

WHY CHARTER SCHOOLS WON'T WORK

FOR CHRISTIANS

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. "CHARTER SCHOOLS: Q & A." <[HTTP://WWW.CDE.CA.GOV/CHARTER/QANDA/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/charter/qanda/)>. OCTOBER 1999.

WHAT IS A CHARTER SCHOOL?

"A charter school is a public school and may provide instruction in any of grades K-12. A charter school is usually created or organized by a group of teachers, parents and community leaders or a community-based organization, and is usually sponsored by an existing local public school board or county board of education. Specific goals and operating procedures for the charter school are detailed in an agreement (or 'charter') between the sponsoring board and charter organizers." [Emphasis added.]

The majority of charter schools in California are classroom-based, with children going to a school site each school day. This paper focuses on charter schools which enroll home-schoolers. These programs use a variety of titles: homeschooling; independent study; distance learning; virtual, on-line, cyber, or computer-based schools; co-op teaching; correspondence; work

study; or home study. What these "non-classroom based" charter schools have in common is that the student completes most of his schooling without attending a classroom.



PHOTO BY REBECCA PARKER

CHRISTIAN CHILDREN NEED CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Just as the Christian life cannot be lived only on Sundays while ignoring God the rest of the week, so Christian education cannot occur in a void apart from the other school subjects. God is the God of science, history, literature, arts, mathematics, and all other subjects. Instruction in all of these areas must point to Him and to His precepts. THIS CANNOT HAPPEN IN A CHARTER SCHOOL.

CHARTER SCHOOLS CANNOT OFFER A CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The law clearly prohibits religious instruction in all public schools, including charter schools: no "sectarian or denominational doctrine [shall] be taught, or instruction thereon be permitted, directly or indirectly" in public schools.

Some charter school administrators claim that parents may teach their own children religious doctrine

FOR WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN, IF HE SHALL GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD, AND LOSE HIS OWN SOUL? OR WHAT SHALL A MAN GIVE IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS SOUL?

— MARK 8:36-37

CALIFORNIA CONSTITUTION, ARTICLE IX, SECTION 8.



PHOTO BY REBECCA PARKER

whether they are in a charter school or not. This is true only in the sense that it is true for parents of any public school student—they may pray with him each morning before sending him off to school, they may teach Bible before or after school, and they may take him to church each Sunday. However, they may not teach him any subject from a Biblical perspective during school.

NON-CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

Trying to give children a Christian education within a system which does not function from a Biblical perspective requires a continual shifting of perspectives, from secular to Biblical and back again. This creates a double-minded man, who attempts to deal with life sometimes from a biblical perspective and sometimes from a humanist perspective.

If the goal of education is to bring children to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, to raise them to glorify God and love the Lord their God with *all* their heart, mind, soul, and strength . . . If the goal is to raise children who know God's Word and are able to apply God's wisdom to every situation they encounter throughout their lives, then an education program is needed which openly declares Christ as Savior and King. **THIS CANNOT HAPPEN WITHIN A CHARTER SCHOOL.**

NON-CHRISTIAN INFLUENCES

There is no guarantee that children in charter schools will be assigned a Christian teacher. Charter schools cannot lawfully consider religious affiliation when hiring teachers or other staff. And since charter schools cannot consider religious affiliation when enrolling students, there is also no way of knowing whether the other students participating in various school activities are Christians.

Privately home schooling parents can ensure that only professing Christians influence their children.

They can also maintain full authority over all activities which



PHOTO BY REBECCA PARKER

provide opportunities for others to develop relationships with their children. **THIS CANNOT HAPPEN IN A CHARTER SCHOOL.**

NON-CHRISTIAN CURRICULUM

Charter schools are prohibited by law from purchasing religious materials, and they are prohibited from allowing religious materials to be used in their programs *even if* those materials are purchased by parents or others. Parents of *any* public school student may *supplement* their children's education with Christian materials, but this must be done outside of regular school time.

In his "Preface to the Holy Bible," Noah Webster wrote, "The scriptures were intended by God to be the guide of human reason." Biblical teaching is not merely supplemental, rather, it is essential and foundational. Such open recognition of this primary position of Scripture **CANNOT HAPPEN IN A CHARTER SCHOOL.**

NON-CHRISTIAN TESTS

Beginning with the graduating class of 2004, all public school students (including those in charter schools) must pass the California High School Exit Exam (HSEE) in order to get a high school diploma. The content of the HSEE is dictated by the California State Board of Education and is aligned with the secular content standards for each subject area: "The content standards also serve as the basis for the curriculum frameworks, and all adopted instructional materials and state tests are aligned with them."



PHOTO BY REBECCA PARKER

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. "CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAMINATION (CAHSEE)."

"LAST WEEK, I TALKED TO A CHRISTIAN LADY WHO IS A TEACHER IN A LARGE 'BRICK AND MORTAR' CHARTER SCHOOL PROGRAM IN COLORADO. SHE SAID MANY CHRISTIAN FAMILIES ARE USING THE PROGRAM AND ENROLLING THEIR CHILDREN IN THE CHARTER SCHOOL. I ASKED HER IF THE TEACHERS COULD TEACH THE BIBLE. SHE SAID, 'NO BUT WE CAN TEACH VIRTUES.' I ASKED IF SHE WAS ALLOWED TO TEACH THE CHILDREN ABOUT SALVATION AND SHE SAID, 'WE ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO.' IF YOU CANNOT TEACH THE BIBLE AND THE CHILDREN ABOUT JESUS, WHAT IS THE POINT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION?"

— ATTORNEY CHRIS KLICKA. "VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOLS." OCTOBER 2001.

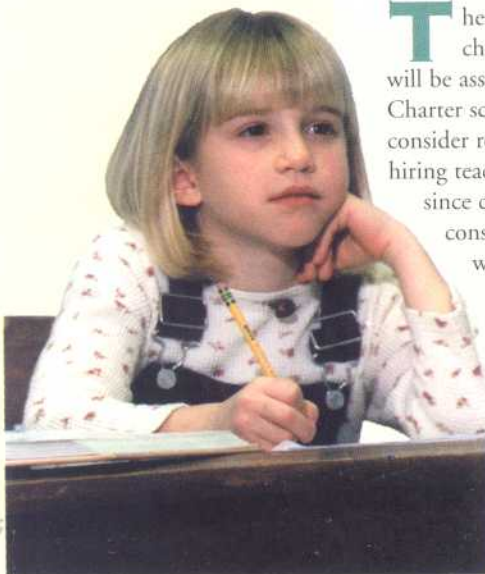


PHOTO BY REBECCA PARKER

"HOW CAN SCHOOLS BEST PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE HSEE? IT WILL BE IMPORTANT THAT STUDENTS TAKE CLASSES THAT INCLUDE INSTRUCTION IN STATE CONTENT STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATH. STUDENTS WILL NEED TO USE THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONTENT IDENTIFIED FOR THE TEST."

— HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAMINATION: Q & A FOR TEACHERS.

The only way to opt out of having government bureaucrats dictate what your student will learn is to opt out of the government tests entirely. But THIS IS NOT AN OPTION IN THE CHARTER SCHOOLS.

NON-CHRISTIAN CONTROL OF YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

The discerning parent will note that there is a difference between parental *involvement*, and parental *control*. God has not ordained that parents should have a government facilitator, specialist, guide, teacher, advisor, or assessor for the training of their children to His glory.

It is important for parents to recognize that the God-ordained family order is subtly undermined in government schools. Parents are the ones who are responsible to God for educating their children—not civil government. Roy Hanson, private and homeschool legislative consultant, stated it well:

When we choose not to look to the government, but rather to take full personal responsibility for our children's education, we acknowledge the authority of God and His Word in our lives. We teach our children to honor God, His Word, and his ordained jurisdictions of authority and responsibility. We also teach them to be content with what God provides through our faith and diligent obedient labors.

Children in charter schools are public school students. Charter schools are funded by taxpayer monies and, according to the California Constitution, all publicly funded schools must be under the "exclusive control of the officers of the public schools." The very heart of homeschooling is the return of that control to the parents. THIS CANNOT HAPPEN WITHIN A CHARTER SCHOOL.



PHOTO BY PETER CUTTS

ROY M. HANSON.
"CHARTER SCHOOLS."
THE HOMESCHOOL COURT
REPORT. HSLDA:
JAN/FEB 2002.

CHRISTIAN HOME EDUCATION:

THE PARENTS HAVE 100% RESPONSIBILITY.

THE PARENTS HAVE 100% AUTHORITY.

THE PARENTS HAVE 100% CONTROL.



PHOTO BY RUBECA PARKER

NON-CHRISTIAN YOKING

Charter schools offering independent study require the parents to enter into a contract with the government school:

Each written agreement shall be signed, prior to the commencement of independent study, by the pupil, the pupil's parent, legal guardian, or caregiver, if the pupil is less than 18 years of age, the certificated employee who has been designated as having responsibility for the general supervision of independent study, and all persons who have direct responsibility for providing assistance to the pupil.

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?
2 Corinthians 6:14

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly . . .
from Psalm 1:1

NON-CHRISTIAN FUNDING METHODS

Some parents have looked at charter schools as an opportunity to "get back" some of the hard-earned money they pay in taxes to support public schools. The truth is that when private school students switch to charter schools,

CALIFORNIA EDUCATION
CODE § 51747 (C)(8).

"IT SOON BECAME APPARENT THAT THE TEACHERS WERE REQUIRED TO TALK TO THE CHILDREN AT THESE VISITS AND ASSESS THEM NOT ONLY ON THEIR ACADEMICS, BUT ALSO ON THEIR PHYSICAL APPEARANCE . . . LOOKING FOR SIGNS OF ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT AT THEIR DISCRETION. I HAD GOTTEN SO USED TO LIVING MY OWN LIFE AND HAD FORGOTTEN JUST HOW INVOLVED THE GOVERNMENT IS IN THE LIVES OF FAMILIES ENROLLED IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS."

— LETTER FROM A HOMESCHOOLING PARENT TO ATTORNEY CHRIS KLICKA. QUOTED FROM "VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOLS."

TO PAY ENOUGH TAXES TO COVER THE ADA FUNDING FOR TWO ELEMENTARY-AGE CHILDREN, PARENTS MUST FIT THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLE EVERY YEAR:

OWN A HOME THAT IS ASSESSED FOR PROPERTY TAXES AT A VALUE OF \$1,500,000, OR MORE AND

SPEND OVER \$68,000 PER YEAR ON ITEMS WHICH ARE CHARGED SALES TAX, AND

HAVE A TAXABLE INCOME OF OVER \$90,000 PER YEAR.

—“I WANT MY MONEY BACK.”
THE PARENT EDUCATOR,
CHRISTIAN HOME EDUCATORS
PRESS: APRIL/MAY 2000.

“IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT YOUR NEIGHBOR WITH NO CHILDREN PAYS TAXES FOR SCHOOLS. WHAT IS HIS FAIR SHARE?”

— RAY STALKER, A
RESPONSE TO PARENTS:
FREEDOM IS THE ISSUE, 2000.

it creates an additional tax burden. The best way for families to get the benefit of more of their own money is to work toward *reducing* government spending.

Parents pay the same amount of taxes whether their children are in a public school, private school, homeschool, or stay home with a hired tutor. The difference is whether parents *add* to the tax burden by insisting that they get a piece of the tax fund pie. And when parents consider the incredible spiritual cost to their children's real education by subjecting them to godless government schooling, it's easy to see why it's worth the extra cost of paying for your own children's education.

DESTRUCTION OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

The charter school movement is a serious threat to true family freedom for several reasons. First, when families participate in charter schools, they support the assumption among many “professionals” that parents are incapable of raising their children without government supervision. Second, as larger numbers of families leave private education in favor of charter

schools, it weakens the private education movement by reducing their numbers. Third, as charter school members increasingly earn the reputation of wanting their “share” of taxpayer funds, they become just another special interest group trying to get money—at least in the eyes of the Legislature.

CONCLUSION

The charter school option may look good to many Christian parents—at first glance. The financial cost of private home education may seem high when compared with the “free” benefits offered by the charter schools. But when parents consider the cost of their children's future—their Christian discipleship—then the truth becomes clear. The financial cost of keeping children away from a system that cannot openly proclaim Christ and His Word is a small price to pay. The Christian education that is necessary to raise children to the glory of God **SIMPLY CANNOT BE FOUND IN A CHARTER SCHOOL.** ☺



PHOTO BY PETER CURTIS

COPYRIGHT FEBRUARY 2002 BY CHEA OF CALIFORNIA AND FAMILY PROTECTION MINISTRIES.



PHOTO BY REBECCA PARKER

CHEA of California and Family Protection Ministries are dedicated to providing information, training, and support to parents desiring to give their children a Christian education at home. We have studied public school programs offering “homeschooling” for many years, including the charter schools since their inception in California in 1992.

This brochure briefly addresses some of our concerns with the charter school movement. We understand that the decision of whether to enroll in a charter school is a difficult one for many families. If you would like more detailed information please order our in-depth paper from CHEA.

Information on private and homeschool freedoms and issues related to charter schools is available from Family Protection Ministries through their bi-monthly *Legal-Legislative Update* newsletter.

**CHRISTIAN HOME EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA
(562) 864-CHEA
P.O. Box 2009, NORWALK, CALIFORNIA 90651-2009**

**FAMILY PROTECTION MINISTRIES
(916) 786-3523
P.O. Box 730, LINCOLN, CALIFORNIA 95648-0730**