

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARTER SCHOOL

Board Meeting

December 3, 2008

Context Setting

The purpose of the December 3, 2008 meeting was for NCS board members to (1) introduce members of Matthews Consulting Group (MCG) to the board (2) gain an understanding of the strategic planning process, and (3) allow NCS board members to make recommendations/suggestions about the process. This document summarizes the key discussion points, insights gained, and decisions made during the meeting.

Importance of the Vision

It is important to develop consensus about the future direction of and vision for NCS. Having clarity around the vision and the mission provides key decision makers with a “screen” through which to filter day-to-day decisions.

Positive Experience Factors

Board members described factors/elements deemed necessary to create a positive experience for all constituents and participants throughout the strategic planning process. Key elements identified include:

- *Open-mindedness* – Our board members are intelligent and have unique perspectives. As a result, there will always be differences of opinions and ideas; however, members should consider others’ ideas before immediate rejection.
- *Unity* – Members must work as a “united front” to accomplish goals. This can be accomplished by:
 - Operating as a team/family
 - Recognizing that compromises must be made
 - Agreeing to disagree and/or disagreeing without being disagreeable
 - Exemplifying the good team member principles/ground rules established during the last board retreat
- *Commitment* – Team members must be willing to stay on task and be dedicated to the process despite personal and/or professional rough spots that may occur along the way.
- *Decorum* – Conduct should remain respectful, and actions should aim to be efficient and purposeful.
- *Celebration* – Accomplishments and successes should be celebrated throughout the process.
- *Focus on Children* – Team members should always remember that we are here for the betterment of NCS’ children and that should be our ultimate priority.

Strategic Issues

Board members were given several minutes to summarize their individual thoughts before discussing the key issues to be addressed during the planning. These strategic issues include but are not limited to:

- Fundraising
- Facilities plan
- Diversity issues (it is understood that diversity goes beyond race)
- Charter Inc.
- Academic excellence
 - Decision to focus on curriculum versus test scores
 - Technology in classrooms
 - Effects of non-instructional school days (i.e., after school, extended day, etc.)
- Parent education (e.g., the curriculum)
- How to position NCS as a laboratory school (i.e., exploit NCS as a model school, raise visibility, etc.)
- Environment (i.e., sustainability, conservation, recycling, etc.)
- Communication on all levels
- Long term/Operational infrastructure and systems (i.e., financing, administration, organization structure, etc.)
- Community relations

Steering Committee

A Strategic Planning Steering Committee comprised of board members, teachers, parents, and others will govern and provide guidance to the overall planning process. It was suggested that subcommittees could be established to address specific issues (e.g., communications) and help ensure inclusiveness and involvement from other individuals and constituencies. Tammie Mitchell, Board Chair, will make the ultimate decision with regard to Steering Committee members. The following persons volunteered and/or were nominated during the meeting:

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|-------------------|---------------------|
| ○ Amy Drooker | ○ Kelly D. |
| ○ Doug Blackmon | ○ John Wright |
| ○ Melissa Alvarez | ○ Maya Jenkins |
| ○ John Corbally | ○ Nicole Tillman |
| ○ Carol Keller | ○ Peter Ernst |
| ○ Jill Kaechele | ○ Nikole Camp |
| ○ Teacher | ○ Melissa Devereaux |

Environmental Scan Focus Groups and Interviews

Board members discussed and made recommendations for the focus groups and individual interviews participants. The actual participants will be indentified and confirmed by the Steering Committee:

- Focus Groups (a total of seven (7) are specified in the proposal)
 - (3) Parents (former parents, demographic-specific group)
 - (1) Teachers
 - (1) Community (diversity group)
 - (1) Board
 - (1) Students (older students, former students)
 - Special needs (parents?)
- Interviews (a total of ten (10) are specified in the proposal)
 - Parents (former dissatisfied parent, parent who has been involved over some specified period of time)
 - Neighbor within close proximity to the school (it was suggested that this individual might participate in the community focus group instead)
 - Atlanta Public School System (Beverly Hall/Chief of Staff/Board Chair)
 - Foundation (i.e., Woodruff)
 - Georgia State Department of Education
 - Progressive education expert
 - Atlanta Charter Middle School (ACMS)
 - Private schools (i.e., Paideia, Galloway)
 - Political representative (Brenda Muhammad, Mayor Franklin)

For Later Discussion

- Refer to presentation slide 14: *Project Overview Tentative Timeline*.
 - Concerns were expressed about the timeline, specifically activities in Phase Four: Plan Strategic Initiatives and Milestones. This concern was expressed because of the limited availability of NCS representatives to participate in the planning process during April and May. Once the interviews, surveys and focus groups are scheduled, Matthews Consulting Group will have a better idea as to whether activities can be initiated and/or completed earlier in the timeline.
 - It was recommended that the date for the Planning Retreat be determined as quickly as possible to help attendees plan their schedules.
- Jill Kaechele would prefer a research scan of best practices versus conducting interviews with two (2) successful GA K-5 charter schools. Because this activity will require a greater level of effort than conducting the interviews, Michelle agreed to work with the Steering Committee to identify a strategy that will work for NCS and MCG.
- A communication plan needs to be developed to inform the community about the NCS strategic planning process.

Overall Meeting Evaluation

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting down to business • Keeping people on task/redirecting • Team involvement • Food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long day • At times there was too much rambling/talking • Set start time for all meetings at 6:30P

Action items	Responsible Party	Date (s)
Designate Steering Committee members	Tammie Mitchell	12/15
Identify participants of focus groups and individual interviews and gather contact information	Steering Committee	12/15
Determine January date for MCG and Steering Committee meeting	Steering Committee	12/15