



[WILSON CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL]

STRATEGIC PLAN SY 2014/15 – SY 2016/17

APPROVED AUGUST 2014

SECTION I: Strategic Planning Background and Approach

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.

Wilson Creek Elementary began the strategic planning process in the spring of 2014. In order to plan our strategic direction, we first had to engage with our community to understand our specific challenges and consider a path to collectively address them. The strategic planning process is a collaborative effort among the leadership team and School Governance Council. We assessed and evaluated data including community perceptions, academic achievement and instructional programs to formulate a plan to meet the needs of our students.

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 initiatives; 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 Wilson Creek 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

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.

Wilson Creek 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 Wilson Creek Elementary clarified performance trends and identified the school’s most critical areas for improvement.

Needs Assessment – Process & Summary of Findings

The Wilson Creek School Governance Council completed a needs assessment to gather data, seek perceptions about our school, and identify our school’s strengths and weaknesses to guide our strategic planning process. To understand the state of our school operations, we began by using the Education Resource Strategies (ERS) School Check with faculty and staff. The purpose of the tool is to analyze our current structure and how effective resources are being utilized. The assessment is designed to focus on four primary principles used to organize resources: prioritizing teaching effectiveness, targeting individual attention, maximizing academic time and minimizing non-instructional spending. We identified our strengths and weaknesses and shared it with the staff and the School Governance Council.

After our first School Governance Council meeting, we decided the most effective way to gain feedback from our stakeholders would be an online survey which targeted staff, future and current parents, and community members. We utilized both a rating system (1-10 scale) and priority listings with open choice responses available for comments. Our survey was designed to capture the overall perception and needs of Wilson Creek and included the following questions:

- What is your overall impression of Wilson Creek Elementary?
- What recommendations do you have for the future academic focus at WCES?
- What do you think is missing from the education that students receive at WCES currently that should be included?
- In which area do you think Wilson Creek’s staff could use more improvement?
- What are your hopes for WCES as we transition to charter school status?
- What aspects of WCES would you like to see remain the same as we transition to charter school status?
- If you believe you have a resource or can provide a service that will benefit the Wilson Creek community, please provide your name, contact information, and a brief description of the resource and/or service.

Approximately 300 stakeholders participated in the Wilson Creek survey. Our results indicated a strong community perception of Wilson Creek with 84% of the respondents rating Wilson Creek as an 8, 9, or 10 on a 10-point scale (1 being lowest, 10 being highest). As we transition to charter status, it was evident that our stakeholders would like the following to remain the same at Wilson Creek:

- Positive and productive learning environment
- Focus on students
- High quality teaching and learning
- Interpersonal relationships between students and staff
- High expectations for students and staff
- Strong parental support and PTA events
- Fine Arts and PE
- Programs such as Science Force, Cardio Club, Chorus Club

Overall, stakeholders were extremely positive and favorable towards our total school program. However, we also found areas where growth was needed. The main two areas that stakeholders identified as areas in which staff need to improve their skills included technology (29%) and academics/instruction (21%). The stakeholders made the following recommendations to guide the future academic success at Wilson Creek:

- A greater focus on problem solving/critical thinking (28%)
- A greater focus on reading, writing, speaking (18%)
- A greater focus on science and math (18%)
- A greater focus on technology (18%)

In the open-ended comments, the common themes that reoccurred were in the following areas:

- Increase students' communication skills/public speaking
- Challenge the middle learner
- Improve parent communication with classroom teachers
- Increase student involvement in community
- Integrate use of technology
- Improve understanding of what it means to be a part of a charter system

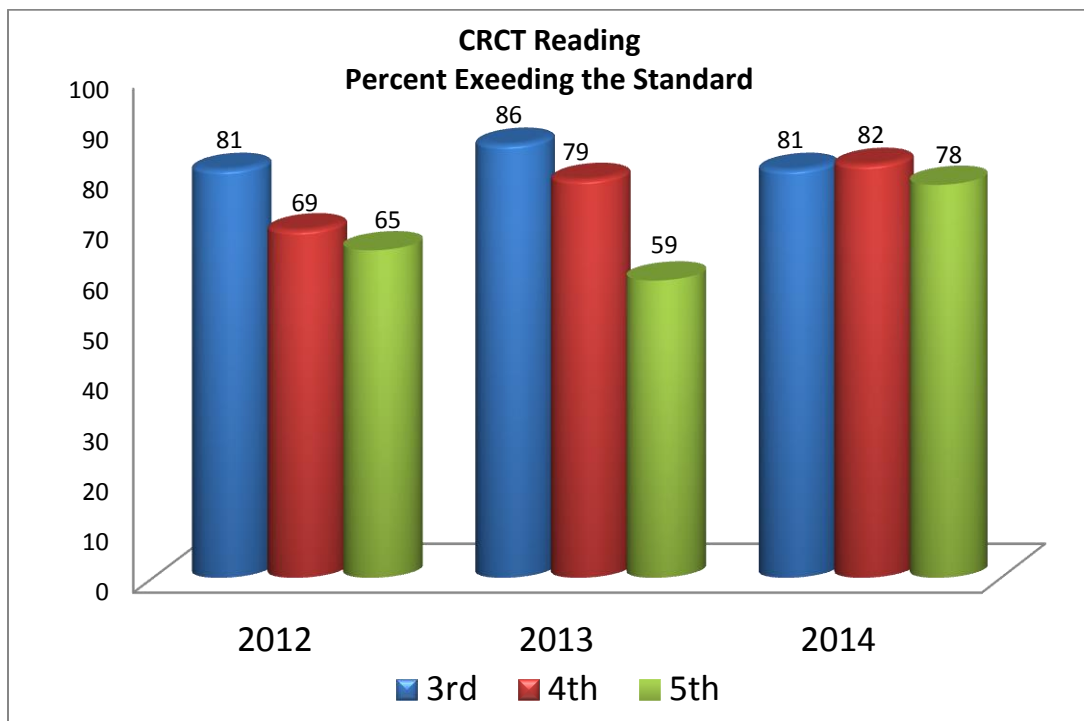
To ensure we gained feedback from our diverse Wilson Creek population, we also conducted a focus group with our international community in the hope of gaining feedback from our Asian community and non-English speaking parents. Their viewpoints were aligned to our survey results. We shared all results with the staff and the School Governance Council.

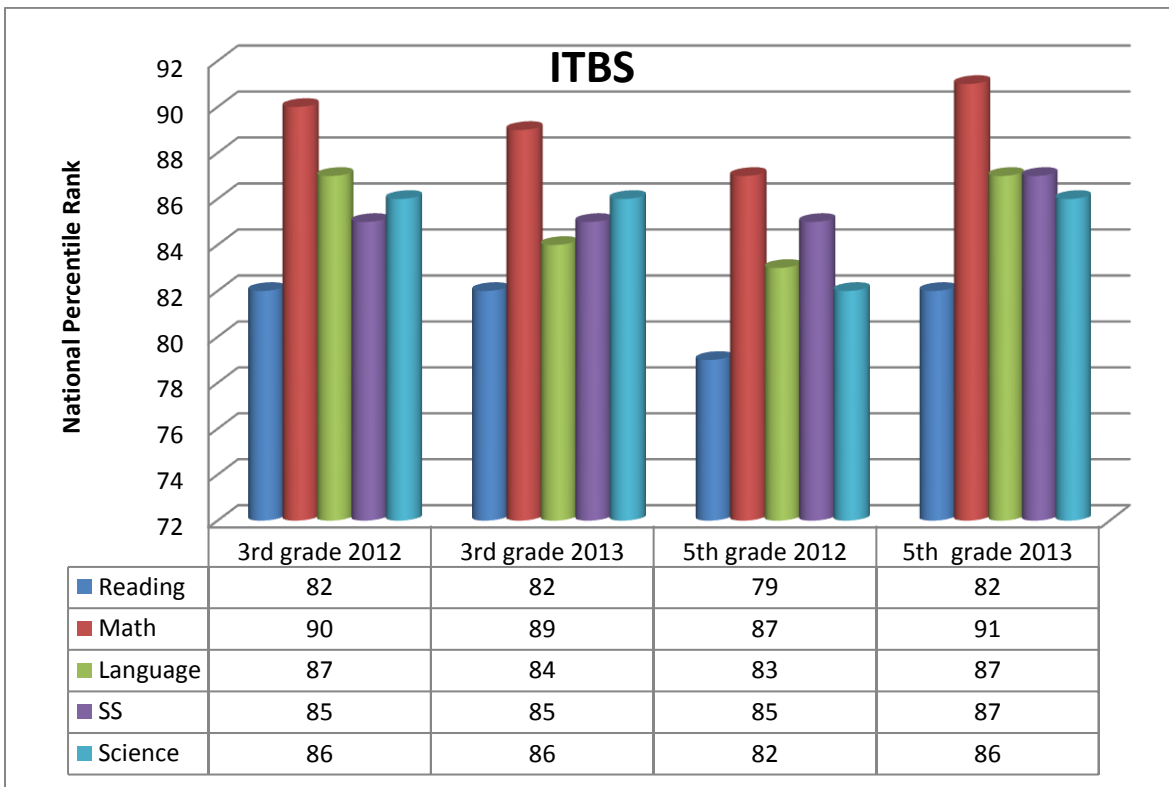
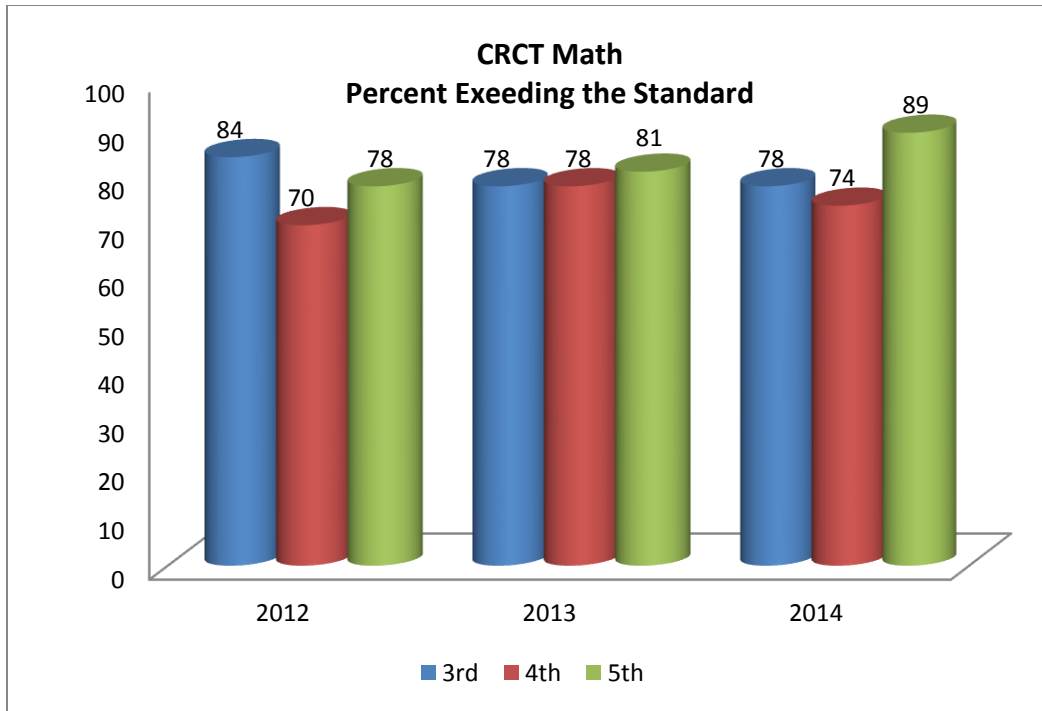
After the survey identified key areas of improvement, the staff brainstormed a list of desired outcomes of critical thinking and technology including what students should be saying, thinking, doing and feeling and listed ways we can teach technology and teach the students to be critical thinkers and problem solvers. Next, the staff identified the most effective strategies using the Dot-Mocracy method. In the area of critical thinking, the staff priorities were lower class size, a critical thinking lab, STEM activities, flexible scheduling, and more money for

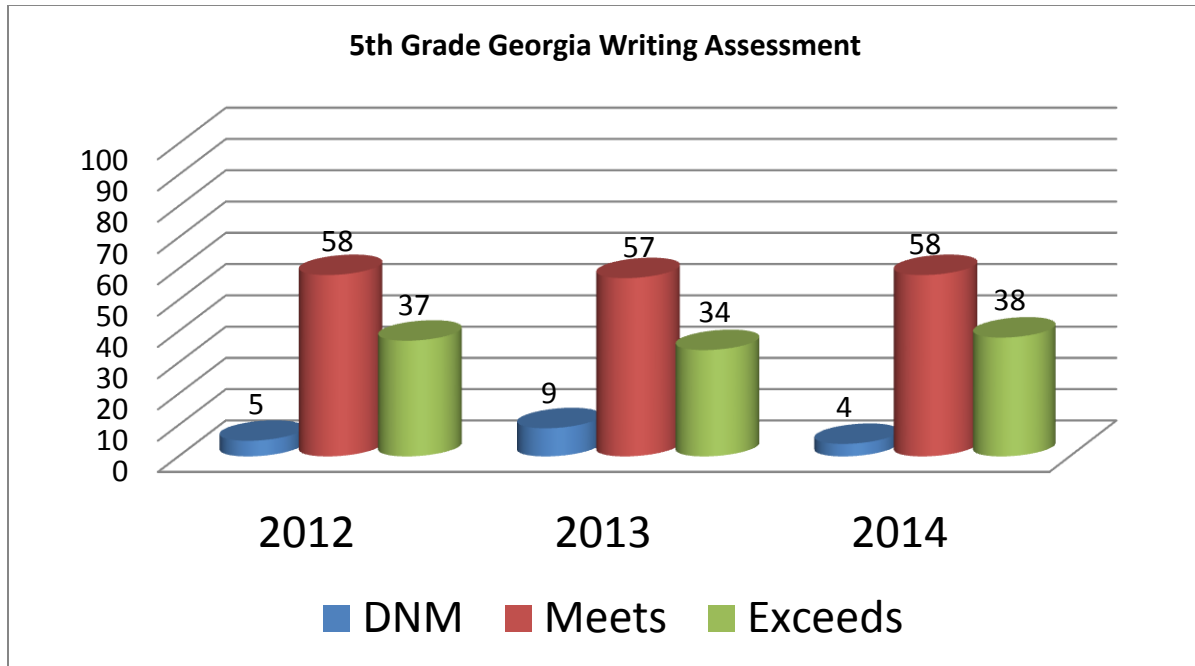
resources. In technology, the teachers prioritized having more technological devices, a master technology teacher, and to partner with local businesses to support technology use. The School Governance Council reviewed the feedback and added their comments to the charts.

Another component of our needs assessment included gathering, analyzing, and evaluating Wilson Creek data. We reviewed our student demographic summary and the number of students in special programs. Wilson Creek is comprised of K-5 and special needs Pre-K. We had 840 students enrolled during the 2013-2014 school year. Of these students, 49% are Asian, 36% are Caucasian, and 15% are African American. The number of females and males is even. Twenty-five percent of our students are enrolled in the Talented and Gifted (TAG) Program, 16% in English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), 8% in the Early Intervention Program (EIP), and 6% in Special Education. Fifteen percent of our students qualify for free/reduced meals and our mobility rate is 16%.

We also analyzed recent performance results from the CRCT, ITBS, GA 5th Grade Writing Assessment, Access and common and formative assessments. We reviewed trend data and the number of students exceeding expectations. Wilson Creek Elementary scored a 94.9 in 2012 and a 94.8 in 2013 on the Georgia College and Career Ready Index (CCRPI). We ranked 6th among the 61 elementary schools in the Fulton County School System. In 2013-2014, 3rd and 5th grade ITBS scores ranged from the 82nd percentile to the 91st percentile and 96% percent of our students met or exceeded expectations on the Georgia Grade 5 Writing Assessment (GWA). Thirty-eight percent of our 5th grade students exceeded expectations on the GWA. The 3rd, 4th and 5th grade 2014 Criterion Reference Competency Test (CRCT) scores ranged from 94% to 100% of our students meeting and exceeding expectations in each content area. The percentage of 3rd through 5th grade students exceeded expectations on the CRCT were 80% in reading, 70% in language arts, 80% in math, 74% in science, and 67% in social studies.







From the needs assessment, we identified the need to continue our focus on balanced literacy and our writing initiative as we develop our students' technology, critical thinking, and leadership and communication skills. Furthermore, the importance of involving our families and community in our students' educational process remains a high priority to ensure student success.

SECTION III: Long-term Outcomes

LONG-TERM OUTCOME 1. Students will demonstrate an increased use of critical thinking skills across content areas.

Our primary purpose is to ensure the academic achievement of all students at Wilson Creek Elementary. We want to make certain our students are actively engaged in the use of higher order thinking strategies and tasks across all content areas. We realize that students will need to draw on their ability to critically problem solve throughout their lives. We want to empower our students with critical thinking skills and strategies so they are better able to evaluate and process information; a crucial component necessary for their success.

LONG-TERM OUTCOME 2. Increase students’ technology skills to enrich learning experiences.

Technology has the potential to influence and enrich the learning experiences of our students. It is an extremely important aspect of our lives because it has revolutionized the way we communicate and learn. We are committed to using technology in ways that affirm, challenge, and inspire all students to grow intellectually, academically, and socially. Increasing our students’ skills will allow them to share the responsibility for their learning. The effective use of technology will build our students’ confidence, enhance learning, and keep our students engaged. Increased technology skills will provide opportunities for all students to succeed and will have a positive impact on their academic achievement.

LONG-TERM OUTCOME 3. Increase students’ leadership and communication skills.

Our goal is to cultivate and promote our students’ leadership and communication skills. We believe that all students have the capability to develop essential leadership skills that will enable them to act responsibly and confidently in all aspects of their lives. We will foster strong leadership qualities through knowledge, self-awareness, and relationships. We recognize the important role that effective leadership plays in providing today’s students an advantage in tomorrow’s competitive world; and these skills will be critical in meeting emerging and future challenges. In order to be successful in life, students need to know how to effectively communicate their thoughts and ideas with others. Students need to be able to communicate in a myriad of ways; reading, writing, listening, speaking and using technology. By helping our students become more effective communicators we enable them to advocate for themselves as well as help solve problems.

LONG-TERM OUTCOME 4. Increase family/community involvement.

Parent, family, and community involvement in education correlates with higher academic performance and school improvement. When schools, parents, families, and communities work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, and enroll in higher level programs. It also fosters higher educational aspirations and more motivated students. We believe a strong school-family-community partnership is a critical factor for the long-term success of our students at Wilson Creek Elementary.

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

FOCUS AREA 1. Professional Development

As a school, we will expand our staff’s knowledge and skills of the best educational practices to enable our students to achieve at the highest levels. We will develop a clear plan for professional development that will improve their implementation of critical thinking strategies and the integration of technology.

<p>As measures of progress, we will: IN PROGRESS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. [insert specific short-term goal with associated measure, target, and the date by which you expect to reach the goal] 2. [insert specific short-term goal with associated measure, target, and the date by which you expect to reach the goal] 3. [insert specific short-term goal with associated measure, target, and the date by which you expect to reach the goal] 4. [insert specific short-term goal with associated measure, target, and the date by which you expect to reach the goal]
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Summary of Strategic Initiatives:

- Provide project-based learning, critical thinking, problem solving, differentiated instructional staff development.
- Develop technology learning labs for the staff to further develop technology skills based on skill set.
- Implement continuing staff development for the writing program, balanced literacy, and Reading Workshop.

FOCUS AREA 2. Challenging Environment

Our students will be immersed in a rigorous learning environment. Students will be engaged in a variety of activities that are aligned with the standards, student learning goals, and build on their prior knowledge and life experiences. Their work will be authentic and they will build understanding through problem solving, critical thinking, and in-depth investigation.

<p>As measures of progress, we will: IN PROGRESS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. [insert specific short-term goal with associated measure, target, and the date by which you expect to reach the goal] 2. [insert specific short-term goal with associated measure, target, and the date by which you expect to reach the goal] 3. [insert specific short-term goal with associated measure, target, and the date by which you expect to reach the goal] 4. [insert specific short-term goal with associated measure, target, and the date by which you expect to reach the goal]
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Summary of Strategic Initiatives:

- Implement a program that will increase students’ technology awareness.
- Increase students’ engagement in critical thinking skills activities.
- Implement a project based learning initiative for students.
- Students will create learning goals in order to reflect on their learning and monitor their progress.

FOCUS AREA 3. Student/Family engagement

As a community, we will increase stakeholder involvement through specific activities. We will improve our bi-lingual communication, broaden participation of parents and engage our community partners.

<p>As measures of progress, we will: IN PROGRESS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. [insert specific short-term goal with associated measure, target, and the date by which you expect to reach the goal]2. [insert specific short-term goal with associated measure, target, and the date by which you expect to reach the goal]3. [insert specific short-term goal with associated measure, target, and the date by which you expect to reach the goal]4. [insert specific short-term goal with associated measure, target, and the date by which you expect to reach the goal]

Summary of Strategic Initiatives:

- Develop and launch a “We Need You” campaign to both parents and community.
- Partner with school organizations to create a calendar of events and volunteer opportunities to maximize participation.

SECTION V: Next Steps

Our next steps are to determine the measures and annual targets and solidify our timeline and action steps for each initiative. The Wilson Creek Elementary administrative/leadership team will lead and monitor the progress of the strategic plan throughout the year with status checks based upon the implementation schedule of various activities. The School Governance Council will be briefed continuously on the progress of the plan. Stakeholders will be informed via meetings, *Wildcat News* and the Wilson Creek website. The strategic plan will be assessed and/or revised on an as needed basis.