



2014 GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE CHARTER SCHOOLS QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Georgia Charter Schools Association is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit membership organization for Georgia's charter school operators and petitioners. Our mission is to be an effective advocate, resource, and service provider for charter public schools in the state.

Gubernatorial candidates recognize Georgia Charter Schools Association may release my responses at any time to GCSA members and/or the general public.

Candidates understand Georgia Charter Schools Association, as a 501c3, does not endorse any candidate for political office.

Candidates recognize that by returning this questionnaire to GCSA, either electronically or by mail, conveys their individual opinions.

This questionnaire contains six questions that require full commentary response. It is the discretion of each candidate to determine the length of his or her answer. All questions must be answered for the questionnaire to be considered valid.

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SIGNATURE OF CANDIDATE OR CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR/MANAGER ON BEHALF OF CANDIDATE

Andrew T Hunt

DATE OF SIGNATURE 8/27/2014

*If you have any questions about this survey, please do not hesitate to contact
Andrew Lewis at 404-835-8902 or alewis@gacharters.org.*

PLEASE SIGN & RETURN COMPLETED FORM

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OVERALL VIEW ON PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

1. Please explain how you believe independent self-governing public charter schools play a role within public k-12 education in Georgia.

I believe Charter schools are the key to Georgia becoming a top-20 state in education, which is my objective. We do have some quality schools systems, but there is also a number of very poorly performing ones. Any school system operating at 75% or lower in graduation rates needs massive change. These underperformers can be rapidly improved just like the New Orleans turn-around in education: by a complete changeover to a Charter School system. With self-governing schools we can cut administration costs by over 80%, and these savings can go into funding a longer school day and year in the Charter schools. Well-run Charter schools are much more cost-effective than public schools and on average, yield higher performance from the children. The longer school day and year help working families better match their work schedules, meaning less unsupervised time for the children that sometimes ends in trouble. I would add to this school choice, and encourage a variety of school options for parents to be able to choose between: traditional curriculum, STEM, vocational, special needs, Montessori style, remote learning focused, and other types.

2. President Obama and his predecessors, President Bush and President Clinton, all called for the expansion of public charter schools as part of their national education policy. Under their administrations, the number of public charter schools across the United States increased from 1,542 schools in 1999-2000 to 6,004 schools in 2013-2014. The number of students being served in these charters has increased through the same time period from 349,714 students to 2,280,627 students.

Do you support this bipartisan effort at the federal and state level?
Yes, at the state level, and appreciate the Federal recommendation.

Why or why not?

Education needs to be a family or state-run program and not federal-run (just read the US Constitution and 9th and 10th amendments). I fully agree with further expansion of Charter schools and see this as the best path forward for most school districts. I firmly believe the focus needs to be on the children and not the system. The bigger the system, the less focus on the individual needs of the children. Having independent schools removes much of the size factor and returns the focus on the child. Allowing school choice further increases focus on doing what is best for the children in that their parents are able to help delineate which school is best for them.

ROLE OF THE STATE IN GEORGIA'S CHARTER PROCESS

Georgia law allows for local approval (local boards of education) and state approval (state charter schools commission) of public charter schools. The latter approval process, allowing the state to have the ability to authorize charter public schools, in addition to local boards of education, was a contentious issue for the Georgia General Assembly and for many voters in 2012.

In November 2012 voters passed Amendment 1, the Charter Schools Amendment, in a statewide referendum by a 58.6% margin with support coming from a diverse mix of geographic, demographic and cultural backgrounds.

3. Did you support or oppose the Charter Schools Amendment, allowing for a single purpose, statewide authorizer of charter schools? Yes, I did support it.

Why or why not?

There are cases where local school systems try to keep charter schools out for political reasons, and were not doing what was best for the children. In such cases, charter schools need to have access to such underperforming school districts in order to challenge them to improve. It is very sad when politics interfere with what is best for the child by disallowing parents a school choice option.



4. Two years removed, and in consideration of state charter school performance, what do the results of Amendment 1 mean to you with regards to the state's role in public k-12 education, specifically chartering?

I truly believe we will see significant benefits over time. It is too early to see the large benefits just yet for the newly open charter schools, but they are certainly beginning to show results. In fact Atlanta Public Schools hired the top person from the very successful KIPP charter school (located in its own school area) for its #2 position over all of APS. This is proof that charter schools create positive competition – which ultimately benefits students. I believe that an independent school style with modest testing requirements will ensure quality of education and school choice. It would bring Georgia into the top 20 of all states in education within 4 years with broad and rapid implementation.

INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

Charter schools allow for innovative education practices within public K-12 education. These innovative practices are meant to drive stronger results in student achievement.

In recent months, parents and educators in the Druid Hills community of DeKalb County attempted to work with DeKalb County Schools to convert the Druid Hills High School Cluster (the high school and all of its feeder schools) to a "charter cluster." After many months of work, advocates for the cluster voted with a clear mandate (91% approval by voters), to send their charter cluster petition to the DeKalb County Board of Education for a vote. The DeKalb County Board of Education, in a 5-4 vote, denied allowing the Druid Hills Cluster to convert to charter status under the governance of one 501(c)3 nonprofit board.

5. Should conversion charters and charter clusters, like the Druid Hills Charter Cluster, be allowed some type of an appeals process with the State when denied by their local district? Please explain.

There should absolutely be an appeal process if the board does not allow a change that the majority of People in the affected area desire. I would want this implemented quickly and so that approvals can happen at all levels. However, I would also advocate for an even faster solution of encouraging a change in the board. Elected officials are expected to be public servants to see forth the People's will and what is best for them. Education boards are to represent the People and what is best for the children, and they should disregard the job security of employees or companies funded by the system. I would like there to be a clear website showing boards' voting against the People's will so that in the next elections, the best-suited candidates for the board can be readily determined by the voters. There is also nothing like inspiring visits from the Governor to help get the vote right in the first place.

6. States with the most successful and varied types of charter schools, such as Tennessee, Louisiana, New York, Colorado and others, have used various state resources to attract the best charter operators and leaders from across the nation while incubating new operators and leaders from their own state. How will you, if at all, go about attracting the top charter operators and leaders to Georgia while attempting to groom homegrown operators and leaders from within the state as well?

My parents founded the very first Montessori school in the state of Georgia. They realized these same problems and worked with a local university to establish an initial training center there. This helped other Montessori schools to open over the years. They cared about spreading the methods and not owning them. Open sharing of best practices and teacher exchanges, along with recruiting top instructors, will be imperative to rapid growth. Many states have open exchanges and training for other states. Georgia has so many talented and smart teachers who have the ability to bring out the best in their students. I believe this will be maximized by a transition into a new school culture, which will require some basic training. I have met so many teachers who would like such changes implemented as soon as possible, and welcome the opportunity to realize their drive to be a teacher, which is more often than not seeing the students love to learn and succeed in life.

I will not be sitting in the gold dome, but instead be meeting with people and inspiring such positive change as above.