

## Plan for Advancing Minnesota Public Education

September 10, 1990

To:

From: Wayne Jennings, President, Designs for Learning

Re: Chartered Schools Initiative

This plan continues major public policy initiatives like post-secondary options, choice and area learning centers to improve learning .

Proposed is a system combining chartered schools with diversification and divestiture. It tests these extraordinary ideas to improve schools.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) to educators and parents from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) would invite proposals for new schools. The Minnesota State Board of Education would grant charters to proposers meeting criteria. Funding for each new school would come from total per pupil expenditures each enrollee would have received from their residence district.

Here are the steps:

1. The MDE establishes baseline criteria for a school. It must meet such standards as: safety, cleanliness, non-religious, non-discrimination, affirmative action, employment rights and realize state learner outcomes.
2. The MDE invites proposals to establish new schools through a RFP.
3. Proposals are reviewed and charters for schools granted to those who meet the baseline criteria. Initially, the number of charters may be limited in order to test the plan.
4. New schools may contract with districts for services such as transportation, food, payroll, facility use, health benefits, etc. Districts may not refuse to provide such services if requested and must provide them at the same cost as its other schools.<sup>1</sup> The new schools may decline to use district services and are free to make other arrangements.

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<sup>1</sup>Establishing these services is one of the daunting factors in creating a new school and drains crucial staff energy from program development.

5. To encourage staff to participate in the new schools, educators will retain rights to return to their former districts for a period of five years. This is like the former five year mobility leave provision. The new schools will not grant tenure and most personnel will be under one year renewable contracts based on school need and staff performance.
6. The new schools will not be under the jurisdiction of a district. Accountability results from decisions for continuation of the charter based on performance: adherence to state criteria, student achievement and the ability to attract students to the program.
7. The new schools will receive their funds in lump sums from the district(s). Each school will determine its budget, program and staff. Schools will be encouraged to use democratic decision making.

Comments

The expected impact on districts will be to act to prevent such defections. They risk losing valuable staff and will fear losing students and funding. I believe they will begin to grant real site based decision making authority and become more open to improved practices. This program provides the state with a significant effort to advance learning.