

What would a district of charter schools look like?

Edison Elementary School

June 2, 2009

What are the key points you learned tonight about charter schools?

- Charter districts would not be fiscally responsible or beneficial.
- District wide charters aren't fiscally responsible
- Teachers need a 50% + 1 yes vote to convert to a district wide charter
- Conversion charters require 50% + 1 for considering the charter schools process
- Charters in K-5 configuration get less funding (usually)
- Charter schools may bring in more dollars and innovation especially at the middle and high schools
- Full/complete district conversion is not the best fiscal option
- Funding stats
- How charters work & the types of charters
- Funding is not very different on the surface. Flexibility with those pots of monies is the differentiating factor
- There seems to be some fear and/or hostility about charters
- Funding is very unclear and I am confused after how much I know before and worry me
- Going full charter district would hurt Alameda financially
- The difference between conversion versus new/restart charters
- 80 children from Alameda needed for Prop 39 request of facilities
- The difference between conversion and new charters
- The cost comparison with current ADA and charter ADA at primary and secondary level
- The charters can write "preferences" into their enrollment process
- Apparently, charter district isn't viable
- The different types of charter schools
- The buckets of monies called categoricals versus general fund monies
- Total charter district does not make sense financially
- Charter schools can focus on specific innovative programs as a draw.
- Being a charter school does not mean we lose a sense of community
- Alameda is discussing/educating themselves about charter schools in an effort to determine if it should be an option for Alameda
- Charters at secondary are fiscally prudent but not at the elementary level
- Not all schools need to go charter to be a charter district
- There are some monetary advantages
- Not feasible for full conversion or elementary – Maybe one high school
- Charters are open to everyone – only 80 local students need to be a charter
- Financial differences
- Secondary level charters bring in more dollars per student than elementary
- AUSD is not the right size for a district conversion – too large

What are the key points you learned tonight about charter schools? (continued)

- How a chartered district would and would not work, how we could have a combined district
- You can have whole charter districts or roll out site by site
- Charters have flexibility and their source of funding
- What charter schools are, what types there are and funding of charter schools
- Charter funding and decision making process being by the Board/District
- I already knew the key points and had read the power point slides ahead of time (thank you Mike!)
- High school charters are significantly funded at a higher rate for ADA. Innovation can be achieved without a charter
- Dependent versus independent charters from a teacher's point of view
- Charters have more flexibility in developing curriculum with available funding
- How charters are set up, run flexibility and innovative possibilities as they try to sort out public education
- Independent versus dependent charter – flexibility on a charter is written – conversion versus a start-up
- We are desperate!
- There are multiple permutations of charters possible
- Charters have so many different options and configurations
- Funding and startup requirements of charters
- What a charter is, what is required and the different levels of funding
- Fiscal impact and what it takes to convert to a charter
- The difference in funding and other requirements
- The whole district versus conversion versus start up process
- Funding allocation for charters
- Most of what I heard tonight I had already learned through public discussions/blogs surrounding ACLC and Nea
- General rules that govern charters and the rough financial comparisons with non-charters
- Charter remain a confusing concept of apples, oranges and pineapples
- Dependent versus independent charters and the funding flexibility of charters
- The funding and governance of charter schools (how variable they are)
- The different options in funding – whole district versus school
- The district could go partially charter
- How funds are more flexible, what is taught isn't forced, but up to the community
- The district is looking at a range of options from the district staying the same to converting entirely to a charter district
- Charters would address financial difficulties because their income being so general they are not forced use it in a specific way
- The district can not afford to do a district wide conversion to charter
- Pro and cons of charters
- A whole charter conversion is probably not financially feasible though the ACLC parent claims that charter school education is less expensive than traditional

What are the key points you learned tonight about charter schools? (continued)

- The clarification of the four charter options was critical – thanks. There is a great need to educate our community in regards to public education funding.
- There are different types of charters
- There are different type of charters dependent and independent
- Funding, governance and flexibility associated with charters
- ACLC is a part of the district and Nea is not part of the district

What else do you need to know, or are concerned about?

- Who in the district is responsible for making sure Memorandum of Understandings are being followed?
- Why are charter schools allowed to students kick out for non-expellable offenses, but regular public schools are not?
- This “Advisory Group” for the Master Plan needs to be published to all of Alameda.
- How will you gather info from parents who don’t have the skills – confidence – time to attend these meetings?
- The charters I’m familiar with – attrition takes place where the traditionally disenfranchised members of the community leave the charters for various reasons and then the school becomes not reflective of the community
- Sense of community and belonging for our students, families and community
- Parent’s desire to push an academic focus theme on a child at an early age without receiving a well-rounded education
- Issue how to implement change so those kids in transition have a meaningful/good experience
- Enrollment process mess!?!?! How can we this clean and fair?
- Some kids/parents don’t necessarily have increased “choice” to go to an innovative school
- Would the public schools (district) end up with all of the special need children?
- I am concerned that there be some control to prevent charters from becoming elite enclaves and also how can we be sure that charters are doing what they purport to do.
- The truth about funding
- Since we can’t stop future charters what will we offer sooner rather later to counter them?
- Sad that so many turnout for this meeting versus the budget Maybe this should have been first
- I want the district to be innovative about solutions to the overall problem, not innovative schools necessarily
- What are other innovative solutions that can be used in addition to or instead of charters
- My understanding of charters is that it so depends on the people who write the charters and the initial staff. What are qualifications of people who do this? I am suspicious of the charter management companies
- Lastly, what is the story with state fiscal stabilization funds? CA has applied. When will we know about Alameda’s slice of the pie?
- Magnet schools
- Is combining schools an option and if so how, where etc?
- Are minorities being considered to bring up state percentages?
- Comparison between various schools going charter versus what cuts would have to be made district wide
- The question of “disenrollment” that happens at charter schools, i.e. pressuring students to leave if they “under perform”

What else do you need to know, or are concerned about? (continued)

- How does the teachers union feel about charters? What's the likelihood they vote for it?
- Can kids be kicked out of charter schools based on performance?
- Where is the declining enrollment issue? As a parent of incoming kindergartner I'm concerned about overcrowding. Are we losing students as they get older?
- I'm still not clear on whether a partial conversion to charters is a good idea or not. Would teachers support charters or not? Would community or not?
- Still curious as to what the other options are
- What can creating/converting to charters do to help elevate the city's level of funding for teacher's pay, benefits and other administrative costs? We only discussed the per pupil ratio this evening, but I would hope that increased funding would trickle down to needed places.
- If a charter loses its renewal what happens to all of the students? At present they can be reabsorbed into the traditional system. When you are predominately a charter district and the traditional system is lost, where do the students go?
- I'm concerned about union/seniority status of teachers that choose to not be part of a charter and they are sent to another district. Do they bring their years? What happens to the principals of the charter schools? What happens when AUSD kids can't get into a school near their home or in their town?
- What happens to those little buckets of monies if we go charter? What about Title 1 funding?
- If Encinal became a magnet school with more students from Bay Farm does that balance out the cost per student?
- More clarity around magnet versus charter – What is the actual dollars lost when a student attends a charter from AUSD
- How does a district charter conversion effect management level employees? Is there an agreement with local districts like teachers?
- What kind of responsibility does the community (individuals) have to initiate/organize charters?
- What happens to very involved (moderate to severe) special needs students when district becomes primarily a charter district?
- How would we - as lay people/ parents – begin to make educated decisions about charter models, curricula, etc?
- If charter schools have more flexibility in compliance for certain programs and if that negatively affects performances in those programs, then wouldn't parents of those students served by those programs not apply to those charter schools? Would the charter schools naturally become elitist, and non charter schools become overwhelmingly special needs?
- Do teachers at charter schools get health benefits and a retirement contribution similar to non charter schools?
- Do elementary school charter teachers have to be credentialed?
- Understanding how dependent charters go independent and its impact on enrollment
- I am concerned about funding and how money received must be allocated

What else do you need to know, or are concerned about? (continued)

- How successful are other charters in surrounding districts?
- What academic impacts will charter schools have on public schools? We need more concrete evidence and dollars to make informed decisions.
- What are the potential options? When are the deadlines for potential choices? Are there any closures of schools or reduction of class sizes for the 09/09 school year?
- I would like to understand the difference between profit and non-profit charter governing boards. How does a corporation profit from this? I would like all funds should go to students.
- How do charter schools compare to district schools when it comes to standardized testing for California? How would conversion charters be chosen?
- Have the rules changed enough to allow more flexible spending by school districts for categorical programs?
- Will the schools be holding smaller intimate community meetings?
- What does year one and year two look like in a charter school? What resources are available to support school site staff and families?
- How will schools decide what to do? Who will be in leadership roles?
- What schools are going to be asked to be considered charter? Other options? Permanent parcel tax? What else? Other innovative programs, research on the success of those programs.
- This is such a tiny population – I fear you're missing many, many voices, views, experts
- Why couldn't the district itself experiment with some small, innovative structures – eg single sex boys K-2 or a reading intensive school (1-3) the regular schools can not handle the remediation on their own?
- If a teacher became a member of an independent charter do you know how teacher salaries are affected? Are there pay scales do teachers increase salary through earning credits or is a plan set in place by those who make the charter? What about health coverage?
- The advisory committee to the Superintendent – how were the teachers chosen for the committee? I concerned teachers were not included in the process.
- Making sure that the chartered schools are developed/created based on successful models and what the consistent similar characteristics are. Please utilize community talents before engaging pricey experts
- Specifics on what options/flexibility /loopholes to set up district charter schools to benefit public education
- What is the estimated dollars needed to cover wanted District budget or what is the delta?
- Concerned about magnet schools would like more information
- Which schools are under enrolled in Alameda? Which schools have students outside the District? What are the percentages of outside district enrollment? How will you the district from becoming a district like SF where there is vast inequity?
- The effect on the balance of the district if only some schools go charter – Will charter schools have SDC classes or are special needs students mainstreamed into regular education classrooms?

What else do you need to know, or are concerned about? (continued)

- Still not clear on what the advantages are would like to see clear numbers
- More information around how less revenue per student in K-5 charter school equates to a better budget outlook - How difficult children will be protected and included in charter schools
- More details on admission policies for charters – give more information about charter conversion and what fiscal implications for the charter and rest of the district
- What the educational structure will look like, what standards will need to be adhered to – How do we manage funds and who manage them?
- I think there is still a great deal of confusion about charter school performance. Are there models for evaluating charter schools? Do charter schools have to give CELDT? Does the district have to have a plan? Are the parents on their own to find a new school? What might be additional demands on the district due to families receiving more choice?
- Without a full conversion to charters, I am concerned about drain on existing schools – not fiscal but personnel like innovative teachers leaving from –non charter schools; will ELL parents understand application process; concerned non-charter schools will end up lesser educated informed parents – interested in ways district can be more innovative without charter
- I am concerned about the process of writing a charter – should we decide to adopt a partial conversion
- I think people need to understand that if our motives are financial, we can design any charter school to look like its current self (ie neighborhood preferences, similar curriculum) and just “use” the charter model to free up money. How do charter schools address/fund free/reduced lunch programs? People seemed concerned about out of attendance zone or out of district students due to charters. Ours has both. What percentage of our current students are out of district? What percentage of students are attending schools outside of their attendance zone?
- The concern of “skimming off” is still on the table. How will the charters insure diversity and parity regardless of the school you attend? There are a lot of economic status and racial issues that have not been addressed in the conversation.
- If a school converts would currently enrolled guaranteed attendance? It does not seem to make sense for over-enrolled to convert. I would like the district to focus on under-enrolled with magnet or charter.
- Could we home school if the district went charter? What schools have declining enrollment or are low performing, especially middle schools?
- Would a “new charter” be able to keep the name of the current school? What are the real technical differences?
- Would like to see a better summary of how total dollars per student would compare in charter versus existing scenario for a middle school and for a high school. Also more information on the existing limitations on funding for non-charter schools, the impact of cuts if no changes to charters, costs involved in converting to a charter
- Need more information on successful charters

What else do you need to know, or are concerned about? (continued)

- Ongoing budget issues
- Compliance issues or mandates that all schools must adhere to and those mandates that will not affect categorical funding, if not met. Categorical funding and the impact of charters Diverting and redirecting students who are considered “not a fit” for the charter school they are enrolled in Teacher leaders versus administrators
- Special education within charter schools especially focusing on pre-school special education in the district. Also elementary special education with emphasis on children with massive special needs – how will that work?
- I continue to be concerned about teachers’ rights to be protected and that we do not adopt skill-based charters on the model of American Indian in Oakland.
- Union issues, teachers, employees, use of funding via block grant dollars, mixed school types between district and charters
- Simplify options
- I do not know where to begin
- I do not want the neighborhood feel to be taken away at the elementary school level but as a middle school parent I would LOVE options. I think choices of specialties become more important at that age.
- What about the elementary schools? Why does Alameda continued to be one of the lowest funded districts in the state?
- If total conversion to charter schools does not make sense, how would partial conversion be helpful?
- In regards to the Master Plan I am concerned that 5 very large community meetings are inadequate to the enormity of the task. I hope there are lots of sessions to talk sessions to talk with teachers and get their input because it is they who will make or break the charter school conversion. Small breakout sessions with principals and parents so everyone understands might help.
- What are we taking off the plate in terms of requirements that would allow for improved schools? Are there innovative programs in mind?
- How do under represented groups get this information to be informed consumers and participants? Are we running the video on the local cable station channels?
- Mainly unions – retirement, etc Special education students English Language Learners
- I am very concerned about the two teachers on the Master Plan advisory group. They don’t represent me as a teacher since I was not consulted in the choice. Teacher representatives should be chosen by teachers (AEA). I am also concerned about the number of teacher involved in this planning since we are the ones who will implement this plan.
- I understand Chipman is in program improvement and has to go magnet or charter. What options are limited to them in every way? (Preference of enrollment, union, non-union, etc) Also I know that Wood is in year one program improvement. What does this take away financially from other Title I schools?
- I am a teacher and I really need to know how my STRS would be affected.
- Not all students learn in the style that ACLC is, how do we address that?

What else do you need to know, or are concerned about? (continued)

- How do we get the performance gap to get smaller if everyone is applying to the same school? I would like to see the “unified” applied to all schools in this district. How do we all start to work together?
- What would happen to district staff if a few schools converted to charter? Less staff at district offices
- Charter districts and its possibilities and each school staff should evaluate possibilities as it applies to their school. Focus groups should be formed within each school community to determine priorities and possible scenarios. Flexibility is the key if we want to preserve quality and promote choice

Who else should be at these meetings?

- Glad to see more staff here (especially admin) since they are the educational leaders in the district.
- TEACHERS! There should be time built into “paid teacher staff development” time for teachers to talk about the PAST innovations – their innovative programs
- The ELAC committees from schools and the business community
- Include some middle and high school students on all levels of your assessment and planning process
- More outreach to the community is needed
- More people of multi-race
- More parents
- Representatives from schools or districts that might offer case studies of innovative programs, possible solutions that would be comparable to Alameda needs/size
- More parents who are not also district employees
- Representation from a variety of parents and school staff supporting the many sub-groups served within schools (eg English language learners, special need students, sports programs, arts programs, etc)
- Charter school people to share their experiences
- People who have done this – ACLC parents teachers staff
- More community members and staff
- When/if charter model is adopted for middle or high schools, kids should be involved
- All Alameda community members from all ethnic and financial backgrounds
- Charter schools consulting firms
- Neighboring school districts Superintendents and school board members
- People with direct experience both working in options being discussed and creating them (Nea folks)
- My neighbor (whose children are long gone) would to have been here. I think the postcard info should go out to all residents, not just parents and teachers. I am also concerned that our lower socio-economic/minority parents are not present.
- More parents who don't they already know the answers more teachers
- Parents, teachers
- More teacher representation and input so community has a better sense how this group views charter conversion.
- Students from existing Alameda charters I would like to hear from students, their responses to some of the questions especially about charter community climate
- More parents all those people who showed at Kofman because they are supposed to be concerned about our schools!
- Other people who have converted to a charter – talk about differences – pro & con
- Not sure but would be useful if polled the teachers to get a sense of how likely a conversion are to pass – also would like see more of a debate to hear the pro and cons
- More of our community – both teachers and parents- it would be helpful to hear from ACLC parents

Who else should be at these meetings? (continued)

- More diverse population
- Students – Also people with experience in helping mentor students to use technologies to self-learn. We may need to lower the amount of labor in teaching.
- All parents
- Title I parents, special needs parents
- Representatives of innovative schools and charters
- Business community to see the use of Measure H funding
- More parents, newspaper reporters, people willing to blog
- Families with children that will be entering school in the next three years
- More parents of declining enrollment schools, all employees
- Parents of declining enrollment schools
- The entire community of parents and staff
- To what degree can the City and greater community collaborate with the District to provide a more holistic approach?

Was tonight's meeting helpful? If yes, how did it help? If not, how can we improve it?

- Yes – at the end I arrive late.
- Make sure August, September and October meetings are held in different places!
- Yes. I would have different Board members give information so Ms. Vital can take a break
- Yes – increased information about is in progress and an opportunity to listen and be heard
- Yes hearing some of the options being explained.
- Yes gave me more questions to ask me
- Education on charter
- Yes good information, dialogue, encouraging that community centered dialogue is underway
- Yes it clarified general concepts about charters
- Somewhat, definitely anxiety rising but our anxiety should be raised. I would like more direction on what the superintendent thinks is a good or bad idea – not just community input
- Yes I am much clearer as to what a charter school is and what is involved in getting one or more started
- Yes honest conversation is mandatory at this time. It is also encouraging to see the community interest in “putting in the time” to help solve/provide feedback to help move forward
- Yes – a primer of charter school information
- Yes we need more conversations
- Yes I appreciated additional support from California Department of Education
- Yes more case studies
- Meeting was helpful – large group answered questions of many
- Yes very informative
- Very helpful – needs a bit more structure tool
- Yes I was bale to get a better understanding of the charter school system
- Yes very helpful and I really appreciate the Superintendent's participation and knowledge base
- Yes but would have like to hear more about other options/drawbacks of charters and special needs children's right within charter schools
- Yes very clear. I think we need more time to talk/discuss/plan at future meetings (not tonight but as the plan progresses)
- Yes thought the questions and answers was important and added more information to the presentation that was overlooked
- Yes I had no idea what was being considered
- Yes very helpful. Settled concerns about jumping into the charter model.
- Yes explained more ideas and processes on what we are facing as a district
- Very helpful – informative and interesting hearing questions
- Clarified some of the issues and answered some of my questions
- Yes but the options are still confusing

Was tonight's meeting helpful? If yes, how did it help? If not, how can we improve it? (continued)

- It was somewhat helpful to get a basic understanding – need to look into this more deeply
- Very helpful to see fiscal data
- Yes great information
- Yes but how will these wide ranging points of view come together on the timeline to create a master plan
- Yes helped answer questions about charter means
- Yes, but I don't think people felt ready to ask pertinent questions about whether or not conversion would work. Need time to digest then ask
- Yes I would like more information on charter model
- Yes – thanks Mike M for posting information in the afternoon, the earlier the better.
- Yes, good presentation. Good questions.
- Yes gave the community a voice
- Yes I was apprehensive that charter adoption was a done deal
- Yes better options need to be created and decided
- Yes helpful but there is so much information to process. Need more better clearer teaching tools
- Great general information about charters
- The glossary is great is it online? Give us an idea of how a child's day would change at a charter school.
- Yes although at a beginning level
- Yes always getting information is a key
- Yes I am getting to know some information regarding charter schools – Still have a long way to go
- Yes clarified issues of charters
- Yes but please people not to have side bar conversations during the meeting
- Yes it was helpful. Please provide a forum for parents provide input online.

What is the most important thing you learned this evening?

- We have a damn smart superintendent for that, I'm grateful.
- The Superintendent, the Board and the community want to develop programs.
- The District is trying very hard to receive input from parents and teachers
- Change is coming. The more community participation the better
- What grabs people attention (scares them) is strange to me but we must capitalize on this to fix the problem
- The minimum of 80 residents needed for a charter school
- District wide conversion to charter won't work financially and mixture is possible
- The dollars for a full conversion to district charter does not make sense. Can we drop the full conversion option?
- The current system is antiquated. We have a chance to change that now
- I think what we have learned is the tip of iceberg and I appreciate the materials posted on the website that expand beyond what is presented here
- We need a much more in-depth discussion and more research
- Not fiscally prudent to charter entire district – When will we discuss creating one high school and one middle school?
- Change is a coming
- The community is represented tonight – yeah
- I started to see how the district might be restructured
- Charter school definitions and the different types /startup/dependent/independent
- No decisions have been made yet
- Charter school creation process
- We need a plan
- Whole charter conversion isn't realistic because revenue limit is significantly lower
- Too much to list
- Additional information about charter schools, still very interested in learning more
- More detailed information on what a charter is and what it could mean to our community
- Total district conversion to charter is not fiscally wise
- The possibility of change and innovation is real
- We are not willing (as a community) to stop the State of California from destroying public education!
- There are more configurations to charters than I realized
- How charter schools are funded and what is required for set up and approval
- Basic understanding – need to know who ultimately decides?
- Charters schools are often able to do more with less money
- Not fiscally viable for all charter conversion
- Performance versus compliance: Are charter schools more efficient economically?
- Charter schools may not be the silver bullet to solve our problems.
- We need much more discussion and information

What is the most important thing you learned this evening? (continued)

- More “appreciated” than learned: I was impressed by our Superintendent and her very reasoned presentation.
- The funding for charters and non charters average daily attendance
- Current AUSD funding is a dead end
- The district is considering a range of options
- Charter schools might a great option for middle schools but elementary schools, I am unsure about high schools
- The school district is going broke. Focusing on secondary schools is not the answer if we ignore the elementary schools, we don’t have secondary students.
- The need for AUSD to have a good plan
- I am actually alarmed at the low parent attendance. AUSD should do serious outreach to parents of preschool and babies.
- I would need way more information to even form an opinion
- I learned names of people involved in district changes.
- I need more information before I can make an informed decision
- Charter schools do not necessary get more dollars
- The difference between magnet and charter schools.

Recap of classification of individuals self identified as:

87 sheets turned in.

68 Parents
13 Community Members
26 Teachers
2 Staff
7 Administrators
2 Other
Multiple boxes were checked

Location Information (space for location needs to be added to feedback from since less than half of the respondents indicated a location)

Lum Elementary School – 12
Otis Elementary School – 8
Bay Farm Elementary - 6
Paden Elementary School – 4
Edison Elementary School – 4
ACLIC – 3
Ruby Bridges Elementary School – 3
Alameda High School – 2
Washington Elementary School – 1 Edison Elementary School – 1
Lincoln Middle School – 1 Encinal High School - 1
Henry Haight School – 1 Amelia Earhart Elementary School - 1
Franklin Elementary School – 1