

1998
Urban League

TALKING POINTS for July 17 meeting with Maudine Cooper

Summary HISTORY of District of Columbia Public Charter School Board

- Sworn in at the end of February 1997, almost a year and one-half ago.
- Seven volunteers (six active members)
 - Tom Loughlin - KPMG Peat Marwick
 - BB Otero - Calvary Multicultural Bilingual Learning Center
 - Joe Horning - Developer
 - Hope Clark - Psychologist who works with children & families who've been exposed to violence
 - Bernie Walker - Businessman
- Met immediately. One of the first Board decisions was to develop productive relationships with key players in public education in this city.
- Independent Board, not a part of the traditional public school system but, wants very much to be a partner because of the children who we anticipate will move back and forth between traditional public schools and public charter schools.
- Hired two consultants to develop and put in place procedures needed to (1) ensure a fair and objective competition for charters to establish public charter schools, ~~on~~ that raised the bar in terms of standards and rigor, and (2) develop and put in place mechanisms and tools to ensure that the schools we charter are accountable to their students, parents, this Board, and the citizens of the District of Columbia.
- The NOTEBOOK contains information about what ^{we} refer to as the four pillars of ACCOUNTABILITY:

Approval of only highly qualified applicants through a thorough, rigorous application review and decision process;

A carefully designed charter agreement that clearly spells out the responsibilities of the parties and the consequences of failure to perform.

A well-conceived, technical strong charter school accountability plan in every school that specifies the school's academic and other goals, how they intend to measure results, and how they plan to use accountability information to improve their educational program.

A plan for (1) how this Board will monitor the performance, academic progress, management and fiscal probity, and compliance of each charter school and (2) what actions the school intends to take when problems arise.

- Collaborating with the 10 new schools to develop accountability mechanisms in a way that we hope fosters ownership on their part. The Board believes that the schools must not only understand how these accountability tools can be used to track their performance but also how they can be used to improve performance and to report on it.
- So far, the collaborative accountability effort with the schools has included six workshops, the gathering and distribution of materials on school level accountability from other charter schools and sources around the nation, and a round of one-on-one technical assistance sessions with the schools. A second round of one-on-one assistance sessions is now underway.
- This Board invited schools chartered by the DC Board of Education to its group workshops on accountability. Response has been terrific; several schools came to the last two workshops. We've promised to invite them to other group sessions on accountability.

Recently hired an Executive Director who will come on board on July 20, 1998.

Concern re PROLIFERATION OF CHARTER SCHOOLS AND THE CREAMING OF STUDENTS

- Not sure that there are large numbers of tireless, zealous people out there who have the stamina and are willing to put in the long hours and hardships associated with starting a school and keeping it going. Across the country, there seems to be significant “burnout” among charter school leaders who work around the clock with no break to make their schools succeed.
- What people have learned is that the barriers and problems are very difficult, if not impossible, to overcome. One of the most formidable barriers is the perception that the DCPS does not look favorably upon public charter schools (e.g., facilities, special education, etc.)
- Community support is still mixed and accountability may turn out to be the maiden or the monster behind the door. We are working hard on both of these but, people still view public charter schools through the lens of the Marcus Garvey situation, making them think twice about the merits of such schools.
- Students entering public charter schools don’t necessarily come from DCPS. Some come from private schools, parochial schools, etc.

Note: What the Board did to establish relationships. Partial record -

- Met with Becton.
- Met several times/conversed via telephone with MacLaury and periodically sent him information on the Board’s progress.
- Met often with Reverend Childs.
- Initiated a series of meetings with DC Board of Education and DCPS staff that led to the convening of newly chartered schools and applicants for the purpose of introducing them to DCPS staff

responsible for service delivery and/or selected program areas and informing them of what is available and how to access it.

- Board staff met with Mitzi Beach on January 31, 1997
- Met with Elois Brooks and DCPS staff (requested jointly by both chartering authorities) February 1998
- Initiated a series of meetings with representatives of the DC Board of Education, DCPS special education staff, representatives from the DCPS/CFO's office, etc. to talk about the delivery of special education services to public charter schools.
- Twice requested a meeting with Ackerman. October 1997 (invited her participation in public hearing and requested meeting; sent information about the Board and a progress report of Board's activities in November 1997.
- Several conversations with Tonya Kinlow.
- Wrote Ackerman recently suggesting that she, Tonya Kinlow, and I meet to continue a discussion we had with Congresswoman Norton.