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Contact: Christine Dufour 651- 582-8720
Or Charlene Briner 651- 582-1145

Eight More Charter School Authorizers Approved by Minnesota Department of Education

Twenty-five charter school authorizers now meet the nationally recognized rigorous state law that brings increased oversight to charter schools

(Roseville, MN) – Twenty-five charter school authorizers have now been approved by the Minnesota Department of Education, including eight newly approved charter school authorizers approved by Commissioner Brenda Cassellius.

The eight approved charter schools authorizers are:

- Augsburg College
- Bethel University
- Intermediate School District 917
- Rochester Community and Technical College
- Rushford Peterson Independent School District 239
- Winona Area Public Schools
- Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center
- YMCA of Metropolitan Minneapolis

“This latest round of approvals continues our efforts to ensure a high-quality education for all students who attend Minnesota charter public schools,” said Commissioner Brenda Cassellius. “Each of these authorizers meets nationally recognized standards of quality and accountability, and all have agreed to take on the responsibility of holding the charter schools they authorize accountable in meeting the high-quality expectations contained in their charter contracts.”

This completes the spring round of charter school authorizer applications. The next opportunity to become a charter school authorizer is expected in September.

The new law, passed by the 2009 Legislature, is designed to increase charter school quality and accountability by requiring approved authorizers to take on a greater role in overseeing the charter schools they authorize.

Previously approved authorizers are:

- Anoka Technical College
- Audubon Center of the North Woods
- Chisago Lakes Public Schools
- Concordia University of St. Paul
- Fraser
- Friends of Education
- Innovative Quality Schools
- Minneapolis Public Schools
- Northfield Public Schools

- Novation Education Opportunities
- Ordway Center for the Performing Arts
- Pillsbury United Communities
- Project for Pride in Living
- Student Achievement Minnesota
- University of St. Thomas
- University of Minnesota – Duluth
- Volunteers of America – Minnesota

Minnesota's charter school law received the 2009 Award for Excellence in Improving Policy from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA). In addition, Minnesota was recently ranked first in the nation for strong charter school laws from the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

The 2009 law puts in place more robust oversight responsibilities in the areas of capacity and infrastructure, the application process, contracting, ongoing oversight and evaluation, and renewal of charter schools. It shifts the Department's focus from approving individual charter schools to approving charter school authorizers, which, in turn, will be responsible for approving charter schools and holding them accountable. On May 18, 2011, Governor Mark Dayton signed into law a bill (H.F. 1092) that contained an extension that allows applicants seeking to become a charter school authorizer until June 30, 2012, to earn approval from the Department.

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