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**EdVisions to Implement Long-Term Strategic Plan and Strengthen National Network of Charter Schools**

*Minnesota-Based Organization Receives \$1.2 million Investment from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*

**Henderson, MN** – EdVisions, a Minnesota-based non-profit corporation that has opened more than 40 innovative small charter high schools across the country, today announced a \$1.2 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support its *Schools Moving Forward Project*. Funding will help support the implementation of EdVisions' strategic plan, designed to improve school quality, expand the EdVisions Leaders Center professional development program, build organizational capacity, and ensure long-term financial sustainability.

"We are looking forward to continuing our partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support the great work our schools are currently doing around the country," stated Doug Thomas, executive director of EdVisions Schools. "We've provided more than 4,000 students access to high quality schools that prepare them for success in college and beyond. This investment is vital to EdVisions' long-term plan to continue expanding and strengthening its charter schools to serve more children nationwide."

The EdVisions school model is based on the successful flagship school, the Minnesota New Country School in Henderson, MN. Today, the EdVisions network of schools spans to ten other states beyond Minnesota including California, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Wisconsin, and Washington.

The Minnesota New Country School, serving 6-12<sup>th</sup> grade students, was created in 1994 by a group of teachers and parents who believed a personalized, technology-infused, project-based secondary school model could inspire a greater interest in learning and meet higher standards required by businesses and post secondary institutions. In 2006 the New Country School was named by the U.S. Department of Education as one of the top eight charter schools in the nation in closing the achievement gap. Over 90 percent of New Country graduates have gone on to college.



“Today’s workplace demands that all students graduate from high school prepared to enter college and earn a postsecondary degree or certification,” said Vicki L. Phillips, director of education at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “EdVisions has developed a national network of charter schools that taps into the hopes and aspirations of its students and provides an innovative path to college and career success.”

The foundation’s investment is part of \$18.5 million in recent grants to five school networks nationally that have shown progress in increasing student achievement and preparing students for college and work success. These investments focus largely on classroom-level improvements, including stronger data systems to assess academic performance and greater teacher and student supports.

Since 2000, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has committed more than \$8.9 million to support EdVisions’ replication efforts locally and nationally, including the creation of the EdVisions Leaders Center, a program designed to provide professional development, coaching and technical assistance to new schools in the EdVisions network. This new investment will help EdVisions extend these learning and coaching opportunities to an even wider audience of schools.

**EdVisions** is a charter development organization with a mission to create schools that will enhance relationships and build relevant learning environments that empower students, parents and teachers to make choices. These learning environments utilize self-directed, project-based learning to build student autonomy through relevant learning opportunities; create student belongingness through full-time advisories; and empower teachers via teacher-managed, democratically collaborative schools.