GCSA

GEORGIA CHARTER SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

2023 Georgia Charter Schools Conference

Wednesday, March 15

Today's Agenda

Ice Breaker

Using Messaging to Influence Policymakers

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Ice Breaker

Tell us your name, title, school.

What are you hoping to learn today?

Professional Development: Using Messaging to Influence Policymakers

Michelle Wirth, GCSA Senior Director of Communications

Shabaaka Smalls, GCSA Manager of Digital Strategy

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Messages That Work

Message 1: Public charter schools provide high-quality educational opportunities for students:

Democrats:

- Fairness: every student deserves the chance to get a great public education regardless of zip code, income or ability level. Education is a right not a privilege.
- Collaboration: when teachers and schools work together, learning improves for all students and everyone benefits.

Republicans:

- Every child in Georgia should have the opportunity to attend a high-quality school that best meets the needs and helps them reach their full potential.
- Charter school autonomy: Charter schools are unique student-centered public schools designed with the flexibility and autonomy needed to make decisions that put students first making them a great option for some families.

Messages That Work

Message 2: Public charter schools meet the needs of individual students

Democrats:

- One size does fit all: students deserve an education that will meet their individual needs, because a one-size-fits approach all does not work for our kids.
- Opportunities: When families can decide which school is best for their child and their child's needs are met, public schools, including charter schools strengthen the community and the broader public school system.

Republicans:

- Flexible approach: Charter schools have the autonomy and flexibility to take creative approaches in the classroom to teaching every student in a way that works best for them.
- Opportunities: The pandemic exposed real problems in the way the public education system works. Now more than ever, we need more high-quality educational opportunities where every child can go to a school that meets their individual needs.

Messages That Work

Message 3: Public charter schools prepare students for success in 21st century careers.

Democrats:

- Student-centered: By delivering for students from diverse backgrounds and teaching them in ways that they learn best, charter schools are preparing the workforce of tomorrow.
- Fairness: every student deserves the chance to get a great public education to reach their full potential regardless of their zip code, income or ability level. Charter schools as free, public, and open to all students are making good on this promise.

Republicans:

- Workforce of the future: Charter school are preparing the workforce of the future because they are able to be creative and give students the hands-on experience they need to become the leaders of tomorrow.
- Success: Charter schools are bringing new ideas into the classroom and using creative approaches to prepare students for success in 21st century careers.

July 2021 GCSA Poll

Descriptive Phrases about Nonprofit Charter Public Schools by Party

Shown among those able to rate Charter Public Schools (N=474)

Ranked by %Describes Very Well	All Voters	GOP (38%)	Independents (23%)	Democrats (36%)	White Democrats (12%)	Voters of Color Democrats (25%)
Prepare Students for the Future	47%	55%	39%	42%	29%	46%
Provide Quality Education	44%	50%	41%	41%	33%	44%
Are a Source of Innovation in Education	40%	41%	36%	39%	38%	40%
Provide More Individual Instruction for Students	40%	44%	35%	38%	28%	42%
Offer Different Learning Styles	38%	34%	39%	42%	39%	43%
Have High Quality Teachers	37%	43%	24%	39%	33%	41%
Offer a Small School Environment	37%	38%	34%	40%	28%	47%
Provide Options Parents Need	33%	31%	42%	29%	21%	33%
Help Improve the Entire Public School System	31%	35%	32%	26%	12%	31%
Are Open to All	30%	33%	28%	27%	16%	32%
Meet Rigorous Standards	29%	30%	31%	29%	24%	32%
Are Tuition Free	28%	26%	30%	29%	27%	30%
Have Ethically Diverse Groups of Students and Teachers	27%	28%	30%	27%	18%	30%
Serve Mainly Highly Performing Students	26%	21%	23%	36%	31%	38%
Helps Close the Achievement Gap Among Students	25%	23%	37%	19%	15%	22%
Are Public Schools	25%	23%	25%	26%	22%	28%
Take Too Much Funding from other Public Schools	14%	9%	17%	18%	15%	20%

July 2021 GCSA Poll

Most Favorable Aspects of Nonprofit Charter Public Schools

	Most Favorable	Total Parents (35%)	Moms (20%)	Dads (15%)
Are smaller schools that offer more individualized attention	29%	33%	35%	30%
Support Different Learning Styles	18%	23%	24%	20%
Are Free and Open to All Children	17%	16%	16%	17%
Are Managed Independently from Local School Districts	17%	12%	7%	17%
Enroll Children of All Skill Levels and Backgrounds	10%	11%	14%	7%
Are Held to State and Federal Standards	7%	5%	4%	7%
Are Publicly Funded	5%	4%	5%	2%
None of These	17%	17%	14%	19%
All of Them	5%	3%	2%	5%

Top Demographic Sub-groups: None of These (17%)	
Independent Women	25%
Ages 55-64	23%
Men College+	23%
Voters of Color Less Than College	22%
Independents	21%
Democrat Men	21%

GA Voters Overwhelmingly Support Charters

Charter schools enjoy widespread public support - in urban and rural areas and across demographics and political parties.

- Statewide, more than **6** out of **10** registered voters approve of charter schools.
- **83%** of parents of school-aged children express positive opinions. Parents who live in metro Atlanta (**72%**) and in South and East Georgia (**75%**) would send their children to a public charter school if one was available in their community.

GA Voters Overwhelmingly Support Charters

- Georgia voters of all racial demographics support public charter schools. **83%** of Asian voters, **83%** of Latino voters, **67%** of White voters and **65%** of Black voters expressed a favorable opinion of charter schools
- **73%** of Independents, **68%** of Republicans and **64%** of Democrats in Georgia say they support public charter schools.

Myth: Charters take money from district schools.

Criticism •	"Charter schools **are taking enrollment and funds from traditional public schools, hurting the neighborhood schools** that serve the vast majority of our kids."
Why It Matters	• Undermines central message of putting kids first • People are looking for solutions for <u>all</u> schools • If people believe charters hurt most schools, they'll turn against them
Main Response	Georgia's non-profit public charter schools strengthen the overall public-school system by offering more children an opportunity for a high-quality public education at a school that works best for them.
Other Ways to Respond	• Charters provide a great education despite receiving less per-pupil funding than district-run public schools. Unlike district schools, charters must allocate up to 18% of their annual operating budgets to cover facility costs. • When a family moves, no one says "DeKalb County School District is taking money from Atlanta Public Schools." It is no different when a family selects a public charter school.

Myth: Charters don't serve diverse students.

Criticism	"Charter schools don't serve all students. They **cherry pick the best students and don't serve students of color**."
Why It Matters	• Undermines our value of offering more high-quality options for <u>all</u> kids that meet their individual needs • Casts doubt on the results charters get for students
Main Response	Charter schools are public, free and open to all, and they're built to give every child an opportunity to go to a school that puts their needs first, regardless of their zip code, income, or ability level.

Other Ways to Respond	• Charters enroll more students of color than district schools.
	  • 70% of GA charter students are students of color versus 63% in traditional public schools.
	  • Black students comprise 52% of charter school enrollment versus 36% of the district-run public school student population.
	• On the 2022 NAEP, Atlanta's Black charter school students scored higher than their traditional Black peers in fourth-grade math (22 points), fourth-grade reading (23 points), eighth-grade math (11 points) and eighth-grade reading (10 points).

Myth: Charters cause declining enrollment.

Criticism	"Charter schools don't serve all students. They **cherry pick the best students and don't serve students of color**."
Why It Matters	The public is looking for solutions to improve all schools, not just give better options to kids stuck in failing schools.
Main Response	This is factually inaccurate. The pandemic exposed that a one-size-fits all public-school system does not work for every student and family.
Other Ways to Respond	• If a family is happy with their child at a district-run school, they are not looking for an alternative. Families seeking an alternative are doing so because whatever their child's situation is, is simply not working for them. • Charters keep students in the the broader public education system. • Locally-approved charters prevent district enrollment losses and allow families to choose a public school to best meet the individual needs of their children. • Until every child has the chance to attend a high-quality public-school that works for them, we need more great public schools. And public charter schools give families that opportunity.

Myth: Charters hurt communities.

Criticism	"Charter schools open in the most at-risk neighborhoods and prey on minority and low-income students."
Why It Matters	• This argument undermines the key values charters stand for • Particularly when unfamiliar with charters, people will evaluate charters based on their perceived motivations
Main Response	This language is simply offensive. Charter schools serve as good partners in their local communities.
Other Ways to Respond	• Charters are positive for children and communities because they keep more students in the public school system, successfully prepare children for college and career opportunities and improve local property values. • On the 2022 NAEP, Georgia's Black students scored higher than their traditional Black peers in fourth-grade math (22 points), fourth-grade reading (23 points), eighth-grade math (11 points) and eighth-grade reading (10 points). • Until every child has the chance to attend a high-quality public-school that works for them, we need more educational options. Public charter schools give families that opportunity. • Charter schools reflect the communities in which students live.

GCSA Statewide Advertising Campaign

GCSA Statewide Advertising Campaign

Multi-Year Ad Campaign in Key Markets: Atlanta & Savannah. The campaign is a partnership between the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools and the Georgia Charter Schools Association.

Goal: Improve Sentiment for Public Charter Schools

Latest Round: April 6 - May 14

- Atlanta & Savannah TV and radio placements
- The ads in the latest round will also run on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube
- In the past, they were also placed on Hulu and Spotify.

GCSA Digital Campaign

PHASE ONE – Spring 2023

Type: General awareness and educational campaign

Audience: State lawmakers, parents and the general public.

Geographic areas of focus: Atlanta, Macon, Athens, Albany & Augusta

Messaging: Messaging from previous Georgia polling and national jury testing.

Questions & Answers

Truths Vs. Myths

CHARTER SCHOOL MYTHS & FACTS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW →

MYTH: CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE NOT PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

TRUTH: AS DEFINED IN FEDERAL AND STATE LAW, CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

They must meet the same academic standards that all public schools are required to meet:

- Tuition free and open to all students;
- Nonsectarian and do not discriminate on any basis;
- Publicly funded by local, state, and federal tax dollars based on enrollment, like other public schools;
- Held accountable for meeting state and federal academic standards.

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Truths Vs. Myths

MYTH: CHARTER SCHOOLS CHERRY-PICK THE BEST STUDENTS FROM DISTRICT-RUN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

TRUTH: Charter public schools are generally required to take all students who want to attend. If there are more interested students than available seats, the schools are required to hold lotteries, which randomly determine which students will be enrolled.
According to federal law, charter schools must accept all students, including students with disabilities and English Learners (ELs), regardless of previous academic performance.

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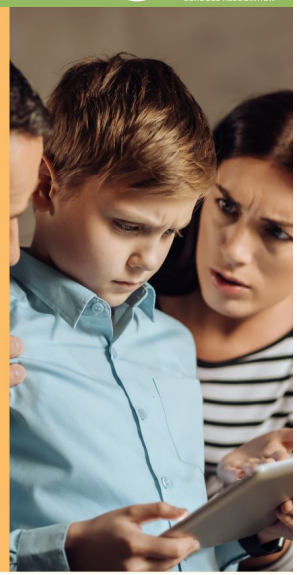
MYTH: CHARTER SCHOOLS DON'T ENROLL CHILDREN FROM UNDERSERVED FAMILIES.



TRUTH: Charter public schools enroll more students of color and from low-income backgrounds than district-run public schools.

- 70% of the students enrolled in a Georgia public charter school are students of color versus 63% in the state's traditional public schools.
- Black students comprise 52% of charter school enrollment versus 36% of the district-run public school student population.

Truths Vs. Myths

MYTH: CHARTER SCHOOLS GET MORE MONEY THAN OTHER PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

TRUTH: Charter schools often receive less public funding than district-run public schools, and—unlike traditional public schools—charters must allocate up to 18% of their annual operating budgets to cover facility costs.

In FY19, state charter schools in Georgia earned almost $900 less than the state funding average (per pupil), and locally-approved charter schools earned less than their districts in 13 of 15* districts operating charter schools.

*District count does not include College and Career Academies because of funding and programmatic differences.

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MYTH: CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE NOT HELD ACCOUNTABLE.

TRUTH: Charter schools introduce an unprecedented level of accountability into public education.

If a charter public school is not improving student achievement as laid out in its charter agreement, it can be closed down. This is not the case for district-run public schools, where failing schools often undergo school improvement and turnaround measures for years, while generations of children continue to receive a subpar education.

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Engaging Policymakers Online

Directly **mention** a policymaker in a post using the @ symbol.

You can **tag** a policymaker in a photo in addition to mentioning them.

Tying it all together

1. Create engaging content or strategic messaging meant to get attention.
2. Identify policymaker's social handle and mention/tag them in relevant conversations.
3. Be respectful in whilst engaging (i.e.: Try not to get blocked!)
4. Be mindful that while you may be directing the content at a single policymaker, the conversation is very, very public.

Your turn!

1. *What would you say to a lawmaker who claims that charter schools steal money from public schools?*

2. *How would you respond to claims that charter schools "cherry pick" the best students?*

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Questions & Answers

Thank You!

Feel free to email us:

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