

A REQUEST FOR CONSISTENT STAFFING

Charter schools typically create a plan with their chartering authorizers to ensure that the mission and vision of the school is carried out. Funding the school is a major component of the plan. Please accept this explanation of our request for consistent funding for CPCS from the Albemarle County School Division. The lack of consistent funding creates persistent uncertainty about the future of our school and we respectfully seek to remedy this stressful situation.

Who are the students who attend the Community Public Charter School?

The Community Public Charter School, a school with a specific mission and passion, exists to meet the needs of particular types of learners. Most students who choose to attend the Community Public Charter School have struggled socially, behaviorally, emotionally, and/or academically in traditional school settings. These students have often been identified as “at risk” because traditional schools are unable to meet their specific learning styles and needs which has resulted in their being unsuccessful. **Even in our close-knit elementary schools, our students feel disconnected in classes with 20 plus students and they anticipate this being amplified in middle school.** Due to the structure and expectations of large, traditional middle schools the students who transfer from middle school report having felt a high level of stress and frustration, as well as being bullied or ostracized by their peers. This, in turn, was responsible for many of them being regularly absent from school.

Our students come to us because they experience being “different” in some way from many of their peers in traditional schools. In our school, our students not only learn to accept and appreciate their differences, but also capitalize on them. At CPCS, we create an environment that helps students learn pro-social/emotional skills which then allows them to advance their academics. Specifically, we are able to create an environment that helps students learn many of the things they must conquer before they can advance academically: to believe that they can succeed, to recognize their own strengths, how to make friends, how to manage emotions, how to respect themselves and others, how to organize their time and maintain focus, to learn self-advocacy and develop stamina and resilience, as well as many other skills that have prevented them from being successful in their past. By learning these skills simultaneously with academic content, our students gain confidence with every new success.

Many of our students come to us with one or more other challenges and diagnoses such as:

- Anxiety Disorders and depression
- ADD / ADHD
- Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, memory disorders and/or processing disorders
- Asperger’s Syndrome and High Functioning Autism
- Oppositional Defiance Disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Sensory Integration Disorder
- Extreme shyness or fear, isolation from peers
- Low self-confidence
- Attention Reactive Disorder

Finally, approximately 90% of students are at least one grade level below their traditional school peers in reading and/or math when they enter CPCS. Approximately 65 % are two or more grade levels behind.

How is CPCS Helping Students Meet Success?

There are many key points leading to how students experience success in all three domains: social, emotional and academic. This is primarily accomplished through a firm commitment to keeping student to teacher ratios

low, typically 12:1 and, when possible, a 6:1 ratio by utilizing the resources of a special education teacher and/or a teaching assistant.

1. Focus on individual achievement, progress, and learning.
2. Trusting, committed and personal relationship between teachers and peers.
3. The ability to increase student engagement by providing differentiation.
4. Individualized instruction and lessons that target student interest.
5. Increased teacher/staff response time and attention, often one-on-one assistance of teacher/staff.
6. Impactful, meaningful and personalized formative assessments across all areas of the curriculum which provide timely student feedback allowing students and teachers the opportunity to make informed decisions on areas of growth and areas where more work is needed.
7. A learning environment that provides a feeling of safety, promotes student voice in asking questions, offering opinions and advocating for needs.
8. Access to planned and/or spontaneous excursions to explore the real world.

What is the Basic Mission of CPCS?

CPCS is dedicated to serving students who are at risk of failure in traditional settings. The potential in every student is recognized with the goal of balancing rigor and high expectations with accommodations that meet the needs of each student. Individualized learning pathways are designed to ensure every student's success. Reasonable expectations paired with manageable workloads and scaffolded learning, allow each student to reach his or her full potential.

Students and staff work together to cultivate real-life skills necessary for success in school and the world of work. As they learn content, students also build organizational skills, communication and collaboration skills, and flexibility, and develop a sense of increased self-confidence, self- concept and self-worth.

Through an arts-infused, project based curriculum, students use hands-on, standards based curricula to deeply engage with ideas and processes that interest them and work to create quality products through a mastery-learning model.

Elements of Success

- Graduation class: Given that CPCS seeks to attract students who are one or more years behind expected benchmarks for core academic content areas, one measure of the efficacy of the school is the on-time graduation rates for students who study at CPCS. Of 52 former students, records are available to determine the progress of 49 students. Excluding 12 students who are currently enrolled in their first semester of ninth grade, 78% of the former students are on track to graduate either on time or early. The remaining 22% of the students are less than one year behind in attaining high school credits, on average, with a median of being half a year behind. In that cohort, two students received their GED's.¹
- Attendance rate: Students and families continually report that for the first time, possibly ever, the students want to come to school and do so. A familiar refrain from the students is that they look forward to the end of winter break; spring break and summer break so that they can be back in school. Many students report disliking weekends and snow days because they want to be in school. The daily attendance rate is 95% or higher.
- In addition to the extensive learning done at CPCS, students are achieving success because, in many cases, for the first time in their child's academic career, the families feel a sense of partnership with

¹ William Deane, The Community Public Charter School Program Evaluation Report, 2014

school. Many of the families who choose to send their child(ren) to CPCS have had to navigate the unfamiliar territory of schooling alone rather than through a strong and trusting relationship with their child's school. In the parent survey administered by the School Management Team 100% of the parents either Strongly Agree or Agree that "The teachers care about their child at CPCS". 98% either Strongly Agree or Agree that "They made a good choice joining the CPCS school community." 98% either Strongly Agree or Agree that "The academic program meets the needs of their child."

- Over 79 % of students showed academic growth as reported on the SOL and/or MAP assessment in language arts and over 69% showed academic growth in math this past year.
- Trust survey – Over 95% of CPCS students report having a positive and trusting relationship with one or more adults in the school on a yearly Trust Survey.

The Rationale for Providing Funding for 6.0 Full Time Staff

To maintain a successful learning environment for a student body of 48-50 students, full-time teachers for each subject are required in math, science, language arts, social studies, and art. In the past, several part-time staff members have been employed; however, services to students and the ability to provide adequate special education collaborative support was significantly compromised. In an arts-infused school, it is imperative to have a full-time art teacher to collaborate with teachers and ensure the curriculum has integrity and depth. In addition, as a Glasser school using the non-punitive model of Choice Theory, and with so much interaction with high needs students, a full-time Director/head teacher is required. Our families need many wrap around services, which we provide and are part of our success. Finally, we continue relationships with families after they graduate CPCS and worked on their behalf as they move through high school.

The funding for the CPCS electives program (all music, drama, metalworking, yoga, knitting, photography, technology, etc.) and our counseling and mindfulness work is raised by the School Management Team. Additionally, money is raised to provide a teaching assistant to ensure the commitment to low students-to-teacher ratios. Most of the professional development opportunities related to Choice Theory work, mindfulness, project-based learning and other relevant experiences are provided for through funds raised by the School Management Team. The goal this year is to raise funding which will enable us to hire a literacy specialist to support the significant deficits many of our students face. Money is also raised for materials and school supplies, food and various other needs that are not covered by any school funding.

Raising money to fund salaries is a very difficult task. The public, and therefore financial donors, expects the school system to provide staff funding. To date, the founders of the school, and the School Management Team, all volunteers have raised over \$1.7 million. Fully funding the ask of 6.0 full-time staff makes a strong statement in support of the school and recognizes the enormous contribution the School Management Team makes to the school and school system. Such funding is a strong statement and encouragement to potential donors. Therefore, based on the data provided in this report, we respectfully ask that consistent funding of 6.0 FTE's be awarded to CPCS.