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

### **An Agenda for the 4<sup>th</sup> Decade of Chartering in Minnesota**

The agenda for the fourth decade of chartering in Minnesota can be summed up in three short ideas:

- **Fair and equitable funding for students who attend chartered public-schools.**
- **A rational policy approach for charter school facilities.**
- **A rebalancing between accountability and autonomy/innovation.**

**FUNDING** - Over the years, a myth and a policy approach have led to a growing gap between the funding for students who attend chartered public-schools and students who attend traditional public schools. The myth is that chartered public schools can and/or should educate students for less than traditional public schools. The idea that charter school students should receive less funding for their education was never part of the original chartering deal. The policy approach, which has exacerbated the growing funding gap, is the transferring of education costs from the state to local district levies. Charter school do not have access to those levies, nor do they receive equivalent state funding in lieu of local levies.

**FACILITIES** - The one provision of the charter school law which has never been updated states that charter schools cannot use public funds to purchase facilities. The consequences of not updating the policy have led to the creation of additional non-profits organizations which own facilities, while not providing any asset for the state lease aid investment. While this provision made sense in 1991 when chartered public schools were still experimental, it is financially irresponsible today. It is time to update the law.

**ACCOUNTABILITY & AUTONOMY/INNOVATION** – Over the last two decades, school and student accountability has been measured and documented through standardized tests. The result of this approach has created an environment that does not value or recognize different and innovative practices in terms of measuring learning outcomes and the establishment of new forms of accountability for schools – both of which are goals defined in the charter school law.

There is a need to rebalance organizational and operational accountability issues from a bureaucratic compliance approach to one based on a demonstration of competency and actual performance.

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## EPILOGUE

Over the course of this 45-part series, the focus has been on telling the history and evolution of Minnesota's first-in-the-nation chartered public school law from its beginning, when the framework for the law was first outlined on a napkin at the Itasca Seminar in 1988, through today.

However, the history of the law only gives us hints about the events and people who have shaped chartering over the last 30+ years. While the evolution of the law is critically important given it provides the framework for chartering, it is only one aspect of the history of chartered public schools. There are numerous events and people who have shaped Minnesota's chartered school story.

**So, there is much yet to be told.**



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