



**The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools  
October 29, 2015  
Deerfoot Inn and Casino  
1000, 11500 – 35 St. SE  
Calgary, AB**

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

1	Presenter	Ember Reichgott Junge	Special Guest		<a href="mailto:ember@visi.com">ember@visi.com</a>
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**8:30 a.m.**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

- 1.1 Introductions – Attendees introduced themselves with their school affiliations and positions. Thanks were expressed to the Calgary Girls’ School for providing the talented entertainment, to Almadina for providing the door prizes, and to New Horizons for providing the hospitality. Suzuki Charter School presented a combined School Spotlight/ Research Report which was also appreciated by the membership.
- 1.2 Consideration of Agenda – Add Item 3.3 Alberta Education Report, 3.4 MLA Directory, and 4.1 Hospitality
- 1.3 Approval of Minutes  
**#15/29/10-01** M/C to approve the minutes of the May 7, 2015 regular meeting as presented.  
*John Liu*  
*Harold Lemieux*
- 1.4 Financial Report  
**#15/29/10-02** M/C to receive the April 1- Sept. 30, 2015 Financial Report as presented.  
*John Liu*  
*Vicky Qualie*
- 1.5/1.6 Education Research Update/School Spotlight – Suzuki’s research initially attempted to answer the question of exactly why their students performed above provincial averages, and in doing so uncovered some very interesting facts: 1. That they serve a significant number of ESL students and students with high learning needs, 2. That the level of parent engagement has decreased, and 3. That although music is important to their students, it is not the #1 thing for them all. The concept of empathy emerged as a possible factor in their success, and their research suggests that there is indeed a positive correlation between the two. The presentation ended with an informative video created by a former Suzuki student who went on to study film-making in France. The Suzuki method emphasizes the Suzuki

“triangle” comprising parent, students and teachers. The philosophy is that music instruction increases confidence and leadership ability, and the inherent element of practice increases perseverance.

## **9:00 a.m. Guest Speaker: Ember Reichgott Junge – “The Charter School Story”**

Our guest speaker, Ember Reichgott Junge, attorney and former State Senator from Minnesota, is a national spokesperson on charter public schools, past board member of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, and current board vice chair of Washington D.C. based Charter Schools Development Corporation (CSDC), co-publisher of *Zero Chance of Passage*. She was inducted into the National Charter Schools Hall of Fame in 2008, and received the Brian Bennett Education Warrior Award from Democrats for Education Reform in 2012.

Ember shared her story of the genesis and growth of charters in the U.S. and remarked on what she has seen to be a significant and very beneficial difference between “us and them”, and that is that in Alberta we draw on the considerable experience and expertise of Superintendents from the traditional public education sector (and indeed are required by legislation to do so). Ember described the essence of the charter movement as “ordinary people taking an extraordinary stand for change”. The first pathway to charter schools in the U.S. was through the concept of open enrolment proposed by Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich, and the idea gained traction with the support of the President of the American Federation of Teachers who saw it as a step forward in enhancing teacher professionalism. Add to this the support of community leaders, and charter schools became a viable option, further enriched when the door was opened for other authorizing entities than local school districts. As in Alberta, the independence conferred with the “charter” was expected to be reciprocated in positive results, or the charter withdrawn. The rest is history, and now charters exist in 43 American states, as well as D.C. and Guam, as well as Canada, Britain, New Zealand and even Iraq.

According to Ember, the myths that exist throughout the public in the U.S. are much the same as here in Alberta: 1. Charter schools receive more money, 2. Charter schools take money from “public” schools, 3. Charter schools are private schools (a misconception held by 2/3 of Americans), 4. Charter schools do not perform as well as public schools, and 5. That management companies “own” charter schools and siphon off taxpayer dollars to run them. Of course this last point is not an issue in Canada, but we have all heard the other statements more often than we can recall, in addition to the claim that we “cherry-pick” the “best” students and reject the rest.

Ember suggested that we focus on developing our 2-minute (“elevator”) speech around the following themes, which resonate very well with American (and presumably Canadian) citizens: 1. Freedom to choose, 2. Equality for every child, 3. Efficient, accountable use of tax dollars, and 4. Opportunity.

Ember was sincerely thanked for her inspirational words and useful advice, and was welcomed to return at any time!

## **2. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

2.1 Charter Board Directors’ Report – Jolene Kochendorfer (Valhalla Board Chair) reported that their meeting focussed on advocacy and developing that 2-minute message that will increase knowledge and understanding among the general public, and particularly our elected representatives. Since during the budget teleconference the minister mentioned how happy he was to have met with “all of us”, and he has not yet met with anyone from charter schools or the Association, another letter will be sent to request such a meeting. In regard to another mandate of the Directors’ committee, Director Professional Development, Garry provided a reminder of the modules on our website and offered to provide training to individual schools. As well he will recirculate our input into the new *Education Act* and put together a

directory of “who’s who” in Alberta Education. Judy Gray commented that our research and innovation obligations and initiatives should also find their way into our 2-minute message.

2.2 Regional Collaborative Service Delivery – No report.

2.3 Superintendents’ Report – Randy Clarke was present at the Superintendents’ meeting to talk about the new practice standards for teachers, school leaders and school authorities. There was also a presentation by an Aurora parent on a transportation program he developed and that is being piloted by 3 schools. Other topics of discussion included 1. Provision of employee benefits to smaller jurisdictions (costly), 2. Misconceptions about the demographics of charter schools held by many MLA’s, 3. Our “elevator” speech, 4. The potential for another meeting with the ATA, 5. The optimal time to intentionally engage parents politically, 6. The meeting with the Minister scheduled for Oct. 30 in Edmonton regarding budget implications of the new Education Act, and 7. Implications/repercussions of the recent budget (brief discussion).

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING EXERCISE – Dr. Lynne Paradis**

Dr. Paradis capably led an activity to start us on the road from “where we are” to our Preferred Future, in relation to 3 basic elements: 1. The “process”, 2. “Sparkle” – building on what is there and adding value, and 3. Our current context. Participants were divided into several groups and asked to brainstorm critical success factors, barriers and opportunities associated with getting to where we want to be, and were asked to think in terms of 1. The Association (not individual charters), 2. Inclusive ideas, 3. Initial response value, and 4. Putting trust in the process. The ideas generated will be collected and presented at EAC for further discussion and decisions on “next steps”.

### **3. EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT**

3.1 School Leadership Learning Initiative (SLLI) Update – Session 1 of our 4<sup>th</sup> year proceeded concurrently with our regular meeting, being led by Karen Spencer, Jeney Gordon and Darrell Lonsberry, with a presentation on School Leadership Standards by Randy Clarke. Alberta Education was thanked for their permission to allow surplus funds to go towards keeping the SLL program going.

3.2 Conference 2015 Update – The conference will commence at 9:00 a.m. tomorrow at the North Glenmore Park Community Association. There will three keynote speakers, Ember Reichgott Junge, Gareth Thompson and Dr. Phil Butterfield, after which nearly 500 participants will be able to choose from 50 breakout sessions following a modified Ed Camp format. Sincere thanks were expressed to the Calgary Girls’ School for hosting this event for a second time; it would not be possible to keep costs down (and attendance up!) without this kind of support.

3.3 Alberta Education Report – Marlene Lambe reported that proclamation of the new Education Act has been delayed to 2016 pending further consultation with stakeholders, some of which is taking place on Oct. 30 with regard to 1. Age of access, 2. Residency, and 3. School fees. The November Director’s Report has been released; dates to note: Nov. 15-21 National Bullying Awareness Week, 2. Nov. 27 Great Kids Award nomination deadline, and 3. Nov. 30 due date for AFP’s and AERR/3YEP. Emily commented the recent budget provides funding for enrolment growth, and that the issue of school fees will be a point of discussion with all Boards in the Oct. 30 meeting with the Minister.

3.4 MLA Directory – A directory containing contact details and basic background information for each charter school MLA in the province was provided to each member school, and will be distributed electronically.

#### **4. NEW BUSINESS**

4.1 Hospitality - It was agreed that people would be welcome to continue to socialize in the banquet room without the necessity of providing extra space or food, but that there would still be a host named for each event.

#### **5. MEETING REMINDERS**

5.1 Jan. 14/15, 2016 Regular Meeting (Red Deer Sheraton) - Entertainment – Connect; Door Prizes & Hospitality – Calgary Arts Academy; School Spotlight – Calgary Girls’ School; Research Report - Almadina

**6. EAC MEETING SCHEDULE:** Dec. 4, Feb. 26, Apr. 8, June 10

**7. REMAINING SLLI SESSION DATES:** these dates will be determined by EAC.

**ADJOURNMENT** 2:20 p.m.