



League of Women Voters of Louisiana moves to study charter schools in Louisiana

At its March 11-12, 2017 convention, the delegates voted to hold a study in order to reach consensus on the efficacy of Louisiana charter school laws and their execution through the state's existing governing structures. After initial research, the study team found it necessary to limit the scope of study to the state's creation and governance, compliance with policies and regulations, finance and funding, and equity and accessibility of Louisiana charter schools.

What is consensus?

Consensus is not a vote; rather, consensus is mutual agreement of League members arrived at through careful and respectful discussion. During this discussion everyone has an opportunity to express his or her viewpoint, so that the issue can be examined from all perspectives. The group reaches a general agreement as to how to respond for each question. The process is generally thought-provoking and stimulating as individual League members listen and respond to each other.

How does the local League's study team plan and hold the consensus meeting?

1. Use your knowledge of members' skills to sign up a facilitator, a recorder, a techie or two for the overhead projector interface with a computer, and running the laptop computer.
2. Given the amount of information to present, plan for about 3 local study team members to divvy up, prepare, and do the presentation.
3. The recorder or recorders (it can be very useful to have two people taking notes 1) writes down each comment as each consensus question is discussed and 2) carefully records the consensus response on the designated response forms

What is the local League's timeline for participating?

June 4th, 2018

The LWVLA study team chair sends this study guide to each local League's president and requests that the presidents send the LWVLA study team chair the contact information for the local study team chair who volunteers or who is recruited to steer the local League's study.

June 11th, 2018

The LWVLA study team chair sends each local President or leadership team spokesperson a hard copy and an electronic copy of the charter school study materials prepared by the LWVLA study team.

June 4-June 11th, 2018

The LWVLA study team chair works with the LWVLA webmaster to place the study packet on the LWVLA website, lwvofla.org.

June 11th – September 9th, 2018

Each local League's study team reads all materials, prepares, schedules the consensus meeting, shares, and presents the study material selected/prepared by the LWVLA charter school study team to its whole local League. (The local League's study team schedules with the local President and Board a date and place for all study activities and the consensus meeting by the study team's deadline.)

- Note that the local League may decide to hold a forum or invite a speaker(s) or some other activity as an additional date to the consensus meeting to gain further local perspectives on the study topic.
- The consensus meeting is League member-only business and should have adequate time for discussion on each consensus question and each sub-part of each question. A facilitator, rather than a member of the local study team, is preferable for the consensus process. Some local Leagues schedule sufficient time for both the study team's presentation and the consensus process—2 hours on a Sunday afternoon has worked well for a number of local consensus meetings—1 hour for the presentation and 1 hour for the consensus discussion.

On or by September 15, 2018

The local League study chair enters the consensus responses, and all member comments from the consensus meeting up to 250 words on the state League's website. The comments are most useful to the charter school study team in drafting the position.

September 16-October 15th, 2018

The study team tallies and analyzes all of the local Leagues' formal responses and League and individual comments made during each League's consensus meeting. The study team writes a proposed public policy position from the points having consensus.

October 30th, 2018

The study team chair sends the team's proposed position to the LWVLA Board for its review and approval. The Board can only make changes in wording, not the substance of the position.

November, 2018

Two months before the opening of January 2019 state Convention, the Board sends out the proposed charter school position to each local League president requesting each local League's board to review, recommend changes in wording as needed [no substantive changes may be offered, only changes to the wording], and send to the Board within one month of convention (December 1, 2018)

January, 2019

At the LWVLA Convention 2019 the delegates vote to accept or reject the proposed public policy position. The convention delegates can only make changes in wording, not the substance of the position. The new position, if approved, is included the LWVLA's public policies under the Education section and advocacy can then begin.

What are the study materials?

- a. Introduction to the charter school study
- b. Historical sketch of charter schools in Louisiana
- c. Charter Schools 101
 - i. Governance
 - ii. Finance and Funding
 - iii. Equity and Accessibility
- d. League Policies and Issues for Louisiana's Charter Schools
- e. Consensus Questions
- f. Power Point for Presentation by the Local Study Team for the Consensus Meeting
- g. Bibliography

Who contributed to this project?

The study team gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the following professionals either as external readers and/or as interviewees:

- Kunjun Narechania, Assistant Superintendent of Portfolio and Chief Executive Officer of the Recovery School District, Louisiana Department of Education

- Erin Bendily, Assistant Superintendent of Policy and Public Affairs, Louisiana Department of Education
- Shawn Fleming, Deputy Director, Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
- Dr. Nathan Roberts, J.D., Dean of the College of Education, University of Louisiana at Lafayette and the Mr. and Mrs. E.P. “Pat” Nalley/BORSF Endowed Professor of Education.
- Caroline Roemer, Executive Director of the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools

The committee would like to thank Linda Walker, attorney and board member of the League of Women Voters of New Orleans and League of Women Voters of Louisiana, for her expertise and consideration of the study materials as an internal reader.

Who is the LWVLA Charter School Study Team?

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