

Celebrating Chartering @ 30 – MINNESOTA'S STORY

While the 1988 **Citizens League Report – *Charter Schools = Choices for Educators + Quality for Students*** was a foundational document for Minnesota's approach to chartering and the basis of many provisions of our charter school law, action to move legislation forward also came from conversations at the Itasca Seminar.

The Itasca Seminar, sponsored by the Minneapolis Foundation, was held at a resort on Gull Lake in the fall of 1988. The seminar focused on K-12 Education. One of the presenters at the Seminar was Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), who shared his idea of chartering public schools.

Shanker's idea was for a "*new kind of public school—'charter schools'—which would allow teachers to experiment with innovative approaches to educating students. Publicly funded but independently managed, these schools would be given a charter to try their fresh approaches for a set period of time and be renewed only if they succeeded.*" **

Among the participants at the Seminar was Ember Reichgott (Junge), who at the time was a State Senator, and Assistant Majority Whip. After the Seminar, and with the Citizen's League work in hand, Senator Reichgott drafted legislation for chartered schools for the 1989 legislative session.

The legislation passed the MN State Senate, but the House of Representatives would not agree to it in the Conference Committee, so chartered schools were not included in the final 1989 Omnibus Education bill.

Senator Reichgott tried again in 1990 with the same result. After the failure in the 1990 session, the then Commissioner of Education Tom Nelson, convened a group to think through the chartering idea. The proposal from that group was endorsed by the State Board of Education.

Senator Reichgott took that proposal, along with other ideas, and introduced new legislation in the 1991 session. This time she found an ally and House author, Representative Becky Kelso, who would champion the idea in the House of Representatives.

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