

December 15, 2006

TO: Committee members, Special Study Committee on Charter Schools

FROM: Cindy Zautcke, Institute for the Transformation of Learning, Marquette University

RE: Charter school inquiries to ITL's offices

Part of the work at the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University is to assist with charter school start-ups. Since 1996, when ITL began its work with charter schools, we have received regular requests from planners for assistance.

While Milwaukee's charter school environment has been more "friendly" to charter schools operated by groups outside of the school district, it is worth noting that in the nine years since alternate authorizers were created, only thirteen schools have opened. That's not for lack of interest. Instead, for every school chartered by the city of UW-Milwaukee, there have been, on average, between three to four groups that have started the process and either pulled out or were denied.

The picture is not as clear in districts outside of Milwaukee. However, the following types of school planners have called us from across the state, but particularly from mid-sized cities and some suburbs of Madison and Milwaukee. Because most of the planners made these calls in confidence, it is inappropriate to identify the specifics.

Social service agencies/youth serving agencies (approximately 12). Perhaps a dozen well-established non-profits have made inquiries to our office about trying to get their school board to consider chartering.

Community groups (20). About twenty different inquiries have been made to our office by "community groups" outside of Milwaukee requesting information about how to engage their school board in dialogue about chartering a school.

Non-sectarian, private schools (community-based) (8). A smaller number of community-based non-sectarian private schools have contacted our office interested in talking to their school board about becoming charter schools.