

July 12, 2001 San Francisco

State Charter Approved for Controversial Edison School

SACRAMENTO - The California Board of Education on Thursday unanimously approved a state charter for San Francisco's controversial, for-profit Edison Charter Academy, subject of months of contention with the San Francisco school board.

Edison Charter Academy, operated by New York-based Edison Schools, has been at the center of a high-profile battle between the company and the school district. In a recent compromise, the district agreed to sever ties with Edison and allow the company to seek a charter from the state Board of Education.

The school district moved in March to consider revoking Edison's 3-year-old district charter, accusing Edison of numerous violations of its contract. Accusations included "counseling out" challenging and special-needs students, especially African-American boys; failing to comply with accountability and financial disclosure requirements; and numerous other charges. The district also contended that Edison Charter Academy received an estimated \$1,000 per student more than other district schools in public money and complained about high teacher turnover.

Edison responded with a vigorous legal, public-relations and political-lobbying assault, with assistance from the right-wing Pacific Research Institute think tank.

The compromise between the district and Edison, reached in June, means that the school district will no longer provide Edison with free rent and administrative services. Edison will continue to occupy a district-owned site in the pricey Noe Valley neighborhood but will pay rent.

Edison's academic success was also at issue in the debate. Even with a revamped student population and resources far greater than other district schools, Edison students scored far below districtwide averages, casting doubt on the company's claims of academic achievement.

Edison has had problems in many school districts nationwide and has charters challenged, revoked or not renewed in Goldsboro, N.C.; Sherman, Texas; and San Antonio, Texas.
Backup and sources:

Districtwide STAR test score percentiles spring 2000
Compared with Edison STAR test score percentiles spring 2000
(National percentile ranking for average student score)

Second grade

Districtwide: Reading 56 Math 65 Language 58 Spelling 61
Edison: Reading 33 Math 57 Language 22 Spelling 34

Third grade

Districtwide: Reading 46 Math 62 Language 54 Spelling 57
Edison: Reading 28 Math 41 Language 29 Spelling 28

Fourth grade

Districtwide: Reading 51 Math 56 Language 56 Spelling 56
Edison: Reading 30 Math 32 Language 33 Spelling 29

Fifth grade

Districtwide: Reading 47 Math 59 Language 53 Spelling 54
Edison: Reading 35 Math 49 Language 46 Spelling 41

Link to Edison scores:

<http://star.cde.ca.gov/star2000f/reports/38/68478000/6040935158/01.html>

Link to districtwide scores:

<http://star.cde.ca.gov/star2000f/reports/38/68478000/01.html>