



## FCS Charter System Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is a Charter System? How is it different from a charter school?

Fulton County Schools became a Charter System in July of 2012. This means that the district and our schools have flexibility from many state education laws. For example, state law dictates how much time students must be in the classroom (“seat time”) and the certification requirements for teachers. Now that Fulton County Schools is a Charter System, the district is allowed to set those (and many other) rules for our schools. The district is also working to transition more of these decisions to the school level.

Charter schools are different from *schools in a Charter System*. Charter schools (otherwise known as “start-up charter schools” or “conversion charter schools”) hire their own staff and often have to raise money for a building. The principal in a charter school reports directly to the governing board of the school. All of these stipulations are laid out in a contract between the charter school and the state and/or local board of education. With a Charter System, the *district* has the contract with the state and therefore the responsibilities for management and oversight remain with the elected system-level school board – Fulton County Board of Education, in our case. Thus, Fulton County Board of Education retains the authority for hiring and managing all school staff, maintaining facilities, and a few other key responsibilities, while at the same time pushing a number of responsibilities down to the individual schools.

### 2. What are School Governance Councils? What do the School Governance Councils do?

The School Governance Councils work with the principal on the long-term vision and strategy for the school. They are responsible for approving the school’s strategic plan and the school budget recommendations, as well as developing any requests for flexibility from state law or district policy (see previous question). The School Governance Council is comprised of a mix of stakeholders from both the school and the community:

- 3 parents (*elected by parents/guardians*)
- 2 teachers (*elected by school employees*)
- 2 school employees (*appointed by principal*)
- 2 community members (*nominated by principal; approved by rest of Council*)
- Principal (*non-voting member*)
- 2 students (*non-voting members; high school only*)

**3. When will new School Governance Council member begin to make decisions for the school?**

New School Governance Council members elected in March will begin their two-year term of service on July 1, 2016.

**4. When are School Governance Council elections?**

Elections for the parent/guardian and teacher positions on the School Governance Council will be held from 8:00 am on March 23- 5:00 pm on March 29, 2016. Parent/guardian representatives will be elected by the parents/guardians of the school. Teacher representatives will be elected by the school's employees.

All votes will be cast electronically through an online election system within the FCS portal and tallied by an external vendor. All votes are anonymous. Parent/Guardian voters will use their Home Access Center (HAC) usernames and passwords to vote for the parent/guardian representatives on the School Governance Council. School employees will use their employee login information to vote for the teacher representatives on the Council. This system ensures only those eligible to vote are able to vote and that eligible voters cannot vote more than once.

**5. How do I sign up to run for a position on the School Governance Council?**

The Candidate Declaration Period is open from February 16 – March 1, 2016. Candidates who are interested in running for an elected position on the Council must complete a Candidate Declaration Form. The Candidate Declaration Forms are available electronically on the Charter System Website and in hard copy at the physical school location. Candidate Declaration Forms may be completed and submitted electronically by accessing the Charter System Website or completed in hard copy and returned to the Governance & Flexibility Department of Fulton County Schools. The url to the Charter System elections site is <http://www.fultonschools.org/en/about/charter/Pages/electionresources.aspx>.

**6. As a charter system school, will our school get to hire our own teachers and principal? Will we get to choose what students come to our school?**

No. Charter System schools will not hire their principal or teachers. All staff are hired and managed by the district. When a principal vacancy occurs, the School Governance Council may *participate* in the hiring process for the *new* principals.

Charter System schools do not choose which students will attend their school. Unlike start-up charter schools and conversion charter schools, Charter System schools cannot set attendance zones, admissions criteria, or lotteries for student enrollment. The Fulton County Board of Education authorizes and maintains attendance zones for Charter System schools.

**7. Can my child go to any school in the district?**

No. The Charter System designation did not change the Fulton County attendance zone boundaries or allow for enrollment lotteries. Students are still geographically assigned to a "home" school with transportation provided only to that school. Students interested in attending a school other than their "home" school should contact the Fulton County Schools Student Assignment Office between January 1 and February 15 during the year prior to enrollment.

**8. Where can I find more information about the Charter System?**

Additional information on the Charter System can also be found on the Fulton County Website. The link is <http://www.fultonschools.org/en/about/charter>.