



September 30, 2015

Hello Sarah Smith Community -

On September 25, 2015, the Georgia Department of Education voted unanimously to approve the Atlanta Public Schools charter system application during its state board meeting. Atlanta Public Schools will become the 33rd school system in Georgia to achieve Charter System status.

A charter system is a school district that operates under a performance-based contract between the local board and the state board of education. Under the Charter System operating model, Atlanta Public Schools would gain freedom and flexibility from many state education laws and regulations in exchange for increased accountability for student achievement. Additionally, charter systems must distribute meaningful decision-making authority to individual schools by maximizing school-level governance through local school governance teams.

On October 14, 2015 at 6:30 PM there will be a North Atlanta Cluster meeting at Brandon Elementary School in the gym of the main campus for people who are interested in learning more about the charter district conversion as well as information about serving on the Local School Governance Team, which is a critically important part of the charter system conversion. Please mark your calendar to attend this important informational session.

Absences from School –

Since the beginning of the school year on August 5th 98 students have been absent from school three days or more. This number is really alarming! School attendance is critically important as it's not possible to teach the children important subject matter content if they are not here. Please work hard to ensure that children are only missing school when they are sick. Early checkouts and late arrivals are also problematic. Please work with us to have your child at school on time and allow the child to stay for the entire school day. Additionally, it seems there is some confusion regarding excused and unexcused absences.

Excused absences are those absences authorized by the Atlanta Board of Education. They include:

- Personal illness of the student and when attendance in school would endanger the health of the student or the health of others.
- Quarantine either by the county health department or by the family's physician.
- Serious illness or death in the immediate family of the student that would reasonably necessitate absence from school.
- Medical or dental appointments with verifications; however, such non-emergency appointments are encouraged during non-school hours when possible.
- Special or recognized religious holidays observed by the faith of the student.
- Weather or other environmental conditions preventing a student from getting to school or rendering school attendance hazardous to the health or safety of the student.
- An absence not to exceed one (1) day in order for the student to register to vote.
- Court ordered by governmental agency mandating the student's absence from school.

All other absences are **unexcused**. When absences are excused, it does not mean they are erased from the student's record, it simply means there was an APS-valid reason for the child to miss school. Students cannot be counted present at school if they are not in attendance.

Parent-Teacher Conferences –

Teachers are currently in the process of scheduling fall parent-teacher conferences. Please look for an invitation from your child's teacher/s in the next few days. The conferences will be held from October 5 – October 23.

Georgia Milestone Assessment System –

The Georgia Department of Education implemented a new testing system, the Georgia Milestones Assessment System (Georgia Milestones) during the 2014-2015 academic year. The new system replaced the CRCT. Georgia Milestones was aligned to the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) and required more from students than the CRCT it replaced in order to better prepare students for college and career and to provide a more realistic picture of academic progress. A major benefit of the new system is that it is one consistent testing program across grades 3-12.

The increased expectations for student learning reflected in Georgia Milestones may mean initially lower scores than previous years' CRCT scores. School districts and schools have not received the scores from last spring at this time. We are anticipating that they will be release in mid to late October.

Update on the Installation of Artificial Turf for the Playground at the Primary Campus –

As you are probably aware, the PTA is investing approximately \$150,000 to make the playground at the PC a better place for our children to play and enjoy PE and recess. These improvements will come at a slight cost to us in that students will not be able to use the playground from Monday, October 5 through Friday, October 16 (if there is no inclement weather). Part of this time is during fall break to avoid as many days that students are in school as possible. The payoff will be great when we have a playground that actually has grass and not just dirt. Additionally, the school should remain cleaner as the students will not be tracking in dirt, dead grass, and pine straw remnants from the field. If the construction is completed earlier than expected, of course, the playground will reopen.

Thanks for your understanding and cooperation. Also a BIG thanks to the PTA!!!

Staff Feature –

Each month two staff members are randomly selected and profiled in "The Anchor." This gives you an opportunity to know a little bit about the wonderful faculty and staff members working with your children every day.

Shantel Spencer – Special Education Teacher

Birthplace/Hometown – New Orleans, LA

Education – University of New Orleans and Xavier University of New Orleans

Personal – Traveling, Family Time, Interior Design and Fashion

Claim to Fame – Bridging the achievement gap

Favorite Quote – "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." Benjamin Franklin

Kathryn Sublett – Fifth Grade Teacher

Birthplace/Hometown – St. Simons Island, GA

Education – Bachelor's in Early Childhood Education with a concentration in Special Education from Georgia State University

Personal – Loves the beach and anything involved with it. Her husband and her lazy Labradors are her heart. She is the oldest of six children and she enjoys eating delicious desserts.

Claim to Fame – Animal Lover

Favorite Quote – “I have come to believe that a great teacher is a great artist and that there are as few as there are any other great artists. Teaching might even be the greatest of the arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit.” John Steinbeck

Your Principal,

Ken Proctor, Ed.D.