



## **Celebrating Chartering @ 30 – MINNESOTA'S STORY**

The accountability measures in the 2005 legislation focused on charter school sponsors. The law was amended to require the sponsor's affidavit to the commissioner to layout "*how the sponsor intends to oversee the fiscal and student performance of the charter school and to comply with the terms of the written contract between the sponsor and the charter school board of directors...*"

The law was also amended to require those provisions be put in the charter contract and to require that "*the sponsor must submit to the commissioner timely information for the review and comment*" before a contract is renewed with a charter school. It also spelled out a process for the sponsor or charter school board to voluntarily terminate the contract at the end of the contract term and change sponsor if the commissioner approved the change. Finally, it defined a timeline for notifications of renewal or nonrenewal by the sponsor.

In 2007, the legislature removed the provision for how long a board had to decide whether to sponsor a charter school. It also clarified that when a charter school closes, the students' educational records must be transferred to their resident school districts within 10 business days. There, the records are required to either be retained or transferred to other schools the students will attend.

There were several other proposals regarding the accountability of a charter school's board of directors, the required trainings for board members, compliance with public records, conflict of interests, charter contracts, as well as enrollment lotteries, and allowing charter school students to participate in extracurricular activities in their resident district. None of these proposals were adopted in 2007, nor in 2008.

*"In April 2007, the Legislative Audit Commission directed the Office of the Legislative Auditor to evaluate charter schools. Legislators had questions about the achievements of charter schools and whether students who attend charter schools are performing adequately on key academic measures. Legislators also had questions about the oversight and accountability of charter schools."*

**The Evaluation Report**, issued in June 2008, provides an overview of Minnesota’s charter school system and addresses the following questions:

- What programs do charter schools offer and what types of students do they serve?
- How do charter schools’ academic performances compare with that of district schools? What factors contribute to any differences?
- How well do sponsors (organizations that authorize charter schools) and the Minnesota Department of Education oversee charter schools?
- To what extent have charter schools experienced financial difficulties?
- To what extent has the Minnesota Department of Education implemented recommendations made in the Office of the Legislative Auditor’s 2003 report on charter school financial accountability?

## **NEXT WEEK: The 2008 OLA Report**



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