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David:

Kate's piece on charter schools was a good one, I thought.

Since there's no pattern to the proposals coming in it's as legitimate to pick out the small-school-threatened-with-closure to key on as anything else. Plus, MPR did a series on small rural schools some time back, as I recall.

There're some very revealing quotes.

The superintendent's, for sure. I've never come across a more perfect case of the tendency in public education to put adults first than his willingness to worry less about the time that little kids will have to ride the bus to Crosby (which I calculate to be at least 10,000 hours a year) than he does about the 400 hours a year that adults now have to drive to Emily. There are words for this, but not really fit for a family show.

The teacher's -- about "what if" they could go directly to the state board for the charter -- helps explain some of the larger context of the issue about charter schools, without the narrator having to do it.

The financing of charter schools (and of choice in general) is always hard to explain . . . even before we get to the disagreement between proponents and the sup't about how much would be "lost" (see below) if a charter were to be approved. The \$3,000 figure is about right. But it'd be better to drop all reference to whose money is involved: state or local or whatever. It isn't just the state-aid portion, as a lot of people always think. It's the average state-wide amount. (Ask me, if you want: I think I've worked out a way to explain it.)

(On the question about 'money lost' the proponents are more right than the sup't. During the Northfield debate Dan Loritz gave Griff Wigley an important perception: that the community doesn't lose anything: There's simply a reallocation of kids and dollars between the big existing district and what Peggy Hunter (when she's trying to explain charter schools) calls the "itty-bitty new district".)

On a couple other specifics:

\* Strictly speaking Minnesota law doesn't permit a school to be formed by teachers and parents/others. The law says: "One or more licensed teachers" only.

\* I think a charter school can fairly be said to be cut free of most (maybe even all) regulations. It has to follow certain provisions of statute, reflecting the basic principles of public education. I sometimes say a school is permitted to waive itself clear of regulations.

There's a tough issue about the superintendent's comments. Sup'ts are logical people to ask for comment. When they're quoted it's assumed they're representing what's good for kids and the community. But this can be a problem: Sometimes they aren't. Sometimes they really are representing what's good for their organization and for themselves. I think reporters know this. But nobody seems to have figured out a way to talk about a superintendent's self-interest or to be willing to suggest a person speaking for the district is motivated by anything other than what's good for the kids. (See above, re: travel.)

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The June 11 SBE meeting will be important: Forest Lake, and St. Paul. Q: Will Faribault fuss around with the proposal for the metro day-school for the deaf? What are the private and public interests in this question?

Forest Lake is as important for the proposal that didn't get board-approved as for the one that did. The charter law provided parents the leverage to get the elementary Montessory option.

There are some important developments elsewhere, too. Give me a call when you have a moment.

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