

Administering Charter Schools in Minnesota: What Does It Take?

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Abstract

This study attempts to answer questions about the competencies and skills needed by Minnesota charter school administrators by means of an on-line survey, and a literature review. Recommendations for educational leadership programs for charter school leaders in Minnesota are then suggested. Information collected and subsequent analysis will allow charter school officials, Minnesota Department of Education charter school personnel, college and university educational leadership program department chairs, and future charter school leaders themselves, to determine the knowledge and skills that will best serve Minnesota charter school leaders.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

On June 04, 1991, Minnesota became the first state in the nation to pass a charter school law (Minnesota Session Laws, MN. 265-3, 1991). That original law referred to charter schools as “outcome-based schools.” Later changes to the law replaced this term with “charter school.” Originally, charter schools could only be sponsored by school boards and on November 18, 1991, The Winona Minnesota School Board approved the charter proposal of Bluffview Montessori School. On December 10, 1991, that proposal was approved by the Minnesota State Board of Education and Bluffview, an existing private school, became the first school in the nation to be authorized as a public charter school. Bluffview, originally scheduled to open in the fall of 1993, actually began operating with public funding in March 1993 – the last few months of the 1992-1993 school year.

During the time that Bluffview was reorganizing itself as a charter school and preparing to convert from private to public financing, the City Academy charter school proposal in St. Paul was approved by the Minnesota State Board of Education and City Academy began operations on September 07, 1992 as the very first operating charter school in the nation (Junge, 2012).

Minnesota’s original charter school law allowed these new schools to be essentially teacher-run and the original vision of the law was to have teachers in charge – both in the daily administration of the schools and in the roles of governance as majority members of the boards of directors of their schools. It wasn’t long, however, before teachers realized that running a school was much more work than they cared to take on – especially as charters grew in size – and

eventually individuals were hired to administer the daily needs of charters so that teachers could concentrate on teaching.

This study deals with the implications of the now-common practice of hiring charter school administrators who are neither teachers in the charter school nor holders of administrative licenses as required in conventional public school settings. At a time when many of the older charter schools must soon deal with replacing their founding leaders, this is becoming an important area of concern. It is uncertain what the framers of charter school law intended in their original legislation but it is certain that today's legislators are being asked to deal with questions of charter school leadership.

In essence, today's politicians are being asked to determine what a good Minnesota charter school administrator should look like. In order to answer that question, they need to know what skills such an administrator should bring to the "Head of School" desk. They must also determine how those skills might differ from the skills of licensed public school administrators working in conventional public school systems. It may also be helpful to know whether existing educational leadership programs meet the needs of present and future charter school administrators.

Research Questions

The data were collected for this study by means of a statewide survey of Minnesota charter school directors.

The concerns expressed above are here encapsulated into three research questions which, if adequately answered by this study, could serve as guidance for lawmakers, for Minnesota

charter school boards when they replace existing leaders, and for colleges and universities that elect to prepare educational leadership candidates for charter school administrative functions:

- What are the important competencies and skills that Minnesota charter school administrators believe to be vital to their work?
- How do these competencies and skills differ from those of conventional public school licensed administrators?
- How might existing public university educational leadership training programs meet the needs of future Minnesota charter school administrators?

Limitations

While the data analysis in this study will incorporate the results of two previous studies, the core of this study and the conclusions it articulates will be limited to Minnesota charter schools. While the knowledge and skill requirements of charter administrators in other states may be similar, the charter school laws themselves differ considerably and there is reason to suspect that similar differences in administrative needs might also exist. It is believed that such state-specific issues cannot be adequately dealt with within the context of a regional study.

Delimitations

Because of the difficulty of identifying and locating former charter school leaders, this study will deal only with existing charter school administrators. Former charter school leaders, who may have changed careers because they lacked the very skills this study hopes to identify, will not be surveyed. The author of this study, as the administrator of a Minnesota charter school,

participated in the survey. The author's data has been clearly identified, when possible, in the subsequent analysis by being placed in gray boxes.

Chapter 2 - A Review of the Literature Concerning Charter School Leadership

The original framers of the Minnesota charter school law intended that charter schools would be able to introduce “new ways of learning, new ways of organizing, new ways of managing, and new ways of motivating” (Junge, 2012). That perspective invites studies of charter school administration and administrative license requirements.

Background of the Evolving Charter School Leadership in Minnesota

The first administrators of charter schools were often selected from among the founders. They were the individuals who were responsible for the creation of their specific charter school. They were the insiders who understood the needs of the school and the purposes of the overall charter school movement (Campbell, 2010; Gross & Pochop, 2007). Frequently, these founders were also people who started out as teachers in the school which seemed to fit with the intentions of the authors of the original Minnesota charter school law.

In 2009, the Minnesota legislature recognized this trend to hire individuals to administer charter schools and in a major re-write, often called Minnesota’s second generation charter school law, allowed teachers to back away somewhat from leadership and to concentrate on their primary function – teaching. Although teachers currently must serve on charter school boards, state law no longer requires them to constitute a majority of the board members. With the implementation of this new law, the Minnesota Department of Education began to require that annual administrator professional development plans, of those charter school administrators who did not hold Minnesota school administrator licenses, be included in the schools’ annual reports (Charter Schools, MN Statute § 124D-10, 2009).

These changes in Minnesota charter school law, coupled with the need for many charter schools to begin to seek new leaders with appropriate skill sets and background knowledge, are problematic because there are no competency requirements for Minnesota charter school leaders. Additionally, charter schools may not be aware of the availability of charter school-specific leadership programs. Moreover, the question of whether public and private university educational leadership programs are adequate for the needs of charter school leaders has not been addressed.

Problems with Charter School Leadership Transitions in Minnesota

Transitioning to non-founding leaders.

The next round of charter school administrators will likely not be part of the founding generation of charter school leaders – especially for older well-established schools. During these leadership changes, some charters may call upon teachers and others within their organizations to step up to leadership positions. Other charter schools may seek new leadership candidates elsewhere. For instance, colleges of education might be excellent sources of candidates who have been trained specifically to be educational leaders. Also, alternative charter-specific leadership programs, such as the KIPP School Leadership Program (Knowledge Is Power Program [KIPP], 2009), have been created to meet these needs.

The need to replace first-generation administrators as they enter retirement, or leave a charter school for other reasons, along with changes in the Minnesota charter school law, make it necessary to identify the knowledge and skill sets of current administrators.

Evaluating educational leadership programs for charter leaders.

This study has the potential to enlighten educational leadership programs for Minnesota charter school leaders. Existing educational research (Adamowski, Therrault, & Cavanna, 2007; Campbell & Grubb, 2008c) call into question the quality of educational leadership programs – especially those directed toward meeting the leadership needs of conventional public school systems. That such programs can meet the needs of charter school leaders in Minnesota is a question worth asking. Levine (2005) states: “...too many [education schools] have chosen to ignore not only their own shortcomings, but also the extraordinary changes in the nation and the world that should have led education schools to reevaluate the ways in which they prepare educators” (p. 6).

A number of charter-oriented leadership programs have been established across the country, but it is unlikely these programs will be able to meet the rapidly growing needs of charter schools in the short run (Campbell & Grubb, 2008c). For this reason, research studies, including this one, have the potential to bring about needed improvements in educational leadership programs in general and to allow colleges and universities to be able to target leadership programs to the needs of charter school leaders as well as conventional public school district leaders.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

A survey of Minnesota Charter School Administrators

While there have been investigations of charter school leadership needs in several Midwestern states, Minnesota charters were not included (Gross & Pochop, 2007). This study will be relevant to charters operating under the current charter school law within the state of Minnesota and will deal only with the leadership needs of Minnesota charters.

The sample.

This study is based upon a survey broadly disseminated to Minnesota charter school administrators. An email list of 148 directors was created from data available on the website of the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS). An introductory email was then sent to each administrator. This email (Appendix B) and the attached IRB Consent Form (Appendix C) contained a link to the on-line survey, which was administered via Qualtrics (Appendix D). One month later, a second reminder email containing the same information was sent to the same list of administrators. Twenty two directors (including the author of this study) or approximately 15% of the total number participated in all or a part of the survey. Eighteen people, or approximately 12%, completed the entire survey.

Survey topics and method of delivery.

The survey asked about five categories of data:

1. director's background: general information about the participant's background and professional training;
2. school governance: details about the participant's school, management, and administration;

3. work of the director and other school leaders: thoughts about participant's role and the role of others in the day-to-day operation of the school;
4. future leadership: general information about the leadership plans for the school;
5. demographic information: personal information including age, gender, and race.

This survey was adapted from two existing surveys; one referred to as the Midwest Survey as cited in Gross & Pochop (2007) that was distributed to charter directors in three Midwestern states (Ohio, Illinois, and Wisconsin) and a second similar survey (Campbell, Gross, & Lakle, 2008a) that was distributed to charter school directors in six states (Arizona, California, Hawaii, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Texas). The similarity of these two earlier surveys and the version that was adapted for this study will allow for straightforward comparisons of data to compare how well this Minnesota-specific data relates to regional and national research. The entire survey with responses is included in Appendix D.

Data that were collected in the survey were both quantitative and qualitative in nature. All of the data have been summarized and displayed in charts and tables in Appendix A. Survey response data have been ranked by average and weighted average where appropriate. In some instances, comparisons with the Midwest Survey (Gross & Pochop, 2007) are made.

In addition to quantitative data, some of the data that are collected from the surveys were of a qualitative nature. Qualitative data, including quotations (while maintaining confidentiality) have been included in this report.

In one instance, it was obvious that survey respondents misread a question. In this instance, the error was pointed out and a corrected dataset is displayed with the original responses along with an explanation. (Table A-6; Table A-7)

Chapter 4 - Survey Results

Data Analysis

Tables of the survey responses are contained in Appendix A. All tables in this appendix are designated with the naming convention “A-[survey question number]” and most data references in this chapter will be by survey question number.

New and conversion charter schools are represented.

Most of the survey respondents were from charters that were initially created as charter schools (survey question 1 - see Table A-1 in Appendix A). Only 2% of the directors who answered this question were working in schools that had converted to charters from some other school structure, such as a private school or a conventional public school

Charter school administrative history and administrative titles.

Charter school chief administrators who completed the survey were employed at charter schools ranging in age from 3 years to 18 years (survey question 2 - see Table A-2 in Appendix A). Most of those (46%) who responded were the chartering administrators of their schools. Two administrators were the most recent of five at their schools; these schools had the highest turnover of this sample. Both of these schools were formed in 2003.

Sixty eight percent (68%) of survey respondents had four or more years of experience as a charter school director. This compares favorably with the results of the 2003-2004 SASS Survey of public school principals discussed by Gross & Pochop (2007), where 66% of public school principals had similar levels of experience (survey questions 6 & 7). Charter school directors in the Midwest Survey came in a distant third with 46% of respondents claiming four or more years of experience (Gross & Pochop, 2007). The higher percentage in this survey is likely

a result of the longer history that Minnesota has with charter schools, which are more firmly established as a part of the Minnesota public school system.

Most charter schools prefer to call their chief administrators “directors.” In the survey sample, no charters used the title of “Principal” or “Superintendent,” even when their directors held those licenses. Of the 20 directors, 8 were called “Executive Directors.” The chief administrator at one school – probably a Montessori School – held the title of “Head of School,” which is a common Montessori school administrator title (survey question 4). Thirteen of the survey respondents (62%) held a Minnesota administrative license. Eight respondents (38%) have never been a licensed administrator (survey question 5).

Administrator career history and education.

Fourteen (64%) of the administrators surveyed were in their very first positions as charter school leaders. The remaining eight (36%) came to their current positions from leadership positions in other charter schools. Administrators surveyed listed their most recent professional positions in response to survey question 2.

Administrator professional history.

When questioned about all of their professional history, charter school directors indicated even more diversity (survey question 9). Nearly all charter leaders have had previous experience as teachers, often in different types of environments. Eleven survey participants (52%) reported having taught in traditional public schools. Four respondents (19%) reported having worked in or led a private business. Three survey respondents (14%) were self-employed during a part of their professional careers. Two respondents (10%) reported having worked in the non-profit sector.

Administrator education.

When asked about educational levels, all but one participant reported an educational level higher than a Bachelor's Degree (survey question 10). Nearly 20% had their doctorates or ABDs. Twenty of the 22 respondents (91%) had a Master's Degree or higher – such as a sixth year certification or an Educational Specialist Degree. The vast majority of those surveyed (82%) had degrees in education. Two respondents had degrees in the sciences, one in the Humanities, and one in Theology (survey question 11).

When questioned about specific types of college courses they had taken (survey question 12), survey respondents reported having taken courses as listed in Table A-12. The survey also asked if respondents had taken courses from non-certified leadership programs. Two respondents replied in the affirmative. One took courses through New Leaders for New Schools and the other took courses from the Arizona University LEE Program. Two respondents answered with “None.” Only four respondents elected to answer this question (survey question 13).

Education and experience prepare charter school leaders.

When questioned about the relevance of their education and past experiences to their present positions as charter school administrators (survey question 14), survey respondents said that they brought a wealth of skills to their jobs. Past experience was most common in areas of curriculum and instruction, and organizational and financial management. Administrators' previous experience was less helpful when dealing with their school's community, non-profit fundraising, and local politics or community organizations. The Midwest Survey (as cited in Gross & Pochop, 2007) produced similar results, although respondents to the Midwest Survey appear to have had more prior experience dealing with local politics and community organizations than did Minnesota administrators. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of Minnesota

survey respondents reported no previous experience dealing with local politics or community organizations, as compared to 11% in the Midwest Survey.

How charter school administrators do spend their work time.

The responding administrators spent from 30 hours per week to 80 hours per week on their jobs (survey question 20). The average of those responding was 56 hours. These administrators spend a widely varying amount of time on tasks from a selected list of tasks (survey question 21). Table A-21 shows tasks that are arranged from those that are on average most demanding of time to those that are on average least demanding of time for each respondent. The average administrator, based upon survey responses, spent the most time (20%) on organizational management. Organizational and financial management combined took up an average of 35% of administrators' working time. Administrators also spent a significant amount of time dealing with political issues within the school (15%). Public relations, a seemingly important function in market driven schools such as charter schools, took up only about 13% of administrative time on average.

How charter school administrators wish to spend their work time.

Survey participants were then asked where they wished to be able to spend their time (survey question 22). Eighty-three percent (83%) of the respondents wished to be able to spend more time as instructional leaders. This is not unlike the tension between administrative and instructional leadership that principals of conventional public schools experience (Gawlik, 2008). Minnesota charter school administrators also wished to be able to spend more time on issues of governance, such as strategic planning. It was not surprising to learn that, 22% of survey respondents wished that they could spend less time on organizational management.

Administrators' ability to deal with specific problems.

The survey also inquired into problems in each respondent's school. Participants listed problem areas as shown in Tables A-23 and A-24. As expected, some respondents listed serious issues in administrative areas with which others had little or no difficulty (survey questions 23 & 24). The ability of administrators to deal with the issues presented in the survey is obviously a function of their cumulative experience and educational background. One of the more important management issues that came out in these two questions was that of hiring qualified teachers, which was in fourth place in question 23 and third place in question 24. Survey respondents were generally confident of their abilities to perform a number of specified tasks (survey question 25). Areas of instructional leadership, concerned more survey respondents than organizational and financial management issues. This seems to reinforce their desire to spend more time as instructional leaders. Administrators who took the survey found it difficult to seek critical feedback from peers, which in a teacher-governed Minnesota charter school, is an important skill. In three instances, respondents indicated that functions did not apply to them, most likely because their schools' overall administrative structures assigned those tasks to others.

When asked where they sought advice when encountering difficult situations, the majority of respondents depended upon networking with other charter school directors and meeting with their school's authorizer (survey question 26).

Administrators Would Choose Different Career Paths

Of 19 survey respondents, only 3 said they would continue in charter school administration upon leaving their present positions. Another 3 indicated that they planned to retire. The remaining 12 respondents said they would work in educational environments other than a charter school. One respondent was undecided (survey question 27).

Administrator Demographics

The survey ended with several questions seeking demographic information. Those results are summarized in Table A-28 (survey questions 28, 29, & 30).

Seven survey respondents opted to submit additional comments at the end of the survey. Those comments can be found in Table A-29.

Qualtrics Survey Compacted Results

The full Qualtrics survey is reproduced in Appendix D with the responses to each quantitative question displayed graphically and each qualitative question as individual respondent comments.

Chapter 5 Discussion and Recommendations

Survey Revelations

As noted, most of the survey respondents were from charters that were initially created as charter schools (survey question 1). Only 2% of the directors who answered this question were working in schools that had converted to charters from some other school structure, such as a private school or a conventional public school. This could be an important point because existing schools that convert to charter schools are likely to bring an organizational history into their charter environment that does not exist in brand new charter schools. More could be learned by a study of the board structures and administrative-board working relationships within new and conversion charter schools.

A significant piece of data obtained from the survey was that; of the 19 charter school administrators who returned the survey, and out of the 16 administrators who had not decided to retire, only 3 indicated that they would seek a future job in a charter school if they were to leave their current position. Indeed, charter school administration is particularly difficult because the administrative structure of a charter school is often extremely small. Charter school administrators are simultaneously principal, superintendent, networking specialist, data entry person, lunchroom monitor, morning greeter, public relations and marketing specialist, and more. As a former Superintendent of the Winona Area Public Schools, Paul Durand, when interviewing for that position (2004) responded, when asked about his familiarity with charter schools, “I know one thing. Charter school directors have a lot of meetings in the bathroom!” When pressed further, he explained, “You go into the bathroom and look at yourself in the mirror and say, ‘Get

the job done!” Paul Durand led a charter school prior to interviewing for the superintendent position in Winona.

Table A-14 lists six common charter school leadership task categories and displays survey respondents’ feelings about how well their previous experience or training prepared them for completing these tasks. The table displays them in an increasing weighted average order so that the top listing represents that task for which leaders felt most prepared. Table 1 connects five of these categories with descriptors of typical school administrator functions. These descriptors represent the challenges that Minnesota charter school leaders face every day. A sixth category, Curriculum and Instruction, was a strong point for all but one survey respondent. By focusing on the five troublesome tasks, where charter school leaders felt least-prepared, educational leadership programs might be of better value to Minnesota charter school leaders.

Challenges to Educational Leadership Programs

While an educational leadership program certainly cannot prepare charter school leaders – or any school leader for that matter – for everything that must be faced in the field, it seems reasonable that in the charter school rich public school environment in Minnesota, important charter leadership topics be included. The survey was able to isolate the following areas of need and the challenges to administrative leadership that they pose:

Local politics or community organizations.

Engaging parents – especially in a time when both parents often work outside the home – can be a particularly difficult challenge. Board committee meeting times must be scheduled when it is convenient for parents – not faculty members. Recruiting parent volunteers in the

classrooms or for additional support on field trips can be difficult. Finally, engaging parents in homework activities can be challenging.

The uniqueness of such local politics and community organizations – and the need to know and understand this uniqueness – is already covered in existing Minnesota educational leadership course material offered by Minnesota colleges and universities. Charter schools leaders are not unique in having to deal with these difficult issues. It would seem important, however, to ensure that courses dealing with local political issues be extensive and far-reaching

Non-profit fundraising.

Because Minnesota charter schools do not have access to local voter referendum monies, the only additional funding that is available to them is private non-profit fundraising. Charter schools – especially smaller schools – must schedule regular and effective fundraising activities. In this respect, Minnesota charters resemble private and religious schools. They sponsor pancake breakfasts, silent auctions, annual giving campaigns, and other fundraising activities.

Such activities, involve extensive organizing, effective publicity, and complete follow-through. Courses in fundraising, not routinely a part of Minnesota educational leadership programs, would greatly enhance the ability of charter school administrators to collect adequate funding for their schools.

Table 1 – Challenges for which charter administrators felt ill-prepared (See Table A-14.)	
Indicated Experience or training weakness (Most concern to least concern)	Typical Challenges faced by Minnesota charter school administrators
Local politics or community organizations	Community involvement and engaging parents: Charter schools, like traditional public schools, depend upon parent and community support ranging from volunteer activities to board membership.
Non-profit fundraising	Raising non-public funds, building endowments: Private fundraising efforts replace referendum dollars that are not available to charter schools.
Living in the school’s community	Marketing and attracting students: Charter schools are market-driven. Selling the school’s program to the community is vital. Charter communities look to their administrators to coordinate and implement public relations campaigns.
Financial Management	Revenue streams, accounting, budgeting: Business offices with one or two individuals require charter school administrators to have extensive hands-on expertise.
Organizational Management	Attracting and managing qualified teachers: Minnesota charters generally pay below-union wages. Teachers tend to become self-managing and autonomous. These factors present unique management challenges.

Living in the school's community.

One element of living in the school's community that challenges Minnesota charter school leaders is the need to actively recruit students. Students do not automatically come to charters because of where they live. Charter schools must market themselves. They must advertise. They must hold frequent and effective recruiting activities and meetings. In this respect, charter school leaders must know the key elements of marketing.

While many educational leadership programs do not offer such courses, it is likely that business programs do. A Minnesota charter school leadership program should include one or more courses that focus on effective advertising and marketing.

Financial management.

Understanding Minnesota and federal public school revenue streams and accounting and budgeting are typical challenges of financial management. Some survey respondents indicated weaknesses with principles of financial management. Because charter schools have very slim management structures, such weaknesses could lead to serious school management issues if the head administrator cannot provide adequate financial management guidance.

In order to meet auditing requirements, charter school administrators frequently find themselves in the middle of financial accountability and process completion. Because most charters do not have large accounting departments, administrators are often involved in the completion of processes such as ordering supplies and equipment, receiving shipments, and accounting for cash receipts. They are not simply on the planning side of their school's finances.

An extensive course on public fund accounting principles should be a part of every educational leadership program that targets future charter school leaders.

Organizational management.

As noted, one of the more important management issues that came out in the survey was that of hiring qualified teachers. Minnesota charter schools are *At Will* employers. In order to attract high quality faculty, charters must be well managed and must be able to offer fair salaries and high degrees of professional autonomy in order to offset the benefits that working under union contracts in established public school districts may offer. Educational leadership programs should offer courses that focus on the unique perspectives of *At Will* employment law for students wishing to go into charter school administration.

Curriculum and Instruction

The one area of preparation that the respondents seemed best prepared for was that of curriculum and instruction. This is not unexpected. Recall that 83% of the respondents wished to be able to spend more time as instructional leaders. Clearly they value their role as educational leaders and consider that role to be one that they are most capable of filling.

Thin administration.

One reality that the survey failed to collect responses to was the impact of the thin administration of typical charter schools on the many roles that administrators must play. As noted earlier in this paper, Minnesota charter school administrators must often fill the multiple roles of principal and superintendent, along with other leadership and functional roles within the school such as student records maintenance, Information technology management, and

curriculum oversight. When charter school leadership is distributed, that distribution is directed horizontally, and those additional responsibilities usually fall on the backs of others who are already working at the school.

As two survey respondents put it (Table A-29):

- “There are areas of this survey that would have made sense for other staff to complete (lead teachers, school director) as we have distributed responsibilities more horizontally, rather than having all areas of leadership go through one individual (me).”
- “Our school's leadership structure is inadequate. I highly advocate moving from a single director to an executive director and principal.”

In all but the smallest conventional district environments, these roles are delegated to many individuals. There is, therefore, a “hands on” element to charter school administrator duties that does not exist in conventional district leadership roles and are not often offered in educational leadership programs outside of practicum and internship opportunities.

Suggestions for Future Action

The author has been a charter school administrator for 12 years. That experience has been gathered in two different charter schools – one with a total enrollment of over 200 students and one with a much smaller enrollment of around 50 students. That experience, along with the results of the survey and a brief look at existing educational leadership programs in the state of Minnesota, is an important part of this discussion and the recommendations that follow.

While the author does not suggest that the State of Minnesota require charter school administrators to be licensed, it is apparent that the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)

would like to see licensure become a requirement. According to Eugene Piccolo, Executive Director of the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (personal communication, May 2012), a compromise was reached during the writing of the second generation Minnesota charter school law (Charter Schools, MN. Statute § 124D-10, 2009). Instead of requiring charter school directors to hold administrative license, schools were required to include administrator professional development plans in their Annual Reports to MDE – but only if their head administrators were not licensed.

Charter schools are mandated by state law to be innovative (Charter Schools, MN. Statute § 124D-10, 2009) when in Subdivision 1 – Purposes – it states that a purpose of charter schools is to “encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods...measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes...[and] establish new forms of accountability for schools[.]” Despite this statement which is encoded in statute, Minnesota charters schools are under much political pressure to look and become more conventional. This statute, for example, no longer requires teachers to be the majority on charter boards. This is a fundamental shift away from the “teacher lead” model in the original charter school legislation. Requiring conventionally trained and licensed administrators to lead such schools could further erode the ability of charters to be “different and innovative” and could be counter-productive to the stated purposes of the 2009 Minnesota law. Indeed, if MDE determines that charter school administrators must hold a license, it would be prudent to design that license specifically for charter school leaders.

Table 2 – The Author’s Suggestions for a Charter School Leader Certificate Program	
Subject	Considerations
Hands-on administration: Non-Profit Fundraising	Private funding sources, Grant-writing, and other fundraising activities
Hands-on administration: Minnesota and federal educational data and accounting systems	SERVS (Web-based Funding application), IDEAS (Finance System), MARRS (Student accounting), UFARS (Financial accounting), STARS (Professional assignment tracking), CliCS (School Lunch Web application), EDRS (Special Education web application), eRate (federal funding for technology), Title I (Federal funding for poverty), and REAP (Federal rural schools initiative funding).
Hands on administration: Special Education Reporting	IEPs, State and Federal Special Education funding, and the role of Special Education Cooperatives
Governance and Administration	Different but co-mingled roles; Section 124.10D, Charter School Law, Section 13D, Open Meeting Law, Section 317A, Non-Profit Organizations Law
Reaching in and out: local politics or community organizations	Living in the greater community and engaging parents in school volunteer activities, the school’s board of directors, the importance of service clubs, and other community organizations, school culture, employee relations
Reaching out: living in the school’s community	Marketing, attracting, and retaining students, advertising and publicity

A Charter School Administrator Certificate Program

Instead of an administrative licensure program, the author recommends that Minnesota college and university educational leadership programs create specialized certificate programs for new and experienced charter school administrators. Certificate programs designed to build needed competencies in charter school leaders could improve charter school administration without adding a license and related oversight costs to regulating agencies, such as MDE. Charter school administrative certificate programs could offer a core of required courses as well as elective courses that are designed to meet the needs of both licensed and unlicensed participants.

Table 2 lists the general subject matter content of courses that the author, based upon the results of this survey, suggests should be included in such charter school administration certificate programs. Other courses might be included from the regular course offerings of existing educational leadership programs in order to meet the needs of specific students.

Certificate programs alone could meet the needs of current and future charter school administrators that hold conventional administrative licenses as well as those who are unlicensed. More importantly, offering appropriately designed certificate programs and not requiring charter school leaders to hold administrative licenses will reduce the likelihood of producing “cookie cutter” administrators for these highly innovative and specialized schools.

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Appendix A – Survey Data

Table A-1 – (Question 1) Is this charter school a newly created school or was it a type of pre-existing school? (“Pre-existing” means the charter school was originally a public or private school, or part of a public or private school.)		
Type of Charter School	Respondents (n=22)	percentage
Newly Created	18	82%
Pre-existing	4	18%

Table A-2 – (Question 2) Since this school opened or converted to a charter school, how many directors has it had, including you?		
Schools (n=22)	Directors	Percentage of Schools
10	1	46%
5	2	23%
3	3	14%
2	4	9%
2	5	9%

Table A-3 – (Question 3) In what year did this school start providing instruction as a public charter school?	
Startup Year	Number of schools (n=22)
1993	1
1995	1
1998	1
1999	1
2000	1
2002	1
2003	5
2004	3
2005	1
2006	1
2007	1
2008	3
2009	1
2011	1

Table A-4 – (Question 4) What is your formal title in your school (e.g., Director, Head of School, etc.)?		
Administrative Title	Survey Responses (n=22)	Percentage
Director	11	50%
Executive Director	8	36%
School Administrator	1	5%
Interim Director	1	5%
Head of School	1	5%

Table A-5 – (Question 5) Which of the following categories best describes your administrative license status?		
Administrative Status	Survey Responses (n=21)	Percentage
Currently a licensed administrator in Minnesota	13	62%
Have never been a licensed administrator	8	38%
Administrative license is currently expired	0	0%
Administrative license is from another state	0	0%

Table A-6 – (Question 6) PRIOR to this school year (2011-2012), how many years have you served as the director of THIS school?																						
(Q7) PRIOR to this school year (2011-2012), how many years have you served as the director of THIS OR ANY OTHER school (including charter, public, or private schools)?																						
Respondent # (n=22)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Q6	0	11	1	3	18	2	7	0	1	2	10	6	3	2	7	2	3	3	4	5	1	1
Q7	10	11	14	15	0	2	0	2	6	2	10	0	8	4	7	2	0	3	4	0	4	0
C7	10	11	14	15	18	2	7	6	2	10	10	6	4	7	2	2	3	4	4	5	1	1

Questions 6 (Q6) and 7 (Q7) were worded in such a way that a correct interpretation would yield answers to question 7 that would have to be equal or greater than the answer to question 6. Thus, it is assumed that answers of 0 (grey background) were the result of a misinterpretation of NO OTHER EXPERIENCE. Based upon this supposition, a correct interpretation for each respondent would have yielded an answer to question 7 that was identical to the answer to question 6, as displayed in dark grey background on the third line (C7).

The survey responses that are highlighted in light grey are those of the author.

Table A-7 - Questions 6 and the corrected question 7 sorted by experience and compared to the SASS and MW Surveys (The survey responses that are highlighted in light grey are those of the author.)

(Q6) Experience at Current School (Years)	Corrected (Q7) Total Administrative Experience (Years)	Survey Data %	SASS Survey %	Midwest Survey %
18	18	68%	66%	46%
3	15			
1	14			
11	11			
0	10			
10	10			
3	8			
7	7			
7	7			
6	6			
1	6			
5	5			
2	4			
4	4			
1	4			
3	3	27%	18%	24%
3	3			
2	2			
0	2			
2	2			
2	2			
1	1	5%	16%	31%
3.95	6.55	Average Years		

Table A-8 – (Question 8) Indicate your most recent professional position prior to your current position. (Select one)		
Positions	Survey Response (n=22)	%
Teacher in THIS charter school	4	18%
Director of another charter school	3	14%
Assistant principal or other administrator in a traditional public school	2	9%
Assistant principal/director or other administrator in THIS charter school	2	9%
Teacher in a traditional public school	2	9%
Principal in a private school	2	9%
Principal in a traditional public school	1	5%
Worked in or led a community-based non profit	1	5%
Worked in or led a business	1	5%
Superintendent of schools	1	5%
Director of private school	1	5%
Progress Coordinator in an ALC	1	5%
Consultant, CEO of Designs for Learning	1	5%
The survey responses that are highlighted in light grey include those of the author.		

Table A-9 – (Question 9) Indicate all other professional positions you have held (Select all that apply.)

Previous Professional Positions	Response	%
Teacher in a traditional public school	11	52%
Teacher in THIS charter school	5	24%
Worked in or led a business	4	19%
Self employed	3	14%
Teacher in private school	3	14%
Director of another charter school	3	14%
Assistant principal or other administrator in a traditional public school	3	14%
Worked in or led a community-based non profit	2	10%
Principal in a traditional public school	1	5%
Superintendent of schools	1	5%
Military (USN)	1	5%
Principal at private high school	1	5%
Progress Coordinator in an ALC	1	5%
Assistant principal/director or other administrator in THIS charter school	1	5%
Teacher in another charter school	1	5%
VP Student Services, Dean of Students in Private College	1	5%
The survey responses that are highlighted in light grey include those of the author.		

Table A-10 – (Question 10) What is the HIGHEST degree you have earned? (Select one)			
Educational Achievement	Survey Responses	%	MW %
Master’s Degree + 30 credits (including Educational Specialist)	12	55%	37%
Master’s Degree	3	14%	27%
EdD	3	14%	16%
Bachelor’s Degree	1	5%	20%
MA and 6 th year certification	1	5%	N/A
ABD	1	5%	N/A
Montessori Teaching Diploma (AMI)	1	5%	N/A
Total	22	100%	100%

Table A-11 – (Question 11) In what field did you earn this highest degree? (Select one)		
Answer	Survey Responses	%
Education	18	82%
Science (e.g. Biology, Chemistry, Medicine)	2	9%
Theology	1	5%
Humanities (e.g. History, English, Fine Arts)	1	5%
Total	22	100%

Table A-12 – (Question 12) Have you ever taken any university or college courses in the following areas (Select all that apply)		
Course Topics	Survey Responses	%
Curriculum and Instruction	19	90%
Educational Leadership	17	81%
Education Law	14	67%
Child Development	13	62%
Non-Profit Management	5	24%
Business Management	3	14%
None	2	10%
Accounting/Mathematics	1	5%
Adult Development, Organizational Change	1	5%
Organizational Change	1	5%
STEM	1	5%

Table A-13 – (Question 13) Have you ever taken any courses from the following non-certification leadership programs? (Select all that apply)		
Answer	Survey Responses (n=4)	%
None	2	50%
New Leaders for New Schools	1	25%
Arizona University – LEE Program	1	25%

Table A-14 – (Question 14) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how your prior experiences and training prepared you for your current position?

(n=22)

Your experience or training in _____ prepared you for your current position.	Strongly Agree (1)		Agree or Somewhat Agree (2)		Somewhat Disagree and Strongly Disagree (3) and (4)			No Experience (5)		Wt Av
	Survey	MW	Survey	MW	Survey	Survey	MW	Survey	MW	
Curriculum and Instruction	10 45%	58%	9 41%	32%	1 5%	0 0%	11%	2 9%	6%	41
Organization Management	12 55%	61%	6 27%	34%	1 5%	0 0%	5%	3 14%	4%	42
Financial Management	10 45%	36%	7 32%	53%	1 5%	2 9%	11%	2 9%	11%	45
School’s Community	6 27%	47%	11 50%	37%	1 5%	1 5%	16%	3 14%	17%	50
Non-Profit Fundraising	4 18%	12%	9 41%	40%	2 9%	5 23%	48%	2 9%	27%	58
Local Politics or Community Organizations	2 9%	27%	11 50%	59%	2 9%	1 5%	14%	6 27%	11%	64

Survey responses are displayed as number of respondents and percentage (nn xx%). MW (Midwest Survey) responses are displayed simply as a percentage (xx%) because the number of responses was not available.

MW-Midwest Survey as cited in Gross & Pochop (2007) and rounded to the nearest percent.

Entries are ranked by weighted average (Wt Av) – low to high. Heading numbers in parentheses represent weighting factors (WF). Disagree and Strongly Disagree values are combined to match the MW (Midwest Survey) data presentation after the

weighted average was calculated. Numerical weighting factors (WF) are assigned to each type of response and are indicated in parentheses in the column headings. Weighted averages are calculated as follows: $WtAv = \text{summation of (Column WF) X (Column Responses)}$

Example for Curriculum and Instruction: $41 = 1X10 + 2X9 + 3X1 + 4X0 + 5X2$

The increasing weighted average value represents increasing degrees of difficulty (less prepared) in carrying out the listed functions.

Table A-15 – (Question 15) How did you find out about your current position at your school?

(Select all that apply)

Answer	Survey Response (n=22)	%
Read a classified advertisement	8	36%
Personally contacted by other charter school staff	5	23%
Worked in this school when the position became available	4	18%
Personally contacted by the board or former director	4	18%
Founded the school	4	18%
Personally contacted by community members	3	14%
Contacted by a recruiter	2	9%

Table A-16 – (Question 16) What most satisfies you about being director of this school? (Select one)		
Answer	Survey Response	%
Your passion for the school mission	10	45%
The autonomy you get by leading a charter school	3	14%
The chance to grow an organization	3	14%
The collegiality you experience with school staff	2	9%
A commitment to educating the kinds of students served by the school	1	5%
Other (Describe): Seeing students succeed	1	5%
Other (Describe): Offering an educational choice to students in this area	1	5%
Other (Describe): All of the above	1	5%
The location of the school is attractive	0	0%
Total	22	100%

Table A-17 – (Question 17) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the school’s board of directors as they relate to your school?

The board of directors _____.	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	n=21	Mean
Sets a clear mission for the school	11	8	2	0	21	1.57
Holds high expectations for the school	13	7	1	0	21	1.43
Directs instructional programs	2	2	8	9	21	3.14
Plays an active role in developing new sources of revenue	2	7	7	5	21	2.71
Allows you to use your judgment to make important managerial decisions	15	4	0	2	21	1.48
Conducts strategic planning for the school	11	7	2	1	21	1.67
Plans for leadership transition	4	8	5	4	21	2.43
Buffers you and your staff from politics and controversies	2	7	8	4	21	2.67
Provides you with valuable feedback for improving the school	4	12	4	1	21	2.10
Provides technical assistance	2	8	4	7	21	2.76

Table A-18 – (Question 18) Is your school managed by an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or Charter Management Organization (CMO)?		
Question	Response	Percentage
Yes (Continue with Question 19)	0	0%
No (Go to Question 20)	21	100%
Total	21	100%

Table A-19 – (Question 19) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the school’s Educational Management Organization/Charter Management Organization (EMO/CMO) as they relate to your school.				
The EMO/CMO_____	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Sets a clear mission for the school	No responses to this question			
Holds high expectations for the school				
Directs instructional programs				
Plays an active role in developing new sources of revenue				
Allows you to use your own judgment to make important managerial decisions				
Conducts strategic planning for the school				
Plans for leadership transition				
Buffers you and your staff from politics and controversies				
Provides you with valuable feedback for improving the school				
Provides technical assistance				
Provides professional development				

Table A-20 – (Question 20) How many total hours do you spend on ALL school-related activities for this school during a TYPICAL FULL WEEK?																		
n=18	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Hrs	30	45	50	60	80	60	65	55	55	45	60	55	70	80	50	50	50	50

Table A-21 – (Question 21) What % of the hours listed above do you spend on the following: (n=18)																			
Tasks	Survey Respondent Number and times in percentage																		
n=18	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Av
Organizational	25	15	30	5	10	25	10	45	18	10	5	25	10	30	45	21	25	5	20
Politics	40	5	5	25	25	5	20	5	30	10	15	30	25	20	5	5	5	1	15
Financial	10	10	15	25	20	10	10	15	20	40	5	5	5	15	15	6	35	5	15
Public Relations	1	25	0	5	10	5	5	15	2	15	60	10	15	25	10	3	5	15	13
Human Resources	12	15	20	10	10	25	5	5	10	10	5	25	10	20	5	2	10	5	11
Instructional	2	10	20	25	15	5	40	5	10	0	5	5	0	10	5	8	10	4	10
Strategic Planning	2	15	5	1	5	5	5	5	5	5	0	0	25	10	10	1	5	2	6
Culture	8	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	10	5	0	10	0	5	4	5	10	5
Other - Legislative and Communication issues	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other - Non-specified	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Total Time (percentage):	100	100	100	100	100	90	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	130	100	50	100	50	20
Survey responses that have a light grey background are those of the author. Ranked by average.																			

Table A-22 – (Question 22) Should the amount of time you spend be:

n=18

Question	Less	Same	More
Instructional Leadership (Classroom observations, modeling teaching practice, supervising curriculum, meeting with instructional teams, and assuring quality of teaching resources)	0	3	15
Strategic Planning (Developing a school improvement plan, including a vision, mission, and goals)	0	5	13
Public Relations (Representing the school in the community, public relations, recruiting students, dealing with the school’s parent groups, authorizer, district, board of trustees, or EMO/CMO, and advocating for the school’s interests)	2	7	9
Human Resources (Recruiting, hiring, firing, inducting, and mentoring teachers and administrators; developing leadership capacity and professional development opportunities)	1	11	6
Promoting School Culture (Leading or organizing celebrations or school traditions.)	0	13	5
Financial Management (Managing the school budget, fundraising)	1	14	3
Organizational Management (The school schedule, enrollment, facilities, safety and security, student discipline, and transportation)	4	14	0
Other (Describe): 1) legislative issues and communications 2) No description offered	0	2	0

Table A-23 – (Question 23) To what extent is each of the following organizational issues a problem in your school? (n=18)					
Question	Very Serious (3)	Somewhat Serious (2)	Somewhat Minor (1)	Not a Problem (0)	Wt Av
Engaging parents	4	4	9	2	29
Raising funds or managing finances	1	8	5	5	24
Attracting students	2	5	3	9	19
Attracting qualified teachers	1	4	7	7	18
Working with your board of trustees	2	1	6	10	14
Acquiring or managing facilities	1	3	4	11	13
Negotiating with district and traditional public schools	1	2	5	11	12
Maintaining the focus of the school's mission	0	3	5	11	11
Complying/reporting on state or federal laws and requirements	0	0	9	10	9

Entries are ranked by weighted average (Wt Av) – high to low. Heading numbers in parentheses represent weighting factors (WF).
Weighted averages are calculated as follows: $WtAv = \text{summation of (Column WF) X (Column Responses)}$
Example for Engaging Parents: $29 = 3X4 + 2X4 + 1X9 + 0X2$
Increasing weighted average values correlate to increasingly problematic organizational issues.

Table A-24 – (Question 24) Rank order the organizational issues listed in Q23 with regard to how much of a problem each one is for your school. Give a “1” to the issue that is the biggest problem, a “2” to the next biggest problem, and so on until you have ranked all nine. Each issue should have a unique number.

(n=18)

Answer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Wt Av
Engaging parents	2	6	4	2	3	0	1	0	0	56
Raising funds or managing finances	2	6	2	4	1	1	1	1	0	62
Attracting qualified teachers	2	2	3	1	2	2	3	2	1	87
Attracting students	5	1	2	0	1	1	3	2	3	88
Acquiring or managing facilities	2	1	1	1	3	4	2	2	2	98
Maintaining the focus of the school’s mission	0	0	3	5	1	3	1	3	2	101
Complying/reporting on state or federal laws and requirements	1	1	2	2	3	1	2	4	2	102
Working with your board of trustees	2	0	0	2	1	5	3	3	2	108
Negotiating with district and traditional public schools	2	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	6	108

Entries are ranked by weighted average (Wt Av) – low to high. Heading numbers also represent weighting factors (WF).

Weighted averages are calculated as follows: $WtAv = \text{summation of (Column WF) X (Column Responses)}$ Example for

Engaging Parents: $56 = 1X2 + 2X6 + 3X4 + 4X2 + 5X3 + 6X0 + 7X1 + 8X0 + 9X0$

Decreasing weighted average values correlate to increasingly problematic organizational issues.

Table A-25 – (Question 25) How confident do you feel in your ability to perform each of the following tasks effectively? (n=18)						
Question	Very Confident (1)	Mostly Confident (2)	Slightly Confident (3)	Not at all Confident (4)	Does Not Apply (0)	Wt Av
Lead school-wide literacy and math initiatives	2	7	8	0	1	40
Seek critical feedback from peers	4	9	5	0	0	37
Engage parents to work toward a common vision	4	10	4	0	0	36
Facilitate staff to work toward whole-school improvement	4	10	4	0	0	36
Implement of a long-range strategic plan	7	6	4	1	0	35
Retain talented teachers	5	11	2	0	0	33
Develop a talented faculty	4	11	2	0	0	32
Develop leadership within the school	8	7	2	1	0	32
Attract talented teachers	6	11	1	0	0	31
Delegate or share responsibility	8	8	2	0	0	30
Manage budget, aligning resources with instructional improvement	9	7	2	0	0	29
Establish high expectations for students	6	10	1	0	1	29
Foster a safe, student-centered learning environment	6	11	0	0	1	28
Manage school operations effectively	10	8	0	0	0	26
Engage staff to work toward a common vision	11	7	0	0	0	25

Entries are ranked by weighted average (Wt Av) – high to low. Heading numbers in parentheses represent weighting factors (WF).

Weighted averages are calculated as follows: $WtAv = \text{summation of (Column WF) X (Column Responses)}$

Example for Lead school-wide literacy and math initiatives: $40 = 1X2 + 2X7 + 3X8 + 0X1$

Increasing weighted average values correlate to decreasing confidence in performing the task.

Table A-26 – (Question 26) How important do you find the following sources of advice or assistance in helping you meet the challenges of your job: (n-18)						
Question	Very Important (1)	Mostly Important (2)	Slightly Important (3)	Not important (4)	Does Not Apply (5)	Wt Av
Formal networks of similar schools (e.g. Coalition of Essential Schools, Core Knowledge, KOPP, Edison, Montessori)	2	2	6	5	3	59
National charter school conference	1	1	10	5	1	58
Resource centers/technical assistance providers in my state	0	5	9	4	0	53
State charter association events or networks	1	7	6	4	0	49
Meeting with my school's authorizer	5	3	9	1	0	42
Informal meetings with other charter school directors	5	7	5	1	0	38
Other: Scholarly articles, business environment, consultants (n=3)	2	1	0	0	0	4
Entries are ranked by weighted average (Wt Av) – high to low. Heading numbers in parentheses represent weighting factors (WF). Weighted averages are calculated as follows: $WtAv = \text{summation of (Column WF) X (Column Responses)}$						

Example for National charter school conference : $58 = 1X1 + 2X1 + 3X10 + 4X5 + 5X1$

Increasing weighted average values correlate to decreasing importance of advice or Assistance.

Table A-27 – (Question 27) If/when you leave your current position, what do you expect to do? (Check One)		
Answer	Response (n=19)	Percentage
Work as a director in another charter school	3	16%
Work as a principal in a traditional public school	3	16%
Retire	3	16%
Continue to work, but leave the field of education	2	11%
Work in education administration at the district or state level	1	5%
Work as a teacher in this or another school	0	0%
Other: 1) Retire but support my school in the area of development as no time now for it 2) Admin in private schools 3) Train teachers 4) Teach at university 5) Take an indefinite leave but probably continue working at some point; field to be determined 6) Retire; but consult in SPED 7) CEO, Designs for Learning Consulting Firm	7	37%

Table A-28 – (Question 28, Question 29, Question 30, Question 31) Demographic information				
Question	Survey Responses			
Q(28)	Age (n=18)	Youngest: 28	Oldest: 68	Average: 51
(Q29)	Gender (n=18)	Female: 13	Male: 5	
(Q30 and Q31)	Race (n=18)	Caucasian: 17	Latino: 1	

Table A-29 – (Question 32) If there is anything else about the topics in this survey you would like to share with me, please feel free to comment here:

Text Response

Hittner –Identification of survey taken by author.

I have found that this school lacked clear processes and procedures that were predictable and repeatable on routine activities. That created high uncertainty. As we have developed these processes the climate has improved greatly. Staff is much more comfortable having clear expectations. Internal communications have also improved as a result of weekly meetings with key personnel. They in turn communicate with staff they supervise and having knowledge of weekly goals and expectations is very important.

The first section would not allow me to put in # of years in the school - values to 13 only it stated (?) - I am completing my 18th year with my school (Founder). As much as I would love to find time to network with other leaders, there is NEVER time and this has not changed over the years but I have become much more efficient at multi-tasking!

I would love to receive information from your study when it is finished my email is [REDACTED] * is that possible?

There are areas of this survey that would have made sense for other staff to complete (lead teachers, school director) as we have distributed responsibilities more horizontally, rather than having all areas of leadership go through one individual (me).

Our school's leadership structure is inadequate. I highly advocate moving from a single director to an executive director and principal.

* Identifying information removed.

Appendix B – Introductory email

From: Leslie Hittner [lhittner@hbc.com]

Sent: Friday, May 25, 2012 9:49 PM

To: Survey List

Subject: Administering Charter Schools in Minnesota: What Does It Take?

Dear Charter School Administrator:

As a part of my Education Specialist Degree at Winona State University, I am conducting a research study designed to help me to understand how leadership in Minnesota charter schools differs from more traditional leadership in conventional public schools. Little is known about the needs of Minnesota charter school leaders. This leaves educational leadership programs in the dark when it comes to meeting those needs.

Because the requirement to provide annual professional development plans for non-licensed charter school leaders in the 2009 charter school law was a compromise, it is reasonable to assume that it is only a matter of time before the political need for accountability will lead to a license requirement for charter school leaders. If so, it is vital for Minnesota charter schools to ensure that such administrative licensure requirements meet the needs of their unique school environments.

Please read the attached consent form and then click or copy and past the following link into your web browser to complete the survey.

https://winona.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_eWLciSKKRmWdl3K

Note: Completing this survey should take no more than 30 minutes of your time.

The survey will close on Monday June 11, 2012.

Thanks for taking this survey.

Leslie Hittner

No virus found in this message.

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Version: 2012.0.2177 / Virus Database: 2425/5053 - Release Date: 06/06/12

Appendix C – IRB Consent Form

Dear Charter School Leader:

This research study is designed to help me to understand how leadership in Minnesota charter schools differs from more traditional principal leadership in conventional public schools. While charter leaders' needs in several other states have been studied, there is currently little known about the needs of Minnesota charter school leaders. This leaves educational leadership programs in the dark when it comes to meeting those needs for Minnesota charter school leaders. In a recent discussion with Eugene Piccolo of the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools, he stated that the push to require charter school administrators to be licensed comes up in the state legislature almost every year. The requirement to provide annual professional development plans for non-licensed charter school leaders in the 2009 charter school law was indeed a compromise. It is reasonable to assume that it is only a matter of time before the political need for accountability will lead to a license requirement for charter school leaders. If so, it is vital for Minnesota charter schools to ensure that such administrative licensure requirements meet the needs of their unique school environments.

Participation will require approximately 30 minutes. There are no appreciable risks or benefits from participating in this study. No identifying information will be collected. Participating is voluntary and you may stop participating at any time. If you agree to participate, responding to the questions constitutes your consent. If you have any questions, contact Leslie Hittner at 507-313-8217 (email: lhittner09@winona.edu), Field Study Advisor George Morrow (507) 457-5346 (email: gmorrow@winona.edu), or the Human Protections Administrator Nancy Kay Peterson at 507-457-5519. This project has been reviewed by the WSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects.

This survey contains five sets of questions:

6. Director's Background: This section asks for general information about your background and professional training.
7. School Governance: This section asks for details about your school and its management and administration.
8. Work of the Director and Other School Leaders: This section asks for your thoughts about your role and the role of others in the day-to-day operation of the school.
9. Future Leadership: This section asks for general information about the leadership plans for the school.
10. Demographic Information: This section asks for your general demographic information.

There is space provided at the end of the survey for you to describe important leadership topics that you believe this survey has not adequately captured.



4/27/12

Appendix D – Survey as Presented With Responses

Last Modified: 05/24/2012

This is a survey of Minnesota charter school administrators. This first section asks some general questions about this charter school where you currently work and your professional background.

1. Is this charter school a newly created school or was it a type of pre-existing school? (“Pre-existing” means the charter school was originally a public or private school, or part of a public or private school)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	This is a newly created charter school		18	82%
2	This charter school converted from a pre-existing public or private school		4	18%
	Total		22	100%

2. Since this school opened or converted to a charter school, how many directors has it had, including you?

Text Response
3, 1, 5, 1, 1, 5, 2, 1, 2, 3, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 2, 2, 4, 2, 1, 1, 4



3. In what year did this school start providing instruction as a public charter school?

Text Response
2004, 2000, 2003, 2008, 1993, 2003, 2002, 2011, 2004, 1995, 2006, 2003, 2008, 2005, 2004, 2008, 2007, 2003, 1998, 2003, 2009, 1999

4. What is your formal title in your school (e.g., Director, Head of School, etc.)?

Text Response
School Administrator, director, Interim director, Director, Executive Director, Executive Director, Director, Head of School, Executive Director, Director, Executive Director, Executive Director, Director, Director, Executive Director, Executive Director, Director, Director Director, Director, Executive Director, Director

5. Which of the following categories best describes your administrative license status?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Have never been a licensed administrator.		8	38%
2	Currently a licensed administrator in Minnesota		13	62%
3	Administrative license is currently expired		0	0%
4	Administrative license is from another state		0	0%
	Total		21	100%

6. PRIOR to this school year (2011-2012), how many years have you served as the director of THIS school?

Text Response

0, 11, 1, 3, 13, 2, 7, 0, 1, 2, 10, 6, 3, 2, 7, 2, 3, 3, 4, 5, 1, 1

7. PRIOR to this school year (2011-2012), how many years have you served as the director of THIS OR ANY OTHER school (including charter, public, or private schools)?

Text Response

10, 11, 14, 15, 0, 2, 0, 6, 2, 10, 0, 8, 4, 7, 2, 0, 3, 4, 0, 4, 0,

8. Indicate your most recent professional position prior to your current position. (Select one)

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Principal of traditional public school	1	5%
2	Director of another charter school	3	14%
3	Assistant principal or other administrator in a traditional public school	2	9%
4	Assistant principal/director or other administrator in THIS charter school	2	9%
5	Assistant principal/director or other administrator in another charter school	0	0%
6	Teacher in a traditional public school	2	9%
7	Teacher in THIS charter school	4	18%
8	Teacher in another charter school	0	0%
9	Worked in or led a community-based non profit	1	5%
10	Worked in or led a business	1	5%
11	Self-employed	0	0%
12	Other (List)	6	27%
	Total	22	100%

Other (List)

Supt of schools; Principal private school; Director of private school; Prog. Coord in an ALC; Consultant, CEO of Designs for Learning; Principal private school

9. Indicate all other professional positions you have held. (Select all that apply)

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Principal of traditional public school	1	5%
2	Director of another charter school	3	14%
3	Assistant principal or other administrator in a traditional public school	3	14%
4	Assistant principal/director or other administrator in THIS charter school	1	5%
5	Assistant principal/director or other administrator in another charter school	0	0%
6	Teacher in a traditional public school	11	52%
7	Teacher in THIS charter school	5	24%
8	Teacher in another charter school	1	5%
9	Worked in or led a community-based non profit	2	10%
10	Worked in or led a business	4	19%
11	Self-employed	3	14%
12	Other (List):	9	43%

Other (List):

Military- USN; Supt of schools; Principal at private high school; teacher, private school; Teacher private school; Teacher in private school; Prog. Coord in ALC; VP Student Services, Dean of Student in Private College; teacher in private school





10. What is the HIGHEST degree you have earned? (Select one)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	High school diploma		0	0%
2	Associate Degree		0	0%
3	Bachelor's Degree		1	5%
4	Master's Degree		3	14%
5	Master's Degree + 30 credits (including Educational Specialist)		12	55%
6	PhD		0	0%
7	EdD		3	14%
8	Law Degree (JD)		0	0%
9	Other (List):		3	14%
	Total		22	100%

Other (List):

Montessori Teaching Diploma, Association Montessori Internationale; MA and 6th year certification; ABD








11. In what field did you earn this highest degree? (Select one)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Education		18	82%
2	Business		0	0%
3	Humanities (e.g. History, English, Fine Arts)		1	5%
4	Social Science (e.g. Economics, Political Science, Psychology)		0	0%
5	Science (e.g. Biology, Chemistry, Medicine)		2	9%
6	Other (List):		1	5%
	Total		22	100%

Other (List):




Theology

12. Have you ever taken any university or college courses in the following areas? (Select all that apply)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Education Leadership		17	81%
2	Curriculum & Instruction		19	90%
3	Education Law		14	67%
4	Non-Profit Management		5	24%
5	Business Management		3	14%
6	Child Development		13	62%
7	Other (List):		5	24%

Other (List):
 Accounting/Mathematics; none; None; Adult Development, Organizational Change; stem

13. Have you ever taken any courses from the following non-certification leadership programs? (Select all that apply)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Building Excellent Schools		0	0%
2	New Leaders for New Schools		1	25%
3	KIPP Leadership Training		0	0%
4	Edison Leadership Training		0	0%
5	Arizona University – LEE Program		1	25%
6	Other (List):		2	50%

Other (List):
 None; None

14. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how your prior experience and training prepared you for your current position?







#	Question	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Experience	n	Mean
1	Your experience or training in financial management prepared you for your current position.	10	7	1	2	2	22	2.05
2	Your experience or training in organization management prepared you for your current position.	12	6	1	0	3	22	1.91
3	Your experience or training in curriculum and instruction prepared you for your current position.	10	9	1	0	2	22	1.86
4	Your experience or training in non-profit fundraising prepared you for your current position.	4	9	2	5	2	22	2.64
5	Your experience or training in local politics or community organizations prepared you for your current position	2	11	2	1	6	22	2.91
6	Your experience living in this school's community prepared you for your current position.	6	11	1	1	3	22	2.27

15. How did you find out about your current position at your school? (Select all that apply)

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Contacted by a recruiter	2	9%
2	Read a classified advertisement	8	36%
3	Worked in this school when the position became available	4	18%
4	Personally contacted by the board or former director	4	18%
5	Personally contacted by other charter school staff	5	23%
6	Personally contacted by community members	3	14%
7	Founded the school	4	18%
8	Other (Describe):	0	0%

Other (Describe):

16. What most satisfies you about being director of this school? (Select one)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Your passion for the school mission		10	45%
2	The autonomy you get by leading a charter school		3	14%
3	A commitment to educating the kinds of students served by the school		1	5%
4	The collegiality you experience with school staff		2	9%
5	The location of the school is attractive		0	0%
6	The chance to grow an organization		3	14%
7	Other (Describe):		3	14%
	Total		22	100%

Other (Describe):

seeing the students succeed; offering an educational choice to students in this area; All of the above!

17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the school's board of directors as they relate to your school.

#	Question	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Responses	Mean
1	Sets a clear mission for the school	11	8	2	0	21	1.57
2	Holds high expectations for the school	13	7	1	0	21	1.43
3	Directs instructional programs	2	2	8	9	21	3.14
4	Plays an active role in developing new sources of revenue	2	7	7	5	21	2.71
5	Allows you to use your judgment to make important managerial decisions	15	4	0	2	21	1.48
6	Conducts strategic planning for the school	11	7	2	1	21	1.67
7	Plans for leadership transition	4	8	5	4	21	2.43
8	Buffers you and your staff from politics and controversies	2	7	8	4	21	2.67
9	Provides you with valuable feedback for improving the school	4	12	4	1	21	2.10
10	Provides technical assistance	2	8	4	7	21	2.76

18. Is your school managed by an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or Charter Management Organization (CMO)?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes (Continue with Question 19)		0	0%
2	No (Go to Question 20)		21	100%
	Total		21	100%

19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the school’s Educational Management Organization/Charter Management Organization (EMO/CMO) as they relate to your school.

#	Question	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Responses	Mean
1	Sets a clear mission for the school	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
2	Holds high expectations for the school	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
3	Directs instructional programs	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
4	Plays an active role in developing new sources of revenue	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
5	Allows you to use your judgment to make important managerial decisions	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
6	Conducts strategic planning for the school	0	0	0	0	0	0.00

7	Plans for leadership transition	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
8	Buffers you and your staff from politics and controversies	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
9	Provides you with valuable feedback for improving the school	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
10	Provides technical assistance	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
11	Provides professional development	0	0	0	0	0	0.00

Next, we ask about your work and the work of others leading your school.

20. How many total hours do you spend on ALL school-related activities for this school during a TYPICAL FULL WEEK?

Text Response
 30; 45; 50; 60; 80; 60; 65; 55; 55; 45; 60; 55; 70; 80; 50; 50;50; 50

21. What % of the hours listed above do you spend on the following:

Default - Instructional Leadership (Classroom observations, modeling teaching practice, supervising curriculum, meeting with instructional teams, and assuring quality of teaching resources)

%
 22; 10; 20; 25; 15; 5; 40; 5; 10; 0; 5; 5; 0; 10; 5; 8; 10; 4

Default - Promoting School Culture (Leading or organizing celebrations or school traditions.)

%
 8; 5 ; 5; 4; 5; 5; 5; 5; 5; 10; 5; 0; 10; 0; 5; 4; 5; 10;

Default - Financial Management (Managing the school budget, fundraising)

%
10; 10; 15; 25; 20; 10; 10; 15; 20; 40; 5; 5; 5; 15; 15; 6; 35; 5

Default - Organizational Management (The school schedule, enrollment, facilities, safety and security, student discipline, and transportation)

%
25; 15; 30; 5; 10; 25; 10; 45; 18; 10; 5; 25; 10; 30; 45; 21; 25; 5;

Default - Human Resources (Recruiting, hiring, firing, inducting, and mentoring teachers and administrators; developing leadership capacity and professional development opportunities)

%
12; 15; 20; 10; 10; 25; 5; 5; 10; 10; 5; 25; 10; 20; 5; 2; 10; 5

Default - Strategic Planning (Developing a school improvement plan, including a vision, mission, and goals)

%
2; 15; 5; 1; 5; 5; 5; 5; 5; 5; 0; 0; 25; 10; 10; 1; 5; 2

Default - Public Relations (Representing the school in the community, public relations, recruiting students, dealing with the school's parent groups, authorizer, district, board of trustees, or EMO/CMO, and advocating for the school's interests)

%
1; 25; 0; 5; 10; 5; 5; 15; 2; 15; 60; 10; 15; 25; 10; 3; 5; 15

Default - Staff/Student/Family Politics (Resolving internal disputes among the staff and building staff, student, and family morale and loyalty)

%

40; 5; 5; 25; 25; 5; 20; 5; 30; 10; 15; 30; 25; 20; 5; 5; 5; 1

%

5; 3

Other (Describe):

legislative issues and communications

22. Should the amount of time you spend be:

#	Question	Less	Same	More	Responses	Mean
1	Instructional Leadership (Classroom observations, modeling teaching practice, supervising curriculum, meeting with instructional teams, and assuring quality of teaching resources)	0	3	15	18	2.83
2	Promoting School Culture (Leading or organizing celebrations or school traditions.)	0	13	5	18	2.28
3	Financial Management (Managing the school budget, fundraising)	1	14	3	18	2.11
4	Organizational Management (The school schedule, enrollment, facilities, safety and security, student discipline, and transportation)	4	14	0	18	1.78
5	Human Resources (Recruiting, hiring, firing, inducting, and mentoring teachers and administrators; developing leadership capacity and professional development opportunities)	1	11	6	18	2.28
6	Strategic Planning (Developing a school improvement plan, including a vision, mission, and goals)	0	5	13	18	2.72
7	Public Relations (Representing the school in the community, public relations, recruiting students, dealing with the school's parent groups, authorizer, district, board of trustees, or EMO/CMO, and advocating for the school's interests)	2	7	9	18	2.39
8	Staff/Student/Family Politics (Resolving internal disputes among the staff and building staff, student, and family morale and loyalty)	8	9	1	18	1.61
9	Other (Describe):	0	2	0	2	2.00

Other (Describe):

legislative issues and communications

23. To what extent is each of the following organizational issues a problem at your school?

#	Question	Very Serious Problem	Somewhat Serious Problem	Somewhat Minor Problem	Not a Problem	Responses	Mean
1	Attracting students	2	5	3	9	19	3.00
2	Attracting qualified teachers	1	4	7	7	19	3.05
3	Working with your board of trustees	2	1	6	10	19	3.26
4	Acquiring or managing facilities	1	3	4	11	19	3.32
5	Raising funds or managing finances	1	8	5	5	19	2.74
6	Maintaining the focus of the school's mission	0	3	5	11	19	3.42
7	Engaging parents	4	4	9	2	19	2.47
8	Negotiating with district and traditional public schools	1	2	5	11	19	3.37
9	Complying/reporting on state or federal laws and requirements	0	0	9	10	19	3.53

25. How confident do you feel in your ability to perform each of the following tasks effectively?

#	Question	Very Confident	Mostly Confident	Slightly Confident	Not at All Confident	Does Not Apply	Responses	Mean
1	Engage staff to work toward a common vision	11	7	0	0	0	18	1.39
2	Engage parents to work toward a common vision	4	10	4	0	0	18	2.00
3	Attract talented teachers	6	11	1	0	0	18	1.72
4	Retain talented teachers	5	11	2	0	0	18	1.83
5	Develop a talented faculty	4	11	2	0	0	17	1.88
6	Develop leadership within the school	8	7	2	1	0	18	1.78
7	Delegate or share responsibility	8	8	2	0	0	18	1.67
8	Lead school-wide literacy and math initiatives	2	7	8	0	1	18	2.50
9	Facilitate staff to work toward whole-school improvement	4	10	4	0	0	18	2.00
10	Implement of a long-range strategic plan	7	6	4	1	0	18	1.94
11	Manage budget, aligning resources with instructional improvement	9	7	2	0	0	18	1.61
12	Manage school operations effectively	10	8	0	0	0	18	1.44

13	Foster a safe, student-centered learning environment	6	11	0	0	1	18	1.83
14	Establish high expectations for students	6	10	1	0	1	18	1.89
15	Seek critical feedback from peers	4	9	5	0	0	18	2.06

26. How important do you find the following sources of advice or assistance in helping you meet the challenges of your job:

#	Question	Very Important	Mostly Important	Slightly Important	Not Important	Does Not Apply	Responses	Mean
1	Informal meetings with other charter school directors	5	7	5	1	0	18	2.11
2	State charter association events or networks	1	7	6	4	0	18	2.72
3	Resource centers/ technical assistance providers in my state	0	5	9	4	0	18	2.94
4	Formal networks of similar schools (e.g. Coalition of Essential Schools, Core Knowledge, KIPP, Edison, Montessori)	2	2	6	5	3	18	3.28
5	Meeting with my school's authorizer	5	3	9	1	0	18	2.33
6	National charter school conference	1	1	10	5	1	18	3.22
7	Other (Describe):	2	1	0	0	0	3	1.33

Other (Describe):
scholarly articles
Business environment
Consultants

The next section asks about plans for leadership succession in your school.

27. If/when you leave your current position, what do you expect to do? (Check One)

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Work as a director in another charter school	3	16%
2	Work as a principal in a traditional public school	3	16%
3	Work as a teacher in this or another school	0	0%
4	Work in education administration at the district or state level	1	5%
5	Continue to work, but leave the field of education	2	11%
6	Retire	3	16%
7	Other (Describe):	7	37%
	Total	19	100%



Other (Describe):
retire but support my school in the area of Development as no time now for it
admin in private schools
Train teachers
teach at university
Take an indefinite leave but probably continue working at some point; field to be determined.
Retire; but consult in sped
CEO, Designs for Learning Consulting Firm

Last, we ask about demographic information.



28. In what year were you born?

Text Response
1943; 1951; 1956; 1951; 1973; 1971; 1976; 1947; 1945; 1972; 1966; 1962; 1960; 1972; 1963; 1962; 1951; 1984



29. Are you male or female?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Female		13	72%
2	Male		5	28%
	Total		18	100%

30. Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		1	6%
2	No		17	94%
	Total		18	100%

31. What is your race? (Check All That Apply)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	White		17	94%
2	Black or African American		0	0%
3	Asian		0	0%
4	American Indian or Alaska Native		0	0%
5	Other (List):		1	6%

Other (List):

Latino

32. If there is anything else about the topics in this survey you would like to share with me, please feel free to comment here:

Text Response

Hittner –Identifican of survey taken by author.

I have found that this school lacked clear processes and procedures that were predictable and repeatable on routine activities. That created high uncertainty. As we have developed these processes the climate has improved greatly. Staff is much more comfortable having clear expectations. Internal communications have also improved as a result of weekly meetings with key personnel. They in turn communicate with staff they supervise and having knowledge of weekly goals and expectations is very important.

The first section would not allow me to put in # of years in the school - values to 13 only it stated (?) - I am completing my 18th year with my school (Founder). As much as I would love to find time to network with other leaders, there is NEVER time and this has not changed over the years but I have become much more efficient at multi-tasking!

I would love to receive information from your study when it is finished my email is [REDACTED] is that possible?

There are areas of this survey that would have made sense for other staff to complete (lead teachers, school director) as we have distributed responsibilities more horizontally, rather than having all areas of leadership go through one individual (me).

Our school's leadership structure is inadequate. I highly advocate moving from a single director to an executive director and principal.

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* identifying information removed.