

See Polk Consensus Results in BOLD.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

STATEWIDE STUDY ON CHARTER SCHOOLS CONSENSUS STATEMENTS

Florida's constitution provides for a uniform, high quality school system as the paramount duty of the state. The purpose and management of charter schools are subject to study and debate. A lawsuit has been filed in Florida that alleges that the current educational system is neither uniform nor high quality. The League supports the Florida constitution. Discuss these statements and reach consensus on whether or not they will improve charter school management and make Florida's educational system more closely aligned with the Florida constitution.

For each statement, respond: Consensus reached: Yes ___ No ___

Comment: _____

Purpose of Charter Schools

1. Districts must identify unmet student and community educational needs as part of their strategic plans and submit priorities for alternative and/or charter schools to the Florida Department of Education. **YES**
Comment- needs to be part of district's written plan
2. Only charter schools that offer identifiable innovative teaching/learning methods or meet specific unmet needs should be authorized. **YES**

Management

1. Traditional public and charter schools procedures must allow flexible schedules and curricula. **YES**
Comment- would require changing the statutes
2. Charter and traditional schools may have flexibility in salary and benefit compensation packages, but they must adhere to a minimum and maximum salary range that reflects district salary guidelines. **YES**
3. A charter school governing board must have a minimum of one local representative, not the administrator, who resides in the community and is answerable to the school parents and community. **YES**
Comment- doesn't go far enough
4. Charter school admissions and dismissal policies and procedures should be supervised by district staff to ensure they conform to state guidelines. **YES**
5. Those charter schools that educate students requiring ESE services must hire appropriately certified full or part time instructors before applying for additional funding for the services. **YES**

Transparency and Accountability

1. All public schools, including charter schools, must report teacher and student retention. **YES**
2. The charter school audit template must be adequate for comparison and analysis and identify facilities ownership and management contractors. **YES**

3. Teachers and administrators, including principals, must meet certifications and qualifications at the same level as all other public school instructors or administrators. **YES**
4. All schools, even small ones, receiving state funds must report state assessment test scores, and receive some indicator of student achievement levels. **YES**

Comment- We had lots of trouble with this one! Poorly worded! We agree IF “some indicator” means an evaluation of students based on Florida State Standards. Needs to be more specific regarding student accountability

Conflict of Interest

1. Administrators and board members of all public schools, including charters, must **not** supervise or determine compensation for family members. **YES**
2. Members of charter school governing boards must **not** have financial interests in the charter school. **YES**
3. Legislators serving on education or appropriation committees must recuse themselves on votes related to charter school finance if they have financial interests in charter schools. **YES**

Facilities and Funding

1. As a recipient of public education funds, charter schools should be required to meet the same procurement requirements as other public institutions, including competitive bids for leasing, acquisition of sites and purchasing of supplies, equipment and facilities. The records should meet all public records laws for full disclosure. **YES**
2. Charter schools that acquire their facility using public funds must assure that the facility reverts to public ownership at the termination of the charter. If a facility is subject to a mortgage to be paid using public funds, the mortgage must disclose and protect the public's interest in the facility. **YES**

Comment- IF “Facilities” means land and buildings. Facilities should have been defined.

3. A conversion of an existing public school to a charter should only be authorized by the local governing school board retaining full public ownership of the facility and assets associated with the school. **YES**
4. A charter school may be housed in a religious institution in order to broaden the availability of facilities for use by charter schools so long as secular identity is maintained and the student body reflects broad racial/ethnic and economic diversity. **NO CONSENSUS**

Comment- the disagreement here was because many felt that there was no way to make a religious facility secular

Polk County LWV Local Consensus Agreement

- 1. The school grade assessed by the State of Florida shall take into consideration the type of student population of each public school including charter schools. Schools with entry/exit policies that dismiss students with low grades, poor FCAT test scores, or academic retention at grade level, shall be graded on a different scale than schools that do not have such entry/exit policies for student membership at the school.**
- 2 All charter school management companies and/or boards shall be required by law to be made up of a majority of people residing in the local (County) district and shall have the same transparency required of other public boards.**
- 3 Each district and the charters within that district shall be required by law to meet at least once annually to share successful, innovative programs.**
- 4 Federal and Florida State regulations for all public schools shall be as flexible as those for charter schools, providing the same opportunities for creativity and innovation that are currently allowed only in charter schools**