

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION WORKSHEET

I. List the Learning(s) that this recommendation is addressing:

1. Our schools do not do a good job of teaching our children living in poverty.
2. Many teachers, parents, and students have low academic expectations for children coming from poverty.
3. We need to do more to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers.
4. Focus on the children and why they are not achieving.

- **WRITE THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION** (limit focus to one subject or action item, more than one recommendation may be needed to address a particular learning):**

To implement a Charter School Forum to introduce the charter school concept to the Athens community.

- **Identify any research, or other kinds of information that was used to craft this recommendation. (add additional sheets as necessary)**
 1. Several members of the Education Committee visited charter schools in Atlanta (i.e. Drew Charter School, KIPP, and CEC- SEE BELOW). They were impressed with the models.
- **Identify additional research or information that could help clarify this committee recommendation. List potential sources if possible.**
 1. Additional research needs to be done to determine pros and cons.
 2. What are the ingredients for a successful school?
- **Indicate people or groups that we need to talk to help clarify this committee recommendation. List any recommended locations.**
 1. We need to meet with the Charter school association.
 2. We need to meet with representatives from ACC School System to get their thoughts.
 3. We need to meet with parents and community leaders to get their input.
- **What kind of action or resources would be necessary to implement the recommendation?**
 1. To conduct a forum we would need to develop a strategy and invite the appropriate representatives to discuss charter schools.
 2. We would need to begin thinking about possible models we are interested in.
 3. We would need to develop strategies for inviting the community.
 - **Indicate what forces and influences are likely to occur that will support or oppose implementation.**
Forces that support (please list):
 1. Parents who are interested in new models would likely support.
 2. Education reformers
 3. Business people would likely support the concept.
 4. Probably some teachers

Forces that oppose (please list):

- 1. The school system would likely oppose the idea at least initially.**
- 2. District administration would likely oppose the idea.**
- 3. Public school enthusiasts would likely oppose the idea.**

****As information is received and/or clarified, these potential recommendations may change or be discarded.**

Charter Schools

Charter schools are independent public schools of choice. Nearly 4,000 new charter schools have been launched since state legislatures began passing charter legislation in the 1990s. The number of charter schools in the United States is up 11 percent over last year, with schools in 40 states and the District of Columbia educating more than 1.15 million children in the 2006-2007 school year. Chartering is an educational innovation that is moving states beyond reforming existing schools to creating something entirely new. Chartering is at the center of a growing movement to redefine public education.

Chartering allows schools to run independently of the traditional public school system and to tailor their programs to community needs. The schools are run by independent nonprofit community boards. Policymakers, parents, and educators are looking at chartering as a way to increase educational choice and innovation within the public school system. A 2004 report commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education found that charter schools are smaller than conventional public schools and serve a disproportionate and increasing number of poor and minority students.¹

Nationally, charter schools are designed to meet the independent needs of students in specific schools. Some charters have extended school years and school days. Some charters have a strong vocational-technical focus to address the workforce needs of its community. Some schools focus on early literacy. Some schools have a strong technology focus. Charter schools participate in state and federal testing and accountability systems – the same as other public schools.

Charter schools offer a governance model that gives them the opportunity to innovate without many of the obstacles evident in many school systems. Charter schools have the freedom to spend their funds in the ways that most benefit their particular students. There is no tenure in charter schools. Most charter schools provide year to year contracts, and can provide merit and bonus pay to high performing teachers and administrators. Participants at charter schools are there by choice. No student or staff person is assigned to a charter school.

Charter schools are operated according to the provisions of a charter document. The charter document is a contract that gives the charter petitioner the authority and the public funding to operate the charter school and states how the charter school will be run. In order to continue to operate the charter school the charter petitioner is required to meet the performance objectives stated in the charter document. In Georgia, the local school board is the primary granter of the charter, although an appeal can be made to the state board. Georgia has 55 charter schools.

In Georgia there are 2 primary types of charter schools:

¹ Center for Education Reform

1. Conversion charter schools. An existing traditional public school can become a charter school if the faculty and parents at the school vote to convert the school to a charter school.
2. Start-up charter schools. Individuals and organizations can submit a petition to start a new charter school from scratch.

Nationally and locally there are some great charter school models. KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) is a national model with schools in Atlanta focusing on at-risk urban middle school students. The average KIPP fifth-grader enters at the 28th percentile nationally, and the average eighth-grader leaves at the 74th percentile. Nearly 80 percent of KIPP alumni who graduated from the eighth grade have matriculated to college in communities where less than 25 percent reported having plans to do so.

Central Educational Center (CEC) is a publicly-funded charter high school in Newnan, Coweta County, Georgia. It is also the county's "workforce development center" for teens and adults. CEC is a joint venture between Coweta County Schools, West Central Technical College, and business and industry, providing learners from high school through adulthood a seamless education for life. Since opening in 2000, CEC has played a major role in the community by helping to reduce the drop-out rate, raise test scores, graduate more students, place more graduates in higher-paying jobs or in additional postsecondary education, improve the local workforce, and attract and better serve industry.

Charter schools are not magic answers to the challenges of public education. As of February 2006 there had been a total of approximately 400 charter school closures since their inception in the early 1990s (about 9% of the charter schools that have opened). The major reason for charter school closures have been related to financial difficulties. Charter schools have traditionally not received facility funding, resulting in less per pupil funding than regular schools. The other two major components to help assure an excellent charter school are strong school leadership and a strong board committed to the vision of the school.

Some initial steps and guide lines for starting a charter school would include:

1. Determine the educational focus that will be addressed (i.e. early literacy, vo-tech, experiential learning, etc.).
2. Get community support and buy-in at the grassroots level. Provide community meetings focused not only on your educational program, but also educate the community groups about charter schools.
3. Do your best to introduce the idea to your school system as soon as possible. Encouraging their involvement and participation can be very helpful. If the school system becomes a barrier, persevere and build grassroots support-and maintain communication with your school system.
4. Develop a strong, strategic community board to support your vision. This Board should be diverse with representation for the school community, an attorney, accountant, parents, etc.
5. Realize that the process of developing a great charter school will likely take at least one to two years. Be patient.
6. During your planning process, focus on excellence and accountability.
7. Have fun!

KIPP

KIPP was founded in 1994 in Houston by two idealistic teachers, Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin, after completing their commitment to Teach For America. KIPP has grown to a national network of 52 public schools in 16 states and the District of Columbia. KIPP schools have been widely recognized for narrowing the achievement gap in public education and putting underserved students on the path to college. A report by The Educational Policy Institute in August 2005 found that KIPP made “large and significant gains” compared to traditional urban schools. More than 80 percent of KIPP students nationally are low-income and more than 95 percent are African American or Hispanic. KIPP schools use a combination of higher expectations, greater structure, more time in school, rigorous teacher training and even spirited songs to engage students in learning. **The average KIPP fifth-grader enters at the 28th percentile nationally, and the average eighth-grader leaves at the 74th percentile.** Nearly 80 percent of KIPP alumni who graduated from the eighth grade have matriculated to college in communities where less than 25 percent reported having plans to do so. KIPP’s Internet address is: www.kipp.org.

KIPP Ways Academy- West Atlanta Young Scholars

David Jernigan- Founding Principal

Partners Representatives: Vivian Fisher, Pam Swayne, Danny Brewington, Delene Porter
Wednesday, August 28, 2006

KIPP, the Knowledge Is Power Program, is a national charter school model started in 1994 in Texas. There are 52 KIPP Academies around the U.S. and Atlanta has two of them. 90% of the students from the first two schools have gone to college. The West Atlanta school was started in 2003 and it has 5th through 8th grade.

Its mission is based on having high expectations, high time commitments, a focus on leadership and organization, a focus on results, and is a choice that requires commitment of the staff, parents, and students.

KIPP’s school day lasts from 7:30-5pm and Saturday School every other Saturday as well as 2 hours of homework each night. There is also an extended school year, so only 5 weeks off in the summer. The pay scale for teachers is 15% higher than Atlanta Public Schools, but turn over is high.

The school day is broken up into morning work, reading, math intensive, decoding skills- (3 hours and 45 minutes) is spent on literacy. The 5-6th graders work on reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and mechanics for 90 min, 90 min of math, 45 of science, 45 of social studies, and 50 of arts or PE. The 7-8th graders no longer need to split reading and writing up- so they integrate them, then spend 90 min on math, 90 on science, 90 on social studies.

West Atlanta was using teachers to do the electives but it was contributing to burn out and they wanted more focus, so this year they brought in three teachers for band, theater, and visual arts.

There is a focus on college prep- teachers' rooms are named after the college they went to and each class is referred to as the class of the year they are expected to graduate high school. So this year's 5th grade class is called the Class of 2014.

West Atlanta KIPP serves 80% Free and Reduced Lunch and mostly African American student body. The school is now at 300 students.

West Atlanta uses a monetary system of scholar dollars for life lessons. They treat school like a job, being on time and having work done correctly adds up. Parents get record for week with how children are doing in relation to KIPP values. Scholar dollars can be used at school and they must have a certain amount to go on the monthly field trips (this raised concern about whether the field trips should be for everyone if they are considered part of their experiential development rather than using them for a reward only). No system manages kids- it's about the instruction.

Teachers have a lot of professional development- 2 weeks in the summer, site visit to original KIPP School, talk about building culture of their school, and they have conferences in different content areas. They also have a summit every year and teachers sit in on each others' classes.

Teachers get 2 to 2.5 hours of planning (per day?, per week?) and team planning is usually 1 hour. West Atlanta does not require that its teachers do curriculum mapping but they try to integrate. Many times the science and math teachers coordinate and the English and social studies teachers coordinate lessons. They let it happen organically.

West Atlanta does student assessments with the standardized tests and other methods.

West Atlanta just had children reach 8th grade so they have hired a High School placement director. This person researches and tries to match students up with magnet schools, charter high schools, boarding and private schools. Find best fit- develop relationship with these High Schools, take students on field trips. Have a High School placement course where students learn about AP classes, SATs, and what GPA is. They also work on Financial Aid.

Take the SSAT for private schools- work with A Better Chance program in Atlanta.

West Atlanta works with Dubois Society- mentors who take them to college campus.

Atlanta had political backing for charter schools from Barnes. He wanted a KIPP Academy so that made it a little easier with the superintendent.

The founding principal had been a Teach for America volunteer in the area. When his two years were done he decided to start the KIPP School. He opened an office at the YMCA to recruit kids and parents. Parents from his old classes introduced him around. He met with community leaders and went to Neighborhood Planning Unit meetings to build trust.

It took about 6 months to form this KIPP School because much of the ground work had been laid within the community- an abandoned school building had become available and there was political support from Governor Barnes.

It is still not easy with the Atlanta Public School System though. They will give the per pupil allotment, but no money for Special Ed, Transportation, or Food. And kids don't have access to sports teams, etc. You want autonomy, but there are some things you miss.

West Atlanta contracts out for its bus services and owns two buses for activities.

In theory, charter schools should run with only the per pupil allotment from the district, but there are federal and state grants that you can take advantage of. Many charter schools have a development officer. West Atlanta now runs on its allotment of 7500-8000 per student because they have budgetary freedom to spend money how they want (unlike public schools).

They also can hire and fire at will- so if a teacher isn't working, they can fire them the next day and hire a new teacher right away.

There used to be a 3rd KIPP School in Atlanta but it had financial troubles. KIPP revoked their name from the school and the school returned its charter to the district. There are currently 7 charter schools in the Atlanta Public Schools System (2 are KIPP).

There is a Charter School Directors network. They mainly meet up for a job fair- to recruit teachers. They are now also considering a sports league program.

We got a group tour and went in the class rooms. The students seemed engaged and interested. One teacher used a song to teach the countries of Africa- this is part of the KIPP instructional model.

We ate with the kids. They talked about liking that they felt safe; there is no bullying allowed. It is very strict. They weren't happy with all the homework and the long hours. One doesn't get off the bus until 7pm and then has to eat. The student usually gets up at 5 am to finish work. One also said they didn't know any of the kids in their neighborhood, because they took the bus across town to KIPP. They also talked about the books they were reading and had in-depth interests and reasons for liking things.

West Atlanta uses uniforms. Parents choose to send their students to the KIPP school. It is a school of choice.

Central Educational Center

Central Educational Center (CEC) is a publicly-funded charter high school in Newnan, Coweta County, Georgia. It is also the county's "workforce development center" for

teens and adults. CEC is a joint-venture partnership between Coweta County Schools, West Central Technical College, and business and industry, providing learners from high school through adulthood a seamless education for life.

High School aged "team members" (students) attend Central Educational Center voluntarily from one of three high schools in Coweta County and may still participate in regular high school activities. These team members graduate from the high school in which they are enrolled, just like other students. Courses they take at CEC seamlessly combine traditional and applied academics with career and technical education, providing opportunities for work-based and project-based learning, teamwork, and a high set of expectations for personal and professional achievement. Team members receive two grades per course – one for their academic performance (deducting points for poor attendance, if necessary), and a separate grade for work ethic. Team members may also take dual-enrollment classes in conjunction with West Central Technical College, earning simultaneous credit in high school and college. High school team members take classes with adult learners in these dual-enrollment classes, and adults also enroll at CEC for GED, night technical college courses, and customized training for local corporations.

CEC is a charter school in its seventh year teaching students in Coweta County. CEC's mission is "to ensure a viable 21st century workforce." Since opening in 2000, CEC has played a major role in our community by helping to reduce the drop-out rate, raise test scores, graduate more students, place more graduates in higher-paying jobs or in additional postsecondary education, improve the local workforce, attract more and better higher education, and attract and better serve industry. In one case alone, a major industry decided to create 300 new higher-paying technical jobs in our community because CEC was begun. In 2004, we were named a national Model High School. We have received a grant from the state Department of Education to disseminate and replicate our successful model throughout Georgia.

Central Educational Center SEAMLESSLY combines academics with career and technical education ... high school with college ... and education with businesses. It is a charter school serving grades 9-12, and our "team members" (CEC jargon for "students") attend voluntarily from our county's three base high schools for all or part of every school day. The curriculum is designed around the needs and expectations of business, using a needs assessment. As a result, we focus as much on soft skills (work ethic) as we do on courses, offering a work ethic grade in every class in addition to a course grade. Work-based learning opportunities are provided to hundreds of team members each year. We typically provide more than 400 work-based learning opportunities (job-shadowing, internships and apprenticeships) with the help of about 100 local businesses each year. And we offer high school students the chance to take dual-enrollment classes with the local technical college (which is located on our campus), learning alongside adults. CEC is also a center for lifelong learning, teaching adults with technical college and GED courses day and night, housing the county's evening high school, and providing customized training to local corporations. In a typical year, some 1000 high school students and 300 adults will take advantage of the various offerings at CEC.

In a typical year, 100 + among those high school students will earn Technical College Certificates while still high school students (dual enrollment). Both University of Georgia and Florida State University researchers have concluded that dual enrollment leads to 98% high school completion rates. 100% of those who have both earned Technical College Certificates and graduated from high school (dual enrollment) are successfully entered into additional post-secondary education, or into the workforce, within 120 days of graduation from high school, according to the research from UGA and FSU.

CEC has most recently helped Walton County (Walton Career Academy), Whitfield County (Whitfield Career Academy) and Douglas County (Douglas College and Career Institute) to begin “CEC replications.” CEC and its partners provided technical assistance to these communities with the goal of starting a new charter school in each. These new charter schools will feature a strong collaboration among local business, a regional technical college, and the local public school system. Since opening in the year 2000, more than 460 groups from across the US and from 15 other nations have visited CEC to study this unique educational model.

The school is primarily funded through the State/School District per pupil student allotment and money provided by the Technical College. The HOPE Grant (separate from HOPE Scholarship) provides funding for students earning Technical College Certificates or Diplomas.

CEC is a part of the three local public high schools and of West Central Technical College. This collaborative relationship with the local school system, and with the Technical College, helps CEC to be viewed as a unique supplement to the school system, not a competitor.

The school is the workforce development center for the county. Businesses have provided capital and instruction to train students. CEC uses the online Worldwide Interactive Network (WIN) to train students in academic skills needed to succeed on WorkKeys (ACT assessments). These assessments match academic skills directly with some 13,000 jobs in the US economy. This approach highlights the notion of Instructional System Design so important to the development of CEC. In such design, the needs of employers allow educators to develop what meets those needs. It is an “employment base backward approach” rather than the traditional “theoretical forward approach.”

In short, at CEC, You can graduate from high school on Friday, graduate from Technical College on Saturday, and go to work on Monday. CEC has created a skilled workforce that attracts industry to Newnan.