



THE DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT'S CHARTER PETITION APPLICATION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

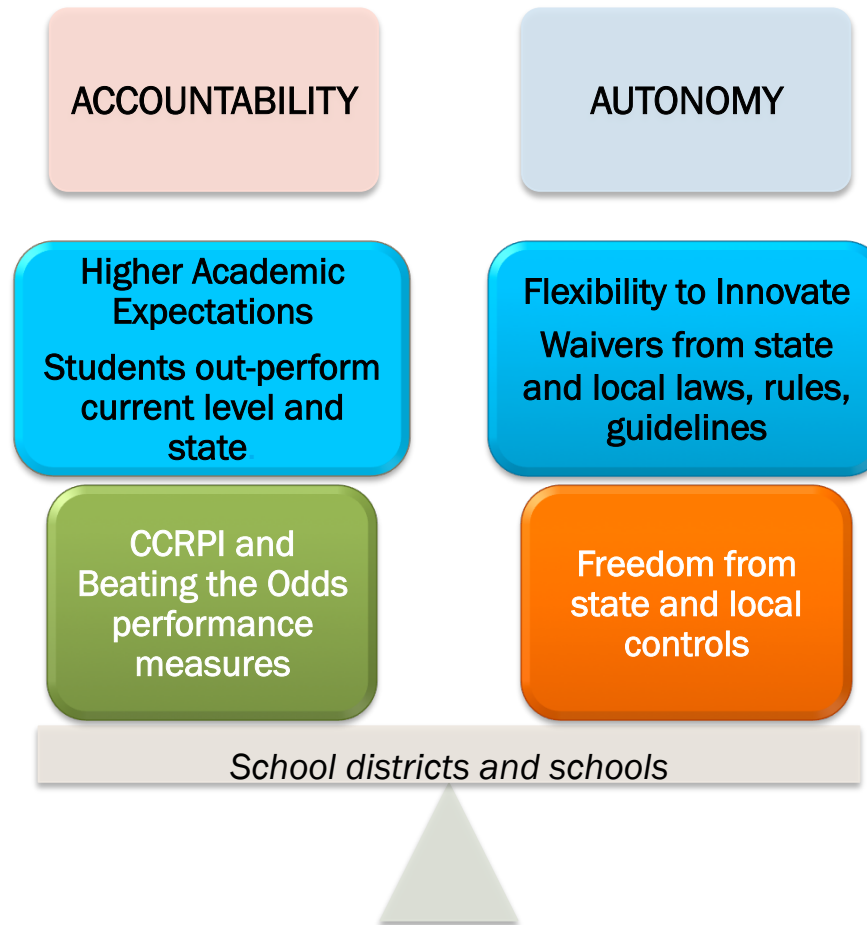
Flexibility Reminders



- O.C.G.A. §20-2-84.3 states that “[n]o later than June 30, 2015, each local school system shall notify the [Department of Education] of its intention to request increased flexibility pursuant to this article or shall comply with subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-80.”
- According to O.C.G.A. §20-2-80 subsection (b) “a local school system may elect not to request increased flexibility in exchange for increased accountability and defined consequences and opt to remain under current laws, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures....”



Flexibility Options: The Trade-Off *



* from GA DOE documents

Flexibility Options: Innovation*



In recent presentations to metro school districts, the GA DOE has noted how innovation plays a key role in the charter system process:

- Freedom from many state and district regulations inspires creativity;
- Advocates see charter schools as incubators of innovation where best practices will be implemented.

* from GA DOE documents



Charter Systems & Charter Schools

It is important to note that state law §20-2-2063.2 makes specific provisions regarding both conversion charter schools and start-up charter schools and their inclusion in any charter system petition.

- Schools falling under the authority of the system's charter petition are considered system charter schools;
- An existing conversion or start-up charter within a district seeking system charter status shall have the option of maintaining its current charter or it may terminate its existing charter and become a part of the system charter and thus a system charter school;
- A system charter school has the authority to seek conversion charter status and may petition to do so.

Charter Systems & Charter Schools




- It is also important to clarify that this same section of the Georgia Code states that the “local board may revise its proposed charter system petition, upon resolution, as a result of testimony at the public hearings or for other purposes.”
- This would allow for additional revisions to the District’s charter application after submission to the GA DOE, should the community or Board determine that changes were warranted.



DCSD Charter Petition Timeline Review



- At the April 1, 2014, Business Meeting, the DeKalb County School District Superintendent informed the Board of Education of the district's intention to petition the Georgia Department of Education (GA DOE) and State Board of Education to operate as a Charter System.
 - As required by O.C.G.A. §20-2-84.3, the district submitted its *Letter of Intent and* moved forward with the drafting of a charter petition.
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DCSD Charter Petition Timeline Review




- At the October 8, 2014, Committee of the Whole, the administration recommended that the DeKalb County Board of Education adopt the charter application but revise the petition as well as the *Letter of Intent* to advance the start year to the 2016-2017 school year. This would allow the District to return to internal and external stakeholders to gather additional information and input, and submit the petition to the Georgia Department of Education no later than November 1, 2015.
- The Board of Education chose to table the vote.
- The Administration resubmitted a Letter of Intent in April, 2015 to allow for the start year to occur during the 2016-2017 school year.



Stakeholder Input




Throughout this process, the District has sought input from parents, teachers, students, community members, and district staff over the past twenty months:

- Fifteen Community Engagement Sessions (three for each Region);
 - Five Principal Engagement Sessions (one for each Region);
 - Central Office Sessions;
 - Multiple meetings with the District's Flexibility Advisory Committee;
 - Input from the Superintendent's Student Advisory Committee;
 - Input from the Teacher Advisory Committee.
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Stakeholder Input



From the Community the District heard:

- Enthusiasm about local school autonomy;
 - Desire for resources to be directed at the local school level;
 - Support for current choice programs;
 - Desire for more specific information about proposed innovations and concern about timeline for community input on proposed innovations;
 - Desire for clarity in autonomy granted to local schools.
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Stakeholder Input



From the Community the District heard:

- Concern about central office support of local school autonomy;
- Concern about consistent implementation of Local School Governance Teams;
- Desire for checks and balances in implementing waivers from state law to ensure that student achievement does not decline;
- Confusion about charter system and charter schools.



Stakeholder Input



From the Principals the District heard:

- Enthusiasm about implementing innovations aligned with student needs;
- Concern about engagement, knowledge, and function of Local School Governance Teams;
- Concern about over involvement and lack of involvement;
- Questions about the emerging role of the central office.



Stakeholder Input

From the Flexibility Advisory Committee the District heard:

- Concern with lack of trust in the community in general with all public institutions;
- Viewing charter system as an opportunity to demonstrate competence and innovation;
- Concern about ability to implement innovation without additional funding;
- Concern about schools that do not have adequate support for local school governance;
- Need for leadership skills to lead in a charter system environment, at both the school and central level.

Charter Petition Elements



The current GA DOE charter system application asks districts to respond to three primary considerations when seeking charter system status, and stakeholder input on these elements guided how the DeKalb County School District wrote the initial draft of the charter application:

- The Case for becoming a charter system;
- Meeting Performance Expectations associated with being a charter system;
- Distributed leadership and decision-making structures through Local School Governance.



The Application's Response to Stakeholder Input


Seven challenges were identified from stakeholder input and used to make *The Case* for charter system status and flexibility from state laws and GA DOE rules and regulations:

- Improving achievement among low-income students;
- Improving achievement among students with limited English proficiency;
- Increasing the high school graduation rate;
- Better preparing graduates for college and career success;
- Better serving academically advanced and gifted students;
- Attracting, motivating, and retaining high quality teachers;
- Attracting, motivating, and retaining high quality principals.

The Application's Response to Stakeholder Input



The District also sought ways to maximize local school governance while still following the GA DOE's guidance that a charter system is a “distributed leadership process” and must meet the legal obligation under O.C.G.A. §20-2-2065 which makes the schools in a charter system “[s]ubject to the control and management of the local board of the local school system....”



The Application's Response to Stakeholder Input


Local School Governance Team (LSGT) were initially proposed to be comprised of nine members (ten at the high school level):

- Principal (voting member);
- Two Parents each elected by parents with children in the school;
- One Parent appointed by the Principal to ensure equitable representation of the student body;
- Two Teachers each elected by the staff of the school;
- One Faculty/Staff Member nominated by the Principal for appointment by the LSGT;
- One Business Representative (non parent) nominated by the Principal for appointment by the LSGT;
- One Community member (non parent) nominated by the Principal for appointment by the LSGT;
- One high school student (non-voting/high schools only) nominated by the Principal for appointment by the LSGT.

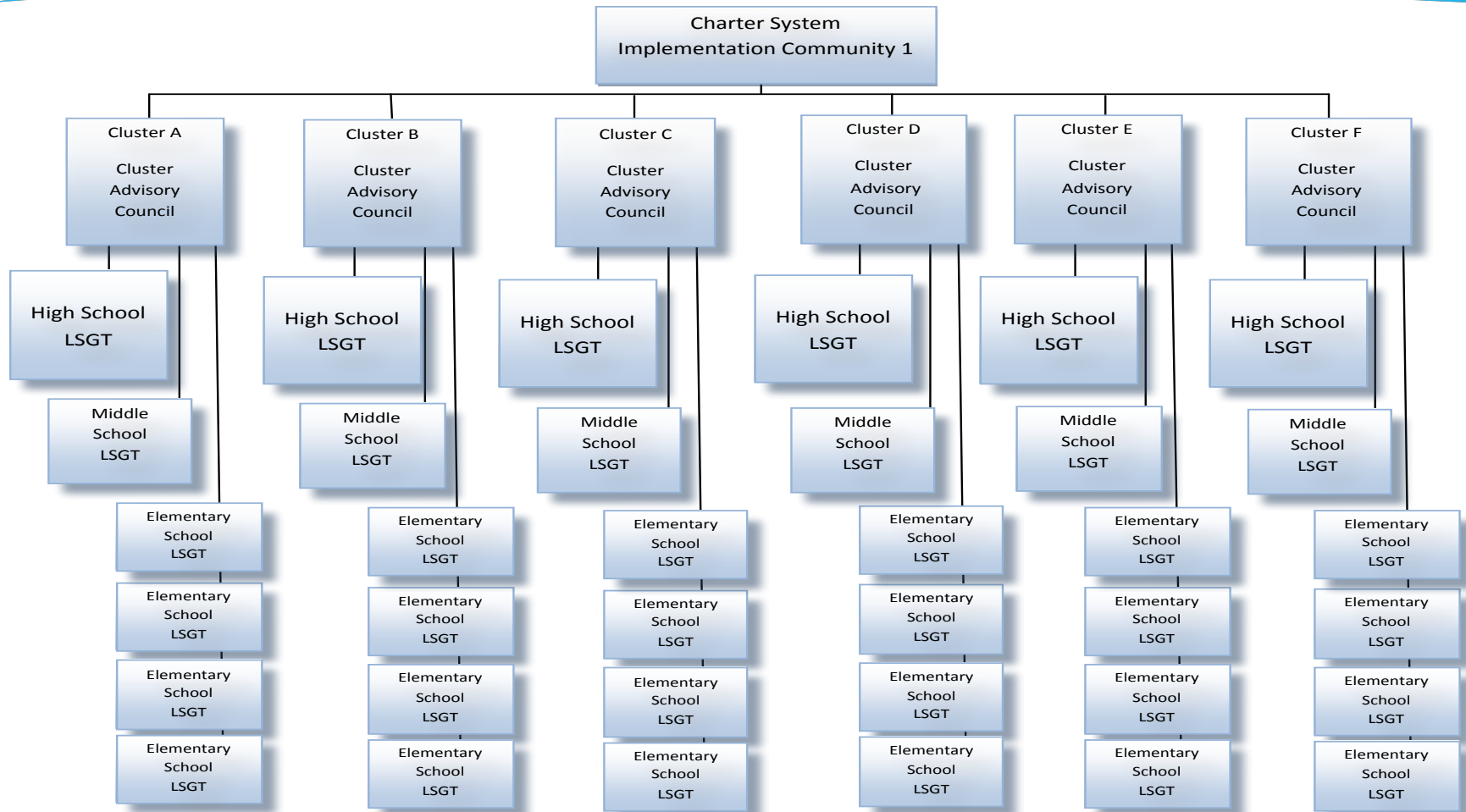
The Application's Response to Stakeholder Input



The DCSD Petition also proposed to develop innovative and unique strategies to promote local school governance:

- Cluster Advisory Councils (CAC) that provide input and support for LSGTs and collaboration among schools within each cluster;
 - Three Charter System Implementation Communities (CSIC) to allow for successful roll-out of LSGTs and CACs across the District:
 - ensures fidelity to charter system model and practices;
 - allows for adequate LSGT member training and support for success;
 - creates a learning community across clusters to share practices and common issues where effective LSGTs can mentor new LSGTs;
 - builds capacity and support for communities to ensure the success of each LSGT.
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The Application's Response to Stakeholder Input



The Application's Response to Stakeholder Input



Each LSGT will have various degrees of involvement in school governance in five broad areas:

- Personnel Decisions:
 - participate in interviews of Principal candidates;
 - make recommendations for Principal selection to the Superintendent;
 - receive information on staffing patterns and assignments;
 - conduct surveys of stakeholders regarding school performance.
- Financial and Resource Allocation:
 - identify with Principal priorities for school resource allocation;
 - approve fundraising efforts and use of donated funds to the school;
 - receive information about budget expenditures;
 - provide input on final recommendations for school's budget



The Application's Response to Stakeholder Input



Each LSGT will have various degrees of involvement in school governance in five broad areas:


- Curriculum and Instruction:
 - provide input on curricular and instructional improvements;
 - approve instructional innovations requiring a waiver;
- School Improvement Goals:
 - receive a yearly report on performance compared against school goals;
 - approve innovative practices resulting in class size, seat time, teacher certification;
 - approve school improvement plan and monitor implementation.
- School Operations:
 - receive monthly reports on school operations;
 - approve school operations that increase student achievement



The Application's Response to Stakeholder Input




Flexibility requests from LSGT would be assessed against the District's Flexibility Risk Criteria:

- Maintains or increases results in CCRPI tested areas;
 - Does not exclude or give preference to student or community groups;
 - Ensures student safety;
 - Does not impact surrounding schools (unless endorsed by the Cluster Advisory Council);
 - Does not increase district budget;
 - Does not affect federal funding;
 - Does not affect capital funding;
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The Application's Response to Stakeholder Input



Flexibility requests from LSGT would be assessed against the District's Flexibility Risk Criteria:

- Maintains economies of scale in District operations (nutrition, transportation, contracting);
 - Does not conflict with standard operating procedures (contracting, employment processing, compliance with federal regulations);
 - Does not involve legal action;
 - Does not interfere with maintenance and upkeep of physical facilities;
 - Complies with all GHSA rules.
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Innovation and Governance: Community Input

Innovation:

- Seven challenges are currently listed. Considerations have come forth that would allow for a combining of the sixth and seventh challenge (attracting and retaining great teachers and principals). Would this be appropriate?
- Should the District then add a new seventh challenge to improve central office organization and culture? What are your thoughts in regarding identifying organizational climate and culture that can be addressed through a charter system? How would you like to see the District address this area?

Governance:

- Is the composition of the Local School Governance Teams appropriate?
- Should a local school request flexibility, what pathway through the central office should that request follow, keeping in mind the need to meet the Flexibility Risk Criteria elements?
- What are additional ways that the District could support LSGTs in the decision-making process, particularly in areas around, curriculum, personnel, resource allocation, school improvements, and school operations?

