



MN ASSOCIATION OF
CHARTER SCHOOLS

Unleashing education from convention

*Minnesota
Charter School*

***Public Policy
Positions for
2011-2012***



1] EDUCATION FUNDING

Preamble: Education Funding Principles

*Given that the Constitution of the State of Minnesota gives the legislature the duty to establish general and uniform system of public schools, and the power of taxation to secure a thorough and efficient system of schools; and given that the funding gap between public school students who attend traditional school districts versus public charter schools is rapidly growing as local property taxes are becoming a higher percentage of school funding: **we believe that funding for all public schools should be state based - not local property-based to ensure equitable funding for public education throughout the state.***

*Given that the education needs of individual students are unique and varied, and that public school choice is a value and benefit to the students and the educational system of our state, **we believe that all funding (federal, state or local), for individual students should follow that student to the school of the student's /parent's choice.***

We support:

- Restoration of the 90/10 holdback formula for charters and/ or creating either a charter school loan guarantee fund by utilizing the state startup aid, or a charter school operating loan interest fund using the charter school startup aid to pay the interest for the costs of charter school operating loans during the 2012 -2013 biennium.
- The Equalization of Referendum Aid of the entire per pupil amount that local levy referendum aid generates from students who attend charter schools should follow those students to the charter school they have chosen to attend.
- Charter school students receiving the per pupil amount of funding generated by the Permanent School Fund in accordance with MN Statute 124D.11 subd. 6, which states that charter schools shall receive aids, grants and revenue according to chapters 120A to 129c,

as though it were a district. (MN Statutes 127A deals with funding from the Permanent School Fund to the School Endowment Fund.)

- Equitable funding for voluntary full-day kindergarten programs.
- Legislation that allows extended time revenue to increase in the future at the same percentage as the general education revenue.
- Legislation that provides for additional funding beyond the basic aid formula for traditional school districts and charter schools which establish longer year school programs.
- Legislation that would allow charter schools with approved expansion plans to access federal startup funds.
- Maintaining the present compensatory education formula which provides aid on the basis of the concentration of poverty.
- The concept of the Equity and Opportunity in Education Tax Credit, which would provide a state tax credit to individuals and corporations that give financial gifts to schools to provide academic support for students from low-income families.

2] CHARTER SCHOOL FACILITIES AND LEASE AID

Preamble: Charter School Facilities Principles

Given that school facilities can enhance or detract from the ability to learn, we believe that children have a right to expect that the facility in which they attend school is safe and healthy, and we believe that public charter school students should have the ability to have access to facilities that are conducive to the learning process and experience without intrusive or unjustified restrictions.

Given that the public policy of the state of Minnesota since 1991 has been that charter schools may not directly own facilities using public funds, we believe that it is time for the state to reexamine that policy and create other options for financially sound public charter schools.

Given that charter schools do not have the authority to levy taxes, we believe that charter schools should receive facilities aid that reflects



the actual cost of providing facilities for students who attend public charter schools.

We support

- The options of direct school facility ownership or affiliated building companies for charter schools that have met appropriate criteria, including a demonstrated record of sound financial management, business practices and a sustainable plan for the future.
- The creation of a Minnesota Charter School Facilities Authority empowered to issue bonds for qualifying charter schools to purchase, renovate or construct a facility.
- All facilities currently owned by affiliated building companies be transferred to the public charter school upon bonds being paid off, so that if the school closes the public charter school facility shall be deemed an asset of the school and public property.
- The State of Minnesota undertaking an inventory (at least biennially) of all state and traditional school district facilities that could be utilized by traditional school districts, charter schools or other entities for school or youth programming.
- Legislation that would prohibit school districts and other local public boards or agencies from adopting or implementing policies that discriminate against charter schools from leasing or purchasing vacant, surplus, publicly-owned property.
- Legislation that would establish a transfer or sale price of \$ 1 for a surplus, vacant, publicly owned facility between a public entity and a charter school that will own the facility directly when the facility being transferred or sold has no mortgage or bonds against its value.
- Renaming the “lease aid” program to “facilities aid” to more accurately reflect the aid’s real purpose.
- Creating incentives in the lease aid program to give charter schools leverage in negotiating with landlords, allowing the charter school to utilize the savings in lease costs for covering utilities, maintenance or other related facilities costs.
- Grand-parenting lease aid for those schools who were at a higher lease aid amount in 2003 until their current lease expires (extensions

of the lease would not be covered) or until the school moves and enters into a lease for new space.

- Clarifying the charter school law that recognizes that IRS regulations allow for overlap of boards between the school and its affiliated building company.

We oppose

- Tying academic performance to the ability of a charter school to purchase or construct a facility that will be owned directly by the charter school.

3] STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

We support

- Revamping state policy and funding of the public education student transportation system to: encourage investment and use of energy efficient vehicles, encourage innovation in service delivery and design, and provide sufficient transportation aid funding to cover the actual cost of transportation.

We oppose

- Any requirement that charter schools reimburse traditional school districts for excess transportation costs beyond state transportation aid, as charter schools do not have taxing authority to cover excess costs and have no say in the design or delivery of transportation services provided by traditional districts.

4] TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATORS

We support

- Legislation that would require the State of Minnesota to create an interdisciplinary teaching license which recognizes the reality of personalized learning programs (e.g. project-based learning) where the role of teacher is to serve as a facilitator or manager of the learning process.
- Legislation that would facilitate the creation of alternative teacher preparation programs through partnerships of traditional school districts, charter schools, higher education and nonprofits formed for an education purpose as a means of acquiring a two-year limited



license or an initial standard entrance license.

- A requirement that every charter school board develop or adopt and implement an evaluation system for all teachers and all personnel in administrative, supervisory or instructional leadership positions that is designed to measure school outcomes and longitudinal growth in student achievement, encourages multiple, different and innovative methods of assessing and evaluating performance and creates new professional opportunities linked to school and student academic growth. We further support charter school boards maintaining maximum flexibility in terms of determining how the evaluation and compensation are linked given that charter schools are by law at-will employers.

5] AUTHORIZERS

We support

- Emergency legislation to extend the deadline for current sponsor/authorizers to apply for approval from June 30, 2011 to June 30, 2012 and allow these sponsor/authorizers to continue to authorize current schools until that date.
- Amending the charter school law to clarify that single purpose authorizer organizations must be free standing nonprofits and not subsidiaries or affiliates of another nonprofit.
- Amending the charter school law to allow up to 5 single purpose authorizers.
- Amending the charter school law to clarify that a person may not be a member of an authorizer's board if he/she is a board member or employee of the school the authorizer has chartered.
- Amending the charter school law to establish procedures for the merger of two charter schools and that authority to approve mergers rests with authorizers rather than MDE.
- Amending the charter school law to require that the Commissioner seek stakeholder comment in the establishment of standards for

authorizer approval and the standards and process of authorizer performance review.

6] ACADEMICS AND ASSESSMENT

We support

- Legislation that clarifies that charter schools have the authority to establish early childhood and pre-school programs, adult basic education programs, enrichment programs and before and after school programs if defined in the school charter and that those schools are thus eligible for any state or federal funding available for those programs.
- Legislation that measures academic achievement on the basis of individual student growth and measures school outcomes on that basis.
- Legislation which recognizes the use of multiple forms of assessment for accountability purposes.
- Legislation which recognizes that schools which serve over-age and under-credited students should have a longer time frame for measuring success for accountability purposes.

7] SPECIAL EDUCATION

We oppose

- Any requirement that charter schools reimburse the resident district of a special education student for excess costs, as special education is a federal mandate and charter schools do not have taxing authority to cover excess costs for these federally mandated services.

8] EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

We support

- Legislation that directs the MN High School League to institute policies which, as a matter of public policy, encourage school districts and charter schools to enter into cooperative agreements that ensure the interests and needs of young people are the first and foremost



consideration in extracurricular programs, rather than school or High School League interests.

- Legislation that would prohibit the MN High School League and school districts from adopting policies that discriminate against public charter school students from participating in their resident district activities, if the charter school does not offer that activity, or that undermine a student's choice of school by charging exorbitant fees which do not reflect the actual cost of the extracurricular activity.
- Legislation that would require traditional school districts and charter schools to annually publish the cost of every extracurricular activity and the funding sources for those activities to ensure the parents, students and the public know the actual costs of these programs.

9] STUDENT SAFETY

We support

- Amending the law to include bullying and intimidation in school harassment and violence policies and to include all categories of students identified in the MN Human Rights Law.

10] AUTONOMY

We oppose

- Any legislation that would change the fundamental principle of "organically developed and locally controlled" charter schools to "corporately controlled and managed" schools.
- Any legislation that imposes a mandated health plan which limits the autonomy of the charter school board to make financial decisions related to personnel costs or imposes unfunded financial obligations on the school.
- Any legislation that mandates that charter school administrators have a license.
- Any legislation that would undermine the purpose of charter schools outlined in Minnesota's charter school law.

MN Association of Charter Schools
www.mncharterschools.org

Contact: Eugene Piccolo, MACS Executive Director
Eugene@mncharterschools.org
651-789-3090 ext. 10