

STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS COMMISSION MEETING

June 29, 2016, 9:30 a.m.

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning Conference Room
East Twin Tower, Room 854, Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Meeting Minutes

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jennifer Rippner at approximately 9:30 am. Chairman Rippner verified that a quorum was present.
2. Also present were Commission staff members Bonnie Holliday—Executive Director, Gregg Stevens—Deputy Director and General Counsel, Terence Washington—Finance and Operational Accountability Manager, Morgan Felts—Associate General Counsel, Petitions Manager, Katie Manthey—Academic Accountability Manager, and Sarah Beck—Business Operations Manager.
3. Approximately 100 members of the public also attended the meeting including charter school staff and representatives, charter school business representatives, Georgia Charter Schools Association representatives, Georgia Department of Education representatives, and members from the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement.
4. Chairman Rippner made a motion to begin the Executive Session to discuss personnel matters and Commissioner Tony Lowden provided a second.
5. Chairman Rippner called the meeting back to order following the Executive Session at approximately 10:20 a.m.
6. Chairman Rippner welcomed and acknowledged the attendance of Mr. Brian Burdette and Ms. Lisa Kinnemore from the State Board of Education.
7. Chairman Rippner called for approval of the meeting minutes from the May 25th SCSC meeting. Commissioner Jose Perez made a motion to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Tom Lewis provided a second. There was no discussion, and the minutes were unanimously approved by those present.
8. Chairman Rippner asked Mr. Terence Washington and Ms. Katie Manthey to present the SCSC’s proposed budget for FY17. Mr. Washington explained details of the revenue portion of the budget for the SCSC and that the SCSC is projected to return approximately \$2,880,000 of the SCSC’s administrative withhold to SCSC schools by the end of the year. Ms. Manthey then gave an overview of the budget allocation portion of the proposal.

9. Mr. Gregg Stevens discussed rule adoption recommendations, including a rule for State Charter School Monitoring and Sites and Facilities. The SCSC did not receive any comments for revisions. SCSC Staff recommended that the Commission adopt the rules. Chairman Rippner called for a motion. Commissioner Lowden motioned for approval. Commissioner Perez seconded the motion. There was no discussion, and the amendment was unanimously approved by those present.
10. Mr. Stevens discussed SCSC staff recommendations of the charter amendment requested by Scintilla Charter Academy to amend the essential and innovative practices in its charter contract. The SCSC staff recommended that the amendment be approved. Chairman Rippner called for a motion. Commissioner Perez raised the motion, and Commissioner Lewis provided the second. There was no discussion, and the amendment was unanimously approved by those present.
11. Chairman Rippner then introduced the state charter school performance review portion of the meeting. Director Bonnie Holliday explained the purpose of the state charter performance reviews and school presentation portion of the meeting. Chairman Rippner reminded the room that there will be 5 minutes for presentations and then a 15-minute discussion.
12. Director Holliday introduced Utopian Academy. The school addressed additional measures the school is taking regarding operations, charter revisions, and the school's discipline process and is developing a strategic plan that will include measures from the SCSC Comprehensive Performance Framework.
13. Director Holliday introduced Atlanta Heights Charter School. The school stated it is focused on the future by building board capacity, adding additional board members with expertise in needed areas, restricting the school day, and conducting an independent audit of the school's education management organization.
14. Director Holliday introduced Charter Conservatory for Liberal Arts and Technology (CCAT). The school focused its presentation on its financial and operational improvements. The school's governing board also believes that it will be more involved in holding school leadership accountable by attending more SCSC trainings and visiting other SCSC schools.
15. Director Holliday introduced Graduation Achievement Charter High School. The school stated that the school has restructured its academic division, replaced the chief academic officer, and reduced class sizes. The school leader included demographic information stating that the school focuses its mission as an alternative high school. Director Holliday added that the SCSC Comprehensive Performance Framework takes into account the demographic information of the students, including demographics prevalent in alternative schools, when calculating the school's performance. Mr. Brian Burdette from the State Board of Education inquired about the school's 83% governing board turnover rate, and Ms. Henson explained that members resigned and were rolled off around the same time frame.

16. Chairman Rippner then amended the agenda to call for public comment prior to recessing the meeting. Sherrie Gibney-Sherman of Foothills Education Charter High School made a public comment to thank Mountain Education Charter High School for assisting them in creating Foothills Education Charter High School. Ms. Gibney-Sherman announced that as of the day of the meeting, Foothills Education Charter High School had graduated 113 students.
17. Chairman Rippner then called for a recess at approximately 12:30 pm.
18. Chairman Rippner called the meeting back to session at approximately 1:10 p.m.
19. Director Holliday introduced Georgia Cyber Academy (GCA). The school stated that it has already implemented the following improvements to grow academic performance such as a new high school online platform, data-driven instructional models, and a new elementary principal.
20. Chairman Rippner introduced Coweta Charter Academy. The school explained that the school is now operating all grade levels and has developed resources for teachers to use in the classroom to help with academic achievement. The school is planning on implementing the following improvements to increase academic performance: restructuring tutor model, Super Saturdays targeting students in math, increasing parent communication, writing across the curriculum, seeking STEM certification, refining the response to intervention (RTI) process, and making instruction more adaptive. The school explained that it believes its decision to purchase a facility affected its financial score on the framework, and Director Holliday clarified that other schools have purchased a facility without affecting their framework score.
21. Director Holliday introduced Cherokee Charter Academy. The school presented that they will begin focusing heavily on improving middle school math scores and are using data and targeted professional development to achieve better results. The school is also using project-based learning, consistent homework practices, extended Saturday school tutoring opportunities earlier in the year, improving the RTI process, and collaboration between teachers to increase performance.
22. Mr. Stevens introduced Georgia Connections Academy. The school stated it is working to improve its RTI process, creating a K-5 early intervention program, developing new strategies to communicate with families, and has created a professional learning community for its teachers. Going forward, the school's board intends to create a culture of expectations by analyzing dashboards at its monthly meetings and use board meetings as a time to create solutions to problems within the school. Chairman Rippner noted that the school increased its academics score from 6 to 60 on the performance framework in one year. Ms. Robinson stated that she believes the school's attention on students, preparing and supporting teachers, and a focus on data has helped the school achieve the increase. The school explained that it focuses heavily on instilling good time management techniques for students as they transition from a brick and mortar school to a virtual school.

23. Chairman Rippner introduced Odyssey School. The school explained that it has already implemented the following to improve academic performance: recruited highly qualified teachers, addressed Title I and Title II issues, created subject level teams, implemented teacher mentoring programs, created a new school wide discipline plan, developed new curriculum for certain subjects, and attended CCRPI training. The school said that it is already seeing positive results from these reforms.
24. Chairman Rippner introduced Fulton Leadership Academy. The school presented information about the school's mission and focus on STEM. The school has developed a plan to improve academic performance that includes: a FLA learning framework, expanded Saturday sessions, increased tutoring sessions, using data-driven instruction, daily/weekly assessments, implement comprehensive assessment system, monitoring student progress, and creating a culture of high expectations. The school explained that while it is meeting its targets in middle school, high school academic performance still needs improvement. The school had implemented a block schedule in its high school and found it did not help students improve academically and plans on returning to its normal schedule in the future.
25. Chairman Rippner introduced Ivy Preparatory Academy at Gwinnett and Ivy Preparatory Academy at Kirkwood. The schools presented information about how the school plans to focus on improving its curriculum and instruction by implementing the following strategies: addressing need for new core of teachers; new hiring process much more rigorous and thorough; providing teachers with tools they need to be successful; focusing heavily on assessment and data that is accurate; MAP assessments; using data to drive instruction; innovation; training teachers in state standards; hiring chief academic officer; providing more support and guidance to teachers; and personalizing learning and enrichment plans for scholars developed with teachers. The school has already hired a new principal for Kirkwood school and a new chief academic officer.
26. Director Holliday then acknowledged representatives from Pataula Charter Academy and Mountain Education Charter High School in the audience who were compliant in all three areas of the SCSC Comprehensive Performance Framework. The representatives were invited to hear challenges from schools and will be using the information they heard to develop a training session to share best practices.
27. Chairman Rippner next called for additional items from Commissioners, but no Commissioners offered additional items.
28. There being no further business before the SCSC, Chairman Rippner adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:15 pm.