

Sen. Reichgott:

This will be rough, but I thought it might be a good idea to put down a few notes about the ideas in the bill and about issues that might come up.

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You might want to anticipate (and somewhat defuse) the likely opposition by saying . . . yea, affirming . . . up front that, yes, this is different. A different school. Created through a different procedure. Operating under different rules. Absolutely. You bet.

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Since opponents always to spread fear and doubt we've tried to listen for the "questions" that'll be raised. They fall under two headings:

\* Why should we do this?

- \* School boards can create new schools now.
- \* School boards can create site-managed schools now.
- \* Help all schools.
- \* What would it do for rural Minnesota?

\* How would it work?

- \* Would it lead to segregated schools?
- \* Who would the sponsors be accountable to?
- \* How much money would go to the school and how would it flow?

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You might spread a little fear and doubt yourself. What if it would work? What if it would be good for kids? "Are you (Mr. Opponent) prepared to deny this help to kids who need it? And to deny the state this improvement? This innovation?" Etc.

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On most objections it's possible . . . useful . . . fair . . . to ask: "Whose interest would that serve?"

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The plea to "make existing schools better" isn't hard to handle.

The premise is that the state can do that. That's probably wrong. Schools have to make themselves better: Improvement has to be school-based. The state can't do it.

And at the moment the school can't really do that itself either. Schools do not have the freedom needed for that. Schools are controlled by their districts, almost absolutely.

What the state really does is to help districts. The districts always promise they will make schools better. But too often that doesn't happen. Too much of the money gets turned into salaries and into district bureaucracy, rather than into program-improvements for kids.

It's time the state did something directly to let schools shape themselves. Not a lot. Not a revolution. Just open a small door.

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That's the 'charter' concept. It's true: Shanker's original idea was to enable teachers to do this within the framework of their district. But see the notes, attached, of the conversation with him about that.

Teachers need some leverage to deal with the district board and bureaucracy. Otherwise -- even with the charter concept -- they'll be supplicants like they've always been: "Please, Dr. Superintendent, can't we try out this new idea?"

They need the leverage represented by the opportunity to approach some other sponsor; without having to carry the burden of having been rejected by their local board first.

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The bill is a way for the Legislature to push ahead on three fronts where it wants change and improvement:

\* Outcomes. If you want schools to measure student performance and to be measured by student performance, what better than to set up a few schools that can't be controlled except through their outcomes?

\* Accountability. Measurement alone isn't enough. Something has to depend on the outcomes being met. There have to be some consequences. Right now nothing would happen, even if we did know performance. The bill offers two kinds of accountability: through the contract with the sponsor, and through the choice offered to the parents/kids.

\* Site-management and teacher-professionalism. This really gives teachers what (some of them, at least) have been asking for: the

authority to run the school. Without being told how to do it. (Which is what professionalism means.) This is the most sweeping grant of authority to schools ever put on paper in Minnesota. Absolutely. You bet. We don't know how many will be willing to pick it up. That's what the Legislature wants to find out.

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Attached is Mattheis' testimony.

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**Re: the Friday meeting:**

A person friendly to the bill talked the other day with Sandra Peterson. He reports:

\* The MFT just may want to come out with something, if it can meet their concerns.

\* These are with "the Senate bill". Specifically:

\* The provisions for teacher-leave don't protect seniority.

\* It would permit unlicensed teachers in the schools.

\* It sounds like the Tesseract school.

\* These schools drain off resources that would otherwise go to reducing class size and to increasing teacher salaries.

This is amazing. It's worth checking with Betsy, but she probably misunderstands the leave provisions of the bill, probably misreads the licensing provision (at least in the current draft) and apparently does not understand that you have ruled out for-profit operators.

The point about "draining off resources that could otherwise go to salaries" speaks for itself.

My friend told Sandra: "This (bill) is the ultimate opportunity for teachers to get professional status."