

## Why a Charter School?

Charter schools seem to be the new “craze” in education, so you are probably wondering how are they different than a traditional school and why Chestnut Mountain is considering converting to a charter school. Due to the popularity of our new CSI program of choice, conversations began with the staff and the school community about moving towards a charter school in the spring of 2011. After much discussion, the staff, PTO Board and School Council voted favorably to pursue a charter petition.

In June, we submitted a letter of intent to pursue Charter status to the State of Georgia Department of Education. We are currently in the process of applying for a Charter Study Grant (due August 1<sup>st</sup>).

In the fall, we will be working with parents, teachers and community members to write a Charter petition which will be submitted to the State DOE by November 1, 2011. A vote by the teachers and parents will be held prior to submission of the charter petition. A list of commonly asked questions and answers are below:

**What is a public charter school?** A public charter school is a public school that operates according to the terms of a charter, or a contract, that has been approved by the local board of education and the State Board of Education. The public Charter schools in Hall County are endorsed and operate under the guidance of the Hall County Board of Education. In exchange for some flexibility, a charter school is bound by contract to be held accountable for meeting the academic or performance-based objectives in the charter.

### **What are the advantages of being a charter school? How will Chestnut Mountain be different?**

- We will have more parent involvement in school level decisions (Local Governing Board)
- Students experience inquiry-based thematic units of study and research as a method of learning
- Students demonstrate what they have learned in creative ways
- Learning is enhanced with technology
- Students will be given the opportunity to participate in enrichment activities throughout the year.
- Enrollment will be based on lottery (instead of application-based enrollment)

### **Who may attend?**

Chestnut Mountain will be open to children within our school district as well as some of those outside of our district. Instead of completing an application for enrollment, students living outside of the CMES attendance zone will be accepted to the charter through lottery. Students currently attending Chestnut Mountain, and those living in the attendance zone will automatically be enrolled (unless the parent opts out of the charter school).

**How will Chestnut Mountain be held accountable?**

We will continue to be held accountable by all standardized testing (ITBS, CRCT) and curriculum guidelines (Georgia Performance Standards) that we currently are held to. We will set yearly goals and report our progress towards meeting those goals.

**Will the focus on inquiry-based instruction and technology take away from reading, ELA, and math or other curriculum areas?** No. Chestnut Mountain will continue providing the rigorous instruction currently provided in all subject areas. By incorporating the standards into thematic units and having students research areas of interest, students gain a deeper understanding of what they are learning. No other subject areas will suffer or be compromised due to charter status.

**How will the charter be funded?** If granted charter status, Chestnut Mountain would still be a part of the Hall County School System and would continue to receive state and local funds. Additional funds may be obtained through state charter grants.

**Will special services (speech, gifted, special education, etc.) still be provided?** Yes. All special services currently provided will still be provided under charter status.

**How can I learn more about Chestnut Mountain's Creative School of Inquiry Charter?**

We will host community meetings and continue to place information on our website about our charter petition. You may also contact the school principal, Dr. Sabrina May ([Sabrina.may@hallco.org](mailto:Sabrina.may@hallco.org)) for additional information.