Public Schools, Frederick County Public Schools, Harford County Public Schools, Prince George's County Public Schools, and St. Mary's County Public Schools), charter school founders/operators, parents, and other key stakeholders knowledgeable about charter schools in Maryland expressed diverse perspectives, but there was notable agreement about the key issues perceived to influence the creation of charter schools. Based on our interviews and our review of related documents we categorized these barriers and issues as either primary or secondary. These barriers reflect our synthesis of data from multiple sources and incorporate our identification of recurring themes. For instance, while not all stakeholders explicitly identified the newness of the charter sector as a barrier, we identified this barrier based on stakeholders' discussion of frustrations related to lack of policies and procedures coupled with State Board of Education appeals. The distinction of primary versus secondary reflects whether the barrier was identified by individuals in multiple districts *and* the perceived impact of the barrier. In aggregate, these issues affect the creation and characteristics of charter schools and consequently, the schools' ability to fulfill the intended purpose outlined in the state charter school law.

Primary Barriers and Issues

We identified the following five primary barriers and issues that nearly all respondents reported are influencing the application and authorization process and consequently, the growth of charter schools: (a) newness of the charter sector, (b) facilities access and financing, (c) the per-pupil allocation, (d) the single authorizer system, and (e) the charter schools' limited operational autonomy.

Newness of the Charter Sector

The most significant factor currently influencing the development of new charter schools is the practical reality that charter schools are new in Maryland and LSSs as well as charter founders are figuring it out as they go. Two common metaphors used by stakeholders in five LSSs to describe the charter sector in Maryland were: "We are building the car as it is racing around the track" and "We are building the airplane as it is taxiing down the runway." Overall, LSSs are learning on the job; in some instances they have developed charter school policies and procedures in a rushed and reactive manner as opposed to developing them through thoughtful consideration or proactive practice. Supporting stakeholders' perceptions are the multiple appeals to the State Board of Education related to interpreting specific aspects of the charter school law (e.g., application procedures, timelines, and per-pupil allocation). Both LSSs and charter founders are dedicating resources to understanding the basic provisions of the state charter statute and thereafter implementing the provisions.

MSDE has developed mechanisms to support charter authorizers and charter operators alike, but some districts and charter developers have reportedly been slow to take advantage of these opportunities. Yet, LSS representatives from six districts with experience reviewing and granting

charters report that charter applicants require a great deal of guidance and support from authorizers. Representatives from five LSSs identified the quality of charter applicants as a key barrier to creation of new schools.

One administrator described the development of the movement in this way: “The Maryland charter school support structure for districts was not in place when the charter school legislation was passed. We were not ready as a state, we were not ready as a county and there was nowhere to look to for support. We ended up making it up as we went along.” Another LSS representative said, “I would like to see us set up a type of blackboard site for authorizers so that we could have meetings and have more of an ongoing sharing of information across the state and nationally.”

Both LSS officials and charter founders expressed frustration with the authorization process. The multiple legal challenges reflect the evolving nature of charter school policies and practices statewide. In their new role as charter authorizers, LSS officials are assuming new responsibilities, in many instances without shedding previous responsibilities. An LSS representative noted that when hired, charter schools were mentioned as one small aspect of her job responsibilities but in practice, they have evolved to be her primary responsibility. LSSs are developing new policies and aligning the state charter school law with existing state and district policies as well as standard district operating procedures. An LSS representative noted that negotiating a charter contract required the involvement of nearly every division in the district central office. A key motivation apparent in conversations with the three LSS officials with operating charter schools during the 2005–2006 school year was ensuring that they do what is “right” or “legal” related to charter school policies and practices.

Fourteen charter developers expressed frustration related to LSSs’ efforts to develop thoughtful policy and in some instance, their explicit resistance to the notion of charter schools. For instance, one operator commented that during the application process, “No one really knew what to do. The guidance changed frequently.” An LSS representative characterized the first application cycle in the following manner:

“The first round, we were creating everything as you go. We were constantly seeking out applications, scoring rubrics, and interview questions. What recommendations do you make to the Board of Education? What are the criteria for a good application? What is the barometer to deny an application? Complicating matters was the fact that we were driven by a sense that the state would overturn an application [decision].”

While not universal, in all three LSSs with experience operating charter schools we documented a lack of awareness on the part of both LSS representatives and charter founders of the multiple, complex issues at the center of evolving charter authorization and contracting policies.

Our interviews also revealed a gap between what support is available to LSSs to help them develop sound authorization policies and what they are taking advantage of. For instance, in each of the six LSSs with experience, representatives requested more standardization across the state related to authorization policies and procedures yet MSDE provided a model policy and resource guide that was disseminated by the State Superintendent of Schools.

As LSSs gain more experience developing authorization procedures and managing operating charter schools, the newness of the law will most likely diminish as a factor influencing development of charter schools.

Facilities Access and Financing

The second primary issue that influences the authorization of new charter schools is limited access to adequate school facilities and facilities financing options. The challenges associated with facilities identified by LSS representatives and charter founders stem from (a) a limited supply of appropriate buildings and (b) limited access to funding or financing options.

In many districts, real estate is reportedly at a premium and charter founders in the six LSSs reported that it can be very difficult to find an affordable facility that meets county zoning requirements and health and safety requirements. While districts are permitted to provide charter schools with facilities or access to facilities funds, few are doing so. A notable exception to this rule is in Baltimore City where the LSS has provided six charter schools with facilities at a minimum cost (e.g., \$1.00 per year). Absent access to a district facility or capital budgets to build or improve school facilities, charter schools must use their operational funds to cover both operational and facilities expenses. In at least two cases, charter schools reported that they are spending upwards of \$250,000 a year to lease a facility.

Further compounding the facilities challenge is the fact that, as noted under the section regarding charter applications, three LSSs require charter applicants to identify a facility prior to submitting the charter application for review. Charter operators reported that it is virtually impossible for an applicant to acquire a facility prior to receiving a charter because landlords will not typically sign a lease with a tenant if the tenant cannot show proof of the financial resources needed to fulfill the lease agreement. Overall, the challenge associated with securing and thereafter paying for a charter school facility was noted in each of the LSSs with experience authorizing charter schools and a nearly universal theme mentioned by charter founders.

Ambiguous Commensurate Per-Pupil Allocation

Interviews with LSS representatives, key stakeholders, and charter founders as well as our analysis of State Board of Education rulings documented that the notion of “commensurate funding” is problematic for authorizers and charter school applicants alike. The State Board has offered guidance about the definition of *commensurate*, but the guidance provides LSSs discretion to determine what percentage of the per-pupil allocation will flow to charter schools relative to services. Charter founders in five LSSs reported that they had little input in determining the balance of funds relative to “in-kind” services from the LSS. They also lamented that they have no means to hold LSSs accountable for the services provided in lieu of funding. For example, a charter founder explained that if an authorizer is responsible for providing special education services but does not do so adequately, the charter school does not have the option to opt out of the district’s services and purchase special education services independently. Furthermore, a charter founder noted that there is no apparent means for charter schools to recoup dollars for services not provided. For instance, a charter operator noted that he did not receive a school nurse until late in the school year yet there was no compensation for the fact that the district did not provide this service for which the charter school ostensibly paid.

Of particular note, multiple charter operators in one LSS expressed frustration with the apparent lack of accountability for services for students with disabilities. In some cases, charter operators lamented that the LSS had retained thousands of dollars earmarked for students with disabilities who enroll in charter schools but to whom the LSS did not provide required services. Stakeholders

from four LSSs and a charter advocate reported that commensurate funding formulas that provide charter schools with limited budgets and a heavy reliance upon their authorizer for services are a tangible deterrent for potential applicants interested in operating autonomous schools.¹⁴

Single Authorizer System

Interviews with LSS representatives and charter founders and our analysis of State Board of Education appeal decisions revealed inherent tensions associated with charging LSSs with responsibility for authorizing charter schools. The core tenet of the charter school concept is to grant a school autonomy so that school personnel can do things differently. Ten LSS charter school policies explicitly note that “under certain conditions, a non-traditional program may provide alternative educational opportunities for students.” The underlying assumption is that once granted autonomy and simultaneously held accountable, charter schools will develop different opportunities that lead to improved academic outcomes.

Yet, granting a charter applicant a contract to operate a new public school requires taking a risk—a risk that the individuals seeking the charter may not understand the complexity of operating a school or be qualified to do so. LSS personnel questioned, will the new operator know how to educate children and operate a safe school and will the new operator be a good steward of public dollars? State officials and charter advocates reported that requiring LSSs to take risks with charter applicants is problematic because LSSs are characteristically risk averse. Complicating this tension is the reported tendency of charter founders to assume that the LSS knows all the answers, and to interpret any hesitation or pause to contemplate the implications of a policy as an intentional effort to obstruct the charter school. For instance, a principal in one charter school reflected on problems with charter school personnel decisions and placed the blame on district personnel for allowing the charter school to hire the under-qualified individual. Another charter founder complained about issues the district had not prepared the charter school to deal with. Yet, representatives from all five LSSs with charters due to open in the fall of 2006 expressed a commitment to cautiously trying to understand their roles and responsibilities as authorizers while under pressure to grant and support successful schools.

Following are examples of LSS practices that charter founders cited that may unnecessarily hinder the development of successful autonomous charter schools:

- Delaying signing charter contracts until the 11th hour, thereby limiting the charter founder’s efforts to secure a facility, recruit faculty and staff, and register students (n=4).
- Requiring charter school parents to apply to the LSS to attend the charter school and withholding names of students from operators until a principal is secured (n=1).
- Withholding transportation from students because the charter school offers a different bell schedule, even if the morning and afternoon bus schedule aligns with other schools’ schedules (n=1).
- Requiring charter schools to purchase all supplies from LSS-selected vendors, even if the vendor selected is more expensive than other local vendors (n=1).

¹⁴ The September 1, 2006 Maryland Court of Special Appeals ruling upholding the State Board of Education’s ruling related to commensurate funding has broad implications for the funding barrier. However, the decision was issued after the evaluation data collection was complete and it was not possible to examine the full implications of the ruling prior to submission of the evaluation to the General Assembly on October 1, 2006.

As the single type of authorizer, LSSs are required to accept new responsibilities for which they report that they have limited time or expertise and for which they have had limited opportunity to prepare. The State Board ruled that LSSs cannot arbitrarily decide to deny a charter school or set a limit on the number of charter schools granted per review cycle. While LSSs and charter founders and advocates proposed different solutions, frustration associated with the tensions emerging from LSSs serving as the only authorizer was a recurring theme in all the districts with experience granting charters.

Limited Operational Autonomy

The Maryland state charter school law is brief and according to MSDE officials, potentially extends charter schools significant autonomy to develop unique public schools. However, charter founders characterized LSSs as reticent to grant new charter schools substantial autonomy. Charter founders in five LSSs speculated that the reticence may be due in part to the aforementioned risk entailed. MSDE officials noted that appealing LSS policies is time consuming and costly. In the words of a charter founder:

“At every turn there is an opportunity to appeal. If we had the time and the effort and the energy, we could pick apart and appeal [our contract] but it takes up to a year. So practically speaking, it is the district way or the highway.”

As a result of the limited autonomy, a stakeholder noted that most of the charter schools in the state are arguably not autonomous charter schools but rather, a repackaged effort at site-based management. For instance, some LSSs are requiring charter schools to adopt their discipline policies, participate in their procurement process, follow their “normal” special education practices, and abide by their school calendar. While the Maryland Charter School law requires that schools develop appropriate systems to address all of these issues, the *Maryland Public Charter Schools Model Policy And Resource Guide* (2003) notes that the law grants charter schools the ability to consider alternate approaches to these and other practices through the waiver process. The law does not mandate that charter schools implement the same standard operating procedures as LSSs.

Yet, 12 charter operators that operated schools during the 2005-2006 school year noted that they were offered contracts that limit autonomy and then required to either except the conditions and open their school or dedicate resources to appealing LSS decisions. In addition to evidence collected from 13 LSS charter applications, and from interviews with LSS officials and charter founders, parents and charter advocates also cited the limited autonomy as a barrier during the application process. These individuals specifically noted that potential applicants have opted not to pursue opening a charter school due to the limited autonomy offered by LSS authorizers.

Secondary Barriers and Issues

In addition to the aforementioned primary barriers and issues, our evaluation revealed additional factors that we characterize as secondary because they were unique to one or two LSSs or identified as barriers that impede charter schools to a lesser degree than the primary barriers. The secondary barriers and issues are (a) cumbersome authorization policies and practices, (b) divided lines of governance authority, (c) transportation issues and access, and (d) parental contracts.

Cumbersome Authorization Policies and Practices

In Maryland, LSS personnel reported that they have typically waited to develop their charter school application procedures until an application has arrived, frequently using the state model policy to

guide them through the process. See Section 2. As a result, LSS representatives noted that they are in the position of developing and implementing policy at the same time, as well as building systems to effectively assess applications and negotiate contracts.

As noted previously, we documented that in five of the six districts that have approved a charter, the process entails multiple steps including but not limited to: a letter of intent, a concept paper, a formal application, a revised proposal, written responses to specific questions, interviews, and contract negotiations. Based on interviews with LSS representatives, the goal driving application processes is to infuse rigor. Yet, charter founders in all five of the districts reported that the process is overly cumbersome. A key stakeholder noted that the quantity of human resources dedicated to reviewing the proposal for a single school seems unnecessary and overly bureaucratic. Also, in accordance with State Board of Education rulings, LSSs currently offer rolling application cycles, wherein a charter group could submit an application at any point and the LSS would have to comply with the 120-day review cycle.

Closely associated with the barriers documented in the charter authorization process is comparable inefficiency in the contract negotiation phase. Charter founders in two districts expressed particular frustration with the duration of time that elapsed between approving charters and signing contracts. LSS representatives in these two districts confirmed that they have dedicated significant human resources to negotiating the charter contract, frequently taking months to negotiate a single contract. Overall, LSSs expressed an interest in MSDE and other key stakeholders dedicating more time and offering more support in the area of charter school authorization policies and procedures.

Divided Lines of Governance Authority

The state charter school law stipulates that charters may only be granted to nonprofit entities, which then become responsible for fulfilling the goals and objectives of the charter. However, to date, the 15 charter school principals are not employed by the nonprofit but rather, by the LSS. So while the nonprofit holds the charter and in some cases selects a principal to fulfill its mission, the principal reports to the LSS. LSS personnel and charter founders in two LSSs noted that if the principal and the charter school board are in sync, this arrangement is not a problem. However, if issues arise between the charter board and the principal, the divided governance structure that emerges is reportedly problematic. Charter founders at one school expressed frustration with what they characterize as an awkward governance structure. For instance, one founder noted: “The process is not linear from principal to charter board to local district.” Parents from three charter schools also expressed frustration regarding who is responsible for school operations if the non-profit charter board holds the charter and is ultimately responsible for fulfilling the mission of the school but the principal who is responsible for implementing the mission actually reports to the LSS. While not necessarily a barrier to the application process, the divided lines of authority may impede charter school operators’ ability to ensure that their school fulfills the goals and objectives outlined in their charter.

Addressing Transportation as a Means to Ensure Access

As stipulated in the charter school law, charter schools must offer open enrollment. Yet, interviews with charter founders in all three districts with operating charter schools during the 2005-2006 school year revealed that financial considerations limit the provision of transportation to charter schools. Consequently, enrollment in charter schools that don’t provide transportation is limited to

families that either live close to the school or can transport their child to the school. Therefore, open enrollment is more symbolic than real if the state or LSS does not provide the charter school with either transportation or access to adequate transportation dollars. Key stakeholders and parents identified the lack of transportation as a barrier for some students interested in attending charter schools. Identifying the number of students excluded from charter schools due to lack of transportation was beyond the scope of the evaluation. Nevertheless, we characterize it as a barrier to the creation of charter schools that can fulfill the mission of the Maryland Public Charter Schools Act.

Parent Contracts

The purpose of charter schools in Maryland is to increase educational opportunities for students. Inherent in this purpose and related requirements regarding open enrollment is that charter schools will provide opportunities for *all* interested students. Yet, five charter school founders/principals discussed the existence of parent contracts that charter schools use to encourage parental involvement.

According to school personnel from charter schools with contracts, parents are asked to sign a contract with the school that outlines specific expectations. For instance, parents are expected to ensure that their child arrives at school on time, does not have unexcused absences, wears the required uniform, and completes a specific number of volunteer hours. If the family does not fulfill the obligations in the contract, the child is asked to leave the school. Two founders explicitly noted that they had asked children to leave their school due to their parents' failure to comply with the contracts.

Assuming that the contracts are not being enforced in a discriminatory manner (i.e., by race, religion, or disability), they do not appear to be out of compliance with federal laws. Furthermore, charter operators in two LSSs stated that parent contracts are essential to ensuring that they can fulfill their mission. However, if charter schools are permitted to ostensibly limit their student population using administrative transfers (because of a broken parent contract, for example) they are not in practice maintaining open enrollment policies. Furthermore, the administrative transfer depends upon the traditional public district serving as a safety net for these students. The use of parent contracts as a means to exit students out of charter schools undermines the spirit of open enrollment policies and consequently, undermines these schools' ability to offer new opportunities in the public school sector.

Summary of Key Findings

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- Multiple barriers and issues are influencing the charter application and approval process and consequently, the number of charter schools approved.
 - The primary barriers identified as problematic in multiple LSSs and perceived to have a notable influence on the growth of charter schools are (a) newness of the charter sector, (b) access to facilities and facilities financing, (c) ambiguity regarding funding, (d) single authorizer system, and (e) limited operational autonomy.
 - The secondary barriers documented in select LSSs and perceived to have a less significant influence on the growth of charter schools are (a) cumbersome authorization policies and practices, (b) divided lines of governance authority, (c) addressing transportation as a means to ensure access, and (d) parent contracts.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the advisability of the “continuation, modification, expansion, or termination” of the MCSP. After three years, the MCSP has led to the creation of a growing charter school sector; there are currently 15 operating charter schools offering a variety of instructional approaches and an additional 8 charter schools were due to open in the fall of 2006. The State Board of Education and the courts are attempting to clarify specific aspects of the law as conflicts arise between districts and charter schools. In turn, MSDE and LSSs are dedicating significant human and fiscal resources to deciphering the charter school law, developing appropriate policies, and supporting the charter schools created. Parents and educators are committing endless hours to collaborating to create and sustain new public schools in Maryland.

Based on the demand for charter schools demonstrated by the number of applications and enrollment data and apparent parent satisfaction, we conclude there is evidence of support for the continuation of the charter school program. Yet, our interviews, primary and secondary documents, and analysis of State Board of Education decisions revealed that charter schools in Maryland potentially face multiple barriers. In recognition of the identified challenges, successful continuation of the program is contingent upon modifications to state law, refinement of authorizer policies, and development of high quality charter applicants. At a minimum, such modifications will provide charter schools with the opportunity to create the “innovative learning opportunities and creative educational approaches” envisioned by the General Assembly and embodied in the state charter school statute.

In particular, the limited autonomy extended to charter schools, coupled with the limited resources available to them, place charter school founders in an untenable position: creating schools that are for all intents and purposes virtually identical to traditional district schools but required to operate with fewer resources. The most obvious example of the reduced resources is the practical reality that charter schools must pay for their operational and facilities costs from the same budget that traditional schools use solely to pay for operational expenses. Absent key modifications that will either (a) enable charter schools to realize costs savings by doing things differently than traditional district schools or (b) give charter schools greater access to facilities or facilities funding, we posit that many of the existing charter schools may not be able to sustain their operations once their federal implementation grant dollars are expended. The recent ruling by the Court of Special Appeals upholding the State Board of Education’s 2005 definition of commensurate funding appears to grant charter schools access to increased per pupil allocations and greater autonomy to purchase central office services from alternate sources.

Our analyses of the data from all 24 local school systems revealed that districts are looking to the Maryland General Assembly, the State Board of Education, and the Maryland State Department of Education to continue to carefully contemplate modifications to the state charter school law. They are also seeking reasoned policy guidance to assist them in assuming the new and evolving responsibilities associated with charter authorizing. Based on our evaluation findings, we offer the following nine recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Address Facilities Challenges

The nature of the charter school facilities challenge is twofold: inadequate capital resources and insufficient supply of appropriate facilities. We recommend that the General Assembly examine and build on the innovative practices developed in other states to help charter school operators access additional resources to purchase, lease, and/or renovate facilities. Related to supply, we suggest that the General Assembly consider offering incentives to districts or businesses that offer charter schools the opportunity to either co-locate or lease appropriate facilities. The supply of appropriate facilities varies by district but incentives have proven to be helpful in other jurisdictions to fostering careful consideration of innovative facilities options in underutilized or surplus buildings in both the public and private sectors.

Recommendation 2: Designate Alternate Authorizer

With LSSs designated as the only permissible authorizers, the development of the Maryland charter school sector is limited by the multiple aforementioned barriers associated with requiring LSSs to take risks, develop new systems, and thereafter collaborate with new schools explicitly created for the purpose of competing with traditional public schools. An alternate authorizer could relieve LSSs of the responsibility of granting and monitoring charter schools and provide new charter schools the opportunity to realize greater levels of autonomy to fulfill their missions. Examples of potential alternative authorizers that should be examined to assess the legal and fiscal implications of them serving as charter school authorizers are the State Board of Education, colleges or universities, or a new 25th district that would be responsible for granting charters.

Recommendation 3: Clarify/Standardize Charter School Funding Formulas

The notion of commensurate funds requires additional scrutiny that carefully weighs the funding needs of both traditional and chartered public schools. The recent Court of Special Appeals decision supporting the State Board of Education's ruling defining commensurate funding and emphasizing the importance of dollars rather than services provides needed clarity about the meaning of commensurate funding. LSSs need to adjust their charter school funding policies to reflect the State Board of Education's definition of commensurate.

Recommendation 4: Balance Autonomy and Liability

Statewide, districts have demonstrated reticence to grant charter schools substantial autonomy. Part of the reticence is reasonable given the newness of the initiative, the lack of clarity regarding accountability, and the reality that LSSs may ultimately be held responsible for charter schools' shortcomings. Nevertheless, LSSs should identify areas where they can delegate responsibilities to charter schools in order for them to operate autonomously enough to realize the fundamental goals of the charter construct. A critical component of successfully balancing autonomy and liability is rigorous authorizing that enables the authorizer to ensure that the charter school applicant has the capacity to successfully fulfill the responsibilities associated with increased autonomy.

If the purpose of the Maryland Charter School Program is to offer new opportunities to parents, increase educational outcomes for students, and grant autonomy in exchange for accountability, these new schools must be extended that autonomy in order to explore alternative instructional and

operational approaches. Following are examples of areas that charter schools could benefit from being granted greater autonomy:

- selection of administrative and instructional staff who support the charter school mission,
- use of facility during non-school hours,
- special education service provisions,
- alternate bell times,
- procurement, and
- food service.

Furthermore, a key component of charter schools is infusion of competition into public schools systems. Therefore, we propose that it is not unreasonable for shifts in enrollment, driven by the creation of charter schools, to serve as a catalyst for district central offices to consider the efficacy of how they allocate funds and specifically funds that support services at the central office. While there are potential efficiencies associated with economies of scale, if charter schools can purchase equivalent or better services for less than what they are paying district central offices for the same or less services, these new schools should not be bound to the existing system but rather, granted autonomy to approach instruction and school operations differently.

Recommendation 5: Address Policy Ambiguity

The Maryland charter school law is still very new and the full implication of the law is being explored in schools, LSSs and in some cases, the State Board of Education and the courts. The State Board has made progress toward clarifying specific aspects of the law as demonstrated by their appeal decisions but ambiguity remains. We recommend that the State Board of Education continue to take a pro-active role in offering additional guidance and if appropriate, regulations, to clarify and modify areas in the law that are ambiguous (i.e., degree of autonomy and finances). In turn, MSDE is uniquely positioned to continue to take an active role in providing guidance to district authorizers and charter developers. As noted previously, areas that need further policy development are facilities, funding, degree of autonomy, lines of governance authority, and means of holding charter schools accountable for academic outcomes. The recent ruling by the Court of Special Appeals regarding commensurate funding advances the discussion but additional work is required.

Recommendation 6: Establish Effective Application and Contract Negotiations

Based on feedback from LSS representatives who have struggled to develop authorization procedures, LSSs will benefit from dedicating resources to developing intentional, rigorous, and efficient authorizers' policies and practices. The LSSs that have approved charter applications and granted charter contracts have dedicated significant human resources to negotiating the charter contract and in some cases, micro-managing the charter development and start-up process. We recommend that LSSs develop thoughtful and efficient authorization and oversight policies to streamline the application process for potential applicants and serve as a foundation for district staff to build their capacity to serve as authorizers. Furthermore, establishing a statewide application deadline or permitting individual districts to establish a single application cycle will enable LSSs to prepare for and implement a meaningful and timely review. Model application language should take care to balance rigor and rigidity. Development of effective applications includes adopting a transparent application process that clearly identifies how applicants will be evaluated. Creation of an authorizer advisory board or council may be helpful to advancing the exchange of ideas between authorizers.

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers has published guidelines for quality authorizing practices that Maryland school districts new to authorizing may benefit from reviewing: *Principals and Standards of Quality Authorizing (2005)*.

<http://www.charterauthorizers.org/files/nacsa/BECSA/Quality.pdf>

Recommendation 7: Sustain and Expand Technical Assistance Opportunities

Charter schools represent a new entrant to the public school arena in Maryland and their development necessitates significant technical assistance to charter authorizers and potential charter developers. The state has dedicated resources to providing start-up technical assistance but ongoing technical assistance is required. To address this need, MSDE, local foundations, and charter advocates should continue to collaborate to build and expand existing technical assistance opportunities and support organizations. Furthermore, rather than creating new systems and procedures, authorizers and operators alike should capitalize on the expertise developed in other states with established charter school sectors.

Recommendation 8: Address Potential Barriers to Access

Our evaluation documented multiple factors that may potentially limit students' equal access to charter schools. Building on the primary goal of the Maryland charter school law, we propose that efforts should be made to provide authorizers and operators alike with thoughtful policy guidance regarding such issues as equitable funding, transportation, and parental contracts that may potentially limit charter schools as viable options for students. For instance, equal access to open enrollment schools is more symbolic than real if the state and LSSs do not provide charter schools with either transportation or access to transportation dollars that would have been allocated to the children who opt to enroll in the charter school. If charter schools are to grow and provide new opportunities within the public school sector on a sustainable basis, it is critical that they offer and maintain open enrollment policies so that all students can access these opportunities if they choose.

Recommendation 9: Develop Meaningful Data Management and Accountability Systems

Due to the fact that 14 of the 15 operating charter schools were in their first year of operation during the 2005-2006 academic year, this evaluation did not examine the academic growth or outcomes of students enrolled in charter schools. However, a key measure of any school's success is the growth individual students experience each academic year while enrolled in the school. Charter schools are accountable for the standards established by NCLB (i.e., AYP), as are all public schools. However, in light of the ongoing national discussion regarding how best to assess the academic performance of students in charter schools relative to traditional public schools, we recommend that charter schools in Maryland establish data management systems that will enable future evaluations to assess the academic growth of individual students who enroll in charter schools over time. In contrast to measures of a *school's* annual progress expressed in metrics such as AYP, a system that tracks individual *students* provides valuable data regarding what students are learning in schools and controls for confounding variables that typically make it difficult to compare students in charter schools to students enrolled in traditional public schools (i.e., parental choice).

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APPENDICES

- A. Interview Summary Table
- B. Parent Satisfaction Survey Response Rate Analysis
- C. State Board of Education Appeals Summary
- D. Application Data Table
- E. Charter School Profile Table
- F. Parent Satisfaction Survey
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- H. Charter School Demographics Table

Appendix A: Interview Summary Table

ROLE	TYPE OF INTERVIEW
Local school personnel (n=30)* Parents (n = 17) Other stakeholders (n = 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With operational charter schools (9) • Without operational charter schools (21) • Focus Group I (6) • Focus Group II (9) • Individual parents (2) • MSDE officials (3) • Other key informants (5)
Founders/Principals (n = 19)**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing charter school personnel (16) • Approved but not open charter school personnel (3)

* Respondents' positions within their district included Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Executive Director of Special Programs, Director of Operations, Director of Alternative/Charter Schools, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Public Information Officer, and Governmental Liaison.

**Seven of the founders/principals are also parents of students enrolled in the charter schools.

Appendix B: Parent Satisfaction Survey Response Rate Analysis

Response Rate for Maryland State Charter School Program Parent Satisfaction Survey¹⁵

<i>SCHOOL</i>	<i>SURVEY RESPONDENTS</i>	<i>TOTAL ENROLLMENT *</i>	<i>RESPONSE RATE</i>
Chesapeake Science Point Public Charter School	37	97	38.14 %
Monocacy Valley Montessori Charter School	94	253	37.15 %
Northwood Appold Community Academy	32	101	31.68 %
City Neighbors Charter School	37	120	30.83 %
The Crossroads School	41	147	27.89 %
Southwest Baltimore Charter School	17	65	26.15 %
The Empowerment Academy	29	149	19.46 %
KIPP Harbor Academy	10	54	18.52 %
Hampstead Hill Academy	83	480	17.29 %
Midtown Academy	25	182	13.74 %
Inner Harbor East Academy	22	174	12.64 %
KIPP Ujima Village Academy	34	298	11.41 %
Collington Square School	44	505	8.71 %
Patterson Park Public Charter School	23	295	7.80 %
City Springs School	29	393	7.38 %
Total	557	3,313	16.81 %

Source: <http://mdreportcard.org/>

*The total enrollment figures are official student data counts as of June 16, 2006.

Response Rate by County Relative to Total Enrollment by County

	<i>Total Survey Respondents</i>	<i>% of Total Respondents</i>	<i>Total Charter School Enrollment</i>	<i>% of Total Charter School Enrollment</i>
Anne Arundel County	47	8.44%	151	4.56%
Baltimore City	416	74.69%	2,909	87.81%
Frederick County	94	16.88%	253	7.64%
Totals	557	100%	3,313	100%

Response Rate According to School Type (Conversion or New Start-up)

<i>Charter School Type</i>	<i>Mean Response Rate</i>
Conversion School	15.13%
New Start-up School	25.36%

¹⁵ A total of 557 parents of students currently enrolled in charter schools responded to the Parent Satisfaction Survey disseminated in May of 2006 as part of the Maryland Charter School Program evaluation. However, due to the fact that the evaluation survey contained seven of the same questions included in a parent survey conducted by the Baltimore City Public Schools System (BCPSS) in January 2006, we did not include these questions in the surveys we disseminated in Baltimore City charter schools. For the seven duplicate questions, the responses from Baltimore charter schools reflect data collected and shared by BCPSS. For these seven questions, the total number of respondents increases from 557 to between 1,107 and 1,127.

Appendix C: Summary of State Board of Education Appeals

Deadlines and Timelines

Three of the 12 appeals dealt with deadlines or timelines for the LSS's review of the charter school applications. In *Opinion 4-32: Potomac Charter School v. Prince George's County Board of Education* (August 4, 2004), the Prince George's County Board of Education returned Potomac Charter School's application without a decision because the LSS had not yet finalized their application process and was not yet ready for charter school proposals. The State Board of Education stated that a local board must render a decision on a charter school application within 120 days of receipt. In this case, the State Board ruled that the local board's 10-month delay was not in compliance with the state charter school law, and they must render a decision on the charter school's application within 60 days.

In *Opinion 4-38: City Neighbors Charter School v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners* (October 6, 2004), Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners deferred the decision on City Neighbors Charter School's application because it was submitted prematurely for the September 1 application deadline. The State Board responded that there was nothing in the charter school law that provided the local board with the right to defer a decision on the charter school application until a future date. The local school board's decision must be rendered within 120 days of receiving the application.

In *Opinion 5-23: Chesapeake Public Charter v. St. Mary's County Board of Education* (July 20, 2005), a dispute arose over the denial of the application due to lack of facilities. The local school board implied that they denied the application because of lack of facilities; however, the charter school argued that they could not secure a facility in light of the fact that the school board required a two-year delay between the approval of a charter school application and the opening of the charter school. The State Board of Education ruled that a two-year delay between the approval of a charter school and the opening of that charter school is unreasonable. It was also noted that the charter school law does not authorize the local board to impose that kind of lengthy timeline.

Limits on the Establishment of Charter Schools

In *Opinion 4-38: City Neighbors Charter School v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners* (October 6, 2004), the charter school founders challenged the local school board's policy of limiting the approval of charter schools to a total of three during the first three years of the charter school program. The State Board of Education ruled that the local board couldn't limit the number of charter schools that are approved in a certain amount of time. In addition, the Board noted that each charter school application should be considered based on its own merits and without regard to other applications.

Funding

In both *Opinion 5-17: City Neighbors Charter School v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners* (May 26, 2005) and *Opinion 5-18: Lincoln Charter Public School, Inc. v. Prince George's County Board of Education* (May 26, 2005), the charter school disputed the amount of funding they were to receive from the school district. In *Opinion 5-17*, the school board had not yet

given the charter school a funding commitment. In *Opinion 5-18*, the charter school argued that the local board's funding proposal of \$5,495 per pupil was not "commensurate" with the amount disbursed to other public schools in the district. In response to both appeals the State Board of Education noted, "We believe the legislature intended that a public charter school receive federal, State, and local funding in an amount proportionate to the amount of funds expended for elementary, middle, and secondary level students in the other public schools in the same system. This includes funding for services for which students in the public charter schools are eligible such as free and reduced price meals, pre-kindergarten, special education, English-language learners, Perkins, Title 1, and transportation" (*Opinion 5-17: City Neighbors Charter School v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners & Opinion 5-18: Lincoln Charter Public School, Inc. v. Prince George's County Board of Education*). In addition, the State Board noted that there is no statewide formula or methodology that determines how LSSs fund their schools. However, the State Board suggested the following funding formula when dealing with charter schools: (a) take total annual LSS operating budget; (b) divide the annual operating budget and each major category of appropriations by the September 30 enrollment count of the school system from the previous school year to calculate the average per-pupil funding overall and per major category; (c) adjust the total average per-pupil amount by a 2% reduction as a reasonable cost to the charter school for required central office functions; and (d) multiply the adjusted average per-pupil amount by the student enrollment at the charter school.

In both opinions the State Board noted that the average per-pupil amount derived from the total annual LSS operating budget should be sufficient for the charter school to deliver the services for which the school's students are eligible. The State Board recommended making budgetary allocations based on student population eligibility requirements and complying with all applicable federal and state requirements. In addition, the charter school would have to choose whether to provide eligible students with special services directly or have the LSS provide these services. If the charter school wants the LSS to provide these services, then the charter school must reimburse the school system the proportionate cost of those services. The charter school must also reimburse the LSS for the salaries, local retirement, and other fringe benefits for the public school employees working in the charter school "as well as for regular services and supplies that the charter school requests the local system to provide" (*Opinion 5-17: City Neighbors Charter School v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners & Opinion 5-18: Lincoln Charter Public School, Inc. v. Prince George's County Board of Education*).

In *Opinion 5-19: Patterson Park Public Charter School v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners* (May 26, 2005), the State Board of Education noted, "We believe the legislature intended that a public charter school receive federal, State, and local funding in an amount proportionate to the amount of funds expended for elementary, middle, and secondary level students in the other public schools in the same system." They further noted that this should include funding associated with free and reduced priced meals, pre-kindergarten education, special education, English language learners, Perkins, Title 1, and transportation.

In *Opinion 6-17: Monocacy Montessori Communities, Inc. v. Frederick County Board of Education* (May 24, 2006), the charter school argued that both the local school district and the State Board of Education's funding formulas for charter schools did not provide "commensurate" funding. In this case, the charter school argued that the term *commensurate* should be changed to *equal to* and result in the charter school receiving the same per-pupil amount as the other schools in the school district. Monocacy Montessori argued that equal funding would result from the funding formula in which

the total operating budget for the LSS was divided by the total student enrollment to arrive at the per-pupil amount. Then the school should be given the per-pupil amount multiplied by enrollment in the charter school. Based on this proposed formula, the charter school arrived at \$9,597 per pupil as commensurate funding.

In comparison, the LSS's funding formula was the following: (1) subtract all restricted budget amounts targeted at specific programs and services from the total budget; (2) subtract the value of services provided in-kind and directly to the charter school from the unrestricted budget; and (3) divide that amount by the number of students enrolled. Based on this formula, the local school board arrived at a \$6,838 per pupil for the charter school.

The State Board's formula entailed: (1) subtracting 2% from the total operating budget for central-office administrative costs; (2) dividing that figure by the September 30 enrollment count for the previous year; (3) subtracting from the per pupil amount any restricted state or federal funds that the students at the charter school are not eligible for; and (4) having the charter school reimburse the school system for any buy-back services from the school district. The state formula resulted in a per-pupil amount of \$8,485, plus restricted funds students are eligible to receive.

In comparing the LSS's and the State Board's funding formulas—factoring in the in-kind services, the charter school/LSS agreement for the charter school to provide transportation, and so on—the difference between the two amounts was only \$12 per pupil. The State Board ruled that Frederick County Public Schools owed the charter school an additional \$12 per pupil.

The State Board of Education decision clarified multiple issues that had previously been ambiguous. First, restricted funds should be included only for the number of children eligible for them. The restricted funds should not be factored into the total budget amount, and such funds should be subtracted out if already included in the total budget amount used in the funding formulas. Second, in-kind services provided by the school district must be paid for at a reasonable and legitimate price by the charter school. Third, the funding formula includes transportation. However, in this particular case the charter agreement stated that the charter school would provide its own transportation. Consequently, transportation was not factored into the per-pupil amount. The State Board ruled that it is not legal to take the total operating budget and divide by total student enrollment to get the actual per-pupil amount, especially when a school is receiving multiple in-kind services. Overall, the State Board ruled that commensurate funding does not necessarily mean equal dollars but rather dollars and services combined.

Timeline for Finalizing the Charter Agreement

In three cases, the State Board of Education ruled that the charter agreement must be completed within 30 calendar days of the approval of the charter school application. All three cases—*Opinion 5-17: City Neighbors Charter School v. Baltimore Board of School Commissioners* (May 26, 2005), *Opinion 5-18: Lincoln Charter Public School, Inc. v. Prince George's County Board of Education* (May 26, 2005), and *Opinion 5-19: Patterson Park Public Charter School, Inc. v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners* (May 26, 2005)—the disputes were over funding issues; however, the State Board's ruling made it clear they expected the negotiations of funding, employee status, and waiver process to be completed in time to establish a charter school agreement within 30 calendar days of the date of the approval. In each of these cases, an extensive amount of time had

elapsed and the State Board directed the parties to have a charter agreement within 15 days of the issuance of the opinions.

Application Review Process

Four of the appeals sought a State Board of Education ruling on the charter school application review process. In *Opinion 5-21: Dr. Ben Carson Charter School v. Harford County Board of Education* (June 7, 2005), the charter school's argument against the local school board's denial of the application was partly based on the fact that LSS personnel did not provide them with enough assistance during the application process. The State Board ruled that the charter school law does not require the LSS to provide technical assistance to an applicant.

Similarly, in *Opinion 5-31: Columbia Public Charter School v. Howard County Board of Education* (September 27, 2005), the charter school asked the State Board of Education to overturn the denial of its application because the local school board had acted against legislative intent by denying the charter school application. The State Board of Education did not find the local school board to be acting contrary to legislative intent. They stated the legislative intent was "to provide innovative learning opportunities and creative educational approaches to improve the education of students." However, this intent does not mean that every charter school application will be approved. In this case, the local school board was concerned with the proposed charter school's curriculum and ability to implement it. In addition, the State Board also reiterated that the Maryland Charter School Law does not require the LSS to provide technical assistance to an applicant.

In *Opinion 4-32: Potomac Charter School v. Prince George's County Board of Education* (August 4, 2004), the State Board of Education reiterated that the LSS must provide the charter school applicant with a decision on the application within 120 days of its receipt. In this specific case, the charter school application was returned to the applicant because the LSS had not yet established a review process. However, by the time the opinion was written, the LSS had finalized its charter school application review process. The State Board of Education advised the applicant to revise the application to meet any new requirements of the review process and resubmit the application. The State Board also noted that the LSS had to issue a decision in this case within 60 days of the application receipt due to previous extensive delay.

In *Opinion 5-08: Potomac Charter School v. Prince George's County Board of Education* (March 11, 2005), the State Board of Education dismissed the appeal as untimely since the charter school applicant had not filed the appeal with the State Board within 30 days of the local board decision. However, the State Board did offer some advice on the concerns that arose in the appeal, ruling that the LSS has to state specific deficiencies of the application when issuing a denial.

Evaluation of Application

Two opinions address the evaluation of charter school applications. In *Opinion 5-23: Chesapeake Public Charter v. St. Mary's County Board of Education* (July 20, 2005), the charter school argued against the denial of its application for the following reasons: (a) the local superintendent failed to make a recommendation to the local school board; (b) the denial was based on vague evaluation criteria; (c) notification of the denial was not in written form but presented orally; and (d) the denial was not based on substantive issues with the application. The State Board of Education noted that the local superintendent should provide to the local board a detailed recommendation for approval

or denial of a charter school application. In this situation, the documents and continuous collaboration and feedback from the LSS during the application process constituted an adequate amount of information on evaluation criteria. All local school boards must provide a rationale or explanation for the approval or denial of a charter school application. If a local school board gives the decision orally then it must supply the rationale for this decision as well. In addition, the State Board stated that the 30-day time span between the approval decision and a charter agreement is supposed to be used to arrange for facilities and the approval of those facilities.

In another ruling, *Opinion 5-08: Potomac Charter School v. Prince George's County Board of Education* (March 11, 2005), the State Board of Education noted that "if a numerical rate scale is used to evaluate an application, the local board must provide an analytical key that describes with specificity what is necessary or adequate to achieve each point on the scale." However, in this case the appeal was dismissed because it was not submitted to the state within the prescribed time frame.

Local Board's Explanation

In two opinions, the State Board of Education ruled on the necessity and quality of the local board's explanation for its decision. In *Opinion 5-23: Chesapeake Public Charter v. St. Mary's County Board of Education* (July 20, 2005), the charter school argued that the local school board's decision had to be in writing. In this situation, the applicant's denial was presented orally at a local school board's open session. The State Board reiterated that the local school board must provide a rationale or explanation for the approval or denial of a charter school application. The decision may be presented either orally or in written form. In this particular case, it was ruled that the local school board's oral presentation of the decision was acceptable since it included a rationale.

Similarly, in *Opinion 5-31: Columbia Public Charter School v. Howard County Board of Education* (September 27, 2005), the State Board of Education ruled that there is no legal requirement for a local board to present a denial in writing, but it must include an explanation or rationale for the decision. The State Board also made the distinction that if a decision is presented to the applicant in writing, the rationale should also be presented in writing, and if the decision is presented orally, the rationale should be provided orally as well. Furthermore, if a numerical scoring rubric is used in the evaluation but is not determinative of whether the application is approved or denied, then there does not have to be an analytical key that describes what is necessary to achieve each point on the scale.

Hearing on a Board Decision

In one appeal, the State Board of Education ruled on whether or not a local school board must hold a hearing for the applicant to respond to the reasons for the denial of the application. In *Opinion 5-21: Dr. Ben Carson Charter School v. Harford County Board of Education* (June 7, 2005), the charter school argued that it was deprived of due process rights because there was no opportunity to defend its application. The State Board of Education ruled that there is no legal requirement that a charter school applicant be given a hearing prior to a decision on the merits of the application and a charter school applicant that would impose a hearing obligation on the local school board possesses no constitutional due process right.

Nonprofit Status

In one appeal, the State Board of Education ruled on the necessary criteria or qualification one must have to be considered a nonprofit organization under the Maryland Charter School Law. In *Opinion*

5-21: *Dr. Ben Carson Charter School v. Harford County Board of Education* (June 7, 2005), the local school board argued that the charter school applicant was not an entity eligible to submit a charter school application. The local board stated that the applicant did not fit any of the categories of applicants since it had not filed for a corporate status. However, the State Board ruled that if an entity has obtained a federal tax identification number, then it has demonstrated its nonprofit status for the purpose of applying for a charter school.

Comparing a Grant Approval to a Charter Approval

In one appeal, the State Board of Education ruled on whether receiving a grant approval should dictate receiving a charter school application approval. In *Opinion 5-21: Dr. Ben Carson Charter School v. Harford County Board of Education* (June 7, 2005), the charter applicant argued that since it had received a “Planning and Design” grant from MSDE, the charter application must be sufficient to win approval from the local school board. The State Board ruled that being given a “Planning and Design” grant and a grant score are not relevant to the evaluation of a charter school application. The State Board further stipulated that the sufficiency of an application is judged on the quality of the application alone.

Waivers

Two State Board of Education rulings regarding the waiver process pertain to funding issues. However, both charter schools also requested waivers regarding the status of the employees of the charter school. In *Opinion 5-19: Patterson Park Public Charter School, Inc. v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners* (May 26, 2005), the State Board of Education ruled that the appeals process is not the forum for requesting a waiver from the state. The appropriate process to request a change in the status of charter school employees was to first speak with the local district. The school district “may choose to negotiate certain changes in the applicable negotiated agreements, pursue the procedures set forth in the State Board’s proposed regulations on waivers for charter schools, or a combination of both.” Should the school district proceed, it “must file a written waiver request with the State Superintendent of Schools, cite and describe the statutory or regulatory provision from which it seeks to be exempted, and describe the desired outcome with an explanation of why the waiver is necessary and justifiable under the circumstances including the impact, if any, on the students or staff.” In addition, the State Board noted that waiver “requests to modify local board policy and procedure shall be submitted to the extent practicable with the charter school application and resolved by the parties during the application review period.”

In the other case, *Opinion 5-18: Lincoln Charter Public School Inc. v. Prince George’s County Board of Education* (May 26, 2005), the charter school requested a waiver regarding the employment status of the charter school employees in the local school district and was denied. The State Board ruled that charter schools needed to do one of the following to request this waiver: (a) negotiate changes in the applicable negotiated agreements; (b) pursue the procedures set forth in the State Board’s proposed regulations on waivers for charter schools; or (c) a combination of the two. They further advised that waiver requests must (a) be written, (b) be filed with the State Superintendent of Schools, (c) cite and describe the statutory or regulatory provisions from which the school seeks to be exempted, and (d) “describe the desired outcomes with an explanation of why the waiver is necessary and justifiable under the circumstances including the impact, if any, on the students or staff.” The State Board reiterated that waiver requests to modify local board policy should be submitted with the charter application and resolved by the parties during the application review process (to the extent possible).

Appendix D: Charter School Application Data Tables

Charter School Applications Submitted to Local School Systems by Academic Year¹⁶

<i>Local School System</i>	<i>2001-2002</i>	<i>2002-2003</i>	<i>2003-2004</i>	<i>2004-2005</i>	<i>2005-2006</i>	<i>County Totals</i>
Allegany County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0
Anne Arundel County Public Schools	0	0	0	2	0	2
Baltimore City Public Schools	0	0	1	17	6 (1*)(2**)	24(2**)
Baltimore County Public Schools	0	0	1	0	0	1
Calvert County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0
Caroline County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0
Carroll County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cecil County Public Schools	0	0	(1**)	0	0	0
Charles County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dorchester County Public Schools	0	0	1	0	0	1
Frederick County Public Schools	1***	0	0	0	0	1
Garrett County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0
Harford County Public Schools	0	0	0	3	(2*)	3
Howard County Public Schools	0	0	1	(1*)	(1*)	1
Kent County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0
Montgomery County Public Schools	1***	0	0	0	0	1
Prince George's County Public Schools	0	0	1	2(1*)	3(1*)	6
Queen Anne's County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Mary's County Public Schools	0	0	0	1	0	0
Somerset County Public Schools	0	0	0	(1**)	0	1
Talbot County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0
Washington County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wicomico County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	(1**)	0
Worcester County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0
Statewide Total of Completed Original Applications	2	0	5(1**)	25(2*)(1**)	9(5*)(3**)	41

Source: Interviews with local school system representatives and MSDE personnel, 2006

**Application represents the submission of an application that was previously rejected or withdrawn **Application was submitted and subsequently withdrawn*

****These applications predate the Maryland State Charter School law.*

¹⁶ Charter school policies and procedures varied across districts. For the purposes of standardizing the definition of “submitted,” we asked each LSS to report how many complete applications they had received and defined “complete” as an application that was considered final and which was reviewed by the LSS.

APPENDIX D: CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION DATA TABLES CONT.

Charter School Application Decisions According to Year and Local school System

	2001-2002				2002-2003				2003-2004				2004-2005				2005-2006			
Local School System	Approved	Denied	Resubmitted	Appealed	Approved	Denied	Resubmitted	Appealed	Approved	Denied	Resubmitted	Appealed	Approved	Denied	Resubmitted	Appealed	Approved	Denied	Resubmitted	Appealed
Allegany County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Anne Arundel County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Baltimore City Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	12	5	1	0	4	3	0	2
Baltimore County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Calvert County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Caroline County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Carroll County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cecil County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Charles County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dorchester County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Frederick County Public Schools	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Garrett County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Harford County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	1	1
Howard County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Kent County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Montgomery County Public Schools	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prince George's County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	0	1	3	1	0	0
Queen Anne's County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Mary's County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somerset County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Talbot County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Washington County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wicomico County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Worcester County Public Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Statewide Total	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	2	17	9	3	1	7	7	1	3

Source: Interviews with local school system representatives and MSDE personnel, 2006

Appendix E: Operating Charter School Profiles

Operating Charter Schools	
<p>Chesapeake Science Point (<i>New Start-up</i>) Opened 2005 Grades 6–7 (6–12 fully operational) 1321 Mercedes Dr., Suite Q-S Hanover, MD 21076 www.clfmd.org</p>	<p>City Neighbors Charter School (<i>New Start-up</i>) Opened 2005 Grades K–5 (Pre-K–8 fully operational) 4301 Raspe Ave. Baltimore, MD 21206 cityneighbors.org</p>
<p>City Springs School (<i>Conversion School</i>) Opened 2005 Principal: Bernice Whelchel Grades Pre-K–8 100 S. Caroline St. Baltimore, MD 21231</p>	<p>Collington Square School (<i>Conversion School</i>) Opened 2005 Grades Pre-K–8 1409 N. Collington Ave. Baltimore, MD 21213 www.baltimorecp.org</p>
<p>The Crossroads School (<i>Conversion School</i>) Opened 2005 Grades 6–8 802 S. Caroline St. Baltimore, MD 21231 www.thecrossroadsschool.org</p>	<p>The Empowerment Academy (<i>Conversion School</i>) Opened 2005 Grades Pre-K–2 (Pre-K–8 fully operational) 851 Braddish Ave. Baltimore, MD 21216</p>
<p>Hampstead Hill Academy (<i>Conversion School</i>) Opened 2005 Principal: Matt Hornbeck Grades Pre-K–7 (Pre-K–8 fully operational) 500 S. Linwood Ave. Baltimore, MD 21224 www.baltimorecp.org</p>	<p>Inner Harbor East Academy (<i>New Start-up</i>) Opened 2005 Grades K–3 (K–12 fully operational) 200 N. Central Ave. Baltimore MD 21202</p>
<p>KIPP Harbor Academy (<i>New Start-up</i>) Opened 2005 Grade 5 (5–8 fully operational) 135 Stepneys La. Edgewater, MD 21037 kippharboracademy.org</p>	<p>KIPP Ujima Village Academy (<i>Conversion School</i>) Opened 2005 Principal: Jason Botel Grades 5–8 4701 Greenspring Ave. Baltimore, MD 21209</p>
<p>Midtown Academy (<i>Conversion School</i>) Opened 2005 Grades K–8 1398 Mount Royal Ave. Baltimore, MD 21217 www.midtownacademy.org</p>	<p>Monocacy Valley Montessori Charter School (<i>New Start-up</i>) Opened 2002 Grades K–8 217 Dill Ave. Frederick, MD 21701 www.mvms.info</p>
<p>Northwood Appold Community Academy (<i>New Start-up</i>) Opened 2005 Grades K-2 (K-8 fully operational) 4499 Loch Raven Blvd. Baltimore, MD 21218</p>	<p>Patterson Park Public Charter School (<i>New Start-up</i>) Opened 2005 Grades Pre-K–4 (Pre-K–8 fully operational) 27 N. Lakewood Ave. Baltimore, MD 21224 www.pppcs.org</p>
<p>Southwest Baltimore Charter School (<i>New Start-up</i>) Opened 2005 Grades Pre-K–1 (Pre-K–8 fully operational) 31 South Schroeder St. Baltimore, MD 21223 www.sbcshschool.org</p>	

Approved Charter Schools for Fall 2006	
ConneXions Community Leadership Academy (<i>Conversion School</i>) August 2006 Grades 6–8 2801 N. Dukeland Ave. Baltimore, MD 21216	Restoration Alternative Academy (<i>New Start-up</i>) August 2006 Grades 8–9 (7–12 fully operational) Location: Aberdeen area
EXCEL Academy (<i>New Start-up</i>) August 2006 Grades K–5 (K–8 fully operational) Location: Riverdale area	Rosemont Elementary (<i>Conversion School</i>) August 2006 Grades K–5 2777 Presstman St. Baltimore, MD 21216
Maryland Academy of Technology and Health Sciences (MATHS) (<i>New Start-up</i>) August 2006 Grade 9 (9–12 fully operational) www.mathsbaltimore.org	The Green School of Baltimore (<i>New Start-up</i>) August 2006 Grades K–2 (K–5 fully operational) Location: TBD
Potomac Public Charter School (<i>New Start-up</i>) August 2006 Grades - K-5 Location: Ft. Washington Road area	Turning Point Academy (<i>New Start-up</i>) August 2006 Grades K–3 (K–6 fully operational) Location: Lanham area

Source: Maryland State Department of Education (2006). Current charter schools in Maryland. Retrieved May 1, 2006 from: http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/charter_schools/

Appendix F: Parent Satisfaction Survey

Maryland Charter School Parent Satisfaction Survey*

The University of Maryland has been awarded a contract by the Maryland State Department of Education to conduct an evaluation of the Maryland State Charter School Program. To ensure that the evaluation is comprehensive and includes input from parents, we ask that one adult parent/guardian/caregiver in each household complete and return the survey form. For your convenience, an addressed, postage-paid envelope is included to return the completed form directly to the University of Maryland, College Park.

The information we obtain from the survey will be used to inform policy decisions regarding the Maryland State Charter School Program. The surveys are anonymous and will not contain information that may personally identify you. The code number on the survey will be used to document school response rates. However, your responses will not be identified with you in any way and you will not be named in any report. Your participation is entirely voluntary and your responses will be treated in a very confidential manner. Only summarized data will be shared with the Maryland State Department of Education and/or included in the final evaluation report. Please complete the survey and **return it within 5 days of receipt**. Thank you very much for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please call the lead evaluator, Lauren Morando Rhim: (301) 405-6494.

If you have more than one child enrolled in this charter school, please consider the child who has been enrolled for the longest period of time when responding to the questions. If two or more children were enrolled at the same time, consider the oldest child.

1) In what year did your child first enroll in the charter school? ☐ 2000 ☐ 2001 ☐ 2002 ☐ 2003 ☐ 2004 ☐ 2005

2) What kind of school did your child attend before enrolling in this charter school? (Check only one)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public school (traditional) | <input type="checkbox"/> Private school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parochial/church related school | <input type="checkbox"/> Home schooled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Did not attend school | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____ |

3) Where would your child attend school if he/she were not enrolled in this charter school? (Check only one)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public school (traditional) | <input type="checkbox"/> Private school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parochial/church related school | <input type="checkbox"/> Home school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other charter school | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____ |

4) Are you aware of the school's mission?

- ☐ No ☐ Yes

If yes, to what extent is the mission being followed by the school?

- ☐ Not Very Well ☐ Fair ☐ Well ☐ Very Well

5) Indicate the importance of the following factors in your decision to enroll your child in this charter school. Mark only one box for each item ranging from *Not Important* to *Very Important*.

	Not Important				Very Important
a. My child attended the school before it became a charter school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Convenient location	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. My interest in being involved in an education reform effort	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Promises made by charter school spokesperson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Academic reputation (high standards) of the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Safety for my child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. I prefer the emphasis and educational philosophy of the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. My child has special needs that were not met at previous school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Good teachers and high quality of instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. My child wanted to attend this school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. My child was performing poorly at previous school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. I was unhappy with the curriculum and instruction at previous school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Recommendation of a teacher or an official at previous school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6) Do you plan to continue to enroll your child in this charter school next year (i.e., 2006-2007)?

- ☐ No ☐ Yes

Please turn over to complete the survey

*This instrument is based on an instrument developed by the Western Michigan Evaluation Center.

7) Please rate each of the following statements according to whether it influenced your decision regarding enrolling your child in this charter school for next year. Mark the appropriate response in each category: *False, Partly True, True, or Do Not Know*

	False	Partly True	True	Do Not Know
a. My child is motivated to learn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. The quality of instruction is high	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. My child receives sufficient individual attention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I am able to influence the direction and activities in the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. There is good communication between the school and my household	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. My child has access to computers and other new technologies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. The school has effective leadership and administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. The school has small class sizes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. School personnel are accountable for my child's achievement/performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. My child's achievement level is improving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Support services (i.e., counseling, health care, etc.) are available to my child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. The school is supporting innovative practices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your child's school. Mark the most appropriate response for each item ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
a. This school is meeting students' needs that could not be addressed at other local schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. This school has sufficient financial resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I am satisfied with the school's curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I am satisfied with the instruction offered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. This school has been well received by the community at large	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Too many changes are occurring at the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. This school has small class sizes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. This school has good physical facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Teachers and school leaders are accountable for student achievement/performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. This school has good administrative leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. If my child is having a problem at the school, I know who I can talk to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Disruptive students are a problem at my child's school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. This school sets high standards for academic performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. Students have enough school supplies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. Parents have opportunity to provide input into the school's programmatic decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
p. My child is safe at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
q. Overall, I am satisfied with my child's school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. In what grades do you have children enrolled in this charter school? (Mark a grade level for each child you have enrolled)

☐ Pre-K ☐ K ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.

Please return the survey to the University of Maryland, College Park in the enclosed addressed, postage-paid envelope

Appendix G: Spring 2006 Parent Satisfaction Survey Results

1. In what year did your child first enroll in the charter school?¹⁷

	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	Total
Count	1	284	78	65	53	19	37	1	1	0	1	539
%	0.2%	52.6%	14.4%	12.0%	9.8%	3.5%	6.9%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	100%

2a. What kind of school did you child attend before enrolling in this charter school?

	Traditional Public School	Parochial/Church Related School	Did Not Attend School	Private School	Home Schooled	Other, Please Specify	Total
Count	336	29	56	58	16	58	553
%	60.8%	5.2%	10.1%	10.5%	2.9%	10.5%	100%

2b. Previous school, listed under "Other, please specify"

	Headstart	Preschool	New School Initiative School	Daycare	Other
Count	15	26	4	7	6
%	25.9%	44.8%	6.9%	12.1%	10.3%

3a. Where would your child attend school if he/she were not enrolled in this charter school?

	Traditional Public School	Parochial/Church related school	Other charter school	Private School	Home Schooled	Other, please specify	Total
Count	343	39	20	96	24	22	544
%	63.1%	7.2%	3.7%	17.6%	4.4%	4.0%	100%

3b. School if not the charter, listed under "Other, please specify"

	Head Start	Undecided or other
Count	5	17
%	22.7%	77.3%

4a. Are you aware of the school's mission?

	No	Yes	Total
Count	45	500	545
%	8.3%	91.7%	100%

¹⁷ Besides the years 2000-2005 that were provided as options to parents, some parents wrote in alternative years.

4b. If yes, to what extent is the mission being followed by the school?

	Not Very Well	Fair	Well	Very Well	Total
Count	22	58	195	225	500
%	4.4%	11.6%	39.0%	45.0%	100%

5. Indicate the importance of the following factors in your decision to enroll your child in this charter school. Mark only one box for each item ranging from *Not Important* to *Very Important*.

	<div> <div>Not Important</div> <div>←</div> <div>→</div> <div>Very Important</div> </div>					<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
	1	2	3	4	5			
My child attended the school before it became a charter school	55.3%	6.8%	10.5%	8.9%	18.6%	2.2866	1.61422	485
Convenient location	13.9%	7.9%	17.7%	23.0%	37.5%	3.6234	1.40670	547
My interest in being involved in an education reform effort	5.0%	3.1%	16.0%	28.4%	47.5%	4.1031	1.09530	543
Promises made by charter school spokesperson	6.5%	5.6%	17.8%	28.1%	42.0%	3.9370	1.18420	540
Academic reputation (high standards) of the school	1.7%	1.7%	9.2%	22.5%	65.0%	4.4751	.85629	543
Safety for my child	0.7%	2.0%	3.4%	16.5%	77.4%	4.6775	.70338	552
I prefer the emphasis and educational philosophy of the school	1.7%	1.5%	8.8%	23.8%	64.3%	4.4751	.84545	543
My child has special needs that were not met at previous school	38.0%	6.2%	13.5%	15.1%	27.2%	2.8748	1.67660	503
Good teachers and high quality of instruction	0.7%	.4%	4.0%	18.3%	76.6%	4.6965	.63422	547
My child wanted to attend this school	14.2%	7.1%	22.9%	19.4%	36.3%	3.5654	1.40449	520
My child was performing poorly at previous school	44.1%	7.5%	15.4%	11.6%	21.3%	2.5854	1.62554	492
I was unhappy with the curriculum and instruction at previous school	27.5%	7.2%	14.2%	15.6%	35.5%	3.2445	1.64046	499
Recommendation of a teacher or an official at previous school	46.7%	5.7%	16.0%	12.2%	19.5%	2.5213	1.61234	493

6. Do you plan to continue to enroll your child in this charter school next year (i.e., 2006-2007)?

	No	Yes	Total
Count	40	497	537
%	7.4%	92.6%	100%

7. Please rate each of the following statements according to whether it influenced your decision regarding enrolling your child in this charter school for next year. Mark the appropriate response in each category: *False, Partly True, True, or Do Not Know.*

	<i>False 1</i>	<i>Partly True 2</i>	<i>True 3</i>	<i>Do Not Know 0</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
My child is motivated to learn	1.5%	10.4%	87.6%	.5%	2.8506	.43512	549
The quality of instruction is high	2.2%	12.5%	82.3%	2.9%	2.7422	.64273	543
My child receives sufficient individual attention	5.7%	21.9%	68.2%	4.2%	2.5411	.78426	547
I am able to influence the direction and activities in the school	12.9%	39.4%	39.9%	7.8%	2.1138	.91105	536
There is good communication between the school and my household	5.1%	26.0%	67.2%	1.6%	2.5879	.66675	546
My child has access to computers and other new technologies	13.2%	27.8%	52.5%	6.5%	2.2635	.92124	539
The school has effective leadership and administration	6.8%	25.8%	64.7%	2.7%	2.5238	.74216	546
The school has small class sizes	8.4%	29.1%	59.2%	3.4%	2.4413	.78513	537
School personnel are accountable for my child's achievement/performance	4.4%	27.0%	65.4%	3.1%	2.5471	.72527	541
My child's achievement level is improving	4.8%	13.0%	80.2%	2.0%	2.7143	.64882	546
Support services (i.e., counseling, health care, etc.) are available to my child	8.2%	20.5%	63.2%	8.1%	2.3883	.94207	546
The school is supporting innovative practices	4.4%	14.4%	71.2%	10.0%	2.4677	.96866	541

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your child's school. Mark the most appropriate response for each item ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*.

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> ← <i>Strongly Agree</i>					<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>			
This school is meeting students' needs that could not be addressed at other local schools	4.6%	6.8%	19.4%	24.9%	44.3%	3.9742	1.15174	542
This school has sufficient financial resources	20.0%	17.6%	26.2%	19.6%	16.6%	2.9538	1.35527	541
I am satisfied with the school's curriculum	2.7%	4.7%	15.4%	31.9%	45.3%	4.1232	1.01318	552
I am satisfied with the instruction offered	3.6%	3.4%	13.2%	33.7%	46.0%	4.1504	1.01756	552
This school has been well received by the community at large	4.8%	5.9%	17.6%	30.2%	41.6%	3.9799	1.12093	546
Too many changes are occurring at the school	32.7%	27.1%	20.3%	9.6%	10.3%	2.3782	1.30509	542
This school has small class sizes	6.5%	10.9%	23.8%	27.4%	31.4%	3.6624	1.20997	551
This school has good physical facilities	12.6%	15.9%	26.1%	23.4%	21.9%	3.2614	1.30764	547
Teachers and school leaders are accountable for student achievement/performance	3.1%	6.7%	20.8%	31.9%	37.5%	3.9402	1.06165	552
This school has good administrative leadership	7.4%	7.9%	15.7%	26.5%	42.4%	3.8863	1.24694	554
If my child is having a problem at school, I know who I can talk to	1.8%	4.5%	1.3%*	41.0%	51.3%	4.3550	0.86225	1,121**
Disruptive students are a problem at my child's school	21.6%	39.1%	3.1%*	24.7%	11.5%	2.6547	1.35818	1,112**
This school sets high standards for academic performance	0.9%	3.3%	2.8%*	40.0%	53.0%	4.4091	0.77622	1,127**
Students have enough school supplies	5.1%	16.4%	4.4%*	50.1%	24.0%	3.7135	1.14931	1,110**
Parents have opportunity to provide input into the school's programmatic decisions	2.5%	10.9%	3.5%*	52.3%	30.7%	3.9774	1.00381	1,107**
My child is safe at school	0.5%	4.9%	1.2%*	48.7%	44.7%	4.3221	0.77372	1,127**
Overall, I am satisfied with my child's school	0.9%	5.4%	1.4%*	37.2%	55.1%	4.4029	0.83640	1,117**

*Respondents to the BCPSS survey were provided with only four response options (i.e., 1, 2, 4, and 5)

**The increased number of respondents is due respondents who answered questions on survey conducted by BCPS

9. In what grades do you have children enrolled in this charter school? (Mark a grade level for each child you have enrolled)

<i>Total # of Children</i>	<i>Pre- K</i>	<i>Kinder -garten</i>	<i>First Grade</i>	<i>Second Grade</i>	<i>Third Grade</i>	<i>Fourth Grade</i>	<i>Fifth Grade</i>	<i>Sixth Grade</i>	<i>Seventh Grade</i>	<i>Eighth Grade</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
1	43	94	73	82	36	48	43	64	53	18	554
2		8	12	17	22	18	20	15	13	5	130
3			1	6	2	6	6	9	4	1	35
4					6			1	1	1	9
5						6					6
<i>Total N</i>	43	102	86	105	66	78	69	89	71	25	734
<i>Total %</i>	5.86%	13.90%	11.72%	14.31%	8.99%	10.63%	9.40%	12.13%	9.67%	3.41%	100%

Appendix H: Charter School Demographics Table

<i>School Name</i>	<i>Total Enrollment (September)</i>	<i>Native American</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>African American</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total Enrollment (June)</i>	<i>Free/Reduced Meals</i>	<i>Special Education</i>	<i>English Language Learners</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
Anne Arundel County Public Schools												
KIPP Harbor Academy	62	0	1	52	1	8	27	35	54	41	5	7
Chesapeake Science Point	119	1	4	35	76	3	76	43	97	14	9	0
Baltimore City Public Schools												
City Springs Elementary	383	2	0	377	3	1	183	200	393	369	31	0
Hampstead Hill Elementary	467	23	3	112	267	62	252	215	480	376	33	33
Collington Square Elementary	495	1	0	493	1	0	239	256	505	476	59	0
Empowerment Academy	150	0	0	150	0	0	67	83	149	115	*	0
Midtown Academy	184	0	9	127	45	3	90	94	181	62	12	0
The Crossroads School	148	1	0	123	7	17	65	83	147	125	16	*
KIPP Ujima Village Academy	305	1	0	303	1	0	140	165	298	262	19	0
City Neighbors Charter School	120	0	0	66	54	0	62	58	120	41	14	0
Patterson Park Public Charter School	312	2	2	214	24	70	160	152	295	217	30	41
Southwest Baltimore Charter School	64	0	0	55	8	1	28	36	65	49	*	0
Inner Harbor East Academy	184	0	0	184	0	0	90	94	174	157	15	0
Northwood Appold Community Academy	113	0	0	113	0	0	56	57	101	56	10	0
Frederick County Public Schools												
Monocacy Valley Montessori School	257	1	7	13	231	5	124	133	253	*	32	*

Source: <http://www.mdreportcard.org>

*Indicates school population is too small to publish enrollment data.



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