

# MN Charter Vision

State Fair Edition 2005

Photo: Metro Deaf Charter School, St. Paul

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online: [www.mnchartervision.org](http://www.mnchartervision.org)



# Nerstrand Elementary Charter School

by Carolyn Treadway, Grant Coordinator

Farmlands stretch for miles outside the windows of Nerstrand Elementary School. One gets the feeling that all is right with the world as such a beautiful area of southeast Minnesota unfolds before your eyes. Visitors to the school quickly discover the beauty of an exceptionally respectful school community inside, as well. A pervasive climate of respect permeates the halls and is evident throughout the day. Students and staff work together in mutually respectful relationships.

Nerstrand School encourages academic, social, and personal

growth in each of its 154 Kindergarten through Grade 5 students. The school’s strong community service program provides opportunities for students to improve in each of these key areas. One hundred percent of Nerstrand’s students participate in school wide service opportunities throughout the year. As a result, students learn civic responsibility and (despite their ages) make significant contributions to the school, the community, and the world.

Ongoing service projects include restoring and reforesting a nearby prairie remnant and deciduous forest; hosting community lunches and elders’ coffees; and making sandwiches for a homeless shelter and

placemats for a children’s hospital.

Students have worked with an adult volunteer through the past five years to plan and develop an International Peace Garden. The representations of England, Mexico, Canada, the U.S., Tanzania, Poland, Japan, China, and Australia grace the school’s courtyard. Recently, a giraffe sculpture representing Kenya was added. The Peace Garden is a reminder that each of us must make a daily commitment to peace-filled relationships and to making the world a better place. As an area in the garden is planned, students do research about the nation. They try to learn what life is like for a child there - the problems they encounter, the foods they eat, the games they play, and so on.

## Achieve Language Academy Turns 10



*Ribbon cutting ceremony at Achieve Language Academy*

by Mary Apuli, Director

This fall Achieve Language Academy begins its tenth year of educating students on St. Paul’s east side.

Born as Acorn Dual Language Academy, Achieve was created by parents and community members in 1996 and began with 136 learners in grades K-6. Its charter was sponsored by the St. Paul Public Schools. Designed to be a school of small class sizes the school especially wanted to attract students whose first language was not English, especially students from the Hmong and Spanish communities.

Today Achieve language Academy begins its tenth year with 400 pre K-8 students in a refurbished and expanded building and a healthy fund balance. Achieve provides students with instruction in Hmong language and culture and Spanish language and culture in all grades, preschool through grade 8. Class sizes are limited to a maximum of 24.

The school is located at 2169 Stillwater Ave., St. Paul.

Our students and their parents have also contributed to a variety of world charities. One particularly memorable effort was collecting food and medical supplies, as well as sewing quilts, for the people of Guatemala.

Our students also honor local residents through service opportunities. Every household in our sleepy, little town receives a colorful May basket containing a warm greeting and a small gift on May Day. In addition, our students and staff recognize two community elders each year by interviewing them about the stories of their lives. From that information, songs are created and performed at a Community Celebration. We’ve learned that even the most “common” among us have dramatic stories to tell - and there’s always a life lesson to be learned from these wise, old people!

Nerstrand students assume some of the responsibility for caring for their school facility in a unique way, too. A group of 18 children volunteer to serve on the work crew each morning. These students, ages

*Nerstrand - Continued on page 9*

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## Great Things Come in Small Class Sizes!



By Kelly Falch & Becky Meyer

The Agricultural and Food Sciences Academy (AFSA) is a 9-12 charter school in Vadnais Heights dedicated to providing high quality education in a small, safe setting. Our niche is agricultural literacy and preparing students for careers in the science, business and technology of Agriculture. (Did you know that more than 18% of all jobs in Minnesota are in Agriculture?) Educational and agricultural professionals who saw a need for an urban, agricultural based school started our school in the fall of 2000. Currently, we offer a rigorous, college-preparatory education focusing on agricultural and food sciences, and we serve a wide variety of students from more than twenty different school districts. About 225 students will attend AFSA this fall.

For the 2005-2006 school year, we are moving into our brand new, state of the art facility located in Vadnais Heights. This custom built 44,000 square foot facility has FOUR science labs which will help prepare our students for careers in agriculture-related areas of: Food Science, Environmental Science, Horticulture/Plant Science, Animal/Vet Science, Mechanical Science or Agricultural Business. Our new building will also have a wood and metal working shop and greenhouse to help students learn in a hands-on manner and over 125 computers for student use.

AFSA differs from other high schools in that we provide urban students with the opportunity to become knowledgeable in the field of agricultural. We also have highly qualified, caring teachers who provide students with a nurturing, and highly academic education. Our students enjoy making agricultural

connections by being members of the FFA, an organization that provides students with leadership opportunities. As members of the FFA, students participate and compete in Career Development Events ranging from floriculture to judging livestock to public speaking. Students participate in several Community Service activities each year. Each fall and spring, our students also participate in Farm Service Day. On this day, we work on farms around Minnesota assisting farmers with their daily chores, including fencing, planting, renovating buildings, harvesting crops, and maintaining the care of animals. Students plan and carry out lessons for younger students at the Little Farmhands Display at the State Fair and participate in the Walk n Roll for Camp Courage annually.

Our small class sizes allow the teachers to get to know their students and to work one-on-one with them ensuring each student reaches his or her potential. Both students and teachers gain from forming these relationships. Small class sizes also contribute to building a safe and secure learning environment for all students. We offer many other student activities, including Minnesota State High School

League athletics, including soccer, volleyball, basketball, Nordic skiing, baseball and Lacrosse. The AFSA Eagles are excited to get their season underway this fall! Last year over 100 AFSA students participated in our Prom and school dances. Students learned more about government careers by participating in Youth In Government and Model United Nations. Several students are members of the National Honor Society.

Our graduates are our biggest success! With the strong support of their parents, teachers, and the community, forty-one graduates have earned their diplomas at AFSA. Several students have earned scholarships from the University of Minnesota. Students are choosing college majors like Agricultural Education, Agronomy, Biotechnology, Engineering, Graphic Design and Elementary Education.

AFSA is excited to be in its new home for the new school year. The dedication of the staff and parents ensures that AFSA will continue educating students in the vast field of agriculture for many years to come. To find out more about AFSA, visit our website at [www.agacademy.com](http://www.agacademy.com) or email [afsa@agacademy.com](mailto:afsa@agacademy.com)

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## Urban Academy Charter School

by school staff

Urban Academy Charter School, located in downtown St. Paul on the northeast corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Robert Street, opened its doors in 2003 to grades K-3 and now in 2005 Urban Academy is a K-5 school. We serve students from St. Paul and the greater St. Paul area with the majority of the students being from St. Paul.

Urban Academy was founded by Mongsher Ly, Ralph Elliott, Pierre Rhodes and Troy Johnson. The mission is to work in partnership with urban parents to provide an opportunity for every child to meet or exceed their individual potential in basic academic and life skills by utilizing research proven methods in a safe, structured and respectful community.

The idea of developing Urban Academy Charter School began in 2000. Urban Academy had its fair share of successes and setbacks towards becoming a school. Urban Academy's most memorable moment was when Hamline University agreed to be our sponsor. It is a distinct honor and privilege to have the oldest university in Minnesota sponsor the school and support our vision and mission.

Urban Academy's core academic philosophy is based on the Urban Learner Framework which centers on implementing thinking skills, creative thinking, and higher order of thinking. Urban Academy developed a unique, integrated curriculum based on but is not limited to the Minnesota Graduation Standards. Urban Academy's curriculum is articulated throughout all grade levels to provide continuity and a sense of community.

Emphasis on a collaborative team approach to achieve a connected curriculum that recognizes and celebrates diversity, Urban Academy students are viewed as a glass half full rather than half empty. Teachers are committed to building a personal relationship with their individual students by recognizing the student's culture, capability, motivation and resilience.

Urban Academy is a community-based school that prides itself on family outreach by having a strong commitment to our students and their families. Urban Academy holistically views its' students by stepping beyond the school environment – Urban Academy is committed to fostering partnerships with the home since that effects a child's learning ability in school. Staff makes home visits, daily phone conversations when needed and commits time to meet with families when convenient for them, whether at school or home.

Over the years, Urban Academy has built and developed a strong support system with the families and the community of St. Paul. Student achievement and student enrollment continues to increase. When students and their families attend Urban Academy, they are guaranteed to find a committed staff that is dedicated to develop and nourish the students' in a positive, academic and creative atmosphere.

For more information call 651-215-9419.



*Urban Academy students at the playground*



# ARTech Makes a Name for Itself

by Tim Goodwin, Director

“ARTech does performances well.” This quote was in a newspaper article profiling our January 14<sup>th</sup> “Arts for Martin” show. The paper heralded the show as the most ambitious Northfield event honoring Dr. King (something which Northfield takes seriously) that weekend. It was a unique and powerful experience that brought together students and parents, along with professional and amateur artists of all ages and walks of life in the community. Why am I telling you this? Well, naturally, I am gloating. But I have a specific reason why I pick this particular event to gloat about.



*ARTech Staff celebrate at the 2005 Graduation Ceremony in June*

Identity is crucial to a school, and it has been a considerable challenge for ARTech to establish one of its own. It is difficult enough for teachers, students, and parents to learn a new school; it’s an even greater challenge to reach the larger community. To begin with, the school was founded with two different names: Northfield School of Arts and Technology, and ARTech Charter School. Our first year, Bob Gregory-Bjorklund, our arts coordinator, often welcomed audiences to ARTech’s presentation nights and performances by saying “We are ARTech...” and then describing what we were all about. Nobody knew who we were, so we had to explain ourselves – again and again. But once our students and parents began to figure it out, and the larger community followed suit, folks started to understand that we were something special. When the local paper described us this past January as a school that stages quality performances for the entire community, I knew we had arrived at last.

Northfield School of Arts and Technology (ARTech Charter School) opened its doors to students September of 2003. Northfield is a community rich in academics and art. While known for thwarting Jesse James and his gang, Northfield has two colleges and a very active arts community. It was from this community of artists and educators that a group of parents and educators got together and created our little project-based, arts and technology school. We opened our doors to roughly 100 students who were ready to develop their own independent project-based learning program with an emphasis on technology. What an eager group! There was only one problem: our

technology had not yet arrived. We barely had desks, built the week before by parents, teachers, and kids who volunteered their time and energy. The paint was barely dry. Since then, however, a heck of a lot has happened.

Aside from its growing reputation for performing and visual arts – including excellent media/video arts production – ARTech has also established itself as a school with high academic expectations. Most importantly, most kids really like coming to school at ARTech, a testament to the staff, parents, and the kids themselves. They show up early; they hang around at the end of the day. They stop by in the summer (when we are not looking our best, I might add) just to see how we are doing. We can’t get them to leave. That is another part of the identity we have developed in just two years of operation: a place kids like to be.

When prospective parents visit, they invariably ask about the curriculum. We have a simple answer: we teach the same content as any other middle school and high school in Minnesota,

with an added emphasis on art and technology. But there is so much more than content to a school like ARTech. It is how we teach that makes all the difference. If your child has a special motivating interest, they will do well at a school like ARTech. We still expect them to learn science, social studies and all the rest, but here they get to focus in on these subjects through the lens of their own particular passion.

Proposing and finalizing a project with a team of teachers who evaluate the work holistically (including how well the student can sit and describe it) produces self-confident young adults who really get how to learn, synthesize ideas, be creative with the information they have learned, and communicate the entire package. Could there be better training for life after high school? That is what is special about a school like ARTech. And I guess that is why we all do it, despite the challenges that come with being a charter school. With this and so much more to offer, we can say with confidence: “We are ARTech.”

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## Avalon School Makes an Impression on Student

by David Kraft, student

I made my first visit to Avalon School before our first school year even started. Some teachers, parents and students were busy assembling the desks and piecing together the wall segments that separated our then four advisories. I should have realized then that I was entering not just a school focused on projects, but one centered around progress. My school has been serving the local St. Paul community since 2001. Our building is located at 1745 University Avenue. This year we have proceeded to add a middle school on another floor of the building.

On the last day of school this past year we dismantled everything because the carpets needed replacing. That afternoon amidst the desk clumps and stacks of wall segment stacks, I was signing and exchanging yearbooks. Now, for me, that moment serves as a gateway to the memories of how

our school has progressed with its community of students and staff across almost half a decade. We have done many things and much progress has been initiated as a community: the open body of the Student Congress drafted and continues to amend our own constitution. During senior retreats at Camp Friendship we build the skills needed to graduate the coming year. We developed a Friday night coffeehouse experience. We fought to make our crosswalks safer after two students were injured. Together, as a community, we have made progress in many other significant and influential ways. On an individual level progress keeps us working on self-determined projects that challenge us beyond old spheres of knowledge and to explore new topics. In conclusion to this article, I shall state that we here at Avalon School have learned that there is always progress to be made. And we, at Avalon will be up to it.



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## Avalon Graduation Ceremony Marks Important School Milestone

by Andrea Martin, Program Coordinator

June 10, 2005, marked an important event in the history of Avalon School, a 9-12 high school that opened its doors on September 4, 2001. Over 300 friends and family witnessed 34 seniors take the stage at Hamline University's Sundin Hall and accept their diplomas. This spring's graduation (Avalon's second) was a milestone because 18 of the 32 graduates started their high school careers at Avalon. A non-traditional setting, Avalon asks students to create their own curriculum within the framework of a liberal arts education. With so much freedom to make decisions but serious demands for work completion, many of the graduates went through times at Avalon when they weren't quite sure if their work would measure up in the "real world."

The results? Approximately 85 percent of the graduating class will go on to four year colleges this fall, including destinations such as Hamline University, Macalester College, the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, University of Minnesota-Morris, Evergreen State in Washington, Hampshire College in Massachusetts, and Knox College in Illinois. Of those not attending this autumn, many are pursuing dreams that fall outside the framework

of traditional education, such as attending midwifery school, traveling, and participating in Americorps. With such success and goals for future education, what makes Avalon students prepared for life beyond its walls?

The answer may come from Elaine Campbell, a 2004 graduate of Avalon School. In a letter she wrote to her former advisor (an Avalon teacher; the word advisor encompasses more of the relationships students build with their teachers), she spoke of the success she experiences at Wesleyan College in Connecticut. Soon to start her sophomore year, Elaine was first concerned that her non-traditional high school route left her with huge gaps in her education. Because she had so much choice in her education, she didn't read the novels "every" tenth grader reads, or do the chemistry experiment that's in every textbook. According to Elaine,

*As time has gone on here, however, a few things have become clear. I have realized that I already have certain things other students here are grappling to find. I know what I want and what I am interested in, for one thing. It shocked me to see how some of the freshmen here floundered when they had to choose their own classes. They were used to*

by school staff

Dugsi means a school or shelter in the Somali language. Dugsi Academy will serve approximately 240 students in grades K-5, most of whom will be immigrants from East Africa. We are opening our doors for the first time this fall in the renovated 3rd floor of the Griggs-Midway building. The space is great! The teachers are excellent! The curriculum materials are new and will be adapted to reflect the students' cultural heritage and home language.

Perhaps our Mission and Vision statements can best explain our philosophy.

*Mission - Dugsi Academy will provide students with educational opportunities that are respectful*



*either following a prescribed course list or taking classes their parents told them to. Another big one is time-management... Honestly though, the most significant thing I took away from Avalon was a curiosity and appreciation for education. Avalon really was just a springboard into further education. It gave me the skills to find resources and therefore the ability to appreciate when they are available to me. The biggest thing is my excitement about learning. There are all these classes here that are just laid out for me, with readings and discussions and quizzes, just waiting to be explored. This curiosity is certainly the most significant thing I have taken from Avalon.*

Elaine speaks to the success and excitement for learning common in all Avalon students. Sparked by this success, Avalon School is moving into a new and exciting stage of its history by opening a 7-8 grade middle school this fall. Openings in the middle and high school are still available; please call Jackie Powell at 651.649.5495 ex. 200 for more information or visit Avalon at [www.avalonschool.org](http://www.avalonschool.org).

## Dugsi to Open in Fall 2005

*of their individual learning styles and interests, enabling students to meet high academic expectations in an environment that celebrates cultural awareness and citizenship.*

*Vision - The academic focus of Dugsi Academy will be to integrate students into the scholastic community of Minnesota and to enable students to use their talents and experiences to achieve to the best of their abilities.*

The following is an interview with one of the founding members and Community Outreach Coordinator of Dugsi Academy, Mr. Mohamed Osman.

Q - What makes you different from other schools?  
M.O. - Dugsi Academy is committed to active parent participation in their children's education and strong student-teacher relationships with a small class size of approximately 20 students per class. We offer all-day Kindergarten and students in grades 1-5 will receive language instruction in Somali or Arabic. Everyone will be served halal food at lunch. Our curriculum will be infused with multicultural content and aligned with the MN State Standards.

Q - Why did you and the other founders start your school?  
M.O. - Dugsi Academy is designed to serve the unique needs of East African immigrant students. It is directed by East African immigrants working in collaboration with experienced educators. Parents in our community wanted a school that valued parent contribution and would help their children to be successful academically. Our parents have a direct influence on Dugsi. They are the pillars and support for our school. Dugsi Academy will link the home culture with the school.

Q - What successes have you had?  
M.O. - The founders of Dugsi Academy have been planning and dreaming about creating this type of school since 2000. Our Board has elders from East Africa and America. Minnesota allows the establishment of charter schools and this fall Dugsi Academy will become a reality!

Q - What is your favorite start-up memory? Your greatest success? greatest challenge?  
M.O. - There are several memories of challenges and solutions: the initial Walton Foundation planning grant allowed Dugsi to formally organize; the federal start-up grant provided funding to financially underwrite the initial expenses of starting a new school; the many MDE staff development sessions - on funding/reporting, Board training, sponsor training, No Child Left Behind - gave us advice and direction, plus personal contacts. Finding an appropriate



# BlueSky Charter School Students Celebrate 2005 Graduation



by school staff

BlueSky Online Charter School started as the first 100%, totally online high school in Minnesota. Providing a quality online education using state of the art technology to students in grades 7-12 from all over the State of Minnesota was our goal. Eighteen students made up BlueSky's first graduating class of 2005. Nine students were from the metropolitan area, and nine students from greater Minnesota. Two graduation exercises were held; one in Bloomington for metropolitan students and their families, and one in International Falls for students and their families from greater Minnesota.

BlueSky requires 21.5 credits to graduate, and meets all state graduation requirements. Our staff are fully

licensed, experienced teachers that know how to keep in contact with students and their families to make sure students succeed. Special education services are provided by licensed teachers for students with disabilities. Our administrators are fully licensed, experienced school leaders.

The online learning environment allows students to individualize and personalize their study schedules to best meet their needs. Classes and lessons are delivered online in such a manner that students can build their own schedules, and work at the times best suited to them. This is especially important to students that work and/or have families of their own.

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For more information, contact BlueSky School at [www.BlueSkySchool.org](http://www.BlueSkySchool.org); Phone: 651-643-2106 or 651-642-0888. Fax: 651-642-0435. BlueSky School, serving all of Minnesota's students and families, is officed at 1821 University Avenue, Suite 178N, St. Paul, MN 55104.

Dugsi - Continued from page 5

site for Dugsi Academy proved be very challenging!...but our patience paid off and we have an excellent location! We are now in the process of identifying minority-based businesses to provide janitorial services, transportation, instructional support, and food service for Dugsi.

Q- What traditions have you started? M.O. - We have adjusted the school calendar to better reflect the traditional Muslim holidays. We're also excited about offering student programs to parents and the community demonstrating our students' accomplishments.

Q- What do you want people to remember about Dugsi Academy? M.O. - Dugsi is prepared for an exciting and challenging year! We have highly-qualified, culturally-sensitive teachers who are strongly committed to student achievement while making learning fun! There has been an enthusiastic response from the community about Dugsi Academy and we are ready to meet our students for the 1st day of the 2005-06 school year on August 29! Families + Staff + Students + Community = Success!

## Beacon Academy Grows and Welcomes New Principal

by Janet Carlson, Dean of Students

Beacon Academy is entering its second year as a public charter school in Plymouth. A year ago the school opened with 91 students in grades K-3 and this fall has an enrollment of 180 in grades K-4. Students attend this tuition free school from throughout the west suburban area. Families select this school for its daily Spanish instruction (30 min/day for K and 40 min/day for 1-4<sup>th</sup> grades), its content rich Core Knowledge program developed by E.D. Hirsch , the emphasis on positive character development based on Search Institute's 40 Assets and the many opportunities for parent involvement. Class sizes ranged from 15- 22 students last year and there are still a few openings in some grades for this fall. Eventually there will be two sections of each grade K-8<sup>th</sup>. This fall the school will be adding a new physical education specialist and Spanish teacher. Music classes will continue to be offered by instructors from the McPhail Center for music, with private lessons offered

by instructors from the former Calvary School of Music.

Beacon Academy is pleased to announce the new principal of the school is Jordan Ford. Mr. Ford comes to Beacon Academy from Trinity Christian School in North Branch. Prior to Trinity, he held positions as principal at Mounds Park Academy and Torah Academy and curriculum director for the Waconia and Young America school districts. Mr. Ford is a resident of Plymouth and a graduate of Concordia College, Moorhead and the University of Minnesota. He and his wife have two daughters who attend Wayzata High School.

The public and members of the school community are invited to a welcome reception for Mr. Ford on Wednesday, August 17 from 5-6:30 on the school grounds at 12325 Highway 55 in Plymouth. For information about the school or the reception, please call 763-546-9999.

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# Discovery Public School of Faribault Moves

by school staff

The school started as the Covenant Academy of Minnesota Charter School in 2001 on the old Wilson Center campus in Faribault along with Catholic Charities’ residential program. Together the two were known as the Covenant Academy. The charter school was started to serve students who were behind academically but wanted to earn a high school diploma. The school was to work in conjunction with the residential program and community agencies to aid underprivileged youth.

The first 10 students were all female students with low self esteem. They were behind academically from 1 to 4 years. They came with the wish to earn a high school diploma but often had doubts about their abilities to succeed in the classroom. They were intelligent youth but had experienced many failures in the classroom and had minimal curiosity. The school offered the students a trial period to see if they really wanted to make a commitment to learn. The teachers would do everything possible to help them achieve this goal. The students in turn had to commit after 3 weeks to this shared student-staff covenant to listen, to learn, and to have fun.

As the school and the residential facility developed, there became an increased demand from students in the Faribault community. Both organizations were united behind the goal of serving youth who had been lost in the traditional classroom setting. The school was able to offer its students a five to one student to teacher ratio, core and elective classes, special education services, sports, and most of all, communication with parents. One of the keys to educating the student body is believing in the students even when they do not believe in themselves.

The Covenant Academy of Minnesota Charter School was successful in its first four years of operation. The school was able to provide a safe place of learning for the youth residing on campus as well as those residing in the community. The school successfully graduated four senior classes and can claim 100 % of the graduates have gone on to post secondary schooling over the last two years.

The charter school staff has experienced a high staff turn-over ratio. No original



staff members are associated with the charter school to date. The new staff represents a demographic variety that will help meet the needs of the individuals that attend the school.

In the spring of 2005, the charter school faced some incredible challenges and experienced amazing changes! The school was notified that it would have to find a new location and a new sponsor. The hunt for a new sponsor was difficult in and of itself, but to meet deadlines during the state shut down was even more challenging. The school staff was able to persevere through it all and is excited to be able to open the doors for another school year! The school has a new name, a new location and a new sponsor!

Our new sponsor is Northwood Children’s Services located in Duluth, Minnesota. Northwood Children’s Services is a private, not-for-profit, multi-service agency that provides professional care, education, and treatment for boys and girls with emotional, behavioral, and learning disabilities. The school anticipates on developing a mutually beneficial relationship with the new sponsor.

Beginning with this school year, the school will be known as Discovery Public School of Faribault. The school will still be pursuing the same mission and vision of the original charter, but will be focusing on the youth of the Faribault community. Students will be encouraged to participate in a logo contest for our new name as well as other activities associated with reopening.

The school will start the 2005-2006 school year at the old St. Lawrence school building (shown above) located at 126 Eighth Street NW in Faribault. Students will be greeted on the first day of school by some familiar faces, but the surroundings will be vastly different. When students enter their new classrooms, they will find materials and supplies that are also new to them. The school has been very lucky to receive donations and support from the following organizations: Cennedeigh Inc., District One Hospital, Faribault United Way, Faribault City Council, City Employees of Faribault, Faribault Chamber of Commerce, Allina Hospitals and Clinics Asset Redistribution Management, Faribault Senior Citizens Center, Faribault Kiwanis Club, and the Faribault Free Press.

The Discovery Public School of Faribault would like to thank all the people and organizations that have helped the school succeed in its endeavor to continue to educate youth. The staff looks forward to working with other charter schools and educational agencies to help provide the best education available to its students.

If you would like more information about Discovery Public School or are interested in working with the staff and students, please feel free to visit or contact the school at: 126 Eighth Street NW, PO Box 361, Faribault, MN 55021. Our phone number is 507-333-1320 through August 31. Please call 507-331-5423 after September 1, 2005. Email: [jgreen@isd4081.org](mailto:jgreen@isd4081.org).

# A School at the Mall!!!!

By Maryann Pellot

A school at the mall!!!! Whoever thought of that must be crazy. Yes, Liberty High Charter School is located at the Northtown Mall in Blaine. It had been three months since I arrived from Puerto Rico and I had never heard of such a thing. I instantly fell in love with the school. It’s a really neat concept created by Mr. Gary Knox. We have three sessions everyday. Some kids come from 7:45am to 10:45am. Our second session is from 12pm to 3pm, and our third session is from 5pm to 8pm. The last session was created mainly for kids that have a full time job. Only 3 hours!!!! Yes, that’s because we are a work based program. Students are required to come to school 12 hours a week from Monday through Thursday and complete 3 hours of out of school work. To be able attend Liberty, you must have a job and work at least 15 hours a week. This works out great for the students that are interested in this type of program. They are able to obtain a high school diploma and work at the same time.

We have the greatest teachers and staff that have ever walked the planet. They are nice, respectful, flexible and helpful. The teacher to student ratio is about 6 students per teacher. Although Liberty has an independent student program, teachers are always available to help and guide students through their projects and task. If you enjoy working on your own and at your own pace, this is the program for you.

You’ll enjoy your experience at Liberty High. We do such cool things, like Wacky Wednesday. That’s when the staff draws the name of another staff member and pretends to be that person for the day. We have pancake breakfast as a reward for the whole school and Monday Meetings, where we announce what will go on that week. We even have a pink Thursday, but to know what that is, you’ll have to come and visit us.

Do you like to travel? We do!! Yes we travel around the world. France, Italy, New York, San Francisco and Puerto Rico. The trips are affordable, educational and fun. Overall we want to provide Life Changing Experiences for students and we are making that happen at Liberty.

I’ll never finish writing all of the great stories that I have accumulated over the year that I have worked there. It’s been a great year and I look forward to the experiences that the new school year will bring. Charter schools provide a great opportunity for students to find alternatives to traditional education. The bonding that happens between the students and the teachers is incredible and probably unheard of in most places. I can honestly say that all of the teachers know every student and care about them as if they were their own kids. I wish that every student had the opportunity to experience this kind of education.





# Caught Working in my PJ's

By Karen Locke, Advisor

I bought my first webcam on April 25, 2005. Since then I've learned which instant messages work the best (Microsoft Messenger unless you're under 6, when Yahoo Messenger wins), how to angle my webcam so I'm kind of in the dark (sit in front of a window - I don't always want to be seen clearly), and what to do when the picture freezes on someone's face for a long time (restart the program because you've lost the connection). Oh, and I've also learned to get dressed before I turn on my computer in the morning. The first few times I got invited to webcam sessions I had to excuse myself for a few minutes—I was still in my pajamas (it was only 7:30 AM), and I thought it might be good to be seen AFTER I was dressed.

I'm an advisor and a student at EdVisions Off-campus High School, a new project-based, online school for grade 7-12 students throughout Minnesota. I'm an advisor by title, since I've been hired to help design the school and to work there when it opens this fall. I'm a student in practice, because I've had to learn so many things this spring and summer.

EOCHS exemplifies something that happens more frequently since the charter school bill passed in Minnesota – a completely new kind of school. In our case, we are a project based school like Minnesota New Country School in Henderson, or Avalon in St. Paul, but with a twist. Our students will be working at home or in their communities. We will be meeting them online. We'll only see them in person about once a month for field trips and presentation nights.

Now in beginning a totally new kind of school there are a few (!) problems to iron out. Like the fact that everyone tells you it can't be done. Like having to explain over and over that no, you're not exactly like this or that school they've heard of. Like trying to figure out exactly which box to uncheck so you can hear your colleague, who looks like they're talking on the screen but you can't hear a word.

So I have become a student for the summer. And that's logical, because our school is project based. This is just a very big, ambitious, exciting, nerve-racking project!

I even had to write a project proposal in order to get paid. We're trying out the software our students will be using in the fall, so each of us wrote a proposal and submitted it to our "advisor" (in this case, one of the co-directors). Fortunately she approved it. Then I began doing the activities it listed. Well, of course I didn't really know about all the activities when I began (just like students don't), so some are listed and some aren't. But I did them anyway.

When students do a project they have to do research, and so did I. I read lots of articles and interviewed lots of people. I learned that some schools in Michigan require students to take at least one online class, because they're trying to prepare them for schooling in the future. I learned there's a school in London that provides computers to dropouts to use however they want, and it's going well. I learned that there's a program called Ivisit that the Metro Deaf School is thinking about using because it has a good picture (deaf people need good pictures so students can sign to each other). And I learned that Special Education (a third of my new job) has rarely been done online, even in online schools that already exist.

As I did all these activities I logged my time and wrote a journal every day. Well, I admit that I didn't do my journal EVERY day. But I did log my time. This was important for me because the first few months I got paid by the hour. It will be important to my students because that's how they will get credit for their work. Like my students, I showed my results to others. I told about the other schools, we got a copy of Ivisit (it's pretty neat!), and I'm designing Special Education programs that will work online. I also got books on writing press releases, and then I made press releases, signs, posters, stationary, and a script for a video. I learned by trial and error about file sharing, whiteboards on computer, and even turning my desktop over to someone else and letting them manipulate everything on it. You learn a lot when starting a new, never-seen-before school.

The intricacy and detail reminds me of a senior project at a project-based school. At Minnesota New Country School, where I've worked for 3 years,



seniors have to do super-projects of at least 300 hours in order to graduate. This year's crop was amazing. There was the girl who made an amazingly professional-looking comic book, and then explained it to us using a powerpoint that showed whimsical drawings of her creating the comic book (I asked her for a copy of her powerpoint). There was the student who researched psychological effects of color, including advising MNCS on repainting the school (which staff and volunteers did while students attended Valley Fair). There was the boy who applied his PSEO training in construction to insulate and heat his garage. In some ways, my project wasn't as big as theirs. But it isn't over yet, either.

Students' projects are seen by their advisors and some of them are seen by the public at presentation nights. I did a presentation night too. In fact, I'm doing several. We're showing the public a video we made of a mock advisory meeting, and letting them try designing their own project with an advisor who is 50 or 100 miles away. At the last meeting in Burnsville a prospective mom worked on designing a dog project which expanded to encompass service dogs and dogs that work at places like fire stations or the North Pole. It was exciting to see how our project inspired the parents, the students, and even the news reporter that attended the meeting. They wanted to talk to us afterwards about how it all will work. A student even said "I'm looking for the down side of this thing. And I can't find it!"

So finally, our project has met the world just like our students' projects do. At the very least they've learned to broaden their own world view, exploring both a topic and also a process of taking

responsibility for their own learning. Often, though, they've also taught others. They've shown their friends what they've made, they've answered questions from parents and the public at presentation nights, they've taken part in things like a supermileage car race or making a movie or building a ferret cage that will make a real difference in someone's life.

My project, well, it's taking off as well. I'm off to Duluth on Monday to present our "road show" at the Duluth Public Library. I'm calling our Special Education kids this week so I can find out what their IEP's say and plan to meet their needs online. And I'm writing this article to share our process with all of you.

Project-based, online learning. EdVisions Off-Campus High School. Hopefully you will see and hear those words for a long time to come. Now you've had a peek at their very beginning.

Oh, and I did get dressed before I wrote this on my computer, just in case anyone called and wanted me to hook up my webcam. I'm rarely caught in my PJ's at the computer anymore.

EdVisions Off-Campus High School is opening Fall, 2005. It is available to students from 7-12 grade, throughout Minnesota. The school will supply laptops and webcams if needed, and help families to get high speed internet connections. The school's sponsor is Volunteers of America, and it is part of a grant from the Gates Foundation.

For more info, our website is [www.eochs.k12.mn.us](http://www.eochs.k12.mn.us)  
Phone: 1-800-617-7857  
E-mail: [info@edvisionshighschool.com](mailto:info@edvisionshighschool.com)

## Four Directions: The Little School With a Big Heart

by Kate McClure, teacher

It's lunchtime, and the lunchroom is abuzz with approximately eighty students eating a home-cooked meal and visiting with each other and staff members. Bursts of laughter randomly erupt at various tables around the room. Four Directions' Program Coordinator, Ronald Buckanaga, is walking around teasing students and checking in with them to see how they're doing; incidentally, he's also handing out bus tokens so they can go home at 3:00 today and return by 9:50 tomorrow morning.

Wait a minute. Home-cooked meal? Students visiting with staff? Laughter? The Program Coordinator teasing and checking in with students? School starting at 9:50 in the morning? This is a typical day at Four Directions Charter School in north Minneapolis. If students have it this good, why aren't there thousands of them?

If they were able to get in, there probably would be more—every year, there is a waiting list of at least thirty students. However, part of Four Directions Charter School's recipe for success is keeping class sizes small—the average class size is fifteen, and many classes also have educational assistants working in them. According to Ronald Buckanaga, Four Directions has been successful because "[w]e've always had a caring staff, and we encourage kids to finish school. We also allow the younger kids [underclassmen] to go to prom. Self-esteem does a lot for these kids."

What is now Four Directions was once Plymouth Youth Center, a Minneapolis alternative school that served twenty-two high school students. The classes were small, but there were only two teachers and not enough money to serve more kids. In 1999, Ronald opened Four Directions Charter School at Broadway and Emerson Avenue North in Minneapolis, and forty-six students registered on that first day. During the 2004-5 school year, the numbers of 8<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students have increased to capacity at 93 pupils.

Since becoming a charter school, there has been more operating money, which





*Nerstrand - Continued from page 2*

5 to 11 years, set their alarm clocks and arrive early just to help the custodian with cleaning responsibilities! They cheerfully don gloves, grab rags, buckets, brooms, and dusters and set off to make the building “spiffy”. These proud workers wash classroom tables, sweep the floor, sharpen pencils, clean the chalk trays, dust, wash lockers, and empty the recycling bins and wastebaskets.

Thirty students also volunteer to serve on rotating teams on the noon work crew. They give up their recess for the opportunity to help make the school day run smoothly. These student volunteers wash lunchroom tables, check that silverware isn’t tossed, assist small children with their trays, sweep

the floor, and help to ready the area for afternoon physical education classes. Being part of these work crews develops lifelong practices of service to others. These students have become excellent role models and leaders. It just goes to show that even menial tasks can foster self-esteem and friendships when the job serves a greater

purpose.

Nerstrand School is proud of the many community service projects our students accomplish. More importantly, however, we are proud of the amazing students who make such incredible things happen!

For information: (507) 333-6850



translates to more opportunities for its students. Pupils who have good daily attendance and are making satisfactory academic progress are invited to attend a movie every other Friday. At the end of the school year, these students also go to Valleyfair. The entire school is invited to go to the Minnesota Zoo, the Science Museum of Minnesota, and attend an end-of-the-year picnic. In June, seniors who will graduate go to Six Flags in Chicago for a weekend.

It’s not just fun and games; Four Directions also provides culturally an enriching curriculum for its students, over 70% of who are Native American (however, the school is open to 8<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders of all ethnic and social backgrounds.) Four Directions has a Media Arts program in which students learn digital photography, video and editing techniques. The capstone of the Media Arts program is its Peer Mentoring class, in which the mentors design curriculum and teach it to students at other schools. Select mentors have chances to travel to conferences and media arts event throughout Minnesota, the Dakotas, and other states like Arizona and Florida. In addition to the core classes, other unique learning opportunities include a School Readiness mentoring class for students to work with preschool-age children and discover how they learn reading, math, social and technology skills necessary for kindergarten; physical education classes at the YMCA, where participants choose to play basketball or wallyball, lift weights, run or swim; technology classes for students to learn computer animation skills and how a computer works and how to fix it when it doesn’t; and art classes where students learn to make traditional Native American handicrafts like dream catchers and beaded miniature headdresses, jewelry, and other items. In addition to academic services, Four Directions provides licensed mental

and chemical health care, referrals for legal issues and medical care, and early childhood programs such as Head Start, parenting, and child development classes for students with children.

As a result of the individualized support of its pupils, Four Directions has a graduation rate of 93%, which is more than 6 times that of the Minneapolis Public Schools<sup>1</sup>. Some Four Directions students are the first generation in their families to graduate from high school. More than 50% of Four Directions’ graduates attend a post-secondary institution or technical college program. In addition, Four Directions students’ standardized test scores on the Basic Standards Test (BST), California Achievement Test (CAT), and Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) improve each year—for example, over 50% of the school’s tenth and eleventh graders passed the BST in Writing during the 2004-5 school year. Despite the school’s success with its students, Ronald Buckanaga contends that Four Directions’ greatest challenge continues to be “finding the key for kids to finish high school and go on to college. It doesn’t happen overnight. These kids are used to being put down in the public schools and carry defensive mechanisms [against institutions like school].”

If you would like to find out more about or schedule a visit to Four Directions, contact the school’s Program Coordinator, Ronald Buckanaga, at (612) 588-0183.

<sup>1</sup> In the 2003-4 school year, the graduation rate was 15% for Native American youth.



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# The F. Scott Fitzgerald Writing Academy



by school staff

Instead of sitting at a desk listening to an American history lecture, how about working with your classmates to make a historical documentary? Instead of just reading classical poetry, how about producing a literary magazine? Instead of studying film, how about writing and producing your own screen play?

At the F. Scott Fitzgerald Writing Academy, we understand the power of language in almost every part of life. However, we realize that not everyone wants to be a writer. So, whether your passion is poetry or science, screenwriting or graphic arts, song lyrics or the law, you will develop the knowledge, skills, and character traits for success after high school.

The Academy, which is located at the Capitol View Center in Little Canada and is scheduled to open in Fall 2006, provides a unique, writing-based learning experience for students in grades 7-12 who learn best in a small, personal school setting. Guided by teachers, adult writing mentors and

writers-in-residence, students will gain experience across all genres and academic areas.

At the F. Scott Fitzgerald Writing Academy, we believe writing is nourished when it is:

- Student-centered
- Hands-on
- Reflective
- Challenging

At the Academy, students explore their world through writing. The academic program features a solid core curriculum enriched through the development of writing skills appropriate for each content area. All language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, are strongly emphasized in all courses from science and math to social studies and art. Students write in all concept areas in order to master concepts and demonstrate their understanding.

For more information about the F. Scott Fitzgerald Writing Academy, visit [www.fsfwa.org](http://www.fsfwa.org) or call 651.415.5405.



*Liberth High Students travel to Rone, Italy (story on page*

# Great Expectations School Where Everyone Learns and Everyone Teaches

by Patsy Ingebrigtsen, office administrator

Great Expectations School is a charter school serving the educational needs of K – 8 students in Cook County sponsored by the Audubon Center of the North Woods. Located in Grand Marais on the shore of Lake Superior, the school opened its doors in August, 2003, and began its third year of operation on August 8, 2005. At GES, as we often refer to ourselves, students learn based on their individual strengths, passions, needs and learning styles.

The basic framework for our educational program is called “Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning©” or EIC for short. That means using whatever is in your community and surrounding environment as part of instruction. It could mean investigating the plants, rocks and streams near the school or the air and water quality in your town. It’s planting flower and vegetable gardens while studying math and science. Hands-on will capture your attention!

At GES, we offer multi-age groupings, small classes, flexible-paced learning (progress based on achievement – not chronological age), a recognition that students learn in different ways, authentic assessment (demonstrate understanding and reflect through writing and discussion) and project-based learning where teachers guide and students have sense of ownership in their education.

The founders of the school wanted to offer the option of a small school with a family-oriented environment. The school’s vision is to encourage the best teaching practices while fostering community and parental involvement in public education. We recognize the parents as the primary educators and believe in respectful, open communication with all involved. Parents are partners and their opinions are valued in the education of their children as well as the school’s decision making process. In an effort to offer a continuum for learning, we have year-round school in which there are five learning blocks each being followed by a 2-3 week break.

Ah. . . the memories! Starting out in our town’s Community Center ice

arena, then down to the outdoor park for a week and finally into our new building! And through it all our teachers kept right on using the environment at hand and the students kept growing and learning. As a result of this unique beginning, we built a strong school community thanks to the commitment of our parents, students and staff.

We are a remote, rural school and have relied heavily on dedicated teachers, community experts and many volunteer parents to provide solid academics as well as support the social and emotional growth of our students. Our first annual yearly progress (AYP) report from the State of Minnesota gave GES students a three star math rating and a five star rating in reading! In addition, based on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAPS) testing used at GES, in the 2003-2004 school year, the majority of Great Expectations students performed in the high average or above range in math and reading according to other kids their age.

One of Great Expectations earliest and most enduring traditions is the annual student adventure to Audubon Center of the North Woods. In fact, prior to opening, a Great Expectations weekend retreat brought enrollees and their families to the Center for a community building experience. Since opening, Great Expectations students, teachers, staff and parents have enjoyed a three-day learning experience each year at the Audubon Center.

The mission of Great Expectations School is to develop in each child a love of learning; critical and creative thinking skills; mastery of the academic building blocks; the ability to nurture family, friends and self; strong commitment as a contributing member of community; an open-heartedness toward others, and a passion for life-long learning.

For information call 218-387-9322  
[www.greatexpectations.com](http://www.greatexpectations.com)





# Green Isle Community School Set to Open

by Bonnie Jean Flom, Planning and Development Director

Eleven years ago, the school in Green Isle, then a part of the Sibley East School District, closed its doors. Eventually purchased by the City of Green Isle and then sold to the city's Economic Development Authority, the building has undergone a renovation and expansion to accommodate the students of "Green Isle Community School," a new K – 6 public charter school opening on September 6<sup>th</sup>. The rapidly growing City of Green Isle, situated just 15 minutes from Belle Plaine, is pleased to offer a local school option to families in Green Isle and the surrounding communities.

The unique partnership between the City and the school developers in Green Isle serves as a model for other rural communities seeking to offer a local educational program. The developers of the school enlisted the help of the EdVisions Federal Technical Assistance grant nearly two years ago when they were exploring the idea of establishing a charter school in their community. The grant cycle has since ended, but prior to its conclusion, a team of charter school practitioners was brought on board to assist Green Isle developers through the application stage. Bonnie Jean Flom was later engaged by the City to keep the development work moving forward. Eventually, Ms. Flom was invited to serve as the school's start-up coordinator.

The GICS teaching staff experienced a rigorous selection process that included not only an interview, but also a written exercise, a visit to Nerstrand School, and the submission of a videotape of their teaching. They have had the good fortune of participating in workshops

this summer with representatives of the Nerstrand Elementary School Dissemination Grant project, Christine Reed, Carolyn Treadway, and Keith Johnson. GICS is being modeled after the highly successful Nerstrand program, and the opportunity to work in partnership with the Nerstrand team has enabled the new staff in Green Isle to get off to an especially strong and steady start.

Serving as Green Isle Community School's director is Kirsten Kinzler. Ms. Kinzler is a board member and founder of New Century Charter School in Northfield and is well known in the charter school community, having provided contracted services to a number of schools. The Board of GICS is pleased to have the opportunity to engage with a director with such vast experience in all aspects of charter school operation.

Green Isle Community School embraces a strong commitment to service to the community, thus making it a school in close alignment with its sponsor, Volunteers of America of Minnesota. The Board of Directors of Green Isle Community School (GICS) is eager to work in partnership with a vigilant and committed sponsor, and VOA is looking to GICS to carry out a program of excellence to families in and around Green Isle.



# Odyssey Charter School

by Judy Hinck, Director

"What the best and wisest parent wants for their own child, that must the community want for all its children" (John Dewey, 1902)

Odyssey Charter School—Project-based learning within a nurturing environment for students in grades K – 8 located in Brooklyn Center.

Why do families choose a charter school? The story of two families (though not their real names);

#1 Jack and his family listened as I introduced Odyssey expectations, explained project based learning, reviewed handouts and handbooks. This 5<sup>th</sup> grade child had been tagged as "hyper active," "a straight F average," "very intelligent, but will not work," "suspended for getting in fights." His mother spoke little English, but she clearly communicated her love, concern and frustration. She wanted her son to do well. Jack's face lit when I described the American history project his grade level recently presented. Each child chose an occupation that would have been needed in a pioneer town. After reading and researching, inquiring and interviewing, each student "set up shop." Students constructed store fronts and dressed the parts. During the week of Pioneer Town they demonstrated what they had learned about their own jobs, many jobs they had never heard of before, and they learned how their occupations connected to the others in their new community. Jack wanted to start right away. He said that he could see that, "This was his kind of place."

At the end of the year, is he earning the

## DREAMS

By Shana, 12<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Face to Face Academy

As I lay here trying not to fall asleep,  
my dreams kill me  
I feel like its all real, like when I fall  
in love in a dream.  
I wish dreams were true because then  
I'd be with you.  
We would happy and have a good life  
- the one I dreamed.  
You'd love me. I'd love you.  
And everything would be so true.  
But day after day I turn so blue  
because I know deep down inside  
dreams don't come true!



highest marks? No, not yet. Was he so engaged in his work that he completed assignments and projects, even after declaring, "I don't do school work"? Yes. He isn't failing a single class. He stops by the office to share a joke and a smile. What made the difference? Teachers and a curriculum dedicated to meeting students at their areas of interest, family support celebrating learning in meaningful ways, and fellow classmates who had been taught to show respect, take responsibility for their own learning and support each other.

Jack's sister transferred to Odyssey three months later.

#2 Odyssey Charter School begins its 8<sup>th</sup> year, and the Parker family returns for their 7<sup>th</sup> year here. They came, attracted by the school's commitment to involving parents, students and teachers in developing individual learning plans and goals. Russell and Janel searched for a place where their two daughters could each thrive and be

## Why

By: Theresa, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Face to Face Academy

In the beginning it was great.  
It could have been different.  
After a while came the fights.  
It could have been different.  
Not long after came the lies.  
It could have been different.  
Then came hurt and tears.  
It could have been different.  
Then came the baby.  
It could have been different.  
Then came adultery.  
It could have been different.  
Soon after came separation.  
It could have been different.  
Not long after came prison bars.  
It could have been different.  
And now we don't talk.  
It should have been different!

challenged, where each child's unique learning style was honored. They wanted a small school so that each girl would be known by the staff. They were attracted to the multiage classes which allowed the girls to spend two years with the same teacher. As parents they wanted to be involved and find ways to offer their talents.

Seven years later Teresa loves project based learning. As she enters middle school grades she knows that she is in control of her learning, that she can challenge herself to grow and learn as much as she can. Her younger sister loves to set her learning goals in the fall, challenging herself to meet and surpass them. In second grade most students set one or two major learning goals for the year. Belinda met her goals by Christmas and was ready to set new ones, to explore and learn more.

Janel helped to celebrate students' growth in learning respect, responsibility and support by interviewing and polling classrooms monthly and then designing a display which celebrated the students' choices for growth in meeting our expectations. Russell serves on the school board, making decisions about program and finance, working side by side with other parents, staff members and community members to keep the school strong. Both offer their ideas on the Community Action Committee. Russell is a favorite cook at Odyssey community events.

Why do families choose charter schools? Because choice in education allows parents and students to find the school and program which best meets their needs. As one winning bumper sticker announced: Minnesota Charter Schools – Because One Size Fits Nobody.

For more information call 763-971-8200.



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## Metro Deaf Charter School

### *meeting the needs of student since 1993*

Metro Deaf School (MDS) serves deaf and hard of hearing students from Pre-K through 8th grade. Our students come from roughly 30 school districts around the Twin Cities metro area and eastern Wisconsin. The majority of our students are placed at MDS through their home school districts with transportation provided by the home district.

MDS opened in September 1993 with 13 students, 2 teachers and an educational assistant. At that time the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) had no idea how to help charters as we were new to the entire U.S., so we were on our own for everything: no start-up money, no advice - nothing!! There was one other charter-newly opened, so not much of a network either! We housed our school in a historic building in Lowertown, in St. Paul. We are now located at 265 West Lafayette Road South in St. Paul just across the Lafayette Bridge from downtown. Currently, our board has decided to purchase a building and is actively seeking a new space to house our growing school.

MDS started from a concept that was beginning to filter its way into deaf education in the early 90s: bilingual-bicultural education. Two experienced teachers (one deaf: Marcia Passi, one hearing: Dyan Sherwood) and a group of very dedicated parents of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders decided they wanted to educate deaf students using this “new” approach – American Sign Language (ASL) as the language of instruction and English taught through print, with both cultures (hearing and deaf) being equally recognized and respected. After two years of this successful classroom approach in St. Paul Public Schools, charter law was passed. Knowing the limitations of large school districts with regards to innovative programs, this group of dedicated educators and parents applied for a charter as Metro Deaf School, which they were granted in the summer of 1992. With the bilingual-bicultural approach to education, the new school wanted to advocate for a strong, positive “deaf identity” among the students, hiring deaf teachers as role models; thus the school was “born”.

MDS is a segregated site. By designing the school this way, students would not be perceived as “special ed”

because they are deaf and in a school with majority of hearing students, but rather see themselves as kids attending school where communication is 100% accessible, as well as having access to role-models all day long! All staff at MDS are fluent in ASL – even the custodian!

The school has grown from 13 students in 1993 to over 70 students in 2005. 100% of our graduated 8th graders have gone on to finish high school, and have or are currently attending universities or technical colleges. MDS students succeed because they receive the best possible education, building a strong identity as a deaf person and gaining in self-confidence. They receive strong support from their families and the deaf community as well.

MDS’ exiting 8<sup>th</sup> graders typically score in the top 20<sup>th</sup> percentile on the Stanford Achievement Test (which is normed on deaf students across the U.S.), when compared to their peers across nation. MDS students are well prepared for high school and beyond when they leave the school. Several graduates have been so confident that they have returned to their home high schools to be full-time mainstream students – competing easily with their hearing peers and taking rigorous course work in advanced placement or international baccalaureate classes.

MDS is nationally recognized throughout the U.S. in higher education teacher training institutions due to its success as a bilingual school. MDS hosts student teachers from colleges/universities from across the U.S. Often the staff is invited to other schools to provide workshops regarding bilingual education for deaf students, since we are perceived as a leader in the field. MDS recruits nationally for its staff. Most of MDS’ teachers move to MN to teach at MDS. MDS has paved the way for charter schools with like-missions serving deaf students. There are three other charters currently operating in the U.S., who have modeled much of their school after MDS.

One of our favorite start up memories is just how “broke” we were in our first year - not having funds even for small things such as tape or staples, yet making the most of it. Our families were so invested and very involved in our first few years– ensuring we were

getting by with what we needed; it was “sink or swim” and we all knew we wanted to swim! Their generous support helped the school succeed!

As a “100% special education” school, since our all of our students are deaf, we have been presented with some major challenges with regards to how rules/regulations apply to us over the years. We continually work closely with MDE. MDS is always in a unique place and generally does not fit into the “regular ed.” mold. When MDS opened, procedures for billing back to districts for services had to be developed. Much of what MDS developed regarding billing and procedures, in conjunction with MDE, has in turn benefited many charter schools with regards to their special education population.

For the first few years we didn’t have students old enough to graduate from our program. We now have a history of graduations we are proud of, and look forward to keeping this new tradition in tact. We celebrate our native language by hosting ASL Storytelling competitions and participate in one national competition each year. Several of our students have won in national competitions, as well. Our after school program provides students with opportunities for all sorts of athletic and non-athletic program choices. Each team (PreK-2, 3-5, 6-8) develops and participates in three service-learning projects each year. We host an annual middle school dance, complete with a DJ and blaring speakers after our annual basketball game between the MN State Academy for the Deaf and our middle school basketball teams. The week of the big game is “Spirit Week” complete with “wacky hair day”, “backwards day” and of course the big pep fest on game day!

There is a huge sense of pride among all the staff, students, and families. Our students WANT to come to school. We see ourselves just like any other school. We are a small, close-knit community working to provide more and more opportunities for our students as they transition into responsible, compassionate and well-educated young adults.

For more information, please see our website at [www.metrodeafschool.org](http://www.metrodeafschool.org)

## Watershed High School:

### *Waldorf Education at a Public School*



by Scott Cole, Administrator

Watershed High School began in 1996 as a private Waldorf high school. There were only twelve students then, and teachers were brought in from around the county and other local Waldorf schools to share their expertise and wisdom with the students and the faculty. In 2002, charter status was sought. Watershed became the first private high school in Minnesota to convert to a public charter. The desire for a more diverse student body, the commitment to making a Waldorf-methods education available to all students, regardless of ability to pay and the need for a stable income stream influenced this decision.

Waldorf education offers the opportunity for students to immerse themselves deeply in a rigorous and far-reaching curriculum. At Watershed, interdisciplinary block lessons are offered every morning. These 4 to 6-week segments encompass all the History, English and Sciences. After a sensible 50-minute lunch, we launch into three one-hour classes; math, foreign language and art (theater arts, fine art, and traditional crafts). Art is viewed as an integral part of all we do as a visit to the school demonstrates. Student art adorns all the common spaces and even the lockers are painted with original works designed by the students.

We now have over 120 students in four grades. Students come from a variety of elementary and middle schools both public and private. Social harmony

pervades the atmosphere at Watershed. The faculty know every student by name and seek to involve the whole community in charting the direction of the school. A parent led community council weighs in on decisions along with the board and faculty.

At Watershed, discussion and exploration are core staples of the curriculum. There is no one ‘type’ of Watershed student. The name Watershed actually represents this quality ~ many streams converging in a common body of water. This has been our experience. We do not cater to any one specific segment of the youth population, but seek to bring all types together for active inquiry, service and an experience of community.

Our social life is rich as well! A monthly ‘open-mike’ night, The Medieval Dinner (a whole community fundraising effort with a new play penned each year, costumes, a full meal and medieval antics), senior play and projects, and prom take place throughout the year among many other changing activities that spring out of student initiative. Consistent with Waldorf tradition, creating an environment that stimulates and challenges the whole child is what the leaders at Watershed have designed. We are honored to be in a position to offer this service to our students, and engage in the important work of preparing young people for a life of service and contribution in the world that awaits them come graduation.



# Partnership Academy



by Charles Bodden, Assistant Director

Empowering teachers, students, families, and our broader community as partners in creating an exceptional school: this is the vision behind Partnership Academy Charter School and is achieved by having a committed and dedicated staff. A staff that believes that they don’t need a management company or a corporate logo to make a successful program, they believe in themselves, their commitment to succeed and their mission.

The founders of Partnership Academy were once associated with a traditional public school that was soon to be shut down. They believed in their program, their kids and staff, and they were not ready to give up so easily. In June, they decided to start their own school by empowering themselves, creating a mission, and being willing to endure any and all obstacles for the sake of their dream to see children succeed. Now located in the City of Richfield, MN and going into its fourth academic year, Partnership Academy serves a diverse population from the Richfield and Minneapolis areas. Partnership Academy opened its doors to 115 kids on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of September, 2002 but getting to that point was a big challenge.

Opening a charter school is a very difficult task and we didn’t have much time to prepare but we were dedicated and willing to sacrifice in order to have those doors open by September. Along with having very

little time to get started, we had not received any funding from the state right away so everything we purchased in the beginning was with our own personal finances. We also had quite a bit of recruiting to do and there was always the possibility of not meeting our enrollment goals and financial obligations. Even though the pressure of starting the school was great, the desire of the staff to get Partnership Academy opened was greater. By the time school was scheduled to start we met our enrollment goals, funds were beginning to come in and we had the support of our sponsor PPL and the surrounding community which is always a great feeling. During the little time we had to get the school ready for parents and students, we ran into several obstacles which we can now look back on and laugh about.

One of our favorite start up memories happened the day of our first Open House. We had ordered furniture to be delivered in time so that the parents could see the classrooms fully furnished. As time grew closer for the Open House, as always seems to happen during crunch time, the furniture did not show up in time. The vendor agreed to send over temporary furniture that we could use to give the parents some idea of what the classes would look like and not just empty rooms. However, the furniture that was delivered was plastic patio furniture! Little pre-school plastic chairs for our rooms! Card tables with plywood tops of various sizes and none of which,

because of the size difference, would go with the plastic chairs. The staff maintained a “can do” attitude to hide the frustration and the panic some of us were feeling. Some of us on the planning committee tried to “Make it work” by covering the tables with table clothes and tucking the chairs way under the tables, but wiser minds prevailed and they were removed and hidden away. The parents saw beautiful and spacious empty rooms, but received a promise that furniture would arrive in time and it did! That was when we realized that even though the furniture was not there, the parents were able to overlook it because they believed in our vision and our staff.

Even with all the ups and downs, we feel we have had many successes over the past three years which allows us to stand apart from all other charter schools. First and foremost, our families are extremely happy with the educational environment we have created and our students enjoy coming to school. This shows in our parent and community involvement. Last school year we averaged a 97% attendance at parent/teacher conferences. We have a Community Partners Program provided by PPL that brings in over 75 volunteers a month to the school which also provides the students an opportunity to serve in our community. Partnership Academy averaged a 98% daily attendance rate during the 04’-05’ school year. We have established a strong program to meet the needs of all of our children but especially our 75% Latino population. Our kids are showing academic gains every year by improving at least one years growth or more. We have set high expectations for everyone and anyone involved in the growth and development of Partnership Academy and again it

shows in the support given to us by the community and the traditions we have created.

The support from our community is best displayed during what we feel has become our biggest and most involved tradition by families, students, and PA staff. The Taco Dinner and Talent Show has become proof that our vision has become a reality. During the month of May, the school hosts a Taco Dinner and the parents of our students provide all of the authentic Mexican food. While enjoying a great meal, the students have the opportunity to showcase their skills during the talent show. The first year we did this we didn’t think we would have a huge turnout, and it was supposed to be a small fundraiser, but boy were we surprised! We had over 200 people show up and we ran out of food and had to go to the store to buy more. This has turned out to be our most successful tradition in which parents, staff, and students get to come together and make Partnership Academy’s mission a reality.

Through the start up of the school, development of our programs, and the creation of many traditions we have come to know and love we would like for people to remember that Partnership Academy has created a positive and unifying culture. We want people to remember that our school is welcoming and our kids and families always come first. The community should be able to look at our staff and see how committed they are and their willingness to do whatever it takes to help our children succeed. We believe that the only way we will all succeed is through empowerment!



# TRIO Wolf Creek

## Learning at a Distance



The TRIO Wolf Creek Distance Learning Charter School serves about one hundred students each year in grades 9-12. We began “3” years ago as a collaboration between the charter school founders and their sponsor Chisago Lakes Schools. We are located in Chisago City, Minnesota just North-East of the Twin Cities on Highway 35. Due to our flexible schedule and On Line Learning curriculum we do enroll students who live quite a distance away from the school building.

What makes our charter school so unique is the distance-learning approach to student achievement. Students work from home or another safe location for the majority of their school week. They are able to access our On Line curriculum at times that work best for them to learn. We work with students when they enroll with us to write IGP’s or Individual Graduation Plans for their success. Some students come to us behind on credits where others want to continue accelerating their high school experience. Each student is assigned one caring adult advisor who is responsible for checking with them frequently on their IGP progress.

Students find that the flexibility of our program puts a lot of responsibility on their shoulders. It is a time for students to understand that getting work done will take organization and dedication on their part. Teachers called Learning Managers are always there either in our physical lab location or via email if students have questions but the student is ultimately responsible for their learning experience.

If you are ready to be in the drivers seat and be responsible for your own high school experience we are the school for you!



# SAGE Academy... Where the Possibilities are Endless

by Karen Jongeward, Administrative Associate

I would run out of fingers and toes if I counted the number of times I've had another staff member say to me throughout the years, "let's start our own school...we'll run things the right way". That's as far as it ever went. None of us, even for a remote moment, truly considered starting up a school. That is until I met Marilyn Thompson, Diane Scholten, and Todd Cota. Three extremely intelligent, courageous, passionate, and determined educators who sat on a backyard deck, amongst the trees one beautiful sunny Saturday afternoon, sharing their visions of the quintessence of schools. The difference in this case, however, was that this tremendous trio did more than talk the talk...they walked the talk. With their vision and determination, completely unaware of the life altering commitment they were about to undertake, they began the journey into developing and opening a secondary charter school.

After a laborious year of research, phone calls, documents, contracts, real estate searches, curriculum assessments, and extreme stamina their dream became reality. SAGE Academy Secondary

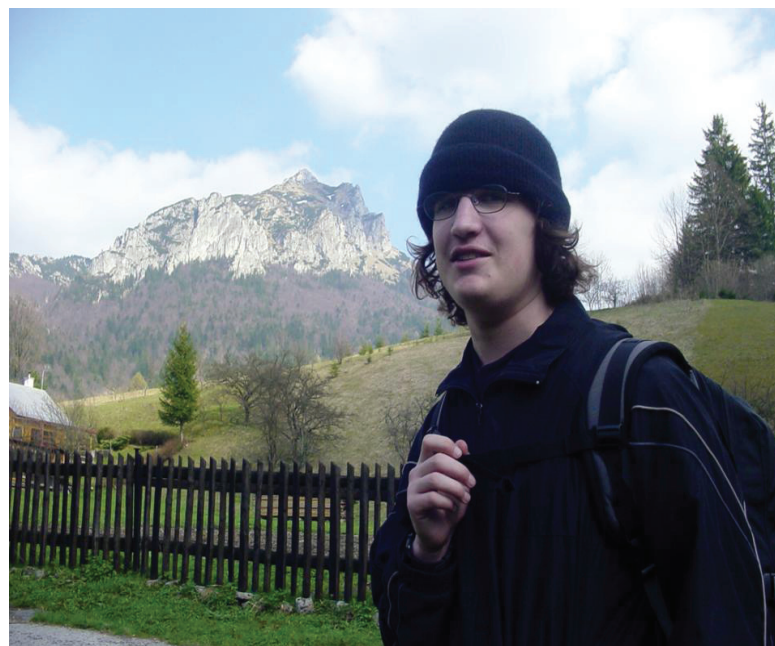
Charter School was born on September 29, 2002. Weighing in at 64 teenage students and 7 enthusiastic staff. Home to SAGE Academy is 3900 85<sup>th</sup> Avenue North in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota.

The vision/philosophy hasn't changed since that first day on the deck. SAGE's philosophy was, and continues to be, to provide an academic environment of excellence for secondary students, to encourage life-long learning, to create awareness of the earth's limited resources, to promote understanding of social justice issues throughout the world, to promote active participation of students as citizens of the world, and to offer multiple and diverse opportunities for leadership in team dynamics and problem solving experience.

Students Achieving Global Excellence...and that they have. In three years, the students of SAGE have grown together in their efforts to achieve life-long learning through team building, oral communication, listening, creative thinking, and goal setting. Project based curriculum and expeditionary learning are two strategies that set SAGE apart from traditional instruction. Individual and group projects allow students to identify

and develop their individual strengths by giving students the flexibility to create projects that coincide with their forte. Expeditionary learning involves diverse opportunities consisting of required expeditions once a month with pre and post reflective assignments and two other larger, elective expeditions. The required expeditions include a three day trip at the beginning of the school year, which has included; environmental learning centers, Eagle Bluffs, and Deep Portage. The opportunity for students to participate in one of two large expeditions each year has included trips to Ireland, Costa Rica, Paris, Prague, and New York City.

SAGE is a labor of love that has evolved into a culture that includes students, staff, parents, the community, and the environment. The students and staff of SAGE Academy strive for, and have been extremely successful accomplishing, one common goal; the acknowledgement, acceptance, and appreciation of each other's differences, limitations, and strengths. SAGE is a charter school that provides brain compatible learning as a choice and a challenge as well as an opportunity. For more information call 763-315-4020.



*Hiking the Carpathian Mountains in Slovakia*



*Hanging out on the Ha'penny Bridge in Dublin, Ireland*

## STUDENTS and TEACHERS

### GET INVOLVED

Charter Vision Editorial  
Board  
Needs New  
Members

The first meeting for the 05-06 school year is  
September 15th

**11:30 - 1:00**

**at Liberty High Charter  
School**

**call 507-469-0595  
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Curriculum is available for free online at [www.mnchartervision.org](http://www.mnchartervision.org).

For more information about Charter Vision email [info@mnchartervision.org](mailto:info@mnchartervision.org)  
or call 507-469-0595



## Higher Ground Academy Charter School Wins Top Honors in National Youth I T Challenge.



Academics Par Excellence, a student-created business plan for online tutorial programs for ACT and PSAT test preparation for high school students, won top honors at the second annual "Making the Business: Youth IT Challenge" hosted by Ed Gordon of National Public Radio's News and Notes. The championship team was composed of five Higher Ground students and a student from St. Agnes. The Youth IT Challenge (YITI) program is a technology-based plan competition, which began in January through the U.S. and hosted more than 150 students vying to compete in the national event by winning locally sponsored Youth IT Challenges in their home communities. Members of the championship team were Farhiya Abdi, Michelle Finley, Mohamed Adani, Imani Church Stubberfiled, Mahamed Jama and Duad Mohamed.

This year's 10-week program was hosted by the National Urban League affiliate offices in nine cities: Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Seattle, St. Paul, and Washington. The affiliates and local business professionals assisted students in learning basic research techniques

and market analysis so they could evaluate viability of ideas and develop presentation skills.

The Making the Business: Youth IT Challenge is one of the nation's only entrepreneurial and technology-based competitions aimed at minority youth. The competition was designed by the National Urban League and Microsoft to engage 14-18 year old youth in the development of an original IT-based business. The competition was held in the historic Apollo Theatre in Harlem, N.Y., where student teams followed the age old Apollo tradition of rubbing the Tree of Hole, a tree stump located on the stage, for good luck.

The national champion, team Academic Par Excellence received \$15,000 in prizes from the program sponsors. Each student received a Hewlett Packard laptop, a printer, software, including Microsoft Office 2003, digital Image Suite 10 and Plus! SuperPack for Windows XP, a notebook optical most and a \$719 U.S. Saving Bond.

## Schoolcraft Learning Community: *Caring and Traditions Build Strong Foundation*

Schoolcraft Learning Community is a K-8 charter school located in the woods of Northern Minnesota, just northeast of Bemidji, housed in Lac du Bois of the Concordia Language Villages. We opened our doors on September 5, 2000, and watched as 150 excited young people got off the bus for their first day at a new type of school. As the first charter school in the Bemidji area, there were many misconceptions about what it meant to be a charter school. Now, going into our sixth year, there are still many misconceptions about what it means, but most days, it feels like we are making some headway. Our enrollment continues to be steady at 160 students.

Schoolcraft Learning Community exists to help develop individuals to be self-directed, lifelong learners who have the skills and knowledge to confidently and compassionately navigate in the world. We offer multi-age classrooms with two-grade groupings for Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grades. We strive to keep our class sizes limited to eighteen or less.

Schoolcraft Learning Community is an Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB) school and maintains ELOB's 10 design principles as the framework of our community. You may view the design principles at [www.elob.org](http://www.elob.org). The primary method of instruction at Schoolcraft is through learning expeditions. Learning expeditions are in-depth investigations into a topic or a learning area. These expeditions incorporate ideas and learning goals from as many of the subject areas as possible, knowing that the more you can associate one with another, the better the understanding and retention of knowledge. The expeditions aim to encourage student participation in the developmental process, as well as for student proficiency in the topics studied.

Schoolcraft Learning Community has a multitude of strengths, including, but not limited to: a caring community environment; mentoring between older and younger students; a wonderful strings and choral program; specialist areas integrated into our expedition curriculum; many environmental

learning experiences; service learning incorporated into expeditions; parent contacts at least 3 times per year; parent involvement encouraged; wonderful lunches served family style every day; all 160 student eat together; older students helping the younger; French instruction, portfolio documentation of student's growth, and hands-on project based learning.

Schoolcraft Learning Community has had many successes, including, but not limited to: very competitive test scores - many times the highest in the area; a waiting list for each grade level; a great community feel; financial stability and strong fund balance; a great staff and low staff turnover; and staff and students excited about going to school every day.

One of my favorite start-up memories is that when we opened our doors, many of the classrooms didn't even have chairs yet...the students were involved in actually putting together the classrooms. I also remember fondly feeling thrilled to have made it through the first year - feeling like we hung on by our fingernails - but that we made it! It was a great feeling of accomplishment, and we have worked hard to make it better every year.

Schoolcraft faces challenges every

year, as do all schools. One of our greatest challenges is the relationship development with the Bemidji district. We have been working hard for many years to reach an agreement to participate in extra-curricular sports. We continually work on public perception of us as a charter school in our community and accountability at the state level. Another challenge that we continue to face is the fact that we completely move in and move out of our site each year, as Concordia Language Villages uses the site in the summer months for their programming.

Schoolcraft Learning Community has created many traditions along the way. The one that sticks in my mind right now is the 8<sup>th</sup> grade culminating fieldwork trip to the Black Hills, held following graduation. Additionally, the 8<sup>th</sup> graders are all required to teach the class for a week on a topic related to the Black Hills. Other fun traditions include our Fall Festival, WinterFest, and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade sponsored fundraiser dance.

Schoolcraft Learning Community welcomes visitors to our school. We enjoy sharing our story and our wonderful site. Please make sure to come around lunch time for an additional treat! You can contact me at [shar@schoolcraft.org](mailto:shar@schoolcraft.org), or by calling (218)586-3284.





Minnesota’s Charter Schools - Alphabetical by City

Balaton	Yankton Country School	9 - 12	507-734-2677 <a href="#">www.yanktoncountryschool.com</a>
Bemidji	Schoolcraft Learning Community	K - 8	218-586-3284 <a href="#">www.schoolcraft.org</a>
Bemidji	TrekNorth High School	9 - 12	218-444-1888 <a href="#">www.treknorth.org</a>
Bemidji	Voyageurs Expeditionary High School	9 - 12	218-586-8347 <a href="#">www.vehs.org</a>
Bigelow	Worthington Area Language Academy	K-8	507-683-2004 <a href="#">www.walacharter.com</a>
Blaine	Liberty High Charter School	Ages 16-21	763-786-4799 <a href="#">www.libertyhigh.us</a>
Brooklyn Center	Odyssey Charter School	K-8	763-971-8200 <a href="#">www.odysseycharter.org/</a>
Brooklyn Park	Excell Academy for Higher Learning	K-6	763-533-0500 <a href="#">www.excellacademy.org</a>
Brooklyn Park	SAGE Academy Charter School	9 - 12	763-315-4020 <a href="#">www.sagecademy.org</a>
Burnsville	Sobriety High (South Campus)	9 - 12	952-277-0809 <a href="#">www.sobrietyhigh.org</a>
Chaska	World Learner School of Chaska	1 - 8	952-368-7398 <a href="#">www.worldlearnerschool.com</a>
Columbia Heights	Academy of BioScience	5 - 7*	763-571-5039 <a href="#">www.academyofbioscience.org</a>
Coon Rapids	Coon Rapids Learning Center	Ages 16-21	763-862-9223 <a href="#">www.crlc.charter.k12.mn.us</a>
Cross Lake	Crosslake Community School	K-8	218-692-5437 <a href="#">www.crosslakekids.org</a>
Dakota	Dakota Area Community School	K-5	507-643-6869 <a href="#">www.dacsweb.orgÿ</a>
Duluth	Duluth Public Schools Academy (DPSA)	K-8	218-728-9556 <a href="#">www.edisonschools.com/sites/duluth</a>
Duluth	Harbor City International School	9 - 12	218-722-7574 <a href="#">www.harborcityschool.org</a>
Duluth	Lake Superior High School	9 - 12	218-529-2468 <a href="#">www.lshs.net</a>
Duluth	North Shore Community School	PreK-6	218-525-0663 <a href="#">www.northshorecommunityschool.org</a>
Eagan	Paideia Academy	K-4*	952-807-3760 <a href="#">www.paideiaacademy.org</a>
Echo	E.C.H.O. Charter School	K-12	507-925-4143 <a href="#">www.echocharter.com</a>
Eden Prairie	Eagle Ridge Academy	6, 7, & 9*	952-746-7760 <a href="#">www.eagleridgeacademy.orgÿ</a>
Edina	Sobriety High (West Campus)	9 - 12	952-831-7212 <a href="#">www.sobrietyhigh.org</a>
Emily	Emily Charter School	PreK-6	218-763-3401
Faribault	Discovery Public School of Faribault	7 - 12	507-333-1320 <a href="#">www.isd4081.org</a>
Forest Lake	Lakes International Language Academy	K-4 in 2004*	651-464-0771 <a href="#">www.lakesinternational.org</a>
Forest Lake	North Lakes Academy	1 - 9	651-982-2773 <a href="#">www.northlakesacademy.org</a>
Golden Valley	LoveWorks Academy for Visual & Performing Arts		612-529-2912 <a href="#">www.lovetheartsacademy.org</a>
Grand Marais	Great Expectations School	K-8	218-387-9322 <a href="#">www.greatexpectationsschool.comÿ</a>
Grand Rapids	Northern Lights Community School	6 - 12	218-326-2701 <a href="#">www.nlcschool.org</a>
Green Isle	Green Isle Community School	K-6	507-326-7144 <a href="#">www.greenislecommunityschool.org</a>
Henderson	EdVisions Off Campus	7 - 12	507-248-3101 <a href="#">www.eochs.k12.mn.us</a>
Henderson	Minnesota New Country School	7 - 12	507-248-3353 <a href="#">www.mnncs.k12.mn.us</a>
Hopkins	Main Street School of Performing Arts	9-10 in 2004*	952-224-1340 <a href="#">www.performing-arts-school.org</a>
Houston	Ridgeway Community School	PreK-5	507-454-9566 <a href="#">www.ridgewayschool.org</a>
Hutchinson	New Century Charter School	7 - 12	320-234-3660 <a href="#">www.newcenturycharter.com</a>
Inver Grove Heights	Tarek ibn Ziyad Academy	K-5	651-457-7072 <a href="#">www.tizacademy.com</a>
LaCrescent	LaCrescent Montessori Academy	PreK-8	507-895-4054 <a href="#">www.amshq.org ÿ</a>
Lafayette	Lafayette Charter School	K-8	507-228-8943 <a href="#">www.lafayettetecharter.k12.mn.us</a>
Lindstrom	TRIO Wolf Creek Distance Learning	9 - 12	651-213-2017 <a href="#">http://wolfcreek.chisagolakes.k12.mn.us</a>
Little Canada	Agricultural & Food Sciences Academy	9 - 12	651-415-5370 <a href="#">www.agacademy.comÿ</a>
Mankato	RiverBend Academy Charter School	7 - 12	507-387-5524 <a href="#">www.riverbendacademy.com</a>
Milroy	MILROY Area Charter School	K-4	507-336-2563
Minneapolis	Ascension Academy	9-10 in 2004*	612-465-8121 <a href="#">www.ascensionacademy.org</a>
Minneapolis	Aurora Charter School	PreK-4	612-870 -3891 <a href="#">www.auroraschool.com</a>
Minneapolis	Cedar Riverside Community School	K-8	612-339-5767 <a href="#">www.crcs-school.org</a>
Minneapolis	Dugsi Academy	K-5	612-668-9785 <a href="#">www.dugsiacademy.org</a>
Minneapolis	El Colegio Charter School	9 - 12	612-728-5728 <a href="#">www.el-colegio.org</a>
Minneapolis	Four Directions	9 - 12	612-588-0183 <a href="#">www.4directionsmn.com</a>
Minneapolis	Fraser Academy	K-2 in 2004*	612-465-8600 <a href="#">www.fraseracademy.org</a>
Minneapolis	Friendship Academy of Fine Arts	K-4	612-879-6703 <a href="#">www.friendshipacademy.org</a>
Minneapolis	Harvest Preparatory School	K-6	612-381-9743 <a href="#">www.harvestprep.orgÿ</a>
Minneapolis	Hmong Academy	9-10 in 2004	612-377-0221 <a href="#">www.hmongacademy.org</a>
Minneapolis	Lighthouse Academy of Nations	9 - 10*	612-722-2555
Minneapolis	Mary McEvoy Early Literacy Academy	PreK-1*	612-807-6255 <a href="#">www.marymcevoyacademy.org</a>
Minneapolis	Minneapolis Academy	5-6 in 2004*	612-455-1340 <a href="#">www.minneapolisacademy.org</a>
Minneapolis	Minnesota International Middle School	5 - 8	612-821-6470 <a href="#">www.tiesmn.org</a>
Minneapolis	Minnesota Internship Center	9 - 12	612-722-5470 <a href="#">www.mnic.org</a>
Minneapolis	Minnesota Online High School	11-12*	612-227-8499 <a href="#">www.mnohs.org</a>
Minneapolis	Minnesota Transitions Charter School	K-12	612-722-9013 <a href="#">www.mtcs.org</a>
Minneapolis	New City School	K-6	612-623-3309 <a href="#">www.newcitycharterschool.org</a>
Minneapolis	New Millennium Academy	K-8	612-374-2694
Minneapolis	New Visions School	K-6	612-706-5566 <a href="#">www.actg.org</a>
Minneapolis	Oh Day Aki (Heart of the Earth)	K-12	612-331-8862 <a href="#">www.americanindianeducation.org</a>
Minneapolis	Prairie Seeds Academy	K-5*	612-302-8555 <a href="#">www.prairieseedsacademy.org</a>
Minneapolis	Sojourner Truth Academy	K-6	612-588-3599 <a href="#">www.sojournertruthacademy.org</a>
Minneapolis	Soul Academy	K-5	763-586-6058

Minneapolis	Twin Cities International Elem School	PreK-4	612-821-6470 <a href="#">www.tiesmn.org</a>
Minneapolis	Ubah Medical Academy	9-10 in 2004*	612-821-6470 <a href="#">www.ubahmedicalacademy.org</a>
Minneapolis	Watershed High School	9 - 12	612-871-4363 <a href="#">www.watershedhs.org</a>
Minneapolis	WISE (Woodson Inst for Student Exc.)	K-5	612-522-4022
Minnesota City	Riverway Learning Community	PreK-12	507-689-2844 <a href="#">www.rwlc.org</a>
Monticello	Swan River Montessori School	K-6	763-271-SWAN <a href="#">www.swanrivermontessori.org</a>
Morton	Eci’Nompa Woonspe’ Charter School	7 - 12	507-697-9055
Naytahwaush	Naytahwaush Community School	K-6	218-983-3285 x 1251
Nerstrand	Nerstrand Elementary School	K-5	507-333-6850 <a href="#">www.nerstrand.charter.k12.mn.us</a>
New Brighton	Family Academy	PreK-9	651-697-1740 <a href="#">www.familyacademymn.org</a>
New Heights School	St. Croix Preparatory Academy	K-7 in 2004*	651-379-6160 <a href="#">www.stcroixprep.orgÿ</a>
Northfield	ARTech	6 - 12	507-663-8806 <a href="#">www.artech.k12.mn.usÿ</a>
Northfield	Prairie Creek Community School	K-5	507-645-9640 <a href="#">www.prairiecreek.org</a>
Northfield	Village School of Northfield	K-12	507-663-8990 <a href="#">www.villageschool.charter.k12.mn.us</a>
Osakis	Lakes Area Charter School	9 - 12	320-859-5302 <a href="#">www.lakesareacharterschool.org</a>
Owatonna	Recovery School of Southern Minnesota	7 - 12	507-835-0554
Pillager	Pillager Area Charter School	9 - 12	218-746-3875 <a href="#">www.pacschool.com</a>
Plymouth	Beacon Academy	K-3 in 2004*	763-546-9999 <a href="#">www.beaconacademy.com</a>
Ramsey	PACT Charter School	K-12	763-712-4200 <a href="#">www.pact.charter.k12.mn.us</a>
Richfield	Partnership Academy	K-6	612-866-3630 <a href="#">www.paschool.org</a>
Rochester	Adam Abdulle Academy	K-8	507-202-7488 <a href="#">www.aaa.k12.mn.us</a>
Rochester	Rochester Off-Campus High School	9 - 12	507-282-3325 <a href="#">www.rocchs.org</a>
Rochester	Studio Academy	9 - 12	507-529-1662 <a href="#">www.studioacademyhs.org</a>
Rogers	Kaleidoscope Charter School	K-8	763-428-1890 <a href="#">www.kaleidoscopecharter.org</a>
Saint Cloud	STRIDE Academy	K-5	320-203-0690 <a href="#">www.strideacademy.org</a>
Saint Paul	Academia Cesar Chavez	K-8	651-778-2940 <a href="#">www.cesarchavezschool.com</a>
Saint Paul	Achieve Language Academy	PreK-8	651-738-4875
Saint Paul	Augsburg Academy of Health Careers	9 - 10*	651-645-5698 <a href="#">www.augsburgacademy.org</a>
Saint Paul	Avalon Charter School	7 - 12	651-649-5495 <a href="#">www.avalonschool.org</a>
Saint Paul	BlueSky Charter School	7 - 12	651-642-0888 <a href="#">www.blueskyschool.org</a>
Saint Paul	City Academy	9 - 12	651-298-4624 <a href="#">www.cityacademy.orgÿ</a>
Saint Paul	Community of Peace Academy	K-12	651-776-5151 <a href="#">www.cpa.charter.k12.mn.us</a>
Saint Paul	Concordia Creative Learning Academy	PreK-6	651-649-5795 <a href="#">www.cclaonline.org</a>
Saint Paul	Cyber Village Academy	4 - 8	651-523-7170 <a href="#">www.cva.k12.mn.us</a>
Saint Paul	Face to Face Academy	9 - 12	651-772-5555
Saint Paul	Family Academy	PreK-9	651-697-1740 <a href="#">www.familyacademymn.org</a>
Saint Paul	General John Vessey Leadership Acad	9 - 12	651-206-2980 <a href="#">www.vesseyacademy.org</a>
Saint Paul	Great River School	7-10 in 2004*	651-305-2780 <a href="#">www.greatriverschool.org</a>
Saint Paul	High School for Recording Arts	9 - 12	651-287-0890 <a href="#">www.hsr.a.org</a>
Saint Paul	Higher Ground Academy	K-12	651-645-1000 <a href="#">www.hgacademy.org</a>
Saint Paul	HOPE Academy	K-6	651-796-4500 <a href="#">www.hope-school.org</a>
Saint Paul	Jennings Experiential High School	9 - 12	651-649-5403 <a href="#">www.jehs.org</a>
Saint Paul	Metro Deaf School	PreK-8	651-224-3995 <a href="#">www.metrodeafschool.org</a>
Saint Paul	Minnesota Business Academy	9 - 12	651-726-2100 <a href="#">www.mnbusinessacademy.org</a>
Saint Paul	Minnesota North Star Academy	9-11 in 2004*	651-771-2000 <a href="#">www.mnnorthstaracademy.org</a>
Saint Paul	New Spirit School	K-8	651-225-9177 <a href="#">www.newspiritschool.com</a>
Saint Paul	New Voyage Academy	K-8	651-649-5402 <a href="#">www.flconline.org</a>
Saint Paul	Nova Classical Academy	K-6	651-227-8622 <a href="#">www.novaclassical.org</a>
Saint Paul	St Paul Conservatory/Performing Artists	9 - 12	651-290-2225 <a href="#">www.stpaulconservatory.org</a>
Saint Paul	Skills for Tomorrow High School	9 - 12	651-647-6000 <a href="#">www.skillsfortomorrow.org</a>
Saint Paul	Sobriety High District Office	9 - 12	651-773-8378 <a href="#">www.sobrietyhigh.orgÿ</a>
Saint Paul	Twin Cities Academy	6 - 8	651-205-4797 <a href="#">www.tca.k12.mn.us</a>
Saint Paul	Twin Cities German Immersion School	K-1*	651-492-7106 <a href="#">www.germanschool-mn.org</a>
Saint Paul	Urban Academy	K-3	651-215-9419 <a href="#">www.urbanacademymn.org</a>
Stillwater	New Heights School	K-12	651-439-1962
Tofte	Birch Grove Community School	K-5	218-663-7977 <a href="#">www.birchgroveschool.com</a>
Waite Park	Great River Education Center	7 - 12	320-258-3117
Waseca	TEAM Academy	K-6	507-835-3000 <a href="#">www.waseca.k12.mn.us/TEAMÿ</a>
West Saint Paul	River Heights Charter School	9-12 in 2004*	651-457-RHCS <a href="#">www.riverheightscharter.org</a>
Winona	Bluffview Montessori School	PreK-8*	507-452-2807 <a href="#">www.bluffviewmontessori.org</a>
Woodbury	Math & Science Academy	7 - 12	651-578-7507 <a href="#">www.mnmsa.org</a>

For more information about charter schools, please visit:

The MN Association of Charter Schools

The Center for School Change

Education Evolving

MN Dept of Education

[www.mncharterschools.org](#)

[www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/school-change](#)

[www.educationevolving.org](#)

[www.education.state.mn.us](#)