



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Department of Education Puts BlueSky Charter School on Notice for Curriculum, Graduation Violations

Online charter school has thirty days to make changes or face crippling fines.

(Roseville, MN) The Minnesota Department of Education notified BlueSky Charter School today that it has thirty days to correct problems with its curriculum and graduation standards or face fines totaling more than \$18,000 per day until the violations are remedied. The eight-page letter with fifteen-page attachment sent to BlueSky is the result of a second curriculum audit of the school in the last two years.

Since at least June 1, 2009, BlueSky has repeatedly failed to comply with Minnesota laws regarding academic standards and graduation requirements, and continues to fail to comply even with significant technical assistance from the department. Because of the persistent lack of compliance with state law, Commissioner Alice Seagren will withhold 60 percent of BlueSky's general education basic revenue per day, the maximum allowed under state law if BlueSky does not come into compliance by December 1, 2010.

The withholding will begin on December 2, 2010 – the day after BlueSky's time period for correction of these violations ends – if the violations are not corrected.

"We've given this school significant time and lots of technical assistance to make the corrective actions required from our first audit," said Seagren. "With this notice of intent to withhold state funding, we expect they will make the changes needed to comply with state law and more importantly, guarantee every student receives the quality education expected by Minnesota parents."

According to the letter sent to BlueSky, the charter school's basic revenue for the 2010-11 school year is estimated to be \$5,328,960.00. Therefore, the maximum aid reduction is estimated to be \$18,589.40 ($\$5,328,960.00 \times 60\% / 172$ days) for each school day after December 1, 2010, that BlueSky is found to be in violation of the law.

"In order for the charter school movement to remain strong in Minnesota, we must continue to hold all schools accountable under the law and look out for the best interests of students," added Seagren.

In February 2009, MDE informed BlueSky of the concerns brought to the department regarding courses offered by BlueSky and the department's intention to conduct an audit of selected courses. Minnesota Statutes section 124D.10, subd. 10 requires a "Charter school must design its programs to at least meet the outcomes adopted by the commissioner for public school students." On June 1, 2009, MDE issued corrective actions to BlueSky based on a Curriculum Review conducted by an independent contractor.

On March 8, 2010, MDE notified BlueSky that its response to these corrective actions was insufficient and that there were additional complaints regarding the social studies program. MDE notified BlueSky of its intent to conduct a follow-up audit of BlueSky's curriculum and credit

policies to ascertain whether it was complying with state law. The results of the follow-up audit were released today.

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