

2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT

IMPACT



NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOLS
INSTITUTE
EXPERIENCE • INNOVATION • RESULTS



OUR HEART

We are a team of passionate professionals that thrives on empowering people to grow and achieve more than they think possible. We believe in the transformative power of education and want all people to have the opportunity to learn, grow and reach their full potential.

OUR CORE PURPOSE

To inspire and democratize excellence in education.

OUR MISSION

We inspire, equip and support people and organizations dedicated to improving education for our kids and our country.

OUR VISION

We envision a wise and virtuous nation that embraces the transformative power of education and equips all students to learn, grow and pursue their dreams.

OUR VALUES

We value people and relationships and are relentless about fulfilling our promises and treating people with respect. Our success comes from the success of our partners and the students they serve. We strive to uphold the virtues of wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage and follow the “golden rule” in all we do. We truly believe in the principles and practices we teach and value the passionate pursuit of greatness.

W. SIDNEY SMITH & JAMES N. GOENNER, PH.D. WINNING FOR KIDS

DEAR FRIENDS & COLLEAGUES,

It’s hard to believe that 25 years have passed since Minnesota lawmakers pioneered a new strategy for improving public education by enacting the nation’s first charter schools law. At its core, the chartering idea was about empowering people to reimagine how the educational system could work and authorizing other organizations beyond just the local school board with the authority to create new schools and serve students.

Today, nearly every state has adopted some form of the charter idea. Our organization has been at the forefront of helping to turn the charter idea into action for 22 of those years. From our beginnings—as a small group providing technical assistance—to today, we have adapted and evolved as needs changed. But our core purpose has always remained the same—to inspire and democratize excellence in education.

That’s why we are proud to say that this has been our best year yet in putting the ideas behind chartering into action.

Throughout this report, you’ll see how our team of passionate professionals is inspiring hearts and minds and working with fellow travelers to advance excellence in education.

We are continuously working with authorizers, boards, and schools and showing them how they can align for greatness by establishing a shared vision and values, developing relationships of mutual trust and respect, and clarifying performance expectations so there are

no surprises. We also integrate this thinking into the design of the software system, Epicenter, which is being used across the country spanning from Hawaii to the District of Columbia.

To us, Epicenter is more than helping people manage documents, workflow, and compliance. It’s about helping people take ownership of their responsibilities, growing the capacity of their organizations and freeing them up so they can focus on the things that truly matter, and giving them the peace of mind that comes with knowing you can proactively demonstrate performance.

We love what we do at the Institute and are excited about the impact we are having. Our hearts smile when we see new schools being built in long-forgotten neighborhoods, adults being empowered to challenge the givens and find better ways to serve kids, and students achieving more than they thought possible.

We hope the following pages put a smile in your heart as well. We’re grateful for your support and encouragement and the knowledge that together we are making a difference for our kids and our country!

With best wishes,

W. Sidney (“Sid”) Smith
Chairman, Board of Directors

James N. Goenner, Ph.D.
President and CEO

democratize

verb | *de·moc·ra·tize* | \di-'mä-krə-,tīz\

(1) to make (a country or organization) more democratic

(2) to make (something) available to all people; to make it possible for all people to understand (something)

— *Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary*

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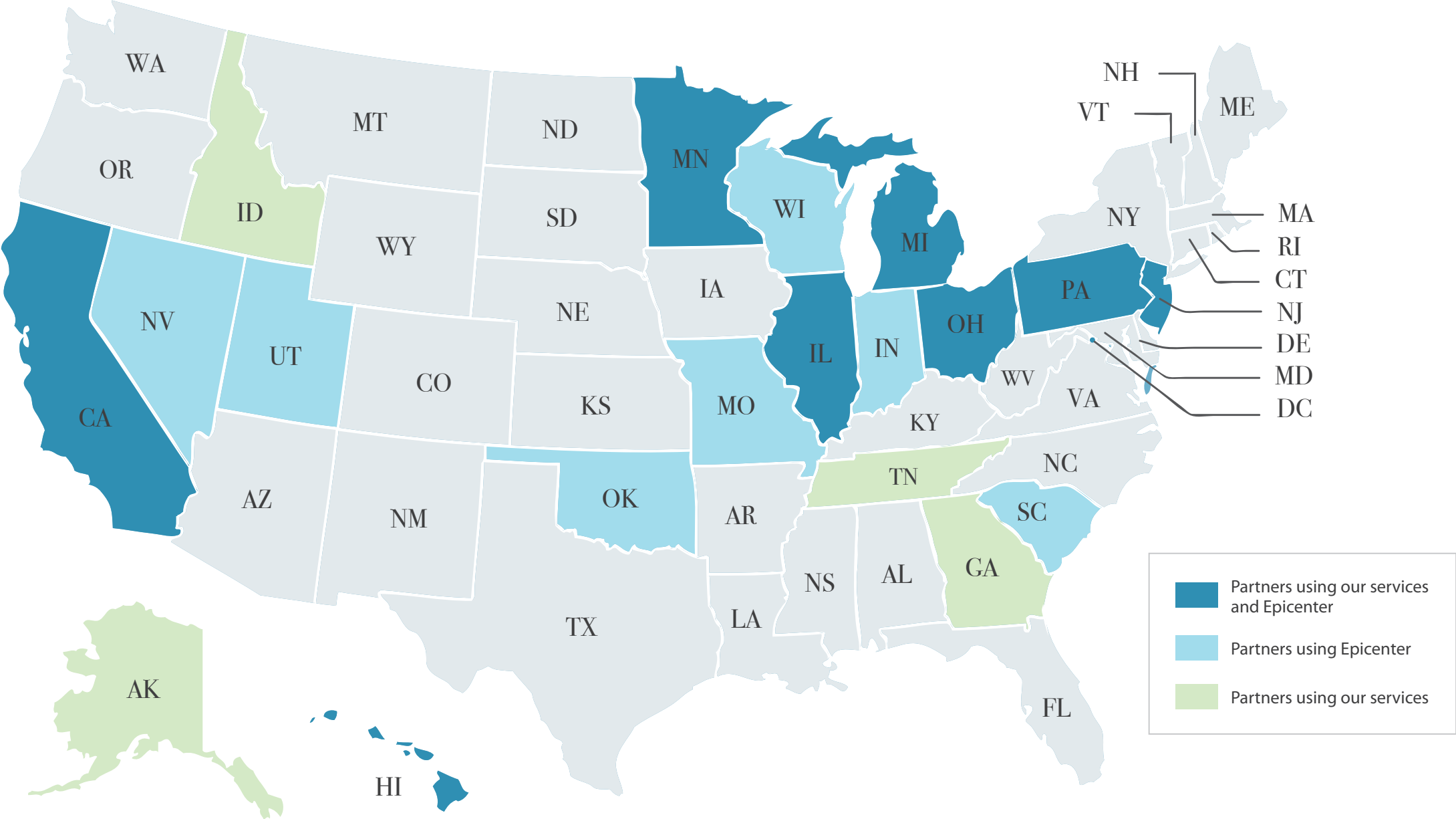
OUR NATIONAL IMPACT

The National Charter Schools Institute is a values-driven, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose core purpose is to inspire and democratize excellence in education.

Our team is made up of passionate professionals who thrive on empowering people to grow and achieve more than they think possible. We know education. We've served as teachers, school leaders, board members, authorizers, association executives, and leaders of business and technology. We believe in the transformative power of education and we want all people to have the opportunity to learn, grow, and reach their full potential.

We have a long history of putting the charter schools idea into action. Our organization was founded in 1995 as the Michigan Resource Center for Charter Schools. Our original mission was to support and guide the implementation of Michigan's newly adopted charter schools law. Based on our impact and the rapid growth of charter schools across the country, the United States Congress provided \$1 million in 2001 for us to transition into the National Charter Schools Institute to expand and grow our services nationally.

Today, we provide a range of training and support for people and organizations in the charter community—from policymakers to authorizers to school operators—who are serious about making a difference for students. Our coaching and consulting work, along with our speaking engagements, has us working with authorizers, boards, schools, and support organizations across the country. Epicenter, our Web-based portfolio and performance management system, is in use in 25 states and the District of Columbia, to improve the performance and productivity of more than 2,000 schools impacting the lives of more than 370,000 of our nation's kids.



STRIVING FOR THE FUTURE INSPIRING HEARTS AND MINDS

Encouraging and Equipping

OUR PRESENTATIONS

Our team of speakers—Jim Goenner, Darlene Chambers, Riley Justis, and Don Cooper—is proud and honored to speak at conferences from coast to coast. Each of our presentations contains a unique blend of inspiration and practical advice, designed to encourage and equip participants to achieve more for kids.

11/15
Columbus, OH



OHIO CHARTER SCHOOLS CONFERENCE

25 Years of Chartering: Looking Back to Lead Forward | Jim Goenner

Understanding the past strengthens our ability to shape the future. In partnership with former Minnesota state Senator Ember Reichgott Junge, this session explored the ideas behind the charter strategy. Participants gained valuable insights about what's working and what's not in policy and practice.

Governing for Greatness | Jim Goenner and Riley Justis

We believe that board members can play an essential role in ensuring the school they govern fulfills its mission with fidelity and stands the test of time. Jim Collins' model for greatness from his book *Good to Great for the Social Sector* was used as our framework for equipping boards with knowledge, skills, and abilities they need.

2/16
Anchorage, AK



ALASKA SOCIETY FOR TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

One-Room Schoolhouse | Riley Justis

Focusing on the the power of integrated technology based management solutions for school operations, this presentation laid out the "digital one-room schoolhouse" as a model for school reform. The concept focuses on the integration of technology as a means by which to produce more effective and efficient school operations.

3/16
Long Beach, CA



CALIFORNIA CHARTER SCHOOLS CONFERENCE

Aligning for Greatness | Jim Goenner and Riley Justis

This session taught the timeless principles that effective leaders use to lead people and fulfill their organizational mission. It helped participants discover how to move from effectiveness to greatness through Covey's 8th habit — finding your voice and inspiring others to find theirs.

5/16
San Diego, CA



ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY/ GLOBAL SILICON VALLEY SUMMIT

Putting the "I" in Education Reform

Panel Discussion, Jim Goenner

As we look back on 25 years of education reform, this panel asked: How far have we strayed from our goals? Have we kept our focus? They discussed the progress we have made and where we are going.

5/16
Atlantic City, NJ



NEW JERSEY CHARTER SCHOOLS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Charter Board Institute | Jim Goenner, Riley Justis, and Don Cooper

In partnership with the New Jersey Charter Schools Association, this dynamic and interactive annual Charter Board Institute was designed to inspire hearts and minds and provide valuable insights and tools that both trustees and school leaders can put into action.

6/16
Nashville, TN



NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOLS CONFERENCE

Authorizing and the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership | Jim Goenner

We envision authorizers playing this role and advancing beyond the basics of gatekeeping and monitoring. This session teaches how to apply the five practices—model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, encourage the heart—of exemplary leaders and become a catalyst for excellence.

Growth Strategies for Charter Schools: Start-Up, Expansion, and Maturity | Darlene Chambers, Panel Discussion

This panel session outlined stages of growth from start-up to expansion to mature schools and highlighted the challenges schools face at each stage. Our panel of experts offered best practices learned from their experiences.



“If the K-12 system does not move to innovate, the new approaches to learning will sweep around it.” — *Ted Kolderie, The Split Screen Strategy*

Spotlighting Innovation in Education

A SPECIAL “TED TALK”

A key way that we inspire excellence is by convening thought-leaders and influence-makers throughout the country to connect, reflect together, and share ideas about the future of charters and chartering. From casual get-togethers to structured roundtable discussions, we believe that coming together strengthens the charter community and helps us advance as a team for kids.

This year, we convened a special meeting of more than 40 thinkers-and-doers from throughout the country for an insightful conversation with Ted Kolderie, co-founder of Education Evolving and an inaugural member of the Charter Schools Hall of Fame, during the National Charter Schools Conference in Nashville in June.

One of the originators of the charter schools idea, Ted is known to “challenge the givens.” He is a leader in the transformation of public education into a self-improving system that goes beyond commonly accepted notions.

Ted has been thinking about where the charter idea stands and where it’s headed. Some of his latest thinking is in his 2015 book *The Split Screen Strategy: How to Turn Education into a Self-Improving System*. It will also appear in Education Week’s review of 25 years of chartering.

During our time together in Nashville, Ted shared with the group the developments he sees on the horizon, as well as what he believes the policy discussion today is missing and should consider. Also during our time together, we announced a new, special award—The Kolderie Award for Challenging the Givens—to honor Ted and inspire the next generation of innovators. More on this award is on page 26.

This luncheon video is available at www.CharterInstitute.org/Kolderie2016.



Encouraging Students

SPRING ESSAY CONTEST

Our organization has a rich history in our home state's charter public schools sector. Because of this, we are proud of the thousands of students who annually attend charter schools throughout Michigan, and of the thousands of parents, teachers, school leaders, and charter school board members who are hard at work each day to help kids succeed.

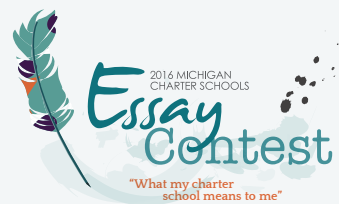
In celebration of National Charter Schools Week (May 1 through 7) and to encourage charter school students to show pride in their schools and show the positive, transformative impact charter schools are having on children every day, we sponsored a statewide essay contest. The theme of the 2016 essay contest was "What My Charter School Means to Me." More than 200 students from every corner of the state submitted essays.

Through this contest, kids opened up. They told us their stories. What they wrote was heartwarming—they sent us stories of warm, family environments where they have a supportive network of teachers and friends that help them flourish. Other stories were heartbreaking. We received deeply personal essays that vividly described struggles that no one should have to go through. For these students, their school was more than just a place to learn. It was a place that kept them safe. It was a place that transformed their lives.

The contest was open to students in middle school and high school. Prizes were awarded for the first, second, and third place winners in middle (6-8) and high school (9-12) divisions. First place winners of each division were invited to Lansing for special recognition.

Due to this success, our plan is to make this contest an annual event for National Charter Schools Week and growing it across the nation to give more kids a chance to tell their stories.

We are also launching an art competition for elementary school students. This year's theme is "What do you want to be when you grow up?" to encourage kids to dream big—and to help inspire adults to keep working hard to help kids turn their dreams into reality.



AWARDS

First place winners received \$500, a trophy, and special recognition from legislative leaders.

Second place winners received \$250 and a trophy.

Third place winners received \$100 and a certificate of recognition.



HIGH SCHOOL WINNERS

1ST PLACE

Abby Marshall

Grand River Preparatory High School
Authorizer: Grand Valley State University

"Attending a charter school means that you are always challenged, and that you are never looked down upon if you fail. The environment is always positive, and all the teachers are always willing to help you achieve your best. And because charter schools are typically smaller, it means that the teachers can get to know you easier, and find out how you learn best."

2ND PLACE

Brogen Harger

Charlton Heston Academy
Authorizer: Lake Superior State University

"They have bettered me, not changed but bettered, a new Brogen 2.0. [Charlton Heston Academy] has molded me into the amazing person I am today. I not only want to see myself succeed, now I'm pushing others around me to be the best that they can be in order to help them as a greater good."

3RD PLACE

Jasmine Teutsch

Insight School of Michigan
Authorizer: Central Michigan University

"I finally knew what the Civil Rights movement, and its most famous leader Martin Luther King, and the Harlem Renaissance, and all of the great people that expanded the culture and art of the African American population after they had migrated northward. . . . And one day, I want to be like these wonderful people I learned about, and change society for the better like they did."

MIDDLE SCHOOL WINNERS

1ST PLACE

Audrey Broadwater

Holly Academy
Authorizer: Central Michigan University

"You asked all of us competing for this prize to tell you what our school means to us. . . . In case you didn't get the message, here's what my school means to me. It means home."

2ND PLACE

Moneebah Ashra

Central Academy
Authorizer: Central Michigan University

"What I think makes my charter school the most special is that they prepare you for college, step by step. There are programs that prepare you for things that you might never find in other schools. There are classes from healthcare to self-finance."

3RD PLACE

Christopher Mangrum

Metro Charter Academy
Authorizer: Grand Valley State University

"With knowledge, there comes power; like choices for a job or college. More, meaning a greater or additional amount, can mean there is no end to learning; there is always "MORE" to learn about. Also, the more interesting the topic; the more fun you could have learning about it."

LEADING THE WAY IN DEMOCRATIZING EXCELLENCE

Powering Performance

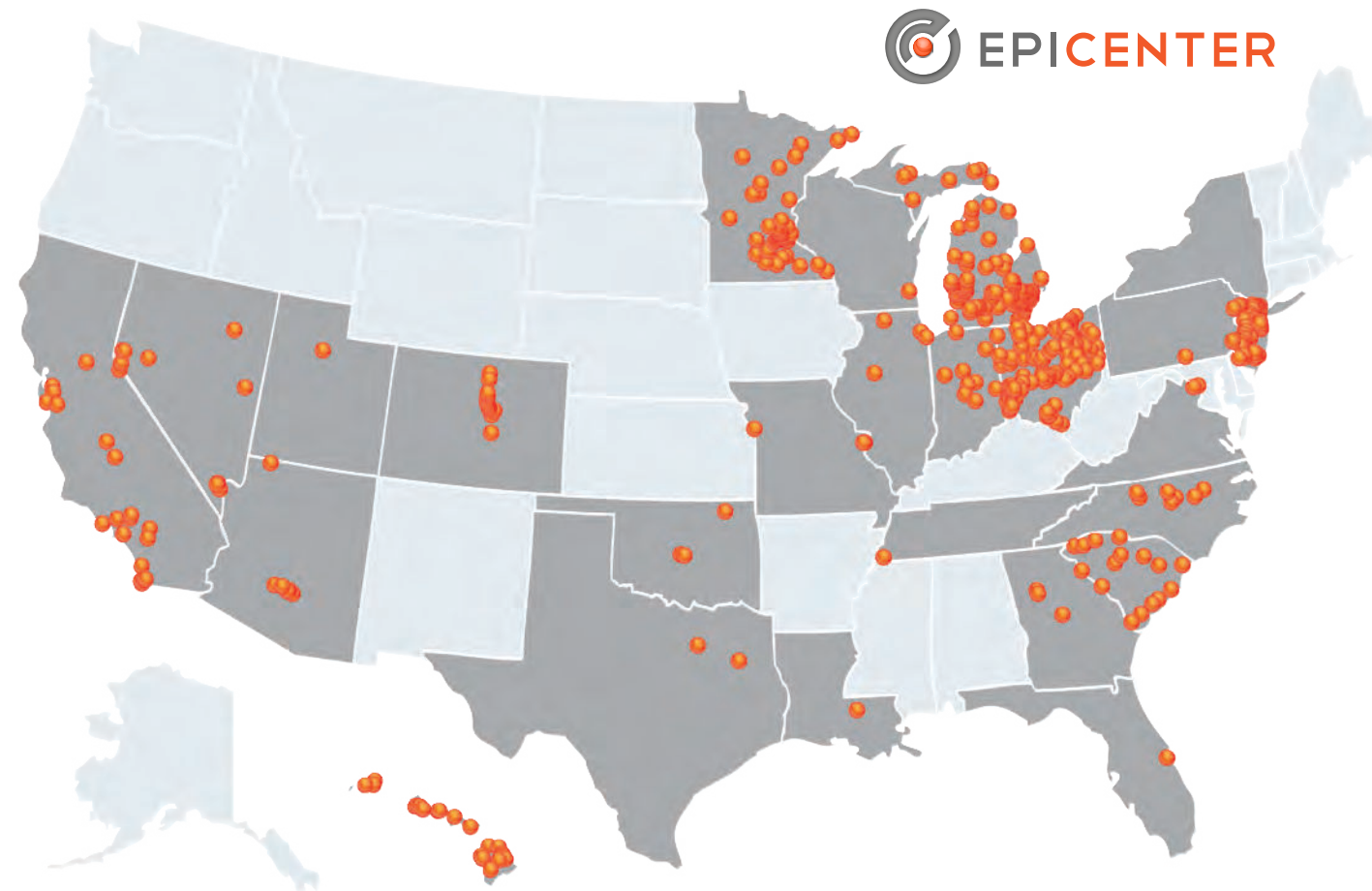
EPICENTER BRINGS FOCUS TO WHAT MATTERS MOST

One of our team's passions is a Web-based performance and portfolio management system called Epicenter. It is a powerful system that leading authorizers, boards, schools, and management organizations are using to improve their performance and productivity.

To us, Epicenter is more than helping people manage documents, workflow, and compliance. It's about helping people take ownership of their responsibilities, growing the capacity of their organizations and freeing them up so they can focus on the things that truly matter, and giving them the peace of mind that comes with knowing you can proactively demonstrate performance. It's about ensuring everyone involved with schools has access to powerful technology so compliance can be systematized and we all can be laser focused on improving performance.

In short, Epicenter is about democratizing excellence in school portfolio management.

We are proud that Epicenter is in use by schools in 25 states and the District of Columbia to help more than 2,000 schools increase their performance.



LENNY SCHAFER
Executive Director

OCCS STRENGTHENS SCHOOLS WITH EPICENTER

A designee of the University of Toledo Board of Trustees, the Ohio Council of Community Schools (OCCS) is one of the first and largest sponsors of charter schools in the Buckeye State. The OCCS charters 48 schools that serve approximately 26,000 students, all hailing from "the river to the lake," an Ohio reference to the Ohio River in the south to Lake Erie in the north.

OCCS uses its 15 years of experience in authorizing to offer the schools it charters robust technical assistance in the areas of finance, special education, academics, and more. They collaborate with schools, management partners, and other education advocates to ensure all students have access to high-quality education options.

They also charter blended learning schools, electronic schools, traditional brick and mortar schools, bilingual academies, prep and fitness academies, and dropout academies, all in an effort to try to change the face of public education.

Lenny Schafer, the Executive Director at OCCS, is a proponent of Epicenter. "Previously, we would run around the state trying to collect the necessary paperwork from each school," Schafer said. "This allows us to do trainings and sit in classrooms and spend more time on parents and kids and allows each school to spend time on their students instead of on paperwork."

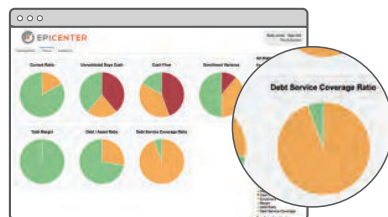
EPICENTER DASHBOARDS

This year, we made some great advances toward this vision through the launch of Epicenter's Performance Center. This Center provides information at-a-glance to ensure that authorizers, boards, and schools have a common set of academic, financial, and demographic information to work from. In this Center:



The Academic Dashboard

allows users to examine and assess the performance of a portfolio of schools against established targets and benchmarks. Users can see whether schools are meeting performance goals and obtain detailed information on each school. A board member or school user can see how well their school is performing at each grade level and over a period of time.



The Financial Dashboard

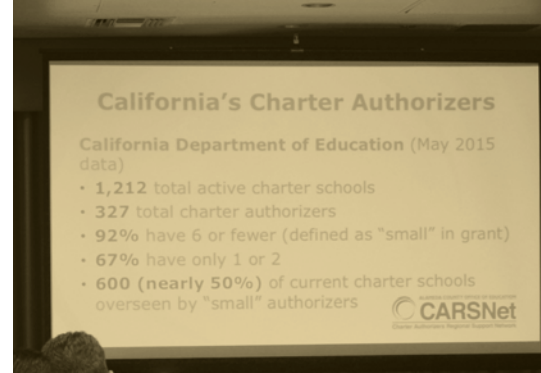
uses the framework developed by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers to assess the financial performance of a portfolio of schools. Pie charts quickly identify a school's or district's performance. Snapshot views also demonstrate the performance trends of each school by using simple and clear arrows that show whether a school is performing better or worse than in the past.



The Demographics Dashboard includes a number of the fields measured at the local, state, and national levels as a comparative to student performance and measures of academic success.

Our team knows that when it comes to school board meetings, planning and preparation are essential for success. Our system simplifies board preparations and equips boards with the data and documents they need to govern wisely. Whether working with one board or a portfolio of boards, Epicenter streamlines the necessary preparation for board meetings. The enhanced coordination and communication brings clarity and focus to meetings.

And there's so much more that is planned. Our team has been hard at work advancing Epicenter's functionality in the areas of board governance and developing new ways to help connect boards and others with training and learning opportunities through the system. To learn more or stay up-to-date, visit www.epicenternow.org.



GAIL GREELY
Director

EPICENTER HELPING AUTHORIZERS IN CALIFORNIA

The Charter Authorizers Regional Support Network (CARSNet) is a project of the Alameda County Office of Education. CARSNet is funded by a U.S. Department of Education's Charter Schools Program National Leadership Activities Grant, which was awarded in March 2015.

CARSNet has a three-year grant and their mission is to train and support charter authorizers in California that have six or fewer schools.

CARSNet is one and a half years into their grant, and one of the resources they provide their authorizers is Epicenter. An authorizer must complete a three-day "boot camp" or a master class, and once they complete either they are given free access to Epicenter for three years.

"We want authorizers spending time doing what they should be doing, not dealing with paperwork, and that's where Epicenter fits in," said Gail Greely, Director of CARSNet. "We are excited to be offering Epicenter to our clients and we know it will make them more efficient."

By gathering authorizers together and working with them, CARSNet's long-term goal is to help authorizers make better decisions and become better leaders.

"It will be great to see how our authorizers are using Epicenter and for CARSNet to use Epicenter to see how [better authorizing helps] charter schools are succeeding," Greely said.

Board Services

EMPOWERING BOARDS TO GOVERN FOR GREATNESS

One of the pillars of our work at the Institute is empowering charter school boards to govern effectively and wisely.

We know that people choose to serve on charter school boards for many reasons. But there's one reason that unites everyone. And that's to make a difference for kids. It's the reason that board members give up their time and offer evenings and weekends for meetings and retreats; ensure that budgets are balanced; ask the tough questions about school performance; and serve as ambassadors for their school.

This is challenging work, but it is the work that positions schools for success.

We support the important work of charter school boards and board members in many ways. The cornerstone of our support of boards is our Board Policies Service. Since 2001, we have worked with an organization that provides policies to school districts across the nation, Neola, to customize and make this service available to charter schools in Michigan. Our policies are legally vetted, practically tested, and provide a solid framework for school operations.

This year, we were proud to provide this service to 169 schools in Michigan. For these schools, our service goes beyond simply delivering policies. Our team of seasoned associates provides consulting and guidance to each schools' leadership on the recommended updates and how policies can be effectively used each day.

We are also proud to provide 74 schools with a companion administrative guidelines services that guide schools' day-to-day operations. These guidelines provide schools with a complete system. This provides board members an assurance that policies they adopt are being carried out correctly and consistently, and also provides school leaders with an implementation-ready time-saving tool.

Additionally, we provide governance training for schools and organizations throughout the nation. This year, our seasoned professionals led trainings in Georgia, Michigan, and New Jersey.



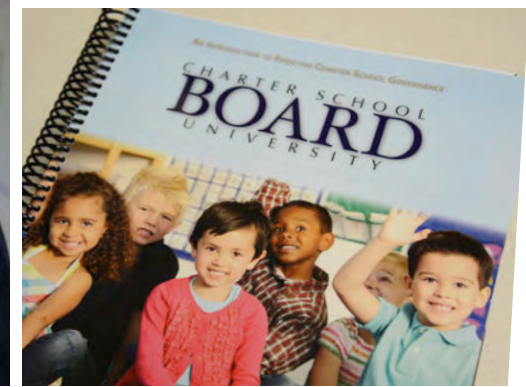
JIM GOENNER



DON COOPER



RILEY JUSTIS



Board Training Spotlight

LAKE SUPERIOR STATE UNIVERSITY

Having chartered 22 schools throughout Michigan, Lake Superior State University (LSSU) is one of Michigan's larger charter school authorizers.

We have been proud to work with LSSU for years through our board policies service, which it underwrites for its schools, and through Epicenter. This year, the Institute partnered with LSSU to provide board governance training to schools it charters.

Together, we hosted large-group trainings at our offices in Mt. Pleasant, in Grand Rapids, and in Detroit. These sessions centered on the fundamental, universal principles of good governance, and helping board members lead their schools to greatness.

This partnership grows our tradition of working with leading authorizers to prepare board members to effectively govern, which has included longstanding work with Ferris State University on a successful online board development series, and hosting a statewide board summit in partnership with the Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers.

INDIVIDUALIZING BOARD TRAINING NEEDS

In addition to working with authorizers to help prepare their boards, our team also works individually with select clients to tailor trainings, facilitate retreats, and provide needed coaching and consulting to support their operations. This year, our team provided direct, customized support to the boards of Walden Green Montessori, Jackson Preparatory and Early College, and Muskegon Heights Public School Academy in Michigan; and Macon Charter Academy in Georgia.

Our team also presented two special day-long Board Institutes that provide inspiration and comprehensive governance training—one in partnership with the New Jersey Charter Schools Association and one in partnership with Philadelphia Charters for Excellence.



“For, in the end, it is impossible to have a great life unless it is a meaningful life. And it is very difficult to have a meaningful life without meaningful work. Perhaps, then, you might gain that rare tranquility that comes from knowing that you’ve had a hand in creating something of intrinsic excellence that makes a contribution. Indeed, you might even gain that deepest of all satisfactions: knowing that your short time here on this earth has been well spent, and that it mattered.”

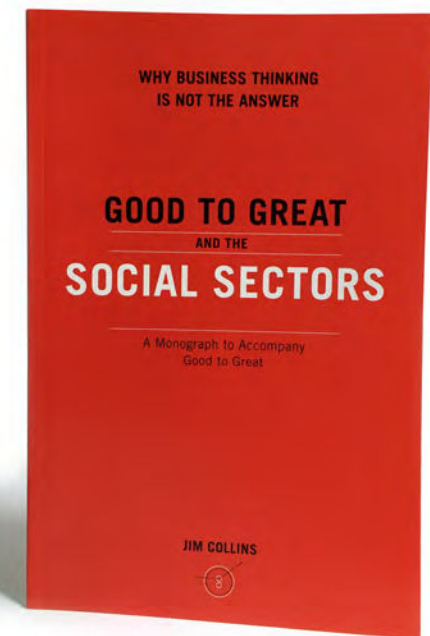
— James C. Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't*

Jim Collins

A PARTNERSHIP FOR GREATNESS

At the Institute, we are big advocates of Jim Collins’ seminal book, *Good to Great*, and his passion for developing leaders. That’s why we were so thrilled when Mr. Collins generously offered to provide us with complimentary copies of his monograph, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, so that we could provide copies to the board members and school leaders that attend our governance and leadership trainings.

As Collins says, “Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness...is largely a matter of conscious choice and discipline.” Our goal is for everyone to choose greatness, because we believe the passionate pursuit of greatness will imagine and deliver the kinds of education our children deserve.



STRIVING IN EMPOWERING OTHERS FOR GREATNESS



DARLENE CHAMBERS

Leading in Authorizing

COMMITMENT TO HIGH-QUALITY, HIGH-CAPACITY CHARTERING

At the Institute, we know that an authorizer can serve as a change agent, a market maker, and a force for greatness in public education. Authorizing can serve as a quality control for the charter schools sector and provide lawmakers with the confidence that someone is watching the store and ensuring excellence.

However, deciding to become an authorizing body is not to be taken lightly. Institutions looking to engage in this activity must balance a number of factors—such as potential benefits and risks to the institution, and political and legal liabilities that the institution might incur—with the desire to help launch more schools that help students reach their full potential.

Our team is proud to support institutions that have made the decision to authorize schools through programs and services, and also by periodically convening forums at which they can share and discuss issues, learn from each other, and grow together.

We also help potential authorizers understand what it takes to be successful. Working in partnership with Bluum, an Idaho-based nonprofit organization that cultivates great leaders and schools, we have assisted potential authorizers with the research needed to make an informed decision about whether to join the charter community. This research has been made available to potential authorizers in multiple states.



Fostering Innovation



MUSKEGON HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOL ACADEMY

Like many others, a school district in the west Michigan community of Muskegon Heights struggled. It faced substantial legacy debt and structural costs, and its schools were among the lowest-performing in the state.

Working in partnership with state policymakers and thought leaders, Institute President and CEO Jim Goenner was part of a team that implemented an innovative policy solution set into motion four years ago—using the combined flexibility of Michigan’s charter schools law and “emergency manager” law to create a new, chartered district to educate kids. This provided Muskegon Heights’ schools with a new organization and a fresh start, while at the same time allowing the legacy debt to be paid off through the taxing mechanisms of the old district.

This new arrangement has resulted in a financially sound environment that allowed school leaders to build upon to get results for kids. As reported by Alexa Malesky at the Mackinac Center (Lessons from the Muskegon Heights Overhaul, August 17, 2016): “Muskegon Heights seems to have successfully reduced its spending and stayed on stable fiscal ground. The old district was spending over \$15,000 per pupil in 2010-2011, creating a budget deficit of over \$2 million. Under new management, the district receives \$11,789.59 per pupil and has so far prevented expenditures from outpacing revenues.”

Goenner has remained a trusted advisor since this solution has been put into action. Additional research is expected on the Muskegon Heights experience in the future.



Supporting Achievement

JACKSON COLLEGE

In 2013, under the leadership of President Dan Phelan, Jackson College in Jackson, Michigan, launched an innovative, new venture: the establishment of an early college. The vision was for a mastery-based school that allowed students to advance at their own pace on a balanced calendar and earn an associate's degree and high school diploma upon graduation.

Our team was proud to work in partnership with Dr. Phelan and the College to advance this vision and launch Jackson Preparatory and Early College ("JPEC") on the College's main campus in the Fall of 2013. We believed that this new type of early college could be a replicable model for others, helping increase college access for students not just in mid-Michigan, but throughout the nation.

This year, JPEC is educating 390 students in sixth through twelfth grades—up by more than 100 students from last year. School leaders project that JPEC students will earn more than 2,800 dual enrollment credits while being able to participate in the robust environment that a college campus offers.

We remain a committed partner in assisting the College to fulfill its authorizing functions, working with JPEC's board to build their capacity to govern, and supporting the school's leadership to be positioned for success.



College President Dr. Dan Phelan (center) with College and JPEC leadership



Building Capacity



THE WILLIAM C. ABNEY ACADEMY

Founded by the late Bishop William C. Abney in 1998, pastor of the Bethel Pentecostal Church, the William C. Abney Academy was founded to provide a new, high-quality educational option to parents in Grand Rapids, Michigan, who were frustrated with other choices. It is chartered by Grand Valley State University, one of the nation's premier university authorizers.

Abney operates on two campuses—elementary and middle school—to serve more than 400 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Both campuses are nestled in challenging neighborhoods in northeast Grand Rapids, where many students are at-risk of academic failure.

Since its founding, Abney has historically provided a high-quality educational environment for students. In 2012, it was designated as a Michigan School of Excellence. However, it has struggled both academically and financially in recent years.

In partnership with the Institute for Excellence in Education, our team was invited to lead the school's reconstitution to position it for long-term viability. We have been hands-on in working collaboratively with the board, authorizer, and school leadership. Together, we are entering the second year of Abney's restructuring, and we are confident that the systems, procedures, and leadership being put in place is positioning the school for success to win for kids and the community.



Partnerships: Leading in the Charter Community

Our team strives to empower people and organizations to achieve more than they thought was possible. A key way we do this is through service and partnership with state and national organizations that are aligned with our values and core purpose.



CENTER FOR EDUCATION REFORM

Founded in 1993, the Center for Education Reform (“CER”) is one of the nation’s pioneering and leading advocates for structural and sustainable changes that can dramatically improve educational opportunities. Institute President and CEO Jim Goenner has served on CER’s board since December 2014. He has served as a thought partner with CER’s leadership, advising as the organization applies a new formula to education reform—Innovation + Opportunity = Results—and recommits itself to the founding principles of the charter schools strategy.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS

Since our founding, the Institute has worked to empower and equip authorizers with the knowledge and tools needed to succeed for kids. We are proud of the long history of work that our team has done with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (“NACSA”) to prepare the next generation of leaders. Most recently, Institute Senior Vice President Darlene Chambers has participated in the Leaders Program and has served as a national leaders coach for the past three years. Vice President Don Cooper has been invited to present to the current cohorts of its Leaders Program and its Innovation in Education Fellowship.



NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools is a national leader in advancing the charter schools movement. In 2015, the Alliance launched a two-year project of convening communities of practice in eight states to strengthen their advocacy capacity. Participating states are Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Michigan, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Institute Vice President Don Cooper is currently a partner in Michigan’s community of practice, bringing our perspective on public policy to shape this advocacy work.



MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL ACADEMIES

As the 9th state in the union to enact a charter schools law, Michigan leaders knew that strong support organizations were needed for charters to succeed. Our organization was born out of this need in 1995, as was the Michigan Association of Public School Academies (“MAPSA”) in 1996. Leaders in both organizations have worked closely over the last twenty years to advance charters and chartering. Institute Vice President Don Cooper continues this tradition, serving on MAPSA’s board of directors and as a thinking-and-doing partner in advocacy.



OTHER LEADERSHIP ROLES

Our team is committed to advancing individual organizations that help the charter community flourish. In addition to other service, Institute President and CEO is active on the board of directors of the Charter Schools Development Corporation and on the national advisory board for Pathways in Education; Senior Vice President Darlene Chambers serves on the Cleveland Transportation Alliance Board; Vice President Riley Justis is a contributing author to Competency Works, a national think-tank for competency-based education reform and a member of the editorial board of Charter Schools Resource Journal; and Partner Ray O’Laughin sits on the board of a Michigan-based organization serving at-risk youth, Integrity Educational Services.

“Leadership is not about titles, positions or flowcharts. It is about one life influencing another.” — John Maxwell

UPCOMING PROGRAMS ON THE HORIZON

THE KOLDERIE AWARD FOR CHALLENGING THE GIVENS

Announced at a special “Ted Talk” in July with Education Evolving co-founder and National Charter Schools Hall of Fame inductee Ted Kolderie, our team is proud to announce the launch of a new award—the Ted Kolderie Award for Challenging the Givens—to illuminate and celebrate innovation occurring throughout the nation.

Our plan is to award the Kolderie Award for first time in the summer of 2017, and annually thereafter.

Ted is an inspiration to us and to many in the charter community. We believe that his ideas are as relevant and important today as they were in the 1990s. To improve public education for our kids and our country, innovation must be encouraged. We know that innovation happens best when it happens closest to “the problem.” Innovation doesn’t always come from big think tanks, but, instead, from people who are hard at work every day trying things that are different to see what works best. Innovation happens from all of those who “challenge the givens.”

We believe that it is essential that we recognize and encourage the work that those throughout the country are doing differently to get results for kids. This award is one way, but certainly not the only way, for us to do that.

The Institute has committed \$25,000 over the next five years to help launch the award, make it meaningful for Ted and those who receive it, and help it become a catalyst for innovation. We are making this commitment because we believe that this award will be powerful and will bring new ideas to bring results for kids to the forefront.

To make this truly a success, we need your help. We would be honored if other thought-leaders, practitioners, and policymakers would join us in this endeavor. If you’d like to be part of the nominating process, selection process, or raise funds to endow the award so it can have a lasting impact, please contact us.

“As Democrats, what are we waiting for? We have always been the party considered most responsive to education needs. We must continue to earn that reputation by responding to our changing times.” — *Sen. Ember Reichgott Junge, The Freedom to Be Better: Speech to Democratic Leadership Conference, May 1, 1992*

THE SENATOR EMBER REICHGOTT JUNGE RESEARCH LIBRARY

We know that the charter schools idea is making history.

Over the last 25 years, the idea of chartering has spread across the country. Today, 43 states and the District of Columbia have chartering laws on their books, allowing for the operation of more than 6,700 public charter schools that serve nearly three million of our nation’s children.

The charter school movement has learned a great deal as new laws have been created, new schools opened, new ways of teaching were pioneered, and new leaders emerged. Important materials, like speeches, white papers, historic legislation, personal papers of leaders, and the like, are spread too far across the country. We believe that gathering, cataloging, preserving, and making this knowledge accessible is essential to continuing the charter idea’s growth. The history of the origins and first quarter century of chartering can and will inform the future.

That’s why our team is embarking on an ambitious project in 2017—the launch of a research library. Through this project we will gather primary source material, create a permanent home for it, and make it available to students, practitioners, and policymakers to inform the work of the next generation of innovators.

We are proud that this project is launched in partnership with the library’s namesake, Ember Reichgott Junge, the Minnesota State Senator who authored the nation’s first charter school law in 1991. A passionate advocate for chartering, Ember committed her time after leaving office to educating the next generation of chartering leaders. This project will amplify her work.

Additional information will be released in 2017, including information on how to participate.



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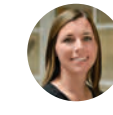


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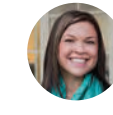


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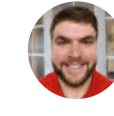
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 IT Support Technician


Our team also includes a number of highly skilled associates, including Richard Halik, Ph.D.; Fritz Esch, Ph.D.; Angelete (“Angie”) Melhado, Ph.D.; Peggy Yates; and Neil Hartman.



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