

2003 National Charter Schools Week

The Fourth Annual National Charter Schools Week celebration is April 28-May 2, 2003. Educational and political leaders, national organizations that support charter schools, and other charter business partners use NCSW to demonstrate the broad national support for independent, performance oriented public schools.

Charter schools are independent public schools. The "charter" that establishes each school is a performance contract detailing the school's mission, program, goals, and measures of success. Charter schools are accountable to their authorizers, parents, and the public. Freed from bureaucracy often found in traditional schools, charters design and deliver programs tailored to educational excellence and student and community needs.

Thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia have charter school laws, and several additional states are considering charter laws this year. Nationwide, students in charter schools have similar demo-

graphic characteristics to those in traditional public schools, although more than half of charters report serving significant populations of minorities, at-risk, and low-income students.

Like traditional district schools, charter schools are funded according to the number of students attending. Unfortunately in Delaware, unlike other public schools, charter schools do not receive money for facilities. Delaware charter schools pay their mortgages or renovation costs out of their general operating funds.

Charter schools operate from three basic principles:

Accountability: Charter schools are judged on how well they meet student achievement goals established by their charters, and by how well they manage their fiscal and operational responsibilities. If they fail to deliver, they can be closed.

Choice: Parents, community groups, teachers, and individuals interested in creating alternative educational opportunities for children can start charter schools. Students choose to

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Neat to Know About Charter Schools

- The U.S. has more than 2,700 charter schools
- 680,000 students attend charter schools nationwide
- Thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia have charter school laws
- Nearly 70% of charter schools have waiting lists
- More than 90 new charter schools are approved to open for the 2003-04 school year
- Nearly 45% of charters offer an extended school day and/or extended year program
- On average, 15% of charters' state operating money (student funding) goes to facility expenses, for which traditional public schools usually receive taxpayer funding
- According to the Center for Education Reform, more than 22 studies show that America's charter schools serve a disproportionately high number of students from low socio-economic populations and those at risk of dropping out

*Charter schools focus on three components:
Quality, Choice, and Innovation.*



Charter Schools Help Kids Reach for the Stars



What puts the "positive" in Positive Outcomes?

Now in its seventh year, POCS in Camden has earned



"commended" status from the Delaware Department of Education.

Serving at-risk students, POCS makes academic

Positive Outcomes Charter School

gains that exceed expectations by fully implementing their mission statement.

Their mission is to provide an opportunity for children to learn in a safe, caring, and respectful environment, where individuality is valued and individual needs are addressed.

This mission statement drives countless decisions on a daily basis, from school uniforms (No!) to free food on state testing days (Yes!) to the quarterly pizza party for students who achieve honor roll status.

POCS is a student-centered school. Many of their students have learning styles that are not compatible with a teacher lecture type of instructional delivery. Visual learners are accommodated with technology in every classroom. In addition, students know that they are valued, and that they are expected to perform in order to continue to attend this school. POCS students like being in a school where everybody knows everybody, and people care about each other.

A caring atmosphere couldn't be achieved without a dedicated staff. POCS staff members regularly provide student transportation, buy school supplies and treats for their students, and contribute funds for children who would not otherwise be able to participate in school activities. When prospective employees are interviewed, attitude and values are weighed as heavily as credentials.

Marion T. Academy Celebrates Science



Spring is in the air at MTA as Ms. Shabazz and Ms. Mowbray's third grade classes participate in the Third Annual City of Wilmington Science Celebration.

The 2003 competition focuses on keeping Wilmington a beautiful place to live. The Delaware Horticulture Society is sponsoring the City's Garden Contest as part of the Science Celebration.

Last year, Ms. Shabazz's class placed third in the city-wide competition of science projects. She lends a special touch to the experiences of each student that passes through her portal of knowledge and learning. Ms. Shabazz demonstrates to students that you don't have to *have* the best of everything in order to *be* the best.

Students' confidence levels are running high at MTA as they prepare for the upcoming competition by planting a flower garden in front of the school. It is a beautiful sight to see!

Newark Charter School Focuses on New Building

"Charter schools don't come into this world because it is easy," said Gregory Meece, School Director, at the Newark Charter School's groundbreaking ceremony. "They come because they are needed."

After three years of hard work, NCS is finally constructing a two-story, 58,666sq.ft. building, and will move to the new, custom facility in time for Fall 2003.

The school expects to open its doors in September with 620 children in grades 5-8. Currently, there are 450 students on the school's waiting list.

NCS boasts the highest state test scores among Delaware

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At Newark Charter School's new custom facility, shown here, construction is well underway.

ISDC: Innovative Schools Development Corporation

Helping Charters with Facility Financing



A new non-profit organization, Innovative Schools Development Corporation (ISDC), has been established to assist Delaware charter schools. One of the central missions of ISDC is to help charter schools with facility financing.


Delaware charter schools currently receive no money for facilities, and each school pays for its building through the state per-pupil allotment. This means that Delaware charter schools do more with less. It also means that each charter school, without capital support, must face the daunting task of finding its own financing sources for facilities.

How does ISDC help charter schools? ISDC works closely with lending institutions to give them a level of comfort in entering into a complex financial transaction with a charter school. ISDC helps lenders understand charter school operations, and

may provide loan guarantees for charter school construction as well.

ISDC successfully completed its first deal, with Newark Charter School, in March 2003. In this financial arrangement, ISDC guaranteed the equity portion of an \$8.5 million construction loan.

ISDC first worked with Newark Charter School to ensure that all financial documentation, performance, and board qualifications were in order. After reviewing the school's portfolio, ISDC discussed with the NCS Board the construction financing options available to the school.

In addition to financing help, ISDC can provide fee-for-service administrative and academic support to Delaware's charter schools. ISDC hopes to assist charter schools in providing cost-effective student services. To learn more about ISDC, call 302-656-4737 or email gfredericks@innovativeschools.org. 


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middle schools. NCS fifth graders were ranked first in the 2002 DSTP tests in reading, math, and writing. In addition, the school's sixth graders have placed first in science for 2003.

High levels of parent involvement (NCS received the State of Delaware Parent Partnership Award last year), high expectations for student behavior, an exceptional teaching staff, and a Core Knowledge curriculum all contribute to the school's solid reputation.

The school's new site will include a gymnasium/multipurpose room, band room, computer lab, art studio, and media center. The facility will give students essential research capabilities as well as training in the use of all kinds of technology.


The new site features a soccer field in addition to many natural habitat areas for environmental studies.

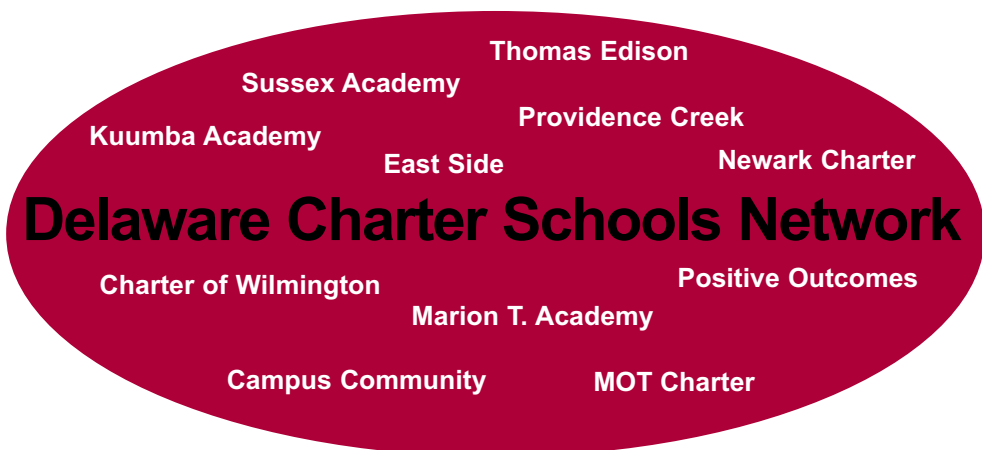
"Our architects, engineers, Board of Directors, and faculty spent a great deal of time making sure the learning environment of NCS would compliment the school's academic and extracurricular activities," said Mr. Meece. "We are fortunate, indeed, that our dream has finally come true." 



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attend, and teachers choose to teach at charter schools.

Autonomy: Charter schools are freed from the traditional district bureaucracy that can divert a school's energy and resources toward compliance rather than excellence. 





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MOT Charter School Celebrates NCSW


Festivities Highlight Charter School Spirit

This year, MOT Charter School is taking NCSW to new heights, under the leadership of co-chairpersons Karen O'Brien (Kindergarten Teacher) and Ed Delfin (Dean of Students). The committee, with members Laurie Bishop, Denise Fanning, Stacie Husted, Dennis Spinella, Miggs Gemmato, Stefanie Sweigart, and Jennifer Vail, has done an outstanding job of planning a coordinated, school-wide celebration of NCSW.

MOT's first NCSW event is a poster/essay contest with the theme of "Show your MOT Pride!" Students will create a poster, poem, or an essay to enter into the contest. The

committee will determine grade-level winners based on originality, school spirit, and neatness.

To gets students in the spirit of things, an MOT Cheer Contest will be held, with grades competing against one another. Each grade will write and learn the same cheer, which will be shared with the school at the Kick-Off Pep Rally.

Finally, a ceremony will honor one boy and one girl in each class with the Citizenship Award, which recognizes politeness and good manners. Awards will also be given for Perfect Attendance. 

MOT Charter School NCSW Activity Calendar

Monday, April 28: Spirit Kick-Off

- Students wear school colors
- MOT Pep Rally (each grade performs "its" cheer)
- 2nd & 3rd Grade Grandparents/Special Person Visit

Tuesday, April 29: Academic Games

- Academic Games in Class
- K & 1st Grade Grandparents Day

Wednesday, April 30: Community Day

- Community leaders to tour school
- Mayor will read proclamation of MOT Charter Day
- 4th and 5th Grade Grandparents Day

Thursday, May 1: Teacher Appreciation Day

- Teacher Appreciation Lunch
- Activity: students write about or draw their teacher
- Club Day: each teacher hosts a different "club"
- 6th Grade Grandparents Day

Friday, May 2: Student Appreciation Day

- Crazy Head Day (hair or hats)
- Carnival: K-3 plays games designed by Grades 4-6
- Day Sock Hop for K-4, Evening Dance for Grades 5-6
- Special snack for students from teachers and parents
- Awards: Essay/Poster Contest, Citizenship, Attendance