

# fine print

a careful look at school reform

HUBERT H. HUMPHREY INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CENTER FOR SCHOOL CHANGE

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## Still moving forward...

# CSC embarks on second decade of school reform

Created by a \$2.3 million grant from the Blandin Foundation in October 1990, the Center for School Change set out to promote school reform in several ways:

- developing new models of schools through grants, training and technical assistance;
- increasing knowledge and support for educational reform; and
- stimulating change in state institutions.



**Celebrating the announcement of two grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation** at Minnesota New Country School Sept. 8, are Southwest Minnesota Foundation President Sherry Ristau, CSC Director Joe Nathan, former CSC Program Associate Betty Radcliffe, and Gates-EdVisions Project Director Doug Thomas. (Stories begin on pages 1 and 7.)

Additional funding from the Annenberg and Blandin Foundations in 1995, along with support from the University of Minnesota, allowed CSC to begin a second phase of work with grant sites around the state. Since then, twenty communities have implemented school improvement projects with Phase II funding, and in a few cases, projects have

expanded to include more than one school.

Although long known for its

work in rural Minnesota, the Center for School Change now includes several projects in the

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Twin Cities as well as two school districts in Ohio. Here is a brief overview of current CSC efforts.

**Schools First**, an initiative funded by the Cargill Foundation, works with twelve K-8 schools in Minneapolis and surrounding suburbs to improve students' basic skills and increase family and community involvement in education. Selection of sites is complete, and work will continue over a period of four years. In addition to grant funds, sites will receive ongoing technical assistance, and will have opportunities to learn from other participants in the project.

**Work with large public high schools in St. Paul, Cincinnati and West Clermont, Ohio** is supported by an \$8 million grant given by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in September 2000. Through this project, school districts will convert existing large high schools into smaller schools of choice. The project seeks to produce several models in which large high school buildings will be converted to smaller, more personalized schools-within-schools. David Evertz and Kwame McDonald have joined the CSC staff to work in St. Paul.

**Rural schools and communities** located throughout Minnesota have received a variety of planning, implementation and expansion grants as well as technical support over the past ten years. Primary support for grants and staff came through funding supplied by the Blandin and Annenberg Foundations, with additional funds for projects made available by the six Minnesota Initiative Funds. **Beginning in July, primary technical support for outstate projects will come from Terri Anderson**, outreach coordinator in northwest and west central Minnesota.

**The New Twin Cities Charter School Project**, under direction of Nancy Smith, has provided technical assistance and/or start-up funds to over 30 groups seeking to start new charter schools in Minneapolis and St. Paul. NTCCSP has had financial support from the St. Paul, Minneapolis, St. Paul Companies, General Mills and TCF Foundations, and recently received additional operating funds from the Frey Family Foundation. The project has posted a charter school developers' manual, *The Charter School Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide to Charter School Development*, on the CSC

Web site.

Grant funds from the Cargill Foundation and technical help from CSC are supporting **new models for teacher preparation**. Six schools or school districts located throughout Minnesota are developing innovative methods of preparing teachers in areas where shortages exist.

**Research and information** continue to be elements of the Center for School Change agenda. The center is currently working on a report due out this fall that will discuss exciting, effective small schools and schools that share facilities with other organizations.

With support from the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, CSC is attempting to identify solutions to the problem of shortages of high quality teachers in some areas. Superintendents in Midwestern states, including Minnesota, were surveyed to identify the most promising approaches to attracting and retaining high quality teachers. A soon-to-be-completed report will be available through the Center for School Change.

For further information about reports, call 612-626-1834.

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CSC staff: Rural Minn. – Terri Anderson, Northwest/West Central Minn. (218-473-2686); Vicki Nelson, Northeast/East Central Minn. (218-326-9044); Doug Thomas and Ron Newell, Southern Minn. (507-248-3738). U of M office – Director, Joe Nathan; Associate Director, Debra Hare; Director of New Twin Cities Charter School Project, Nancy Smith; St. Paul Project Staff – David Evertz and Kwame McDonald; and Senior Office Specialist Martha Hardy (612-626-1834). *Fine Print* editor, Vicki Nelson.

Visit our Web site at [www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/school-change/](http://www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/school-change/)

# Study of CSC projects provides insights on community collaboration and learning

Over a period of three years, beginning in 1997, Rainbow Research, a Minneapolis-based consulting firm, took a close look at Center for School Change projects in rural communities.

*Strengthening Schools and Communities through Collaboration*, published in January, concluded that “carefully developed collaborative efforts can achieve meaningful benefits for students, schools and the broader community.”

Those benefits include: bringing community resources into schools; connecting students and schools to their communities; building community pride in students and communities alike; making school facilities more accessible to community use; and pooling resources to create facilities and programs that benefit both schools and communities.

The report notes that projects met some obstacles along the way—issues related to logistics, resistance to change and long-held perceptions that the best way for rural students to *get ahead* is to *get out* of the places where they’ve grown up.

Rainbow Research concludes that CSC made positive contributions to progress in sites through conferences and workshops, assistance from outreach staff and financial support for expenses related to innovation. The report also suggests five lessons

## Active, hands-on learning has many benefits, including higher test scores

By Joe Nathan

Researchers found many benefits for the kind of active, hands-on learning described elsewhere in this newsletter. For example, an outside evaluator looked at writing samples from three communities where students had written as part of community service projects. His conclusion: There was “significant improvement” by students at all three schools, and “strong evidence of positive student writing outcomes.”

What about test scores? Another evaluator looked at students’ scores on Minnesota’s statewide and nationally normed tests. He concluded that, for the most part, “where there is longitudinal data, CSC sites showed better than average growth in basic skills.”

Some people wonder if schools must sacrifice academic achievement for the social benefits of combining classroom work with community research and service. The answer from CSC sites is “NO!” CSC sites show that well-designed programs improve students’ attitudes, help them learn how to be effective citizens and increase the kind of academic skills measured by both applied writing assessments and standardized tests.

about school-community collaborations based on Rainbow Research staff members’ visits to sites and data collected in surveys:

**“Time and patience are required** to build the relationships necessary for strong school-community collaboration.

Projects typically underestimated the amount of time and attention required to build strong ownership, trust and participation by diverse stakeholders.

**“Innovation and collaboration live in creative tension** in these projects. The best projects allowed creative innovators to put

new ideas into action quickly *and* build broader ownership and stability through appropriate oversight, governance and ongoing information sharing. Typically, this meant forming a broad-based steering committee and giving core teachers freedom to innovate.

**“Strong, supportive leadership** by principals and superintendents contributes to success. Determined teachers and citizens made progress without supportive school administrators in some sites, but had more difficulty. The most effective administrators  
(continued on page 4)

(*Study of CSC ...* from page 3) played roles far more active than simply getting out of the way of innovative teachers and community members. [Administrators] can make valuable contributions by running interference with resistant individuals and policies within the school system, brokering connections and boosting understanding of the new approach in the community, providing professional validation to the frontline innovative teachers.

**“Starting small**, with a single school or *school-within-school*, may be best for generating momentum for school-community collaboration. Focusing on one or a few doable collaborative projects can make the most of limited initial energy.... Some of the strongest projects had a single school, or a program within a school that involved a handful of teachers, at their core. Even successful K-12 ventures had a few *flagship* community partnership projects.

**“Communities possess deep resources** for leadership and teaching; the challenge is on educators to connect with these. Projects thrived when they had active community leadership that provided vision to persevere through the practical and bureaucratic difficulties, and when they enlivened students’ learning experiences through involvement of knowledgeable community members and topics. Teachers and administrators, as the people with day-to-day responsibility for guiding student learning, have the most power to tap or block these community resources.”

## Resilient and effective Red River Valley of the North Curriculum survives

By Terri Anderson  
In 1997, a flood took away the East Grand Forks Middle School, but it didn’t take away the spirit and determination of the people who loved their school.

Four years later, students, staff and parents are enjoying their new sixth through eighth grade middle school, and the school-

wide Red River Valley of the North Curriculum is going strong.

The curriculum, which was designed by staff nine years ago, takes advantage of the living laboratory surrounding the East Grand Forks area. Students spend a good deal of time outside school walls studying the Red River, learning about local

businesses, helping out at the Heritage Center, caring for their school’s prairie and collecting larva from the beautiful butterfly garden outside the school’s back door.

Sixth graders focus on the Red River Valley of the present, seventh graders study the Red River Valley of the past and eighth graders speculate about the Red River Valley of the future.

Eighth grader Kelly Gust says, “The hands-on



**East Grand Forks Middle School teachers and students** gather around a bridge in their butterfly garden. Pictured are (front row) Jessica Wilhelm, Teri Hammarback, Kelly Gust, (middle row) Dustyn Lee, Justin Atkins, Courtney Jones, Nicole Wilhelm, Kayla Wahl and (back row) Ida Carlin, Jerry Wenzel, Cassandra Whitney, Ashley Atkins and Rachael Tretter.

projects we do help me to learn better. And they're fun, too."

Principal Bob Simonson believes the thematic, project-based curriculum is the "best way to teach kids," and that part of its success is attributed to lots of community involvement. For example, each year staff and students help out with the annual Heritage Center celebration. This year, teachers did mini sessions on soap carving, wheat weaving and more. Students sold Minnesota sundaes (warm honey and sunflower seeds drizzled over vanilla ice cream) and sponsored a barn dance featuring accordion music for 200 guests.

Sixth grade teacher Teri Hammarback agrees that widespread community support has been critical to the success of the school. Staff members have created and maintained support by including everyone, even the naysayers, in what they're doing. The use of media, presentations at school board meetings and a get together at the beginning of each year are some of their helpful strategies. Having fun is a priority, too! This year's kick off meeting was called *Shake Up*. Guests ate hamburgers and shakes while learning about the Red River Valley of the North Curriculum and how they could get involved.

Hammarback emphasizes that ultimately it's the commitment of staff that has made the project possible.

She says, "The Red River Valley of the North Curriculum is a passion. It's fun and that's how it (teaching and learning) is sup-

## **Red River Valley of the North Curriculum East Grand Forks Middle School East Grand Forks, Minnesota**

Phase I Planning Grant 1992

Phase I Implementation Grant 1993

Phase I Expansion Grant 1995

**Key Concepts** – Interdisciplinary, place-based curriculum for middle school students in grades 6–8. Includes service learning and self-directed learning and assessment as well as team teaching.

posed to be."

The school definitely has an upbeat atmosphere. Students are engaged in projects and staff members pitch in to help one another all of the time. Visitors can feel the team spirit and warm collegiality among staff members.

Last spring, students and staff volunteered many evenings to create a butterfly garden. Industrial technology students built a bridge and arbors. Many people helped plant trees, shrubs and perennials that fill in a landscape designed to attract butterflies. Students study larva and mark butterflies in the growth lab where they also grow milkweed from seed.

The garden was designed by seventh grade teacher Jerry Wenzel, 1998 National Science Teacher of the Year. What he likes best about the Red River Valley of the North Curriculum is that students get to see and experience things they normally wouldn't.

Wenzel says the Red River Valley of the North Curriculum is still going strong after nine

years and a flood, "Because it's working."

Teachers report that student behavior improves when students are excited about their learning. High expectations for behavior and achievement are met and even exceeded.

"I marvel at what the kids can do," says seventh grade teacher Ida Carlin.

One might also marvel at what the adults in this exciting learning community have been able to do. The staff uses common planning time to evaluate its efforts and make changes based on student feedback.

Carlin says, "The staff has not been resistant to change."

If anything, the desire to do what's best for kids has started an evolution in East Grand Forks, and maybe even in the education world beyond.

(Part of the Red River Valley of the North Curriculum, *Investigating Your Own Backyard*, is at [www.geocities.com/backyardegf/](http://www.geocities.com/backyardegf/))

# A vision is realized at Minnesota New Country School

By Terri Anderson

Eight years ago, a group of thoughtful innovators created a school based on their beliefs about how students learn best. Their result is a distinct new model for public education: Minnesota New Country School.

A central element of the MNCS program is the idea that each of its 125 students should understand and be able to apply knowledge. Instead of typical courses, students progress through a series of projects tied to standards required by Minnesota's Profile of Learning. Students work individually and in small groups on projects they have designed with the assistance of their advisors and the approval of their parents.

There are no typical classes or classrooms, and the facility built

mentors or implementing their project plans.

Learning in the community is one of the cornerstones of Minnesota New Country School. Real-life, meaningful opportunities include service learning, school-business partnerships, apprenticeships and development of student businesses. Among students' current projects are a computerized embroidery business, a 450-tree organic apple orchard and an effort to raise goats for wool.

Students create projects based on their own interests and defend their ideas for projects, in part, by describing how their study will impact them, their community and the world around them. Quality of work, rather than time spent in class, is the standard at

individuals who create them and give students a chance to "look at a few things incredibly in depth rather than superficially," according to facilitator Dee Thomas.

Students demonstrate what they've learned in a number of different ways, including public presentations three times each year. Students steadily increase their standardized test scores and complete all of the 24 high state standards before graduation. The interdisciplinary nature of their projects allows them to work on several state graduation standards at one time.

In addition to being an innovative program that helps young people succeed, MNCS has a unique model for governance and management. As a charter school, MNCS is not restricted by typical school district bureaucracies. The school's board, composed of MNCS teachers and parents, is directly responsible for all decisions that affect the school and its students—all the way from planning the budget to hiring new staff members.

Staff members share administrative responsibilities. A year-round schedule—in session for five weeks and off for one week—gives facilitators a chance to catch up on paper work and concentrate on staff development, something that has been key to their success.

As a participant in the EdVisions Cooperative, MNCS receives services to help administer tasks

## Minnesota New Country School Henderson, Minnesota

Phase I Implementation Grant 1994

Phase I Expansion Grant 1995

**Key Concepts** – Project-based charter school for students in grades 7–12. Year-round operation. Cornerstones include parent involvement, teacher and student accountability, the community as a place to learn, technology as a tool for learning and Coalition of Essential Schools principles.

with the help of community partners features a built-in Harvestore silo that serves as a stage. Students work on rigorous projects at workstations equipped with the latest technology, and they often work off-site doing research, spending time with

MNCS; nonetheless, students usually spend approximately 100 hours on a project. They must document their learning and consult with an expert in their field of study.

Projects are as unique as the

such as payroll, insurance benefits and professional development. EdVisions is a teacher owned cooperative where members control all of the resources that affect them and their students. It is the only teacher owned cooperative in the nation. (See related story below.)

“We have created a system that works because it relies on site based management and supports brain-based theories and practices,” says Ron Newell, one of the original MNCS planners and teachers, who is now learning program director for the EdVisions Cooperative.

“The strength of MNCS,” says Newell, “is that the daily routines fit the MNCS vision.” The staff takes time to reflect and refocus—never losing sight of its mission to provide “a learning community committed to personalized, project-based learning with demonstrated achievement.”

Doug Thomas, former CSC outreach coordinator in southern Minn. agrees. He credits teach-

ers’ ownership in the school as a key element of its success. He says staff members have an “I own a small business attitude,” and they willingly take responsibility for making the school a good place.

MNCS planners, staff members and parents have created a school based on their beliefs, along with lots of supportive research, about how students learn best. Along the way, they have effectively eliminated many of the barriers that exist in traditional public school systems.

To learn more about Minnesota New Country School, visit its Web site at [www.mnncs.k12.mn.us](http://www.mnncs.k12.mn.us).



**Lindsay Schmidt** spins wool from Angora goats into yarn as part of Capra Hills, a student-run business at Minnesota New Country School. Students are responsible for all aspects of the business from raising and sheering the goats to keeping books.

## EdVisions Cooperative begins new project with Gates funds

In September 2000, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation awarded \$4.3 million to create 15 new schools similar to Minnesota New Country School and 10 new teacher owner models similar to EdVisions Cooperative.

Doug Thomas—former outreach coordinator for the Center for School Change in southern Minnesota, as well as a Minnesota New Country School planner and EdVisions member—is

director of the project based at the EdVisions office in Henderson.

In the past, EdVisions’ primary responsibilities centered on Minnesota New Country School, but during the 1999-2000 school year the cooperative grew to include six additional charter schools and 85 individual members. EdVisions provides teachers, distributes payroll and benefits and offers professional development and evaluation

services to the schools it serves.

To date, five schools have been selected to participate in the Gates-EdVisions Project—four in Minnesota and one in Wisconsin. Thomas said the EdVisions staff is pleased with the amount of interest shown in the project. Several sites are currently working on the process of becoming grantees. Gates-Edvisions Project schools will receive grants and extensive technical support.

# Planning is a habit in Cambridge-Isanti

By Vicki Nelson

Innovation was nurtured by necessity when folks in the Cambridge-Isanti School District began to think about an option for middle school students in 1991.

With Cambridge Middle School facing remodeling during the 1992-93 school year, principal Craig Paulson asked teachers Gary Hawkins and Kathy Belsheim if they would be interested in working on an effort to create a program for students at a location outside the school building.

Holding hopes and dreams for students in mind, the teachers brought together a group of parents and community members to plan a new school. The result was the first version of the Minnesota Center.

Located approximately two miles from the middle school in a building that once housed a grocery store, the Minnesota Center opened in fall 1992. During the first year, all Cambridge Middle School students spent six weeks at the Minnesota Center, one group at a time. Units for students in grades 5-8 featured a variety of Minnesota-inspired topics as well as many opportunities for hands-on learning and involvement with the community. In addition, one group of seventh grade students made up a core class which spent the entire school year at the Minnesota Center.

In 1993-94, following additional

planning, the program adjusted slightly to include two core classes—one each of seventh and eighth grade students. That schedule continued in 1994-95.

With remodeling at the middle school nearing completion, and the need for extra space coming to an end, the staff at the Minne-

weeks in the summer), but a few spend one week of the break on remediation and enrichment activities at the school. Teachers say the schedule is comfortable for both students and staff, which leads to less burnout. Shorter breaks also mean that learning is more continuous. There is little need for review after breaks.

## Minnesota Center

### Cambridge-Isanti, Minnesota

Phase I Implementation Grant 1992

Phase I Expansion Grant 1993

**Key Concepts:** Thematic instruction emphasizing local and state resources and history as well as hands-on, real-life experiences for students in grades 5–8. The school, which is an option for families in the Cambridge-Isanti area, has been operating on a year-round calendar since 1996. A year-round elementary school in the same district received Phase II planning and implementation grants.

sota Center began to consider ways to continue the program. Some thought reconfiguring as a year-round option for Cambridge-Isanti families would be a good idea. Active planning resumed, once again with a broad-based group of teachers, parents and community members pitching in.

In August 1996, the Minnesota Center became a year-round school choice for approximately 150 students in grades 5-8.

The school calendar includes four sessions approximately nine weeks in length. Between sessions, most students and teachers take a three-week break (five

It wasn't long before parents and teachers started asking about creating a similar option for younger students. In 1998, the school district put together another planning group—some Minnesota Center teachers, some elementary teachers, more parents, more community people. With help from some CSC planning funds, the new group spent months considering issues related to location, curriculum and staff. The School for All Seasons opened in August 1999 as a K-4 school-within-a-school at Isanti Elementary School.

Gary Hawkins says the nearly continuous state of project planning has been good for the

teachers.

“You don’t get in a rut,” he said. “You do have new challenges.... You look at options out there, and you’re not afraid of change.”

Hawkins added that keeping the community involved also helps to keep the community informed. Involvement also gives partici-

pants “bragging rights” about the good things accomplished. Folks who participate in planning know their input is valued.

There is more to come. Within the past few months, the school district put together yet another committee. The group is considering factors related to creating a year-round option at the high

school level. A district level decision, guided by the committee’s recommendations, will come in a few months.

Whatever the outcome, it’s likely that parents and community members will continue to be involved with planning in the Cambridge-Isanti School District. It’s gotten to be a habit.

## Focus on kids guides Nerstrand programs

By Vicki Nelson

First thing in the morning, it’s not unusual to find Nerstrand Elementary students in the hallway with a large trash container on wheels. Emptying waste baskets and pencil sharpeners is one way Nerstrand kids help out at their school.

In Nerstrand, acts of kindness and kids contributing time to the school and outside community are daily occurrences.

“We are in a culture where it’s expected kids will reach out,” says principal Bonnie Jean Flom. “This is modeled by the staff as well.”

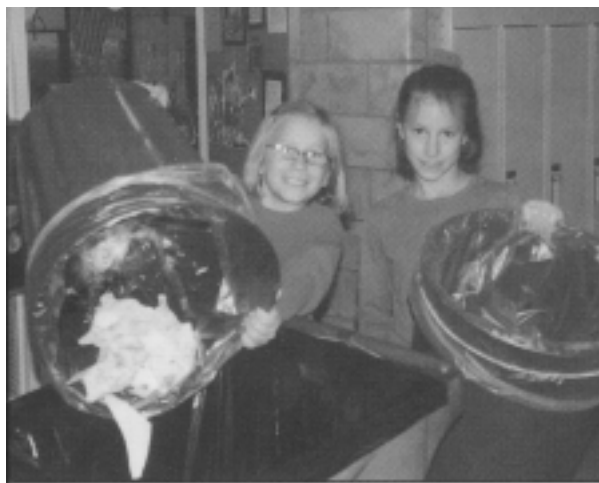
About ten years ago, Nerstrand teachers received a planning grant from the Center for School Change. Ideas developed by a team of administrators, teachers, parents and community people combined interest in increasing the student population at the school with a focus on creating a healthy place for kids to learn. The plan created an environmental magnet school—an option for families in and outside the

traditional attendance area. Along with an emphasis on environmental education and active participation of staff members in decision making, the school featured a multiage classroom configuration.

Today, Nerstrand Elementary is in many ways the school planned nearly a decade ago. There are three groupings of students: the Prairie includes kindergartners, the Savannah includes children in

grades 1–3, and fourth and fifth graders make up the Woodlands. Each school day includes a 20-minute session where students meet in K–5 homerooms. With many opportunities for children to work together across all grade levels, the school has developed a kind of community spirit.

The attempt to build a sense of community within the school has been deliberate. Flom says the  
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**Bright smiles start the school day** as Brooke Piller and Anna Showers empty waste baskets. Students share a variety of responsibilities at Nerstrand Elementary.

*(Focus on kids... from page 9)* multiage homerooms contribute to the caring climate. “You have to invest time in it. We think the 20 minutes we spend [in homerooms] creates an entirely different culture in our school.” It is not unusual, for example, to see older students stop in the hall to help younger schoolmates put on shoes or boots.

There is no student council at Nerstrand Elementary. Instead, students serve on committees developed around specific needs. This means many have opportunities to participate. One current group oversees a peace garden at the school. Another group, made up of representatives from each

ue on a regular basis. Activities include community lunch (local residents have lunch in the school cafeteria), elders’ coffees, community celebrations and a newsletter that goes out to all Nerstrand boxholders and parents. Each spring, with plants supplied by a nearby minimum-security prison, children fill flower containers and deliver them by wagon to businesses downtown.

Opportunities for students to interact with Nerstrand residents have helped to tie students to the community outside the school. Country kids, as well as town kids, feel a sense of belonging in Nerstrand, Flom says.

mer they will spend time preparing new books and materials for use in the school’s media center.

During the 1998-99 school year, the Nerstrand Elementary staff made plans to convert the school to charter status. The Faribault School District agreed to sponsor the change, and the school has operated as a charter for the past two years.

Becoming a charter brought no big program changes—the atmosphere and curriculum at the school are pretty much as they were in the past. There are more responsibilities for teachers, however, since charter law requires that teachers make up more than half of a school’s management board. Students have taken on new responsibilities as well. When it became apparent that the school could not afford complete housekeeping services, staff members and students discussed alternate plans. Students now take care of chores such as emptying trash, recycling and washing tables.

Bonnie Jean Flom believes that the reason for Nerstrand Elementary’s long term success is clear. “Even though it’s easier said than done sometimes, what has really guided us successfully is to keep kids at the center.”

At times, she says, there are decisions that could be especially good for adults. But when issues are murky, the teachers and board put “what’s best for the kids” first. That priority, Flom says, has helped build and sustain strong parent and community support for the school.

### **Nerstrand Elementary School Nerstrand, Minnesota**

Phase I Planning Grant 1991

Phase I Implementation Grant 1993

**Key Concepts:** Multiage, integrated and thematic learning including hands-on math and a literacy program based in high quality children’s literature. Environmental studies and service learning are emphasized. Nerstrand Elementary reorganized as a charter school in 1999. The charter school is sponsored by the Faribault School District.

homeroom, acts as a board of directors responsible for use of a Learn and Serve grant.

Students are so invested in service learning, Flom says, that she believes they will make sure it continues as a part of what happens at the school in the future. Over the past seven years, students and teachers have created over 30 service learning projects—many of which contin-

Good works going out to the community are met by good deeds coming back to the school. Teacher Ellen Paulson tells about the local cooperative contributing surplus funds to purchase risers and math books, and Flom says a local women’s club recently asked to adopt the school. Members of the club purchased mittens and children’s clothing which are kept on hand for occasional needs, and this sum-

# Characteristics of successful school change efforts

Based on the collective observations of staff members who have worked with Center for School Change grant sites over the past ten years, here are some essential ingredients for effective, lasting school change efforts:

**Committed teachers** who are willing to work with parents, other teachers and community resources to create exceptional learning environments for children.

Some teachers have told us they desire to do things differently, or they hope to make a real contribution to education before they retire. Whatever the case, if a program is to be successful, the teachers involved must have chosen to be there. Teachers must also be willing to put in time beyond that specified in their contracts, especially in the early months of new programs.

**A group of people who want something significantly different** in the form of school choice. School reform should be fired by dreams and ideas, not just dissatisfaction with what already exists. And, while administrative support is critical to school reform projects, push and shove from above will not be effective unless teachers, parents and students really want to make changes.

**A clear, cohesive curriculum** that everyone in the program is willing to support.

**Committed building administrators** who are willing to support and lead but not dominate a project. An effective administra-

tor will provide good information and participate in project development. *Stepping aside* to give teachers room to create a program on their own is not adequate.

**A superintendent who is willing to lead change** and support the new program with both words and action, as well as a school board that knows about and endorses the program.

**Start-up funding** from an outside source as well as from local funds. Programs should receive a fair share of maintenance funding once they are up and running.

**Involved and supportive parents** who take part in planning, and who make well-informed choices when it comes to enrolling their children in programs.

**An advisory group** that works beyond planning. Advisors should include parents, community members and, where appropriate, students. Effective advisory groups have real work to do.

**Autonomy** to make most major decisions, including hiring, spending and determining the nature of the program. A feeling of ownership is critical for individuals involved in school change projects. Financial expertise is important when a project, a charter school for example, has autonomy over spending.

**Ability to get along** when working closely with others is critical. In many school change

projects, teamwork is an essential, and welcome, element.

**Positive public relations and marketing** are critical, but programs should not be expected to go head-to-head with other district programs in order to exist. Sometimes teachers are afraid to get too much publicity for fear of provoking anger or jealousy among their coworkers. In the best situations, districts provide adequate information about all options available to students and their families.

**Union and collective bargaining peace.** Teachers should be free from pressures applied by other teachers. Sometimes, large teacher unions and master agreements get in the way of change. *Last hired, first fired* policies, for example, should not be used to break up project teams.

**Adequate support** in the form of staff development opportunities and exchanges with other schools and communities is necessary.

**Flexibility.** Even very effective projects need to allow room for changes and growth.

**Commitment to evaluation** is essential. Make reflection on project goals and students' success a habit.

**Trust the community.** Experts need to trust the community they serve. Any program that says it has all the answers and refuses to give consideration to students, parents and people on the street, is doomed.

## Past and present CSC sites:

# We need your good ideas for a handbook!

Over the next few months, the Center for School Change will take a new look at the work done during the past ten years by the many folks who have participated in CSC projects.

We know that some very effective lessons, tools and techniques have been developed and used by people at CSC sites. The variety of good ideas is extensive, ranging from family lunches to comprehensive staff development plans. We think your successes should be in a book!

*The Center for School Change Handbook* will be compiled during the summer and early fall, and will feature chapters on

themes such as multiage classrooms, parent involvement, students as entrepreneurs and community-based learning. We hope to include rubrics, checklists, and other techniques that promote effective learning and two-way partnerships between schools and communities.

If you have an idea or lesson to share—something that might be useful to teachers, parents and others who actively seek to create positive changes in their own schools—please send a short description to:

CSC Handbook  
Terri Anderson  
39194 County Road 111  
Waubun, MN 56589

You may also FAX ideas to 218-473-2687.

Please send your ideas by June 15. Include your name, your school's name and a summer phone number to facilitate follow-up. Photos and examples of students' art work are also welcome.

Ideas will be incorporated in a school change handbook to be published in the fall and distributed to schools throughout Minnesota. The handbook will include a short description of each site.

For additional information, please call Terri Anderson at 218-473-2686 or Vicki Nelson at 218-326-9044.

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