New Waves—Educational Research & Development
March, 2014, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 99–108

New Roles School and District Administrators Play In the Georgia Charter System Models

Laura E. Lashley
Kennesaw State University

Abstract

As the amount of decentralization in school district governance reforms increase, so does the necessity for new ways of thinking about leadership, at both the district and school levels. Redistributions of power and governance require educational leaders to meet new expectations of adaptability and problem solving that may not have been present before in the traditional school district models where they received their training. Virtually every area of decision-making for schools and districts is affected by decentralization in governance, and leaders must stand at the ready to adapt their own methods and take full advantage of the flexibility and new opportunities they have been granted. (Hassel, 2003). This article examines Georgia's decentralized and distributed governance reform models and provides contextual advice to leaders at both the school and district levels for effective educational leadership in the new era of increased autonomy and flexibility.

Power in the educational landscape is changing hands. More and more education reforms are targeting the traditional structure of the school district and its accompanying educational hierarchy that has dominated the educational landscape for the last century. The school district's central office is, in many cases, no longer the epicenter of the district's decision-making. The local board of education may no longer exercise the usual amount of discretion in traditional areas of board oversight, with governance reforms requiring boards to hand over more and more authority to the superintendent as well as to school leaders directly in crucial areas of district management, such as curriculum, human resources, and finances.

Decentralization in school district governance stems from the powerful realization that effective leadership in education is critical to the success of students (Garda, 2013). This maxim is nothing new, but governance reforms that seek to redistribute decision-making authority are premised on the idea that effective leadership should be localized and customized to the needs of the individual schoolhouse. In traditional districts, school leaders are often treated as conduits for the implementation of district-level initiatives, divested of the power to be creative and invest in solutions tailor made for their own schools (Hassel, 2003). Conversely, school leaders in districts that are experimenting with decentralization reform are often authorized to exercise a great deal of control over a wide range of school-level decisions that previously were reserved for central office staff (Smith, 2003).

This shift in decision-making authority from traditional power structures in education, such as the local board and superintendent, to site-based school leaders and local school councils has created a new set of requirements and considerations for effective leadership, for leaders at both the district and school levels. For many school systems, the days of top-down leadership are now gone. Boards must learn how to relinquish their grip on district management issues, superintendents must learn how to delegate meaningful authority to school leaders and shift their own focus to central office efficiency, and school leaders must learn how to exercise real autonomy and flex their creativity in their newly deregulated school environment (Smith, 2003). This article will begin by reviewing a range of site-based autonomy reform models for school districts, as well

as their implications for educational leadership. From the examination of these models, a list of concrete recommendations and advice for how to effectively navigate the shifting power dynamics of decentralized districts for educational leaders, at both the district and school level, will be provided.

Decentralization as Education Reform

The concept of local control is often viewed as the very backbone of the U.S. educational system, based on the notion that the federal government should only be minimally involved with setting educational policy, passing the lion's share of educational decisions to states, who subsequently delegate a large portion of their authority to localities (Garda, 2013). However, education reform models based on decentralization take this concept of local control several steps further. Instead of elected or appointed school board officials setting the educational policy for an entire school district in line with our traditional concept of local control, new education reforms based on decentralization have shifted the decision-making authority from local boards to school leaders and site-based governance councils located at the individual school level (Augenblick, 2003). These types of reforms stretch the concept of local control to its furthest limits, to the school doors themselves, and with these reforms, new demands are being placed on our leaders at both the district and school levels within the shifting paradigm of decision-making authority.

Decentralization as education reform became recently popularized through the concept of the individual charter school in the early 1990s. In exchange for autonomy and flexibility from state laws, rules, and regulations, a charter school makes contractual promises to achieve certain academic performance goals and operational objectives per the terms of the charter contract with the entity that granted its authorization to operate. The underlying premise of the charter school education reform model is that, when decision-making authority for a school is exercised by individuals from that school's immediate community, those individuals will be able to make the best decisions for that school (Ziebarth, 2003). The charter school, due to its localized leadership and close touch with its community and stakeholders, will be able to better adapt its educational planning initiatives to the needs of its students. This is in contrast to the often criticized "one-size-fits-all" approach to educational planning which occurs when educational policy is set by the central office of a school district and then handed down for implementation to all schools within that district, regardless of the schools' individualized needs (Hassel, 2003). The charter school model, at least theoretically, allows for local governance by individuals that can customize local solutions for local problems.

This notion of site-based autonomy, supreme local control, and flexibility from state-prescribed education laws, regulations, and policies has been very attractive since its inception in many education reform circles, and in the late 1990s, the charter school concept was extended theoretically and considered for application to entire school districts (Hendrie, 2003). Superintendents were persuaded to consider the drastic shift to a decentralized model due to the promises of increased agility and ability to adapt educational planning initiatives to the needs of their schools, as well as freedom from burdensome state education laws and policies that were not translating into the desired academic outcomes for their school districts. The earliest iterations of a "charter district" came about when a few small school systems in California and Georgia converted all of their traditional public schools directly into charter schools using existing legislation designed for the creation of individual charter schools (Lockwood, 2002). As part of this coordinated push for decentralization at the district level, these new "charter districts"

streamlined their central office operations and divested significant amounts of authority to the individual charter schools within these districts (Hendrie, 2003).

From these early days of exploration with the charter district model, a continuum of decentralization has since emerged. One state in particular, Georgia, has implemented a statewide governance reform strategy that actively encourages its school districts to choose from a variety of decentralized governance options by June 30, 2015. This article will examine the range of governance models now available to Georgia school districts before reviewing the new demands these reforms have placed on Georgia's educational leaders.

The Range of Governance Reform Strategies in Georgia

The "System of Charter Schools" Model in Georgia

Georgia's first experimentation with the concept of decentralization as education reform at the district level occurred when each school in the Cartersville school district applied for and received charter school status under the leadership of the Cartersville superintendent and board of education in 1996. The Cartersville school district, a small district composed of four schools, took the initiative at the district level to seek a near complete divestment of decision-making authority to the local school level by pursuing individual charter school status for each of its four schools (Lockwood, 2002). To accomplish this, the Cartersville school district took advantage of Georgia's first charter school law, enacted in 1993, which allowed existing public schools to convert to charter schools to receive flexibility from state education law and policy in exchange for meeting academic goals (Lockwood, 2002).

For a term of five years, the Cartersville school district's four schools operated as a system of charter schools from 1996-2001. School-based leadership teams comprised of parents, teachers, administrators, and community members at large gathered first to formulate the redesign and restructuring of the schools into their charter versions and then to serve as governing boards for the charter schools once formed. Cartersville constituents voiced concerns over whether the local board of education and superintendent would actually relinquish its control and whether they were introducing change to the district's structure for the right reasons (Lockwood, 2002). While the Cartersville superintendent later publicly lauded the experiment as a success, none of the four Cartersville charter schools opted to renew their charters with the state at the end of the five-year term. The rationale provided was that charter status was no longer necessary to implement the kinds of reforms Cartersville system had adopted, such as block scheduling at the high school level, increased expectations for student attendance, an increased focus on reading and math at the elementary level, exemptions from state prescribed instructional materials, and certification requirements (Lockwood, 2002).

This model of decentralization in governance is known in Georgia by the somewhat awkward term of "system of charter schools." A system of charter schools is exactly what it sounds like; each school in the system has its own charter contract with the state that outlines its individual mission and academic goals to be met (GADOE, 2013). A system of charter schools can be considered a loose federation of charter schools, with some level of central office support that is significantly less than that found in a traditional district. This governance reform strategy represents the most drastic option available to Georgia school districts as it requires the greatest shift in decision-making authority to the school level. Notably, it is the only option available to Georgia school districts that the Georgia Department of Education refers to as truly "decentralized" (GADOE, 2013). At present, the Cartersville school district is the only school district in Georgia to have ever adopted the system of charter schools approach.

The Charter System Model in Georgia

The charter system model, available since 2007, is the intermediate option for Georgia school districts in the continuum of decentralization models available. Like charter schools in Georgia, charter systems must apply to the state to receive a grant of autonomy from Georgia's education laws, rules, and regulations in exchange for a set of academic and operational goals that must be achieved per the terms of the charter system contract. To incentivize school districts to pursue charter system status, the Georgia legislature tacked on an additional funding bump of approximately $100 dollars per pupil, subject to appropriations, for charter systems. In addition to the funding carrot, the legislature also brandished a stick; all school districts in Georgia must make an affirmative decision by June 30, 2015 to pursue full charter system status, one of the less extensive flexibility options offered by the state, or remain status quo (O.C.G.A. 20-2-84.3). School districts cannot make this decision ad hoc; they must hold a series of public meetings to discuss the options, thus making the decision to remain status quo politically difficult to adopt, particularly if the district is not performing well or could use the additional state funding.

As part of the charter system application to the state, prospective charter systems must identify a series of innovations and reforms that they could not otherwise adopt without freedom from Georgia's education laws (Samuels, 2012a). The innovations identified in the district's application are largely reforms levied at district-level operations. The "big four" areas of district-level innovation tend to focus around financial-based reforms, such as the removal of state expenditure controls, state salary requirements, and mandatory class sizes, in addition to changes in human resource requirements, such as waiver of teacher certification requirements (GADOE, 2013). School-level innovations are largely excluded, and for good reason; a central tenet of the Georgia charter system model is the creation of School Governance Councils that are granted meaningful authority in the operation of their individual schools. These School Governance Councils ("SGCs") are required by law to have decision-making authority in personnel decisions, financial decisions, curriculum and instruction, resource allocation, establishing and monitoring the achievement of school improvement goals, and school operations (O.C.G.A. 20-2-2062(12.1)). As such, a district's charter system application generally contains proposed reforms at the district level while reserving the authority to make school-based reforms to SGCs. The district's charter system application does, however, have to include concrete plans for the central office's divestment of decision-making authority in these areas to SGCs, an exercise which can be very difficult for districts that want to engage in some form of decentralization without losing total control of the district's mission or their constituent schools.

The charter system model differs from the similarly named system of charter schools model due to the level of autonomy provided to the individual schools. In a system of charter schools, each school, at least in theory, should be operating in complete autonomy from the central office of its system. The central office should exist to coordinate financial disbursements, apply for system-wide grants, and provide general back-office supports to its charter schools. Each charter school in a system of charter schools has its own governing board that, again in theory, has complete authority over its school's decisions and policies (GADOE, 2013). This is in juxtaposition to a charter system model which requires that the district divest some meaningful level of decision-making authority in personnel, finances, curriculum, resource allocation, school improvement, and school operations to the School Governance Councils located at each school, but the central office, superintendent, and local board of education can still choose to maintain a significant role in the operations of both the district and its schools (Samuels, 2012a). The Georgia

Department of Education refers to the charter system model as its "distributed" authority model (GADOE, 2013).

It is this difference of autonomy granted to individual schools that makes the charter system model a more realistic and appealing option to large Georgia school districts. From a practical perspective, coordinating the charter application process of each school would be virtually impossible for a large school system to accomplish. The meaningful community collaboration that the Cartersville school district was able to orchestrate in the planning and redesign of its district to a system of charter schools could not occur with a district that spans a large geographical area with hundreds of schools, thousands of employees, and hundreds of thousands of students. This is not to say that some large districts have not completely disbanded their traditional central office operations; for example, the portfolio district model, which is mostly outside the scope of this article's review, has been implemented in large school districts such as New Orleans, where every school within the district is created as or converted to charter school status (Samuels, 2012a). The major difference with the system of charter schools approach and the portfolio district model is that the system of charter schools approach is characterized by the school district itself leading the initiative to conversion to charter status while still retaining some ownership over the overall operation of its schools. Conversely, the portfolio district model completely bids out the charter creation and conversion process to outside educational vendors, making it a more feasible operation for large districts than the system of charter schools model.

The Strategic School System Model in Georgia

A third option, and one representing the least amount of disruption to a school district's hierarchy, is the newly created strategic school system model. If a Georgia school district does not wish to decentralize its operations to the extent required by the charter system and system of charter schools models, it can instead opt for strategic school system status by the June 2015 deadline (Samuels, 2012a). A strategic school system enters into a contract with the State Board of Education for specific waivers to certain, state-selected Georgia education laws, rules, and regulations in exchange for meeting a specified suite of academic and operational goals. Strategic school systems are not required to divest authority to SGCs like charter systems must, but they still get the benefit of waiving some of Georgia's educational mandates (GADOE, 2013). It is known colloquially as "charter system lite," and was created in policy rather than law largely in response to the resistance to adopting full charter system status by more traditionally minded school districts. Notably, strategic system status does not offer the additional per pupil funding, and the "big four" areas of class size, salary requirements, certification, and state expenditure controls are not included in the bundle of waivers available (GADOE, 2013). This model is characterized by the Georgia Department of Education as one of its "centralized" governance reforms (GADOE, 2013).

While Georgia has other types of governance reform models in its portfolio of options for school districts,[1] these three models represent a range from complete decentralization to ultimately none. By providing these different avenues to its school districts, Georgia has legislatively allowed its school districts to experiment with whichever governance model appeals to their constituencies

[1] Notably, the IE squared model is excluded from the article's discussion. The IE squared model was introduced at the same time as the charter system model, but its use is already on the decline and is being discouraged by the state. IE squared is the equivalent of a centralized charter system—districts receive full flexibility from the law, but the district retains complete control for innovations at both the school and district level. The catch is that if an IE squared system does not meet its accountability goals, the state is prompted to take over the control of the district. When this eventuality inevitably occurred for one prominent school district that fell short by a very small margin on an ambitious goal, the state was put into a situation where following through on the legal consequences of that shortfall would have not been in the best interests of the district or state. Because this particular model is being phased out, a more formal discussion of it and its implications for educational leaders would not be useful.

the most, withholding any judgment or official state stance on whether decentralization as an education reform is a must to raise student achievement. It is merely an option for school districts to explore, and if a school district prefers to maintain a top-down approach, there are avenues available for that as well.

Advice for Leaders in the Era of Autonomy

Leadership in the System of Charter Schools Model

In the fully decentralized approach to district governance, the system of charter schools model, the superintendent's role changes drastically. The superintendent has always been required to exert strategic leadership for both the district's overall educational mission as well as the minutiae of its operations, but in a decentralized model, the superintendent has less control over the means to the ends the superintendent desires for the district (Smith, 2003). The superintendent's role becomes more about setting the parameters for which others can work in rather than mandating specific measures and methods to accomplish academic and operational outcomes (Hassel, 2003). The superintendent must be content with setting the boundaries of the universe for the district and then holding the district's schools accountable to the goals established by their charter contracts.

Furthermore, the superintendent must reconfigure and reimagine the role of the central office. The central office must be able to provide the type of support and expertise necessary to nurture the district's fledgling charter schools without overstepping its boundaries and impinging on the grant of autonomy to these schools (Smith, 2003). The central office can no longer help by simply issuing mandates to its schools—it must instead provide strategies for the schools to elect from and help to build the capacity of its schools' leaders (R. Wade, personal communication, December 9, 2013). The superintendent and the central office must be able to anticipate the types of trainings, information, support, and resources that its charter schools will require to succeed and be ready to provide them (Smith, 2003). The superintendent assumes the role of a matchmaker of sorts in this sense, matching the schools with needs to appropriate vendors, resources, and opportunities (Hassel, 2003).

The superintendent also must play a critical role in providing information to and rallying support for the decentralization initiative in the community (R. Avossa, personal communication, December 17, 2013). With such a drastic shift in operations, it is imperative that families and members of the community understand and support the system of charter schools approach. Without proper communication with the district's stakeholders, the decentralized approach may suffer from parent dissatisfaction, confusion, and refusal to support the initiative. Families need to understand where their children will be attending school and what their options are if they do not like the new direction their local charter school may be taking. They also need to understand their own power to get involved and shape their local charter school's mission and operations, which in turn can help increase their buy-in of the overall model. Similarly, employees of the district will need clear communication from the superintendent on how their employment may be affected by the shift to a decentralized system of charter schools. Superintendents should be clear about the benefits employees stand to receive but also how traditional protections and benefits, such as certain forms of tenure rights, certification requirements, and salary requirements may be affected. (Hassel, 2003).

While the superintendent must adjust to the system of charter schools approach by relinquishing large areas of control in school district management and operations, a school leader in a system of charter schools must adjust by assuming the responsibilities of essentially a CEO of a small company. In exchange for the large increase of responsibility over business operations that

were largely handled by central office staff previously, the school leader is allowed, finally, the autonomy to create initiatives that are directly responsive to the needs of the school (Samuels, 2012b). If an adopted initiative is not successful, the school leader does not have to wait for permission from the central office to cease its use, he or she can simply abandon the initiative and start over with something new (Hassel, 2003). In short, decentralization allows school leaders to be nimble to the needs of their schools.

With autonomy from regulation and the freedom to incorporate innovative new practices comes a great deal of pressure to be creative, however. Arguably, school leaders have not received the type of training and education to fully assume the mantle of the school-based CEO and all of its attendant responsibilities and expectations, chief among them the expectation for creativity. School leaders for decades have complained about the constraints on their ability to implement new strategies in their schools outside of the central office mandates; however, now that those constraints are being lifted, school leaders may find it difficult to exercise the newly gained freedom to make innovative strides in their schools. This is particularly true when these school leaders are simultaneously assuming a heavier burden in business operations that was previously controlled by the central office.

To carry the business analogy further, the school leader as CEO now has its very own board of directors, the governing board of the charter school, to report to. The school leader must forge a relationship of trust with the governing board while simultaneously maintaining a separation of responsibilities between the board and school leader to avoid overstepping the boundaries of either role. A successful school leader will utilize the governing board as a thought partner on school improvement initiatives, harnessing the power of the group to arrive at innovative new solutions for the school's needs while the school leader serves as the operational expert to help guide the explorations. The school leader must be adept at managing the nuances of this micro-political environment to lead meaningful, respectful collaboration among the several groups of stakeholders (students, parents, employees, board, community, and district) committed to the school's overall success (R. Wade, personal communication, December 9, 2013).

Leadership in the Charter System Model

In a distributed authority model like Georgia's charter system model, the redistribution of decision-making is less drastic than that required by a fully decentralized model. While less drastic, however, the shift to a charter system model is no less complicated and may even present greater complexities due to the need to finely tune each working relationship in the system to achieve a meaningful and effective balance of power. School Governance Councils (SGCs) per Georgia law require some decision-making authority in a wide variety of areas, but how much authority is appropriate and in which areas are factors that will be unique to each school system that attempts charter system status. Smaller systems may be able to divest significantly more power to its SGCs due to the central office's ability to maintain a more active oversight function while larger systems with thousands of employees may not be able to reasonably expect a school-level SGC to make effective human resource decisions with district-wide implications, for example.

With such a careful balancing act to perform, the superintendent in a charter system must first and foremost serve as the expert on the school district's needs and capabilities for effective redistributions of power. The superintendent will likely conceptualize and lead the balancing process between the shifts in his or her own powers and responsibilities, those of the local board of education, school leaders, and SGCs. As such, the superintendent must have both a depth and breadth of knowledge about how shifts in the power structure will affect the district's operations

as a whole and at the individual school level. Superintendents in charter systems must have a clear vision for the goals a school system as a whole must attain. Without this vision, the system's individual schools will have nothing to base their own school-based strategies upon, and the system's ability to achieve its overall goals will suffer as a result (R. Avossa, personal communication, December 17, 2013).

Superintendents in charter systems must also possess excellent project and change management skills and seek to develop those same skills in their system's school leaders (R. Wade, personal communication, December 9, 2013). While project and change management skills are critical in the operation and leadership of any school system, these skills are particularly necessary to forge the cultural transformation which is necessary at the system and school levels to effect true second-order organizational change (R. Wade, personal communication, December 9, 2013). In the Georgia charter system model in particular, all distributions of governance and autonomy should be meaningfully made for established purposes and outcomes. In the race to be innovative, superintendents must be very careful to promote change when it is necessary for a specific improvement and only after the effects of the proposed change have been evaluated for their potential impacts on the organization at large. What works for one system will not necessarily work for another, and not all innovations in practice will help a system to achieve its specific goals. In the charter system framework where the entire model is customizable, superintendents must be careful to guide the system to obtaining the balance of power and autonomy between the schools, central office, and board of education that will work best for that system and its needs.

In striking this balance of autonomy, superintendents must also be particularly careful in ensuring that the charter system's practices align with legislative requirements to maintain charter system status. These requirements are unfortunately not always clear or fully developed due to the newness of the governance reforms adopted, and accordingly, compliance can be difficult. For example, the Floyd County charter system recently came under investigation by the Georgia Department of Education and Charter Advisory Committee due to the system's failure to involve its SGCs in a system-wide reduction in force (Hatcher, 2013). Because Georgia's charter system model requires systems to grant some level of decision-making authority regarding human resources and personnel to its SGCs, Floyd County's failure to involve its SGCs at any point during its discussions about and subsequent development of the reduction in force plan that affected over a hundred system employees was considered a violation of Floyd County's charter system contract as well as Georgia law (Hatcher, 2013). The Floyd County superintendent has since been assigned a state charter consultant tasked with building a compliant charter culture for the system to ensure that Floyd County meets its contractual and legislative obligations prospectively.

School leaders in charter system schools, like those leaders in the system of charter schools model, also share characteristics with a small corporation's CEO. School leaders in charter system schools are simultaneously given more autonomy along with responsibility in school operations and programmatic initiatives, which in many ways increases the overall amount of responsibilities they face on a day-to-day basis (Samuels, 2012b). While leaders in traditional schools are primarily focused on managing the day-to-day operations of the school and implementing initiatives dictated from district-level staff, school leaders in charter systems must handle both the daily operations as well as take an active role in shaping the school's trajectory of innovation. The charter system model requires its school leaders to be both reactive and proactive and take a greater share of ownership in forging solutions to meet the school's needs (Hassel, 2003).

Unlike leaders in a system of charter schools model, however, school leaders in charter system schools can still rely on a significant amount of intervention and support from the central office of

the district. How much support and what kinds will be available will depend on the type of charter system model used by the system, but the central office of a charter system will still have substantial involvement. School leaders in charter system schools also do not have quite the same dynamic with their SGCs as a school leader in a system of charter schools model has with his/her school's governing board. An SGC does not have the same authority, breadth of responsibility, or fiduciary obligations as a charter school's governing board has, and thus, the dynamic between the school leader and the SGC is more of a collaborative partnership for change rather than a supervisory reporting structure. Because of the collaborative nature of the school leader's relationships with the SGC and the central office, the school leader must be adept at proactively utilizing the resources offered by the SGC and the district. The increase in the school leader's responsibilities in this model makes it particularly critical that the school leader uses the district's infrastructure and SGC's resources effectively to avoid burn out and inefficient micro-management over the school's functions and growth (Samuels, 2012b).

Leadership in the Strategic School System Model

The strategic school system model, representing the least drastic option on the continuum of decentralized governance reforms available in Georgia, poses its own set of leadership challenges aimed primarily at the superintendent. In the strategic system model, superintendents must use their knowledge of their system's needs to request specific waivers from Georgia laws and regulations with documented evidence of the need for those waivers to accomplish specific solutions for their system. This model requires extensive forethought by a system's superintendent as the entire plan must be presented in full to the Georgia Department of Education for consideration at one given time. Unlike the system of charter schools or charter system models, both of which allow for a work-in-progress mentality to try different approaches to meet the system's goals, the strategic system model is a one-shot plan that must be devised in its entirety before its implementation. Only certain laws and regulations are allowed for waiver under this model as well, so the superintendent must be careful in advocating for this model because it may not represent the best option for the system. School leaders within a strategic school system generally retain the same role and responsibilities as school leaders within traditionally operated districts due to the fact that the strategic system model empowers only district-level leadership and staff to develop district-wide innovations.

As the amount of decentralization in a particular governance reform strategy increases, so does the necessity for new ways of thinking about leadership, at both the district and school levels. Redistributions of power and governance require leaders to meet new expectations of adaptability and problem solving that may not have been present before in the traditional district models where they received their training. Virtually every area of decision-making for schools is affected by decentralization in governance, and leaders must stand at the ready to adapt their own methods and take full advantage of the flexibility and new opportunities they have been granted (Hassel, 2003).

References

Education Commission for the States. (2003). *How can we fund charter districts?* Denver, Co: Augenblick, J. & Sharp, J.

Education Commission for the States. (2003). *A new kind of school district: How local leaders can create charter districts.* Denver, Co: Hassel, B.

Education Commission for the States. (2003). *The new central office: How charter districts serve schools and the public interest.* Denver, Co: Smith, N.

Education Commission for the States. (2003). *State Policy Options for Creating Charter Districts.* Denver, Co: Ziebarth, T.

Garda, R., & Doty, D. (2013). The legal impact of emerging governance models on public education and its office holders. *Urban Lawyer*, 45, 21–50.

Georgia Department of Education. (2013). *School System Flexibility and Charter Schools in Georgia: Overview and Comparison.* Atlanta, Ga: Erste, L.

Hatcher, L. (2013). In light of RIF controversy, Floyd schools assigned charter consultant. *WRGA News.* Retrieved from: http://wrgarome.com/common/more.php?m=49&post_id =7511.

Hendrie, C. (2003, May 28). Once called unrealistic, 'Charter Districts' attract attention. *Education Week*, 22(38), 11.

Increased Flexibility for School Systems, Art. 20 Official Code of Ga. Ann. § 2-84.3. (2013).

Lockwood, A., & Bryans, M. (2002, June). When an entire district goes charter, do benefits follow? A study casts doubts. *School Administrator*, 59(6).

Samuels, C. (2012a, May 22). Fulton district becomes largest charter system in Georgia. *Education Week.* Retrieved from: www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/05/23/32fulton. h31.html.

Samuels, C. (2012b, July 18). District central offices take on new roles. *Education Week*, 31(36), 13.