ANNUAL MEETING & CHARTER SCHOOL ADVOCATE AWARD

We invite you to join us next Thursday, September 27th at our Annual Meeting when we will present the Association’s Charter School Advocate Award to Rep. Carlos Mariani. Rep. Mariani, who has served in the MN House since 1991, has been a supporter of public school choice and charter schools throughout his career.

We will also be honoring three individuals who played a key role in the charter school movement at its beginning and still do so today with the MN Association of Charter Schools Pioneer Award.

Ember Reichgott Junge, Ted Kolderie, and Joe Nathan.

To register, click here

AN AGENDA TO FULFILL THE PROMISE

The Latitude for Innovation – Accountability vs Autonomy

In the last issue of the Advocate, we listed the various topics of the accountability and autonomy proposals and how they were developed or are being developed. Today, we want to focus on one of the proposals. CHARTER SCHOOL CONTRACT ACCOUNTABILITY & AUTONOMY

Among the innovative purposes of chartered public schools stated in the law are: 1] “to measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes”, and 2] “establish new forms of accountability for schools”.

The advent of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and its requirement that the only recognizable way to measure outcomes was standardized reading and math tests, and that the results of those tests were the only way to hold schools accountable blocked any real autonomy and stifled innovation to develop new forms of measuring outcomes and accountability.

About seven years ago the Association convened a group of school personnel, authorizers, and other interested folks to develop a legislative proposal to create an “alternative” accountability system for charters that would fulfill the purposes of the charter law.

The group looked around the country for examples of what others were trying to do to go beyond the constraints of NCLB. The result was a legislative proposal that would address accountability and provide autonomy, as well as legal recognition to the new forms of measuring outcomes and school accountability.
The proposal would establish a framework for charter school contracts that includes three elements; academic performance, career & college readiness, and student engagement. A charter school and their authorizer would select a certain number of performance outcomes from menu’s dealing with each of the three elements that relate to the school program and the students the school serves. These performance outcomes would be the basis for the accountability for the contract period.

Over the years the proposal was heard in a couple of committees of the legislature, but NCLB and the impending renewal of NCLB (now ESSA) always were raised as reasons not to deal with the proposal any further – although traditional schools districts did raise the question at the hearings as to why their schools would not be covered under this system.

It is time, as we approach the 30th anniversary of Minnesota’s groundbreaking charter school law that the promise to charter schools that they have the latitude to be innovative in terms of measuring outcomes and creating new forms of accountability become a reality.

A Rational Approach to Charter School Facilities

When we discuss a rational approach to providing facilities for chartered schools we are not just talking about the ability of charters to directly own facilities, instead of the expensive and cumbersome ‘affiliated building company” process. We are also talking about funding for those facilities..

MN FACILITY RELATED REVENUE – Traditional Districts vs Charters

Earlier this summer, the Association asked MDE to compare facility-related funding between traditional districts and charters. While the comparison of facility-related revenue for traditional schools and chartered schools is not an exact science since the funding streams are different, it is clear that there issue of equity. [TRADITIONAL DISTRICTS = Debt Service + Long Term Facilities Maintenance Revenue + Lease Levy] vs [CHARTERED SCHOOLS = Lease Aid + Long Term Maintenance Revenue].

According to information provided by MDE the facility-related revenue per pupil in Traditional Districts amounts to $1,529 vs $1,223 per pupil in Chartered Schools, or $306 per pupil less per pupil in Chartered Schools.

Source: MDE

EDUCATION PLANS of CANDIDATES FOR GOVERNOR

The DFL and Republican Candidates for Governor have outlined their priorities for Education on their websites:

Democratic Farmer Labor (DFL) – Tim Walz’s Plan for Education
In response to the question in the Education Minnesota 2018 gubernatorial endorsement questionnaire “How do you feel about charter schools and voucher schools versus public system?” Rep. Walz wrote: “Minnesota’s public school have proven time and again to be exceptional and the backbone of this state. I will do everything in my power to protect them from voucher and charter schools.”

Republican – Jeff Johnson’s Plan for Education

EARLY VOTING is now open for the November 6th General Election – we encourage everyone to vote, and encourage you to encourage everyone to vote.

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & INDUSTRY – Labor Standards

The MN Department of Labor & Industry has asked Associations to help get the word out about the most Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s) about the requirements under the Women’s Economic Security Act, enacted by the MN Legislature in 2014. The questions are about pregnancy and parenting, leave, pregnancy accommodations, and nursing mothers under MN law.

Memo from the MN Department of Labor & Industry

In the memo is information on who to contact if you have questions.

RETHINKING REGULATION

EdChoice, has published a new paper, RETHINKING REGULATION: Overseeing Performance in a Diversifying Educational Ecosystem. It is worth the read (short, concise, 15 pages, big print) as it looks at the historic justification for regulation (defined as law, rules and policy), the regulatory process, and how to go about reforming regulation.

CHARTERING ACROSS AMERICA

WASHINGTON D.C. – September 13th - House and Senate appropriators reached agreement on a conference report for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill. The conference report provides $440 million for the Charter School Program (CSP), which marks the highest-ever funding level in the program’s more than 20-year history.

CALIFORNIA – September 7th – Governor Jerry Brown signed into law A.B. 406 that will prohibit for-profit companies (EMO’s & CMO’s) from operating or managing chartered public schools in the state. The law was prompted by a situation involving a virtual charter school operated by K12Inc., a for-profit (EMO) company which was sued by the state for manipulating attendance
records and overstating student academic success. The company settled the lawsuit by paying back the state of California $168.5 million dollars in 2016.

**NOTE:** The MN Association of Charter Schools proposed in 2017 and 2018 legislation that would have required **contract transparency** of EMO’s and CMO’s with schools. The **opposition to our legislation on CMO/EMO transparency and accountability was led by K12Inc.**