



MN ASSOCIATION OF
CHARTER SCHOOLS

Unleashing education from convention

MILO CUTTER

2017 MN CHARTER SCHOOL PIONEER AWARD

Milo Cutter is the “ultimate pioneer” in the charter school movement, being the co-founder and director of the first chartered public school – City Academy – in the nation.

Being a co-founder and director of the first charter school for 25 years, as long as the charter school movement, is itself an extraordinary accomplishment – but the creation of City Academy was never about Milo. It has always been about the students.

In a 1999 interview, Milo said, *“We wanted a school where the number one priority would be the students. We were hoping for the ultimate in student focus”*.

Creating a charter school, and one that is ultimately student focused is a pioneering act.

Pioneers often have to fight the elements, as well as those who believe they have something to lose by the work of pioneers. Milo and her co-founders had to fight off those who opposed the idea of chartered schools including the St. Paul Federation of Teachers, even though she was a member of the union.

Throughout the 25 years Milo has guided City Academy, the school has been led by a cooperative leadership team, and everyone on the staff works with students. Milo and the City Academy team have created as flat an organizational structure as one could probably find in any organization.

For 25 years Milo has kept City Academy focused on serving at-risk students – many who have felt like they did not belong anywhere. She has kept to the vision that students are the number one priority. The graduates of City Academy and now their children who attend the school are a testament and tribute to Milo’s visionary work.

18 years ago in an Education Week interview, Milo laughed when she was called a pioneer of the charter school movement, saying; *“That sounds like someone going across the prairie in a covered wagon”*.

Milo, while you may not have gone across the prairie in a covered wagon, the ground you have walked as a model school founder and director has gone across the nation and the world. Milo Cutter you are a **Minnesota Charter School Pioneer** who helped *“Unleash Education from Convention”* as the founder and director of the nation’s first charter school, but more importantly for your commitment to making students the number one priority.