



Celebrating Chartering @ 30 – MINNESOTA'S STORY

NOTE: *The February 1st issue of this publication stated that next week's topic would be **What Happens Next.** Well, what happened was I had a series of heart related issues and procedures that led to me being hospitalized and limited in my activities. The plan is to pickup where we left off in Minnesota's Charter School Story.*

WHAT DID HAPPEN NEXT

Within a matter of weeks after Governor Arne Carlson signed chartered public schools into law allowing up to eight charters, **Minnesota's U.S. Senator David Durenberger** (R) raised the idea of chartered public schools nationally by introducing federal legislation ("Public School Redefinition Act of 1991") on July 31st to provide start-up grants to approved charter schools. The legislation was co-authored by Senator Joe Lieberman (D) of Connecticut. By the fall of 1991, Michigan, California, and several other states were discussing and debating charter legislation. Start-up funding would be enacted in 1994 and eventually would become the Charter School Program (CSP).

In Minnesota, things started to move forward to figure out how the new law would be implemented and how people would go about starting chartered schools. *"In mid-June about 40 people gathered in late afternoon in a room at the Humphrey Institute. ... a roomful of people who want to start schools and people who want to help them. There was the subtle current of electric expectations – the fears and uncertainties stirring around in a mixture of visions and promise. It is the stuff of which movements are made." ****

While these folks had visions of new schools, the reality at the beginning was that a private school was the first school to seek a charter – **Bluffview Montessori** in Winona. On December 10, 1991, the State Board of Education approved Winona's school district to sponsor Bluffview. The school was scheduled to open as a chartered public school in the fall of 1992. However, that opening was delayed until March 2, 1993, because of the opposition of five elementary principals and a grievance filed by the local teacher's union.

Within days of the State Board approving Winona's sponsorship of Bluffview, the St. Louis County School District board agreed to sponsor a charter school in **Toivola-Meadowlands**. This was a unique situation because it would replace a traditional public school that was closing. The State Board of Education approved the school on February 20, 1992.

The pace of approvals pick-up in the spring of 1992.

In April, the State Board approved **Cedar-Riverside School**, sponsored by the Minneapolis School District, as well as **Metro Deaf**, sponsored by the Forest Lake School District.

While the State Board was approving these schools, there was an effort in the MN House of Representatives to repeal the charter school law. It failed.

In May, the State Board of Education approved **City Academy**, sponsored by the St. Paul School District. City Academy has the distinction of being the first charter school to open in the United States, by virtue of the delay in Winona and the other schools planning to open in 1993.

In February 1993, **New Heights School**, sponsored by the Stillwater School District, was approved by the State Board and also opened in the fall of 1993. **Skills for Tomorrow**, sponsored by the Rockford School District, was also approved but did not open until March 1994.

NEXT ISSUE: THE FIRST RESEARCH ON MINNESOTA'S CHARTER SCHOOLS.

*** from *Zero Chance of Passage, 2012, Ember Reichgott Junge, page 206.*



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