



## Celebrating Chartering @ 30 – MINNESOTA'S STORY

In the first six installments of *Celebrating Chartering @ 30 – Minnesota's Story*, we focused on sharing how the 1988 Citizens League Report: ***Chartered Schools = Choices for Educators + Quality for Students*** was a fundamental document in shaping Minnesota's approach for charter schools.

The 51-page Report not only outlined what would become the basis for many provisions of Minnesota's charter school law, but it also provided the questions with which an authorizer should judge a charter school proposal. The questions were:

- i. Does the proposal incorporate a governance structure for joint decision making, including teachers, administrators, parents, and community members in the school's operation?*
- ii. Does the proposal identify learner outcomes and specify methods of evaluation?*
- iii. Does the proposal call for school-based budgeting, allowing the individual school to govern how its allocated budget is spent?*
- iv. Does the proposal use educationally effective strategies such as cooperative learning, use of technology, experiential learning, or innovation organizational arrangements such as a longer school day to meet the demand for nontraditional school hours?*
- v. Does the proposal include strategies to employ faculty members with diverse backgrounds, experience levels, age, gender, cultures, and race?*
- vi. Does the proposal include a plan to achieve a desegregated mix of students that reflects the makeup of the student population in the district?*
- vii. Does the proposal have a plan for a metropolitan marketing strategy, to ensure that information about the program is available to all students?*
- viii. Does the proposal have an affirmative plan for parental involvement?"*

**COMMENT:** Some of these questions were eventually answered by the provisions in the charter school law. Examples: 1] The law requires that the board governance structure includes teachers,

parents, and community as voting members of the board, with the school administrator being an ex-officio, non-voting member of the charter school board. 2] The law created charters as districts for particular purposes, including funding and budgeting, thus ensuring that financial decisions are governed by the charter school board.

So, while some of the questions were answered in the law, the issue of judging proposals for approving a charter school is still a challenge. Today, given that charters are no longer just a concept, one of the questions authorizers need to ask about a proposed school is whether there is a market need and demand for a particular type of school, in a particular geographic area.

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