

**State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia
Board and Policy Governance Retreat Minutes
October 9-10, 2013**

Wednesday, October 9, 2013

1. The commissioners and staff gathered at 12:00p.m. for a buffet lunch. At 1:00p.m. the meeting was called to order by Commission Chair Charles B. Knapp. All commissioners were present at the start of the retreat. Commission Staff was also present, Bonnie Holliday--Executive Director, Gregg Stevens-- General Counsel and Petitions Manager, Lauren Wright --Director of Organizational and Resource Development, Terence Washington – Accountability Manager, and Daniela Belton – Business and Operations Manager. The facilitators of the retreat were Phil Boyle and Jim Stephens from the Carl Vinson Institute of Government and were also present.
2. Director Holliday provided opening remarks and Commission Chair Knapp provided guidance on objectives for the retreat. Phil Boyle and Jim Stephens gave an overview of the retreat schedule.
3. Phil Boyle and Jim Stephens began with a discussion of Vision and Values in Public Education for Policy and Governing Boards. The SCSC discussed the ultimate purpose it intended to achieve and how that purpose could be measured. The SCSC reached consensus that its goal was to approve charter schools that improve the educational outcome of students as compared to the school for which the student would otherwise attend.
4. A break was taken. The next discussion facilitated by Phil Boyle focused on Creating and Maintaining High Performing Governing Board.
5. During this discussion, the SCSC considered the appropriate roles, responsibilities, and relationships of and between board members and staff. The SCSC discussed that the commission must govern as a whole while providing both broad and specific guidance to staff. The staff must implement that guidance and keep the commission well-informed.
6. Phil Boyle and Jim Stephens then began a discussion regarding communication of a High-Performing Governing Board. The SCSC discussed the need for a communication policy that allowed public access to the commission while balancing the equity of all citizens. The SCSC considered the legal and ethical implications of communicating with constituents on an individual basis. The SCSC agreed, but not a unanimous decision, that SCSC staff should draft a communications policy that directs constituents to discuss matters with SCSC staff or the SCSC as a whole, rather than individual members.
7. The SCSC reviewed the agenda for the following day and decided the specific process that will occur during the sessions.
8. SCSC Chair Knapp adjourned the meeting at approximately 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 10, 2013

9. SCSC Chair Knapp called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. All commissioners, staff and facilitators were present.
10. Director Holliday gave a brief introduction of how the day would progress and of the first policy issue discussion regarding Governance and Autonomy of State Charter Schools.
11. Parker Baxter, Director of Knowledge for the National Association of Charter Schools Authorizers, gave a presentation focused on preserving autonomy and accountability at the school level.
12. Tom Pritchard, Former Chair of the Metro Atlanta Board of Directors for KIPP Schools, spoke about enabling efficiency through charter network structures.
13. After the presentations, Mr. Baxter and Mr. Pritchard remained to answer questions the SCSC may have.
14. The SCSC then debated the benefits and dangers of charter schools that exist as part of a charter school network. The SCSC learned that charter school networks can create an economy of scale for the associated schools, but can also compromise school-level autonomy. The SCSC directed staff to develop guidelines that will assist petitioners that wish to form charter school networks that will outline the specific qualities of a high performing network. These guidelines will be presented to the SCSC at an upcoming meeting and will be adopted by the SCSC when finalized.
15. A break was taken.
16. The SCSC reconvened for a discussion focused on open enrollment and mission driven schools.
17. Cathy Henson, Education Law professor at Georgia State University, gave a presentation about providing flexibility in open enrollment policies.
18. Andrea Jolliffe, Partner at Hall Booth Smith, P.C., focused on maintaining true open enrollment for all state charters.
19. Henson and Jolliffe remained present to answer questions.
20. The SCSC discussed the legal authority of schools to limit enrollment on certain factors and the specific authority of the SCSC to authorize schools that only serve a special population of students. The SCSC learned about the various federal laws that prohibit discrimination on a variety of factors and the intent of the legislation that created the SCSC. SCSC leadership will work to identify the legislative intent in the creation of the SCSC before examining data that reflects the need for schools serving a need for a special population.
21. A break was then taken for lunch.
22. After lunch, the SCSC had the last policy discussion of the day regarding Alternate Accountability Measures for Mission- Driven Schools.
23. Nelson Smith, Vice President of the National Association of Charter Schools Authorizers Department of Knowledge, provided a national perspective for defining alternative student populations.
24. Sam Rauschenberg, Deputy Director for the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, presented on academic accountability options for state charter schools in Georgia.
25. Smith and Rauschenberg remained present for questions.
26. The SCSC learned about the need to understand that it is difficult to measure charter schools that serve certain populations of students with traditional measures that do not capture the unique circumstances of the students. The SCSC learned that there are many types of students and schools that may warrant alternate measures of accountability, but "at risk" students shall not be identified on the basis of race, poverty,

disability, or language status. The SCSC also learned that the Commission's contract with GOSA for an in-depth data analysis will produce a report that yields new and different data on performance metrics and measures for SCSC schools. The results of this analysis will help staff determine the value-add provided by state charters. At the conclusion of the session, the SCSC directed staff to examine student enrollment data in state charter schools to identify which schools, if any, have a significant population of at-risk students.

27. Director Holliday outlined the action steps that SCSC staff will take assist the SCSC in completing the decision making process on issues discussed at the retreat. The facilitators summarized the issues that were discussed and identified the underlying themes that were present in all discussions.
28. SCSC Chair Knapp gave concluding remarks and thanked everyone for their attendance and dedication while discussing complicated issues that will improve and further the work of the SCSC.
29. SCSC Chair Knapp adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:30 p.m.