



Minneapolis District-Charter Collaboration Compact¹

Date Signed: December 2010

Number of Students: 42,204 (2010-2011)

Percent of Charter School Students to All Public School Students: 18.6%

Charter Authorizers: Minneapolis Public Schools, Minnesota Department of Education, higher education institutes, and nonprofit organizations (11 authorizers have schools in Minneapolis)

School District Governing Body: Elected board

Overview

Nonprofit organizations and higher education institutions authorize most Minneapolis charters, and school quality varies greatly. District leaders in Minneapolis created a compact with high-quality charters, hoping to benefit from their strong academic performance and gain insights on effective instructional practices and talent recruitment. For their part, the charter schools were interested in increasing access to district facilities and benefiting from the district’s economies of scale. After Minneapolis was not selected to participate in the Gates Foundation compact RFP process, district leaders decided to look to other compact cities for ideas on how to move forward. Since early 2012, Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) leaders have focused their compact efforts on expanding and improving their authorizer role, replicating strong schools models through a pilot of autonomous district schools, passing new legislation that encourages collaboration, building a data dashboard that compares all district-authorized schools on performance, and sharing best practices across sectors. For instance, the district secured funds to receive instructional support from two high-performing charter networks. How far and deep the compact work will spread, however, remains to be seen. Collaborations to date have only affected a small number of schools.

Key Compact Agreements

Big Wins

Build a talent incubator for school leaders.	
Remove financial barriers to replicating high-performing charter schools.	Replicated a high-performing charter school; passed legislation offering charter schools access to district facilities, transportation, and other services in exchange for sharing best practices and counting their test scores for the district.
Make MPS services available, including transportation and special education.	See above.
Provide MPS facilities for high-performing charter schools (with preference going to district-authorized charters).	The district adopted a process for leasing facilities that grounds allocation decisions in the charter school’s track record of academic performance; leases now require academic performance criteria.
Charter schools commit to ensure transparency around student demographics and recruit and retain comparable percentages of students.	
Document and share practices that accelerate student achievement.	

Challenges and Next Steps

Given that most of the charter schools in Minneapolis are not district-authorized, district-charter collaboration requires identifying mutual benefits outside of the authorizer relationship. Newly signed legislation will facilitate this by allowing the district to enter into contractual relationships with new and existing charter schools. The legislation will make it easier for the district to share resources and responsibility with high-performing charter school organizations, though realistically only a few charters may be considered high-performing or want to enter into these agreements. Going forward, district leaders will need to align their vision for the role of charter schools as they face difficult decisions about which charters to include in new collaborations. For example, the district has started working with a school support organization, Charter School Partners, to develop two talent incubators to address critical school leadership needs across sectors. But which charter schools participate has not been decided. District leaders will also have to coordinate and align nonprofit partners that have competing ideas on what compact work is and how best to implement it.

1. [See this compact on CRPE’s website.](#)