

MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Agenda Item Summary Sheet

Committee:

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

INFORMATION ITEM

Charter School Report

Introduction

Department of Education and they, in turn, are responsible for approving charter schools. This and related changes resulted from the findings of the 2009 report by the Office of the Legislative Auditor and the work of a legislative charter school work group. Discussions continued during the 2010 legislative session about how to address issues regarding charter school facilities; because no action was taken in 2010, further discussions are likely in 2011.

Nationally, several major reports about charter schools and their impact were released over the past year. One study, completed by researchers at **Stanford University's Hoover Institute**, found that fewer than one-fifth of charter schools across the country offered a better education than did comparable local schools and more than one-third were "significantly worse." The report found that a significant factor in determining quality is the rigor of the authorities that grant charters. The report's authors noted that a small minority of charter schools enjoy significant publicity and high-profile financial support and that charter schools are largely an urban phenomenon, with charter schools in 72 cities now enrolling 10 percent or more of public school students. They also concluded that a major problem is an apparent lack of will or willingness to close poorly performing schools.

A recent report released by the **Thomas Fordham Institute** focused on the degree and nature of autonomy allowed for charter schools. The analysis was generally positive about Minnesota charter school provisions, awarding full points for all identified aspects of vision, culture, and programs, as well as specific elements of finance and governance (budgetary fungibility, management organizations, and procurement) and staffing (dismissal of employees and teacher employment terms), while finding less flexibility in the areas of teacher certification, salary schedules or retirement plans, and the composition of school boards.

Charter Sponsors in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

During the 2008-2009 academic year, three colleges within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System – Alexandria Technical College, Century College, and Rochester Community and Technical College – continued their sponsorship of a total of five charter schools. No new sponsorships were initiated, nor were any ended, during that time, but discussions begun in 2008-2009 have led to concrete steps being taken by Anoka Technical College to establish a new charter school. From time to time, system institutions are contacted by potential new charter school developers; often, the costs of sponsorship and the need for an appropriate "fit" between the mission of a given school and its sponsor emerge as key factors in determining whether to take on a sponsorship role.

As expectations have become clearer about the role of sponsors and as it has evolved to that of authorizers, some institutions have found it more challenging to fulfill these requirements within current budgetary limits. This continues to underscore the importance of a close and mutually beneficial working relationship between a college or university and the school it authorizes. In light of the significant financial and academic pressures faced by charter schools, it is critical that

make AYP in math.

Audit Summary: The audit report, prepared by Larson Allen, LLP found that the financial statement represents fairly the financial status of the schools. The only material weaknesses noted are a lack of segregation of duties, which the board works to address by reviewing and approving all expenditures at its monthly board meetings and adjusting accounting procedures and practices to limit the potential of material misstatements of annual financial statements. It was also recommended that the school retain all records for its scholarship fund in the future.

I provisions.

Sponsor: Century College

School: Minnesota International Middle School (MIMS)

Location: 277 12th Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN

Status of Sponsorship: Continuing

Sponsor Comments: See above

School Mission and Programs: See description for TIES above.

Enrollment: Enrollment at MIMS declined modestly from 360 students in 2007-2008 to 320 in 2008-2009.

Staff: In 2008-2009, MIMS employed 23 teachers, including four in grade 5, five in grade 6, four in grade 7, four in grade 8, and three in special education.

Board of Directors: The board consists of ten members, including four teachers, four community members, and two ex-officio members (the sponsor liaison and school director).

Academic Progress: MIMS came very close to making AYP again in 2008-2009 and attributes the fact that it missed this benchmark (by less than two percent) to late enrollments. Overall, the school saw dramatic increases in student progress, with most students showing an increase in content knowledge in both reading and math. The school's participation rate in AYP exceeded 94%. The school continued to emphasize after school programming and summer school as strategies to enhance student learning, and curricula were selected to strengthen math and reading skills.

Audit Summary: The school had a clean audit for 2008-2009.

Sponsor: Century College

School: Ubah Medical Academy (UMA)

Location: 277 12th Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN

Status of Sponsorship: Continuing

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attainment of English language proficiency but below the state target in content ability in math and science. After school programs focused on academic, language, college prep, and computer applications; SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol); and participation in Admission Possible, College in the Schools, and Century College's PACE program are among the strategies used to build student knowledge, skills, and aspirations. The schools' attendance increased slightly in 2008-2009 to 96.21%.

Audit Summary: The school had a clean audit for 2008-2009.

Sponsor: Rochester Community and Technical College

School: Rochester Off Campus (ROC) Charter School

Location: Rochester, MN

Status of Sponsorship: Continuing

Sponsor Comments: "RCTC enjoys the affiliation we have with ROC and we are proud of the accomplishments of the faculty and students in this learning community. It is remarkable to watch how this unique educational environment can promote success in students who have not been successful at other schools. ROC provides secondary education and succeed! RCTC continues to take pride in this charter school sponsorship. ROC satisfies its unique mission to provide a safe and healthy learning community that engages students, parents, and the community in a high quality education. Enrollment at ROC remained stable at 125 students in 2008-2009, enrolling students for services and 64 percent were eligible for free or reduced lunch. The staff of ROC consisted of 12 licensed teachers and 16 paraprofessionals in 2008-2009.

School Mission Statement: "To provide a safe and healthy learning community that engages students, parents, and the community in a high quality education."

Enrollment: Enrollment at ROC remained stable at 125 students in 2008-2009, enrolling students for services and 64 percent were eligible for free or reduced lunch. The staff of ROC consisted of 12 licensed teachers and 16 paraprofessionals in 2008-2009.

Staff: The staff of ROC consisted of 12 licensed teachers and 16 paraprofessionals in 2008-2009.

Board of Directors: The Board of Directors of ROC is a ten-member board consisting of five parents, five community members, and one teacher.

common in students' profiles in order to modify the curriculum and the School Improvement Plan. It is important to note that 87% of the newly enrolled students in 2008-2009 had yet to pass one or more of their state assessments, reflecting a continuing trend among referred and newly enrolled students and presenting a significant challenge to the school. In addition, students enrolled at ROC for more than one school year passed state assessments at a rate higher than those who had been enrolled for less than one year, and all seniors met state assessment standards and were conferred diplomas. At the same time, ROC reported daily attendance at or above 84