



SWEET APPLE ELEMENTARY

STRATEGIC PLAN SY 2014/15 – SY 2016/17

APPROVED 2014

SECTION I: Strategic Planning Background and Approach

This section is a brief (5-7 paragraphs) narrative providing the reader with a summary of the purpose, process, people, and timeline of the strategic planning process. Content has been provided for your use in this section, though schools may revise this as they need or wish to.

In May 2012, the Georgia Board of Education voted to make Fulton County Schools the state's largest charter system. The Charter System Model offers freedom and flexibility, both at the school level and system-wide, to employ research-based methods to improve student achievement, even if such innovations would require exemptions to current state laws and regulations.

Given the new Charter System framework, individual schools within Fulton County have the ability to work in dramatically new ways. We are asking our communities to help drive change and to get involved in our schools. Our collective vision is that every Fulton County school will have a principal and local School Governance Council equipped to effectively lead in a charter system environment to improve student achievement through innovation and flexibility. Schools will be empowered to consider the best uses of resources at the local level and design innovative practices that align with school needs.

Sweet Apple Elementary began the strategic planning process in the spring of 2014. In order to plan our strategic direction forward, we first had to engage with our community to understand our specific challenges and consider a path to collectively address them.

S.A.L.T. (Sweet Apple Leadership Team) is comprised of a representative from each of the grade levels or teams among the instructional staff. In spring of 2014, both the S.A.L.T and S.G.C. (School Governance Council) examined school performance data to establish areas for growth in student achievement.

The S.G.C conducted a community survey to solicit input and goals for the 2014-2015 school year and this survey was distributed electronically. Two focus groups were conducted to receive parent feedback on ways to improve student achievement, school communication, and school climate.

Administration led the faculty in an open-ended brainstorming exercise. What if "Tangy Orange" Elementary School were to open across the street? Teachers were invited to list needs and ideas for improving student achievement in alignment with Sweet Apple's mission and vision created in 2012.

During the 2014-15 school year, the School Governance Council and S.A.L.T. reanalyzed the data to ensure consistency and transparency during the transition to a new principal. Work sessions were held throughout the summer and fall which included S.A.L.T. and S.G.C. to maximize opportunities for collaboration.

Our process included five distinct phases: (1) a needs assessment; (2) the identification of priority issues; (3) the establishment of long-term outcomes, focus areas, & short-term goals; (4) the formulation of strategic initiative; and (5) the development of a monitoring plan. Developed over a period of several months and designed

collaboratively with input and guidance from many stakeholders, the strategic plan represents our deliberate approach to shape and guide what **Sweet Apple Elementary** is, what we do, and why. Our students deserve the best educational experience we can provide, and this plan sets our vision and direction for making that happen.

SECTION II: Context for the Strategic Plan: The School’s Needs Assessment

This section should present the results of the school’s organizational assessment and environmental scan. Rather than list every detail and finding from these exercises, this section should focus on the highlights of the school’s external and internal environments that informed the strategic planning process. Content has been provided for your use in this section, though schools may revise this as they need or wish to.

For every school, the strategic planning process must begin with a thorough consideration of the questions “Where are we as a school?” and “With what do we have to work?” By identifying strengths and weaknesses within the school and examining opportunities and challenges within the external environment, schools lay the foundation for building a strategic plan that builds on their positive attributes while overcoming any weaknesses or areas for improvement.

Sweet Apple Elementary began the strategic planning process by conducting a needs assessment. Through a close analysis of the internal and external environments, we sought to identify stakeholders’ perceptions of our school and enhance our understanding of the political, socio-economic, and demographic environment in which the school operates. By analyzing a comprehensive set of school data and reviewing school-based surveys and external school reviews, the leaders of **Sweet Apple Elementary** clarified performance trends and identified the school’s most critical areas for improvement.

Needs Assessment – Process & Summary of Findings

The needs assessment for Sweet Apple focused on student achievement results, the School Quality Review report, staff input, and a parent survey.

Achievement Results Overview

The Sweet Apple Elementary School Governance Council along with the faculty and Leadership Team reviewed student achievement data including CRCT, ITBS, STAR and Talented and Gifted Assessment Data. Students consistently perform at high levels on both the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test (C.R.C.T.) and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, (I.T.B.S.). The following areas were noted by the stakeholders when looking at the data:

- Percentage of students who qualify for the gifted program in K-2 is lower than 3-5.
- Noticeable discrepancy between the numbers of students who are referred for gifted testing (higher) than those who are eligible for acceleration.

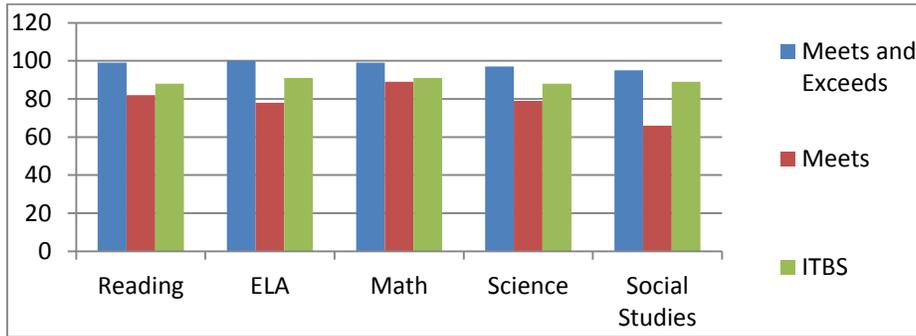
- Significantly lower percentage of students exceeded expectations on the Social Studies CRCT than any other CRCT test.
- CRCT scores for students transitioning from 3rd to 4th in 2012 to 2013 and 2013 to 2014 showed gains in all subject areas.
- Percentage of students that exceed in social studies on the CRCT dropped from 4th to 5th grade.
- Percentage of students that exceed in science on the CRCT dropped from 4th to 5th grade.
- Percentage of students that exceed in reading and language arts on the CRCT dropped from 4th to 5th.

Strength/Weakness Exercise – CRCT/ITBS

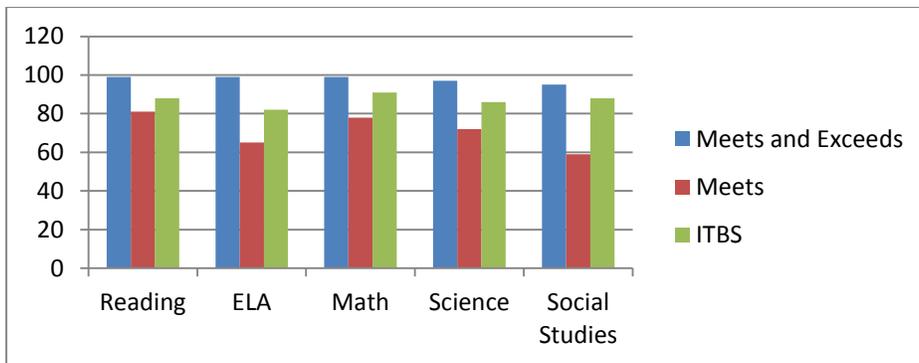
Rev 1 – June 2014

Strengths	Increase Meets/Exceeds Category
1. 4th grade shows improvements in every subject over 2 years of students. 2. Excellent pattern of improvement in 4 th grade CRCT 3. 4 th grade social studies increased in exceeds (11%) - the teachers incorporated map skills into reading/language arts	Since 95-99% of students meet, we have an opportunity to increase the % who exceed.
5 th Grade- opportunity	Critical Thinking & Higher Order Thinking Strategies
4 th grade scores drop in 5 th CRCT scores from 4 th to 5 th decreased in all subject areas except math.	Increase project based learning Increase focus on basics for accelerated students Need higher level thinking strategies
Language Arts Scores – School wide	Increase SS & Science exceeds & ITBS
2013-14 LA scores dropped in 3 rd compared to previous classes	Increase SS exceeds category Average on ITBS – opportunity to increase Science CRCT exceeds – low
Participants: All SGC Members May 13, 2014	

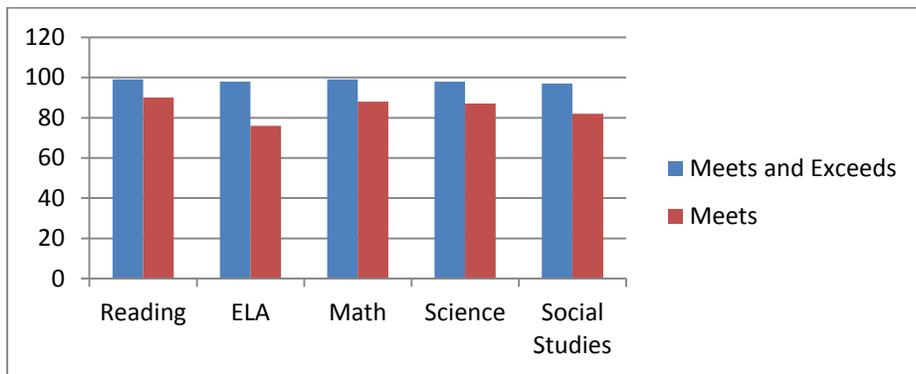
2014 5th CRCT and ITBS Comparison



2014 3rd CRCT and ITBS Comparison



2014 4th Grade Data CRCT



School Quality Review

In October 2011, Cambridge Education conducted a School Quality Review (S.Q.R.) of Sweet Apple Elementary. Our overall rating was “ACCOMPLISHED”. The scale range is found below:

1. Distinguished
2. Accomplished
3. Proficient
4. Developing

Listed below are Sweet Apple Elementary’s ratings for all categories on the S.Q.R.:

- Learning and Teaching- Proficient
- Achievement- Accomplished
- Leadership and Management- Accomplished
- Curriculum- Accomplished
- School Culture and Personal Development- Accomplished
- Involvement of Parents / Guardians and the Community- Accomplished

We are not satisfied with the rating of “proficient” in teaching and learning, as compared to accomplished scores in all other categories. We feel this is an area on which to focus in our strategic plan. Listed below are the summary statements from that report:

What the school does well

- The principal is systematically building the capacity of the school, so that developments and improvements are taking place strategically and purposefully.
- Increased administrative support and accountability has impacted positively on student achievement.
- Teachers value the feedback that they receive from instructional leaders.
- There is good access to technology for both teachers and students and this is leading to more interactive and engaging activities.
- There is an increasing analysis and evaluation of data that is helping the school to establish appropriate goals for growth.
- Teachers work well together during the opportunities provided for collaborative planning.
- Parents make a very positive contribution to the school, providing additional resources, as well as their valuable time, to support school activities and developments.

What the school needs to improve

- The implementation of Professional Learning Communities will be an area for improvement as grade-levels will continue to analyze data and make data-driven decisions.
- Working with teachers to identify and prioritize next steps as individuals and provide differentiated professional development to support them.

- Work with teacher teams to identify, from their experience to date, the key components of classroom practices that should be in place to enable the models and strategies being developed

Parent Feedback

The results of the parent survey were categorized into three areas: curriculum, school climate, and school communication.

Areas of focus within curriculum include:

- Academic Excellence
- Academic Support
- Student Engagement
- Rigor / Higher Order Thinking Skills
- Instructional Practices / Strategies
- Technology
- Professional Development

School Climate:

- Family / Community Involvement
- Citizenship / Character Ed

Listed below are data summaries of our parent survey:

Upon review of the feedback provided by our parents and stakeholders, a need was identified to advance the rigor of academics, while also focusing on the character education of our students. Parents are pleased with the academic excellence provided at Sweet Apple Elementary and look for increased rigor to challenge their students. Parents are concerned about effective teacher communication and the parameters of our Talented and Gifted program. A specific examples is having more “face-to-face” time with their student’s teacher. Overall, parents look for Sweet Apple to maintain its reputation of academic excellence, while continuing to focus on the “whole child.”

The S.G.C. created a survey to obtain specific information from our stakeholders regarding their perceptions of Sweet Apple Elementary. This survey included open-ended questions to allow the ability for each stakeholder to express individual concerns. The results of this survey are difficult to quantify.

- 92% of respondents believe that Sweet Apple Elementary strives for high academic achievement.
- 40% of the comments indicate that parents want to see continued improvement with regards to academic excellence.
- 85% of respondents agree that Sweet Apple Elementary provides resources to support and challenge all students at their individual instructional levels.
- 9% of comments related specifically to the T.A.G. program, although focus groups spoke at length regarding the separation of learning environments for students identified as gifted.
- 25% of the comments described concerns relating to “whole child” learning.

- Based on office referral data, Sweet Apple Elementary does not have significant discipline issues. The council has determined that the development of a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (P.B.I.S.) would help to increase student demonstration of respectful and responsible behaviors. It would also provide consistency of these behavioral expectations through all grade levels.

Sept. 11, 2014
SALT + SGC

Parent Survey & Focus Groups

Issue/Key Finding	Seriousness	Urgency	Growth
Teachers not trained on new curriculum	L	L	L
Teachers don't have time to plan/teach	H	M	H
Lack of rigor (academic challenge)	H	M	H
Lack of teacher/parent conferences & communication	H	H	H
Safety/Security of building	L	L	L
Too much wasted time (parties, celebrations)	L	L	L
Lack of PBL	M	M	M
Too much focus on technology	L	L	L
TAG Concerns			
Balanced Child			

Staff Input

In the “Tangy Orange” open-ended brainstorming exercise led by administration, staff members were invited to list needs and ideas for improving student achievement in alignment with our mission, vision, and credo created in 2012. The brainstorming ideas were broken down into categories:

- Project Based Learning (hands-on, engaging)
- Scheduling flexibility (planning, instruction, increased planning time)
- Smaller class size
- Balanced use of technology
- School-wide discipline plan
- Teacher’s choice in resources
- Well rounded students (involvement in community, social/emotional, high academic expectations)

Teacher Perceptions

- choices for students
- PBL [hands-on, engaging]
- more time (planning, instruction, etc.)
- teacher's choice in resources
- smaller class size
- balanced use of technology [practical uses]
- opportunities for student breaks
- standards-based grading/report cards
- scheduling flexibility
- well rounded students [whole child]
- school-wide discipline plan

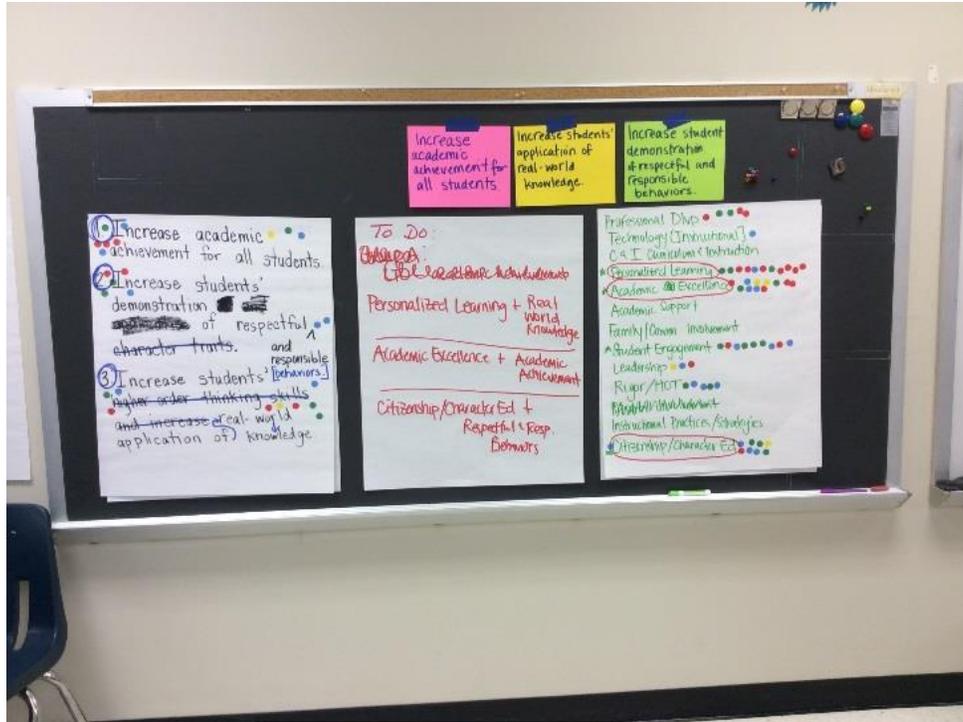
Focus on: differentiation, challenge

*↳ involvement in Community
high standards
socially foundation*

Issue/Key Finding	S	U	G
Teachers not trained new curriculum	L	L	L
Teachers don't have time to plan/teach	H	M	H
Lack of rigor (Academic Challenge)	L	M	H
Lack of teacher/parent conferences & communication	H	H	H
Safety/Security of bldg	L	L	L
Lack of PBL	M	M	M
Too much wasted time (parties, celebrations, b'day treats)	L	L	L
Too much focus on behavior	L	L	L

Issue/Key Finding	S	U	G
Reading: 4th-5th exceeds ↓ 9 pts. (13-14) 3rd-4th exceeds ↑ 3pt (12-13)	H	H	M
ELA: 4th-5th exceeds ↓ 6 pts (13-14)	M	H	H
Math: 4th-5th exceeds ↑ 3pts 3rd-4th exceeds ↑ 5 pts.	L	L	L
Science: 4th-5th exceeds ↓ 5pts 3rd-4th exceeds ↓ 6pts	M	M	M
Soc. Studies: 4th-5th exceeds 3rd-4th ↓ 5 pts	L	L	L
Reading: 49-100% meet all 3 grades ALL 3 years	H	H	H
Soc. Studies Grade 5 (13-14) ↑ 39 → 66 = 27	H	H	H

Issue/Key Finding	S	U	G
Social Studies - lowest % of student's exceeding by (SIGNIFICANTLY)	*H*	H	M
3 rd to 4 th scores generally go up but in 4 th to 5 th generally go down.			
Focus on % Exceeds			



Issue/Key Finding	S	U	A
TAG 2014 data, the number of students referred by teachers was greater in the lower grades, however less students were deemed eligible than in higher grades	L	L	L
2013-14 ITBS language Arts 3 rd scores dropped from both years previously	L	L	M
There is a discrepancy between # of students referred for TAG in K-1 to the # of students found eligible for the Acceleration.	L	L	L

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Summary

After reviewing all data sources the collaborative team, SALT and SGC, concluded that Sweet Apple Elementary is an academically strong school as evidenced through, ITBS, CRCT, Georgia Grade 5 Writing Assessment, and TAG eligibility. Beyond these results, there is a perception in the community that Sweet Apple Elementary is a desirable elementary school to attend. Parent expectations and engagement are very high. Academic rigor was often mentioned in interviews and surveys as a priority.

The TAG program was also recognized as a best practice model. The instructional strategies used in TAG are something from which all students could greatly benefit. Given the pattern of high-level academic performance and a desire to continue a focus on academic rigor, the parent and teacher community recognized the need to also focus on the “whole child”. In order to increase academic rigor, there is a need for professional development in rigor and relevance. In addition, we will expand our character based curriculum to support students in the development of communication, conflict management, and peer relationships.

Therefore, the SGC has determined that data led us to focus on the following long term goals:

- Increase student demonstration of respectful and responsible behaviors
- Increase academic achievement at the highest levels among all students
- Increase personalized learning and application of real-world knowledge

SECTION III: Long-term Outcomes

This section should define the school's 3-5 Long-term Outcomes, and, for each Long-term Outcome, provide a brief rationale that explains the reason for prioritizing the Outcome. Additionally, each Long-term Outcome should have 1 or more associated measures and annual targets by which the success of the Outcome will be assessed.

LONG-TERM OUTCOME 1. Increase student demonstration of respectful and responsible behaviors.

The Sweet Apple community believes that the students' social development is a critical part of their education in order to become responsible citizens. Becoming more responsible citizens will help the students to be more successful in their academic endeavors. Accordingly, the learning community will work to help students learn and demonstrate respectful and responsible character traits.

- % of students and staff demonstrating and applying learned communication skills and strategies
- % of staff implementing the school-wide character education plan
- school-wide implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Strategies (P.B.I.S.)

LONG-TERM OUTCOME 2. Increase academic achievement at the highest levels among all students.

While the focus at Sweet Apple Elementary is excellence for all students. Historical data indicates that our students are high achieving, with Social Studies scores being identified as a target for improvement. The Sweet Apple community stakeholders are unanimous in their desire to challenge all students to achieve at the highest level through the increased implementation of rigorous instruction and critical thinking skills.

- % of students who demonstrate an increased proficiency in the use of technology
- % of students who demonstrate improvement in Georgia Milestones / End of Grade (E.O.G.)
- % of students who demonstrate an increase in critical thinking and creative problem solving using an outside measure to be determined

LONG-TERM OUTCOME 3. Increase personalization of learning and application of real-world knowledge.

At Sweet Apple Elementary we believe students will learn best when educational opportunities are designed to meet individual needs. Stakeholders expressed a desire for increased opportunities / involvement with their student's academic performance. Our objective is to facilitate the development of students who are college and career ready, by creating ownership of their academic development. This includes developing the skills of mastery of technology integration, application of learning to real-world situations, and critical thinking and problem-solving.

- % of students who demonstrate improvement in Georgia Milestones / End Of Grade (E.O.G.)

SECTION IV: Focus Areas, Short-Term Goals, and Strategic Initiatives

This section should define the school’s 3-5 Focus Areas. Within each Focus Area, list the associated Short-Term Goals along with measures of progress and targets. Additionally, for each Short-term goal, list the corresponding Strategic Initiatives.

FOCUS AREA 1.

The Sweet Apple learning community expects students to increase ownership and independence with their learning. We believe student involvement in positive decision making builds healthy peer relationships, ownership in behavior choices, and responsible work decisions.

<p>As measures of progress, we will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports 2. Implement a school-wide character education plan within the ASCA model 3. Establish baseline of counselor referrals for social interactions among students in 2014 with targeted improvement in 2016

Summary of Strategic Initiatives:

- Implementation of a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Plan
- School-wide Character Education program

FOCUS AREA 2.

In order to increase academic excellence, we identified Social Studies as the content area having the lowest percentage of students “exceeding expectations” on the CRCT (lowest % over the course of 3 years). We will continue to develop student understanding of content through the application of critical and higher-order thinking, problem solving, creativity, and innovation. This will include professional development opportunities for teachers to create and sustain an instructional environment that challenges all students.

<p>As measures of progress, we will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitor the % of students demonstrating gains as measured on school-wide formative assessments 3 times per year on instruments such as STAR, Write Score, Lexiles 2. Monitor the % of students demonstrating gains as measured on End Of Course Testing (Georgia Milestones)
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Summary of Strategic Initiatives:

- Teacher to teacher Observation Program
- School-wide Professional Development of Talented and Gifted strategies
- Cross-curricular instruction / integration
- Implementation of Professional Learning Communities

FOCUS AREA 3.

Technology integration provides students the opportunity to increase academic achievement through personalized learning. Technology will be used to challenge learners, promote creative thinking and inspire innovation. Personalized learning involves engaging students in real-world applications across all subject areas. In addition, creating more opportunities for engagement and collaboration between students, teachers, and parents will increase student ownership in regards to their development.

<p>As measures of progress, we will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sweet Apple is working to identify the appropriate measures for these short-term goals.
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Summary of Strategic Initiatives:

- Develop a menu for specialty courses
- Develop a curriculum to support Real-World Connections
- Implementation of student-led conferences including parents and teacher

SECTION V: Next Steps

This section should be 1-3 paragraphs and should summarize the next steps of the strategic planning process. This section should include information that addresses the following questions:

- *Who will lead and monitor the implementation of the strategic plan?*
- *How will the progress of the plan be shared and communicated?*
- *When will the plan be assessed and/or revisited?*

[Note that Initiative Action Plans and the Strategic Plan Monitoring Plan will be separate documents and should be attached to this narrative.]

The NEXT STEPS is currently being addressed by the School Governance Council and will be revised at our next meeting on December 9th.