



Celebrating Chartering @ 30 – MINNESOTA'S STORY

The new decade brought new challenges and new opportunities for Minnesota's charter schools. In 2000, there were three areas of the charter school law that were the focus of the Legislature: **school finance accountability, sponsors, and enrollment preferences.**

In terms of **enrollment preferences**, the legislature put the first preferences in law:

- **The first:** a required preference for siblings of enrolled pupils and foster children before accepting students by lottery.
- **The second:** a required preference for a pupil that resides in a "town" where the only school is a charter with a particular grade.
- **The third:** a required preference for a pupil that lives within two miles of the charter and the next closest public school is more than five miles away.

There were also changes made regarding who could sponsor a charter and the **relationship between the school and sponsor.**

- First, the law was amended to **allow a school to transfer to another sponsor with the approval of the commissioner.**
- Second, a nonprofit organization could be approved to be a sponsor if the **nonprofit was a 501(C) 3 organization, a member of the MN Council of Nonprofits or MN Council of Foundations**, registered with the attorney general, and reported an end of year fund balance of at least \$2 million.
- Third, the law **clarified that a private college sponsor** which offered two-year or four-year degrees and registered with the higher education service office could be a sponsor.
- Fourth, added community colleges, universities, and technical colleges **governed by the board of trustees of the Minnesota state colleges and universities.** *NOTE: MNSCU was just beginning to come together to put these institutions under a common board.*

- Fifth, in recognition that there were costs associated with monitoring and evaluating fiscal and student performance, the law was amended to allow a sponsor to assess **an annual fee of up to \$10 a student, with a maximum of \$3,500.**

There was also a provision enacted that gave the commissioner the **authority to terminate an existing sponsorial relationship** if the charter school had a history of: 1) financial mismanagement; or 2) repeated violations of the law.

In terms of **charter schools and financial management** the law was changed to:

- Require that charter schools **comply** with the requirements for state audits
- Give the commissioner **authority to reduce charter school state aid** if the school employed a teacher that was not licensed or approved by the board of teaching
- Clarify that charter schools were **subject to the requirements** in law when the school went into **statutory debt**
- Clarified that charter schools could apply for a **grant to receive the state portion of integration revenue for enrolled students who are residents of a district eligible for integration revenue.** The grants had to be competitively determined and demonstrate that enrolling pupils in the charter school would contribute to the desegregation or integration purposes defined by the commissioner

NEXT WEEK: CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF THE CHARTER SCHOOL MOVEMENT



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