



**CenturyCollege**

## *News Release*

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## **Century Audience Hears Charter School Message from Joe Nathan**

Public charter school expert Dr. Joe Nathan of the University of Minnesota addressed a Century College audience this week on a difficult day for charter schools.

On Thursday, Jan. 22, the Twin Cities daily newspapers carried a prominent story about a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota against the Tarek ibn Ziyad Academy (TiZA) public charter school and the Minnesota Department of Education. The suit contends the school violates the First Amendment and the Constitution by promoting religion in a public school.

Nathan acknowledged that public charter schools, despite their growth and popularity, face significant challenges. He also strongly defended the TiZA charter school as a model of results, diversity and tolerance, and said the media reports were mostly inaccurate. He was critical of ACLU officials for filing the lawsuit without ever visiting school.

“We are living in an age that is information rich and responsibility poor when it comes to teaching and learning,” Nathan told the audience of community members and educators. “There is no way you can

teach kids all the information that is available. But you can create opportunities for them to learn by doing things, such as community service. When kids actually do things, they see themselves in new ways.”

Nathan, the director of the Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota, has written a widely respected book on charter schools called *Charter Schools: Creating Hope and Opportunity for American Education*. He has testified before 20 state legislatures and the U.S. Congress and regularly publishes commentaries in major U.S. newspapers.

“It is a meaningless question to talk about which are better, charter or district schools,” said Nathan.

“There are fabulous district schools and fabulous charter schools. It is time to learn from the best schools and put our resources into replicating those programs. We need to stop giving state money to create new charter schools – I know that will surprise some of you that I say that – and reallocate those dollars to go to the finest district and charter schools now in existence.”

Nathan applauded Century for its commitment to education innovation by supporting both service learning and the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options program. Century has nearly 2,000 students a year who perform service-learning projects in the community as part of their college courses. And Century ranks number two among Minnesota colleges that accept PSEO high school students who earn college credits in their junior and senior years by taking college classes on campus.

“Most of the things that have made a big difference for kids have been done by people working together,” said Nathan. He noted that since the first charter school was created in Minnesota in 1992, there are now over 4,000 charter schools in the country serving over 1.3 million students.

“Let’s learn from, replicate and expand the best schools that are out there,” said Nathan. “That is the way to make progress.”

Photo below: Joe Nathan chats with educators from the Minnesota International Middle School and the Twin Cities International Elementary School, both sponsored by Century College.

