

CHARTER SCHOOLS

AND THE BEGINNING OF ARIZONA'S SCHOOL CHOICE MOVEMENT



1994: SCHOOL CHOICE CHAMPIONS PUSH ARIZONA'S FIRST CHARTER SCHOOL LAW OVER THE FINISH LINE

- A COALITION OF REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS – PRIMARILY HISPANIC DEMOCRATS– FOUGHT TO GIVE THEIR COMMUNITIES OPTIONS.
- BETTER OUTCOMES FOR KIDS; COMMUNITY RENEWAL; SAFE SCHOOLS
- THE SWEEPING PROPOSAL INCLUDED PRIVATE CHOICE
 - A DEAL WAS MADE TO REMOVE VOUCHERS
- THE COMPROMISE GAVE AZ
 - **OUR FIRST CHARTER SCHOOL LAW**
 - **FREE OPEN ENROLLMENT**
 - **SCHOOL REPORT CARDS**

THE EARLY YEARS

- REGULATORY ACCOUNTABILITY: HOW TO GROW A MOVEMENT
- 400 APPLICANTS THE FIRST YEAR
- ORIGINAL LAW CAPPED THE NUMBER OF CHARTER APPROVALS
- EDUCATORS STRUGGLED WITH THE BUSINESS SIDE
- ENTREPRENEURS STRUGGLED WITH ACADEMIC OUTCOMES
- CLOSURES WERE HIGH PROFILE AND MID-YEAR

2000: LESSONS-LEARNED AND HIGH DEMAND LEAD TO FIRST MAJOR OVERHAUL TO CHARTER STATUTES

- BUSINESS FAILINGS ARE PRIMARY FOCUS
 - Academic Accountability strengthened as part of Proposition 301 negotiation
- STRENGTHENS FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT OF DISTRICT-SPONSORED CHARTERS
- USFR NON-COMPLIANCE PROVISIONS PLACED INTO LAW
- CHARTERS REQUIRED TO PROVIDE DETAILED BUSINESS PLANS
 - NEW AND RENEWING CHARTERS
- CAPS ON CHARTER APPROVALS ARE REMOVED

ARIZONA'S BRAND OF CHARTERING

HOW AND WHY WE GREW

- INDEPENDENT START UPS
- FRUSTRATED FAMILIES EMBRACED ACCELERATION OPTIONS
- COMMUNITY LEADERS GREW-THEIR-OWN TO PROVIDE SAFE CAMPUSES
- IMPROVEMENTS TO APPLICATION PROCESS SLOWED FAILED STARTS
- INTENTIONAL EFFORT TO GROW QUALITY ACCELERATED EXCELLENCE
- RECESSION: INCREASE IN QUALITY MEETS INCREASE IN DEMAND
- DISTRICTS RESPOND AND BUILD ON THE CHOICE MARKET

100 FLOWERS BLOOMED... AND THEN SOME

- HOME TO MORE THAN 500 CHARTER SCHOOLS
- ADULTS AGES 18-49 THINK OF CHOICE AS THE NORM
- 20 PERCENT OF STUDENTS ATTEND CHARTER SCHOOLS
- CHARTER SCHOOL GROWTH OUTPACING DISTRICT SCHOOL GROWTH
- CHARTER SCHOOLS OUTPERFORMING DISTRICT SCHOOLS AS A COHORT
- DISTRICTS ARE CONVERTING THEIR PORTFOLIOS TO SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

MANAGE YOUR MOMENT

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHARTERING, ACCOUNTABILITY AND INNOVATION

- CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE INNOVATING FASTER THAN PUBLIC POLICY CAN REACT
- ENTIRE COMMUNITIES AWAIT THEIR FIRST CHANCE TO CHOOSE; WHILE SOME STUDENTS CAN ACCESS MANY CHOICES WITHIN STEPS OF THEIR FRONT DOOR
- STARK DIFFERENCES STILL EXIST IN SCHOOL QUALITY
 - **HOW DOES THIS IMPACT THE QUEST FOR EQUITY?**
- GOOD AND BAD SCHOOLS ALIKE COMPETE FOR STUDENTS
- UNIQUE CONFIGURATIONS BLUR THE LINES BETWEEN ELEM. AND SECONDARY; UNIFIED
- THE MORE DIVERSE WE ARE AS A STATE, THE STRONGER OUR SCHOOLS

INTENTIONS: UNDERSTAND YOUR “WHY”

“For me, the idea has never been that charters are superior to districts – the full time search we should all be engaged in is how we get the best educators in Arizona to provide us with the best ideas for our students as quickly as possible.

Charter schools offer an open door to new ideas, and I think that has inspired a lot of new thinking and opportunity for innovative leadership in the traditional system as well. It certainly has proven to be one of many ways to see steady improvement in outcomes for students.” – Lisa Keegan



WHAT EXACTLY IS A CHARTER SCHOOL?

- **AN INDEPENDENTLY OPERATED PUBLIC SCHOOL**
- PUBLIC SCHOOL WITH FLEXIBILITY IN EXCHANGE FOR ACCOUNTABILITY
- PUBLICLY FUNDED; PRIVATELY RUN
- OPERATE UNDER CONTRACT WITH A CHARTER AUTHORIZER
- PROVIDE UNIQUE MODELS AND ALTERNATIVES

KNOW YOUR “WHY”

MANAGE THE MOMENT

- HOW DO YOU DEFINE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHARTER SCHOOL?
 - **SET A VISION FOR YOURSELVES AND THE STATE**
- WHAT IS THE BOARD’S ROLE IN ACHIEVING THIS VISION
- HOW CAN THE PENT UP ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF EDUCATORS BE BROUGHT TO BEAR **FOR STUDENTS** IN THE FINANCIALLY CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS?
- HOW DO YOUR ACTIONS AND REGULATORY DECISIONS PROTECT, IGNORE OR ELIMINATE PERCEPTIONS AND TRUTHS ABOUT SCHOOLS OF CHOICE?
- MANAGE YOUR MOMENT: TAKE STOCK OF WHERE YOU ARE NOW BEFORE DECIDING HOW TO MANAGE IT
- IDENTIFY PARTNERS IN THE WORK: SCHOOL LEADERS -QUALITY CHARTERS, NEW CHARTERS; INNOVATIVE DISTRICT LEADERS, POLICY LEADERS, NATIONAL THINKERS

AZ CHAMBER FOUNDATION

- **DATA AND POLICY RESEARCH**

- SEEKS PUBLIC POLICY ANSWERS TO INFORM THE STATE'S SUCCESS

- **A FOR ARIZONA EDUCATION INITIATIVE**

- EXPERIENCE OF BEST PERFORMERS INFORMS RACE TO EQUITY

- **CBN**

- COMMUNICATIONS PLATFORMS BRING BALANCE TO PUBLIC DIALOGUE