

Report on presentation at MSMA's 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Fall Conference

October 24, 2014 Friday 1:05-2:10pm

Session: Maine's Public Charter Schools: The Facts and Questions Answered

Presenters: John Bird, Shelley Reed, Justin Belanger, Karl Francis

After opening introductions, I spoke of founding obligations for authorizers as developing our operating rules, our procedures for authorizing charter schools and the (RFP) Request for Proposals of which there are 110 evaluation criteria, all based on state law and the National Standards and Practices of NACSA. We had to make the law operational.

John then spoke specifically regarding the law and the cycle from application to contract and monitoring. He addressed the issue of funding and the need for the legislature to remedy the problems there.

My next section had to do with what I call myth busting, which are issues where public charter schools share values with public district schools: such as accountability; performance measures and metrics; teacher certification; proficiency based diplomas; skill set of governing board; monitor for progress on track growth meaning renewal in 5 years, no growth meaning nonrenewal. Parents vote with their feet making choice of best placement for their children.

The next sections demonstrated on the ground, clear pictures of charter schools in action. Justin spoke of what it takes to run a charter school and the opportunities it provides students and staff. Karl spoke to the launching of a virtual school, co-locating the teaching staff, students that are enrolled.

Question and answer time addressed the issues of teacher evaluation, proficiency based diplomas, finance issues, local districts interested in creating charters, special education issues where the challenge was given that the participant thought that charter schools did not have 20% special ed students and would like a print out of those numbers. The challenge was met with Justin sharing that Cornville had 20% special ed students.

About 20 participants attended the session with many leaving with issues clarified.

P/CSC/Maine School Management Association/2014 Fall Conference Report- Shelley Reed