



Unleashing education from convention

POLICY STATEMENT ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFFING OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

While charter schools in Minnesota are often small in terms of student enrollment, charter schools are significant organizations by organizational design, size of budgets, staffing, and impact on the students and families they serve.

Even the smallest charter school in the state has a budget of several hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the larger schools are multi-million dollar operations. No matter the size of the school or the budget, the administrative responsibilities of charter schools are the same. While the large institutions may have more issues (personnel, discipline, etc.), those same issues exist even in the smallest of schools.

In fact, the administration of smaller institutions is often more challenging and difficult. These schools have a smaller resource base and limitations on personnel who can be assigned or delegated administrative responsibilities. However, even the largest schools have limited infrastructure by virtue of finances and the requirements of being autonomous school districts.

This is the reality for the majority of charter schools in Minnesota. While it is the reality, it does not exempt any charter school board from ensuring that there is adequate and effective administration of the school.

Every charter school board has the legal obligation and fiduciary responsibility to ensure that the school has adequate administrative staffing to fulfill day-to-day administrative functions and to also address the long-term sustainability and public accountability obligations of the school.

A casual observer of charter schools does not need to look far to see evidence that a significant number of charter schools do not have adequate administrative staffing to even ensure that some of the day-to-day functions and tasks are being effectively implemented.

Recommendations

While the responsibility for ensuring adequate administration rests with individual charter school boards, the MN Association of Charter Schools recommends the following actions to ensure adequate and effective administration:

For School Boards:

1. Every charter school board of directors should conduct an assessment of the administrative responsibilities and duties needed for effective administration of the school and the capacity of the current administrative structure to enable effective administration. The assessment should at least include an assessment of capacity in the areas of nonprofit management, instruction and assessment, human resource management, school finances and financial management, technology utilization, legal and compliance management, and community relations.

2. Every charter school board should develop and execute a plan to ensure that the school has the administrative structure to ensure the responsibilities and duties can be effectively accomplished.
3. Every charter school board should conduct a review of administrative structure and capacity at least every three years or whenever the school has undergone significant changes, such as a substantial change in size, a fundamental change of mission, a change in direction or program design, or a change in the school director.
4. Every charter school board of directors should budget the necessary and adequate funds for ensuring that there is effective and efficient administrative staffing of the school.
5. Every charter school, especially small schools, should explore ways to cooperate or partner with other charter schools to maximize resources.

For Authorizers:

1. Every authorizer should expect that the charter schools they authorize conduct regular assessments of the administrative structure and staffing needs, and the authorizer should make the assessment of a school's administrative capacity an element in the contract renewal evaluation process.