

NEW OPPORTUNITIES....

At this time school year should be nearly one month passed, and I am certain that you are settling into a routine. It is always fascinating to watch students return from their summer breaks and there is always an adjustment period. While those adjustments are sometimes difficult, never forget those end results are worth every effort. As a charter school, you are using taxpayer dollars to prepare children for their future endeavors – that is a HUGE responsibility which cannot be taken lightly. We, as educators, cannot guarantee success to every child, yet our role is to provide them the tools to maximize every opportunity that comes their way.

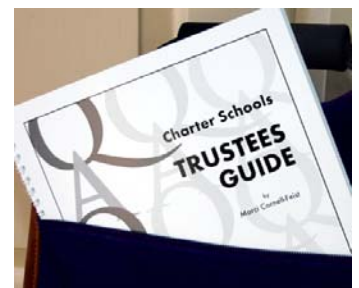
This year, we have 3 brand new schools that have opened to students; and we have 7 schools returning for their second year of operation. Last year's charter school enrollments grew by 65% to more than 9000 students, and there is potential for us to cross the 12,000 student for the first time in South Carolina charter school history. Also, within the last 7 months, 5 charter schools have entered brand new facilities constructed exclusively for those charter schools and several more are beginning their facility construction efforts. South Carolina stands at a cross-road where growth can be seen in student enrollments and school facilities, but we need to make sure that achievement simultaneously increases as well.

CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD RESOURCE

If your school has new board members and is looking for a basic yet pertinent resource, consider ordering Marci Cornell-Feist's *Charter Schools Trustee Guide*. The guide is about \$10 (not including shipping) and is one of the most accessible works on charter school governance. The resource section alone is worth the purchase in that it describes how to maximize a board's work, divides roles between the board and its administrator, lists sample questions that should be considered for student achievement, provides job descriptions with standard operating procedures, supplies steps to ensure financial accountability, and illustrates basics for parliamentary procedure.

On page iii of the introduction, Marci quotes Ed Kirby, the former associate commissioner of education for charter schools in Massachusetts, who asserts the need for strong, charter school governance – “Charter schools have figured out what researchers and legislative commissions still fail to grasp – that the real innovation in charters is nothing more than the power of self-governance, the power to make changes that produce better results.” If self-governance is the “real innovation” of charter schools, then we MUST ensure that each charter school's governance is sound. If weak governance is the norm, most assuredly, weak academics will become the norm as well.

While this document was written with Massachusetts specifically in mind, its value extends beyond that state. If you decide to purchase this guide, you will need to ignore the Massachusetts law section; however, in my opinion, this is a tremendous “short work” on charter school governance – it is only 88 pages (including the valuable resource section). If you would like more information, visit Marci's site at <http://www.meetinghousesolutions.com/index.html> to contact her and peruse the other resources offered through her (check out the “Ask the Expert” section).



SC CHARTER SCHOOLS IN PRINT

The Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) publishes an online journal called *ASCD Express* every couple of weeks. Their September 3rd issue focused exclusively on charter schools by referring to them as “Education’s New Wave” (http://www.ascd.org/ascd_express/vol4/424_toc.aspx) and examined challenges that charter schools face as well as detailing benefits from this type of public school option. Several months back, the SC Department of Education studied the 16 schools that have closed and produced about a 20 page document. That larger document was summarized into 2 pages, and it was included in this publication. The link to that South Carolina article is: http://www.ascd.org/ascd_express/vol4/424_medley.aspx.

REORGANIZATION IN THE DEPARTMENT

Recently, there has been some slight readjustment to the SC Department of Education once again. The Office of Public School Choice, underneath which charter schools fall, has been renamed the Office of Public School Choice and Innovation. Don Lawrimore, the director of the Office of Public School Choice, was offered a job by a district and he accepted. Instead of hiring a replacement, the SCDE merged public school choice with innovation. Our new director is Virgie Chambers, and our deputy superintendent is still the same – Betsy Carpentier. The shift was an internal one to minimize costs without sacrificing the customer service standards that our offices have delivered in the past.

CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

The Charter School Advisory Committee received the largest number of applications in its history with 20 being submitted for review. Several of those groups decided to withdraw their proposals to perform additional work on refining their educational goals and implementation plans; however, the CSAC still deemed 11 applications legally compliant. Of those 11, 9 were authorized by their respective districts, and the other two applicants are currently appealing their sponsor’s opinions into the Administrative Law Courts. For 2010-11, South Carolina could almost have 50 charter schools operating, which shows a continued trend of growth!

School Name	District	Grade	Year one Projected Enrollment	Contact Information
Columbia East Point Academy	SCPCSD	K-5 (up to 8)	288	Roger Jiang columbiacacl@gmail.com
Lake City College Preparatory Academy	SCPCSD	K-9 (up to 12)	250	Deloris Brown brownd14@aol.com
LEAD Academy	Greenville	5-6 (up to 8)	160	Rodney Johnson rodneyallanjohnson@hotmail.com
Palmetto Academy of Learning & Success	Horry	K5-8	153	Courtney Fancher cfancher@ymail.com
Palmetto Scholar’s Academy	SCPCSD	6-8 (up to 12)	216	Stacey Lindbergh slindbergh@homesc.com
Pattison’s Academy for Comprehensive Education	Charleston	K-8	30	Sloan Cooper sloan.cooper@att.net
Richland Two Charter High School	Richland Two	11-12	80	Robert Dozier rdozier@homeownersmtg.com
The Apple Charter School	Charleston	PreK-6 (up to 8)	300	Patricia Williams applecharter@live.com
York Preparatory Academy	SCPCSD	K-9 (up to 12)	1100	Craig Craze craze@zobotv.com

CHARACTER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

The State Schools of Character (SSOC) competition is a way for schools and districts to receive recognition at the state level for their strong character education initiatives. Created in 2006 with a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation, the SSOC program has increased the number of outstanding schools and districts sharing best practices, localized the mentoring network among educators, and identified exemplary state sites.

The applications for this award are due no later than December 1, 2009. Winners will be announced in the spring and could potentially be nominated for the National Schools of Character Award. You can download the application from www.character.org and you will find it on the lower right of that web-page. If you have additional questions about this program, contact Gerry Weaver at 803-734-4804 or via email at gmweaver@ed.sc.gov.

Two other character education items:

- (1) Be on the look-out for the electronic toolkit for character education programs. This kit will include resources, lesson plans, and case studies that can be utilized. It will be available in December!
- (2) “Safe and Savvy in Cyberspace” is a program that is available for small, group middle school students that teaches them how to safely navigate the internet (MySpace accounts, what types of information to never share, etc). If you are interested in this program, please contact Joan Dickinson at jdickins@ed.sc.gov.

PRINCIPAL PROFILE



Victoria Dixon-Mokeba is the Director/Lead Teacher at the Carolina School for Inquiry located in the Richland One school district. She has been with the school since its inception and has sought to develop a positive working relationship with her school district. This small, K-6 charter school has built some wonderful partnerships with local colleges and the community center that houses the school. They have realized that these joint ventures are vital to attain its mission – “to teach a diverse population of children in an atmosphere of kindness that encourages active inquiry, fosters individual growth and promotes respect for self, others and the world in which they live.”

Victoria’s pathway changed in the 1990s during a visit to a children’s home in Spartanburg. A child there approached her before leaving and said: “People come visit us all the time but they never come back, even when they promise. I hope that you come back.” She said that was the “defining moment” for her and she made the commitment to make a difference, whether great or small, in the lives of South Carolina’s children.

She has been actively involved in assisting several charter developer groups write their applications. Recently, the SC Association of Public Charter School honored Victoria as their Charter School Principal of the Year. She attributes much of the success at her school to the support of the CSI Board who are highly dedicated and committed individuals. To show how much she believes in her school, her youngest child attends there; so she can honestly say, if asked by a parent, that she would send her child to this charter school.

You can learn more about the school by visiting <http://www.carolinaschoolforinquiry.com>

SUPPORT FROM THE SDE GRANTS OFFICE

This information is a reprint from the 2008 September newsletter; yet, the information remains just as vital now. I hope you find this helpful as you seek other sources of funding outside the regular state and federal funds. Remember, even in hard economic times, schools that produce outstanding academic results have little difficulty in finding philanthropic donors! Use your status both as a public school and a non-profit entity to your benefit.

The SCDE's Grants Office, online at <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/grants>, helps the state's educators find potential funders, stay informed about grant opportunities, locate useful statistics and research, review and understand grant guidelines and announcements, establish a work plan and project checklist, *edit and polish the grant application narrative*, and review the project budget.

For those interested in potential grants, the "Current grant announcements" link on the Grants Office's Web page accesses information on a variety of federal, corporate, or private grants. The link "Grant programs administered by the State Department of Education" provides the names of the individual grant administrators and their contact information. Finally, if you have not heard of "Donors Choose," please select that link and read about it.

You should also check out the "Hamburger Helper Hometown Helper" grants program. Typically, the company posts their RFP in December with a mid-spring deadline; and public schools or non-profits are eligible to apply – charter schools fit both of those categories. The purpose of the grant is to advance community interest and monetary awards are up to \$15,000. Check out their website at www.myhometownhelper.com. General Mills is currently in the midst of a campaign of helping food banks, so continue checking back on this site to discover when they actually post their RFP.

CONTACT US

State Department of Education Office of Public School Choice 1429 Senate Street, Room 708-A* Columbia, South Carolina 29201	Joel E. Medley Program Coordinator Phone: 803-734-5481 Fax: 803-734-2034 E-mail: jmedley@ed.sc.gov	Rebecca Cupstid Administrative Assistant Phone: 803-734-8266 Fax: 803-734-2034 E-mail: rcupstid@ed.sc.gov
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**Please note that our physical location has changed. We moved from the 6th to the 7th floor during the SCDE's reorganization described earlier in this newsletter!*



South Carolina
Department of Education

Together, we can.