



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Strong Authorizing Practices Produced Better Schools for 230,000 Students in 2013
NACSA Reports Significant Progress toward [One Million Lives](#)

More than 230,000 students are attending better schools in 2013 because of the actions of charter school authorizers across the country, according to the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA). Authorizers – the agencies that approve, monitor and hold accountable charter schools – approved an estimated 491 new charter schools using rigorous review processes and closed 206 charter schools that were persistently failing. When taken together, approximately 232,000 students from these 697 schools were attending better schools in 2013.

The announcement came Tuesday in conjunction with the release of a progress [report](#) on the organization's [One Million Lives](#) campaign. In November 2012, NACSA set out an ambitious five-year campaign to help ensure that by 2017 one million of the nation's children would attend better schools that would prepare them for success throughout their lives.

According to NACSA Board Chair [Lisa Graham Keegan](#), "This progress is not automatic," Keegan said. "By engaging authorizers to open only high-quality schools, and to make the very tough decisions to close failing charter schools, we can get one million more children into 3,000 high-performing schools over five years." Keegan will discuss the results from the first year of NACSA's One Million Lives campaign in testimony before the U.S. House of Representative's Education and the Workforce Committee next week.

"Sometimes students obtain a better education if they enroll in a new, quality charter school and sometimes students obtain a better education if we close a charter school that is failing," said [Greg Richmond](#), NACSA's President and CEO. "Both actions create better educational opportunities for kids and we need to ensure we're doing all that we can to make that happen."

Richmond added, "These figures are really significant. The 232,000 students in these better schools are more than the public school enrollments of Atlanta, Seattle, Cleveland and Saint Louis, combined."

Despite this apparent success, both Richmond and Keegan cautioned both policymakers and authorizers that it is not time to be complacent.

Keegan said, "We have learned a great deal during the first 20 years of building a charter school sector. One of the most important lessons has been that strong authorizing



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matters because it is a proven and powerful way to ensure that we will have better schools.”

Richmond observed that, unlike many other educational issues where there is partisan disagreement, there is widespread consensus on the importance of strong authorizing. “Charter schools are here to stay as part of our public school offerings. And if we are going to do chartering, shouldn’t we be committed to doing it well?”

He added that the results announced Tuesday demonstrate that many authorizers have committed themselves to excellence but there are others who lack both the skill and commitment to do it well. “We still have new charter schools getting approved that did not go through a rigorous review process. We also have hundreds of existing low-performing charter schools that stay open despite failing results. We need to do better.”

NACSA leaders made clear that the need for continued improvement is reflected in its belief that not all charter school openings will result in a great school for children. A recent report of the [National Alliance for Public Charter Schools](#) (NAPCS) documents more than 600 charter school openings in 2013. Of these, NACSA estimates that 491 of them were approved following a rigorous review process that is likely to lead to quality schools.

The estimate is based on NACSA’s yearly [Index of Essential Practices](#), which reports how many authorizers across the nation are implementing the best practices necessary to ensure high-performing charter schools. NACSA defines a rigorous review process as one that includes at least four of these essential practices:

- Have established, documented criteria for the evaluation of charter applications
- Publish application and materials
- Interview all qualified applicants
- Use expert panels that include external members to review charter applications
- Sign a performance contract with each school

Additional information on the past year’s results are found in the new publication [One Million Lives: Stories of Momentum and Success](#) spotlighting stories of authorizers doing the good work necessary over the past year to make progress possible.



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The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) is committed to advancing excellence and accountability in the charter school sector and to increasing the number of high-quality charter schools across the nation. To accomplish this mission, NACSA works to improve the policies and practices of authorizers—the organizations designated to approve, monitor, renew, and, if necessary, close charter schools. NACSA provides training, consulting, and policy guidance to authorizers. It also advocates for laws and policies that raise the bar for excellence among authorizers and the schools they charter. Visit www.qualitycharters.org.

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