

The Emerging Influence of the Advisory Commission on Charter Schools

By Lisa Corr

Most nonclassroom-based charter schools are well aware of the influence of the Advisory Commission on Charter Schools ("ACCS"). The ACCS is an advisory committee initially established by the State Board of Education ("SBE") to recommend criteria to the SBE for making funding determinations for nonclassroom schools under Senate Bill 740. However, the SBE has granted the ACCS a much broader role to advise the SBE on all aspects of the SBE's duties under the Charter Schools Act. Thus, making it important for all charter schools to understand the role of the ACCS and its influence on the landscape of California charter schools.

Since its inception in October of 2001, the ACCS has considered varying charter school issues including funding determinations for nonclassroom-based charter schools; the facilities grant program under SB 740; charter school petitions on appeal to the SBE; regulations related to funding for students over the age of nineteen, AB 14 (facilities financing), AB 1994 (state-wide charter schools), and SBE revocation of charters; and special education. As an advisory committee, it may only make recommendations to the SBE. However, its influence cannot be discounted; the SBE has approved all but one recommendation of the ACCS.

The ACCS is a nine member committee. The SBE is required by law to ensure that all of the following groups are represented in its membership: school district superintendents, charter schools, teachers, parents (guardians), members of the governing boards of school districts, and county superintendents of schools.

The ACCS is advised by Greg Geeting, Assistant Executive Director

Current membership of the ACCS			
ACCS Member	Represents	Affiliations	Term
Steve Barr	Charter schools	Founder: Green Dot Public Schools, Amino Leadership Academy, Amino Inglewood Charter High School	12/31/03
Tom Conry	Teachers	Teacher: Vista Unified School District	12/31/03
Linda Frost	School district superintendents	Superintendent: Summerville Union High School District	12/31/03
Beth Hunkapiller	School governing board members	Board member: San Carlos Elementary School District, Aspire Public Schools	12/31/03
Mark Kushner Chair	Charter schools	Founder and Director: Leadership Public Schools	12/31/04
Marta Reyes	County superintendents of schools	Executive Director: Charter Community School, Home Study Academy and Extended Day Program, El Dorado County Office of Education; President: California Network of Educational Charters	12/31/04
Jan Sterling	State Superintendent of Public Instruction	Director: School Fiscal Services, California Department of Education ("CDE")	Serves at Superintendent's pleasure
Johnathan Williams	Parents	Founder and Co-director: Accelerated School	12/31/04
ONE VACANCY			12/31/04

of the SBE and Eileen Cubanski, Administrator of the CDE's Charter Schools Office. Due to the impact and importance of the ACCS's decisions, many of the consultants from the CDE's Charter Schools Office are present in the audience at each of the meetings of the ACCS.

Given the breadth and wide-spread impact of the matters before the ACCS, its influence over the SBE, and the impact its recommendations might make on our clients, our office, as well as many individual charter schools, attends all ACCS meetings. Ongoing monitoring of the meetings can benefit any charter school operator or developer allowing him or her to stay on top of all current issues affecting charter schools and an opportunity to guide the recommendations of the ACCS by speaking publicly on agenda-dized matters. Moreover, attendance at the meetings provides an opportunity to meet the CDE Charter School's Office consultants that provide a wealth of information to the charter school community.

The ACCS typically meets at least once monthly, but may hold as many meetings as necessary based upon the members' assessment of workload in consultation with the CDE. The meetings are held in accordance with the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act (similar to the Brown Act). As such, all meetings are open to the public and noticed, and the public has an opportunity to comment on all matters on the agenda. If you cannot attend the meetings, you can still stay abreast of the issues by receiving copies of the agendas and minutes of each meeting. To be notified of upcoming meetings, receive agendas, supporting materials, and meeting notes, send an email to Greg Geeting at ggeeting@cde.ca.gov and ask to be placed on the ACCS notification list.

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