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ATLANTA NEIGHBORHOOD  
CHARTER SCHOOL

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## CHARTER RENEWAL AND DIVERSITY GOALS

*March 22, 2016*

# ***Background - ANCS Charter Renewal***

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- ANCS charter is granted by Atlanta Public Schools (APS) and approved by the State of Georgia Department of Education (DOE)
- Our current charter term expires on June 30, 2016
- APS approved our charter at its October, 2015 Board meeting
- The DOE has been reviewing our application since October
  - On February 15, 2016, the DOE asked to revise our diversity goals in a written response to our application. Alternatively, the DOE informed us we could withdraw our application.
  - We need to respond by April 14, 2016 with a plan acceptable to the DOE in order for our charter to be considered at the May DOE Board meeting

# ***Background - The Weighted Lottery***

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- ANCS, Drew, Kendezi, and the Georgia Charter Schools Association (GCSA) supported the establishment, through legislation, of a “weighted lottery” option for charter schools;
- In 2015, the Georgia Legislature passed legislation permitting a “weighted lottery” option for charter schools. (OCGA § 20-2-2066)
  - This law allows a charter school to give an increased chance of admission to “educationally disadvantaged” students, including those who are “economically disadvantaged.”
  - Note: the weighted lottery does not permit schools to weight based on race
- As of March, 2016, no Georgia charter school has implemented this option
- Some charter schools in other states have successfully implemented weighted lotteries in order to increase their socioeconomic diversity

# ***Background - Attendance Zones***

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- ANCS has a neighborhood zone, or a “tiered zone,” which is smaller than the zone of our authorizer (APS)
  - Primary Attendance zone = Grant Park, Ormewood Park, and Summerhill (new 2016-2017)
  - Secondary Attendance zone = NPU-W (except Grant Park and Ormewood Park)
  - Tertiary Attendance zone = The rest of the City of Atlanta (APS)
- Most charter schools, both within APS and state-wide, have larger attendance zones, many of which encompass the entire zone of the authorizer (i.e. APS for us)
  - Movement towards larger attendance zones (e.g. WIA is now APS-wide)
  - US DOE has interpreted guidance requiring all students in the "community" to have "an equal opportunity to attend the charter school" as requiring district-wide zones for CSP grant eligibility.
  - Schools with small attendance zones and student bodies that don't reflect the diversity of the authorizing district (i.e. APS) may draw additional regulatory scrutiny

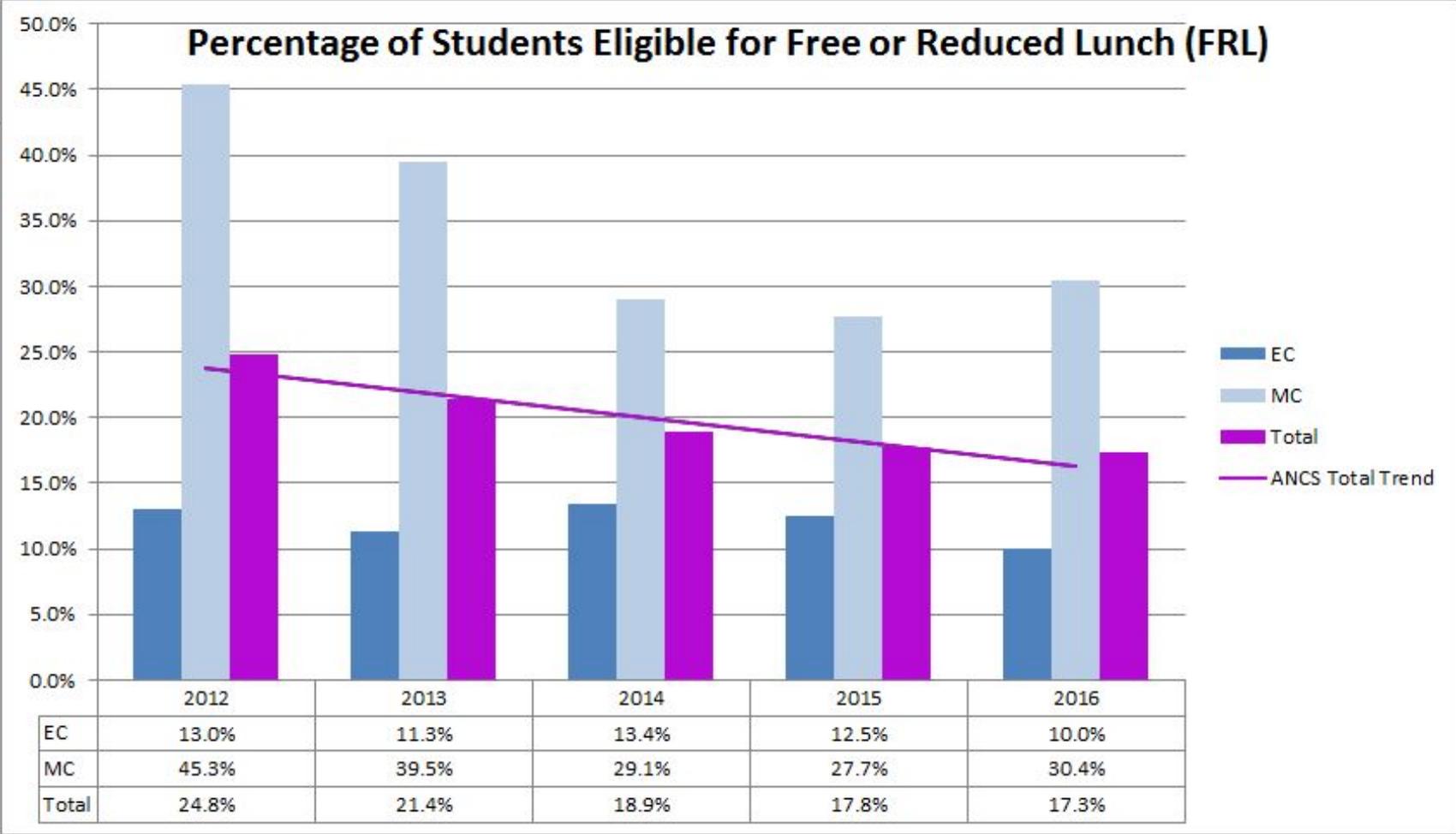
# *Our Current Diversity Plan & Actions*

- Commitment to diversity in our three-year strategic plan
  - We believe **increasing our diversity will help all our students**
    - See, e.g. Matt Underwood's [blog post](#) from September 9, 2014
  - Plan goal to increase students eligible for FRL from 17% to 30% by 2019
    - Economic goals are permissible under federal and state laws
  - Most **teachers would like to see us increase our racial & economic diversity**
    - Outreach
    - Training
    - Additional support and resources (staff, transportation, etc.)
    - In a recent survey, more than 85% of faculty and staff favored adopting a weighted lottery

# *Our Current Diversity Plan & Actions*

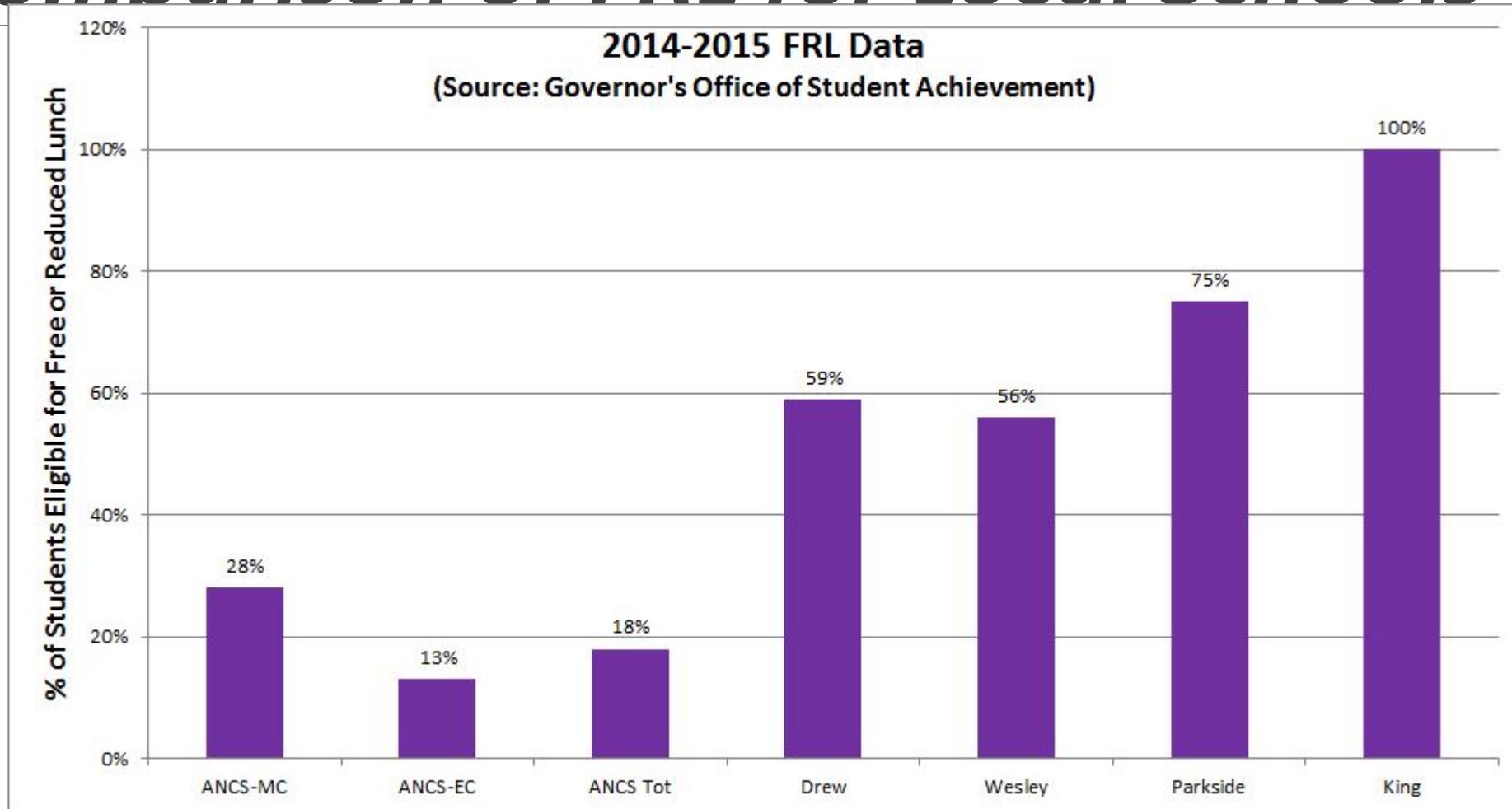
- Actions taken:
  - Appointed Larry Carter as **Diversity Coordinator**
  - Brought **Summerhill** into primary attendance zone (eff. 2016-2017)
  - Joined **National Coalition of Diverse Charter Schools**
  - Ongoing neighborhood **canvassing**
  - Presentations at **neighborhood meetings**
  - **Distribution of materials** to preschools, businesses, houses of worship
  - Enrollment **yard signs**
  - **Social media** campaign
  - Multiple **information sessions** for prospective parents

# Five Year Historical Data on FRL

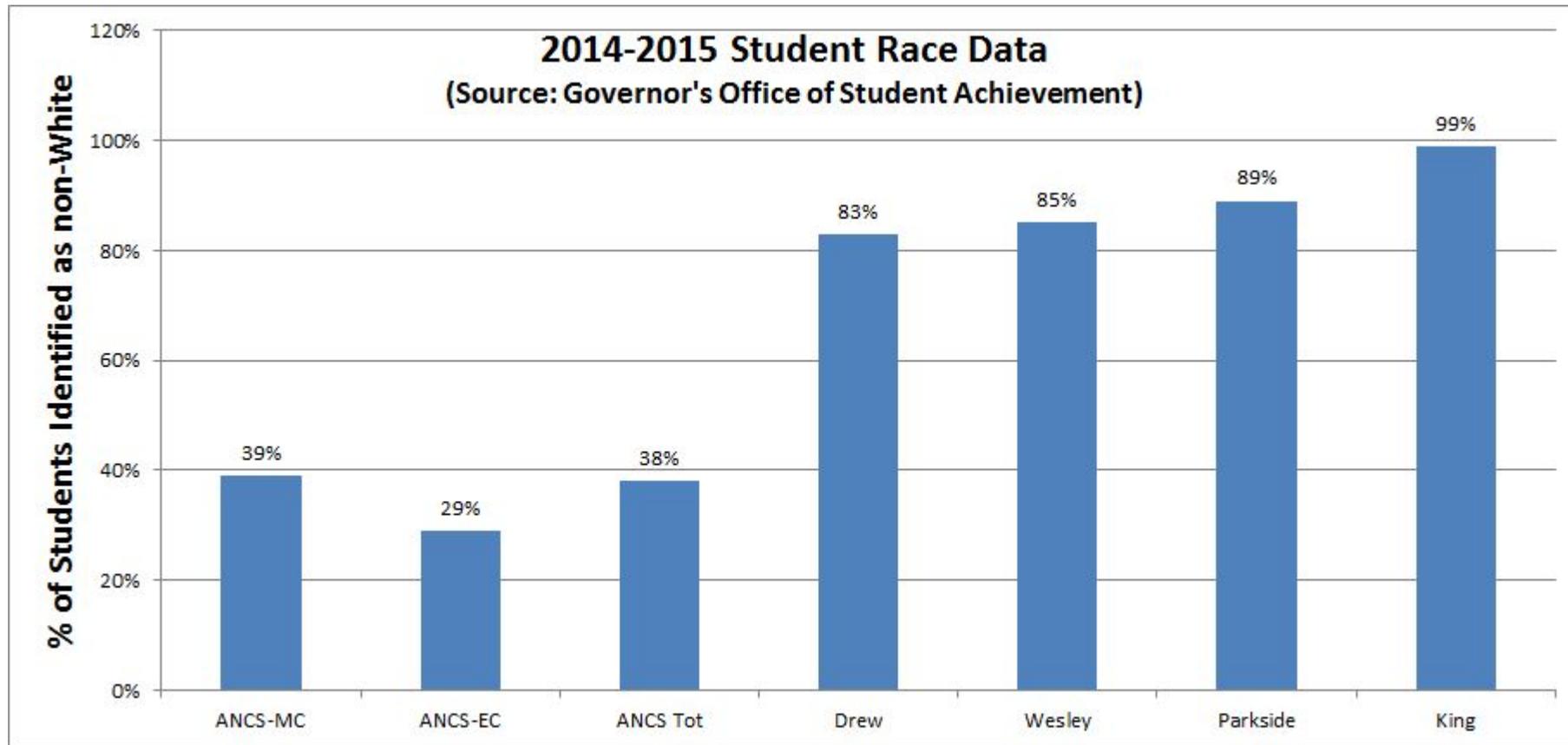


Source: Georgia DOE

# Comparison of FRL for Local Schools



# Comparison of Student Race for Local Schools



# ***Diversity Guidance from the GA DOE<sup>1</sup>***

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- **Charter School Faculty, Staff, and Student [sic] Should Be Diverse.**
  - Charter school best practices have shown a charter school's faculty, staff, and students should reflect the demographic diversity of the community the charter school serves.
  - Schools that do not reflect this diversity should include in their application a plan to make changes that address this need for diversity.
- **Charter School Governing Boards Should Be Diverse.**
  - Charter school best practices have shown that the characteristics of a high-functioning governing board include members that reflect the demographic diversity of the community the charter school serves.

<sup>1</sup>DOE "Charter School Renewal Memorandum" July 17, 2015

## Racial Diversity of students at ANCS per the GA DOE<sup>1</sup>

1. As discussed during your panel interview, we are concerned that ANCS's students, faculty, and staff do not reflect the demographic diversity of the attendance zone the charter school serves. According to the Department's October 2015 FTE data, the student enrollment by race/ethnicity for ANCS as compared to Atlanta Public Schools and the Jackson Cluster are as follows:

School/District	Total # of K-8 Students	Number & Percentage of K-8 Students by Race/Ethnicity					
		Black	White	Hispanic	2+ Races	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian
APS	37,971	27,472 (72%)	6,412 (17%)	2,767 (7%)	779 (2%)	487 (1%)	54 (0.1%)
Jackson Cluster*	3,126	2,625 (84%)	206 (7%)	239 (8%)	44 (1.4%)	8 (0.3%)	4 (0.1%)
ANCS (Total)	659	149 (23%)	424 (64%)	36 (5%)	45 (7%)	5 (0.8%)	0
ANCS ES	422	75 (18%)	300 (71%)	23 (5%)	21 (4.9%)	3 (0.7%)	0
ANCS MS	237	74 (31%)	124 (52%)	13 (5%)	24 (10%)	2 (0.8%)	0

\* Includes MLK MS, Burgess-Peterson ES, Toomer ES, Whitefoord ES, Benteen ES, D.H. Stanton ES, Dunbar ES & Parkside ES

<sup>1</sup>DOE Letter to ANCS, February 15, 2016

# ***Diversity Goals suggested by the DOE (February 15th, 2016):***

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**Goal:** The Charter School will increase access to the school for all families and individuals, with a targeted focus on educationally disadvantaged families and families of color.

1. **Measure 1:** The Charter School will decrease the disparity in the percentage of students of color enrolled in the school as compared to the percentage of students in the school district by 4% during each year of the charter term for a total decrease of 20% by the end of the charter term.
2. **Measure 2:** The Charter School will increase the number of faculty and staff of color employed by the school by 20% by the end of the charter term.
3. **Measure 3:** By Year 2 of the charter term, the Governing Board's composition will include at least 5 board members of color.

# *ANCS Concerns with the suggested goals*

1. **Constitutionality**: The ANCS Board has concerns that the suggested diversity goals might be unconstitutional under the Equal Protection clause of the 14th Amendment.
  - a. Under Supreme Court precedent, strict racial quotas are unconstitutional and race-based goals are generally disfavored if other alternatives are possible.
2. **Risk of Litigation**: The ANCS Board has concerns that adopting race-based diversity goals could expose the school, APS, and the state to the risk of litigation.
3. **Achievability**: The student goals call for a 4% increase in students of color per year, or about 27 additional students of color per year. We expect to have approximately 25-30 kindergarten openings per year in the next few years (after accounting for siblings), so this goal would be very difficult to achieve. Similarly, with low turnover, the faculty and staff goal would also be difficult to reach.

# *Possible Alternatives to the Proposed Goals / Ideas to work with*

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1. **“Economically Disadvantaged” Students**: Instead of using race-based goals, adopt goals based on the percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged:
  - a. Qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL); OR
  - b. Family is eligible for federal benefits such as SNAP, TANF, Medicaid or PINS.
2. **The “cohort” approach**: Instead of creating a goal for the entire school, which will be difficult to achieve quickly due to the large number of returning students, create a goal for students newly admitted through the lottery who were not eligible for a sibling or other preference.
3. **The weighted lottery**: If we are unable to reach our goals using the outreach strategies we have implemented, including bringing Summerhill into our primary attendance zone, implement a weighted lottery.
4. **Other possible options**: Expanding our primary attendance zone or changing our sibling policy could increase our diversity, but might alter the neighborhood nature of, and strong family commitment to, ANCS.

# ***Questions on the Weighted Lottery***

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1. **Who can we weight?** Under the law and guidance issued by the DOE, we can weight all or any subset of students who are:
  - a. Economically disadvantaged;
  - b. Students with disabilities;
  - c. Limited English proficient students;
  - d. Neglected or delinquent students; and
  - e. Homeless students
  
2. **How would we define “economically disadvantaged?”** Under guidance from the Georgia DOE, we would likely define “economically disadvantaged” as a student whose family is:
  - a. Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch; or
  - b. Eligible for Federal benefits such as SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, WIC, or PINS.

## ***Questions on the Weighted Lottery, cont.***

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3. **How would we define eligibility?** Based on discussions with schools in other states, there are easily accessible databases we can check to verify eligibility. The family must be eligible on the day the lottery occurs.
4. **What if we discover an applicant with a “weight” isn’t eligible?** If a student with an extra “weight” is offered a spot through a weighted lottery, the parents would have 10 days to show their student is eligible, if we cannot verify their eligibility. After that time, the student loses his or her spot and would be placed at the end of the wait list. This procedure should discourage applicants from “gaming” the system.

# *Key Dates*

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- **Tuesday, 3/15/16:** Discussion at regular ANCS Board Meeting. No Board vote.
- **Friday, 3/18/16:** Faculty & Staff Discussion
- **Wednesday, 3/23/16:** Community Listening Session (7:00 pm at EC)
- **Tuesday, 3/29/16:** Special ANCS Board Meeting on Charter Renewal and Diversity Goals. Possible Board vote. (7:00 pm at EC)
- **Thursday, 4/14/16:** Response due to DOE for consideration at May DOE Board Mtg.
- **Thursday, 5/5/16:** State Department of Education Board Meeting

Note: We will be discussing our response with the DOE throughout.