

2 April 1991

On site-management:

* The Edmonton superintendent tells me they often see the most 'value added' in schools that enroll low-income, low-performing kids . . . once those schools get moving.

The middle-class schools don't add much value, he says. The kids move along, of course. But the schools aren't moving them ahead of where they'd normally be.

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* The major education organizations are finally getting around to a big conference of their own on site-management . . . after years of having this idea pushed at them by others.

It's at the Radisson South April 18th.

* A good consultant, Pat Dolan, was with Roseville teachers all day Monday. Carol Ericson would really like to move with this.

Mike Strembitsky comes through the Twin Cities a lot, changing planes here on his way to somewhere else. No one has ever asked him to stop, to talk about site-management to folks here. Somebody should, some day. He'd do it.

A lot of people don't like his approach, which is precisely to make the principal accountable . . . for performance, for involving people, etc. They think the goal is "shared decision-making".

School boards often take this line. ("We won't really give you any authority, but you all get to share in it.")

Sad to say, I heard a person with the Matsushita (Panasonic) Foundation take the same line, at a meeting in New York last week. As you know, they give Minneapolis a lot of money.

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I'm beginning to appreciate how important it is for people who give out lots of money not to lose their balance when the people who get the money tell them what wonderful things are happening. The guy with Matsushita had entirely lost the distinction between what's happening and what the school people say is happening.

On charter schools:

It's a site-management bill too. It's easy, and common, for the discussions to assume it's about creating new schools, and only about that. No. It's also about giving 'charter status' to folks now working in existing, district-administered schools.

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The bill is surprising everybody this year. Much stronger support, and better changes, than anyone would have thought. It's like an iceberg. Lots below the surface, that doesn't show. Tom Nelson, for example, is very interested and is making a real effort.

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SF 630 has had a hearing in subcommittee in the Senate. It should be moved out this week, either by the normal process or by the chairman simply referring it to the Finance Division. There it should get rolled into the omnibus Education Aids bill. Dicklich chairs the division.

In the House HF 773 should get a hearing in full committee; on April 10. The author there (Becky Kelso, Shakopee) doesn't expect to pass that version: The House is unlikely to go beyond the (less flexible) provisions of its own HF 350.

The hope is that the House will pass the HF 350 version, that the better version can come through the Senate, and that pretty much the Senate version can be adopted in conference.

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A call to Ken Nelson would help. Also to Pogemiller, who's on the Senate bill.

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None of the establishment organization is supportive; including the teacher organizations. There's what some people call "a war" going on in Minnesota currently between the two unions and it's not a time when either can afford to be seen as anything but militant in defense of teacher rights.

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There more to say, that's better said than written. Give me a call if you'd like.