

ABSTRACT

Stephen D. Sugarman & Emlei M. Kuboyama
Approving Charter Schools: The Gate Keeper Function

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Abstract by Christy L. Welsh

Sugarman and Kuboyama's article examines the process charter schools must go through in order to obtain and maintain a charter and the substantial discretion charter-granting agencies, or "gate-keepers," have in deciding which schools to charter. The authors discuss in detail the role charter-granting agencies play in shaping charter schools and suggest the process can be streamlined in a more realistic, fair and consistent way, while maintaining the integrity of the public interest.

The authors' are critical of the role policy makers and charter-granting agencies have played in determining the fate of charter schools even before they are able to get underway. Factors such as: unclear articulation of policy, inconsistent application of standards, and deviation from public values, have contributed to confusion and difficulty in granting and keeping charters.

Reevaluating the process is necessary to guide the gatekeepers in their difficult task of approving charters. Several states, such as California and Michigan, have advocated for reevaluation of authority to grant charters, clearer statutory standards, continual monitoring, and involvement of private accrediting bodies. The authors suggest that this evaluation process should continue even after the charter is approved to maintain continuity and support the public interest in successful charters. By implementing these suggestions, the authors feel the gate-keeping function charter-granting agencies play will promote the growth, expansion, and overall success of charter schools.