



GCSA Weekly Update

Dear Jeniffer,

Please see below current News on the Georgia Charter Schools movement.

From the Staff at GCSA

GCSA - NEWS & EVENTS

End the Education Numbers Game: Let Funding Follow Students

By Kelly McCutchen - Executive Vice President of the Georgia Public Policy Foundation

GPPF is an independent think tank that proposes practical, market-oriented approaches to public policy to improve the lives of Georgians.

"All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others," George Orwell wrote in his classic work, "Animal Farm." That was fiction. But it's a reality in public education: All public schools are equal, but some public schools are more equal than others.

Georgia's charter schools are public schools that are exempt from some rules and regulations. In exchange for that flexibility they are held accountable for student achievement goals. As public schools, charter schools must accept all students. Yet today in Georgia, students who move from a traditional public school to a state-chartered public school located in the same school system lose as much as two-thirds of their public funding. The state has a constitutional obligation to rectify this inequity.

Consider this: Charter schools more than reflect the state's diversity. Racial minorities make up 61 percent of charter school students, compared with 53 percent statewide, and 56 percent of charter school students are from low-income families, versus 50 percent statewide. Overcoming these (and the funding) hurdles, charter schools demonstrate academic success. They perform at the same or higher level on the state CRCT tests and have higher pass rates in every content area of the Georgia High School Graduation Test than traditional schools. A successful charter school is a successful public school.

Far too many parents lack the option of sending their child to a charter school because their local school board resists the concept. Poorly designed charter schools clearly should be turned down, but the current trend is troubling. Twenty-six of the 28 charter petitions submitted last year were denied by local school boards.

The good news is that Georgia law allows an appeal to the State Board of Education if a charter is denied at the local level. The bad news is that such "state-chartered special schools" receive only state and federal funding. The average total per-student funding last year in Georgia was \$8,729. The average state and federal funding per student is \$4,230, but can be as little as \$3,200. Unlike traditional schools,

this amount must cover both operating and capital costs. Not surprisingly, just five state-chartered schools exist among Georgia's 71.

Legislation proposed to make such state-chartered schools "whole," would provide that the state match the (absent) local funds then retain an equivalent amount from the local school district's state funding. In this way, the full allotment of funding would follow the child.

There is a precedent for this approach in current law. To support the policy goal of limiting the inequity in education funding due to property tax wealth differences at the local level, the state retains a portion of the state funds earned by each local school system. This "local fair share" is determined by multiplying the local net property tax digest by 5 mills. That amounted to more than \$1.4 billion last year.

Local school boards argue that this challenges the time-honored tradition of local control. But isn't it logical to argue that local control is enhanced when parents are given choices? As Rep. Alisha Thomas Morgan (D-Austell) declared in floor debate on the legislation (HB 881), "What better local control is there than parents? You can't get more local than that."

Governance in this model is also more "local" and accountability is firmly established. The schools are run by local governing boards comprising parents, teachers and local business leaders. Parents can leave the school at any time and the state can shut the school down if the school fails to meet its academic goals. That's triple accountability - to parents, a decentralized local board and the state.

Many local school boards, like Gainesville City Schools, are forward-thinking enough to create choices for their parents on their own, and Georgia's new charter systems law streamlines this process. Some school systems are receptive to the unique offerings and innovation provided by charter schools, but children in more than 80 percent of Georgia's school systems have no access to a charter school.

State chartered schools are not the only answer, but they can provide a critical safety valve if equitably funded. Parents should not be punished for seeking the best educational opportunities for their children, particularly within the public school framework. Too much is at stake to play local political power games with the future of young Georgians. Georgia must enable true public school choice for every child, regardless of wealth or geography, by supporting the principle that the money should follow the child.

CHARTER NEWS

International Charter Schools named an International Baccalaureate World School

After completing the normal application process required by the [International Baccalaureate](#) organization, the [International Community School](#) has been officially authorized to offer the IB Primary Years Program. Thus, ICS has become an IB World School, one of only about 150 such schools in North America, recognized for meeting rigorous academic standards and providing a child-centered international education to their students.

Charter school places second in math competition

[DeKalb PATH Academy](#)

8th grade math team won second place in the MathCounts competition in the Atlanta City School division. The team members were Thien Hoang, Vu Huynh, Filipe Jimenez, and Kourtlynn Johnson. Thien Hoang ranked third and Vu Huynh ranked sixth among all contestants. The team qualifies for advancement to the next level in the team category. Thien Hoang also qualifies for advancement to the next level in the individual category.

Professors seek new school for science **Oconee charter proposal**

February 6, 2008

Two University of Georgia professors and a Ph.D. candidate are pushing for the first public charter school in Oconee County. The professors envision the Oconee School of Math and Science as a K-12 school offering students "rigorous math, science and technology learning opportunities."

Ridgeview Charter awarded \$5K for Disney production **Sandy Springs school will produce Disney's 'High School Musical' in March**

January 25, 2008

Ridgeview Charter, in Sandy Springs, is one of 10 schools in the country awarded \$5,000 to help with its production of Disney's "High School Musical." The grant is from NAMM, the trade association of the international music products industry, and the Disney Channel, with support from Music Theatre International and Disney Theatrical Productions. In addition to the money, the license fees for the scripts, worth approximately \$2,000, have been waived, said choral director Susan Messer. The money will be used for the production, but Messer said she not exactly sure how. One possibility is an upgrade to the school's lighting and sound systems, she said. More than 100 of the school's 600 students will participate in the production, which will run March 27, 28 and 29, Messer said.

Students Say Grades Have Improved Since Murphey Middle Went Charter

Feb 5, 2008

It's had some problems in the past, but Murphey Middle School has a new plan for success. In 2007 Murphey Middle School didn't meet standards in English or Math. In 2005 Murphey Middle School was labeled one of the most persistently dangerous schools in Georgia. But the school has a new plan for success. This year Murphey is a charter school. It separates boys and girls during class time, offers mandatory tutoring, and several extra-curricular activities. And halfway into the year some students say they've already noticed some changes. "I don't have any D grades or F grades on my report card," said Antonio Johnson. Murphey's big test comes in April when Richmond County students take state math and reading exams. *(please used above link to watch the news video)*

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

[Forward email](#)

✉ **SafeUnsubscribe**®

This email was sent to jcollins@gacharters.org, by jcollins@gacharters.org
[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe](#)™ | [Privacy Policy](#).

Email Marketing by



Georgia Charter Schools Association | 600 West Peachtree Street | Suite 1555 | Atlanta | GA | 30308