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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Colquitt County Schools Seek Charter System Status

Moultrie, GA – May 1, 2014 - The Colquitt County Board of Education at its meeting April 28, 2014, voted unanimously to petition the Georgia Board of Education for charter system status and authorized the superintendent and staff to begin work on the application. With timely approval of Colquitt’s petition by the State Board, the school system will begin operation under the charter on July 1, 2015. Current Georgia law requires that no later than June 30, 2015, all local school systems in the state must notify the Georgia Department of Education that the school system will operate as an Investing in Education Excellence School System (IE²), a Charter System, or a “Status Quo” School System. Presently, 24 of Georgia’s 180 local school systems operate as charter systems. Four additional systems have been approved for July 1, 2014, and approximately 50 additional systems are making decisions to become charter systems July 1, 2015. Four systems operate as IE² systems with no new applicants. A Status Quo system is one that does not seek waivers and is satisfied with its current operation. These systems are required to hold public hearings indicating their intent to continue complying with current state laws and rules.

As a Charter System, Colquitt County Schools will receive blanket waivers of state laws and Georgia Board of Education rules allowing far greater flexibility in providing a high quality educational program for all the children and youth of Colquitt County. Under a charter contract the school system gains flexibility to innovate in exchange for increased academic accountability. Waivers could possibly result in financial savings as the system pursues alternative strategies in providing learning opportunities for students. Additional per student state funding is currently provided to charter systems. The school system, under the charter, will continue to hold high expectations for staff and for student learning. The newly adopted College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) will be used to gauge student success instead of the single annual test that has been used for the past several years under the No Child Left Behind Act.

One of the provisions for charter systems is the establishment of school governing councils. Under the charter, each Colquitt County school will have a school governing council composed of school staff, parents, and other citizens to support the work in each of the County’s schools. The current school councils will transition into governing councils under the charter.

The school system has convened a charter steering committee to oversee the development of the Charter System application and several opportunities for community engagement are being planned to ensure valuable input in the development of the Charter Petition which is to be submitted to the Georgia Department of Education as soon as possible but no later than November 1, 2014. Superintendent Sam DePaul stated “We believe that the Georgia Board of Education’s approval of this application will create opportunities for children in our county that would otherwise be unavailable.”

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