

STATE CHARTER SCHOOLS COMMISSION GOVERNANCE RETREAT

September 4-5, 2014
Brasstown Valley Resort
6321 Highway 76, Young Harris, Georgia, 30582

Meeting Minutes

1. The meeting convened at approximately 10:02 am on September 4, 2014. Chairman Knapp confirmed that a quorum was present. All members of the SCSC and its staff were present except for Jose Perez who arrived at approximately 10:40 am. Also present was the retreat facilitator, Karen Wakeford. Executive Director Holliday and Chairman Knapp began the meeting with opening remarks discussing the objectives of the retreat and progress of the Commission.
2. Executive Director Holliday then proceeded to provide the SCSC an overview of the agency's current initiatives. The work of the SCSC is spread across areas of policy development and implementation, research, school services, and school and petitioner training. The SCSC emphasized its desire for its initiatives to adapt to the needs of charter schools, petitioners, and other stakeholders as appropriate.
3. At approximately 11:30 am, the SCSC began its discussion regarding initiatives to increase school-choice options in underserved areas. The discussion included analysis of several targeted-petition alternatives, including statements of support, limiting petition cycles, offering planning grants and more extensive training. The SCSC concluded that increasing petitioner capacity and quality should be its focus rather than adjusting administrative processes for certain petitioners. SCSC staff will continue to identify strategies to increase petitioner capacity in underserved and underperforming areas of the state. Following the discussion, the SCSC adjourned for lunch at 12:46 pm.
4. The SCSC reconvened at 1:47 pm to discuss school accountability. SCSC staff outlined NACSA's best practices in terms of school monitoring and accountability. The staff discussed the College and Career Performance Index, the SCSC Value-Add Analysis, and the SCSC's proposed performance framework. The SCSC agreed that its role in school accountability is to maintain high standards of approval and renewal while preserving flexibility and operational autonomy once a school is granted a charter. This approach to authorizing was referred to a "tight-loose-tight" system because it requires the SCSC to be "tight" on approval standards, loose on board implementation of an educational model, and "tight" on performance-based accountability standards required for renewal. The SCSC highlighted the need for staff to ensure that schools are aware of shortcomings as well as options for remediation that are adaptive to individual school needs.
5. Next, the SCSC continued its discussion regarding school accountability with a specific focus on virtual school performance. SCSC staff and commissioners discussed virtual school performance in Georgia and elsewhere in the country. The SCSC identified the need to hold all schools accountable to the same performance standards regardless of the schools' delivery model. As a result, SCSC commissioners and staff reiterated an intent to closely monitor virtual school

progress and performance throughout the charter term and to hold virtual schools accountable for contracted performance goals at renewal time.

6. The SCSC adjourned for the day at approximately 4:53 pm.
7. The SCSC reconvened at approximately 9:04 am on September 5, 2014. The SCSC staff presented strategies for communicating its mission, processes, and progress. The SCSC expressed its desire to proactively communicate a cohesive message and encouraged the staff to assess long-term plans for a comprehensive communications strategy.
8. The Commission then discussed the need to develop an agency-wide succession plan for both commissioners and staff. The SCSC encouraged staff to develop an intensive one-day training program for new commissioners. Additionally, the SCSC encouraged staff to memorialize the institutional knowledge and history of the agency as well as the development of internal policies to assist new staff in the event of transition.
9. At approximately 11:11 am, the Commission and staff recapped the preceding discussions and identified next steps for action. Commission staff will engage in additional efforts to increase petitioner capacity, develop a comprehensive performance framework that clarifies accountability expectations for boards and school leaders and increases transparency and data access for parents and stakeholders, focus research efforts on virtual school performance and accountability, and identify strategies for promoting external relations.
10. The Commission adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:45 am.