Segregated by choice, charters face a test  
BEENA RAGHAVENDRAN; MARYJO WEBSTER; STAFF WRITERS  
Publication Date: November 30, 2015  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
State weighs whether to include charters in integration plan

Charter schools struggle to meet academic goals // Analysis shows widening gap between success of white, minority students  
KIM MCGUIRE; GLENN HOWATT; STAFF WRITERS  
Publication Date: February 17, 2015  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Students in most Minnesota charter schools are failing to hit learning targets and are not achieving adequate academic growth, according to a Star Tribune analysis of school performance data.

In charter schools, a lesson in compromise // Is that a time long gone? Well, consider the stadium legislation.  
LORI STURDEVANT; STAFF WRITER  
Publication Date: June 24, 2012  Page: 01OP  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Wherever Ember Reichgott Junge appeared Wednesday at the big National Charter Schools Conference at the Minneapolis Convention Center, a crowd gathered.  
The former DFL state senator is a rock star among the nation's charter-schoolers. Deservedly so: She shepherded the first-in-the-nation state authority to create charter schools into the statute books in 1991, and has recently written a fine book, "Zero Chance of Passage: The Pioneering Charter School Story," about how it was done.

closing the gap: Minnesota’s chronic classroom struggle // Harvest Prep founder engineers school success // Minnesota's chronic classroom struggle Eric Mahmoud has erased the achievement gap at his charter schools on Minneapolis' North Side. Former engineer Eric Mahmoud has spent 20 years refining his charter school into a model of education reform.  
CURT BROWN; STAFF WRITER  
Publication Date: March 24, 2012  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Eric Mahmoud strides through the halls of a once-vacant north Minneapolis nursing home he converted 20 years ago into a beehive of educational reform. He greets the uniformed Harvest Preparatory Academy children with a "What's up, scholars?"

Charter schools risk closure // Dozens of schools don't have long to find authorizers required under new law.  
SARAH LEMAGIE; STAFF WRITER  
Publication Date: February 2, 2011  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Dozens of Minnesota charter schools face an uncertain future -- and some could be forced to close this summer -- as they adapt to a 2009 law designed to tighten supervision of their innovative programs.

Charters face higher standards // Minneapolis increases scrutiny of schools as a U.S. study finds the state's lowest performers resist change.  
COREY MITCHELL; STAFF WRITER  
Publication Date: January 3, 2011  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
As parents clapped and teachers cheered, students sang a medley of holiday favorites.  
The Friendship Academy of Fine Arts "family" was packed into the church basement that doubles as the school's cafeteria and auditorium for "Winter Wonderland," a year-end holiday showcase.  
But the festive mood belied a palpable tension at the south Minneapolis charter school. Students and staff expect to learn in less than four months whether their school will cease to exist.

Pulling plug on charter schools // A new law is leading school districts - and state education department - to cut charter ties .  
GREGORY A. PATTERSON; STAFF WRITER  
Publication Date: March 29, 2010  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
A new state law intended to strengthen charter schools is driving a wedge between them and traditional school districts.  
School districts from Winona to Hopkins to Waseca have helped guide charter schools, but now are preparing to sever those connections, saying they need to focus time and attention on their own schools.

CHARTER SCHOOLS: A fruitful endeavor? // BUT: // The ideals set forth when charter schools were formed are not being met today. Here's a better way.  
TOM DOOHER  
Publication Date: January 10, 2010  Page: 01OP  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Let me set the record straight: Education Minnesota is not "against" charter schools. We support anything that is proven to help kids learn. If the teachers, principals and staff at any school come up with an innovation that increases student achievement, we want to know about it, and we want to figure out how other Minnesota schools can adapt it to help their own students.

CHARTER SCHOOLS: A fruitful endeavor? // YES: // This idea is popular because it allows innovation that produces results -- with accountability.  
JOE NATHAN  
Publication Date: January 10, 2010  Page: 01OP  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Why have families seeking more-individualized education helped triple enrollment in Minnesota chartered public schools in the last seven years? Why has President Obama -- like the last three presidents, Democrat and Republican -- regarded the charter-school idea as an important part of improving public education? Finally, what legislative changes are needed to deal with errors and mistakes?

Charters pitch broad reform on lease aid // An advocate for charter schools said the state needs to work much harder to prevent abuses.  
TONY KENNEDY; STAFF WRITER  
Publication Date: December 18, 2009  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Minnesota should rework its financial support of charter schools to prevent abuse and self-dealing by insiders and to stop traditional school districts from hoarding unused school buildings, a leading advocate of charter schools said Thursday.

Lawmakers target charter school rules // A state law forbidding such schools from owning property has led to abuse, its critics say.  
TONY KENNEDY; STAFF WRITER  
Publication Date: December 2, 2009  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Minnesota lawmakers will begin probing the use of state lease aid money that charter schools have used to fuel a building spree paid for with high-cost junk bonds.  
To curtail "abuse" of the fast-growing program, lawmakers will begin a series of hearings next week aimed at tightening controls and reducing costs for charter school projects, Sen. Kathy Saltzman, D-Woodbury, announced Tuesday.

Charter program is 'OUT OF CONTROL' // Junk bonds fuel a building spree, but schools are more crowded, insiders are taking fees, and state regulators can't do much about it.  
TONY KENNEDY; STAFF WRITER A star tribune investigation  
Publication Date: November 29, 2009  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Minnesota's charter school movement, which sparked a national rethinking of public schooling nearly two decades ago, has been infected by an out-of-control financing system fueled by junk bonds, insider fees and lax oversight.

As charter schools grow in suburbs, critics raise red flags // Concerns about segregation and unequal opportunities grow as charter schools flourish outside the urban core.  
GREGORY A. PATTERSON; STAFF WRITER  
Publication Date: September 16, 2009  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
The Math and Science Academy in Woodbury has become known as a  
successful charter school that serves up a specific curriculum to  
students with a technical bent since opening at the beginning of  
this decade. In Eden Prairie, Eagle Ridge Academy is developing a  
reputation for its classical education, and in Bloomington, Beacon  
Preparatory School is trying to do the same thing.

BACK TO SCHOOL // Charter schools feel the pinch // With larger amounts of money deferred by the state, cash flow issues are seeping into day-to-day operations at charter schools.  
NORMAN DRAPER; STAFF WRITER  
Publication Date: September 7, 2009  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
At Minnesota New Country School in Henderson, teachers might vote  
to reduce their pay. In a real pinch, they might even vote to  
reduce their ranks.

WHAT IF TEACHERS RAN THE SCHOOLS? // It's being dubbed as the biggest education reform since charter schools. But will school districts really be able to relinquish control?  
EMILY JOHNS; STAFF WRITER  
Publication Date: August 4, 2009  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Minneapolis is pursuing an education strategy this summer that is  
a first for Minnesota: It is asking teachers if they want to run a  
school.  
Under a new state law, teachers can spearhead the creation of  
charter-like schools, but under the school district's umbrella.  
Already being tried in several other states, it's an idea that grew  
out of the frustration that many schools serving poor students are  
struggling academically.

STANDARDS IN EDUCATION // THE REINS GET TIGHTER FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS // New regulations aim to clean up sloppy operations at some specialty schools.  
SARAH LEMAGIE; STAFF WRITER  
Publication Date: June 4, 2009  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
The case of a Minneapolis charter school whose former director  
allegedly embezzled nearly $1.4 million is just one example of the  
problems lawmakers hope to squelch with new rules about how charter  
schools are overseen.  
As the schools reach new heights of popularity in Minnesota,  
they'll also find themselves under closer scrutiny, thanks to the  
biggest overhaul in the way the schools are regulated since the  
state became the first to pass a charter school law in 1991.

CHARTERS IN FOR CHANGE // As interest in the independently run but publicly funded schools explodes, so does legislators' desire to monitor them more closely.  
Sarah Lemagie; Norman Draper; Staff Writers  
Publication Date: February 7, 2009  Page: 01B  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Charter schools were a key part of Minnesota's trendsetting  
school-change innovations of decades past. Now, they are headed for  
some changes of their own.

**CORRECTION PUBLISHED 11/27/08: The explanation accompanying a chart on the academic performance of charter schools was incorrect. The chart showed the percentage of schools -- not students -- that performed better than expected giving the poverty rate.**   
CHOICES IN EDUCATION // Charter schools fall short // A study says charter schools don't perform as well as comparable district schools and are more segregated.  
EMILY JOHNS; PATRICE RELERFORD; STAFF WRITERS  
Publication Date: November 26, 2008  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
When charter schools started in Minnesota in the early 1990s,  
they were touted as a higher-quality alternative for parents,  
particularly poor and minority families, looking to escape  
underperforming district schools.

BACK TO SCHOOL // CHANGING EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM // Choice has a hold in state // Students and parents seeking the best fit fuel a movement.  
James Walsh; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: September 6, 2005  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
It was two days before the start of school and Teri Wilkins and  
her children, ninth-grader Brian and seventh-grader Emily, were  
pitching in at Math and Science Academy in Woodbury. Mainly, the  
kids were figuring out how to use a cordless drill to assemble a  
table. Mom was doing whatever was needed: answering phones, guiding  
visitors, cleaning up.

BACK TO SCHOOL // SUBURBAN CHARTER SCHOOLS // New frontier for charter schools // Once mainly urban or rural, more are opening in Twin Cities suburbs - and attracting students from other schools.  
Norman Draper; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: September 5, 2004  Page: 01B  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Charter schools have burst onto their final frontier: the  
suburbs.  
For years, they stayed largely close to the inner city or far  
outstate. Just a few were sprinkled around the Twin Cities suburbs.  
It used to be that charters catered to those kids who were toughest  
to teach in the traditional classroom. Many of their students were  
poor.  
Not anymore.

How best to grade charter schools? // Few charters outperform traditional schools on state tests. Advocates say tests aren't the truest measure.  
James Walsh; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: June 9, 2003  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Twelve years after Minnesota approved the country's first charter  
school and set off a national movement, there is little hard  
evidence that charter school students are doing better than  
students in traditional public schools.  
A Star Tribune analysis of state test scores found only a few  
charter schools that outperform traditional schools.

Charter school report identifies money problems  
Anthony Lonetree; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: May 11, 2003  Page: 01B  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Three years into a public crusade, House Minority Leader Matt  
Entenza is renewing claims of fiscal mismanagement by many of the  
schools within the state's pioneering charter-school movement.  
New to his complaints, however, is evidence of document shredding  
by a Minneapolis charter school.

Losing out to charter schools // Traditional public schools in Minneapolis are losing both students and money as the movement flourishes.  
Allie Shah; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: January 28, 2003  Page: 01B  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Row after row they stand, the uniformed students at Sojourner  
Truth Academy, a charter school bursting at the seams in north  
Minneapolis.  
Those rows of fresh faces at a recent school assembly represent a  
new challenge for Minneapolis' public schools. The growing  
popularity of charter schools is one of the factors fueling a $28.6  
million budget problem for the Minneapolis School District. State  
funding for schools is meted out on a per-pupil basis, so when  
traditional schools lose students to charter schools, the money  
goes with them.

Thriving charter school has a culture all its own // Innovation is the norm at teacher-run New Country, which is ready to share what it's learned.  
Duchesne Paul Drew; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: May 21, 2001  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Like karaoke singing and online shopping, the Minnesota New  
Country School has a devoted following, but it's not for everyone.  
Students decide what they'll study. Teachers are coaches, not  
lecturers. And a typical day looks nothing like it does at  
traditional schools.  
After seven years in business, New Country has become one of the  
nation's best-known charter schools. Now it's poised to spread its  
lessons of school innovation across and beyond Minnesota.

A call to act on charter school woes // A legislator's report warns of severe financial problems and possible mismanagement.  
Duchesne Paul Drew; Anthony Lonetree; Staff Writers  
Publication Date: February 7, 2001  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Minnesota's charter-school movement will fail unless the state  
requires tighter financial oversight, according to Rep. Matt  
Entenza, who on Tuesday released a long list of financial problems  
found in charter-school records.

Charter schools face a tougher test // As the costs of Minnesota's 10-year experiment grow, all involved lean toward better monitoring.  
Duchesne Paul Drew; Anthony Lonetree; Staff Writers  
Publication Date: January 9, 2001  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
  
Minnesota's charter-school law is in for another retooling.  
After a year in which two St. Paul charter schools were shut down  
because of serious financial mismanagement, school sponsors and  
policymakers are taking a harder look at the experimental schools.  
Some of the revelations are alarming:

Charter schools feeling the heat to make the grade // More sponsors in the Twin Cities and elsewhere are telling unsuccessful schools to improve or shut down.  
Duchesne Paul Drew; Mary Jane Smetanka; Staff Writers  
Publication Date: June 19, 2000  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Practice time is over for Minnesota charter schools.  
Almost 10 years into the charter-schools movement, many  
established schools have had time to get their acts together. And  
if they haven't, their sponsors are starting to ask why.

CLINTON VISITS THE TWIN CITIES // President plugs charter school // He laid out his education agenda at the pioneering City Academy and held an online chat session.  
Allie Shah; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: May 5, 2000  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
President Clinton, in his visit Thursday to St. Paul's City  
Academy charter school, praised Minnesota for leading the charter  
school movement and pledged to increase support for more such  
schools nationwide.  
"Minnesota is about to become Lake Wobegon, where all the  
children are above average," he said.  
His appearance at City Academy, located in the Wilder Recreation  
Center on St. Paul's East Side, also coincided with the first  
National Charter Schools Week, which ends today.

A new direction for schools // Charter schools began in Minnesota as an alternative for kids who were struggling in traditional settings. Now these locally run schools are multiplying and attracting children from all ability levels.  
Allie Shah; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: August 29, 1999  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
With the opening of school this fall, the charter-school  
experiment in Minnesota enters a new phase.  
Stoked by parents' desires for something better and strengthened  
by changes in the law, the number of charter schools will grow to  
54. And unlike years past, the student body promises to be  
dramatically different.

Minnesota's charter school concept wins a crucial vote // The State Board of Education's approval of 7 new experimental public schools is viewed as a vote of confidence for the movement, which began in this state.  
Rob Hotakainen; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: July 8, 1998  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Minnesota's fledgling charter-school movement got a major boost  
Tuesday when the State Board of Education voted to approve seven of  
the new experimental public schools.  
In 1991, Minnesota became the first state in the nation to  
allow the experimental schools, but development has moved slowly  
compared to progress in some other states: Only 27 are operating.  
But that pace now will quicken considerably. Ten new charter schools  
are set to open this fall, and Tuesday's vote assures that others  
soon will follow. By the fall of 1999, at least 41 of the schools  
are expected to be running in Minnesota, according to the state  
Department of Children, Families and Learning.

`U' group that supports charter schools says they appear to be improving pupils' test performance  
Publication Date: March 16, 1998  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
A report to be released today by a group that supports charter  
schools says that most of the best such schools it surveyed met, and  
sometimes surpassed, their promises to raise academic achievement.  
The Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota's  
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs examined 31 top charter  
schools, which are public institutions typically run by community  
groups or teachers and given the freedom to tailor curriculum  
outside the control of a local school district.

Charter schools face uphill battle // Independent schools hurt by tight funding, study finds  
Mary Jane Smetanka; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: February 11, 1997  Page: 01B  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Parents and students are happy with Minnesota's charter  
schools, but so far the independent public schools are not the  
models of results-oriented education that supporters hoped they  
would be, a new study shows.  
In a much-anticipated University of Minnesota study released  
Monday, researchers confirmed what charter school teachers have long  
said: that tight funding, teacher overwork and lack of state  
resources combine to give charter schools an uphill struggle.

**Published 04/27/96: To clarify this article, a school can apply to the State Board of Education for a charter after it is refused by a school board and has received at least two favorable votes from board members.**   
Pioneering schools learn tough lessons // CHARTER SCHOOLS // Five years later // Minnesota's charter schools were supposed to be the laboratories where new education models would be tested. But most look a lot like regular schools. Nevertheless, they are surviving - and changing the lives of many children.  
Mary Jane Smetanka; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: April 25, 1996  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Three years ago, Cedar-Riverside Community School was a  
beautiful dream, a place where poor children and kids who didn't  
speak English could grow and thrive in the cultural rainbow of their  
Minneapolis neighborhood.  
Today, the names on the kindergarten wall show a vision  
fulfilled: Lauren and Abdikadar go to school there, as do Ju Won,  
Taleisha, Hibo and Mohamed.  
But getting to this day was an ordeal the charter school's  
founders never dreamed of: 80-hour work weeks, the strain of  
managing classrooms, administration and finances at the same time,  
having to confront sticky personnel problems. Not to mention  
teaching. But they persevered. "We're through the terrible twos,"  
said teacher Kathryn Hartman. "We've made incredible progress and we  
all have a much better idea what we got ourselves into."

Public school choice in trouble // Programs hurt by enrollment  
Mary Jane Smetanka; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: September 5, 1995  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
On paper, Minnesotans have the biggest, best school-choice  
system in the country.  
Students can pick their public school, even if it's outside  
their district. High school students can go to college at the  
state's expense. Dropouts and adults can return to school to get  
their high school diplomas, and teachers who tire of fighting red  
tape can start independent charter schools.  
But as public schools open their doors today for the 1995-96  
school year, the promise of Minnesota's pioneering choice programs  
is being stymied by the realities of tight money and booming  
enrollments.

Report questions whether means justify ends for charter schools  
Mary Jane Smetanka; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: January 18, 1995  Page: 01B  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Minnesota's pioneering charter schools may be free to break new  
educational ground, but their independence also means low teacher  
salaries, transportation problems, problems with accountability and  
sometimes bitter relations with regular school districts.  
These are some of the conclusions of a report released Tuesday  
by the state House of Representatives Research Department. It's the  
first study of charter schools to go to the Legislature since that  
body approved the nation's first charter school legislation in  
1991.

Charter schools working out bugs // At least 4 more to open soon  
Maureen M. Smith; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: August 7, 1994  Page: 01B  Section: NEWS  Edition: ST. PAUL    
After years of classmates mocking her sign language, Pam  
Siebert, 13, finally found a school where deaf students are the  
norm.  
"I would rather go to a school with deaf students," said  
Siebert, who last year started attending the Metro Deaf charter  
school in St. Paul. "At MDS, they give me harder homework, so it's  
more of a challenge for me."  
The charter school experience was less rewarding for Abby  
Beltrame, 10, who last year attended New Heights, a Stillwater  
charter school geared for at-risk students.

Despite obstacles, idealism endures at charter schools  
Mary Jane Smetanka; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: December 30, 1993  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
For a year, Richard Houde taught school in St. Paul during the  
day and spent most of the rest of his time feverishly planning  
charter schools. The chance to help develop innovative programs run  
by teachers and free of almost all state rules was worth it, he  
figured.  
This fall, New Heights Schools Inc. opened schools in  
Stillwater and Minneapolis. And almost immediately, Houde's dream of  
boosting the academics of troubled kids was marred by the messy  
reality of running a school.

State authorizes charter school, first in Twin Cities  
Pat Prince; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: June 9, 1992  Page: 01B  Section: NEWS  Edition: ST. PAUL    
The metropolitan area came one step closer to getting its first  
charter school Monday when the State Board of Education authorized  
the St. Paul school district to enter into a contract with an  
alternative program for drop-outs.  
Called the City Academy, the program hopes to enroll 30  
high-risk youths, ages 13 to 20, who have had unsuccessful  
experiences at traditional and alternative schools. It is modeled  
after a program called Power League that started earlier this year  
with a $30,000 grant from Northern States Power.

Innovative charter schools are running into opposition  
Mary Jane Smetanka; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: March 16, 1992  Page: 01B  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
Minnesota's charter schools were supposed to free teachers and  
parents of school bureaucracy.  
But the bureaucracy isn't willing to let go.  
After fairly speedy local and state approval for the state's  
first two charter schools, in Winona and Toivola-Meadowlands,  
proposals for other schools are running into varying degrees of  
resistance.

Liberated learning // Minnesota is first to give teachers, parents the right to open schools  
Mary Jane Smetanka; Staff Writer  
Publication Date: May 26, 1991  Page: 01A  Section: NEWS  Edition: METRO    
This summer, Minnesota becomes the nation's first state to allow  
teachers to open schools that are designed and run by teachers and  
parents and operate virtually free of school district control.  
Some say the new law allowing up to eight "chartered schools"  
is an educational milestone comparable to Minnesota's approval of  
school choice programs in the 1980s.  
"No other state has anything like it," said Chris Pipho,  
director of state relations for the Education Commission of the  
States in Denver, Colo. "The way the educational world is moving  
toward . . . collaborative decisionmaking, this is the way to go."  
According to supporters, the ideal chartered school would be  
run by parents, teachers, community members or students who decided  
everything from what's studied and how long the school year is to  
where money goes and how much teachers earn. Parents and others  
could teach.



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