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Positive Directions for Schools and Communities

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Introduction:

*This publication is a companion piece to the video, **Seeds of Change: Positive Directions for Schools and Communities**. It includes three papers which elaborate on current challenges and opportunities in K-12 education. Examples sprinkled throughout the papers illustrate that schools and communities are finding creative, meaningful ways to respond to their educational challenges. An extensive glossary and resources are also provided.*

Non-Traditional Alternatives to School Organization

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In many rural communities, population declines, sagging local economies, and business closures make it difficult for schools to serve their students well. Rather than give up the school, growing numbers of educators and community people are rethinking traditional ways of schooling.

This paper focuses on alternative ways of organizing schools. These non-traditional schools offer educators and communities opportunities to create better learning experiences for their students. While some options presented are fairly new, others have been evolving for over 20 years. Positive reports from many suggest these alternatives are worth exploring.

We will review lessons about the process of school improvement from the video, *Seeds of Change: Positive Directions for Schools and Communities* and describe innovative alternatives being considered and implemented in Minnesota. A resource list provides additional readings and contacts.

Lessons About Alternatives and Making Change

Alternatives to traditional schools have existed in Minnesota for some time. In the late 1960s, the St. Paul school system developed an alternative program for students with difficulties in traditionally-organized high schools. Over the last 20 years, the state has increasingly supported development of new kinds of schools at elementary and secondary levels, from the early magnet schools to the more recent charter school.

Reorganization of all or part of a school to offer students a distinctive program is a feature of all school alternatives presented in this paper. Often this is accomplished through greater community involvement. Unlike consolidation, which may only lead to a larger, traditionally-organized school, the options considered here represent new ways of teaching, managing, and structuring classrooms and schools.

Development of an alternative program takes time and collaboration among teachers, administrators, school boards, parents, students, community members, and sometimes, people from outside the local community, including educators working on other alternative programs. School programs which are community-based can be developed with agreement among teachers and administrators within the school. Other programs, such as a charter school, require formal approval from the state Department of Education and a local board of education. All can benefit from community involvement and support.

In the video, *Seeds of Change: Positive Directions for Schools and Communities*, six lessons are gathered from the experiences of four Minnesota schools creating alternatives to their traditional programs. These practical lessons developed by Joe Nathan, Director, Center for School Change, offer insights to the challenges of making change and advice on being successful.

An Outline of Options

The alternatives presented below emphasize schools that are reorganizing in non-traditional ways. Although this list does not include all options available to schools, all of those introduced are being practiced or seriously considered in Minnesota schools. Some put management of the school in the hands of teachers and most broaden leadership through greater parent and community involvement. Several offer alternative learning environments and traditional classrooms in the same school. The community is a focus of study in some, turning local lessons into a more global understanding of the forces of history, nature, and the economy. In one, the school calendar is changed completely. Many of the schools combine several alternative strategies to use all their resources and talents more fully. Brief definitions and examples, when available, are provided.

Six Lessons on Creating Alternatives

- 1. *Acknowledge pain***
Communities making changes recognize the difficulties of population declines and economic stress on their schools.
- 2. *Turn problems into opportunities***
These schools and communities look at their weaknesses and strengths and take decisive action to “make lemons into lemonade.”
- 3. *Rethink learning, teaching, and schools***
These innovators go beyond the old ways of doing things by thinking big and boldly about the possibilities available to them.
- 4. *Collaborate between school and community***
They garner broad and meaningful support. They include business people, parents, students, educators, administrators, school boards, and senior citizens. Supporters are involved in all phases including brainstorming, planning, funding, and implementation.
- 5. *Push change***
These “sparkplugs” encourage, inspire, monitor, handle criticism, and keep people moving toward the goal of better learning and improved schools.
- 6. *Be persistent***
They are committed to making the significant changes necessary to improve education for their youth.

Charter Schools

State legislation passed in 1991 allows creation of charter schools that operate as independent public schools managed by certified teachers. Authority must be granted by a local school board and the state Board of Education. Financed with regular public education money for each student who chooses to enroll, an elected board of directors of teachers, parents, and community members develops the school curriculum, manages the budget, and is accountable for results. The charter gives educators and communities the authority to design and implement a structure, teaching methods, and curriculum that improve student learning. As a new option, there are no operating examples to cite. However, information is available from the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Charter Schools Network which are listed in the resources.

Community-Based Schools

Community-based schools draw on the local environment as a way to make abstract concepts and textbooks lessons more meaningful to students. History, the natural environment, and the economy are some of the more common areas of focus in programs created in both elementary and high schools. Developed by school and community people, these programs can combine census data with interviews; historical documents and current newspapers; and biology books and local water samples. In all, local resources and experience outside the classroom make learning more relevant to students. Many programs include apprenticeships in business and community organizations to teach citizenship as well as basic and higher-order skills.

Example: Fulda, Minnesota

At Fulda High School, administrators, educators, city officials, the Minnesota Extension Service, and the local state university are working together to develop a curriculum using area history to help students understand the present and create the future. Census data, diaries, newspapers, interviews, and historical sites are used to learn about the economic, political, and social forces shaping the area’s history. Students translate the past into the present using computers, data analysis, writing, and presentation skills in projects with the local historical society, service organizations, and the local paper.

Example: Western Minnesota

In western Minnesota, an environmental laboratory is being created through a collaboration between the Morris School District, the Cyrus Math, Science, and Technology Magnet, and the Stevens County Historical Society. Used by schools and the community, the natural and historic environments are being explored at the 15-acre outdoor lab centrally located between the two schools. A hands-on curriculum is being developed with activities to include archeological digs of pioneer dug-outs, identification and tracking of plants and wildlife, and possible relocation of a log cabin to the site. Subject areas will be combined to encourage students' understanding of the relationships between concepts, such as history and scientific development.

(See the Delavan Agri-Science Magnet Elementary School in the Magnet School section for another example of the community-based approach.)

Magnet Schools

A magnet school features academic programs with a distinctive focus based on the strengths, resources, interests, and talents of school personnel and often, the local community. Once decided upon, program focus is integrated throughout curricula and school activities, creating an overall school theme and offering students choices between traditional and alternative programs. Originally designed to support urban desegregation, magnet schools in Minnesota have been used in both rural and urban areas, attracting students across districts under Minnesota's open enrollment legislation. Existing Minnesota programs are organized around the arts, agriculture, environment, math, and the sciences.

Example: Cyrus, Minnesota

Sending their high school students to a neighboring district pushed Cyrus, Minnesota residents to think about how to best serve their remaining elementary school students. The result is the Cyrus Math, Science, and Technology Magnet for students in grades K-6. The staff of teachers and a part-time superintendent manage the program for 110 enrolled students, approximately one-third of whom come from outside the district. Extensive and sophisticated use of computers, video, and other technologies helps build students' understanding and skills in writing, math, science, and other areas. Organized

primarily by grade levels, the school also draws on older students' abilities in multi-aged classes for part of the school day. During and after school, the school provides community day-care in which 5th and 6th graders assist.

Example: Delavan, Minnesota

Another kind of magnet school exists in Delavan, Minnesota where educators and community members have used the predominantly agricultural economy as a focus in their Agri-Science Elementary Magnet for 100-plus Kindergarten through sixth-grade students. Partnerships between school, businesses, and community support a coherent array of courses taught by individuals and teams of teachers as well as activities in the school and in the community. Multi-aged activities and interdisciplinary coursework include visits to farms and local companies to understand agri-business, growing crops in class to study science and nutrition, and a student-run mini-mall in the school to foster an understanding of economics and job creation among students.

Multi-Aged Classrooms

An alternative to the grades organized by age, the multi-aged classroom brings together students of several ages, grouped by developmental stages. The arrangement also offers students the chance to stay with the same teacher or group of teachers for more than one year. Like the one-room schoolhouse, a class is often divided into small group and individual activities, with advanced or more mature students helping younger or less skilled students while teachers rotate among them, giving individualized attention. Research has found that language and social skills of all students improve more rapidly and discipline problems diminish as each student is given more responsibility for his or her learning and for helping others. In many classrooms, individual learning plans are developed by students with their teachers and parents to give students goals and the responsibility to work toward them, based on their own learning style and abilities.

Example: Blackduck, Minnesota

Blackduck's Curiosity Castle offers a multi-aged classroom option to sixty-six 6 to 9-year-olds, including special education students at the community's elementary school. Organized as an alternative to other traditional age-graded

programs in the school, the Curiosity Castle provides younger elementary students an opportunity to stay with the same teachers for up to three years, learning at their own pace with teachers who know them well. An individualized learning plan is developed by the student, a teacher, and parent that reflects the student's strengths and learning styles. The hands-on, interdisciplinary curriculum is taught by a team of four teachers who rotate leadership of their units with class and school-wide activities that students organize. The program actively encourages parent involvement through its policy-making parent council and in-class parent volunteers.

(See the James Madison Elementary School in the School-Within-A-School section for another example of the multi-aged approach.)

School-Within-A-School

The school-within-a-school offers students and their families choices alongside the traditional age-graded, subject-focused classroom within a single school. The school-within-a-school can be distinguished from the traditional classroom by curriculum focus, teaching methods, or the way the classroom is organized. This type of school often uses alternatives mentioned in this paper such as the multi-aged classroom or a magnet school focus in science or the arts. The availability of the school-within-a-school option gives students and their families a chance to match learning styles and needs more closely.

Example: Virginia, Minnesota

James Madison Elementary School in Virginia, Minnesota is the site of Primary OPTIONS, a school-within-a-school option for students ages 5 to 8. The program offers a two-year opportunity for multi-aged, ungraded curriculum, organized around cooperative learning, whole language, and a thematic curriculum. Instead of grades, students demonstrate their learning progress through portfolios of their work, displays, and self-assessment with the guidance and review of teachers and parents. Students often work individually and in small groups at tables instead of desks.

School/Community Economic Development

School/community economic development is a specific type of community-based school where the local economy is the focus of coursework. It has a dual purpose of benefitting students' learning and strengthening the local economy. Options for collaboration between school and community include shared facilities, school-business partnerships, school-based businesses, school-incubated businesses, and the entrepreneurial curriculum which is a type of magnet school. Student activities may include work with municipal planners, research into the structure and spending patterns of the local economy, and start-up of school and student businesses. These options are detailed in *The Community and School as an Economic Development Team*, which follows.

Example: Rothsay, Minnesota

Rothsay Minnesota's high school is creating new opportunities for students and community and getting nation-wide attention for their innovative school/community development program. Between the school-owned hardware store and student-owned and -operated grocery store, school and community people are learning about working together for mutual benefit. Start-up funds, for instance, came from the school district as well as the city, the Lion's Club, area churches, local and regional development funds, and the area power company. Instead of business simulations, students deal firsthand with the problems and successes of business operation. Customer service, accounting, inventory, bill-paying, and personnel issues are their responsibility. Community professionals, retirees, and teachers work with students to teach the skills students need to run the businesses and gain insight into economics while the community gets services that would not otherwise exist locally.

Site-Based Management

Site-Based Management refers to increasing the decision-making power of people closest to the delivery of services at the school site. In a site-based managed school, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members make decisions about budgets, hiring, and curriculum, although the extent of such decisions varies by district. Principals gain expanded authority and responsibilities as leaders and managers of the school, while teachers have increased influence on

program and service decisions affecting their students. Studies suggest accountability and autonomy of the school are increased under site-based management programs as the school attends more closely to the direct needs of its students and community. Research also indicates that site-based management programs are more common and more easily implemented in smaller districts.

Year-Round Schools

Instead of the traditional September to June calendar and three-month summer vacation, the year-round school has continuous schooling with frequent, shorter breaks. Developed to use crowded facilities more efficiently without constructing new buildings and to minimize students' "summer learning loss," more than 800 schools across the country have rearranged their calendars into a variety of year-round forms.

Schedules vary in year-round schools. Some operate 45 days in school (with weekends off) followed by a 15-day break. Others run 60 days in school with 20 days off, and still others use a semester-like calendar with two 90-day sessions with 30-day breaks. There are even more possibilities. The breaks are used by many schools to offer intensive, specialized courses to students and community people. They may also be used to provide remedial support to students needing additional help.

Schools with year-round programs exist at various levels in Kindergarten through twelfth grade education, although most are at the elementary grades. Although no year-round schools are currently operating in the state, this option is being considered in both urban and rural Minnesota. Research on some of these schools shows improved student performance; less costly; less vandalism due to more frequent building use; better student and teacher attendance; and new learning opportunities during break times.

Summary

This paper outlines a number of new and not-so-new options created by schools and communities to better serve students and their communities. With time, well-focused funding, and community support, these new schools, their students, and their teachers can be at the front of educational excellence in Minnesota.

Community Checklist

Is it time to create some alternatives in your school? Keep this checklist in mind as you work toward better learning and improved schools in your community.

- Do people see a need for change in the school or do they feel, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it?" Many people think education needs improvement but changes often don't happen unless they think there's a significant need or a threat. Ask people what they think needs improving and build momentum for change from those concerns.
- Involve as many people as possible. Several researchers recommend broad involvement of educators and community people at the initial stage of any school improvement effort. Teachers, administrators, and school board members are key participants, but support and involvement of parents, business and service people, elders, and other community people is also important. It keeps people informed, builds accountability, and develops support throughout the community. Research has also found that when people get involved in an effort they feel is worth doing, they keep the project going even without extra funding.
- Additional money may not be needed. Start-up funds help, but some school finance their programs by prioritizing their budgets in new ways. Research on school improvement suggests that beyond the basics, having significantly more money does not make a big difference to a successful program. A study of thirteen school improvement efforts showed that programs with large amounts of outside funding didn't last as long as those that were locally-funded.
- Check out existing school alternatives and create your own. Because every school and community has its own resources, ideas, and priorities, changes made in any one school are often unique. The resource list offers a starting-place for organizations and some readings on alternatives. Visiting schools with alternative programs, such as those in the *Seeds of Change* video, is another valuable way to learn about and get support for your own innovations.

Resources

A School at the Center: Community-Based Education and Rural Redevelopment. 1992. (\$3.85 including postage) Center for Rural Affairs, 101 South Tallman, P.O. Box 406, Walthill, NE, 68067, 402/846-5428.

Shared Facilities: Schools and Communities Working Together. 1991. Jessica Clarke and Joe Nathan (\$5.00) *Students as Entrepreneurs: Building Academic Skills and Strengthening Local Economies.* 1992. Lisa Hinz (\$3.00) *Fine Print*, bi-monthly newsletter on school improvement. Center for School Change, Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota, 301 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455, 612/626-1834.

Schools as Entrepreneurs: Helping Small Towns Survive. 1988. Milan Wall and Vicki Luther (\$5.00 including postage) Heartland Center for Leadership Development, 941 O Street, Suite 920, Lincoln, NE 68508, 402/474-7667.

Minnesota Charter Schools Network, P.O. Box 2131, Inver Grove Heights, MN, 55076, 612/942-1322.

Clustering: Working Together for Better Schools. 1990. Paul Nachtigal and Sylvia Parker (Free) *Redesigning Rural Education - Ideas for Action* (Free) *Rural Education: In Search of a Better Way.* Paul Nachtigal, editor (\$12.50 postage additional) Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL) 4709 Belleview Avenue, 2nd Floor, Kansas City, MO 64112, 816/756-2401.

Minnesota Department of Education, Enrollment Options, 927 Capitol Square Building, 550 Cedar St., St. Paul, MN, 55101, 612/297-2241 or toll-free, 800/652-9747.

National Association for Year-Round Education, P.O. Box 711386, San Diego, CA, 92171-1386, 619/276-5296.

Publications on service learning. National Youth Leadership Council, 1910 West County Road B, Roseville, MN, 55113, 612/631-3672.

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL), 1900 Spring Road, Suite 300, Oak Brook, IL 60521-1480, 708/571-4700.

The Community and School as an Economic Development Team

Rural communities and their schools often overlook the resources and opportunities they can offer each other. In Minnesota and across the country, school/community economic development is proving a viable way to serve the school's primary purpose of student education while strengthening the local economy.

The Community and School as an Economic Development Team

Rural communities and their schools often overlook the resources and opportunities they can offer each other. As a large employer and purchaser, the school may control a substantial amount of the community's money. The school's classes and facilities are valuable resources for community education and training needs. Teachers and administrators are highly educated people. Students are a resource and opportunity, and often, a significant segment of the community population. Many community members have experience and skills as local entrepreneurs and service-providers. Local businesses may have modern equipment available to teach students new skills. Development professionals may want to train local students in the day-to-day of local business.

In Minnesota and across the country, school/community economic development is proving a viable way to serve the school's primary purpose of student education while strengthening the local economy. From school-business partnerships to entrepreneurial curricula, growing numbers of schools and communities are making the connection between economic development and education.

This publication outlines the major aspects of school/community economic development. Ideas tested in communities will be profiled, including two schools featured in the video, *Seeds of Change: Positive Directions for Schools and Communities*. A resource list is also included.

Background

The main purpose of schools has always been to help students learn. Since the 1960s, a growing recognition of the connection between education and economic development has emerged. Traditionally tied to vocational skills training, the idea of education as an economic development tool has expanded to include school-business partnerships and entrepreneurship. In the 1980s, some schools started adopting these ideas in the classroom and community with encouraging results. Through partnerships with business,

coursework, and experiences in which students establish businesses, school/community economic development efforts resulted in meaningful learning experiences and economic benefit to students and community members.

The main reason schools and communities pursue economic development programs together is to improve the quality and meaning of education for students. Existing school/community economic development programs have shown these benefits:

- Strengthen curricula by linking coursework with experience. This learning strategy has growing support in education research.
- Increase courses available to students as the community becomes the focus of study.
- Reduce dropout rates as previously unmotivated students see links between schoolwork and the world outside of school.
- Give students the know-how to create their own jobs in their own communities.
- Improve students' critical thinking skills, independence, and responsibility as they learn about and face real challenges using local resources and technologies.
- Enhance school-community relations as local professionals provide their expertise to students and students provide needed goods and services to the community.

School/community economic development can also contribute directly to the revitalization and diversification of the community's economy. The school and students create new services and businesses, sometimes in partnership with local businesses. Business owners, farm and town, can play a bigger role in youth education by sharing their knowledge and experience. The community can retain more of its intellectual and tax-based wealth as graduates stay in the community.

Program Ideas

Communities and schools can work together on economic development in a number of ways. These program ideas have been implemented successfully.

- a resource center with computers and a library open after school hours for community use
- in-school child care centers
- an annually updated community demographic and economic profile used by local planners
- an accounting service for shut-ins
- a graphics business using modern computer software
- a video inventory business
- students working as reporters for the local paper
- a bakery that leases the school kitchen and supplies nearby markets with specialty breads
- a house-building project
- a global studies curriculum that draws students and teachers from around the world
- a telecommunications business in cooperation with a local technical college
- a hand-painted clothing and crafts business that markets through a store, craft shows, and mail-order

Research shows that most efforts are multi-disciplinary and exist primarily in high schools, although there are successful examples from elementary grades. All programs give classroom credit and operate during the school day, although some also offer wages, primarily for student work done after school hours. Business-creation programs include for-profit and not-for-profit organizations offering goods or services locally or outside the local area through computer networking and mail-order. Many programs operate as school-controlled efforts. Some recent programs emphasize student development of businesses that students take with them when they graduate. All programs reflect local context and options.

Program Organization

Organization of a program depends on resources and the kind of development projects upon which the school and community agree. Although each type of program has distinct features, many schools and communities use combinations of several to take full advantage of their local resources. The common programs are as follows:

- **school-business partnerships**
- **school-based businesses**
- **school-incubated businesses**
- **entrepreneurial curricula**

School-Business Partnership

A School-Business Partnership is an agreement between a school and business to define and work together to improve educational opportunities, benefit business, and support broader community goals.

School-business partnerships can help schools develop new courses taught by professional business people on business management and planning. Such partnerships can provide modern equipment through donation or purchase at reduced price. They create or improve opportunities for students to see classroom principles applied. Businesses receive public recognition and a chance to use their skills and knowledge to educate youth. Some businesses donate equipment and share space with the school for employee training or to give students experience with new technologies. Students acquire work skills and insights about the local economy that may encourage them to remain in the community after their formal education is completed.

Examples: School-Business Partnership

Delavan, Minnesota's elementary school is taking advantage of the local community and business resources to form an agri-science school, a national first. Study focuses on the local agricultural economy for Kindergarten through sixth grade students. Family farms, local banks, and local and multi-national agribusinesses contribute products and knowledge which help students understand their community. Activities include visiting local farms and businesses with lessons in local and global agri-business; class farms with business-donated seeds and instruction; and student

businesses with start-up loans from a local bank. Students gain insights and skills from community examples and local businesses provide meaningful support to this innovative school.

A Cook County elementary school leases space to a clinic, an insurance agency, a youth hostel, and a foundation.

In Henderson, a local technology firm donates computers, televisions and staff to teach students and teachers.

School-Based Business

*A **School-Based Business** is a school-controlled and -owned enterprise in which students gain experience as workers and managers, and profits go to the school.*

School-based businesses add to the stock of local enterprises whether they serve the school population or the broader community. They improve the skills of the youth who will take a more active part in community life as adults. Such businesses provide an ongoing, supervised business and learning environment. Research suggests that students' understanding improves as they apply coursework to authentic challenges with guidance from teachers and advisors. They provide a real-world focus to the school curriculum. The school-based business is not a fund-raising group nor a vocational program. At best, it is an interdisciplinary program which matches the talents and creativity of students with opportunities in the community.

Examples: School-Based Business

Several high schools in Minnesota run in-school child care programs during the school day. In addition to learning first-hand about child development, students sometimes manage the business aspects of the program, directly applying their math skills and communication skills. The community gets a needed service, often conveniently located to homes and workplaces.

At some schools, students design a house, get building materials, and then build and sell the house. Profits are used for other school programs.

In other states, students help low-income people apply for affordable housing that meets federal government guidelines. Interviewing, writing,

math, and reading skills are used to serve community needs.

School-Incubated Business

*A **School-Incubated Business** teaches students the skills to research, plan, establish, operate, and own economically-viable businesses that they continue on their own after graduation.*

School-incubated businesses foster community economic development by helping students become entrepreneurs in their own communities. The school provides classes, teachers, and occasionally, facilities to realize students' business ideas. Through coursework and practice, students learn to analyze the community's business needs using interviews, surveys, and focus groups. Business ideas are then researched by students with advice and support from business and development professionals. The most viable ideas are fleshed out in business plans, and financing is acquired. Local or regional development funds, companies, and investors are potential sources of financing. Under guidance from teachers and local professionals, students start the business while still in school. This early support is often crucial to the business's success. After graduation, the business becomes a permanent part of the community's economic base.

Example: School-Incubated Business

High school students in Rothsay, MN formed a corporation in order to own and operate local businesses. When the town grocery store went out of business in 1991, the corporation bought it. Students deal first-hand with the challenges of business operation by managing and staffing the store while taking classes to learn needed skills in accounting, marketing, meat cutting, and management. Teachers and community professionals, including retirees, provide on-the-job training and classroom discussion for which students receive course credits.

Entrepreneurial Curriculum

*An **Entrepreneurial Curriculum** fosters the entrepreneurial qualities of critical thinking, innovation, and independence as desired educational outcomes for all students throughout the school's curriculum.*

Partnerships, school-based businesses, and school-incubated businesses can all contribute to the entrepreneurial approach. Integrated coursework and hands-on experience form the

basis of students' learning at school. An entrepreneurial curriculum is the broadest approach to school/community economic development. The school and the community work as partners for the educational benefit and economic development of both. In some cases, two or more schools have collaborated to share community and school resources and to enlarge the market area for student businesses.

Example: Entrepreneurial Curriculum

At Belle Fourche, South Dakota's high school, the entire curriculum emphasizes student entrepreneurship through coursework, creation of businesses, and a school environment that supports student initiative. As a result, a number of businesses have been started. Old World Foods makes and sells ethnic breads to local stores. The Breakfast Club restaurant is operated in the high school with earnings returned to the student owners. Students also learn about business and the community by working as reporters for the local paper, and by writing articles reviewed by teachers and newspaper editors. Home economics, art, social studies, journalism, and business coursework teaches students the skills they need to run their businesses.

Starting a School/Community Economic Development Program

Should we do it?

People in the school and community need to decide whether to include economic development as a part of the school's mission. The decision should account for local interest and attitudes toward making a stronger connection between school and community. Since resources are often limited, a program will probably require the school to prioritize its resources to support a school/community economic development program.

How do we do it?

As with the decision to develop a program, both school and community people should be involved in defining, planning, and implementing the program. Although conflict may arise, broad involvement fosters stronger support over time. The resource list has more detailed information for design and training needs.

Who needs to be involved?

The checklist below covers a broad range of interests and talents to include in the planning and ongoing support of a program. Teachers and community people who work closely to develop the program and work with students are especially important.

- *Teachers, administrators, school boards*
- *Government, church, arts, and civic leaders*
- *Business people from businesses of all sizes, rural and town*
- *Students*
- *Community and economic development professionals at the local, county, and regional levels*

Development should include business and economic planners as well as professionals in housing, social services, historic preservation, agricultural and natural resources

- *Nearby schools*
A cluster of schools with such programs can create more opportunities for students and local communities and broaden the market for businesses.

What about money?

Research suggests that reallocation of existing resources, not additional funding, is a successful strategy. Indeed, where additional money is needed, education and development expert Paul Nachtigal has found local funding arrangements more sustainable than those involving large amounts of money from donors outside the community.

What are the legal concerns?

Legal issues to address are: the safety and supervision of students; compliance with state and federal laws on labor conditions and wages; and assessment and fulfillment of insurance requirements. Clear guidelines spelling out the relationship between the school and private business are very useful. The school attorney should be consulted on all contracts.

What are common problems and solutions?

- Primary emphasis should be on education as the goal, not business operation. Projects that are repetitive or use kids as cheap labor are not appropriate.
- Existing businesses may perceive competition. School-based and school-incubated businesses should strive to complement or fill niches not filled by other businesses. Negotiation and subcontracting with existing businesses can eliminate competition and enhance both businesses.
- Teachers need to change their roles from experts to coaches with fewer lectures and more conversations.

Summary

While education is still the primary goal of the school, development becomes the means to reaching the goal. Subject areas such as math, science, English, and the arts are integrated to support this education-through-development orientation. School-business partnerships, school-based businesses, and school-incubated businesses may form all or part of the curriculum. The entrepreneurial curriculum can be the focus of an entire school or a specialized program in a school. These approaches can help schools and communities work together for mutual benefits.

Resources

Building Communities from Within: Schools and Economic Development, Communicating for Agriculture, P.O. Box 667, Fergus Falls, MN 56538, 1-800-432-3276

Business Retention and Expansion Follow-up (Video and Print Package), George Morse, Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota, Department of Agriculture and Applied Economics, 1994 Buford Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108, (612) 625-9769

Noteworthy: Rural Schools and Community Development, Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory, Publications Department, 4709 Belleview Avenue, Kansas, MO 64112, (816) 756-2401.

Students as Entrepreneurs: Building Academic Skills and Strengthening Local Economies, Center for School Change, Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, 301 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455 (612) 626-1834.

Youth Entrepreneurship Seminar (Y.E.S.), (curriculum on business skills for youth ages 11-16), Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota, Distribution Center, 20 Coffey Hall, 1420 Eckles Avenue, St. Paul, MN, 55108, (612) 625-8173.

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Size, Cost, and Quality in Public Schools and School Districts

Are some Minnesota schools and school districts too small or too large to offer a quality education? What makes for a quality education and at what cost?

Size, Cost, and Quality in Public Schools and School Districts

Are some Minnesota schools and school districts too small or too large to offer a quality education? What makes for a quality education and at what cost? In an attempt to answer these questions this publication provides a review of the research on the relationship between school and school district size, cost, and quality. Information specific to Minnesota will be used to put the research into context. In addition, dominant policy positions will be examined. This publication explains more fully the issues facing schools and their communities and the options available.

Understanding Size, Cost, Quality

Size

How we define large and small makes a difference in understanding the relationships of size, cost, and quality. What is small in a densely-populated New England state may be large in mostly rural Northwestern Minnesota where transportation-time and costs are bigger factors.

Distinctions between schools and school districts are also important. A large district could have many small schools; a small district could have one large school.

School size refers to student enrollment within an individual school, and to enrollment in any given grade, kindergarten through twelfth grade. In Minnesota these sizes vary from less than twenty students per grade to several thousand within a single school.

District size refers to an organization of schools from kindergarten through twelfth grade under a single school board and superintendent. In Minnesota, district enrollment size varies greatly. In 1990, the largest operating district, Minneapolis, enrolled 40,554 students while the smallest, Franconia, enrolled 18. Franconia is a non-operating district whose students attend school in a neighboring district. The next smallest district is Pine Point, an experimental district enrolling 51 students (Minnesota Department of Education 1992, 52). Table 1 shows that more than half of the

Table 1: Minnesota School District Sizes 1990-91^a

Group Number	Size Range Resident ADM ^b	Number of Districts	Total Resident ADM	Percent of State's Total Students
1	0-214	45	6,826	0.9
2	215-294	44	11,326	1.5
3	295-384	45	15,294	2.0
4	385-489	42	18,317	2.5
5	490-639	43	24,203	3.2
6	640-869	44	33,227	4.4
7	870-1199	42	43,349	5.8
8	1200-1949	42	62,973	8.4
9	1950-4099	42	113,051	15.1
10	<u>4100+more</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>421,259</u>	<u>56.2</u>
	State TOTALS	433	749,825	100.0

^aBy September 1992, there were 411 districts, a reduction of 22 districts. Figures include 4,229 pre-kindergarten students enrolled in special education programs (Minnesota Department of Education, 1992, 1993).

^bResident ADM, resident average daily membership, is an unweighted count of students in the district in which they reside; some of these students may be attending school in other districts.

state's students are enrolled in the largest 10% of districts, while fewer than 1% are enrolled in the smallest 10% of districts. School and district sizes vary annually due to population changes and cooperative arrangements between districts.

Cost

Funds raised and spent in schools and districts vary greatly depending on factors such as financial conditions, local support for education, legislative mandates, and enrollment size.

Minnesota's school revenues have stayed at fairly constant percentages since 1983. The state contributes approximately 55%, local sources add 41%, and federal funds supply 4% (Minnesota Department of Education 1992, 8). These percentages are statewide averages and vary by district depending on property wealth, numbers of at-risk children, and use of referendum levies. The Adjusted Net Tax Capacity per pupil unit

determines the real and personal property within a district that is subject to local property taxes. Variation among districts has been the source of funding equity lawsuits.

Expenditures differ greatly by district, with the highest per pupil expenditures in the smallest and largest districts as seen in Table 2. Operating expenditures include the costs of services and supplies for all elementary and secondary students except for community service, capital outlay, building construction, and debt service. Among smaller districts, expenditures tend to be higher because fixed costs such as administration, instructor salaries, and transportation are spread over smaller numbers of students and larger geographic areas than in larger enrollment districts. In larger districts, higher costs reflect spending for exceptional instruction, and district, instructional, and pupil support services for at-risk and gifted students (Minnesota Department of Education, 1992, 51).

Table 2: Total District Operating Expenditures per Pupil Unit by Enrollment Size Groups, 1990-

91^a

Group Number	Size Range Resident ADM	Total Operating Expenditures
1	0-214	5,038
2	215-294	4,401
3	295-384	4,303
4	385-489	4,140
5	490-639	4,304
6	640-869	4,122
7	870-1199	4,202
8	1200-1949	3,992
9	1950-4099	4,216
10	4100+more	4,563

^aThis data and information on revenues and expenditures of each district are available from the Minnesota Department of Education (Minnesota Department of Education 1992, 51).

Quality

Research about quality in education includes measures that can be categorized as *inputs*, *throughputs*, and *outputs*.

Inputs

Inputs are factors that make up what the school or district has to offer its students. They include money, books, materials, equipment, attributes of teachers and specialized staff, course offerings, and facilities.

Recent research clearly indicates that spending more money does not necessarily mean improved student achievement. Researcher Eric Hanushek (1981, 30) reviewed 130 studies and found that "higher school expenditures per pupil bear no visible relationship to higher student performance." This does not discount the fact that costs vary across the country and within states due to differences in the distances students travel to the school and related transportation

costs. It does suggest factors other than money make a bigger difference in how well students learn.

A factor some authorities believe related to educational quality is the breadth and depth of course offerings available to students. Some researchers cite limited numbers and types of courses, particularly advanced courses, and few scheduling options as weaknesses of smaller schools, especially high schools of less than 100 per graduating class (Monk and Haller 1986, 59). In contrast, recent education research suggests that the quantity of course offerings and the quality of education are unrelated. This research indicates that students learn better in schools that "do a few things well" through a limited, focused curriculum (Sizer 1992; Gregory and Smith 1987; Goodlad 1984). Another recent study found that in high schools of more than 400 students, a greater variety of courses existed at the introductory level, not at the specialization level, and that less than 12% of students actually enrolled in courses that were not offered at smaller schools (Monk and Haller 1986, 59).

In Minnesota, a 1988 report on high schools by the Legislative Auditor found that districts of at least 25 students per grade in their high school(s) provided core academic courses in English, social studies, math, and science that met curriculum standards. Further, these students scored as well on standardized tests and in college coursework as their larger school colleagues. Additional advanced, vocational, and special education courses were offered in some of these small districts through interactive television and Educational Cooperative Service Units (Legislative Auditor, State of Minnesota 1988, 138-146).

The credentials and variety of teachers and specialized staff are another quality factor frequently mentioned in the size, cost, quality debate. Years of experience, professional degrees earned, subject matter expertise, and salary level are among the factors measured. Although these quantifiable factors do reflect some aspects of teaching quality, research is showing that what teachers do, not just what degrees they have, makes a bigger difference in the quality of student learning. Techniques such as mastery learning, cooperative learning, parental involvement, and homework are among the practices increasingly seen as effective means to improving educational quality (Hanushek 1981, 30; Walberg and Fowler 1988, 16).

Throughputs

Throughputs refer to what the school or district does with inputs to improve student learning. Over the past decade, a number of researchers studied schools around the country to determine what makes a school an effective learning environment for students. The following list summarizes the ten factors most consistently found to contribute to effectiveness (Sher 1988, 17):

1. strong, positive leadership
2. high expectations of student and teacher achievement
3. respectful relationships among students, teachers, and administrators
4. individualized instruction and attention
5. emphasis on the academic basics
6. parental and community involvement and support
7. fair and frequent performance feedback to students and teachers emphasizing positive reinforcement of success and progress
8. friendly, but business-like classroom and school climate
9. healthy balance of activities fostering the intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development of students
10. tolerance for individual initiatives and for trying new approaches to learning

Although some factors, such as individualized attention and parent/community involvement actually favor smaller-sized schools, some researchers believed these qualities are not restricted to schools of a certain size (Gregory and Smith 1987; Sher 1988, 18).

Outputs

Outputs are the product of the school or district assumed to reflect student performance and thus, whether inputs and throughputs have been used well. The most common measures of output are attendance, standardized test scores, dropout rates, graduation rates, and college experience of graduates.

In Minnesota, 1990 and 1991 statistics showed that attendance and graduation rates are

consistently high for all districts. They are over 94% in attendance and over 90% for graduation. This graduation rate is nearly 20% above the national average (Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development 1990, 69). In September 1992, the Minnesota Department of Education revealed an 84% graduation rate in Minnesota based on real longer-term data using a more sensitive measure than that used in annual data collection. It is expected that the national average will also drop as this measure is used in other states. Smetanka (1991, 10A), reports that on standardized tests, Minnesota students in districts of less than 1,000 “perform as well as the rest of the state in reading, writing, and math at grades 6 and 9.”

According to a Legislative Auditor’s report (1988, 138-146), Minnesota students’ performance in core subjects from the Minnesota Department of Education’s Assessment Program (MEAP) “show no relationship between test results and several other variables including total enrollment.” Core subjects reviewed were English, social studies, math, and science. There were no controls for socioeconomic status and district spending. The same report, however, found greater variation in PSAT college entrance exam scores with “higher (scores) in districts with larger enrollments than in districts with relatively few students” (less than 100 high school students per district). In a sample of college performance of Minnesota freshmen, the Legislative Auditor (1988, 146) found grade-point averages to be strongly and independently related to students’ high school rank, not size.

Sher (1988, 24) suggests that overall measures such as the PSAT should include the proportions of students taking these standardized tests. This is because small schools tend to have higher proportions of their students taking these tests, who are often less prepared than students from larger schools. This would likely result in raising the relative ratings of small schools.

Experts are now recognizing that school performance is significantly affected by what students face outside school. Socioeconomic status, in particular, has accounted for at least half of the variation in student achievement at the aggregate level (Hobbs 1989, 5). For schools and districts with a number of students from low income households, this finding means that test scores may reflect local poverty more than the school’s size or teachers’ abilities.

The Size, Cost, and Quality Debate

Debates about school and district size, cost, and quality are an enduring feature of education in the U.S. One the biggest conflicts began in the 1890s as the business sector was restructuring toward mass production. Using a similar line of reasoning, state governments and education experts called for more efficiency and expertise in education. These reformers advocated giving control of schools to education experts, removing it from communities and smaller local school boards. Bigger schools and districts were said to attract higher quality and more specialized staff while money would be saved as bigger units replaced smaller, more costly ones.

In many states this view translated into policies legislating consolidation. The effect, coupled with urbanization and improved transportation, was the consolidation of many smaller, mostly rural schools and school districts. The average number of students per district increased from about 200 in 1930 to nearly 3,000 in 1972, while the average number of constituents per school board member rose from 250 to more than 2,000 (Walberg and Fowler 1988,16). Minnesota’s policy resulted in the merger of over 7,600 districts in 1945 into 411 in 1992 (Chambers 1989, 484; Minnesota Department of Education, 1992, 1993).

The Policy Spectrum

Concerns about school and district size have changed little since the early 1900s, especially in rural areas. Current debate, however, indicates much more doubt about the benefits of larger schools and districts. Research on achievement and school effectiveness and experience with consolidation has created a much broader context.

Policy positions range from a *one best system* view to a *good schools come in all sizes* view. Positions vary depending on the data used and the researcher’s opinion of how to raise student achievement. What follows is a profile of these two policy positions which represent opposite ends of the spectrum. There are many positions which fall in the middle of this spectrum as well.

Advocates of the *one best system* contend that higher student achievement is gained through a broad, comprehensive array of courses and specialized teachers available only to schools of certain minimum sizes. They emphasize higher costs in the smallest and largest schools and districts, and promote moderate size schools as the

most efficient and effective use of funds. Although prescriptions vary by researcher, commonly recommended sizes include: elementary schools (grades K-6) of 300 - 600 students; high schools (grades 7-12) of 400 - 1200 students; and districts of 300 - 2600 students (Monk and Haller 1986, 59; Fox 1980; Swanson 1988).

Among the weaknesses of this view is that savings from consolidation are often not realized. This is because consolidation in large geographic areas usually means increased expenses for transportation, salaries of new staff, and for new buildings. While many proponents acknowledge geographic isolation as a reason for *necessarily existent* schools of smaller sizes, few discuss the cost increases associated with consolidation.

A second concern is whether more courses actually improve offerings to students or whether they simply create a cafeteria-style menu of courses devoid of depth.

Proponents of the *good schools come in all sizes* view assert that higher student achievement is attained through a focused curriculum, direct participation by students, and close links between the school and community (Gregory and Smith 1987; Sher 1988; Sizer 1992). Supporters cite experience in small schools and larger, subdivided schools as evidence of success with many sizes. Gregory and Smith (1987) and Sizer (1992) concur that a workable size is 250 students or less in either a single high school or a subdivided group. Local control and strong community support is noted by others as a major contributor to school effectiveness in a high school and is most possible in smaller schools (Nachtigal 1986). Several researchers note an existing school can cost less than a new, consolidated school when costs of increased transportation, personnel, and facilities are included. This is particularly so if schools with excess space share their facilities with other agencies (Striefel, Foldes and Holman 1991). Technologies, sharing among schools and districts, and restructuring into distinctive, focused programs are recommended for small, rural schools to overcome limited course offerings. Interactive television, computers, and inter-district sharing have been found to be valuable alternatives to mandatory consolidation (Monk and Haller 1986, 86-95).

A weakness of the *good schools come in all sizes* perspective is whether and how much students in small schools are limited by a curriculum focus and few teachers when few other choices exist within geographic reach. A second concern is the limits of instructional technologies as alternatives for expanded course offerings. The merits and weaknesses of these technologies need to be weighed to determine how they can best be used by any size school or district.

Minnesota Policy

Minnesota is entering a time of potential policy change. The commissioner of education has recommended consolidating most school districts to serve a minimum of 1,300 students each by 1995. This change would affect 311 districts according to 1990-91 figures (Minnesota Department of Education 1992, 23-43). The change is recommended to ensure students get larger, more comprehensive course offerings and to reduce teacher preparation (Smetanka 1991, 10A).

The Minnesota legislature has passed several laws to encourage, but not require, district consolidation. Construction funds have been made available to several districts that have agreed to consolidate their secondary schools. The *cooperation and combination* (C&C) program provides small districts with additional funds if they agree to study ways in which they can cooperate, and eventually combine. Districts can receive up to \$600 per pupil unit over a four year period from state grants and local levies. If districts receiving C&C dollars do not consolidate, they must pay back the excess of funds received (Minnesota Rural Education Association 1992).

Summary

The debate about the measurement and importance of school and district size, cost, and quality continues. There are many policy positions which vary based upon the data used and the views of the researchers. While this publication offers no absolute answers, it gives schools, communities and policy-makers a basis for informed discussion and decision-making about the kind of education their schools and districts will provide.

Resources

Class Dismissed: Examining Nebraska's Rural Education Debate, 1988, Jonathan Sher. Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association, 613 Nelson, PO Box 157, Hildreth, NE 68947, 308/938-3825. \$4.95.

Critical Questions: An Outline of Major Perspectives on School and District Size, Cost, and Quality, 1992, Lisa Hinz and Joe Nathan. Center for School Change, Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, 301 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455, 612/626-2834. \$3.00.

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School District Profiles, Minnesota Department of Education. Minnesota's Bookstore, Print Communications Division, 117 University Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55115, 612/297-3000 or 1-800-657-3757. Minnesota Department of Education, 612/296-2400. \$7.00.

Seeds of Change, VHS Video, 26 minutes, 1992. Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota, Project Future/Center for School Change. CR-VH-5755. Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota, Distribution Center, Room 20, Coffey Hall, 1420 Eckles Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108. Purchase price: \$45.00. Rental \$8.00 in Minnesota, \$10.00 out of state.

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Glossary

This glossary defines terms which can help you understand and participate in the dialogue on Minnesota's public education system.

Adjusted Net Tax Capacity per pupil unit determines the real and personal property within a district that is subject to local property taxes.

Agreements for Secondary Education (Minnesota Statute 122.535) permits school districts with less than 375 students in grades 7-12 to enter into one or more agreements to provide instruction of its secondary students in one or more school districts.

Area Learning Centers offer year-round, personalized education programs, day and evening, to accommodate the needs of learners. A wide variety of courses, leading to diplomas, are taught using alternative methods of instruction. Additional services are provided to assure each learner's success. Learners aged 12 through adult may attend.

Average Daily Membership (ADM) the average number of pupils in membership during the school year. Pupils need not be in attendance to be counted in the ADM, but they must be in enrolled. See also Resident ADM.

Business Retention and Expansion local development efforts designed to assist and encourage existing local businesses to grow.

Business Retention and Expansion Follow-up an action-oriented, strategic planning process for responding to the immediate concerns of local firms. It also develops long-range recommendations, following an economic analysis of the data from firm visits. The program is administered by the Minnesota Extension Service.

Charter School state legislation passed in 1991 allows creation of charter schools that operate as independent public schools managed by certified teachers. Authority must be granted by a local school board and the state Board of Education. Financed with regular public education money for each student who chooses to enroll, an elected board of directors of teachers, parents, and community members develops the school curriculum, manages the budget, and is accountable for results.

The charter gives educators and communities the authority to design and implement a structure, teaching methods, and curriculum that improve student learning.

Co-Location see Shared Facilities.

Consolidation (Minnesota Statute 122.23) authorizes two or more school districts (that may or may not share a district boundary) to combine or merge all or part of their school districts.

Cooperation and Combination (C&C) a bill passed by the state legislature in 1989 that provides financial incentives for smaller school districts to cooperate and eventually combine with neighboring districts. Revenues come from a combination of state aid and local levies. If the districts fail to combine, excess aid must be repaid to the state.

Clustering a group of neighboring schools of similar sizes working together to exchange ideas, share resources, better use outside resources, and give each other moral support. In earlier versions of clusters, schools joined together to share the costs of in-services and share ideas. Contemporary clusters are broader in scope and vary in formality from a loose coalition to more formal and institutionalized groups. A cluster of schools, unlike an intermediate service agency working under contract to a district, works directly with their own students.

Detachment and Annexation (Minnesota Statute 122.21) authorizes landowners to request the transfer of land from one school district to another.

Diploma Opportunities for Adults Aged 21 and Over encourages those who have not completed high school to return to get their diplomas. Qualifying learners have up to two years of free state aid to finish their requirements. Many of the same education programs under High School Graduation Incentives are available to these adults.

Dissolution and Attachment (Minnesota Statute 122.22) a process used to dissolve one school district and attach that district to one or more adjoining districts.

Education Districts authorizes a group of school districts to cooperate to increase educational opportunities for students. To form, the education district must have at least five school districts or at least four districts of at least 5,000 pupils in ADM or 2,000 square miles.

Education Programs for Pregnant Minors and Minor Parents are designed to encourage parenting and pregnant teens to continue their education and receive their high school diplomas. A variety of education options are available. Child-care and transportation may be arranged.

Entrepreneurial Curriculum a coursework orientation that fosters the entrepreneurial qualities of critical thinking, innovation, and independence as desired educational outcomes for students. Integrated coursework and hands-on experience form the base of students' learning through school. An entrepreneurial curriculum is the broadest approach to school-community economic development, coupling education and development as a learning strategy.

Full-Time Equivalents (FTE) are the number of licensed professional staff employed by the district, measured in full-time equivalents. The count includes administrators, classroom teachers, and all other licensed professional personnel.

High School Graduation Incentives is designed for students who are not likely to graduate or who have dropped out of school before getting their diplomas. These learners may choose from a variety of education options to complete the requirements needed to graduate.

Interdisciplinary teaching approach organized around themes rather than one specific subject area. With such an approach, economics, English, and history might all be taught in a class about the development of railroads.

Interdistrict Cooperation (Minnesota Statute 122.541) authorizes school districts to eliminate certain grades or portions thereof and provide instruction for those students through agreements with other districts. At least three grades must be maintained locally in a school district. Pupil aids go to the student's resident district. Generally, two

or three districts are involved although there is no limit.

Magnet School features academic programs with a distinctive focus based on the strengths, resources, interests, and talents of school personnel and often, the local community. Once decided upon, program focus is integrated throughout curricula and school activities, creating an overall school theme and offering students choices among traditional and alternative programs.

Mastery Learning organizes learning around significant outcomes that are sequenced to students' readiness. It assumes that learning is a function of time and opportunity, not innate and unalterable abilities.

Multi-Aged Classroom an alternative to the age-graded approach which brings together students of several ages. Like the one-room schoolhouse, students are grouped within the class according to developmental stages and are allowed to stay with the same teacher or group of teachers for more than one year. The class is often divided into small group and individual activities, with advanced or more mature students helping younger or less skilled students while teachers rotate among the smaller groups, giving more individualized attention.

Open Enrollment allows students Kindergarten through 12th grade the opportunity to apply to attend a school outside the district in which they live. Parents or guardians are responsible for transporting their children to a bus stop on the border of the nonresident district. The nonresident district will then transport the students to the school. Low-income families can be reimbursed for transportation costs.

Operating Expenditures are district and school administration, district support services, regular, vocational, and exceptional instruction, instructional and pupil support services, operations and maintenance, food service, pupil transportation, and other operating programs. Not included are community service, capital outlay, building construction, and debt service.

Operating Funds Balance a measure of the district's financial condition at the end of the school year and of resources available for future years. It is the sum of undesignated balances on June 30 from four operating funds (general, food service, pupil transportation, and community

service), excluding statutory operating debt. This balance is then divided by that school year's resident pupil units.

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) a learner-centered, results-oriented system founded on the belief that all individuals can learn. What is to be learned is clearly defined with progress based on demonstrated achievement of specific learner outcomes rather than classroom hours, courses, or credits completed.

Postsecondary Enrollment Options provides 11th and 12th grade students, who qualify for the postsecondary institution of their choice, the opportunity to take college courses for high school credit. The program gives the student choice of a wider variety or more advanced courses than may be available in their high school at no cost to the student for tuition, fees, and required textbooks. If all colleges are at least 40 miles away, a student may request a postsecondary course be offered at the high school.

Pupil-Staff Ratio the average daily membership of all students (both residents and nonresidents) who were enrolled in the school district, divided by the number of professional staff.

Resident Average Daily Membership (RADM) a count of students in the district in which they reside; some of these students may attend school in other districts. Resident ADM counts are used in calculating property tax levy limitations.

School-Based Business an enterprise that is owned and controlled by the school in which students gain experience as workers or managers with profits returned to the school.

School-Business Partnership an agreement between a school and a business to define some mutual goals and work toward them to improve educational opportunities, benefit business, and support broader community goals.

School/Community Economic Development serves a school's primary purpose of student education while also strengthening the local economy. From school-business partnerships to entrepreneurial curricula, the main reason is to improve the quality and meaning of education for students.

School-Incubated Business teaches students the skills to research, plan, establish, operate, and own an economically-viable business that is theirs when they graduate. The school provides classes and teachers and occasionally the facilities for student business ideas to be realized.

School-Within-A-School offers students and their families choices alongside the traditional age-graded, subject-focused classroom within a single school. The school-within-a-school can be distinguished from the traditional classroom by curriculum focus, teaching methods, or the way the classroom is organized, often using alternatives such as the multi-aged classroom or a magnet school focus in science or the arts.

Shared Facilities collaborations by schools with social service agencies, nonprofits, governments, and private companies to share equipment and technology, lease space, share support service, and plan new buildings to better serve youth and communities while spending fewer tax dollars.

Site-Based Management refers to increasing the decision-making power of people closest to the effects of those decisions, at the school site. In a site-base managed school, educators and administrators in the school make decisions about budgets, hiring, and curriculum, although the extent of such decisions varies by district.

Total Quality Management (TQM) a concept from business being applied to education. It emphasizes involvement of people within and outside a school—administrators, teachers, parents, students, and community members—in a continuous process of educational improvement by meeting customer expectations of quality. Customers in the TQM process include teachers, parents, and students.

Year-Round School reorganizes the traditional September-June calendar and its three-month summer vacation into a schedule of more continuous schooling with more frequent, shorter breaks to better use school facilities and to minimize students' "summer learning loss." Breaks are used by many schools to offer intensive, specialized courses to students and community people as well as to provide remedial support to students needing additional help.

General Resources

Center for School Change

Humphrey Institute
University of Minnesota
301 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455 612/626-1834

Educational Research Service

20000 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201
703/243-2100

Heartland Center for Leadership Development

941 O Street, Suite 920
Lincoln, NE 68508
402/474-7667

Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL)

4709 Belleview Avenue, 2nd Floor
Kansas City, MO 64112
816/756-2401

Minnesota Charter Schools Network

P.O. Box 2131
Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076
612/942-1322

Minnesota Department of Education Enrollment Options

927 Capitol Square Building
550 Cedar St.
St. Paul, MN 55101
612/297-2241 or toll-free 800/652-9747

National Association for Year-Round Education

P.O. Box 711386
San Diego, CA 92171-1386
619/276-5296

National Youth Leadership Council

1910 W County Road B
Roseville, MN, 55113
612/631-3672

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)

1900 Spring Road, Suite 300
Oak Brook, IL 60521-1480
708/571-4700

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