

Cars Homes Jobs Classified

Feedback

Subscribe Help



45° Overcast H: 48° L: 42° Weather | Traffic

Monday, December 22, 2014

Welcome to myajc.com Hi, WTSherman | Sign Out

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution Credible. Compelling. Complete.

Search Site [Q]

HOME METRO/STATE EPAPER EXTRAS SPORTS BUSINESS INVESTIGATIONS OPINION LIVING SHOP

NEWS



Cop: Awesome 'continued DJing' when friend admitted killing his wife

NEWS



Atlanta weather | Severe storms possible Tuesday night, Wednesday

NEWS



Cobb chiropractor charged with sexual battery

LATEST HEADLINES

HOME / NEWS / LOCAL EDUCATION

Project aims to birth more Georgia charter schools

Resize text A | A | A

Posted: 12:00 a.m. Monday, Dec. 22, 2014



By Rose French - The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

A first-of-its-kind initiative in Georgia aims to develop more higher-achieving charter schools.

A charter incubator program is being launched by the nonprofit advocacy group Georgia Charter Schools Association. It is not getting state funding, but the initiative has the support of the state Department of Education, and marks a key development in the evolution of charter schools in the state. Backers expect it to drive creation of such schools by training and preparing school administrators interested in establishing charters.



HYOSUB SHIN

December 9, 2014 Alpharetta - Second-grade teacher Dinna Duong teaches her class at Amana Academy in Alpharetta on Tuesday, December 9,

The charter school incubator, New Schools for Georgia, is designed to particularly assist charters in their infancy, often their most challenging time, by helping them establish effective governing boards,

advertisement

In this Section



Cop: Awesome 'continued DJing' when friend admitted killing his wife



Atlanta weather | Severe storms possible Tuesday night, Wednesday

Cobb chiropractor charged with sexual battery

Fulton cop hurt in wreck expected to be OK

Atlanta Traffic from the WSB 24-hour Traffic Center

Actual Factual Georgia

Inmate walks away from Hall County work detail

Gunman killed in DeKalb police shootout identified

Fulton cop hurt in wreck expected to be OK

Atlanta man who killed NYC police had long been in trouble with law

... [Read More](#)

develop clear missions.

“It’s (incubator) going to significantly help with the quality of our charter schools, which is good for kids,” said Lou Erste, associate superintendent for policy and charter schools at the Georgia Department of Education. “We need higher quality (charter school) applications if we want to have higher quality schools.”

Some teachers and education observers question, however, whether such an effort will detract from putting needed resources into traditional public schools.



December 9, 2014 Alpharetta - Third-grade teacher Nicole Ralph Forton (center) leads her class at Amana Academy in Alpharetta on Tuesday, ... [Read More](#)

boost financial sustainability and

State legislation in recent years has pushed for more charter schools and alternatives to the traditional public school model, but state educators and others say they have not seen enough high-qualified groups applying for charter schools to fill the demand.

Georgia has 115 charter schools, close to 4 percent of the schools in the state; five years ago, the number was 110. Charter advocates and state education officials say the number of charter schools should be higher.

“I’ve seen a number of charter schools that have opened and run for a few years and then just basically faltered because they were unable to focus on their mission and vision,” said Allen Mueller, executive director of the new incubator, who previously was director of innovation for Atlanta Public Schools where he helped authorize the creation of charter schools in the district. “They were unable to ... focus on serving kids because they were too busy trying to figure out how to deal with facilities or how to run a board meeting or how to deal with open records requests or how to hire good staff.”

State education leaders including Erste urged the Georgia Charter Schools Association to develop ways to boost charter development, and the incubator is a significant step in that direction, said Mueller. Education experts say similar incubators in other states including

Tennessee and Louisiana have helped support charter school growth.

“How they (charter schools) perform in their first few years really sets the stage for how they’re going to perform,” and incubators can play a key role in helping, said [Marisa Cannata](#), senior research associate at [Vanderbilt University](#), who’s written extensively on charter schools. “If they get off to a strong start, they’re likely to continue on that trajectory. If they get off on a weak start, they usually continue to stumble.

“That startup year is a really hard time financially for schools. I think it’s also working through inabilities to access capital funding, funding for transportation, those are also key things that need to be in place for charter schools to really take hold in a community.”

Tracey-Ann Nelson, government relations director with the [Georgia Association of Educators](#), said one concern with the incubator is that it could divide communities vying for limited money for schools. Both charters and traditional schools are funded by taxpayers, but charter schools manage themselves and have more flexibility over their academics.

“For me ... that is the problem with the movement of charter schools is that it’s about fighting and dividing, not collaborating and strengthening public schools as a whole entity,” Nelson said. “No matter what, we’re all trying to make sure we deliver quality education to kids.”

One of the most recent examples of charter schools failing to make it in metro Atlanta involved Fulton County school board members denying the renewal of charters for a high school and elementary school in the district, citing weaknesses with governance and problematic finances.

Members decided to cut ties with [Fulton Science Academy High](#) and [Fulton Sunshine Academy](#) elementary by the end of this school year. Fulton school district staff cited poor governance that “resulted in the default on a \$19 million bond, a self-perpetuating board membership structure that has been dominated by individuals who did not represent the community,” and a “general lack of transparency.” Leaders of the charter schools have denied any wrongdoing.

Superintendent Robert Avossa of Fulton schools said the incubator should help guide charter schools in their development.

“The state could use more high quality charter schools that are tending to the needs of the most at-risk kids. That’s the area we’ve not been able to do well in,” said Avossa. “I think charters play an important role in public education. I don’t see them as a silver bullet. It’s hard to run a

charter school from scratch. That's where the incubator will play a critical role. You've got plenty of charters doing good work and some that aren't doing good work and can tarnish the effort of the other group."

Ehab Jaleel, executive director for Amana Academy in Alpharetta, a K-8 Fulton charter school with close to 700 students, says the incubator should help bolster charter schools in Georgia, where "there's been this kind of pent-up demand" for them. "People are very interested in school choice."

Jaleel thinks the charter incubator "would have made a world of difference for us" when the school started nearly nine years ago. "We've kind of had to learn as we've grown, and the growth period is extremely difficult."

"I think having an incubator would have exposed us to a more structured approach to learning these things very quickly so that from the beginning we would have been set up for success. I feel like we ... kind of learned as we went. It's a steep learning curve, and I think we could have benefited a lot from the incubator."

PREVIOUS: WORLD

Iraqi Kurds push into contested northern ...

By Dalton Bennett - Associated Press

NEXT: LOCAL MILITARY

'Traveling Joe' ready to lead Georgia Natio...

By Jeremy Redmon - The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Popular on MyAJC.com

[Falcons' progress a welcome positive sign for future](#)

[Shhh! We're trying to shoot over here](#)

[Pt. 2 of Q&A with John Hart: Restocking Braves takes time](#)

[Obama nominates Atlanta's Yates for top Justice post](#)

[Atlanta man who killed NYC police had long been in trouble...](#)

advertisement



Living Intown Magazine - a product of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Gain an insider's perspective into the unique neighborhoods of in town Atlanta. Our lifestyle magazine explores all the things that make in-town living so appealing - from restaurants and attractions to the neighborhoods and their distinct personalities. Available on your desktop, tablet and smartphone and at select outlets around town.

[Learn More](#)



Read Today's Paper online

Still like to read the newspaper in the familiar page-by-page format? Great news! Digital versions of today's paper are available on your computer or tablet. And it's included in your subscription.

[Learn more](#)

[Read](#)

NEWS

- [MyAJC.com](#)
- [Metro/State](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Investigations](#)
- [Opinion](#)

- [Living](#)
- [Nation/World](#)
- [Today's Paper](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Living Intown Magazine](#)
- [ajc.com](#)

CUSTOMER SERVICE

- [Subscribe](#)
- [Subscriber Services](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Web site feedback](#)
- [Digital Products](#)
- [FAQ's](#)
- [Work Here](#)

MARKETPLACE

- [Cars](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Homes/Real Estate](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Kudzu](#)
- [Advertise With Us](#)
- [Shopping](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA

- [Pinterest](#)
- [Google+](#)
- [Tumblr](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Find Five](#)
- [The Vent](#)

© 2014 Cox Media Group. By using this website, you accept the terms of our [Visitor Agreement](#) and [Privacy Policy](#), and understand your options regarding

[Ad Choices](#)

[Learn about careers at Cox Media Group](#)