

DC Charter School Association
First meeting with Charter School leaders
Thursday, March 13, 2003
6:00 PM at SAIL Public Charter School
Meeting Notes

Nineteen charter schools were represented at the meeting: Community Academy, Friendship, Carlos Rosario, SAIL, Sasha Bruce, Chavez, Tri-Community, Studio School, Capital City, Tree of Life Community, Lamb, Booker T, ARE, EW Stokes, IDEA, Arts and Technology, Paul JHS, DC Prep, South East Academy, Maya Angelou, New School Enterprise

Schools Not attending (14): Barbara Jordan, Howard Road, Ideal, Options, Roots, Meridian, Kipp, Thurgood Mashall, Jos.Arz, Kamit Institute, Village Learning, Hyde, Marriot Hospitality, WMST.

Opening remarks made by Kent Amos with a short description of the project from its inception. Tonight's meeting is an effort to come together and talk about this process. A brief history determined that late last year; John Walton put aside money for building educational networks around the US. While some proposals had been submitted in the DC area, the Walton Foundation accepted none, but they voiced a desire to see charter leaders work together to build charter school representation in DC. They approached FFC (Fight For Children) with the idea to create a network. The goal of the group is to work collaboratively to build a platform which will assist DC Charter Schools to serve the children. The group is committed to moving forward as a body controlled by its members. With or without the money from Walton, Mr. Amos stated that the Association will be created.

Mrs. Salcido stated she felt obligated to step up and support the group in determining what the Charter School Association should look like. She wants all to come together to achieve these goals as one cohesive group.

Mr. Hense felt that the Association development had more to do with serious public policy issues; that representatives have been ignored when appearing before the mayor and other policy makers in DC. Issues surround money, per pupil costs, the fact that charter schools receive lower funds than DCPS from Perkins and other funding sources. Mr. Hense stated that the most important part of the Association would be the ability to have a single voice to represent the charter schools.

We reviewed the sheet stating the goals of the association. Everyone seemed to be in agreement with the association's goal to "possess a strong, united voice in the community among local and national leaders and policy makers so that our needs are addressed equally with respect to public schools in the city." Concerns were voiced about the suggested goal to assist in the growth of new charter schools. Many thought that the development of new charter schools should not be a primary focus of the group. The attendees agreed that they don't mind encouraging growth as long as it is not done to the detriment of existing charter schools. Should there be a component of the Association to

provide some level of training to individuals/groups who may want to start as charter school if only to help others avoid the pitfalls we fell into at start up, and afford them a smoother opportunity to open. Some people felt that new school development should be something that should happen somewhere, but not necessarily within the Association. No conclusion was reached about how the association will deal with encouraging the growth of new charter schools. This issue will be addressed again in our business plan.

A comment was made that the Association should share resources and grow successfully. Again the question of funding and structure was raised. It was noted that support service providers such as CSS and the Special Ed. Collaborative are now struggling with funding since their grants have run out and questions were asked relating to how the Association would deal with this. It was stated that the Association must find ways to support what we are going – how will the Association generate money? It was agreed that the Association would have to figure out how to generate revenue on a long-term basis. There must be a vested interest in seeing that the Association gets started appropriately. Everyone will bring some individual values and standards. Intelligent growth must be managed carefully to insure the future of this movement. The money that would come through Walton would be a three-year grant on a declining scale. During those three years, the Association must demonstrate the ability to raise money.

Questions were asked about what other states are doing as far as creating Associations to represent charter schools. Jeanne Allen of CER has data available on other states for those that would like to do further research.

All the attendees seemed to agree that the number one thing the association should do is advocacy and lobbying. It was noted that there is no substitute for having a direct say-so in addressing questions and issues on policies pertaining to charter schools. It was felt that once the first issue comes before the Association, the city would feel the power of its collective might. We need a voice and a face that is credible, authentic; someone who is borne of our experience. We have the capacity in-house and can choose a representative who will report to the Board (predominantly charter school leaders). It was stated that the charter school perspective would be kept alive through strong representation. Would Walton fund the Association if we were only looking to provide this representation? How narrow can the focus be and still be interesting to Walton? Noted that Walton is relatively willing to back what we would like to do as a group. Cathy Lund from the Walton Foundation has made it clear to all that the Association should be what the group wants it to be and are waiting for the working group to submit a plan that will work for us. It was suggested that the Association begin small at first, and as resources and confidence builds, decide if/when the Association can move ahead. There are local foundations that will provide support for the Association, who want to see charter schools in DC survive. It was noted that some of the charter schools are already members of various Associations that provide services.

Membership in the Association will be limited to charter schools only, and the Board elect must offer resources, but be controlled by the schools. Who are key players in DC? Who should be considered for the Board? One of the most important things wanted in a Board is for them to give us access to funding, real estate, etc.

The important question was asked: *Who will go forward to create an Association?* Numerous schools represented at the table professed interest. Need help with the original draft of the basic proposal over the next few weeks to create a document that will represent the wants and needs of the group. Then we asked the group if they would support having the same small group of people (Kent Amos, Donald Hense, Irasema Salcido, Kim Morton, Norman Johnson) who had worked together in issues related to convening today's meeting to continue to lead the association forward to see that we complete the tasks related to forming the association. People supported having the small group continue its role of moving the work of the association forward.

Tasks/work plans were distributed among the group. The work group is functioning within a tight time frame. Most present volunteered to help on specific tasks, committee groups, etc. along the way. The two main tasks that need to be completed are: applying for 501(c)3 status and writing a business plan using some of the work that has been done. Donald Hense, Larry Riccio, and David Domenici will work on the 501(c)3 by-laws, articles of incorporation, etc, Irasema Salcido, Marcia McDonell, Linda Moore, Shirley Richardson, Allison Rohrer will work on the business plan. Irasema will continue to call on people to help as needed. The committee meetings should begin immediately.

It was agreed that the meetings would occur in two-week cycles. The proposal, once received by Walton, will receive a quick turn-around. A July/August date was suggested for the Association to officially begin.

RE: Kaleem and the FFC it was stated that it has been made clear that his past role as facilitator will shift to a role of a staff working for the Association. Rita at FFC agreed that Kaleem could assist the group with some projects as a consultant.

Next meeting scheduled for April 3, 6:00 PM at Maya Angelou. Reminders will be sent out to all charter schools.