

CHARTER SCHOOLS NETWORK NEWS

MARCH 1992

NETWORK NEWS

Is my name for a newsletter to keep you informed about what is going on with those of you who are working toward becoming charter schools. Schedules being what they are in state government, I'm not promising anything, but I will welcome suggestions and items for the NEWS.

NETWORK MEETING:

A scheduled gathering Thursday, March 5 at the Hubert Humphrey Institute was attended by 36 people, if everyone signed the sheet going around the room. Everyone had an opportunity to introduce themselves and tell a bit about where they are in the process toward becoming a charter school. Every group is struggling in one way or another.

LETTER WRITING:

Supportive legislators need to hear from those of you who are charter school proponents. They would love to know of the interest, excitement, and commitment you have in creating a charter school. These legislators do not always know the extent of the interest in this program and would benefit by hearing from you.

Rep. Becky Kelso
415 State Office Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Charlie Waver
243 State Office Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dee Long
Speaker of the House
459 State Office Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Ken Nelson
367 State Office Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Sen. Ember Reichgott
301 Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155

Sen. Ronald Dicklich
235 Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155

Sen. Greg Dahl
235 Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155

UPDATE ON CHARTER SCHOOL GROUPS

BLUFFVIEW MONTESSORI:

The first to get approval by the state board of education, is facing a grievance from the Winona Education Association if the district signs a contract with the school. This program will begin as a K-3 program and move to K-6. They are looking for teachers who have both Minnesota teaching licenses and Montessori elementary certification.

T-M O.B.E. COMMITTEE:

The group from Toivola-Meadowlands, is working on designing curriculum using the state model learner outcomes for a K-12 school and has met with John Bulger in education finance to develop a budget. They are preparing for a fall 1993 start. They plan to use the current school building which is being closed by the district.

RAPIDAN AREA CHARTER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION:

In the Lake Crystal district, is being sponsored by the Truman school board and will be coming to the state board of education for approval on April 13. This group is planning a agriculturally focused school. They are involving the parents and community in the area in planning curriculum outcome-based and expect this involvement to continue within the school's program.

CHANCE TO GROW:

Located in Minneapolis, is an intensive neuro-stimulation program for at-risk primary aged learners. It was scheduled for last week's board meeting and was postponed. There will be a public hearing with the Minneapolis board at 7:30 p.m. on March 11. This non-profit program has been providing services within the Minneapolis Schools and is interested in expanding their program as a charter school.

CITY ACADEMY:

Is seeking sponsorship of the St. Paul schools to form a school to meet the need of learners who have experienced juvenile crime, substance abuse, truancy, persistent poverty, and teen parenting. The St. Paul school board is expected to refer this to a working committee at their meeting on Tuesday, March 10. This group has had support and assistance from the St. Paul mayor's office and several local park and recreation facilities.

JOAN RIEDL:

A teacher in the Princeton schools, is seeking sponsorship of the St. Cloud school board. The board was presented the request and information at the end of November. There is still no decision. Senator Ember Reichgott spoke to a community forum at the end of February. An article, Daring To Be Different, appears in the March 1992 issue of Teacher Magazine describing her program for 5-6 graders and her desire to become a charter school.

MOUNDS VIEW

The Area Learning Center after leadership changes by the district, has decided to seek sponsorship as a charter school. They would still focus on learners who are not succeeding in traditional education, but are planning to include several innovations not currently part of their program. The Mounds View board was to have met in a working session with their board on March 18 which has just (March 10) been canceled.

ROCHESTER MONTESSORI:

Is seeking sponsorship by the Rochester school board. An information study session was held Monday, March 9, to discuss charter schools and the Montessori proposal. The meeting included school board members, the superintendent, the teachers association, the district finance officer, Joe Nathan and others. No decision is expected for some time.

EMILY ELEMENTARY CHARTER SCHOOL:

A small school in the Crosby-Ironton district, is sure of no support from their local board. The Cyrus board has submitted their proposal which they are reviewing. Emily's planning a child-centered learning labs approach created around "real world" situations. Parent involvement is to be an integral part of their program.

CANNON FALLS MIDDLE SCHOOL:

The Northfield group was turned down Monday night, February 24, after a long, thoughtful process. They had an excellent proposal that would have provided innovative education at the middle school level. At this time, they are not considering seeking another district's endorsement.

There are several individuals and groups who are in various stages of development.

Forest Lake Montessori has been talking informally with district administrators, with school board members, and representatives from the teachers organization. Their letter of intent is being sent formally to the board March 11.

Karen Locke is working with a group modeling their program after the Sudbury Valley school on the East Coast, which is run much like a small town with the school community making all the decisions, groups of learners participating in their own corporations.

David Jerusalem a teacher in St. Paul, is developing a proposal for a business learning center which focuses learning around manufacturing and marketing; community based with students mentoring with members of the business community. He currently runs this program one hour per week and wants to make this a comprehensive, full-day charter school.

Carol Serrine, from the Hopkins district, was designing an arts focused curriculum for a charter school. She was unable to get the support of the district and is now looking to join forces with others who would be interested in the arts concept.

TEACHER INTEREST:

Many of the groups are finding that teachers have initially shown interest in the idea of designing a charter school and then back off. On the other hand, there are teachers who are quietly letting charter school groups know of their tentative interest once the school is approved. Toivola-Meadowlands has received about 30 requests to teach in their school.

DISTRICT INTEREST:

Most groups are finding districts reluctant to become sponsors of charter schools. Competition for money and the fear of having to lay off teachers are main concerns. Generally, the educational establishment does not like the idea of independent public schools. There is a concern that this will lead to vouchers for private schools.