

**Charter School Site Visits
August 29 & 30, 2006**

In Attendance with PPA: Red Petrovs, Vivian Fisher, Whitnie Thompson, Pam Swayne, Delene Porter, Jim Geiser, Danny Brewington

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. Pay teachers 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- 3hours 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 the 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 100% African American student body. School is now at 300 students.

West Atlanta uses a monetary system of scholar dollars for life lessons- 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 must have 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 have conferences in different content areas, summit every year, have teachers sit in on each others' classes.

Teachers get 2 to 2.5 hours of planning 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- let it happen organically.

West Atlanta does student assessments with the standardized tests and other methods- One fourth benchmark with sample CRCT, Scholastic Reading In. varies don't have a holistic portfolio but each teacher keeps sample of work for each student.

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. 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- said he wanted a KIPP Academy so made it a little easier with the super independent.

The founding principal had been a teacher for America volunteer in the area and when his two years were done he decided to start the KIPP School. He opened 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.

Only took 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.

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 own 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 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.

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 (only 2 are KIPP).

There is a Charter School Directors network but mostly meet up for a job fair- to recruit teachers, now also considering a sports league program.

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

Ate with kids- they talked about liking that they felt safe, no bullying allowed- 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- usually gets up at 5am 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.

Central Educational Center

Mark Whitlock, CEO

Newnan, Georgia

Wednesday, August 28, 2006

“A national model school for seamless education and workforce development.”

CEC was created because YAMAHA was converting its plant to a more automated process. They were going to have to move out of Newnan to get a skilled workforce. Instead the community convinced them to stay by doing a Needs Assessment with the businesses, school district, and technical college. The result was to work backwards from those needs to create a charter school for high school students that teaches highly technical skills.

CEC uses resources of Technical Colleges to teach high school students. Worked with Athens Tech and Flora Tidings- doing another one in Walton.

CEC has students come from Newnan's other two high schools who want specialty classes. CEC serves about 20% of Newnan's high schoolers. Of those, 10% stay at CEC for all their classes, but most go back and forth and all are still students of their home high school- so they graduate and play on sports teams, etc. of the high school they come from.

23% of students are minority and an estimated 25% are free and reduced lunch.

The school system puts in 2.5 million (which is that per pupil amount) and the Technical College puts in 1 million creating their operating budget of about 3.5 million.

Also take advantage of Hope Grants for students getting votech certification.

Work with the local education authority- aren't in competition- but a supplement to.

Businesses also put capital and time in- instructors and equipment to train students.

This is the workforce development center for the county.

CEC uses the online World Interactive Network to train students in Work Keys- employment base backward instead of theoretical forward approach.

Assess students on hard skills and soft skills.

Have programs in Dental Hygienist- graduates come out making minimum of \$13 per hour.

Have a video room, horticulture, welding, culinary lab, etc.

Also utilize students as teachers- one high schooler was teaching 3-D computer modeling and had done work for the U.S. Army on designing the next Hum-V!

You can graduate high school on Friday, Graduate Technical College on Saturday, and Go to work on Monday. Has created a skilled workforce that attracts industry to Newnan.

Drew Charter School

Dr. Nicholas Stapleton- Principal

Thursday, August 30, 2006

East Lake Village

Drew Charter School is the focal point of an entire community revitalization project.

1. Tom Cousins and others found out that Eastlake Meadows, a neighborhood of the Atlanta Housing Authority, was so high in crime and low in educational attainment that businesses, the police, and social service providers had written it off. He got his family and the Cousins Family Foundation involved with the Eastlake Meadows project in an intimate way by establishing an office in the community and going house-to-house, knocking on doors to see what citizens' obstacles were to becoming successful. They set up the Eastlake Foundation to attract resources, and help community establish their long-term renewal plans.
2. Created a partnership with Atlanta Housing Authority and used Hope 6 money to tear down old units and create new East Lake Villages. People who now live in the new Eastlake Villages mixed income housing units can be either poor, using public housing vouchers, or middle class to affluent, with all citizens living side by side. The common bond is shared values. All must agree to the following terms, among others:
 - a. Annual background checks
 - b. Curfew for kids – once the streetlights come on, the kids must be inside
 - c. All kids must be in school
 - d. All occupants aged 17-54 must either work or be on some type of an approved job training program (71% of residents work)
 - e. Non-compliance with these terms can result in a lease violation and forfeiture of housing privileges
3. The housing complex is organized around three pillars: quality housing, quality education, quality of life infrastructure.
4. The CF and Eastlake Foundations raised and spent over \$200 million to make this all happen. The bulk of the money went to renovation of the Eastlake Golf Course, and proceeds from the operation of the course are used to further fund the Eastlake Foundation's works. Cousins himself put in "only" about \$25 million, but helped raise another 31.5 million through his various contacts. Carol didn't say where the rest of the money came from, but I suspect grant money and Atlanta public housing money was involved, as well.
5. Issues the EF and CFF faced with the citizens revolved around lack of self-worth ("we're not worthy or deserving of living in housing like you're describing") and lack of trust. The head of the community's residents' association (40 years in that office!) was originally the biggest skeptic – very political and a tough negotiator – but has since become one of the biggest converts to what the foundations are trying to do.
6. The conversion/relocation plan for the original residents was unique.
 - a. There were 650 units available in the old Eastlake Meadows, but only 400 were in livable condition.
 - b. The residents of those 400 units were offered two choices:

- i. Move to other Atlanta Public Housing units (chosen by 35% of the residents) or,
 - ii. Receive vouchers for section 8 housing in Atlanta (perceived to be the better of the two options, and chosen by 65%)
 - c. Those who moved to section 8 housing saw an immediate improvement in their lives, and many did not return to Eastlake Villages when given the opportunity
 - d. Those who chose the public housing option did not see much change in their lives
7. Of the original 400 families, return to the new Eastlake Villages was offered to all of those still alive or not relocated to another, similar complex (25 occupants, mostly elderly died in the interim, and 22 families relocated to Columbia Village.) Up to four offers to return were made to each family. 78 families ultimately returned to the new complex.
 8. While the Eastlake Villages complex was conceived and constructed by the Cousins and Eastlake Foundation philanthropy, there are numerous other successful examples of this type of mixed income housing allied with a charter school serving the community, in the Atlanta area, and virtually all of the others are for-profit based. Carol suggested contacting either Egbert Perry of the Integral Group (three public housing redevelopment projects to date) or Noel Kahlil, who is currently re-doing the Perry Homes revitalization.
 9. To get their residents motivated and ready for work opportunities the Foundations partnered with Goodwill Industries, which has a big facility right around the corner from the complex and the school. Goodwill was the primary provider of job training services, and was a big help in getting residents ready for re-entry into the workplace. Now the Foundations are looking for a new partnership with someone who can train those now working for career advancement and the possibility of increased earning power.
 10. Eastlake Meadows was known as “little Vietnam” among Atlanta residents, and police at times refused to patrol this neighborhood for fear of their lives. In the last ten years, however, the violent crime rate is down 95% and the total crime rate is down 87%.
 11. For those expecting quick results from the PPA, it should be noted that this whole effort has taken 15 years to get to this point, although some results were being seen after five years. The Drew School is only five years old.
 12. Thoughts that come to mind for the PPA:
 - a. Look at this as an entire revitalization project with School, Housing, etc. Establish a PPA office in a “trial” neighborhood? Use it for enhanced community conversation work; i.e., knocking on doors, asking the same questions about what are the residents’ obstacles to success?
 - b. Since section 8 housing, not public housing, seems to be the problem in Athens, can we use the Atlanta model to upgrade Athens’ section 8 housing? Carol Naughton seemed to think there were things we could do, like limiting

the amount of section 8 certificates issued to a given property, pulling the property owners' HAP contracts, etc.

- c. Can the Athens' community, absent of Tom Cousins magnitude, work with some local developers to explore doing an Eastlake Village model revitalization project on a for-profit basis?
- d. We need to get school board members, CCSD administrators, and local African-American leaders to visit Drew and the Eastlake Villages complex to see what can be done when a group of determined citizens decides to make a difference. This is a must if implementation of the PPA plans is to ever succeed!
- e. Can we build a charter school model in Athens? Scenario:
 - i. The Boys and Girls Clubs are going to build a new Club on property adjacent to Fourth St. Elementary School.
 - ii. Fourth St. Elementary is not making Adequate Yearly Progress, and is danger of being taken over by the state of GA.
 - iii. Convert Fourth St. to a charter school along any model of our choosing – KIPP Academy, Drew, etc. – and link the school tightly with the B&GC's new club to provide PE and after-school services, much as the YMCA (physically directly connected to the Drew school!) is linked with Drew. We would need assurances from CCSD that the school could be run autonomously from the CCSD, so that the charter school could choose its own principal, teachers, and staff, and would have total control over all hiring and firing decisions and curriculum content.
 - iv. If we wanted to extend this model, or do it as an alternative, we could do something similar with the Garnet Ridge neighborhood – build a new charter school for them, physically attach it to the planned Boys and Girls Club facility for Garnet Ridge, and repeat the scenario outlined above.

Drew Charter School (Impressions):

1. The school is five years old and accommodates about 800 kids from K through 8. Architecture is modernistic on the outside, with a very open, airy, direct-lighted interior. Classrooms are well-sized for the task and amply supplied with learning materials, computers, etc. (There are three fully equipped computer labs.) Hallways and other facilities are extremely clean (you can practically eat off the floors). Play areas for recess use several playscapes, and the footing underneath is a rubberized surface, like that found on running tracks these days.
2. Children are required to wear uniforms, which consist of khaki type pants, shorts, or skirts, and colored Polo style shirts (green for K-5 and choice of four colors for 6-8.) Parents are required to fund the uniforms themselves, but assistance is provided for the truly needy. About 35% of the kids come from the Eastlake Villages complex, another 25% from a nearby housing complex, and the balance from the general Atlanta Public School system.
3. The school uses management services and curriculum provided by Edison, but apparently has a good deal of autonomy about how to apply the materials and run the school on a day-to-day basis, according to the principal, Dr. Stapleton. Of their annual 7.5 million dollar budget, Edison gets a management fee of 1.1 million dollars, or about 15%. The school does not yet have a gifted program, student government, or a multitude of after-school and extra-curricular activities, as might be expected of a newly formed school. (They do offer dance, band, art, and drama, however.) The gifted program is to be implemented soon, and the Eastlake Foundation is already debating expanding the charter school concept to include a high school for the community.
4. The school is intimately intertwined with the YMCA, which is literally an extension of Drew's building. All PE activities for the kids are offered through the Y's facilities. Physical activities offered at the Y include swimming, basketball, floor hockey, soccer, etc. Also, through the Eastlake Foundation, the school provides golf as a physical activity that is offered to the students, and the community and Drew school students have full use of the Charlie Yates golf course, which is literally across the street from the school. There is also a relationship between the EF, Drew and the First Tee Foundation. Proceeds from the Eastlake Country Club and its affiliation with the PGA Tour (the season-ending Tour Championship has been held there for several years) are used to refill the Eastlake Foundation's coffers.
5. We observed a number of classrooms in session, and I was impressed with the orderliness of the students, the obvious discipline that was imposed and followed, the kids' enthusiasm in classroom participation (even in middle school age classrooms), and the apparent quality and enthusiasm of the teachers. All teachers operate on a renewable one-year contract, and can be terminated for cause with no outside interference from bureaucrats. Teachers are paid 3% above the prevailing wage rates of Atlanta Public Schools. Lead teachers can make an additional \$2500 per year. There is a waiting list for both teachers and students. The principal said that he observes each teacher 3 times a year in a classroom setting, and there are also peer evaluation methods in place. The principal's management style is to spend 80% of his time "wandering around", and he appears to know a large number of the kids by

name. We also observed a parent talking to his son outside of a classroom. It is school policy to intervene immediately with a child who is acting out, and get the parents involved right away.

6. Their PTO typically starts the year with 200 members, and then participation drops off to the point where 50 or so attend meetings toward the end of the school year.
7. The school's population is 98% African-American, with 2% "other" – typically mixed race.
8. The number of male teachers in the elementary grades is 15-20%, with the overall school having about 20-25% male teachers. The teaching staff appeared for the most part to be quite young.
9. When asked about the socialization aspects of the school, the principal said that new students (whether entering at the kindergarten level or later) usually have a hard time acclimating themselves to the school's policies, so the staff spends the first two weeks of the school year on explaining and reinforcing their rules on discipline and conduct. Any discipline problems are nipped in the bud.
10. Carol Naughton (EF) and Cynthia Kuhlman (sp?) indicated that the Drew School (of which they are both Board members) has a relationship with a nearby pre-school/day care center. They don't believe that some of the entering students are coming in armed with sufficient training and socialization to succeed at Drew, and they are working to understand the problem and partnering with the pre-school facility to get the children better prepared before entering Drew. The stated that the K-2 performance is quite good, but then drops off in the 3rd and 4th graders. However, by the 8th grade these same students are fully up to grade level and score well on standardized tests. Overall, Drew does better than the APS averages in most grades, although in some grades it does trail similar APS grades. (Considering the starting point of "little Vietnam", that's not too shabby.) The Drew school does qualify for Title I funding, as it has an 85% reduced or free lunch population.
11. The school day is 7:45 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Additional Resources:

Eastlake Foundation

<http://eastlakefoundation.org/view.asp?id=346&page=8796>

Guiding principles

<http://www2.cybergolf.com/sites/courses/view.asp?id=346&page=11767>

Eastlake videos

<http://www2.cybergolf.com/sites/courses/view.asp?id=346&page=8817>

A National Model

<http://www2.cybergolf.com/sites/courses/view.asp?id=346&page=8807>

School reform and neighborhood change in Atlanta pages 5- 22

http://www.abtassoc.com/reports/Schools_and_Neighborhoods.pdf#search=%22cynthia%20kuhlman%20cousins%20foundation%22

Dr. Cynthia Kuhlman

http://www.house.gov/ed_workforce/hearings/109th/fc/nclb061306/kuhlman.html

Drew Charter School

<http://www.schoolmatters.com/app/data/q/stid=11/llid=118/stllid=209/locid=940701/catiid=814/secid=3166/compid=771/site=pes>

Centennial Place

<http://www.schoolmatters.com/app/data/q/stid=11/llid=118/stllid=209/locid=940699/catiid=814/secid=3166/compid=771/site=pes>