



Celebrating Chartering @ 30 – MINNESOTA'S STORY

In November 2005, the Minnesota House of Representatives' Research Department published an updated **Information Brief on Minnesota's Charter Schools** for legislators. The Brief updated information about the role of sponsors, charter contracts, application and start-up process, finances and financial management, facilities, statutory requirements for charters, causes and process for closing a school, and the Charter School Advisory Council. The last section of the Brief laid out issues that required legislative clarification.

The Brief laid out eleven (11) areas that required clarification:

1] The process for closing a charter school – the law is incomplete and people lack administrative experience in the process of closing a school.

2] Timely Board Elections – the parameters of what constitutes “timely” are unclear.

3] Duty to Disseminate Information – the parameters of this duty for sponsors (school districts) are unclear.

4] Supplemental Applications – it is unclear whether the commissioner must approve a supplemental application before a sponsor can authorize a school's expansion.

5] Instruction & Supplemental Programs & Services for Younger & Older Students – it is unclear whether charters have the authority to provide instruction for early childhood or adult basic education given that they may provide these programs, but do not receive general funding for them and are prohibited from charging tuition.

6] Length of the School Year – Since 2000, the length of the charter school year has been unclear as to whether the school must meet the number of schools days as laid out in law.

7] Application Deadline – Given there is no statutory deadline by which a sponsor must apply to authorize a school, a common deadline might facilitate better planning and organizing for

opening a school.

8] Board Membership – Clarity is needed for whether a member of the sponsor’s board of directors may serve on the board of directors of the school it sponsors.

9] Conflicts of Interest for Nonprofit Entities – There is a need to clarify that a member of a charter school’s board of directors must disclose any conflicts of interest not just with for-profit entities, but also non-profit entities which the school contracts for services, goods, or facilities.

10] Transportation Reporting Deadline – There is a need to examine whether requiring charter schools to notify the district earlier than July 1 would help in scheduling, setting routes, and deciding a school's transportation methods.

11] Admissions Requirements & High School Graduation Incentives Program – Clarification is needed for why the criteria and administration for enrolling eligible students in the High School Graduation Incentives Programs is different for charter schools and districts.

Subsequent legislation in the following years addressed almost all these issues.

NEXT WEEK: 2005-2007 Legislation and the Framework for the 2008 OLA Report on Charters



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161 St. Anthony Avenue, Suite 1000
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