

New demands, expectations require a new set of premises and strategies

Millions of America's students head off to school each day, sporting brightly colored backpacks and determined to make this their 'best school year yet.' At the **same time, federal and state policy makers are making tough new demands that our schools change and improve** – so that 'all students learn at high levels.' New standards, tests, timelines and consequences are all being put in place to make sure that 'no child is left behind.'

Yet, all across the country, many policymakers, journalists, teachers, parents and students themselves are troubled by a haunting feeling that all this effort may not really produce the degree of change and improvement that we need. **At a minimum, we are now taking a series of risks that are neither wise nor necessary to be making with other people's children.** These are, after all, demands and results well-beyond what we've ever expected of American public education – all at a time of severe budgetary pressures on states, districts and individual public schools.

That, at least is the serious concern of a small group of Minnesota-based public policy veterans who have come together as **Education|Evolving... a joint venture of the Center for Policy Studies and Hamline University.** Led by public policy veterans Ted Kolderie and Joe Graba, the individuals behind this initiative believe...

... it's an unwise and unnecessary risk for the state and nation to be trying to get the results we need **solely by changing the schools we now have...**

... the issues about teachers and teaching should not be debated only in the **old employer/worker framework...**

... the solution to maintaining **financially viable public education in rural areas** may not lie in the three old 'solutions' of excess levies, consolidation and state aid...

... today's schools should not go on largely failing to take advantage of **new electronic technologies** and other substantially different ways of teaching and learning...

... and the critical discussion about the future of K-12 education in Minnesota and nationally **must not proceed solely as a discussion among adults**, with students largely left on the outside looking in.

What's the 'value-added' by this new voice for change and improvement?

In many ways, the last thing Americans need is another voice asking policy makers and all of us to re-think the basic premises around the challenges and opportunities facing American education as we push forward into the 21st Century. So, **what's the 'value-added' by this new voice for change and improvement?** Here are nine contributions the Education|Evolving team hopes to make in the coming year...

- **First**, a national initiative designed to help convince policy makers, education reform leaders, journalists and others on the **rationale and importance of "new schools"** as an essential element in achieving needed changes and improvements in teaching and learning – at least equal in importance to ongoing efforts to change the schools we now have.
- **Second**, an important **new national "Open Sector" initiative** – focusing on Minnesota and on other key states and cities across the country – designed to help create the kind of environment in which new and different schools can be created and succeed.

- **Third**, an initiative aimed at state policymakers and the national research community to fundamentally reconfigure the premises used in asking the critical question, **"How are chartered schools doing?"**

- **Fourth**, the release and broad dissemination of a series of reports on the changing nature of public education – the first on the astonishing growth taking place among Minnesota's **alternative schools and programs**, the second on the important role that **"school culture"** is playing in the parallel growth and popularity of what will soon be more than a hundred Minnesota chartered schools.

- **Fifth**, an initiative – **"Student Voices"** – designed to enrich the debate around education policy matters in Minnesota and elsewhere through much greater engagement with students and with other young people who may not even currently be attending school.

- **Sixth**, ongoing work to export one of our state's most promising initiatives in education – **schools that are run by teachers in professional practice** – acting with the same kinds of opportunities historically held by fellow professionals in medicine, law, accounting and other fields.

- **Seventh**, an important new initiative on the **future financing of public education in Minnesota.**

- **Eighth**, expansion of a year-old Minnesota-based project designed to strengthen and enhance the role played by the growing variety of agencies and organizations that act as **sponsors of our state's chartered schools.**

- **And**, finally, continued expansion and broad promotion of the initiative's *new and unique web site* – **www.educationevolving.com.**

1295 Bandana Blvd. #165 • St. Paul, MN 55108
651-644-6115 • 651-644-0433 (fax)
info@educationevolving.org • www.educationevolving.org



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For more information and to get on print and electronic distribution lists for Education|Evolving update, contact...

Minneapolis Public Schools.
choice and second chance programs. Former administrator,
Former MN Commissioner of Education. Architect of MN

• **Bob Wedl** – Director, Charter Schools Sponsors Project, publisher, Citizens League staffer.
staffer to Sen. Dave Durenberger, weekly newspaper

• **Jon Schroeder** – Coordinator, Education|Evolving. Former director, Charter Friends National Network. Former senior

Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota.
DC-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and

• **Kim Farris-Berg** – Policy Consultant. Also co-director of the Center for Economic Progress. Previously with the

Bank.
and business executive and consultant, former state agency

• **Ed Dirkswager** – Policy Consultant. Former health care
Twin Cities Metropolitan Council; represents charter school

• **John Boland** – Legislative and Policy Consultant. Former teacher, former state representative, former chair of the

• **Stacy Becker** – Policy Consultant. Former public works budget director for the city of St. Paul, former director and budget director for the city of San Francisco; now directing e/e study on education finance.

Education at Hamline University.
agency executive and Dean of the Graduate School of

Former teacher and union leader, legislator, state education
• **Joe Graba** – Senior Policy Fellow, Hamline University.
Former Journalist, Citizens League Director, Humphrey

school law and laws in other states.
Institute Senior Fellow; architect of Minnesota's charter

Former Journalist, Citizens League Director, Humphrey
• **Ted Kolderie** – Senior Associate, Center for Policy Studies.

Introducing the Education|Evolving team...



education|evolving

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Here's a quick introduction to a new initiative designed to change conventional thinking on both the challenges and the opportunities facing American education in the 21st Century

