



Celebrating Chartering @ 30 – MINNESOTA'S STORY

THE FIRST RESEARCH ON MINNESOTA'S CHARTERED PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The first research on Minnesota's nascent chartered public-school sector was conducted in 1994 by the MN House of Representatives' Research Department.

While the report looked at the process of establishing chartered schools and what issues school districts were debating about being sponsors, the report focused on the six (6) chartered schools (*Bluffview, Cedar-Riverside, City Academy, Metro Deaf, New Heights, and Toivola-Medowlands*) in operation during the 1993-94 school year. That year, the six schools had a total enrollment of 617.

So, what did the research find about charter proposals and the debates of school boards relative to sponsoring a chartered school from 1991-1994?

- 21 chartered schools were proposed and 62% were approved
- 13 schools were sponsored by local districts
- 1 school was sponsored by the State Board of Education
- 8 school proposals were rejected (4 were proposed from small communities)

In terms of the type of school programs proposed:

- 9 were new programs directed at specific student populations (Deaf students, American Indian, at-risk students, vocational-technical ed, etc.)
- 9 were proposals from existing schools or programs (i.e. Bluffview, Toivola-Meadowlands)
- 3 were proposals directed at the general student population (New Country, Canon Valley, MPLS Community Learning)

The researchers surveyed the school board members from the 20 school districts who were debating whether to sponsor a charter school and interviewed the superintendents from those districts. They found that 213 (61%) school board members focused the discussion on concerns about charters and 135 (39%) focused on the benefits of chartering schools.

The discussions of the concerns and benefits of chartered schools focused on four issues: 1] The effect the charter school might have on the district; 2] Philosophical issues about chartering; 3] Specific issues about individual charter proposals; and 4] Issues about the educational approach of the proposed charter school.

NEXT ISSUE: The Research on the Six Chartered Public Schools in 1994



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