



Georgia Charter Schools Association  
Plant a charter. Grow a kid.

**KEY CHARTER SCHOOLS QUESTIONS FOR  
GEORGIA'S STATE SUPERINTENDENT CANDIDATES**

NAME Dr. Beth Farokhi

ADDRESS P.O. Box 9206, Marietta, GA 30065

TELEPHONE NUMBER 404/725-4447

E-MAIL [bethforeducation@bellsouth.net](mailto:bethforeducation@bellsouth.net)

PARTY AFFILIATION Democrat

NAME OF CANDIDATE COMMITTEE Beth for Educational Excellence, Inc.

---

CAMPAIGN MANAGER/CONTACT Dr. Beth Farokhi

CAMPAIGN WEB SITE [www.BethforEducation.com](http://www.BethforEducation.com)

*Georgia Charter Schools Association is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit membership organization for Georgia's charter school operators and petitioners. Our mission is to be an effective advocate, resource, and service provider for charter public schools in the state.*

I understand that **Georgia Charter Schools Association** may use my responses to all questions as one of several other factors in consideration for endorsement of my candidacy and understand that my answers may be released at any time to the general public.

Name: Beth Farokhi

Signature: Beth Farokhi

Date: June 23, 2010

**PLEASE SIGN & RETURN COMPLETED FORM**

**Return options:**

Email: [alewis@gacharters.org](mailto:alewis@gacharters.org)  
Mail to: Andrew Lewis, Chief Programming Officer  
Georgia Charter Schools Association  
600 West Peachtree Street  
Suite 1555  
Atlanta, GA 30308

If you have any questions about this survey, please do not hesitate to contact Andrew Lewis at (404) 835-8902.

There are several important policy questions facing public charter schools across the country. The purpose of this document is to outline the key policy questions related to charter public schools for the state of Georgia.

**Parent Choice**

**Background:** Parents with a certain level of financial status have long exercised school choice through their choice of a residence and/or a private or parochial school in their

community. Only a limited number of parents are able to make these kinds of choices, however. Over the past decade and a half, in an effort to increase the number of parents with the ability to choose their child's school, states and districts have been implementing a broad array of school choice programs, including public charter schools.

**Question:** On a scale of 1-5, please rate your response to the following statement:

I support a parent's right to choose the best public school, in their judgment, for their children.

4 – Agree

Please explain your answer:

A parent has a very serious responsibility in promoting the appropriate education for his/her child. All parents should be provided the information and knowledge to understand the different types of educational programs available and what type of program fits what type of child. No one should try to fit a round peg in a square hole. We have an important task to educate parents about school choice within the district that they reside.

### **Public Charter Schools**

**Background:** Charter schools are public schools that are open to all students, regardless of income, gender, race, or religion. Charter schools differ from traditional public schools in that they are free from burdensome rules and regulations, so teachers, principals, parents, and students can focus on learning. In exchange for this freedom, charters sign a contract detailing the school's mission, program, goals, students served, and ways to measure success. Charter schools are held accountable to parents and the community and to their sponsor/authorizer, to produce positive academic results and adhere to the charter contract. In Georgia, authorizing bodies are; local boards of education, the State Board of Education and the Georgia Charter Schools Commission. Charters are typically granted for 5-10 years. At the end of the term, the entity granting the charter may renew the school's contract.

**Question:** On a scale of 1-5, please rate your response to the following statement:

I support public charter schools.

5- Strongly Agree

Please explain your answer:

So long as charter schools are being run professionally and meeting or exceeding the state's curricular expectations, I support public charter schools.

My son serves on the Board of Directors of the Charles Drew Charter School in Atlanta. At Drew, school choice has had a positive impact on individual students and parental

involvement and expectations. The charter school has had the power to transform a neighborhood and strengthen a community. These impacts cannot be overlooked and should be encouraged but not without working diligently to improve traditional public schools.

### **Equitable Funding**

**Background:** In most cases, public charter schools receive less funding per pupil than public non-charter schools. State and district officials seldom allow charters to receive facilities funding or local property tax dollars and sometimes fail to pass through federal and state program funding that charters are eligible to receive based on their student populations. As a consequence, public charter school students receive 22% less, on average, than other public school students.

**Question:** On a scale of 1-5, please rate your response to the following statement:

I support public charter school students receiving the same amount of public funding as students in other public schools.

4 – Agree

Please explain your answer:

I generally agree but we have to consider a couple of factors when managing precious public education funds. First, we must ensure that traditional public schools are being funded, proportionate to student enrollment at a level that permits success. Second, while I agree that public charter school students deserve the same amount of funding as traditional public school students, given the state's trend of cutting public education funding, we must also take into account other sources of funding (e.g., private foundations) that some charter schools receive to supplement their budgets.

### **Charter Facilities**

**Background:** Although charter schools cannot levy taxes, they are still public entities. Therefore, they should be eligible to receive facilities assistance from state and district officials. Without it, charters must devote precious operational dollars to cover building costs instead of teacher salaries, textbooks, and tutors.

**Question:** On a scale of 1-5, please rate your response to the following statement:

I support charter schools being eligible to receive facilities funding from state and local capital budgets to address their critical facilities needs.

4 – Agree

Please explain your answer:

We must be mindful of our state's budget limitations and the whims of political officials. Public charter schools should be allowed to use vacant public school buildings where available and share facilities such as athletic fields where appropriate. A school within a school concept should be encouraged which allows the charter school to exist in the same building as the traditional school, within a separate wing or separate floor, but bus transportation, school lunches, and other possible components are shared.

### **Quality Charter Authorizing**

**Background:** Charter applicants should have access to rigorous but supportive authorizers – those entities that approve and monitor charter schools. Having access to multiple authorizers, including non-district authorizers such as the Georgia Charter Schools Commission, forces all districts to take their authorizing role seriously and non-district authorizers to set a high bar for quality charter schools.

**Question:** On a scale of 1-5, please rate your response to the following statement:

I support allowing local boards of education, the State Board of Education and the Georgia Charter Schools Commission to approve and monitor charter schools.

4 – Agree

Please explain your answer:

I agree that the local boards of education and the State Board of Education must work more effectively together to ensure that only high-quality charter schools are receiving authorization to operate and to continue to monitor their progress.

### **Quality Charter Authorizing #2**

**Background:** In 2008, Governor Sonny Perdue signed into law House Bill 881 creating the Georgia Charter Schools Commission, a statewide alternative authorizer of charter schools. The seven members of the Commission recommended by the Governor, Lt. Governor and Speaker of the House were appointed by the State Board of Education in December 2008. In accordance with state statute, the Georgia Department of Education releases state funds to Commission approved charter schools that are an approximation of the amount raised by local taxes for students from their respective districts. The school district's state funds are then reduced by this amount, ensuring the equal and equitable funding for students attending the Commission charter school.

**Question:** On a scale of 1-5, please rate your response to the following statement:

I support House Bill 881.

2 – Disagree

Please explain your answer:

Our state needs to adequately fund traditional public schools while allowing new charter schools to grow, giving parents options for their children. I have reservations in the formation of the Charter Schools Commission that takes away authority from the local school district and the State School Board as well as the state funding being reduced for the local school districts.

### **Charter Autonomy**

**Background:** One of the fundamental components of the charter school concept is that individual schools receive more autonomy in exchange for being held to a higher degree of accountability. This autonomy extends across the full range of decisions that a school must make – from staff to budgets to curriculum to schedules. When an individual charter school runs into problems, however, policymakers are tempted to re-regulate all charter schools instead of dealing directly with the struggling school.

**Question:** On a scale of 1-5, please rate your response to the following statement:

I support charter schools getting and keeping the autonomy to make key decisions that affect a school's daily operations.

5 – Strongly agree

Please explain your answer:

So long as charter schools are meeting standards set at authorization, public charter schools need freedom and flexibility to operate innovative curricula. Traditional models and guidelines may not fit with a charter school's approach. I support obtaining and keeping the autonomy to make key decisions that affect a school's daily operations, pending periodic review.