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Absolute Priority 1: Periodic Review and Evaluation

The Georgia Department of Education (“GaDOE”) uses its high quality charter schools framework to evaluate whether each charter school is meeting its charter terms, and especially its academic requirements. GaDOE defines high quality charter schools as charter schools that shows evidence of strong academic results over the last three years based on: Increased student academic achievement and attainment (including high school graduation rates) for all students; Demonstrated success closing the achievement gap as measured by the CCRPI; Results on the CCRPI for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students as compared to traditional public schools; and the school’s results on its high quality charter schools performance framework. The framework focuses on strong academic results, financial sustainability, legal compliance, and high-functioning governing board, with the governing board at the core of the school’s functions.

The framework takes the four components above and expounds upon them to create performance measures. The academic performance requirements include charter schools exceeding the Georgia College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) average for the state and their districts.¹ Charter schools must also Beat the Odds (BTO).² The BTO analysis is a cross-sectional, random effects regression model that uses school-based factors such as poverty level, race/ethnicity, students with disabilities, English language learners, school size (FTE), and

¹ The College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) is a comprehensive school improvement, accountability, and communication platform for all educational stakeholders that promotes college and career readiness for all Georgia public school students. The CCRPI includes four main components: Achievement, Progress, Achievement Gap, and Challenge Points. These components, encompass multiple indicators (e.g., content mastery, post elementary/middle/high school readiness, graduation rate), are combined for a total CCRPI score on a scale of 0 to 100, with a possibility of 10 additional points. The CCRPI also reports other information, such as the performance of student subgroups (i.e., economically disadvantaged students, English Learners, students with disabilities, and students by race/ethnicity), school climate (which is comprised of student, parent, and school staff survey data, student discipline data, and attendance data), and financial efficiency status. CCRPI reports and data files can be accessed here: <http://www.gadoe.org/CCRPI/Pages/default.aspx>.

² Beating the Odds (BTO) is a value-added measure that compares academic achievement between schools when controlled for race/ethnicity, students with disability, gifted, English language learners, and students with disabilities.

school grade configuration. Schools whose CCRPI is above the confidence interval around their predicted CCRPI are defined as Beating the Odds. All charter performance framework measures are also included in the contract provisions. For more information on the performance framework please see competitive preference priority 1a.

The framework described above has been incorporated into every part of Georgia's chartering process and is used to make all decisions. The charter application, year 2 and year 4 monitoring documents, the annual report, and final pre-opening checklist are based off of the framework. Georgia law and State Board of Education (SBOE) Rules require multiple compliance reviews throughout a charter school's five-year charter term. Charter schools are required to submit financial audits and annual reports on November 1 of each year (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2067.1(c)).

These annual reports indicate progress on charter goals including student achievement outcomes, levels of parental involvement, measures of financial management, and a host of other data (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2067.1). Annual reports must be submitted to parents, the school's local board of education, and GaDOE (*See* O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2070). Charter schools' annual reports must "indicate the progress made the previous year in meeting performance-based goals identified in the charter and include all state-mandated assessment scores and state-mandated accountability indicators." (SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.04(18))

Over the last five years, Georgia has been ensuring quality charter schools are operating, which has led to the non-renewal of low-performing charter schools. During this time, thirty-two charter schools have closed. Twenty-six schools opted to not reapply for renewal, the reasons ranging from conversion schools returning to a traditional public school status to schools electing not to renew because their renewal petition would be denied. Additionally, six charter schools

terminated their charters. Finally, eleven charter schools were denied through the renewal process.

In 2014, the SBOE amended SBOE Rule to include a detailed probation process (SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.06 (2014)). The probation process uses the reasons established for termination in law as reasons for probation.³ These reasons for probation are also incorporated into the framework used to evaluate schools, and determine whether probation is necessary. Once a school's evaluation on the performance framework is not satisfactory, and the issue is considered egregious, GaDOE places a school on probation by providing notice to the school leader and governing board chair. This can be done individually by GaDOE or the local district, or collaboratively with GaDOE and the local district. Thus far, GaDOE has always collaborated with the local board to put a school on probation. The notice requires the charter school to submit a corrective action plan and root-cause analysis within 30 days of the notice date. Once the action plan is approved by GaDOE, the school must implement it and provide monthly updates and documentation to GaDOE and the local board. If the school does not file or comply with the corrective action plan, GaDOE may request the SBOE to initiate termination proceedings. The probation and charter termination process allows for a comprehensive, systematic accountability mechanism at every point of the charter term with academic accountability as its highest priority.

³ The Department or the local board of education may place a charter school on probation, or the Department may terminate a charter school, for the following reasons: (i) A failure to comply with any recommendation or direction of the state board with respect to O.C.G.A. § 20-14-41; (ii) A failure to adhere to any material term of the charter, including but not limited to the performance goals set forth in the charter; (iii) A failure to meet generally accepted government accounting standards; (iv) A violation of applicable federal, state, or local laws or court orders; (v) The existence of substantial evidence that the continued operation of the charter school could be contrary to the best interest of the students or the community; or (vi) A failure to comply with any provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065; (vii) For charter schools, the governing board has demonstrated an inability to provide effective leadership to oversee the operation of the charter school; and (ix) A failure to disclose material information regarding violations or potential violations of any material term of the charter or applicable federal, state, or local laws or court orders. (x) Any other reason that would lead to the eventual termination of the charter if not resolved. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2068; SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.06(3)(d)(1))

Additionally, all charter schools in Georgia go through a two-tiered process for renewal and initial petition applications. SBOE approved charter schools must first seek charter approval from their local board. Once the school obtains local approval, the school must apply for approval to the SBOE. For more information on this please see CPP1.

Schools approved by the State Charter Schools Commission (SCSC), the alternative authorizer in Georgia, operate as their own LEAs and are subject to the SCSC's monitoring and evaluation of the SCSC. These schools are monitored on-site annually for operational and financial compliance and sustainability. As part of the on-site evaluation, SCSC staff study and review policies and procedures, interview school staff, and inspect school facilities to ensure the school adheres to its legal obligations as well as principals of sound financial management and academic accountability. The SCSC utilizes CCRPI and a value-added measure⁴ to determine whether schools are academically high-performing. The SCSC employs a Comprehensive Performance Framework similar to GaDOE's for high-quality charter schools and measures their progress in meeting those standards. The SCSC uses its Performance Evaluation in all its high-stakes decisions. Lastly, GaDOE issues charter contracts for a five year terms unless there is a specific reason to do otherwise, which is rarely done. The SCSC uses five year terms at all times. This means that the vast majority of schools are reviewed in-depth at least once every five years.

GaDOE places more emphasis than ever on quality for all students, especially our most vulnerable students. Within the Charter Schools Division (CSD), our rigorous reporting and monitoring processes outlined above ensure high quality charter schools (and fulfill Priority 1) for Georgia's students by providing for periodic review and evaluation by the local boards of

⁴ The value-added measure used by the Commission to determine what charter schools are adding to students' academic achievement as compared to traditional public schools.

education and GaDOE multiple times throughout the charter term. With these multiple reviews occurring, Georgia will continue to ensure compliance and quality within its charter schools.

Absolute Priority 2: Charter School Oversight

(2)(a)(1): Every locally approved charter school enters into a binding contract that is *both* a charter and performance contract with GaDOE and the school’s local board of education. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2062(1)). State charter schools enter in a charter contract that is also a performance contract with the State Charter Schools Commission. In both cases, the contract specifies the charter schools’ goals related to academic performance, financial sustainability, legal compliance, and governance. This aligns with the performance framework used to evaluate charter schools. The contract details the specific laws and federal regulations that a school cannot waive. See Appendix E. For locally-approved charters, it also lists the rights and responsibilities of GaDOE, the Local Board of Education, and the charter school. In addition to the goals schools self-propose, GaDOE and the SCSC require schools to commit to certain academic and financial goals ensuring rigor and accountability. Locally-approved charter schools must “beat the odds” each year of their charter term and have a CCRPI score that is equal to or better than the state and local district. The SCSC similarly analyzes CCRPI and a value-added measure (VAM), and requires its charter schools to outperform the traditional public schools in the school’s attendance zone. Both BTO and the SCSC’s VAM allow authorizers to adequately measure schools even though the schools may serve different populations. In this manner, both BTO and VAM act as an alternative standard of accountability that can hold alternative and virtual schools accountable.

(2)(a)(2): All charter schools must submit to GaDOE financial audit reports independently conducted by a third party CPA that are compliant with GAGAS by November 1 each year. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(7)). These audits are analyzed by GaDOE’s financial review team. Schools with findings receive requests for further information, are placed on probation, are required to have training, and/or receive additional support. Schools that do not submit a timely audit are ineligible for any funding opportunities, and are notified that they are out of compliance with their charter contract, which negatively impacts their prospects for charter renewal. The SCSC annually reviews financial processes and data of each state charter school as part of its monitoring process.

(2)(a)(3) and (b): Georgia’s intent in creating charter schools is to increase student achievement. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2061.) In the charter contract, schools are required to not only improve academic achievement when compared to the school’s previous performance, but in comparison to other similarly situated schools as well. Schools are required to increase performance annually and out-perform the state and their local districts academically among all students, including those described in ESEA Section 111(b)(2)(C)(v). (*See* O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065). These academic measures are the primary factor in determining whether to renew or revoke a school’s charter. When a school applies for renewal, it must fill out a color coded grid showing whether it met its academic goals. For locally approved charter schools, this grid is presented to the Charter Advisory Committee,⁵ which participates in all renewal interviews, and the SBOE Charter Schools (DFCS) Committee. The DFCS Committee makes recommendations to the full State Board. State charter schools submit similar information to the SCSC, which shares this information with the full SBOE. The SCSC evaluates the progress of state charter

⁵ The Charter Advisory Committee (CAC) is established by the State Board to make charter policy and petition recommendations to the State Board. The CAC must be comprised of three members each appointed by the chairperson of the State Board, the Lt. Governor, and the Speaker of the House. O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2063.1.

schools in meeting the goals in their charter contracts and meeting expectations on the SCSC Comprehensive Performance Framework. To be eligible for renewal, state charter schools must meet standards in each area (academics, finance, and operations) at least three of the four years evaluated for charter renewal. The SCSC bases its decision to renew a state charter school on its performance on the Comprehensive Performance Framework, and decisions to renew a charter school are then shared with the SBOE. Georgia's rigorous monitoring, approval, and renewal processes outlined above fulfills Absolute Priority 2 by providing for continuous oversight.

CPP 1.a. Charter schools in Georgia go through a multi-tiered review before initial approval or renewal. Schools must first apply to the local district, and get approved by the local board. At the local board level applicants go through an application review, site visit, and panel interview using the performance framework. Once approved locally, charter schools must apply to the State Board of Education (SBOE) where their applications are reviewed by GaDOE, participate in a panel interview, and go before the SBOE. This two-tiered review process allows GaDOE to ensure quality charter approvals using the standards expressed in the performance framework. Charter schools that are approved by the SCSC must be denied locally and/or at the SBOE level, or have a state-wide attendance zone. These schools are evaluated by the SCSC staff, undergo a panel interview, and then go before the SCSC's commissioners for a vote.

GaDOE recently implemented a multi-factored performance framework which marries GaDOE's expectations of a high quality charter school with measures based on the SCSC Comprehensive Performance Framework. The framework provides detailed performance measures for components of a high quality charter school, including strong academic results, financial sustainability, legal and regulatory compliance. The academic performance requirements include charter schools exceeding the CCRPI average for the state and their

districts. Charter schools must also BTO. Please see page 2 and appendix E for more information. The financial sustainability performance measures include a set of ratios that assess a school's current and long term fiscal health, including its working capital ratio and its debt-to-asset ratio. Also included are the number of unrestricted days of cash a school has on hand, whether it has any enrollment variances, whether a school is in default or is paying its debts in a timely manner, and its financial efficiency margins.

To determine whether the school utilizes strong governance practices, the framework examines a governing board's policies and procedures and compares them to best practices. GaDOE also examines a board's compliance with Georgia law, including conflicts of interest, annual training requirements, and open meetings requirements. Lastly, GaDOE evaluates a board's ability to hold the school's management accountable and make effective decisions for the school, while staying out of the school's day-to-day management.

GaDOE fully understands that legal compliance is at the heart of protecting all students, especially our most vulnerable students. For this reason, GaDOE evaluates a school's treatment of students and employees as well as its operational compliance. Students' rights are taken very seriously, and GaDOE monitors charter school discipline, special education, and enrollment data annually to check for disparities and identify places for improvement.⁶ We also monitor parent and local district complaints about charter school compliance in these critical areas.

The framework described above is incorporated into every part of Georgia's chartering process. The charter application, year 2 and year 4 monitoring documents, the annual report, and final opening checklist all incorporate the framework standards. Georgia law and SBOE Rules require multiple compliance reviews throughout a charter school's five-year charter term. Charter schools are required to submit annual financial audits and reports. Through both of these

⁶ This is discussed in Sections A and B2.

processes, Georgia ensures continuous and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of its charter schools.

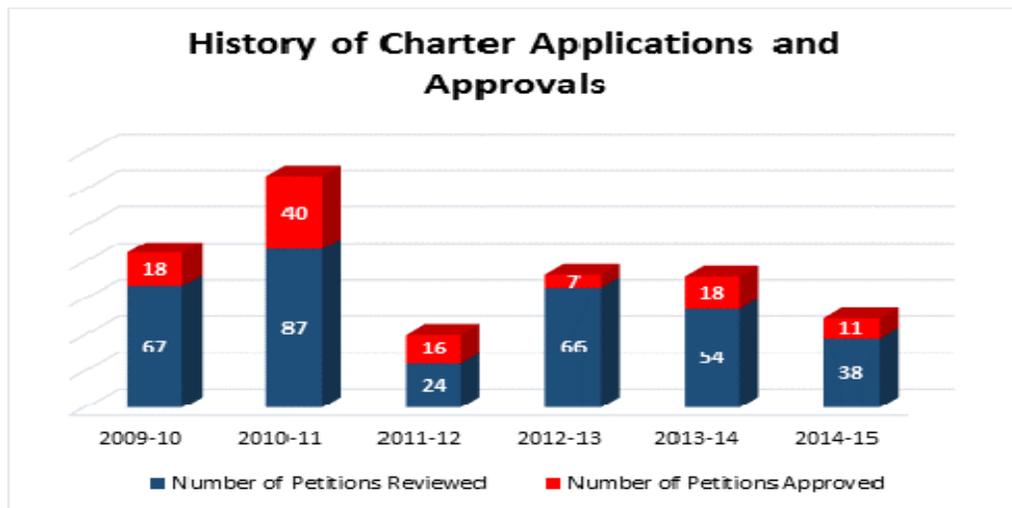
Georgia's charter authorization process establishes clear criteria for evaluating charter applications and includes a multi-tiered review of a charter school application (it is worth noting that the framework is the basis for the initial charter application, a renewal application, application rubrics, and a pre-opening checklist). All locally-approved charter applicants must submit a letter of intent to their local board of education and the CSD at least six months prior to their application submission (SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.05(1)(a)). For locally-approved applicants, applicants first submit their charter application to their local board of education for evaluation and approval (SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.05(1)(b)). If the local board approves the application, it is then submitted to GaDOE (SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.05(1)(c)). Using an evaluation framework that is aligned with the performance framework above, GaDOE staff reviews the application to determine if it meets all legal requirements and if there are any areas of concern.⁷ For state charter school applicants, the SCSC staff conducts a similar legal compliance review to ensure the petitioner met all legal requirements in submitting the petition and would meet legal requirements as an operating charter school. After this review, SCSC staff, along with external charter experts, conduct a panel interview with the charter school's governing board. The goal of the interview is to gauge the applicant's overall capacity to create, implement, and sustain operations of a high-quality charter school with regard to academics, operations, governance, finance, and compliance with all non-waivable laws, rules, and guidelines.

Based on the application review and the panel interview, a charter school is placed into one of four groups: (1) approval group (applicants that warrant an approval recommendation because

⁷ See Appendix E.

they demonstrate high-quality and compliance); (2) clarification group (applicants that require supplemental information prior to a recommendation for approval or denial); (3) revision group (applicants that require substantial changes and must be resubmitted to their local board for approval); and (4) rejection group (applications that are irreparably flawed). If the school fails to respond appropriately, the school is denied a charter. For locally-approved charter schools, GaDOE recommends for approval any successful charter applicants to the SBOE; following recommendation for approval, applicants appear before the SBOE charter sub-committee, at which point applicants answer any questions that arise from the Board or Committee.

For state charter schools, the SCSC’s staff recommends similarly successful applicants to its Board of Commissioners for approval. Following SCSC approval, state law provides the SBOE 60 days to overrule the approval of a charter petition by the SCSC. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2083(a)(1)). Once approved, applicants are granted a charter contract. The figure below shows the history of charter applications reviewed and approved by GaDOE and the State Board:



During the initial approval of a charter school, GaDOE requires the school’s governing board to obtain Georgia non-profit status and attain 15 hours of training by a SBOE-approved provider that, at a minimum, cover finance and budgeting, best practices on charter school governance,

statutory and constitutional requirements relating to public records and open meetings, and other general legal requirements. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(1)). Thereafter, board members with one or more years of board service must participate in a minimum of nine hours of training annually, which includes a three hour whole board governance team training. (SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.06). This ensures schools' decisions are made by school governing boards, and schools are able to operate effectively and in a fiscally sound manner.

Additionally, the local authorizer conducts a final review before a school can open its doors to students to ensure the school meets all of the requirements of the pre-opening checklist. The local authorizer monitors the school's pre-operational period and reports to GaDOE the school's timely implementation of ready-to-open milestones related to facilities, school personnel, enrollment procedures, curriculum and instruction, operations and fiscal management, and governance. In the event the charter school does not meet the ready-to-open milestones in the checklist, the local board of education may postpone the school's opening by one year. Thus, the checklist process ensures the school has the infrastructure in place to have a successful start.

As mentioned earlier, all charter schools must submit an annual report indicating their yearly progress on the academic, organizational, and financial goals stated in their charter. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2067.1). These reports are compiled into one report by GaDOE that summarizes charter school performance and compliance throughout Georgia. The report is presented to the state legislature (as required by law), the State Board of Education, LEAs, all charter schools, and the general public. GaDOE evaluates individual school performance to identify areas needing improvement and provides additional next steps to ensure academic and operational success. This information is also used in the charter renewal process along with information gathered during the ongoing monitoring conducted throughout a charter school's term.

CPP 1.b. Georgia has a fast track expansion model for schools that have demonstrated significant success. The Kindezi Schools in Atlanta recently expanded to include a second school campus. Due to its academic achievement and successful operational model, it took only one month for Kindezi to obtain approval by the SBOE to expand its charter, a process that normally takes two months or longer. It is a prime example of the fast track authorization process: if a charter petitioner demonstrates near-perfect quality and compliance during the review, approval can be fast-tracked to become a 1-month process. Also, highly successful charter operators can have more than one school authorized with one charter contract. GaDOE has done this with KIPP where it approved seven schools at one time, under one charter petition due to KIPP's success nationally. GaDOE provides a differentiated review process for charter applicants that have demonstrated success at the local or national level. SBOE 160-4-9-.06(1)(a)(1)(V)(IX).

CPP 1.c. In 2014, the SBOE passed rules and guidelines that allow greater monitoring of local boards of education by measuring and benchmarking local boards of education and their portfolio of charter schools (SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.06).⁸ The Rule requires GaDOE to hold local boards of education accountable for their responsibilities to charter schools. These responsibilities include submitting to GaDOE and publishing on its website an annual report that includes, among other information, the academic, financial, and organizational performance of charter schools overseen by the local board of education (SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.06(1)(a)(3)).

With the CSP grant, GaDOE will partner with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to strengthen the quality of charter school authorizing practices by developing an evaluation framework that will allow us to evaluate authorizers. Developing this evaluation will allow GaDOE to better understand authorizing strengths and weaknesses across

⁸ In CPP 1.a. above, local boards of education must first approve charter schools before they come before the SBOE. Thus, the local boards are considered local authorizers.

the state, and allow GaDOE to make better informed programmatic decisions. Ultimately, the goal of this partnership is to provide GaDOE and local authorizers with an actionable report to inform future authorizer practices.

NACSA will base its work on its *NACSA Principles and Standards*. GaDOE will work with NACSA to create a formative evaluation framework rooted in best practices and Georgia's charter landscape. Once the framework and criteria are in place, GaDOE will plan for effective and efficient implementation of these tools through (1) training and (2) process development. Lastly, GaDOE will work with NACSA to conduct pilot evaluations with the newly-developed framework and criteria. NACSA will provide process management support for the pilot evaluations by working directly with GaDOE staff on facilitating document reviews; helping prepare for and accompanying staff on site visits; and generating a comprehensive evaluation report for each of the local authorizers. GaDOE will create and implement a final framework and evaluation system based on lessons and best practices gleaned from the pilot evaluations. Although local boards are always liable for contract violations, as part of its work with NACSA, GaDOE will evaluate various consequences. Section D has a timeline for activities.

Through its authorizing and monitoring of other authorizers, GaDOE demonstrates a strong commitment to high-performing charter schools with an emphasis on academic performance, formal standards for authorization, annual monitoring, and reporting. GaDOE has satisfied competitive preference priority 1.

CPP 2. Georgia has an independent authorizer that is not an LEA (or the SEA). Following the passage of a constitutional amendment in 2012 to allow an independent authority, the State Charter Schools Commission (SCSC) was re-established as a seven-person public chartering board to replace the Georgia Charter Schools Commission established in 2008 and ruled

unconstitutional in 2011. If a petitioner is denied by their local district or seeks a statewide attendance zone, the petitioner can seek a charter from the SCSC. The SBOE treats schools authorized by the SCSC as Local Education Agencies. The SCSC has been the authorizer for 27 schools since 2013.

The SBOE has the authority to overrule the SCSC’s decision to approve or renew a charter school. This authority allows the State Board to have input into the authorization of all charter schools in Georgia. Additionally, Georgia law allows petitioners to apply directly to the SBOE for a State Chartered Special School if a local board denies their application. The “State Board shall approve the charter of a start-up charter petitioner for a state chartered special school if the state board finds that such petition meets the requirements set forth in Code . . . and the provisions of this title, and is in the public interest.” (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2064.1(b)) This effectively provides a third avenue for charter schools in Georgia besides local board approval or SCSC approval; petitioners that are denied by their local district also can seek authorization directly from the SBOE. If the SBOE approves the petition, then the charter school is a State Chartered Special School and is treated as an LEA. With the recreation of the SCSC, petitioners are opting to petition the SCSC instead of going through the mediation process, which allows for the state board or the Charter Advisory Committee to mediate between the local board and a petitioner whose petition was denied to assist in resolving issues which led to denial of the petition by the local board. (*See* O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2064(e))

Since Georgia has an alternate authorizer and allows for petitioners to directly appeal local authorizer’s decisions to the alternative authority or directly to the SBOE, Georgia fully meets the criteria of competitive preference priority 2.

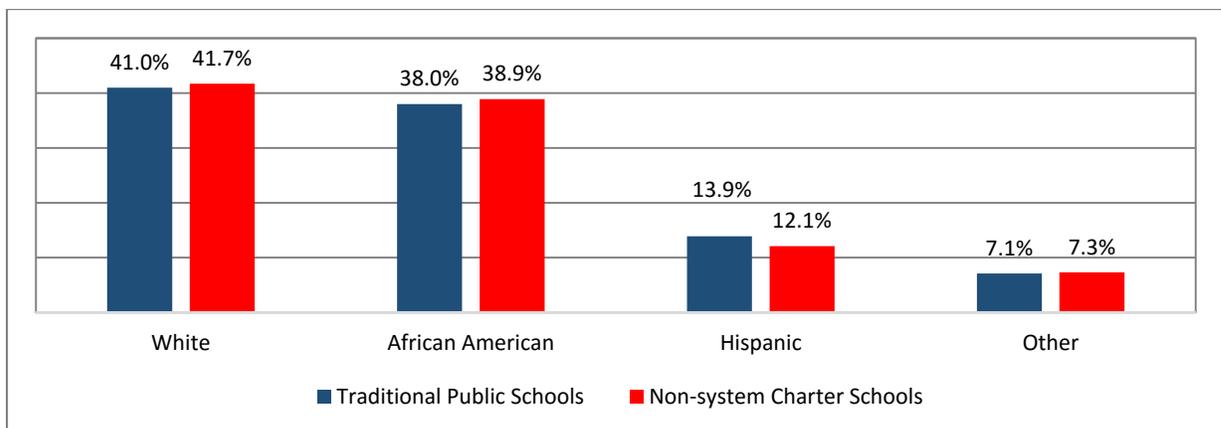
Invitational Priority: Public Reporting of Charter School Demographics

GaDOE will be using administrative funds to work with the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) to create and publish data sheets for each charter school on student discipline, including any racial, English Language Learner, and special education disparities. This data will also look at the school’s demographic data including socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity. This demographic data is already available for all schools and districts through GaDOE’s FTE portal. The data sheets will allow for greater visualization, public usage, and more in-depth student discipline analysis. For more information on these data sheets, please see section E.

Selection Criteria

A. During the 2014-2015 school year, the majority of students attending charter schools in Georgia were people of color, with the majority being African American or Hispanic.

Charter School Enrollment by Race

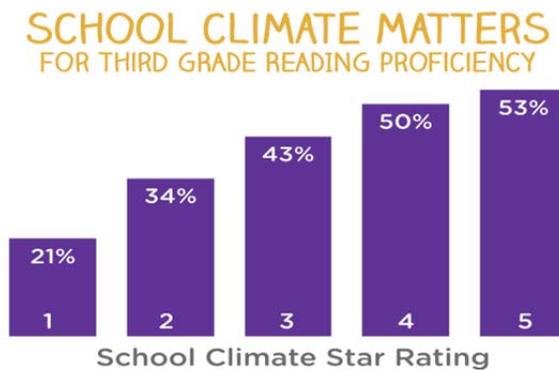


The number of students with disabilities served by charter schools (13%) was almost equal to those served in the traditional public school (13.3%) setting. In Georgia, approximately 27% of children are growing up in poverty, compared to 22% nationally.⁹ Currently, 55% of the students attending charter schools in Georgia qualify for free or reduced price lunch. That is almost

⁹ Ga. Family Connections Partnership, http://www.gafcp.org/index.php/count/kidscount_frame/data_searches (last visited May 17, 2016).

double the percentage of Georgia’s population. In 2015, Georgia passed a law allowing charter schools to provide educationally disadvantaged students additional weight in lotteries. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)) GaDOE plans to use CSP funds to ensure that more educationally disadvantaged students attend charter schools than traditional public schools. Given the percentage of Georgia’s children growing up in poverty, Georgia has a strong interest in closing achievement gaps throughout the state. The subgrant competition will give 10 additional points to schools with models and practices that focus on educationally disadvantaged students. These subgrantees will also get funded at a higher rate as described in section D.

Georgia is one of the few states in the country that uses school climate as a measure of school success across the state. School climate measures the “quality and character of school life” using the Georgia Health Survey 2.0, Georgia School Personnel Survey, Georgia Parent Survey, student discipline data, and attendance records for students, teachers, staff, and administrators. Georgia’s school-climate rating directly correlates to student academic outcomes.



In an effort to close the achievement gap through school climate, GaDOE offers Positive Behavioral Intervention System (PBIS) resources at no cost to schools. This has taken root in Georgia’s charter sector, with 41% of charter schools using PBIS. GaDOE has also coordinated with Drew Charter School, which has been extremely successful at using PBIS, to host in-person

trainings for other charter schools. Charter schools have a 3.89/5 average school climate score, while the state's overall school climate average is 3.45/5.

Georgia is fortunate to have several charter schools with a track record of success with educationally disadvantaged students. During the past award cycles, Georgia has sub-granted all four of its dissemination grants to share best practices in closing achievement gaps with neighboring traditional public schools. GaDOE plans to do the same with this grant cycle by ensuring that dissemination grants are used to further best practices with urban and rural economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities. CSP funds will be used to facilitate at least two annual trainings that focus on practices that have demonstrated academic outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students. GaDOE holds charter schools accountable for academic performance through mandatory academic goals in each charter contract that are aligned to the state's single accountability system. All charter schools are required to perform at or above the state's average academic achievement rate. This holds all schools to the same high standards regardless of the student populations' background, demonstrating GaDOE's strong belief that all students, including educationally disadvantaged students, can attain high level results. CSP funds would be used to make this a long-term reality in Georgia.

Georgia is committed to ensuring that charter schools attract, recruit, admit, enroll, serve, and retain educationally disadvantaged students. During the 2014-2015 petition cycle, Georgia did not renew a charter school because its student population was not representative of its attendance zone. Since then, we have asked all charter schools in the renewal process for recruitment plans targeting educationally disadvantaged students. Additionally, during CSP grant monitoring visits, GaDOE scrutinizes how schools serve students with disabilities, students from low-income communities, and English language learners, and whether there is any racial disproportionality in

their student discipline data.¹⁰ Any issues that need to be resolved are put in writing and an action plan is developed by the school and put into action after GaDOE’s approval. During the sub-grantee competition cycle, Georgia will ask charter schools about their policies towards educationally disadvantaged populations during the application process. Schools that are not complying with laws and policies related to disadvantaged populations are required to make changes and are monitored again within the same academic year. All sub-grantees will go through the same authorization, renewal, and monitoring process described in Absolute Priority 1. The performance framework looks at these elements as well. They are incorporated into the annual report, monitoring tools, and the start-up and renewal applications.

In 2015, Georgia passed a weighted lottery law allowing charter schools to provide an additional weight in a lottery for students who are educationally disadvantaged, including students who are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, migrant students, limited English proficient students, neglected or delinquent students, and homeless students. The weighted lottery option is intended to be part of the school’s comprehensive recruitment plan and, so far, two renewal applicants have chosen to make the weighted lottery for educationally disadvantaged students a part of their recruitment plans. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2166(A)(1))

Lastly, in any future subgrant competitions, GaDOE will ensure that applicants are considering their students’ transportation needs, which would increase access to charter schools for students who have parents without cars or access to transportation. GaDOE has an annual facility grant that can be used for transportation infrastructure costs, such as purchasing buses.

State charter schools go through the same process described above. The SCSC is also planning a pilot program in which an SCSC staff person will make “secret shopper” phone calls to monitor schools’ enrollment of students with disabilities. The staff person will follow a script

¹⁰ Appendix E.

where they introduce themselves as a child's parent or guardian who is inquiring about enrolling her child in the charter school. During the course of the conversation, the "parent" will ask whether it is okay to enroll the child if he has a disability. The SCSC will follow up accordingly depending on the school's response. Schools that make an inappropriate response will be asked to take corrective action. The SCSC also attends state charter school governing board meetings.

GaDOE sees legal compliance as the backbone of protecting students' rights. The framework has legal compliance as one of its four components. This is also seen as one of the four components of a high quality charter school. GaDOE annually analyzes FTE data to look for patterns of discrimination or any enrollment issues. This is further investigated as part of the review process during years 2, 4, and 5 of the renewal process. Additionally, CSP sub-grantees are monitored annually based upon their data and policies related to students with disabilities, English Language Learners, student discipline, and recruitment and enrollment. Legal compliance is also a major component of the probation process and can result in charter termination.

Charter schools in Georgia have a specific person within GaDOE's Office of Special Education who is responsible for handling all charter school complaints and investigations. The CSD works very closely with other divisions within GaDOE to ensure that any investigations become part of the accountability process. Additionally, the same liaison helps create tailored trainings on issues related to students with disabilities and innovative practices that take advantage of the charter model. The special education liaison conducts random IEP and special education policy checks.

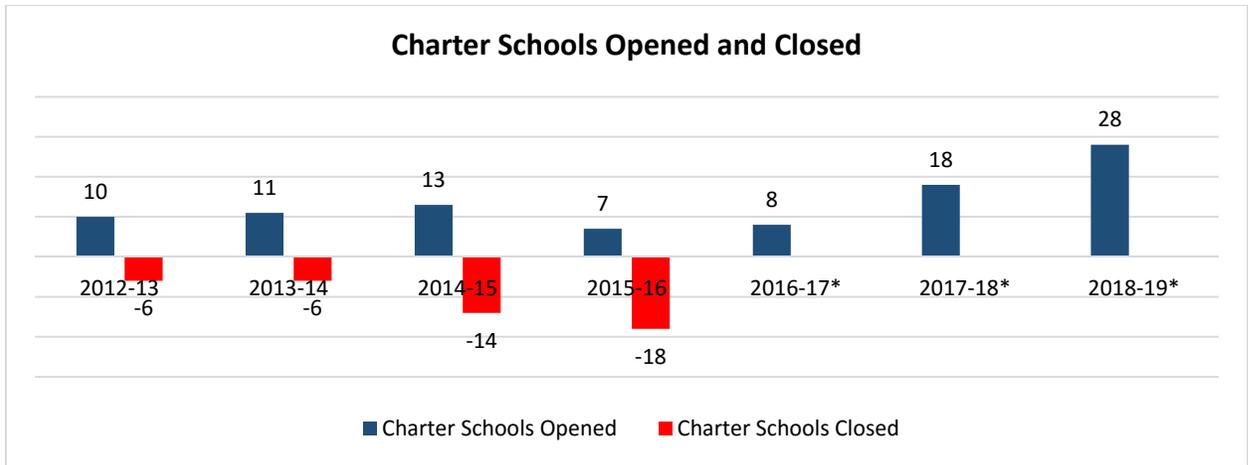
Georgia will continue to comprehensively address educationally disadvantaged students' academic needs by: 1. removing any structural barriers to charter schools, which are addressed in

monitoring students’ rights, lottery compliance, and recruitment, including using the weighted lottery; 2. disseminating best practices that demonstrated success with educationally disadvantaged students through grants and trainings; 3. ensuring high school culture to enable academic success through PBIS and School Climate support.

B.1. GaDOE’s mission is to “Educate Georgia’s future by graduating students who are ready to learn, live, and lead.” As part of that mission, innovation, including charter schools, is included in GaDOE’s initiative to create students who are ready to lead. In using innovation as a tool within that overarching vision, GaDOE realizes that it is essential to open high quality charter schools and close low performing ones.

Over the next five years, GaDOE anticipates a steady increase in quality charter schools with a large increase in the number of charter schools in the third grant year due to the Opportunity School District (OSD, pending formal approval), which aims to take 20 of the lowest performing traditional public schools and make them charter schools. These schools would become state charter schools and gain broad waivers to implement innovative classroom strategies in exchange for increased academic accountability. Additionally, the SCSC and the State Board approve approximately four charter schools each per year.

Number of new charter schools	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017 (Project Year 1) (anticipated)	2017-2018 (Project Year 2) (anticipated)	2018-2019 (Project Year 3) (anticipated)
	11	13	7	8	18	28



Although the net growth of charter schools has paused in recent years, that is a result of replicating highly successful schools operating under a single charter contract. It is also a result of increased accountability for existing schools. Lastly, the charter school student population has doubled over the last five years in Georgia, showing that there are fewer schools serving more students than before as a result of Georgia’s strong accountability measures. Please see the graph on page 27. GaDOE will expand the number of charter schools as illustrated in the chart above. The number of sub-grants available in 2016 includes schools that are already approved but would still be within the time range for an implementation grant:

Fiscal Year	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Planning grants	8	18	28
Implementation grants including substantial expansion	16	18	28
Number of Dissemination Grants	3	3	3

As part of the CSP grant, GaDOE will partner with the Georgia Charter Schools Association (GCSA) to work with communities to encourage, promote, and recruit educational leaders to start charter schools in high-need communities. This strategy includes working with nationally successful charter management organizations to create greater interest in coming to Georgia as well as further developing GCSA’s Board Bank¹¹, CharterStart¹² program, and its new charter

¹¹ Board Bank is a curated group of individuals with expertise in education, business, law, human resources, marketing, fundraising, or other specialized fields, strong community and business ties in a particular community, a
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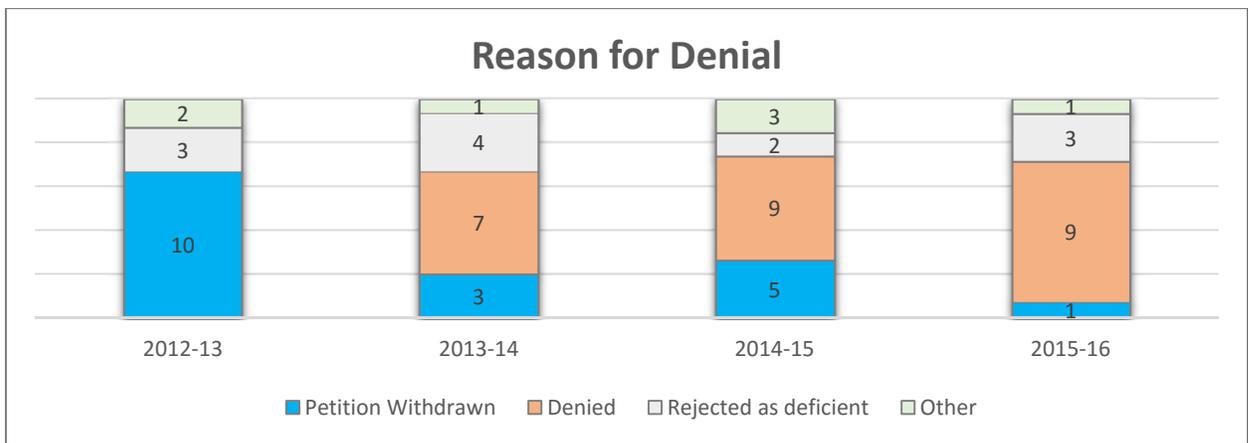
school incubator, New Schools for Georgia. New Schools for Georgia has developed and is actively incubating new charter school leaders and boards. It currently has seven schools that are in different phases of development. GaDOE also plans to work with local boards of education and community leaders to encourage locally developed charter petitions. Currently, the two most developed plans out of New Schools for Georgia involve collaborating with organizations committed to and have a track record of success with educationally disadvantaged students. GaDOE will use CSP funds to expand charter schools that have already demonstrated success with educationally disadvantaged students. This plan has already taken root as two schools that are academically successful within Atlanta's low income community are expanding in fall 2016.

GaDOE requests a substantial expansion waiver to grow and replicate its highest performing schools. GaDOE will use the federal definition when evaluating substantial expansion and dissemination subgrantee applications. Using the federal definition of high-quality charter school, GaDOE will examine the charter school's evidence of strong academic results over the last three years based on: Increased student academic achievement and attainment (including high school graduation rates) for all students; Demonstrated success closing the achievement gap as measured by the CCRPI; Results on the CCRPI for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students as compared to traditional public schools; and the school's results on its high quality charter schools performance framework. This definition mirrors the federal definition and is incorporated into the performance frameworks used by both GaDOE and the SCSC.

heart for education, and the desire to serve on a charter school board of directors. Members participate in a comprehensive orientation to learn the skills and parameters of charter school board service in order to possess the critical skills required to steer charter schools from mission development, through petition submission, to opening day.

¹² CharterStart is a comprehensive and targeted training program that offers technical and hands-on assistance to those interested in starting high quality charter schools in Georgia. More information can be found here: <http://gacharters.org/start-a-school/charterstart/>.

B.2. GaDOE has been successful in not renewing and terminating charters for low-performing charter schools. Both GaDOE and the SCSC have a track record of not renewing or approving schools that will not be successful. During the 2014-2015 petition cycle, GaDOE received 32 applications. Thirteen of these applications were approved by the SBOE. Of the remaining 19 applications, 2 were rejected as legally deficient, 5 withdrew their applications from consideration, 9 were denied approval, and 3 were not approved for other reasons. GaDOE is currently reviewing applications for our 2015-2016 cycle.



During the 2015-2016 petition cycle, the SCSC received 15 start-up applications. Three applications were rejected as legally deficient. Of the remaining application, one school received local approval, five withdrew their applications from consideration, three were denied by the SCSC, and three schools received SCSC approval. The SCSC also received 2 applications for renewal. One school received approval for another 5-year charter term. The other school was not renewed and will close at the end of the 2015-16 school year.

The SCSC is currently reviewing applications for their 2016-2017 cycle and has received 22 applications – the most of any year since the SCSC began operations. Part of the SCSC’s ongoing strategy to encourage high-performing charter schools is an extremely stringent approval process that includes an interview panel with nationally recognized charter authorizing

practitioners and ensures charter schools that are approved are truly prepared for success and supported. The SCSC’s process is especially rigorous because schools that complete it will be their own LEAs. There is an extra level of rigor through the additional approval process—the SBOE must affirm any SCSC decision to renew or create a charter school.

GaDOE defines high-quality charter schools as charter schools that show strong academic results over the past three years such as increased academic achievement and attainment, demonstrated success in closing achievement gaps, and other results (such as graduation rates). These results are incorporated into the CCRPI¹³ and framework used to guide all of the CSD’s work. The framework includes standards comprised of high academic standards, financial sustainability, well-trained and high-functioning governing board, and legal and regulatory compliance.¹⁴ This framework is also used to determine whether a school needs to be on probation for failure to adhere to any of these academic, financial, governance, or legal standards. Academically, schools are expected to outperform their district and the state’s average performance on the CCRPI. GaDOE also uses BTO to consider schools’ performance in comparison to other schools with similar demographics to determine whether the school is performing better at closing achievement gaps.¹⁵ Legal compliance—with a particular focus on ensuring student rights including supporting students with disabilities and English language learners, as well as appropriate student discipline policies and procedures, and monitoring disparities in student discipline—is also a significant focus within the framework. Charter schools placed on probation have one year to complete an action plan geared towards resolving the probation issues. If a school fails to demonstrate improvement, its charter may be terminated.

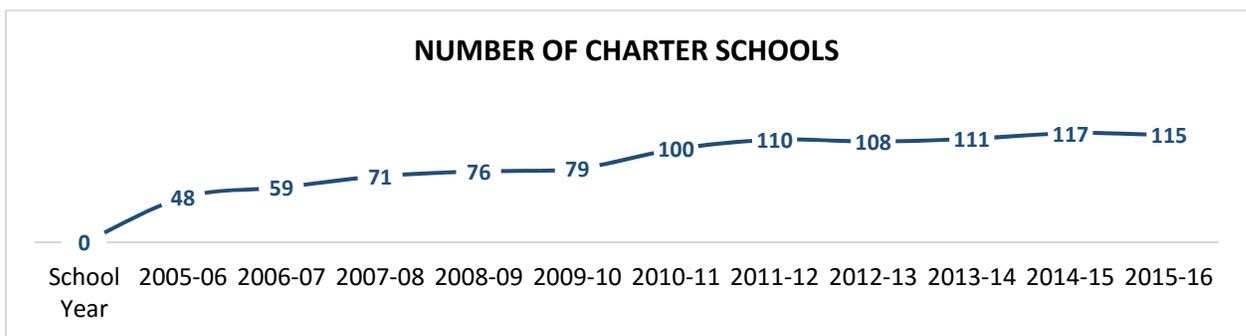
¹³ Please see footnote 1.

¹⁴ Included in attachments. See Section CPP 1.

¹⁵ See footnote 2 for more information on BTO.

Schools that meet these standards are considered high quality. Schools that are approaching the standard are considered needing improvements. Schools that are not meeting these standards are placed on probation.¹⁶ During the 2015-2016 school year, GaDOE placed three schools on probation. The probation process is still in its pilot year. Through the NACSA Leaders Program,¹⁷ the Division Director will be working collaboratively to refine and finalize the framework and implement probation more robustly.

Georgia’s charter school law passed in 1996. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2060 *et seq.*). Currently, Georgia has 115 charter schools.



Georgia has increasingly emphasized quality over quantity. Georgia has a two-tier approval process for schools approved by GaDOE to ensure quality as described in section CPP 1. Charter schools must be initially approved by their local districts. Once approved by their local districts, charter schools apply to the State Board of Education. Local districts approve about 25% of all applications received, and the majority of local denials are due to low quality applications. The SCSC has a stringent process for approval and its decisions must be affirmed by the SBOE. Through its increase in high performing charter schools, and decrease in low-performing charter

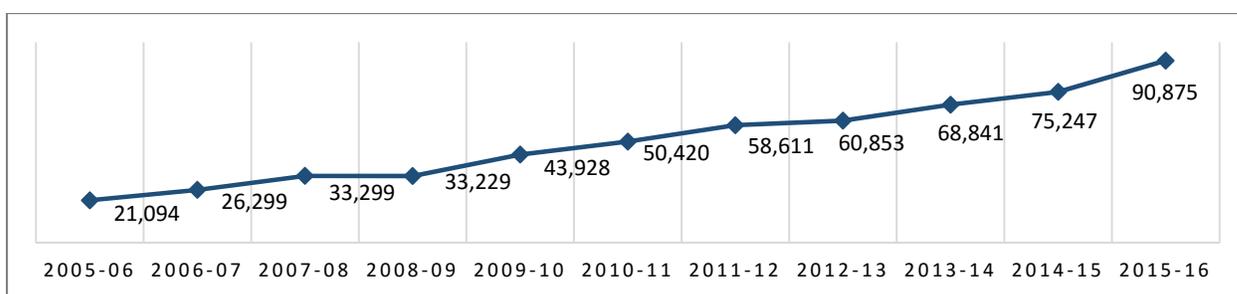
¹⁶ See Absolute Priority 1.

¹⁷ The NACSA Leaders Program is the nation’s only professional development opportunity for current and upcoming leaders in charter school authorizing offices. Throughout the Program, Leaders engage in a hands-on learning environment where they explore best practices with their peers for use in their own offices, and what it means to lead in a dynamic public education environment.

schools, GaDOE has increased educational opportunities in Georgia, and has an ambitious and feasible vision for growth and accountability.

C.1. Georgia has seen a steady increase in the capacity of its high quality charter schools.

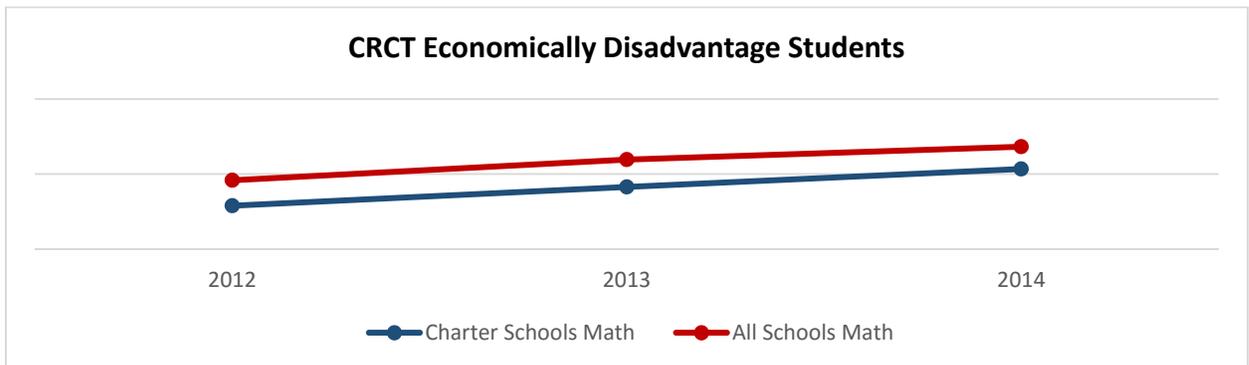
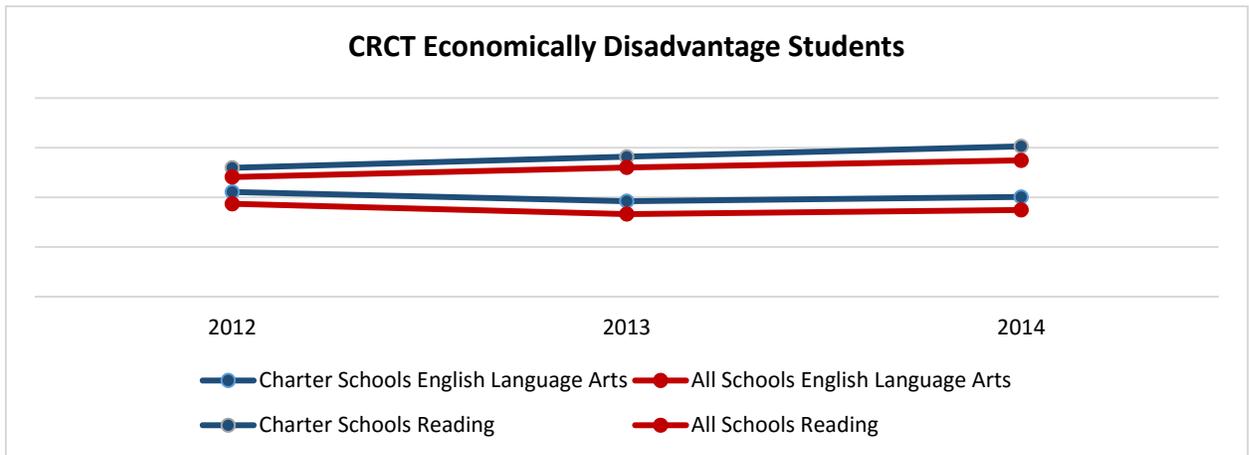
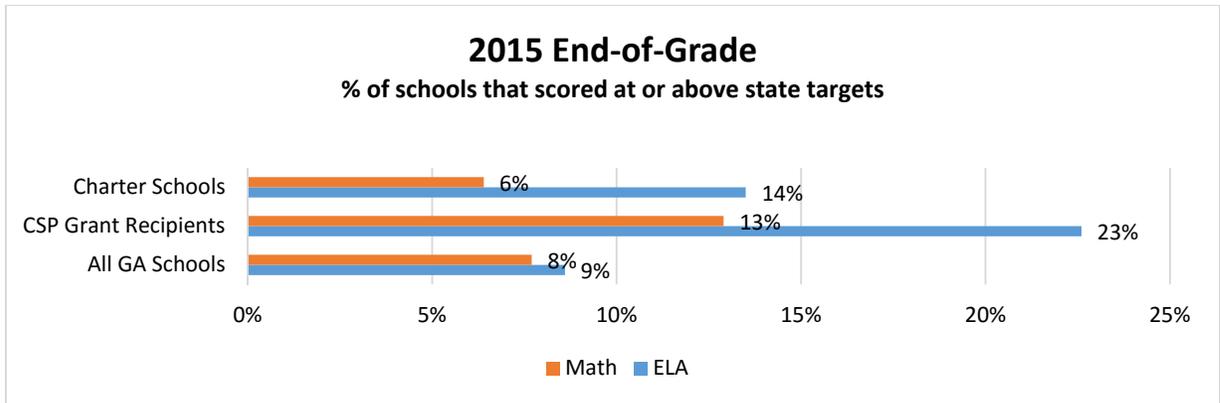
The number of students attending charter schools in Georgia has almost doubled since it was awarded its last CSP grant. With another CSP award, the Opportunity School District, and New Schools for Georgia, Georgia will have an opportunity to permanently transform its charter landscape for the better. Charter School Enrollment:



As the graphs above show, Georgia has had a consistent number of charter schools over the last few years (due mainly to charter schools closing at a steady pace with new charter school approvals), but the number of students attending charter schools has steadily increased, doubling over the last 5 years. This sharp increase in the number of students attending charter schools coincides with Georgia’s last CSP grant. This is also a result of Georgia’s work to replicate successful schools and close poorly performing schools—ensuring high quality charter schools.

According to a 2014 Urban Charter School study conducted by CREDO (the Center for Research on Education Outcomes) on Atlanta charter schools, students attending charter schools show almost three weeks of additional growth in Math compared to traditional public school students. CREDO, URBAN CHARTER SCHOOL STUDY 2015, Georgia (Stanford University) 2015. The study also showed that Atlanta charter school students demonstrated over four additional weeks of growth in reading compared to traditional public school students. GaDOE’s End of

Course test for high school students and CRCT data supports the study’s results. These gains also show with GaDOE’s 2010 CSP sub-grantees. Lastly, students who are educationally disadvantaged and attend a charter school out-perform their peers who attend traditional public schools. This suggests that charter schools are actually closing achievement gaps at a higher rate than Georgia’s traditional public schools.



C.2. While increasing the number of high-performing charter schools, Georgia has simultaneously decreased the number of low-performing charter schools. GaDOE has been successful in not renewing and terminating charters for low-performing charter schools. GaDOE and the SCSC have a track record of not renewing or denying approval to schools that are unlikely to be successful. During the 2014-2015 petition cycle, the SCSC received twenty applications. Two of these applications were rejected as legally deficient. Of the remaining applications, 6 withdrew their applications from consideration, 5 were denied by the SCSC, and 7 schools received SCSC approval. Part of the SCSC's on-going strategy to encourage high-performing charter schools is an extremely stringent approval process that ensure SCSC-approved charter schools are truly prepared for success and have adequate support. GaDOE follows an equally stringent process as demonstrated by the graph on page 11 of this application.

Nine charter schools' charters were terminated during the 2014-2015 school year. Of the 9 terminations, 4 relinquished their charters before they were up for renewal, 2 decided not to renew and close at the end of the charter term, and 3 were denied renewal by their local authorizers. During the 2013-2014 school year, 5 charter schools were closed. Four charter schools were terminated and 1 voluntarily relinquished its charter. These actions demonstrate that the GaDOE is committed to closing low-performing charter schools. Please see graph on page 21.

Georgia is also ramping up its probation process which will increase accountability and school closures. The process is derived from the charter schools performance framework, which holds charter schools accountable to high standards in academic achievement, legal compliance, governance, and financial sustainability. Charter schools placed on probation will have one year

to implement an action plan to improve. If the improvements do not occur, a school's charter may be terminated. For more information on the probation process, please see section CPP 1.

D.1.i., D.1.ii.a., and D.1.ii.b.: Georgia has a specific plan for awarding subgrants to charter schools demonstrating the capacity to operate a high-quality charter school. All applicants will undergo a comprehensive review process with an external group, including strong charter leaders and experts from around the country. GaDOE will ensure all new schools have an equal opportunity to apply for the planning and implementation grants by widely publicizing the CSP grant opportunity, including noting it on the initial charter application. The grant opportunity will be publicized through phone calls to all charter schools that are eligible to apply, and emails sent directly to all charter schools and to GaDOE's charter listserv and website and GaDOE's partner organization's websites including GOSA, the SCSC, and GCSA. The information will also be published through newsletters from GaDOE and our partner organizations. The state superintendent will also notify all district level superintendents of the funding opportunity for their locally-approved charter schools.

GaDOE will use a scoring rubric that focuses on applicants' capacity for financial, operational, governance, and student services plans when evaluating planning and implementation grants. All schools must have a strong foundation in these areas to have a strong opening and initial implementation. These plans need to reflect the school's ability to serve students with disabilities, including students who are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, migrant students, limited English proficient students, neglected or delinquent students, and homeless students, and have an open lottery and enrollment. Charter schools' governing boards must reflect the diversity of skillsets and backgrounds necessary to meet the

school's needs, including a strong plan for ongoing training as required by O.C.G. A. § 20-2-2072. Please see appendix E.

The CSP subgrant peer reviewer pool will include individuals with knowledge of and expertise with charter schools such as educators, administrators, national charter leaders, and charter board members. All peer reviewers will receive training that covers the RFP, application and scoring rubric, charter school laws and rules, and conflicts of interest. All peer reviewers will be required to read and comply with GaDOE's conflict of interest policy. Peer reviewers will only be able to serve for two consecutive years, and cannot be a GaDOE employee.

Subgrant applications are reviewed through a three-tiered process. Applications are initially reviewed for completeness by GaDOE. Applications are then sent to three readers each. The readers score the application using the rubric, which focuses on the elements of a high quality charter school. Applications must score an average of 80 points before being considered for bonus points. This is an increase of ten points compared to GaDOE's 2010 CSP subgrant competition. Lastly, to facilitate schools serving educationally disadvantaged populations, grant applications for schools that are physically located in a low-income area and serve an educationally disadvantaged population will be given 10 extra points. This is a 100% increase compared to GaDOE's 2010 CSP subgrant competition. Schools already in operation will need to show three years of academic success as specified in the grant notice. These schools will also need to show evidence of operating in accordance with the information provided in the original grant proposal, including meeting educational goals. Applicants will be required to attend a pre-grant webinar to ensure grant compliance. Please note that the minimum points required was increased by 10 points and the 10 point bonus given to applications focusing on economically disadvantaged areas is an increase from our last CSP grant. In 2010, GaDOE used the funds to

provide 100% funding to all applicants. As we can see from those schools ultimate academic performance (see graph on p. 27), the majority of these schools are high quality. To ensure a true competition and emphasize GaDOE's focus on using CSP resources for educationally disadvantaged students, GaDOE is prepared to make this subgrant cycle even more rigorous.

The third tier of review is reviewing the budget to ensure adherence to EDGAR, and ensure that the budgetary allocations match initiatives described in the school's budget narrative. GaDOE will award bonus points based on competitive priorities—up to 20 additional points, for a total of 120 possible points. Grants will be awarded to the highest scoring applications until the funding is exhausted each year. These applicants will be presented to the SBOE for final approval.

The same process will be altered to account for a history of success when evaluating dissemination and substantial expansion grant applications. The scoring rubric and application for the dissemination grant will specifically call for disseminating best practices that lead to academic success with educationally disadvantaged students in urban and rural areas and students with disabilities. For an applicant to be considered for a dissemination grant, it must be considered high quality by demonstrating academic success as specified in the CSP grant notice.

During the 2014-2015 petition cycle, Georgia had 14 new charter schools open. Of those schools, 7 were authorized by the SCSC. These schools would be eligible for implementation grants if funded. Additionally, federal funding would encourage charter schools to open in low-income communities in rural Georgia, where districts have less money due to a decreased tax base. Moreover, dissemination grants will be used to highlight programs that target educationally disadvantaged populations, increasing the likelihood that those schools' programs will be

replicated. Data supports this; in years when Georgia had CSP funds to sub-grant, more charter schools opened and more applications were filed. Please see the graph on page 11.

Charter schools that were awarded CSP funds have been more academically successful than those that have not. Of the 31 schools to receive a sub-grant, 9 appear on the state’s high performing schools list as being high performers throughout the state during the 2014-2015 school year. CSP recipients outperform all other schools in Georgia’s End-of-Grade tests. See page 28.

Based on previous charter approval rates, the SBOE and the SCSC approve approximately 4 to 7 new schools per academic year. This number is expected to increase substantially next year with the formal approval of the OSD. The OSD will take the lowest 20 performing schools in the state and make them charter schools. The OSD is created in a model similar to New Orleans’ Recovery School District model. Also, there are a number of schools that were approved during the 2015-2016 school year that would still be eligible for an implementation grant. Lastly, New Schools for Georgia has seven schools in its pipeline that should be ready to open in FY 17. Based on these assumptions, we predict that the numbers below reflect the number of charter schools that will be created over the next three years. Additionally, Georgia is interested in pursuing 3 dissemination grants per year. This is discussed in section E.

	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Number of charter schools eligible for a CSP Implementation/planning grant	14	19	28

	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	Total subgrants
Implementation	14	19	28	60
Planning	7	19	28	53
Dissemination	3	3	3	9
Total	24	41	59	116

There is a need for supporting charter schools during their infancy to promote strong openings. The graph on page 11 shows the number of charter schools Georgia approved in years when GaDOE had CSP grant funds to disseminate (years 2010 and 2012) versus recent years when Georgia has not had funds.

Of the eligible charter schools for planning and implementation grants, GaDOE only intends to fund a portion to ensure a true competition, alignment with the sub-grant priorities, and funding for the highest quality charter schools. GaDOE last had a CSP grant in 2010. Additionally, GaDOE will continue to facilitate and encourage our most successful charter schools to replicate, with a preference for schools serving educationally disadvantaged students (requested on page 60).

GaDOE will fund subgrantees according to the chart below. GaDOE will fund schools that use models and practices that focus on educationally disadvantaged students at a higher level to further GaDOE’s and the CSP program’s objectives. State schools will be funded at a higher level because they operate as LEAs and have greater responsibilities.

Targeting educationally disadvantaged students	State Charter school	Amount of grant (combined planning and implementation)
No	No	\$500,000
Yes	No	\$600,000
No	Yes	\$700,000
Yes	Yes	\$800,000

Timeline for Grant Activities

Time	CSP Subgrant Activity
October 2016	Update Subgrant Application; Finalize webinar for applicants
November 2016	Issue call for reviewers; Finalize Reviewer training
December 2016	Finalize reviewers
January 2017	Release RFP; Conduct training webinar on RFP; Train reviewers; GaDOE will advertise the CSP subgrant on its website, in its listserv, and through its newsletter
February 2017	RFPs are submitted; Review applicants

March 2017	Finish reviewing applicants; present to the state board
April 2017	New subgrantees are notified and required to attend the post-award training session; Funds are made available to subgrantees

Georgia will structure its CSP grant to create more high quality charter schools with an emphasis on educationally disadvantaged students through the following goals and objectives:

Objective 1: To increase the number of high quality charter schools, in Georgia, especially among underserved students in rural and urban settings. Objective 1 directly aligns with expanding the number of high quality charter schools.

Timeframe	Action	Outcomes	Stakeholder
Quarterly, each year of grant	·Hold meetings in rural locations with community stakeholders to increase knowledge about charter schools	·Increase in number of applications to the New Schools for Georgia Project, SCSC, and GaDOE · More parents and students seeking public school choice	·New Schools for Georgia ·SCSC ·GCSA ·GaDOE
Annually	·Hold charter school basics community stakeholder meeting in Atlanta to educate the general public about why and how charter schools can help urban communities	·Increase in number of charter school applications · More parents and students seeking to public school choice	·CSD Staff ·New Schools for Georgia ·SCSC
January of each grant year	·Publish the CSP opportunity through our website, newsletter, and partner organizations	·Increase in number of charter schools application ·Sub-grant applications	·GOSA ·SCSC ·GCSA ·GaDOE
Ongoing-starting in month 1	·Work with NACSA to create an authorizer rubric/evaluation	·An authorizer rubric that establishes an authorizer rating system, best practices for local authorizers, and is differentiated based on the authorizer size ·More sustainable and high quality charter schools ·Local authorizers are holding charter schools accountable and ensuring successful openings	·NACSA ·CSD Staff ·Local Authorizers
Months 1-12, ongoing	·Begin process to collect data	·Greater transparency ·Greater accountability for	·CSD Staff ·GOSA

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Create data collection and flow processes ·Create school discipline data sheets for each charter school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> disciplinary practices through publicity ·Decrease in exclusionary and disparate discipline practices 	
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The CSD will disseminate GaDOE’s literacy programs amongst charter schools to ensure charter schools have access to best practices, including creating a cohort of charter schools participating in GaDOE’s literacy intervention pilot. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·A learning community for charter schools around literacy ·Closing achievement gaps for students in literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·CSD Staff ·Department of Curriculum and Instruction

<p>Process Measure</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> During each year of the grant cycle, GaDOE staff will conduct at least one site visit for each charter school receiving a CSP subgrant during each year of their grant. During each year of the grant cycle, GaDOE staff will conduct at least one new charter school applicant training activity. During each year of the grant, subgrantees will know their status on compliance and performance in terms of the performance framework. Use the authorizer rubric created with NACSA to rate local authorizers. Use the authorizer rubric created by NACSA to inform two authorizer training opportunities a year. 	<p>Performance Measure</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of CSP Recipients will improve their performance on the CCRPI each year. The number of high-quality charter schools opening in Georgia will increase by at least 7 each year. The percentage of charter school students who identify as educationally disadvantaged will increase by 2% each year of the grant cycle, with year one as the baseline. The number of charter school campuses will increase by at least 20 each year. The number of student who attend charter schools will increase each year by at least 10%. Charter schools will close school discipline disparities between sub-groups by 10% the first year, 15% the second year and 20% the third year.
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Objective 2: To use CSP grant funding to improve student outcomes for students attending charter schools, specifically for educationally disadvantaged students.

Timeframe	Action	Outcomes	Stakeholder
Annually	Provide training to schools struggling academically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Improved charter school quality ·Increased academic performance of charter schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·GCSA ·CSD Staff
Annually	Include a ten point	·Increase in the number of	·CSD Staff

	preference points for schools working with economically disadvantaged students	educationally disadvantaged students attending charter schools ·Increased academic achievement for educationally disadvantaged students when compared to similar students in traditional public schools (year 1 will be the baseline)	
Ongoing, Annually	Provide increased content level support through training and partnership opportunities	·Increase communication/partnership with academically struggling charter schools ·Increased academic outcomes for charter school students	·CSD Staff ·Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Annually	Make student discipline and demographic data easily accessible- data sheets	·Greater Transparency ·Increased demand for quality school choice from parents and students	·GOSA ·SCSC ·GOSA ·GaDOE
Ongoing	Work with NACSA to develop charter authorizer rubric. Create training opportunities based on the observed deficits.	·Increased accountability ·Increase in high quality charter authorizing at the local and state levels	·NACSA ·CSD Staff
Annually	Monitoring all grant recipients annually to evaluate schools on multiple issues including implementation of research-based best practices.	·Increased accountability ·Increased student outcomes	·CSD Staff
Annually	Ensure a truly competitive grant process.	·CSP funds are used to support high quality chartering throughout GA	·CSD Staff

<p>Process Measure</p> <p>a. The CSD will provide at least two technical assistance opportunities per year for charter schools that are identified as academically struggling by the high quality charter schools framework.</p>	<p>Performance Measure</p> <p>a. The percentage of charter schools that “beat the odds” will exceed that of traditional public schools</p> <p>b. Educationally disadvantaged students End-of-Grade and End-of-Course scores will increase by 3% each year.</p> <p>c. Each year, charter schools will exceed the state average in closing the achievement gap as measured by the CCRPI.</p>
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	d. All charter schools will increase the score for both ELA and Math each year, with year 1 as the baseline.
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Objective 3: To increase the number of educationally disadvantaged students attending high quality charter schools around the state.

Timeframe	Action	Outcomes	Stakeholder
Quarterly, each year of grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Hold meetings in rural locations with community stakeholders to increase knowledge about charter schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Increase in number of applications to the New Schools Georgia Project · Parents and students seeking to public school choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · New Schools for Georgia
Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Hold charter school basics community stakeholder meeting in Atlanta to educate the general public about why and how charter schools can help urban communities · Provide training/support on utilizing the weighted lottery · Publish results of the weighted lottery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Increase in number of charter school applications · More parents and students seeking to public school choice · Increase in number of schools utilizing weighted lottery · Increase in the number of educationally disadvantaged students attending charter schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · CSD Staff · New Schools for Georgia · SCSC · GCSA
Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create student discipline information sheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Greater transparency · Greater accountability for disciplinary practices through publicity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · CSD Staff · GOSA
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Georgia has already worked to disseminate supports GaDOE offers in terms of literacy intervention. The CSD will continue to disseminate this work amongst charter schools, to ensure charter schools have access to best practices, including creating a cohort of charter schools participating in the Department's literacy pilot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · A learning community for charter schools around literacy · Closing achievement gaps for students in literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · CSD Staff · Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · GaDOE will require all charter renewal and startup applicants to include a recruitment plan in their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ensure that charter schools are truly representative of their districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · CSD Staff

	applications		
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<p>Process Measure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. GaDOE will work with GCSA to help provide a clearing-house of high quality special education consultants for charter schools. b. In each year of the grant, New Schools for Georgia and GaDOE will provide a preference for schools targeting economically disadvantaged students. c. Each year of the grant, GaDOE will work in partnership with GOSA to have a training on working with educationally disadvantaged students. d. By the end of year one, the CSD will create a set of compliance indicators to measure special education compliance, disparate impact compliance in enrollment, and discipline using data reporting. 	<p>Performance Measure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. In each year of the grant cycle, the Georgia Department of Education will require all newly approved charter schools to attend a training workshop on closing achievement gaps, special education, enrollment, and recruitment. b. By the end of year three, 90% of schools will actively recruit, admit, and retain educationally disadvantaged students in proportion with their attendance area. c. Charter schools in Georgia will exceed the state averages in the closing the achievement gap analysis as conducted by GaDOE in the CCRPI analysis. d. Increase in the number of schools utilizing the weighted lottery from the previous year by 100% each year.
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Objective 4: To increase support for charter schools and charter schools’ academic success in working with students of all backgrounds including students with disabilities, students of all racial and economic backgrounds, and ensuring compliance with all special education and civil rights laws.

Timeframe	Action	Outcomes	Stakeholder
Quarterly, each year of grant	· Provide technical assistance to charter schools struggling academically	· Increase in number of applications to New Schools for Georgia · More parents and students seeking to public school choice	· New Schools for Georgia
Annually	· Provide a 10 point weight in the sub-grant application for charter schools working with educationally disadvantaged students	· CSP funds are used to support educationally disadvantaged students in Georgia.	· CSD Staff
Year 1	· Create student discipline information sheets	· Greater transparency · Greater accountability for disciplinary practices through publicity	· CSD Staff · GOSA
Ongoing	· Georgia has already worked to disseminate	· A learning community for charter schools around	· CSD Staff · Department of

	supports v offers in terms of literacy intervention. The CSD will continue to disseminate this work amongst charter schools, to ensure charter schools have access to best practices, including creating a cohort of charter schools participating in the Department's literacy pilot	literacy ·Closing achievement gaps for students in literacy	Curriculum and Instruction
Ongoing	· GaDOE will require all charter renewal and startup applicants to include a recruitment plan in their applications	· Ensure that charter schools are truly representative of their districts	·CSD Staff
Annually	·Use dissemination grants to disseminate best practices related to academic success of educationally disadvantaged student in rural and urban areas, as well as special education students. This will be done by providing these applicants with a priority.	·Disseminating best practices related to students in rural areas, urban areas, and students with disabilities. ·Increased student outcomes in rural areas, urban areas, and for students with disabilities.	·CSD Staff ·Established charter schools

<p>Process Measure</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Dissemination grant applications will have a significant point weight for strategies and practices that are directly applicable to working with educationally disadvantaged students. GaDOE will require 100% of renewal and start-up applicants to submit a recruitment and enrollment plan that gives specific actions geared towards creating a student body that is representative of the school's surrounding district. The CSD will require all charter schools to report on their lottery, enrollment, recruitment, and disciplinary practices in the annual report. 	<p>Performance Measure</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Charter schools will have a higher average climate star rating than traditional public schools each year of the grant. The percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch attending charter schools will exceed the percentage for traditional public schools. The CSD will conduct annual on-site visits for all grant recipients to evaluate schools, including their lottery, enrollment, recruitment, and disciplinary practices. During the three-year grant, all dissemination grant subgrantees will present their projects at a state-wide
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	<p>conference.</p> <p>e. During each year of the three-year grant, all dissemination grant subgrantees will be required to communicate best practices to public schools in their attendance zone</p> <p>f. There will be one dissemination grant focused on disseminating best practices with educationally disadvantaged students in an urban area, one in a rural area, and one regarding students with disabilities.</p>
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D.2. All CSP subgrantees will be monitored on site each year of the grant using the monitoring tool in appendix E. The monitoring tool correlates to Georgia’s high quality charter schools framework, and to the grant priorities. These same priorities/framework are reflected in the initial application process as well. Thus, GaDOE will ensure a quality pool of CSP applicants.

Subgrant Phase	Monitoring Activities	Review Types & Frequency
Pre-Award	·Review Financial procedures and internal controls	·30 days prior to award
Planning Phase	·Annual Report ·Annual Audit ·On-site visit ·Pre-opening check list ·Monthly spending and reimbursement reports ·Telephone Conference calls	·Annual ·Annual ·Annual ·Before opening the school ·Monthly ·As needed
Implementation Year 1 and 2 (including dissemination grants)	·Monthly spending and reimbursement reports via email to grant manager ·Annual Report ·Annual Audit ·On-Site Visit ·Inventory Identification and Disposition ·Progress on subgrant goals	·Monthly ·Annual ·Annual ·Annual ·Annual ·Every six months

Sub-grantees will be monitored in person, on-site using the monitoring tool annually. The monitoring tool is tailored to ensure that schools are identifying and disposing of equipment appropriately. It is also used to ensure compliance with the CFR and EDGAR. Subgrantees will

report every six months on the project goals they have identified in their initial application. These goals are required to be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound.

Georgia's CSP grant application provides ten preference points for charter schools working with educationally disadvantaged students. All charter schools must include a plan to align their proposed curriculum to the Georgia Standards of Excellence in their petition. Curriculum plans are evaluated by GaDOE staff to verify that the proposed curriculum meets the State Standards. Charter curricula must address and include Georgia's content standards for English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Science, and Science. Additionally, charter schools must include academic performance objectives for all grades and all subjects. GaDOE utilizes a comprehensive monitoring system for its CSP subgrant recipients.

E.1. GaDOE disseminates chartering best practices throughout Georgia to local educational agencies, other charter schools, and local communities in a variety of ways. GaDOE uses the BTO analysis to identify best practices. Please see CPP 1. For more information on BTO. GaDOE partnered with the REL-SE (Regional Educational Lab Southeast) to determine which best practices correlate with beating the odds. This research was conducted in 2015-2016 to determine actual best practices. Additionally, the SCSC conducted a research study in partnership with Vanderbilt University's Peabody School of Education to determine best practices for starting a strong charter school.¹⁸ With that research already completed and disseminated at a statewide conference in March 2016, GaDOE is ready to further disseminate that information and highlight schools that are exemplifying those best practices. This will be done with a series of web-based trainings in partnership with charter schools highlighting their use of best practices.

¹⁸ [Starting Strong](#)

Additionally, Georgia has been ramping up its training opportunities. This year, the SCSC has conducted 15 trainings for existing charter schools and 6 trainings for new charter petitioners. GaDOE has also held three trainings thus far this year. One was a two-day conference conducted by GCSA. Another was a webinar for rural charter schools on facility development, and included two Georgia charter schools that have already taken advantage of this opportunity. Lastly, in May, GaDOE hosted a training focused on student rights including positive behavioral interventions. GaDOE has spearheaded an effort to create various guides for charter schools, including manuals on special education and charter schools, and legal waivers and charter schools. GaDOE will continue to support 5 annual training opportunities. The SCSC also prioritizes recruiting charter applicants in districts with the lowest CCRPI scores. As part of this work, the SCSC hosts presentations and interest meetings to encourage applicants in districts that need quality charter schools the most.

During the grant cycle, GaDOE will issue an RFP to contract with a website developer to create a more user friendly website including establishing an online interactive tool that allows schools with areas of need to access and partner with charter schools that are successful in that particular area. For example, if a school is struggling with creating a positive school culture with a low-income, urban population, it can look at a school that is excelling in creating a positive school culture with a similar demographic. By accessing this resource online, the visitor will be able to access trainings, materials, and videos for schools that are successful in that particular area. GaDOE also plans to conduct a series of trainings featuring schools that are successful with educationally disadvantaged students. These trainings would be open to all schools, LEAs, and community stakeholders, and would be recorded and available online.

GaDOE publishes a Charter School Annual Report to disseminate general information about charter schools throughout the state. The report collects academic and programmatic data for all charter schools operating in the previous school year. The report also includes a detailed executive summary that provides an analysis of the current charter school landscape. Additionally, the report looks at aggregate academic data for the past five years. The report is made available on GaDOE's website and is sent to the General Assembly and other state officials. The report is also shared with LEA district liaisons, so that the liaisons can report back to their own LEAs. See appendix E.

GaDOE plans to have three dissemination grants per year. GaDOE will use its dissemination grants to bring additional focus to charter schools working with educationally disadvantaged students. GaDOE will grant two dissemination grants to two charter schools that are very successful in working with educationally disadvantaged in an urban and rural context. A third dissemination grant will be given to a charter school that has demonstrated success with another sub-group that meets the definition of educationally disadvantaged. These grants are designed to disseminate best practices with neighboring traditional public schools and charter schools throughout the state. Charter schools working with educationally disadvantaged students will be given additional points in the planning and implementation subgrant competition.

Additionally, the CSD will provide authorizer training to all LEAs that receive charter school petitions in the first year of the grant cycle. The training will cover authorizer best practices and review federal and state laws. The training will also review local authorizer responsibilities towards ensuring charter schools receive their share of federal funds allocated by formula each year. Authorizers will also be informed about high performing charter schools and national trends.

Furthermore, as part of GaDOE's work with NACSA to create a local authorizer evaluation, GaDOE will be meeting with LEAs to get their input in the process. This will be an education opportunity for both the LEA and GaDOE to learn about best authorizing practices from NACSA. This will also be an opportunity to disseminate authorizing best practices and charter school best practices to the LEAs, and simultaneously create a vision of what chartering could do for that local authorizer's district.

GaDOE has several plans to disseminate best practices to LEAs, traditional schools, charter schools, and community stakeholders. GaDOE will also contract with the REL-SE to conduct an external evaluation of GaDOE's practices, including its CSP program to determine its effectiveness. The REL-SE will provide ongoing feedback and advice on the grant to help GaDOE maximize its effectiveness. This work will be invaluable in incorporating best practices into our work. GaDOE recently conducted research with the REL-SE to determine the efficacy of best practices, and that data will be used to drive GaDOE's dissemination work. Lastly, to measure the efficacy of GaDOE's dissemination work, GaDOE will conduct surveys of participants to understand which practices participants will put into practice. These results will be compared to practices actually put into place and student achievement data in the annual report. The authorizer dissemination work will be evaluated using the NACSA authorizer evaluation.

E.2. GaDOE has employed numerous partners in its dissemination work including the REL-SE, NACSA, and GCSA. During this grant cycle, GaDOE will partner with the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) to further the work it is already doing to cultivate data on school climate and student discipline. GaDOE currently collects school climate data annually using various student, parent, and teacher surveys, discipline data, and staff and student

attendance to create a star rating on climate. The highest star rating a school can get is 5, and the lowest is 1. As discussed above, GaDOE is aware that school climate positively corresponds to learning outcomes. See page 17. GaDOE has several employees dedicated to PBIS and its use throughout the state. It is worth noting that charter schools score approximately 10% higher on the school climate rating than traditional public schools, and 41% of charter schools report implementing PBIS.

To further PBIS usage, GaDOE will use part of the grant funds to work with GOSA to develop online one pagers on each charter school to show its disciplinary, demographic, and school climate data to inform the community at-large of school practices and also create demand for stronger school climate and discipline practices. This data will have information on all exclusionary practices, including referrals to juvenile court. Publishing this information will create greater transparency and public pressure to decrease exclusionary discipline practices. Ultimately, GaDOE's partnership with GOSA will allow for greater visualization and dissemination of GaDOE's school climate rating system and allow greater transparency of all discipline data and disparities behind the climate rating. This will hopefully create a tool that school leaders and board members can use to hold themselves accountable to better school climate and disciplinary practices, and will allow charter school parents to make informed decisions about where to send their children.

In 2014, Georgia passed a law allowing charter schools to provide a weighted lottery to educationally disadvantaged populations with the purpose of increasing diversity in charter schools. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)). As part of GaDOE's increased emphasis on inclusion, GaDOE will require grant recipients to have and implement recruitment plans that are focused on ensuring the school's student population is representative of the school's attendance area. To

further this progress, GaDOE will disseminate best practices in this area through our website and a training call. GaDOE has already started disseminating information about the weighted lottery through rule and a memo. Thus far, one school has already made the weighted lottery part of its procedures, and several others are considering it.

Lastly, GaDOE will measure the effectiveness of dissemination grants through multiple means. First, all dissemination grant participants will fill out a survey regarding their plans to implement their programming. Second, GaDOE will analyze and track student performance data for schools that are implementing a charter schools best practice or dissemination grant focus. Lastly, dissemination subgrantees will be required to develop their own performance and progress measures to evaluate the effectiveness of their dissemination grant.

GaDOE has a comprehensive plan to disseminate best practices as a leader in Georgia's charter school landscape through its BTO analysis, trainings, website resources, and dissemination grants.

F.1.i. Georgia has a two-tiered approval process for charter schools that are seeking approval from the SBOE. Charter schools must first go through the local board of education's charter approval process. Once approved at the local level, then the charter school must go through the SBOE's process for charter approval. If a charter school is not approved at the local or the state level, it may apply to the SCSC for approval. All SCSC decisions to approve a charter school for start-up or renewal must be affirmed by the SBOE. This ensures a two-tiered process for approval for schools created by the SCSC, as well. O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2083. Historically, local boards of education on average approve approximately 25% of initial applications. Georgia's largest local charter school authorizers are DeKalb County, Fulton County, and Atlanta Public Schools.

Local boards of education follow the performance framework as implemented by GaDOE as the requirements are part of the three-party contract signed by the local board, the SBOE, and the charter school board chair. The performance framework was presented publicly February 2016 at both a Charter Schools Committee meeting and a statewide conference attended by Georgia charter stakeholders. Local boards of education are legally required to “enforce expectations for and ensure the achievement of performance goals set forth in the charter.” (SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.06(1)(a)(1)(ii)(I)) One section of the performance framework focuses on ensuring access to charter schools by evaluating the school’s lottery, admissions, and enrollment practices.

To ensure local authorizers approve schools with evidence-based school models, GaDOE has ongoing communication via phone and email with the heads of charter departments in the local authorizer offices, including providing feedback on authorizer policies to ensure uniform application of SBOE Rules and authorizer best practices. While GaDOE respects local control, we consistently inform local authorizers of national and state-wide trends. One example is the pre-opening checklist and high quality charter schools framework. The local authorizer is responsible for ensuring the benchmarks on the pre-opening checklist are met before a school actually opens. This checklist encompasses the standards established in the performance framework, and the checklist’s results are reported to GaDOE before the school can open.

Additionally, GaDOE spent last year revamping its application and renewal process using the high quality charter schools performance framework as its guide. See appendix E. As part of this effort, GaDOE has placed greater emphasis on serving educationally disadvantaged populations through requiring schools in both renewal and the initial petition processes to submit comprehensive recruitment plans that ensure schools are representative of the districts they serve. GaDOE has had individual meetings with larger authorizers to directly communicate why

this is important. Lastly, in the past year, GaDOE has used the probation process to ensure schools are actually executing these plans to success. Some plans incorporate weighted lottery provisions allowed in Georgia law. As part of GaDOE's dissemination work, GaDOE will continue to disseminate information on how to implement the weighted lottery. An informational memo was sent to all charter schools. See appendix E. The dissemination plan is discussed in section E.

The next step in ensuring a prioritization of serving students from all backgrounds is to incorporate this priority into the authorizer rubric through GaDOE's work with NACSA. To further the Department's work with local boards of education, GaDOE will partner with NACSA to strengthen the quality of charter school authorizing practices throughout Georgia by developing an authorizer evaluation framework and criteria by which GaDOE will conduct formative evaluations of authorizer practices. It is important for GaDOE to understand authorizer quality and accountability and how those concepts apply to authorizers within Georgia. The goal of an evaluation is to provide the authorizer with a report that is actionable and will help inform future strategic direction. The evaluations will be differentiated based on the authorizer's size and context (urban versus rural). Many rural authorizers only have one or two charter schools.

GaDOE will work with NACSA to develop a customized and differentiated evaluation framework and criteria, using NACSA's *Principles & Standards* as a guide. GaDOE will also support implementation by conducting pilot evaluations to refine the framework. GaDOE will develop and roll out an authorizer evaluation tool in three phases: (1) Evaluation Framework and Criteria Development: GaDOE will create a formative evaluation framework that is rooted in sound authorizing practices and in alignment with the local authorizing landscape. GaDOE will also create an accompanying set of evaluation criteria based on the *Principles & Standards*; (2)

Implementation Planning: Once the framework and criteria are in place, GaDOE will plan for effective and efficient implementation of these tools through 1) training and 2) process development; and (3) Pilot Evaluations and System Revision: GaDOE will conduct pilot evaluations with the newly-developed framework and criteria. NACSA will provide process management support for the pilot evaluations by working directly with GaDOE staff to review documents; prepare for and accompany staff on site visits; and generate a comprehensive evaluation report for each of the local authorizers. GaDOE will create and implement an authorizer framework and evaluation based on lessons and best practices gleaned from the pilot evaluations.

Within its first year of operation, the SCSC engaged NACSA to conduct an authorizer evaluation of its policies and practices. The results of this evaluation lead the SCSC towards the development and adoption of many performance-based systems of accountability, including the establishment of its Comprehensive Performance Framework to measure schools' academic, financial and operational performance, and progress towards renewal. In 2015, the SCSC and GaDOE both received perfect scores on NACSA's Index of Essential Practices. As the SBOE is authorized by law to overrule approvals or renewals issued by the SCSC, the SBOE serves in an oversight role to ensure such quality authorizing practices continue.

Lastly, schools implementing "school models and practices that focus on racial and ethnic diversity in student bodies with respect to educationally disadvantaged students; consistent with applicable law" will be eligible for more funding at a higher rate for the implementation subgrant. Please see section D.1. for more information on sub-grant funding.

F.1.ii. Local authorizers have adopted the high quality charter schools framework as their own and have used it to not renew or place under-performing schools on probation. As described

in section F.1.i. all charter schools in Georgia are subject to a two-tiered approval and renewal process. Local boards are required to utilize the performance framework as it is part of the three-party contract local authorizers sign for all charter schools. To hold various types of schools and programs accountable, the BTO and VAM analysis discussed on page 6, act as an alternative measure. Both measures control for school demographics such as educationally disadvantaged, race, students with disabilities, English language learners, and school churn rate. The statistical model then creates a range which schools with those demographics have historically performed. If a school performs above the statistically predicted range it is considered to beat the odds or add value. In this way, BTO and VAM are alternative standards of accountability that can hold alternative and virtual schools accountable within their unique contexts.

Lastly, if a local board is not accurately applying the framework for any reason, the framework is applied at the state level by GaDOE and the SBOE, which is also very aware of the framework. GaDOE, and thus, the local boards, currently hold all charter schools (including alternative charter schools and virtual charter schools) to high academic and operational expectations.

F.1.iii. State Board Rule requires local authorizers to annually report to the State Board and post on its website an annual report that includes: “the authorizers strategic vision for chartering and progress towards achieving that vision,” progress on academic goals set forth in the charter for each individual charter school in the authorizer’s portfolio, financial performance for each individual charter school in the authorizer’s portfolio, and the petition pipeline for all charter schools over the course of the last year (SBOE 160-4-9-.06(1)(a)(3)). GaDOE further reports this information in its annual report. The SCSC is an independent agency that conducts its own annual report process and annual audit process with its schools. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2086)

F.1.iv. All SBOE-approved charter schools in the state of Georgia are a part of a charter contract that is simultaneously a performance contract. The contract is a three-party contract between the SBOE, the local board, and the charter school, and lists specific academic and organizational performance goals. These contracts require certain goals related to CCRPI and BTO.¹⁹ Local authorizers are required to hold their charter schools accountable to these goals through the contract, the performance framework, which is part of the three-party contract, annual report, and by the forthcoming authorizer rubric developed in partnership with NACSA.

While local authorizers are required to hold charter schools to the high expectations specified in the charter contract, local authorizers are also responsible for ensuring that charter schools have maximum flexibility. Charter schools

“shall not be subject to the provisions of this [state education law title] or any state or local rule, regulation, policy, or procedure relating to schools within an applicable school system regardless of whether such rule, regulation, policy or procedure is established by the local board, the State Board, or the [state] Department of Education.” (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(a)).

SBOE rule clarifies that local boards must allow local charter schools to exercise substantial autonomy over decisions affecting the school. The non-profit governing board of a charter school has the authority to make personnel, financial, curriculum, school improvement, and operations decisions. (SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.06(1)(a)(1)(ii)(VI)). The State Board also requires local charter schools to report on their interactions and autonomy from local authorizers in their annual reports. This process allows GaDOE to ensure charter school autonomy and accountability.

The charter authorizer evaluation process will be the final part of this process. In the evaluation, we look to develop a process that captures areas of strength and growth for our more developed authorizers and the ones that are only now starting to have charter schools. The rubric will help guide areas of training and support. It will also help newer authorizers understand the

¹⁹ These are described in greater detail on page 2 and Appendix E.

components and expectations of quality authorizing. For more information on this partnership, please see section F.1.i.

F.2.i. GaDOE and the SCSC are collaborating on a plan to bring more high quality charter school developers to the state. The SCSC released its first report evaluating the 25 highest achieving charter school developers in the country to determine the costs, benefits, and their likelihood to come to Georgia. The SCSC reviews national charter performance to identify potential providers that may have success in Georgia. The SCSC meets with these providers to share information upon their request, and the SCSC is working with in-state charter operators to increase capacity to manage additional charter schools. As part of the OSD, Georgia has already been working to recruit high performing charter school developers to take over Georgia's lowest performing schools. Part of this effort has been working with Building Excellent Schools in Atlanta. GCSA has been housing New Schools for Georgia for two years, and has developed seven charter proposals that are scheduled to seek approval in 2017. These represent just two nationally known organizations that have chosen to establish a base in Georgia. They represent a vital part of Georgia's charter school landscape to continue charter school growth that keeps quality and national best-practices at the forefront. Moving forward the plan is to work collaboratively across state agencies to communicate and recruit high-performing developers.

Lastly, the Governor established a task force on education in 2015 called the Educational Reform Commission. One of the key findings of that taskforce was the need to establish a more equitable way of funding schools. This would include additional funding for students who are living in poverty and funding special education based upon the amount of special education services a student receives as described in the students' IEP. These changes are likely to increase the incentive and supports for working with educationally disadvantaged students and would

help attract educational service providers that have a record of successfully serving charter schools focusing on educationally disadvantaged populations.

Georgia has already engaged in a plan to replicate its highest performing charter schools in the state. Over the last two years, 5 schools have expanded to new schools or assumed failing schools in the state as a part of their replication of high performing schools. The local authorizer in these cases has spearheaded the effort to recruit and invest in academically successful charter schools. GaDOE has a strong plan to simultaneously expand local and attract national educational service providers. Please also see section CPP 1.b. for information about how quality charter school operators can expand quickly.

F.2.ii. Local authorizers are required to annually monitor their charter schools and report their findings to the State Board and the local community through their website. The annual report to the State Board requires details on each charter school's academic performance as compared to the goals specified in the charter contract. (SBOE 160-4-9-.06(1)(a)(3)). Additionally, as part of additional monitoring requirements, local authorizers are required to annually monitor their schools for compliance. Authorizers must monitor charter school finances related to any federal or state-level grants in the annual report and through GaDOE's Consolidated Application in addition to any program compliance monitoring visits. The Consolidated Application also has specific monitoring requirements related to financial expenditures that require districts to account for how certain funds are spent in accordance with corresponding regulations.

Districts are required to monitor compliance for federal programs such as special education, governing board compliance and autonomy, lottery, and student inclusion through the annual report. Our largest local authorizers are Atlanta, DeKalb County, and Fulton County Public

Schools. These local authorizers monitor charter schools on-site at least twice a year. These visits include attending a board meeting, walking through classrooms, and attending IEP meetings. These districts also use monitoring tools to document concerns. For many of our smaller, rural districts, this process is less formal. While rural authorizers have a smaller number of charter schools, they are required to meet the same requirements for monitoring. As part of GaDOE's work with NACSA, we will develop a differentiated authorization rubric depending on the number of schools an authorizer has. Many of our rural authorizers only have one charter school, and monitor it as they would any traditional public school in terms of compliance issues.

Every five years, charter schools go through a multi-tiered, in-depth renewal process where academic success is the primary consideration. As described in section F.1.i., charter schools must be first approved by the local district, and then approved by the SBOE. The same is true for renewal. The renewal process for each local authorizer consists of a three-tier review that includes an evaluation of a school's academic, financial, and operational data for the last five-year term. The application is reviewed by the local authorizer's charter staff. Once this initial review is complete, there is a panel interview and site-visit for the renewal candidate. During this process, the local authorizer evaluates the school's academic performance as measured by BTO and CCRPI. The only places where there has been an exception is for schools where there has been a steady trajectory of growth and the school is currently exceeding the state and district, but did not for all five years. Once a charter school gains renewal at the local level, it must apply for renewal before the SBOE. At the SBOE, another in depth review is conducted consisting of: 1. Application review; 2. Panel interview; and 3. SBOE approval or denial. Charter contracts are typically five years long, requiring each school to go through this process every five years.

For schools authorized by the SCSC, schools are visited and audited on-site. Because its decisions are based on a school's track record of academic, financial, and operational performance, the SCSC is able to conduct a streamlined renewal process during the final year of a state charter school's contract. State charter schools complete a brief application where they have an opportunity to discuss the context of their performance and detail how the school's history demonstrates how it provides students a better educational opportunity than would otherwise be available. SCSC staff and commissioners then meet with representatives of the school's governing board and administration to discuss the merits of the school's application for renewal. While it is important to understand the circumstances of the school's performance, SCSC decisions for renewal are ultimately based on the quality of that performance as measured by the SCSC Comprehensive Performance Framework. If a school meets academic, financial, and operational standards on the SCSC Comprehensive Performance Framework in 75% of the years in its charter term, the SCSC will recommend the school be renewed.

F.2.iii. Both the SCSC and GaDOE utilize a performance framework to make renewal and approval decisions. As part of the charter renewal process, local authorizers evaluate several factors in a charter school's performance during its charter term, including the school's financial performance, operational performance, and – most importantly – its academic performance. Academic performance is the most important factor when making renewal decisions and, thus, is given the highest number of points in GaDOE's high quality charter schools framework. All Georgia charter schools are required to "Beat the Odds" and exceed district and state averages on the CCRPI during each year of its charter term in order to be renewed. The only exceptions made are for charter schools where there has been a steady trajectory of growth and the school is currently exceeding district and state averages, but did not exceed them during each year of its

charter term. The comprehensive criteria as set forth in the high quality charter schools framework, including student academic achievement, is also incorporated into every charter contract. A copy of a contract template is in the appendix E.

Schools that are academically poor-performing are flagged as such during the fourth-year monitoring process and are encouraged to not seek charter renewal during the fifth year of its charter term because they are unlikely to be granted a new charter contract. For academically poor-performing schools that still choose to seek renewal, GaDOE revised its charter schools petition process rule during the 2015 regulatory process to require authorizers to provide a written statement to petitioners indicating which of four groups – Approval, Clarification, Revision, or Rejection – a petitioner is in based on the authorizer’s evaluation of the school performance (SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.05(1)(b)(4)). Academically poor performing schools will fall into the Rejection Group and will not be renewed by the authorizer. GaDOE and the SCSC have been very successful at encouraging schools to relinquish their charters when they are poor performing and are unlikely to get renewed. As the graph on page 24, shows a significant portion of charter schools are not renewed because they simply choose not to seek renewal.

F.2.iv. Georgia uses an index model, CCRPI, to determine schools’ academic achievement. Test results are one factor that is included in the index amongst many (graduation rate, attendance, school climate, etc.). Because GaDOE uses an index model, any new assessment can be included in the assessment portion of the index. CCRPI was created in 2012 and has been adjusted every year afterwards to account for any changes in the law or testing. Each year, GaDOE releases guidance and has training on these changes. Thus, changes in the assessment do not change the overarching accountability measure for any school or LEA in Georgia, and all schools, including charter schools, are consistently held accountable.

All public schools are subject to CCRPI and any other assessment requirements in state or federal law. This requirement is explicitly stated in all charter contracts, which is deemed automatically amended when there are any transitions to new state assessments or accountability systems. GaDOE's Annual Report Form is also updated to reflect any changes to state assessments. Additionally, the high quality charter schools framework addresses accountability for schools during transitions to new state assessments because it holistically evaluates charter schools on various components to get a true measure of performance and areas of growth. Thus, charter schools are consistently held to high standards regardless of statewide changes to assessments. All LEAs participate in training conducted by GaDOE on state-wide testing and data changes.

G.1. Georgia charter schools have maximum flexibility from the law as required by law. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(1)(a)) This ensures charter schools control their budgets, expenditures, staffing, procurement, and curriculum. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(1)(a)) All charter schools are required to be a state non-profit to ensure the charter school board has the autonomy and ability to make all major decisions. (*See* O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(1)) All new board members are required to have at least 15 hours of training that, at a minimum, covers finance, budgeting, and best practices on charter school governance, statutory and constitutional requirements relating to public records and open meetings, and other general legal requirements. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(1)).

G.2. Schools that operate as their own LEA are authorized by the SCSC.²⁰ State charter schools are notified about CSP funds through the SCSC in addition to the methods listed on page

²⁰ As noted above, state charter schools are the only schools in Georgia that are treated as their own LEA. State charter schools are schools that were previously denied a charter by their local board of education or serve a state-wide attendance zone, and were able to gain a charter from the SCSC as an alternate means of charter approval. O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2083 (2014).

30. The SCSC currently has 27 schools. The SCSC works from initial petition approval to ensure approved schools have the knowledge and capacity to operate as a fully functional LEA. Following approval, the SCSC requires schools to attend an “LEA boot camp.” This is a series of trainings that include topics such as special education, facilities, finance, federal grants, and governance. Throughout the charter term, the SCSC requires its schools to attend tailored training based on the results of annual, on-site monitoring. To attain a charter, the SCSC requires schools to prove its ability to sustain an LEA during a rigorous interview process that includes a NACSA charter schools expert. This has resulted in an approval rate of state charter school petitions of 20% in 2015-2016, 35% in 2014-2015, and 6.25% in 2013-2014.

For all charter schools and LEAs in the districts, GaDOE ensures compliance with federal laws, especially those related to students’ rights. The High Quality Charter Schools Framework has a specific section related to students’ rights including compliance with IDEA and discrimination based on age, race, gender, color, or national origin. These questions are also a part of our year 2 and 4 reviews, application process, and CSP monitoring document. To get this information from schools, we look at FTE data as compared to surrounding schools, complaints received by GaDOE’s various divisions, and examine policies and procedures, especially as they relate to lottery and enrollment. If there is a concern, GaDOE provides notice to the school and asks for proof of remedying the concern. If the problem continues, the school may be placed on probation or terminated. In the past year, GaDOE has delayed renewing two schools for concerns related to civil rights laws.

Georgia state policy supports charter schools by providing maximum flexibility from state laws, ensuring equitable federal, state, and local funding, and supporting schools that operate as

their own LEAs. Georgia’s policy context for charter schools demonstrates a strong commitment to charter schools throughout the state and satisfies the CSP’s requirements.

Application Requirements

1. **Academically Poor-Performing Charter Schools:** Please see sections B and C.

2. **Disseminating Best Practices:** Please see sections D and E.

3. **Federal Funds: 3a.** Please see page 30. **3b.** to ensure schools have the ability to grow in low-income communities, GaDOE offers an annual facilities grant. The grant offers 1.4 million dollars to charter schools to expand, build, or improve facilities. GaDOE ensures that charter schools receive their share of Federal education funds that are allocated by formula each year, including during the first year of operation. GaDOE created a dedicated Charter Schools Title I program specialist position within the Title I office to work closely with charter schools to ensure they receive their commensurate share of Federal Funds. If funded, GaDOE will again expand its internal fiscal review capacity. State funding for all public schools is based on the number of students enrolled during FTE. The CSD in partnership with the Financial Budgeting Office (FBO) created a spreadsheet that allows charter schools to calculate their appropriate local, state, and federal funding based on the number and types of students. This spreadsheet has become an accountability measure because local districts can use the spreadsheet as a means to hold itself accountable to complying with law that requires local boards to fund charter schools “no less favorably” than traditional public schools. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2068.1) The FBO also publishes mid-term allotment sheets for charter schools halfway through the school year. This allows charter schools to be equitably funded based on the actual enrollment numbers.

4. **High-Quality Charter Schools:** Please see sections C, D, and E.

5. IDEA Compliance: GaDOE has a specific person within the Special Education Division who is responsible for ensuring IDEA compliance amongst charter schools. The CSD works closely with this person to determine future support opportunities. The CSD also considers any special education complaints and compliance issues significantly in its renewal process. Please see Quality of Plan to Support Educationally Disadvantaged Students.

6. Logic Model: Please see Section D.

7. Lottery and Enrollment Preferences: Georgia law allows charter schools to allow an enrollment preference for siblings of students already attending the school, the child of an employee or board member of the school, and a student in a feeder school. Georgia charter schools may also provide a weighted lottery for educationally disadvantaged students. These provisions/ preferences must be specified in the school's charter. Educationally disadvantaged is defined as

all or a subset of the following: students who are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, migrant students, limited English proficient students, neglected or delinquent students, and homeless students, as each such subset is defined by the State Board of Education in accordance with federal education guidelines and regulations. SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.04.

When schools have more applications than capacity, they must admit students via a random selection process. O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066.

8. Objectives: Please see Section D.

9. Revolving Loan Fund: GaDOE will not be providing a revolving loan fund.

10. Waivers: GaDOE would like to utilize the substantial expansion waiver. Please see section D.