

MINNESOTA QUALITY TEACHING COALITION

Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs *** Minnesota Association of Charter Schools
Minnesota On-line Learning Alliance *** Minnesota Rural Education Association

The History of Educational Innovations in Minnesota

Summary of remarks by Wayne Jennings

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Floodwood, 1940-1950s (based on 8 Year Study: now online at www.8yearstudy.org/index.html)

2 books written about it: entrepreneurship, interdisciplinary, community based, etc.

- *Design for America* by Ted Brameld, leading educational philosopher
- *Bootstraps* by Lou Harris, former Floodwood superintendent

Core Curriculum Nelson Bossing, University of Minnesota

- Block time programs in 40 % of junior high schools during the 1960s
- Minneapolis-common learnings in all secondary schools, by Superintendent Willard Goslin

Summerhill School: A.S. Neill, *Summerhill*

- Cort and Susie Smith on Spray Island, Lake Minnetonka (private and kids from court)
- Summerhill school within a school at Minnetonka High School
- Village School of Northfield

Education 1967 (state of education in Minnesota) by Otto Domian.

“For educators to see ‘lighthouse’ school practices they would have to leave the borders of Minnesota.”

Then came a flood of programs in late 1960s based on best sellers: John Holt, *How Children Fail*, Jonathon Kozol, *Death at an Early Age*, Herb Kohl, George Dennison, *Lives of Children*, Charles Weingartner and Neil Postman, *Teacher as a Subversive Activity*,

- Staples open education classrooms
- Duluth open education classrooms
- Winona-Westinghouse Electric computer aided individualized instruction

1968: Wilson Campus School, Mankato by Don Glines

- Described as the most innovative school in America: preK-12, year round, no grades, personalized, no required subjects, extended day, international trips, advisor program, etc.

- North Central report on MSU that Wilson was the most exciting program on campus and it was time for the rest of the college to "catch up."
- Senator Durenberger said we should have 100 Wilson Campus Schools.

Mid to late 1960s: Alternative programs for at-risk students: Minneapolis and St. Paul George Young, St. Paul Superintendent, says we can only go up. Bought administrators, *Crisis in the Classroom* by Charles Silberman.

1971: Banner year for alternative approaches

- Minneapolis SE Alternatives Program, Federal Experimental Schools Grant \$7 million
 - Marcy Open School, Free School, Continuous Progress, Contemporary
- St. Paul Open School, patterned after Wilson Campus school
- St. Paul Learning Centers: 1-12
 - Commercial greenhouse, winter camping, elementary business center, public service video, computer center, performing arts: choices at all levels

1974: Minneapolis goes citywide with choices based on Southeast Alternatives Programs. John Davis, superintendent.

Mid-1970s: Magnet Schools in St. Paul and Minneapolis as choices with massive federal funds

1975: Stonebridge Elementary School, Stillwater

- Individualized, 37 to 1 teacher ratio but 12-1 adult ratio

Minnesota Statutes

- 1973 Council on Quality Education grants for innovations
- 1985 Post Secondary Enrollment Options. Cries of alarm!
- 1987 Area Learning Centers
 - 170,000 Students served by ALCs in 2002-2003
 - Contracted alternative schools: essentially private schools
- 1988 Open Enrollment. Huge cries of alarm! Competition?
- 1991 Charter School Law. Bigger cries of alarm!
- Ethnic Schools: African, Hispanic, Indian, Islamic, Southeast Asian
 - Reform: Sudbury, partnership, music business, SCANS, virtual, project based, teacher cooperative, performing arts, experiential, technology
 - Traditional, Core Knowledge, classical (like Trinity in Burnsville)
 - Now 105 charter schools serving 18,000 students; 30+ more approved for 2005+

1993: New American Schools grant for "reinventing education" supported Community Learning Centers.

Center for School Change, Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota

- 30 grants for innovative projects (Blandin Foundation in Grand Rapids) Gave up on training administrators.
- Gates Foundation grants for "small learning facilities" and new charter schools

Homeschooling growth

Alternatives: International Association for Learning Alternatives (website), way to change.

Lessons:

- Status quo or reversion to the mean generally prevails
- Innovation is a fragile flower

- Sanction and support innovation

We have a proud history of innovation in Minnesota. We must continue our leadership.