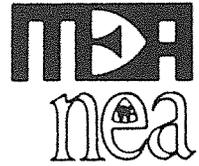


MINNESOTA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



Robert E. Astrup, *President*  
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A POWERFUL FORCE FOR BETTER EDUCATION

April 11, 1991

Senator Ember Reichgott  
301 State Capitol  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Reichgott:

The Minnesota Education Association is opposed to chartered schools. H.F. 773, S.F. 630 would create chartered schools with state funds. These schools would operate independently of existing school districts and free of most state regulations, statutes and safeguards of quality. Stated goals of the legislation include improving pupil learning and implementing outcome based education (OBE) - a system which uses student outcomes as the measure of course completion, rather than time spent in the classroom.

MEA believes that this legislation does not provide the public accountability, oversight, protection of rights, fiscal responsibility, and benefit consistent with the expectations our society holds for public funding of those schools.

Among the many freedoms proposed for chartered schools is lax enforcement of standards, foremost of which is the ability to hire unlicensed teaching personnel. MEA stands firmly behind licensure as a requirement to insure the qualifications of teachers and the protection of students. Teachers need not only be "smart" about a particular subject and have a proclivity toward nurturing; they need professional training. Other professions from barbers to brain surgeons, are licensed by the state. Minnesota students deserve licensed teachers.

MEA supports innovative programs in our schools and real restructuring for education reform for all students. Innovation and experimentation can be and is accomplished within the existing system. We need the time, resources, and administrative support to allow educators to be innovative and we pledge to work with you towards this end.

Please vote against chartered schools so we can move on to the real issue of this session, quality education for Minnesota children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Cheryl M. Furrer'.

Cheryl M. Furrer  
MEA Lobbyist

CMF:mah  
Enclosure

*President*  
*Vice President*  
*Secretary-Treasurer*  
*Executive Director*

Robert E. Astrup, Mounds View  
Walter H. Munsterman, Anoka  
Judy L. Schaubach, Red Wing  
Larry E. Wicks, St. Paul

# Why MEA Opposes Chartered Schools

## *Insulting*

The concept of chartered schools implies that beneficial change cannot be brought about within the existing system of public education, and says that it is necessary to create an additional, untested, competing system. It is insulting because it ignores the success of Minnesota public schools.

The real issue is to provide quality education for all of Minnesota's public school students. The discussion of chartered schools diverts our attention. We need to provide the time, talent, and resources to support the efforts of communities and educators state-wide to restructure our schools to meet the needs of our students and the future of our state.

## *A costly hoax*

The concept of charter schools is a hoax that could cost Minnesota taxpayers millions of dollars and place constitutional guarantees in jeopardy. Under proposals which have been presented in Minnesota, charter schools could be created which would then be supported by state funds. These schools could operate independently of existing school districts and free of most state regulations and safeguards of quality. Our state cannot afford to divert resources in this way.

The institution of a chartered school system could threaten accessibility to education—and even result in abandonment of our state's constitutional duty to provide a "general and uniform" public school system. Chartered schools could be established by any group or organization that applied to the state and met minimal requirements. Once granted a charter, these "schools" would receive taxpayers' dollars to operate.

## *More bureaucracy*

Under these proposals, a new level of bureaucracy would be created to facilitate the formation of chartered schools. In addition, these chartered schools would be able to spend public funds for travel and consulting services and would have access to funding and innovative programs that existing public schools are denied.

## *Nonlicensed teachers*

Most disturbing to MEA, these schools would not be subject to the state safeguards that insure quality education for all children. In fact, they would be permitted to hire persons to teach who are not licensed and therefore not properly trained. MEA stands firmly behind licensure as a requirement to insure the qualifications of teachers. Teachers need not only be "smart" about a particular subject and have a proclivity toward nurturing; they need professional training. Other professions, from barbers to brain surgeons, are licensed by the state. Minnesota students deserve licensed teachers.

## ***Innovation is part of today's public schools***

Proponents of chartered schools believe innovation in education cannot be achieved under the current system. But, in fact, individual teachers, schools, and even entire school districts all across Minnesota are already engaged in designing new programs for excellence which are recognized nation-wide.

### ***Siphon off resources***

Innovation and improvement are a real part of today's public schools in Minnesota. Chartered schools, however, are an idea which would obviously siphon valuable resources of time, talent, money and energy away from a creative, high quality system of education—and our children would be the guinea pigs.

### ***Goes against the grain***

The chartered school proposal goes against the grain of several positive trends in Minnesota public education: fewer school districts and bargaining units; less administrative bureaucracy rather than more; higher, rather than lower, standards for teaching and education; and more rather than less integration of students and curriculum.

### ***Bad public policy***

The hallmark of public education in our nation and state has been the goal—and largely demonstrated ability—to meet the needs of *all* students. Elitism is contrary to all fundamental American values. The stated goals of chartered schools—including improving education and implementing outcome-based education—are commendable, but they are achievable through the existing public school system. And all students should reap the benefits, not just a select few. Creating an additional side bureaucracy and system is unnecessary and unconscionable. It's just plain bad public policy.

## ***MEA supports real restructuring***

### ***Benefits for all students***

Minnesota has more than 400 independent school districts, and all are doing the best they can for their students. Some do more than others, but all are committed to their students. Minnesota owes *all* of these students something. MEA backs real restructuring efforts which would benefit all Minnesota students.

Proposals for chartered schools don't really do anything to restructure schools; they would just create a new, small subset of schools. If the differences inherent in chartered schools would really be so beneficial, then all of our students should share in them—we owe them that much.