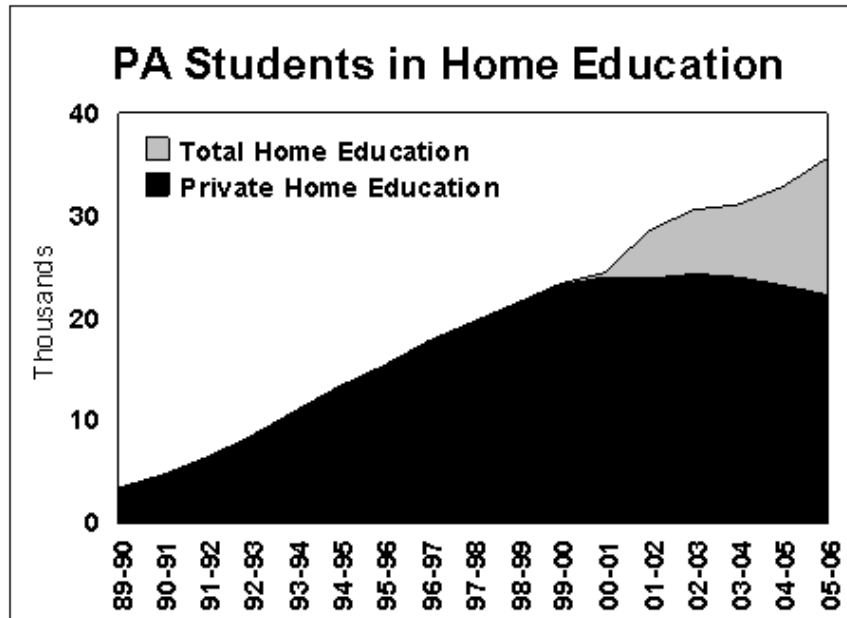


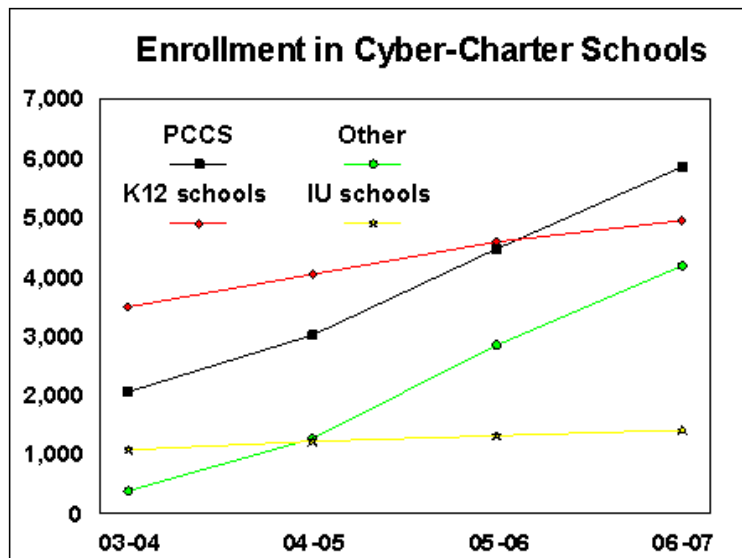
# Private Home Ed Levels while Total Home Ed Grows

by Howard Richman

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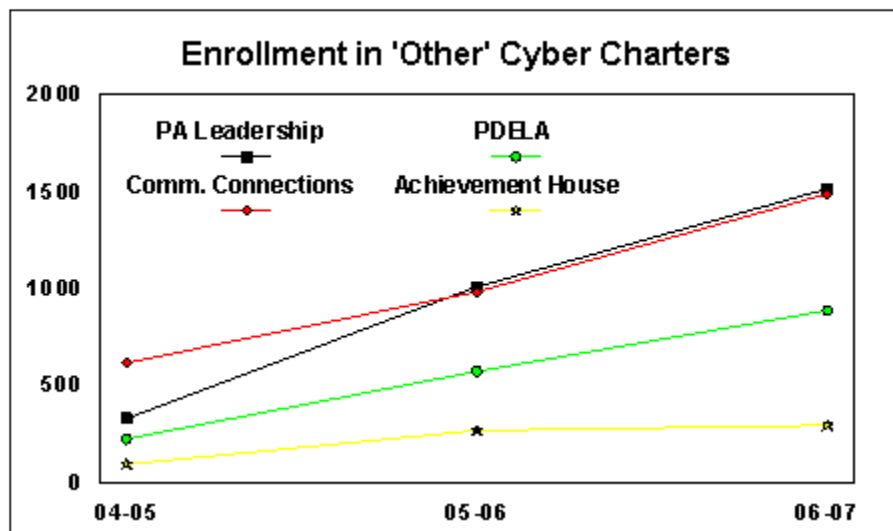


According to statistics for the 2005-2006 school year that were just released by the PA Department of Education, private home education in Pennsylvania was down slightly by about 4% during the 2005-2006 school year to 22,412 students. However, if the number of students being educated publicly in the cyber-charter schools is added in, then total home education grew by 8% during the 2005-2006 school year up to 35,640.



Some of the cyber charter schools have been growing faster than others. Pennsylvania Cyber-Charter School, especially, has been growing rapidly and is by far the largest of the cyber-charter schools with 5,872 students at the end of the 2006-2007 school year.

The two schools that use the K12 curriculum (PA Virtual Charter School and Agora Cyber Charter School) have been growing steadily, but that growth hides the fact that Pennsylvania Virtual has been falling in enrollment while Agora has been growing. The cyber-charter schools run by the Intermediate Units have experienced much slower growth than the other cyber-charter schools. The remaining cyber-charter schools, shown as "Other" in the graph have experienced rapid growth as well, with Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School and the Commonwealth Connections Academy growing especially rapidly as shown in the graph below.



Meanwhile, the cyber-charter schools have dodged a bullet in the Pennsylvania legislature. The bill sponsored by Karen Byer (House Bill 446) that was designed to severely limit their growth was largely neutered by the House Education Committee. As it stands now, its main effect would be to reduce cyber-charter funding from the current average of about \$8300 per student to a fixed per-pupil amount (about \$6500), set by the PA Department of Education through a complex funding formula. The reduced amount would not be so low as to hurt the growth of the better cyber-charter schools, but it would be sufficiently low to give tax payers a big dividend from the lower cost of Internet-based education.

The cyber-charter schools still do not much like the bill. It has some nasty aspects. For example, it makes it difficult for cyber-charter school teachers to gain the teaching experience credits which can entitle them to permanent teacher certification. Also, it takes away extra money saved by the cyber-charter schools at the end of each school year and distributes that money to the school districts. Still, it is much better than the language in the bill as it was originally written.

House Bill 446 would still have to be passed by the PA House and Senate and signed by the Governor in order to become law. Even if it eventually passes, the cyber-charter schools should continue to prosper and their enrollment should continue to grow.