



GCSA Weekly Update

Dear Jeniffer,

Welcome to Charter School News for the month of February 2008.

You should have received a survey from Andrew Lewis on our Annual Conference within the last few days. Since we will be planning the date for the 2009 conference based on your input, if you haven't already done so, please complete the survey so that we can get the information to you as soon as possible.

From the Staff at GCSA

GCSA - NEWS & EVENTS

Why does Georgia need House Bill 881

By State Representative Jan Jones - HB 881 sponsor

I have been working on House Bill 881 for nearly a year. It passed the House last week with a resounding 120-48 bi-partisan vote, a rarity for substantive education reform. In a show of support, 89 percent of Republicans and 42 percent of Democrats joined together to give the bill a constitutional majority.

In my sixth year in the legislature, and serving on the House Education Committee, I have learned, and been frustrated by, how difficult it is to make measurable progress, for Georgia's students. But improving public education will change more lives and spur more economic development than most any other aspect of state public policy. Much has been accomplished in the past 5 years to increase the graduation rate by 10 percentage points, but more remains to be done.

HB 881 is by no means a panacea for a 73 percent graduation rate and 48th national ranking on standardized tests and the SAT. But it is a sturdy effort to put more decision-making into parents hands, particularly when the public school to which their child is assigned does not meet his or her needs. It would result in more public charter schools, which are public schools of choice. You can't get more accountable than schools that shut down if parents don't send their children, or the schools don't meet high objective achievement standards.

Public charter schools offer alternatives to super-sized schools where some students get lost, homogenous one-size-fits-all schools for students that require specialized settings to excel and failing schools that serve almost no one well. Other states and industrialized countries are ahead of Georgia in this regard.

Nothing less than bold and significant change will transform public education. And I am committed to giving more local control to parents, in addition to other education initiatives, including merit pay for teachers and increased decision-making at the school-level.

As always, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to bring about real change for a better Georgia. It is a privilege I take seriously and hold with reverence.

Comments from the Georgia House floor on House Bill 881

Representative Kathy Ashe (D): *"Charter schools are public schools. It is important for families to have choices."*

Representative Brooks Coleman (R) - House Education Committee Chair: *"Georgia is as diverse as it can be. There is a place for private schools, there is a place for home schooling and there is a place for charter schools. This is a good bill offering more opportunities for families."*

Representative Chuck Martin (R): *"We have the opportunity to remove a roadblock and to give another option for Georgia's families."*

Representative Jerry Keen (R) - House Majority Leader: *"It is time for Georgia to lead in education and not simply follow behind."*

Representative Alisha Morgan (R): *"Don't I deserve a choice as a parent, as a taxpayer?"*

CHARTER NEWS

[Bill Would Fast Track Charter Schools](#)

2/1/2008

The charter school movement has shifted to the fast-track. Tuesday the state House of Representatives passed the bill that will change the way some charter schools are approved. The goal is to create more schools such as The Imagine International Academy of Smyrna which opened last August. It's one of a handful of start-up charter schools given the green light in Georgia. "In the last couple of years, just about every start-up charter school application at local boards of education has been denied," said Sen. Dan Weber, (R) Chairman of the Senate Education Committee. (Use above link for article and the following link to [view the WXIA television report by Donna Lowery](#))

KIPP Schools continue to excel and have plans to grow in Georgia

KIPP - Georgia has plans to open 2 additional middle schools (one in Atlanta Public Schools and one in Fulton County Schools) over the next few years with the intention of creating KIPP High Schools within each district in the future. Plans for the next KIPP School are underway. KIPP STRIVE Academy will apply for a charter with Atlanta Public Schools this March with the hopes of opening in the summer of 2009. [KIPP South Fulton Academy](#) (KSFA) principal, Marina Volanakis, recently participated on a panel at Harvard Law School for Careers in Child Advocacy. Marina received her juris doctorate from Harvard Law School prior to founding KSFA. KSFA was recently chosen as a community partner for the C5 Program, formerly known as Camp Coca Cola. The C5 program is a leadership development program that accepts students rising to the 8th grade and provides summer opportunities and camps for them throughout their high school years. As a community partner, KIPP South Fulton Academy will be able to nominate 20 students per year to apply to the program.

[Educator discusses charter school](#)

Teacher wants to open south Gwinnett location

2/1/2008

Monise L. Seward doesn't want to talk about a proposal to open a charter school in south Gwinnett County. Instead, the former special-education teacher wants to talk about what she says will happen in 2009. Seward is trying to start Millennium Scholars Academy, a charter school that would offer a college preparatory curriculum and visual and performing arts classes for students in kindergarten through 12th

grade. Seward shared her vision with a small group of interested parents and community members at a meeting Thursday at Zoar United Methodist Church. "I'm going to stop saying proposed school and just start saying school," she said, "because it's going to happen."

Fulton Science Academy Students achieve honors

Four [Fulton Science Academy](#) students were honored on January 29th, 2008, for their achievements in the "Respect for Human Dignity Art & Essay Contest". The competition was sponsored by the Istanbul Center and the awards dinner was held in downtown Atlanta. The results are as follows: Nairita Nandy (4th among middle school students, Honorable Mention), Oliver Zhou (Outstanding among 7th graders), Meghan Shah (Outstanding among 8th graders), Upasana Chandra (Outstanding among 8th graders)

Charter school Students WOW charter conference attendees

The school children at [DeKalb PATH Academy](#) and [Marietta Charter School](#) impressed all Georgia Charter Schools Association's Annual Conference attendees with their student performances. Children from Marietta Charter School serenaded audience members with their singing and the school children from DeKalb PATH Academy had all in attendance in awe of their percussion performance. To see the DeKalb PATH Academy performance, please use the following links.

[DeKalb PATH Academy - Video 1](#)

[DeKalb PATH Academy - Video 2](#)

[DeKalb PATH Academy - Video 3](#)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Celebrate George Washington

The Mt. Vernon Ladies Association is working to promote George Washington by placing his picture back in schools across the country. The portrait, known as a "porthole portrait" is free and will be sent to schools. As George Washington's birthday approaches, historians have grown concerned that today's children have limited factual knowledge of George Washington and his presidency. By placing a portrait of George Washington in the schools, historians hope to raise interest regarding our first president, his life, and his presidency. To request a portrait for your school, please have your principal send a letter on the school's letterhead to the address listed below. Your letter should include a description of the place you plan to hang the portrait and the school's street address for UPS deliveries. If you are requesting a poster for George Washington's Birthday, please have your letters in by February 8, 2008.

Ann Bay
Associate Director for Education
George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate & Gardens
P.O. Box 110
Mount Vernon, VA 22121
For more information visit <http://www.mountvernon.org>

HIGHLIGHT YOUR SCHOOL!

GCSA wants to highlight your school on the "new and improved" GCSA website, which will be launched very soon! GCSA would like you to forward a photo of your school building or a school sign with a short sentence which can be used as a descriptive caption. Please forward all photos to Andrew Lewis at alewis@gacharters.org.

Jeniffer Collins
Georgia Charter Schools Association

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