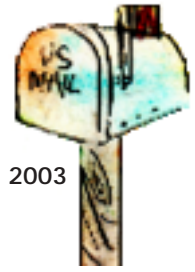


# Staying in Touch

News from the Center for School Change in Rural Minnesota

March 2003



## School foundations provide financial and human resources

School districts throughout the nation, including a growing number in Minnesota, benefit from support offered by local school foundations.

A school foundation is an independent organization set up to assist schools by raising money, buying equipment or seeking donations of services.

School foundations usually begin with endowments — money set aside specifically to generate interest or other investment income. Contributors understand that money they give to an endowment will never be spent. When an endowment is large enough, however, a school fund can use investment profits to support grant giving. Often, this means giving small grants to teachers for innovative projects that fall outside the school budget.

In some places, school foundations are established as stand alone nonprofits, while in others they affiliate with nearby community foundations. In northeast Minnesota, for example, the Duluth-Superior Area Community Foundation pools and invests a number of endow-

ment funds including the North Shore Community School Fund and Proctor's Rails Endowment for Academic, Art and Athletic Development. Working with the community foundation allows these school funds to operate without filing paperwork to gain independent nonprofit status.

### Raising Money

Since they are still building their endowments, neither the North Shore nor the Proctor fund has begun to make grants. Nonetheless, each has already benefited from a variety of sources. Profits from sale of a community history book put \$8,000 into the North Shore fund, and staff members' voluntary payroll deductions add about \$5,000 per year to the Proctor endowment. Contributions also come from special events and gifts from community members.

Fleta Carol, who works with the Proctor school fund, says raising money can be difficult, but she adds, "... The grants option should make life easier and more rewarding for many in our district who struggle to cover the most basic items."

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## Helpful Resources

A guidebook for folks who want to know more about creating school foundations is *Dream Big: Creating and Growing Your School Foundation* by Mark M. Havens. Published by the National School Public Relations Association, Rockville, Md., 301-519-0496, [www.nspr.org](http://www.nspr.org), the book is available for \$29.95 plus shipping.

For information about grant opportunities for schools, grant writing tips, sample proposals, fund raising opportunities and advice from other schools, visit [www.schoolgrants.org](http://www.schoolgrants.org).

The Minnesota Council on Foundations, in cooperation with the Duluth-Superior Area Community Foundation and Northland Foundation, is offering a *Grant Seeking for Beginners* workshop in Duluth April 11. For additional information about this session or others scheduled for a variety of locations around the state, go to <http://www.mcf.org/mcf/grant/beginners.htm>.

## Minnesotans Like School Choice

As part of its research on Minnesota public school choice programs, the Center for School Change recently commissioned Mason-Dixon Polling to conduct a statewide poll.

A random sample of 625 registered Minnesota voters was polled February 19-20. Among individuals polled:

- ▶ 75% believe "families should have the right to select among various public schools";
- ▶ 80% strongly support, or support the Post-Secondary Options program (12% oppose);
- ▶ 60% strongly support, or support "second chance" choice programs (18% oppose);
- ▶ 56% strongly support, or support open enrollment (32% oppose); and
- ▶ 52% strongly support, or support the charter school law (21% oppose).

Support for choice programs was highest among people under age 50, and parents with school age children. The poll was part of a study supported by the Ruth and Lovett Peter Foundation. Additional results are available at the CSC Web site, [www.centerforschoolchange.org](http://www.centerforschoolchange.org).

*School Foundations ...*

### **Making Friends**

In addition to meeting classroom needs, school foundations also create solid connections between schools and communities. Foundation boards typically include individuals who do not work in schools and who may not have children enrolled. In their work as board members, these people often spend many volunteer hours learning about the ways schools work and sharing that information with others in the community.

Mark Havens, a school foundation expert (see *Helpful Resources*) says, "The work of a school foundation is as much friend raising as it is fund raising."

Published by the Center for School Change in Rural Minnesota, *Staying in Touch* provides a monthly connection between CSC and rural school sites. Material is prepared for publication by rural outreach coordinators Terri Anderson and Vicki Nelson. Copies are available by mail or at the CSC Web site, [www.centerforschoolchange.org](http://www.centerforschoolchange.org). Please send comments or questions to Vicki Nelson at 37848 Deer Lake Way, Grand Rapids, MN 55744 or [vickinel@lcp2.net](mailto:vickinel@lcp2.net).

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