
Celebrating Chartering @ 30 – MINNESOTA'S STORY

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While this past June 4th marked the 30th anniversary of the enactment of Minnesota's first-in-the-nation charter school law, the law has roots in a 1988 Citizens League Report; "**Chartered Schools: Choice for Educators + Quality for All Students**".

The Report provided a vision and much of the framework for the actual provisions of Minnesota's law, as well as other significant recommendations regarding desegregation, cooperatively managed schools, teacher licensing, multicultural education, and diversity of the education workforce for the Legislature, State Department of Education, Board of Teaching, Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts, local school boards, and teachers.

The Executive Summary of the Report began:

"Many teachers believe they know how to do a better job of educating their students. But they need to be freed from the constraints of an excessively rigid public school-management system to do it.

Parents concerned about the education of their children need and deserve a way to become involved in and informed about their children's schools. Informed and involved parents help make better schools.

Minneapolis and St. Paul have learned that school desegregation based solely on numbers and transportation produces neither sufficient integration nor assure access to quality education. We need a new approach to multicultural education that values quality as much as it does quotas, and that moves us closer to real integration as a community.

Most recent efforts at education reform throughout the nation are based on requiring the same system to meet tougher new standards. Minnesota, in contrast, has taken an incentives-and-opportunities approach, giving schools a reason and a way to become better.

*The state should cling to this "Minnesota difference." **It should stay on its innovative course by authorizing (not mandating), in Minneapolis and St. Paul, "chartered" public***

schools that empower teachers to develop high quality schooling opportunities, which include a commitment to integration. It should, throughout the state, allow teachers and school boards to talk about alternative structure for school governance, and consider the value of negotiating the terms for cooperatively managing the day-to-day operations of schools.”

[NOTE: Legislation to establish chartered public-school legislation was introduced in both the 1989 and 1990 legislative sessions. While the Senate passed the legislation in both sessions, it was not until 1991 that the House agreed to the legislation.]

The Report goes on to define what a “chartered” public school would be (the vision), the criteria for charter schools, how local districts should charter schools, and the state’s role in chartering public schools.

Look out for what was the vision for charters in the next installment of **Celebrating Chartering @ 30 – Minnesota’s Story, next Tuesday, September 7th.**

ELP



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