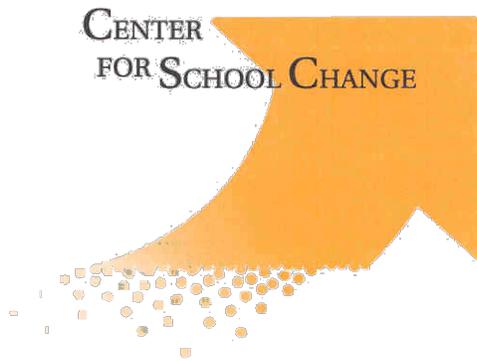


Summary of State Virtual Charter Public School Funding Policies

By

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper summarizes a year long survey completed in September 2013 about virtual charter schools in 42 states and the District of Columbia. The survey was carried out to answer three questions that state policy-makers, educators, parents and other people have asked.

1. Do states that permit charter public schools also permit virtual charter public schools?
2. In states where the answer to the first question is “yes,” do virtual charters receive the same per pupil funds from the state as “bricks and mortar” charter public schools?
3. In states that permit virtual charters but fund them differently than bricks and mortar charter schools, what are the broad outlines of the funding system for virtual charters?

Several major patterns emerged:

- 34 states with charter laws permit both virtual and “bricks and mortar” charter public schools
- Six states permit “bricks and mortar” charters and prohibit virtual charter schools
- Several laws are silent on the virtual charter issue

Of those states permitting virtual charters,

- 19 states fund virtual charter schools at the same per pupil level as bricks and mortar charters
- 10 states fund virtual charters at somewhat lower levels than other charter schools
- Funding details vary in several other states

The report concludes with several questions for policy-makers to consider.

- Should the state **permit students** to attend virtual schools part time, as well as full time? If yes, how should the allocation of funds be determined?
- Should there be any relationship between the characteristics of students served, and the funding that is provided? For example, should virtual or hybrid schools serving students from low-income families receive additional funds per pupil?
- Does the state want to limit charter contracts to non-profit organizations, as some states have done?
- What mechanisms has the state put in place to measure “value-added” – i.e. how much growth students make in any school, including but not limited to a virtual or hybrid school?
- What mix of measures is a state using to assess student progress, in addition to standardized, statewide tests?

- What students in a state would benefit from access to a virtual school opportunity? Might some students who currently unsuccessful benefit from such a school? What are the funding implications of these students attending a virtual school rather than a bricks and mortar school?

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Summary of State Virtual Charter Public School Funding Policies

How are states using virtual charter public schools to help address some of their educational challenges? This paper is designed to help answer this question. This report is designed to assist state policy-makers, educators, parents and other interested citizens by providing information in several key areas. The results below are based on a survey that the author conducted for the Center for School Change and as part of a larger project for the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices. The information provided below is accurate as on August 2013.

Many state policy-makers are exploring ways that emerging technology can improve student outcomes, including achievement and high school graduation rates. More than forty states have adopted some form of charter public school legislation¹, which often but not always permits creation of “virtual schools.” This paper seeks to answer the following key questions:

1. Which of the states that have adopted some form of charter public schools legislation also permit both bricks and mortar and virtual charter public schools?
2. In states that do permit “virtual” charter public schools, what are the basic funding practices being used for virtual charter schools? What patterns collectively emerge across the states?
3. What recommendations emerge from experience and research that state leaders may consider as they develop/refine policies regarding virtual charter public schools.

The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) estimated that as of Fall, 2012, “there are nearly two million students taking single on-line courses and 275,000 in full-time online schools. “ Moreover, iNACOL reported that “28 states offer a statewide virtual school providing students with supplemental online courses, 31 states have fulltime online schools for students in k-12 education.”²

Moreover, states and educators are exploring whether using on-line instruction, or a combination of on-line and more traditional forms of instruction³ can meet the needs of some students more effectively than existing “bricks and mortar” public schools. At the same time, state policymakers face numerous questions in developing appropriate policies and procedures in this rapidly changing field.

Moreover, some states are debating whether and how to bring together the virtual and hybrid school ideas with the charter public school approach. This report seeks to provide policy-makers with information that can be used to help them make the best possible decisions.

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BACKGROUND

Since Minnesota passed the nation’s first chartered public school law in 1991, 41 other state legislatures and the District of Columbia have adapted some version of this idea. The number of young people attending chartered public schools has grown from less than 100 in 1992 to more than two million in 2011-12.⁴

Chartered public schools have been created using an array of philosophies, curricula, age groups and other key characteristics. Most states have included in their goals for charter legislation both the desire to see improved student achievement by at least some students, and the desire to promote innovative approaches that can help more students be better prepared for some form of higher education, careers and citizenship.

Virtual schools are one way that innovation has been carried out, sometimes via districts, sometimes via state or regional efforts, and sometimes via charter public schools. Virtual schools sometimes also are known as “on-line, distance learning or digital schools.” A recent report describes 10 characteristics of these schools, including ways that they differ.⁵ These are:

- a. Comprehensiveness (i.e. are they full or part time)
- b. Reach (within a district, multi-districts, state, national or global)
- c. Type (district, magnet, charter, contract, private or home)
- d. Location (school, home or other)
- e. Delivery (Asynchronous or Synchronous)
- f. Operation control (local board, consortium, regional authority, university, state, independent vendor)
- g. Type of instruction (fully online, blending online and face to face, and fully face-to-face)
- h. Grade level (elementary, middle school, high school)
- i. Teacher-student interaction (high, moderate, low)
- j. Student – student interaction (high, moderate, low)

OVERVIEW

Over the last year, the Center for School Change surveyed and received responses from all forty-two states that have adopted some form of charter legislation and Washington, D.C., which also has a charter public school program. Respondents included state department of education/public instruction officials and state charter associations. Information in this report came from responses to this survey and follow-up emails through September 2013. A report summarizing state-by-state activity as of 2011 also provided information for this document.⁶

The information below is intended as a summary, rather than a full statement of any state’s funding formulas as they relate to virtual charter schools. This is a rapidly evolving field. As a recent report, “Clicks’ Get Bricks,” shows, some virtual schools now have concluded that the most effective way to provide education is to offer both “on-line” and “in-person interaction with students.”⁷

Information provided below is broken down into several major areas. First, the Issue Brief explains which state charter laws permit “virtual” charters. This section also briefly describes funding levels for virtual charters among forty-three laws. Next, a brief state-by-state summary is provided. This includes whether charters are funded from the state’s regular funds for public schools, or from a special fund. The summary also includes some details of funding for virtual charters, and whether the state has some non-charter virtual schools.

As is true in assessing other charters, state authorities need not answer the question, “which is more effective, traditional bricks and mortar schools, virtual or blended schools?” As many states have discovered, a more useful question is “what are features of a blended or a virtual school that will more effectively serve *some* students than those students are being served currently by existing schools, whether district or charter?”

MAJOR FUNDING PATTERNS

Several major funding patterns emerged from our research. The key approaches in states permitting charter public schools regarding funding of virtual charter schools are as follows:

1. Virtual charters are funded at the same per pupil level as “bricks and mortar” charters in: **Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Washington and Washington, D.C. (19)**
2. Virtual charters may be funded at the same level as “brick and mortar” charters, but this depends on certain key characteristics of the virtual school in **California (1)**
3. Virtual charters may be funded at the same, lower or higher level as brick and mortar charters non charter schools, depending on various characteristics of their students in **Kansas (1)**
4. Virtual schools are funded at a somewhat lower level than brick and mortar charter schools in **Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Ohio, South Carolina and Texas (10)**
5. Virtual charter public schools are permitted and their funding level, like “bricks and mortar” charter schools, is determined by a contract with a local school district that serves as their authorizer in **Wisconsin and Wyoming. (2)**
6. The state allows bricks and mortar charter public schools, but does not permit nor fund virtual charter public schools in **Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee (6)**
7. State law does not speak specifically to virtual charters but contain provisions that effectively preclude virtual charters in **New York. (1)**
8. State law neither permits nor prohibits a virtual charter school in **North Carolina and Virginia (2)**
9. State law permits virtual charter schools, so long as they are run by non-profit organizations or other (non-profit) groups. Funding details have not yet been worked out. **Washington State**
10. State law is silent on virtual charter schools. However, state has passed a separate law that permits creation of virtual schools that are similar to, but do not have all the same provisions as the state’s charter law. **Massachusetts**

Brief State-by-State Summary

This section provides a brief summary of the virtual charter school funding formula for each state that has adopted some form of charter public school legislation. As noted earlier, funding formulas often are complex. This is a summary not intended to convey all the details of each state’s funding formula

Alaska: Alaska permits virtual charter schools. However, while the state has “bricks and mortar” charters, it currently does not have any virtual charters. If there were any virtual charters, their funding would come from the same general fund as other non-virtual charter and other district run public schools. Virtual charter funding would be at 80 percent of the “bricks and mortar” charter schools. The state does have the Alaska Learning Network. www.aklearn.net This is a supplemental program that coordinates distance education for all 54 of Alaska’s public school districts.⁸

Arizona: The state permits both virtual and “bricks and mortar” charter schools. Virtual charters are funded at 95% of the level of “bricks and mortar” charters. Money for virtual and “bricks and mortar” charters comes from the state’s general fund, which also funds

district public schools. Some districts also offer virtual schools that are not chartered public schools.⁹

Arkansas: State law permits virtual charter schools. Arkansas has one virtual charter school. It receives the same per pupil funding as district and “bricks and mortar” charters. Its funds come from the same fund as other public schools. Arkansas also has a non-charter virtual program called the Arkansas Virtual High School. This program offers courses but is not a comprehensive, diploma granting high school.¹⁰

California: The state’s law permits both virtual and “bricks and mortar” charter public schools. Virtual charters may obtain up to 100% of what “bricks and mortar” charters receive per pupil. Funds for virtual charters come from the same state fund as other public schools, district and charter.

However, “Virtual schools must apply for a so-called “determination of funding” that documents that at least 40 percent of their budget is spent on teacher compensation, at least 80 percent is spent on “instruction,” and compliance with various other requirements.”¹¹ These additional criteria including achieving a certain ranking on the California school assessment system, providing teachers with certain equipment, developing an individual learning plan with each student, providing each participating student with a computer, internet service, monitor, printer and materials tied to California state standards, providing special education services for those students with an IEP, and having admission procedures that do not favor high performing students or target via recruiting students of certain racial or economic groups in the county or counties to be served.¹²

California virtual charters that do not meet these criteria receive somewhat less per pupil than “bricks and mortar” charter schools. There also are a number of California charters that offer some virtual learning all or part of the day. Some districts also offer on-line, non-charter virtual schools.¹³

Colorado: This state does permit, and does have some “bricks and mortar” charter schools and “on-line” charter schools. On-line charters receive the minimum available for charters. This means they receive somewhat less than some other “bricks and mortar” charters. Some districts and some multi-district organizations also offer virtual non-charter schools. Colorado’s Department of Education currently is studying the virtual school issue at the request of the legislature.¹⁴

Connecticut: This state’s law does allow “bricks and mortar” chartered schools, but does not permit creation of “virtual” charter schools.” The state also has Connecticut Virtual Learning, which provides some supplementary, Advanced Placement and credit recovery courses.

Delaware: This state has some “bricks and mortar” charter schools, and one charter that offer some “on-line” classes in addition to its classroom work. The current law does not permit “virtual” charters.¹⁵

Florida: Virtual schools are funded at somewhat less than the level of “bricks and mortar” charter schools. The amounts are set by statute. Districts withhold five percent of the per pupil allocation to all virtual charters. Those “bricks and mortar” charters designated as “high performing” have only two percent of their funds withheld by districts; however, virtual charters are not yet included in the “high performing” category. Also, charters may enroll only students living within the district in which they are chartered.¹⁶

Florida also has a Florida Virtual School, a major statewide, non-charter virtual school that serves district, charter, private, and parochial school students. One national report notes that the Florida Virtual School “is the largest in the country.”¹⁷

Georgia: This state permits both “bricks and mortar” and virtual charters. Virtual charters receive about 20% less in Quality Basic Education funds and no capital outlay funds. Funding for “bricks and mortar” and virtual charter schools comes from the state’s general fund which also supports district public schools. The Georgia Department of Education operates a Georgia Virtual School, which offers Advanced Placement, career-technical and other courses to high school students throughout the state.¹⁸

Hawaii: The state does permit virtual charter schools, which are funded at the same per pupil level as other charter schools. Funding comes from the same state fund that supports non-chartered public schools. Hawaii currently has two virtual charter schools. The state also has the Hawaii Virtual Learning Network that coordinates virtual courses that are offered by charter and non-charter hybrid and virtual schools.¹⁹

Idaho: This state’s law permits both “bricks and mortar” and virtual charter public schools. The state provides the same funding formula for district and charter schools, whether “bricks and mortar” or virtual charter schools. The state does have some virtual charter schools. The state also has a non-charter Digital Learning Academy that offers a variety of courses to students throughout the state.²⁰

Illinois: This state law permits both “bricks and mortar” and virtual charter schools. Virtual charters are funded at the same level as other charters. The state has a small virtual charter school sector. The state also has a non-charter Illinois Virtual School. This program offers a variety of “on-line” high school classes. It does not award a high school degree.²¹ Illinois current has a one-year moratorium on creating any new virtual charter public schools outside Chicago. A state commission will study the issue and report back to the Legislature.²²

Indiana: This state law permits both “bricks and mortar” and virtual charter schools. Virtual charters receive 90 % of the amount that “bricks and mortar” charters receive. Money for charters and district public schools comes from the state’s general fund. The state has two charter virtual schools and a few non-charter virtual schools operated by districts.²³

Iowa: Iowa permits existing public schools to convert to charter status and it permits creation of new charters. Charters are funded at the same level as other public schools. There are several “bricks and mortar” charters operating in Iowa, but no virtual charters. The Iowa Department of Education operates Iowa Learning On-line, which provides “on-line” courses for high school students.²⁴

Kansas: The Kansas charter law allows both “bricks and mortar” and virtual charter public schools. Funding comes from the regular general fund that supports non-charter as well as chartered public schools. Depending on the characteristics of their students, virtual charters may receive slightly more, the same, or less per pupil than bricks and mortar charter and district-run public schools. Kansas has six virtual charter schools and seven district-run, non-charters. The state also has some district and charter schools that have virtual programs as part of their offerings.²⁵

Louisiana: Virtual charters receive 90% of the amount that bricks and mortar charter schools receive. State legislators decided that since virtual schools do not have all the expenses of “brick and mortar” schools, the virtual schools would receive somewhat less. Money for all charters in Louisiana comes from the state’s “Minimum Foundation Program,” a combination of state and local dollars that fund all public schools, district and charter. Two virtual charters are operating in Louisiana. The state department of education also operates a statewide non-charter school called Louisiana Virtual School (LVS). The state has studied results of the LVS.²⁶

Maine Virtual charters are permitted and will receive the same amount as “bricks and mortar” charters. Thus far, no virtual schools have been approved. The statewide commission that has the authority to authorize virtual charters is studying the issue. Maine has established a Maine Online Learning Program. This program offers on-line courses to students throughout the state. Some local districts also offer on-line learning courses.²⁷

Maryland: Virtual charter schools are not permitted under current legislation. The state does have a non-charter Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities Program (MVLOP) that is managed by the Maryland State Department of Education. MVLOP offers on-line courses for high school students but is not a school. While offering some courses, it does not offer a complete high school program that would lead students to a high school diploma.

Massachusetts: The state law on charters permits “bricks and mortar” charters. It is silent on virtual charters. A number of district public schools participate in a Virtual High School Collaborative, which is based in Massachusetts and includes member schools and districts from a number of states. Research has been done on the Virtual High School Collaborative. A law adopted in 2012 permits “Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools.” These are similar to charters, in that they are “autonomous school districts,” but they are not considered charter schools.

A Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual School (CMVS) is a public school operated by a board of trustees whose teachers primarily teach from a remote location using the Internet or other computer-based methods and whose students are not required to be located at the physical premises of the school. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education grants a certificate to the proposed board of trustees for a virtual school. The CMVS and its board of trustees then becomes a state entity, directly accountable to the Board and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Similar to the charter school model, a CMVS is an autonomous school district that operates independently of any existing school district. State funds follow the student. A virtual school can request payment for the student up to \$5,000 per student, plus the cost of special education services or more if approved by the state.²⁸

Michigan: This state permits both “bricks and mortar” and virtual charter schools. Virtual charters receive the same amount as other charters, through Michigan’s “School Aid Fund.” More than 25 traditional districts also operate non-charter virtual schools. The state has two virtual charters operating. A recent law increased the number of virtual charters allowed, while limiting the total number of students who can be enrolled. The state also created a Michigan Virtual School, which offers courses to middle and high school students.²⁹

Minnesota: Minnesota permits both “bricks and mortar” and virtual charter public schools. Both types of charters receive the same amount from the state per pupil as do district, non-charter public schools.³⁰ The state has seven operating virtual charter schools. Some districts also operate virtual, non-charter schools. Minnesota’s Office of the Legislative Auditor completed a report in September 2011 that discussed the performance of students in Minnesota virtual schools operated as district schools and as charter schools.³¹

Mississippi: State law explicitly prohibits creation of virtual charter public schools.³² The state has established the non-charter Mississippi Virtual Public School in cooperation with the Mississippi Department of Education.

Missouri: Missouri law permits “bricks and mortar” charters but not virtual charter schools. The Missouri Department of Education established the Missouri Virtual Instruction Program. This offers courses available to k-12 students.³³

Nevada: This state has both “bricks and mortar” and virtual charter public schools. Both kinds of charters are funded at the same per pupil level. Charters are funded from the same state budget as district public schools. The state has three virtual (called “distance education”) charter public schools. Some districts also offer non-charter virtual schools and programs.³⁴

New Hampshire: The state allows both virtual and district charter public schools. Virtual charter schools receive the same “per pupil” funding as district public schools. The same state fund is used to support district and chartered public schools. The state’s one operating virtual charter school also enrolls students part time from non-charter public schools and is open to students from other parts of the country.³⁵

New Jersey: Virtual charters would receive as much per pupil as “bricks and mortar” charters. Funds come from the state allocation that supports all public schools, district and charter. There are no virtual charters operating as of fall 2013. The state has one non-charter statewide virtual school, the New Jersey Virtual School.³⁶

New Mexico: Virtual charters receive the same per pupil allocation as district public schools. A recent report discusses the virtual charters and the legislature is studying the issue. The state does have virtual charters operating.³⁷ The state also has IDEAL –NM, a non-charter program that offers on-line courses for middle and high school students.

New York: Virtual charters are not specifically mentioned in the state’s law. There currently are no virtual charter schools in New York. The law as written makes creating a virtual charter extremely difficult. This is because any time a charter educates two or more students of the same grade in a different physical location, this counts against the cap on the number of charter schools allowed. There currently are about 240 charters left under the state’s cap.³⁸

Some non-charter on-line courses are available through Board of Cooperative Services (BOCES).

North Carolina: The state’s charter law does not specifically mention virtual schools. North Carolina’s non-charter Virtual School offers courses not available in the “bricks and mortar” public schools students attend. One national report says that the NCVS “has the second highest enrollments of any state virtual school.”³⁹ In 2012, the State Board of Education established a policy permitting virtual charter schools. These schools will be funded at the level of classes provided by the North Carolina Virtual School. This is significantly below charter revenue for a bricks and mortar charter public school as defined in the state statutes.⁴⁰

Ohio: Both brick and mortar and virtual charters are permitted in this state. Virtual charters receive about 80 percent of the amount that “brick and mortar” charters. In the various categorical weightings such as poverty, parity, and special education, virtual charters receive only special education weighting. Otherwise, virtual charters receive the same amount as “brick and mortar charters.” Funding for virtual charters comes from the same general fund as for all public schools. Brick and mortar charters receive approximately 69 percent, and virtual charters receive about 54 percent of the per pupil allocation of the eight largest school districts. The state has twenty-seven virtual charters, on which seven are statewide schools. The state also has at least ten non-charter virtual schools. Some are operated by educational service centers. Individual districts run others.⁴¹

Oklahoma: The state law permits virtual charter schools. Oklahoma has two virtual charter schools, as well as “bricks and mortar” charter schools. Virtual charters receive the same level of funding as other charter schools, with funds coming via the state aid funding formula.⁴²

Oregon: This state allows both “bricks and mortar” and virtual charter public schools. Virtual charters are funded at the same level as other charter public schools. The state has nine charter schools that the Oregon Department of Education classifies as “hybrid” and twelve it classifies as “virtual.”⁴³

Pennsylvania: Virtual and “bricks and mortar” charters are permitted under state law. Virtual charters receive the same amount as “brick and mortar” charters. The state currently has 12 virtual charters with four more scheduled to open fall, 2012. Currently, 35,000-40,000 students attend Pennsylvania virtual charter schools. A number of districts also offer non-charter virtual programs.⁴⁴

Rhode Island: Virtual and “bricks and mortar” charter schools receive the same amount. The state has approved two virtual charter school applications, which are scheduled to open in September 2013. Some districts schools offer non-charter virtual schools through a Rhode Island or a regional collaborative effort.⁴⁵

South Carolina: Virtual charters currently receive \$1,550 less per pupil than “bricks and mortar” charters. Funds for charter schools come from the overall state education budget. This is in the budget but is not in the state law authorizing charters. The state currently has seven virtual charter schools operating. Many South Carolina districts offer non-chartered virtual schools. South Carolina also offers a virtual non-charter school that provides courses for middle and high school students.⁴⁶

Tennessee: The state’s charter law does not permit charters to be virtual schools. A local school district has partnered with a company to offer a non-charter virtual school for Tennessee students grades K-8.⁴⁷

Texas: Both “bricks and mortar” and virtual charter public schools are allowed by Texas charter law. Virtual charters authorized before January 1, 2013 receive the same per pupil as “bricks and mortar” charters. However a law passed in 2013 “limits that funding to three full time electronic courses per school year unless the student is enrollment in a full-time online program that was operating prior to January 1, 2013. Only virtual operators operating prior to Jan 1, 2013 will receive per pupil funding for full-time students; all others will receive per pupil funding for only 3 classes a year. ”⁴⁸ The state has virtual charter schools and a non-charter virtual school run by fourteen Educational Service Cooperatives.⁴⁹

Utah: Virtual and “bricks and mortar” charters receive the same amount per student from the state’s weighted pupil unit (WPU) formula that essentially treats each student the same. Districts, charters, and virtual students all receive the same WPU amount for the students they serve. Several districts also offer non-charter virtual schools. The state also has the Utah Electronic High School that offers courses to students through the state. In a limited number of cases, students may graduate from the Utah Electronic High School.⁵⁰

Virginia: Virginia’s charter law is silent on the issue of virtual charters, and the state does not have any virtual charter schools. Three districts offer full time virtual (non charter) schools. The state also has a Virtual Virginia, a statewide public school offering courses to middle and high school students. It is operated by the Virginia Department of Education. Virginia

has developed an extensive set of state policies and procedures involving virtual public schools.⁵¹

Washington, D.C. The district's charter law permits both "bricks and mortar" and virtual charter schools. There is one virtual charter school in Washington, DC. It receives the same funding as other local charter public schools. Funds for the virtual charter come from the same fund as for other district and charter public schools. The district does not have other virtual public schools.⁵²

Washington State: In November 2012, Washington's voters approved a referendum establishing a charter public school program. The law allows both "bricks and mortar and virtual charter schools. Washington already has a number of virtual schools.

Washington's charter law requires that all charters be operated by non-profit groups. So far the details of per pupil funding for virtual charters have not been finalized.⁵³

Wisconsin: Virtual and "bricks and mortar" charter schools are permitted. The state has some virtual charter schools. Their per pupil allocation depends on the funding level agreed to in their contract with a local district that serves as their authorizer. At the request of the Legislature, in 2010, the Department of Public Instruction completed "An Evaluation of Virtual Charter Schools."⁵⁴ Wisconsin also has a statewide web academy known as the "Wisconsin Digital Learning Collaborative. This program offers on-line learning opportunities to district and charter public school students, as well as to private schools.⁵⁵

Wyoming: Virtual charter schools are permitted so long as they also have a brick and mortar site. In Wyoming school districts serve as authorizers and their contract with the school determines the charter school's per pupil funding, whether it is a "bricks and mortar" or a virtual charter. The state also has some non-charter virtual schools. Wyoming also has created the Wyoming Switchboard Network, a collection of distance education groups that provide virtual courses to k-12 students.⁵⁶

Questions for State Policy-Makers to Consider

As states consider whether to approve and fund virtual charter public schools, these and other state policies and experiences can be helpful. Key issues that may be raised as states develop and refine policies around virtual charter schools may include:

- Should the state **permit students** to attend virtual schools part time, as well as full time? If yes, how should the allocation of funds be determined?
- Should there be any relationship between the characteristics of students served, and the funding that is provided? For example, should virtual or hybrid schools serving students from low-income families receive additional funds per pupil?
- Does the state want to limit charter contracts to non-profit organizations, as some states have done?
- What mechanisms has the state put in place to measure "value-added" – i.e. how much growth students make in any school, including but not limited to a virtual or hybrid school?
- What mix of measures is a state using to assess student progress, in addition to standardized, statewide tests?
- What sort of students in a state would benefit from access to a virtual school opportunity? Might some students who currently unsuccessful benefit from such a school? What are the funding implications of these students attending a virtual school rather than a bricks and mortar school⁵⁷

About the author

Joe Nathan, PhD, has received awards from student, parent and professional groups for his work as an urban public school teacher and administrator. Nathan coordinated the National Governors Association 1985 report, *Time For Results*. Since 1989, he has directed the Center for School Change. The Center works at the school, community and policy levels to help produce improvements in student achievement and increase the number of students who believe they can and should be active, involved citizens. More than 30 state legislatures and several Congressional Committees have invited him to testify. Since 1985, Nathan has written a weekly column for various newspapers. *USA Today*, *the Wall Street Journal*, *Atlanta Constitution*, *Detroit News*, *Sacramento Bee*, *Philadelphia Inquirer* and other papers have carried “op-ed columns he wrote. He currently writes a column carried weekly by Minnesota newspapers reaching up to 650,000 families. Nathan has been married for 39 years. The Nathan’s three children attended and graduated from urban public schools.

¹ Every state that has adopted legislation permitting charter schools has stipulated that these will be public schools. Therefore, this policy brief uses the term “charter public schools.”

² Patrick, Susan, Edwards, David, Wicks, Matthew, and Watson, John, *Measuring Quality From Inputs to Outcomes: Creating Student Learning Performance Metrics and Quality Assurance for Online Schools*, Vienna, V: iNACOL October 2012.

³ A subsequent paper from the CSC will review research on virtual charter public schools. For the purposes of this report, the terms “virtual charter school” and “online charter school” are synonymous, and the terms “digital learning,” “virtual learning,” and “online learning” are synonymous as well. The terms “blended learning” and “hybrid” refer to hybrid programs in which aspects of virtual learning are used in conjunction with a more traditional setting. Except where otherwise noted, references to “virtual” or “cyber” schools and learning should be understood to be inclusive of blended learning.

⁴ National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Dashboard, available at <http://dashboard.publiccharters.org/dashboard/students/page/overview/year/2013>

⁵ Watson, J., Murin, A., Vashaw, L., Gemin, B., and Rapp, C., *KeepingPace*, 2011, Evergreen Education Group. Available at kpk12.com

⁶ *KeepingPace 2011*

⁷ Schulte, Brigid, “Clicks Get Bricks,” *Harvard Education Letter*, July / August 2011

⁸ Email communication with Roxanne Mourant, State Technology Coordinator, Alaska Education Department, August, 2012

⁹ Email communication, July 30, 2013, Andrew Collins, Senior Director of School Development, Arizona Charter Schools Association.

¹⁰ Email communication August 13, 2012 with Scott Smith, Director, Arkansas Public School Resource Center.

¹¹ Email communication from Eric Premack, Charter Schools Development Center

¹² Email communication from Michelle Low, California Charter Schools Association

¹³ Email communication with July 29, 2013, Eric Premack, Executive Director, Charter Schools Development Center, Email communication 8/16/12 with Michelle Low, Director, Regulatory Affairs, California Charter Schools Association.

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- ¹⁵ Email communication, August 21, 2012, Rebecca Tabor, Delaware Governor's Office
- ¹⁶ Email communication, August 2012, Cheri Shannon, Director, Florida Charter School Alliance.
- ¹⁷ *KeepingPace*, 2011, p. 17.
- ¹⁸ Email communications, August 2012, Tony Roberts, President/CEO and Andrew Lewis, Executive Vice President, Georgia Charter School Association.
- ¹⁹ Email communication, August 2012, Lynn Finnegan, Executive Director, Hawaii Public Charter Schools Network.
- ²⁰ Email communication, August 22, 2012, Diane Demarest, Executive Director, Idaho Charter School Network.
- ²¹ Email communication, August 14, 2012, Andrew Broy, President, Illinois Network of Charter Schools.
- ²² Jenco, Melissa, "State bans new online charter schools for 1 year," *Chicago Tribune*, May 27, 2013
- ²³ Email communications, August 13, 2012, August 11, 2013, Russ Simick, Executive Director, Indiana Charter School Association.
- ²⁴ Email communication, October 8, 2012, Janet Boyd, School Improvement Consultant, Iowa Department of Education.
- ²⁵ Email communication, 8/31/12, Jessica Noble, Education Program Consultant, Kansas Department of Education
- ²⁶ Email communications August 2012 with Sarah Usdin and Caroline Roemer, Executive Director, Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools.
- ²⁷ Email communications August 10, 2013 and August 12, 2013 with Roger Brainerd, Executive Director, Maine Charter School Association
- ²⁸ Phone conversation July 22, 2013 with Susan Hargrave, Coordinator of Digital Learning and Accessibility," Massachusetts Department of Education, email communications August 5, 2013 with Ms. Hargrave and with Luis Rodriguez, Director, Office of Digital Learning, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- ²⁹ Email communication, August 2012, Dan Quisenberry, President, Michigan Public School Academies
- ³⁰ Email communication, August, 2012, Eugene Piccolo, Executive Director, Minnesota Association of Charter Schools.
- ³¹ www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/2011/k12oll.htm
- ³² Email Communication, August 12, 2013, Patrice Guilfoyle, Communications Director, Mississippi Department of Education.
- ³³ Email communication, August, 2012, Earl Simms, Director of Advocacy and Communications, Missouri Charter Public School Association.
- ³⁴ Email communication, August 25 2012, Steve Canavero, Director, Nevada Public Charter School Authority.
- ³⁵ Email communication, August 28, 2012, Michelle Gauthier, Charter School Office, New Hampshire Department of Education.
- ³⁶ Email communications, August 28, 2012 and August 12, 2013, Carlos Perez, President, New Jersey Charter School Association.
- ³⁷ The New Mexico report is item #6 at <http://www.nmlegis.gov/lcs/lesc/lescbriefs.aspx?Date=7N%2f25%2f2012+12%3a00%3a00+AM>
- ³⁸ Email communication, August 1, 2013, from James Merriman, CEO, New York City Charter School Center. Email communication August 2, 2013 from Bill Phillips, President, Northeast Charter Schools Network.
- ³⁹ *KeepingPace* 2011, p. 18.

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- ⁴⁰ Email communications, August 13, 2012, Eddie Goodall, Executive Director, North Carolina Public Charter Schools Association, phone and email communications with Mr. Goodall, August 12, 2013
- ⁴¹ Email communication, August 13, 2012, Bill Sims, President and CEO, Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools.
- ⁴² Email communications, August 12, 2013m Sam Duell, Executive Director, School Choice, Oklahoma Department of Education; August, 2012, Regina Rayburn, Oklahoma Department of Education.
- ⁴³ Email communication, August, 2012, Kate Pattison, Program Analyst, Learning Opportunities, Oregon Department of Education.
- ⁴⁴ Email communication, August 26, 2012, Bob Fayfich, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools.
- ⁴⁵ Email communications, September 4, 2012 and August 13, 2013, Stephen Nardelli, Executive Director, Rhode Island League of Charter Schools.
- ⁴⁶ Email communication, August 13, 2012, Mary Carmichael, Executive Director Public Charter School Alliance of South Carolina.
- ⁴⁷ Email communication, August 20, 2012, August 13, 2013, Lauren Hayes, Director of Advocacy, Tennessee Charter Schools
- ⁴⁸ Email communication, August 12, 2013, Lindsey Jones, Director of Legal and Policy Services, Texas Charter School Association
- ⁴⁹ ,Email communication, August, 2012, David Dunn, Executive Director, Texas Charter School Association
- ⁵⁰ Email communication, August 10, 2013, Christopher Bleak, President Utah Association of Public Charter Schools.
- ⁵¹ See http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/virtual_learning/virtual_schools/index.shtml
- ⁵² Email communications, August 13, 2012, August 11, 2013, Ramona Edelin, Executive Director, District of Columbia Association of Chartered Public Schools
- ⁵³ Phone conversation August 1, 2013, Jack Archer, Director, Basic Education Oversight, Washington State Board of Education
- ⁵⁴ <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/LAB/reports/10-3full.pdf>
- ⁵⁵ Email communication, August 21, 2012, Scott Eagleburger, School Management Services, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.
- ⁵⁶ Email communication, August, 2012, Elaine Marces, Education Consultant, Federal Programs, Wyoming Department of Education.
- ⁵⁷ Support for this research came from two sources. Initial work was supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to the Regents of the University of Minnesota. Grant Number # U282NO60002-08. Subsequent work was supported by a grant from the Walton Family Foundation to the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. The author is solely responsible for the findings. The findings and conclusions are not necessarily those of either the U.S. Department of Education or the Walton Family Foundation. None of the report's findings, conclusions or recommendations are necessarily those of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. This is the first of two reports intended to help inform discussion about virtual charter public schools.