

TO: STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
FROM: CHARTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE
DATE: 04/02/08

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Charter Advisory Committee (CAC) supports the approval of charter school system petitions for five school systems based on the following criteria:

1. Intent to be innovative; and
2. Intent to maximize local school governance.

The CAC understands that the State Department of Education is analyzing the technical adequacy of these five petitions. The five school systems supported by CAC include:

1. Chattahoochee County School System;
2. City Schools of Decatur;
3. Gainesville City Schools;
4. Marietta City Schools; and,
5. Warren County Public Schools.

RATIONALE: The CAC has chosen to focus on assessing "plans for innovation" and "plans for maximization of local school governance" in its assessment of petitioners. We have heard/read summaries of petition reviews from the Department. We have met with the Systems (sub-groups of CAC) and we have heard the Systems present to the CAC as a whole. A summary of CAC visits with petitioners suggest that all have substantial plans to innovate and maximize local school governance. A summary of visits and review of documents also suggests that these are districts with the capacity to continue to improve student achievement. All could report reasons that charter status could help them continue the process of continued improvement/innovation that they believe will continue to improve student achievement. All CAC members report that visits yielded much more detail about system plans than could a separate review of the petitions themselves. All petitioners report the desire to see a "model charter system petition" in a year in which no such models are available.

We have observed that four of five petitioners are already "District Accredited" by SACS (please see Recommendation 2 from CAC to State Board). The fifth is in process to receive that accreditation. The SACS (School) System Accreditation process is a quality assurance tool that helps to ensure the capacity within a System to properly utilize additional freedom. The System Accreditation process rests on "Standards for Quality Systems" that have been applied and tested nationally. Tests have concluded that clear evidence of attainment of specific criteria within these standards best ensures that quality services are delivered today and in the future.

1. Vision and Purpose
2. Governance and Leadership
3. Teaching and Learning
4. Documenting and Using Results
5. Resources and Support Systems
6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships
7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

PRACTICAL APPLICATION/ABILITY TO DELIVER RECOMMENDATION:

CAC believes that these petitioners will work with the Department to ensure that satisfactory petitions are received and that charter system status is implemented. We note that, for some systems, this will involve simple changes in the petition. For other systems, this may involve the development of time lines, etc., that support the plans outlined in visits.