



CHATTAHOOCHEE HIGH SCHOOL

STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2017

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.

Chattahoochee High School 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. The team consists of 2 elected teacher representatives, 2 community stakeholders, 3 parents with currently enrolled students, 2 principal-appointed student representatives, 2 principal-appointed faculty representatives (in this case a fine arts teacher and a counselor), and the principal himself.

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 Chattahoochee High School 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.

Chattahoochee High School 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 Chattahoochee High School clarified performance trends and identified the school’s most critical areas for improvement.

Needs Assessment – Process & Summary of Findings

In completing our needs assessment, the council thought it important to seek out feedback from all of our stakeholders. Consequently, parents, students, teachers, administration, and community members were given the opportunity to provide feedback via a survey and (for some, as time and interest allowed) written responses and informal interviews. While the majority of parents only had students currently enrolled at Chattahoochee HS, due to the nature of schooling, we had a large minority of parent respondents who had either had children previously graduated from Chattahoochee and others who had students currently enrolled in our feeder schools. This cross-section of respondents, we felt, adequately considered our high-value stakeholders.

Chattahoochee High School is located in the northeast quadrant of Fulton County and belongs to the Northeast Learning Community. It is an older school (established in 1991) and the physical infrastructure is beginning to show its age; as one student commented in an informal interview, her friends from neighboring schools consider it to be old and aging in physical infrastructure. While the area itself is by and large a prosperous area with a median home price of \$400,000, nearly 10% of the student body is eligible for free or reduced lunch. The gender breakdown skews slightly female with only 48% of the enrolled student population identifying as male. The predominant racial identification is white (59%) with Asian (20%) and African American (13%) as the next largest populations. Despite the majority of students identifying as white, the school reflects a greater racial and cultural diversity than the surrounding area. The Alpharetta/Johns Creek area according to US Census data identifies as 81% white, 9% Asian, and 7% African American. The school serves approximately 1900 students. Pass rates on all standardized tests (GHSGT, EOC, SAT, ACT, etc) are significantly higher than the state average and usually place Chattahoochee High School in the top three high schools of Fulton County.

Generally our community stakeholders (parents and community members) seem satisfied with Chattahoochee High School as both an academic resource as well as a source for athletics and the arts. As one stakeholder commented, Chattahoochee has “a long history of excellence;” another commented that we were “excellent all around without being showy or uptight.” As a whole, 98% of our community members are overall satisfied with the school, with special attention being called to our “committed staff/faculty,” the “solid administration,” and

the “unique family environment.” Unfortunately, there were also some weaknesses that were identified by our parents and community members. Rightly or wrongly, the community has the perception that Chattahoochee’s counseling department is too overwhelmed to respond to the needs of students. They also believe that bullying, profanity, and casual drug use are concerns.

Our school has a great amount of involvement from the community as audience members and support staff for a variety of art shows, musicals, plays, sporting events, and special focus sessions. In particular, community members remark on the “Taste of Johns Creek” event that occurs at the school every year and pulls in people who otherwise wouldn’t set foot on a high school campus. Likewise, the newly renovated 5230 Gallery has had a very positive reception with its rotating displays of student artwork. One community member even responded that Chattahoochee drove a lot of business to and “support[ed] the small businesses in the area.” Despite an overall positive level of engagement, the community would like to see volunteerism become a larger part of the school culture. Additionally, they would like to be engaged with individual teachers not only when a student is misbehaving or performing poorly, but also when their child is excelling.

As seen from the internal perspective of teachers, students and administration, Chattahoochee High School seems to protect academic instruction time very successfully. Common assessments, given each 6 weeks, provide feedback and data to teachers, while Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) allow the teachers to discuss strategies to meet these needs. Additionally, curriculum resources both in terms of quality and availability are seen as a strength of the school. Students in particular commented on the well-organized final exam and standardized testing days. Students do have the perception that the sports programs at Chattahoochee are better funded than the arts or academic teams. The final area of weakness was commented on by all three internal stakeholders and matched the community’s perception: counseling. There appears to be too much work, too little time, and too few counselors.

Specifically, student need was determined based on a number of factors. An informal review of test scores from SATs, ACTs, EOCTs, AP exams, PSATs, and a variety of other standardized tests was used to help inform the council about the school’s academic successes and weaknesses. As the council expected, overall test results reflected the high academic achievement that is part of Chattahoochee’s school culture. The school’s ranking on a variety of measures including Greatschools.com, CCRPI, *US News and World Report*, the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, and other periodical publications was also considered. Again, as expected, Chattahoochee consistently ranked as above average and excellent. Because the standardized data was presenting a limited window into the school’s *needs* (not its strengths—which the reports reflected—but its areas for potential growth), the council relied heavily on anecdotal feedback from parents, students, and teachers to identify areas of weakness.

Parents and community members were invited to respond to an 8 question, multiple choice survey that was sent to them via email; additionally notice in the PTSA newsletter and the website indicated a website to which respondents could go to complete the survey. These questions centered on the perceptions related to Chattahoochee HS including: areas of strength, areas of weakness, and comparison to other area schools. Additionally there were 6 directed, short answer questions, and one section for additional comments. Respondents could choose to answer all or some of the questions. Two hundred and fifty-eight parents responded to the survey; approximately 15% of respondents had a child who had already graduated from

Chattahoochee and another 15% had a student districted to attend Chattahoochee in the future. The majority of respondents had lived in the Johns Creek community for 10 or more years and only 15% have lived in the area less than 5 years. An overview of the data reveals that parents and community members almost universally felt Chattahoochee was providing a better or similarly high quality education in comparison to other high schools in the area. In particular, the core subjects of math, science, and language arts all were considered to be areas in which the school excels. While only 30% of respondents felt more time should be dedicated to the TAG (17%) and Special Ed (13%) students (those at the highest and lowest ends of the spectrum), nearly 50% felt that the on-level student or the student who is academically challenged needed greater attention. Respondents indicated that additional *outside* support was most often sought for SAT/ACT prep, choosing a career, and preparation for college. Lastly, nearly 61% of respondents felt that the course variety was too limited and should include more elective courses, career pathways, and language opportunities.

A similar survey was conducted for students. English teachers were asked to post the survey link to Edmodo (the student organization and notification system Chattahoochee utilizes) and talk about the survey in class. No extra incentive in terms of grades or privileges was used to encourage participation; it was solely at the discretion of the student. English teachers were chosen because it was the subject area that had the largest reach among the student population. Student surveys included 8 multiple choice questions, 3 directed, short response questions, and one section for additional comments. Four hundred and eleven students replied in part or in whole to the survey; this is approximately one quarter of the student body. Results were in line with the parent/community member survey. The overall quality of schooling and strengths were identical to the adult survey with only 13% of student respondents suggesting that Chattahoochee High School was failing to prepare them for a college environment. Likewise 16% of students felt there were not enough advanced courses offered on campus. The majority of students however perceived themselves to be enrolled in advanced coursework that would prepare them for higher education. The second big observation from the data revealed that one third of students felt course variety and rigor was adequate, while another third felt that there needed to be a larger variety of courses offered. Only 8% of respondents felt the general courses were too challenging for high school. While college preparation was ranked first for additional support on both the community and student surveys, 28% of students identified that they felt they needed the more assistance in writing as compared to a mere 6% of community members.

While ten percent of the faculty participated in the parent/community survey (because they have students enrolled at Chattahoochee HS), the teacher feedback was primarily derived from a school assessment completed by the administration, department chairs, and other teacher leaders (the graduation coach, the media center specialist, a few classroom teachers, etc). The instrument used was adapted from the strategies and principles outlined in “The Strategic School: Making the most of people, time, and money” by Karen Hawley Miles and Stephen Frank. The survey focused on teacher effectiveness, individual attention, academic time, and non-instructional spending. Respondents were asked to respond to each question giving a ranking of 1-4 where 1 is the lowest and 4 is the highest. Specific performance indicators were given as models for each question. For example, one question asked respondents their perception of the schools performance in “assign[ing] teachers to differentiated roles to extend the reach of highly effective teachers. An evaluation of 1 included the description “teacher roles are not differentiated. All teachers have similar responsibilities.” An evaluation of 2 reflects that “teacher roles are informally differentiated to extend the reach of expert teachers across their

peers or to more students.” A 3 stated that “a few differentiated roles exist to extend the reach of expert teachers across their peers or to more students, but available roles do not fully leverage teacher expertise; roles include different position descriptions, selection processes, and accountability systems.” The best possible evaluation, a 4, reflects that there is “a sufficient number of differentiated roles exist to extend the reach of expert teachers across their peers or to more students; roles include different position descriptions, selection processes, and accountability systems.” This particular area, extending teachers into other roles, is one in which Chattahoochee performed poorly with over 65% of respondents scoring the school at a 1 or 2. Closely related to this was the concern 77% of respondents had in which they felt the school was lacking in providing instructional experts the time and resources necessary to support their peers and additional students. The other large shortcoming to come out of the teacher feedback was that Chattahoochee is not doing enough to assign students extra time in subjects in which they are struggling. On the other hand, the school was evaluated most highly when it came to school culture, the amount of time spent on academic instruction, and the belief that instructional time prioritized core academics over electives. As a broad statement, in the areas where the school has direct control, less than one quarter of areas were evaluated as weak (1) or needing improvement (2).

Ultimately, the council found the feedback to by and large affirm Chattahoochee High School’s academic and cultural reputation as an academically challenging, diverse school. However good the school is though, there are areas for improvement. In particular counseling and student support, a wider variety of courses, more focus on the on-level student, and organizational challenges are all rich areas for growth.

SECTION III: Long-term Outcomes

LONG-TERM OUTCOME 1. Improve students' ability to successfully transition, in terms of academics and life skills, between high school and college/career

The change from dependent child to independent adult is complex and multi-level. Teenagers need to be able to navigate the challenges in front of them and schools are key to providing them with the skills necessary in order to do so successfully. Ultimately, schools are shaping the future of society by shaping individuals. We want each student to not just function but thrive in today's rapidly changing world.

Measures for long term outcomes will be:

- Increase the percent of students assessed as work-ready by the CCRPI Work Keys assessment (%)
- Increase student performance on college entrance exams (ACT/SAT) (%)
- Increase student enrollment in honors and Advanced Placement courses (%)

LONG-TERM OUTCOME 2. Improve student engagement in critical thinking and their Emotional Intelligence Quotient, or EQ, (e.g. persistence, accuracy, intelligent risk taking, etc) that are used successfully by people confronted with obstacles, for which solutions are not immediately apparent.

Without the ability to think independently and critically, democracy itself cannot thrive. Students need to problem solve, work collaboratively, and think across disciplines. They need the ability to analyze complex situations and evaluate the possible choices and outcomes to determine what actions will produce the best outcomes for them and their community.

Measures for long term outcomes will be:

- Increase in project based learning assignments (at least 1 per course, per year)
- Increase interdisciplinary assignments (at least 1 per course, per year)
- Increase effective communication as measured through self and instructor evaluation
- Show an increase degree of responsibility, effort, self-awareness, persistence, etc measured by a student survey

LONG-TERM OUTCOME 3. Improve student alignment of curriculum choices to match career, college, and personal interests

This particular outcome became a priority because strategic plans will fail without buy-in from the stakeholders; in this plan that means student buy-in. What do the students really want for their future career beyond lawyer, doctor, or engineer? Where do they want to go to school beyond UGA, GSU, or GA Tech? Are there additional career pathways needed that will fulfill other career choices? These questions need to be explored in an organized, in-depth manner because the objective of high school is not just a paper diploma, but an understanding of what the next steps need to be in order for the students to determine and accomplish their own, self-selected goals.

Measures for long term outcomes will be:

- Increase on-time graduation rate (%)
- Increase work based learning enrollment (%)
- Increase degree of confidence in choosing the next steps in student's career plan (survey)
- Increase student enrollment in honors and AP courses for those that have been identified as AP ready (%)

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

FOCUS AREA 1. Individualized student support

Students have greater opportunities for success if and when they receive the appropriate support in planning their future path. One of the consistent pieces of feedback from both parents and students is that students would like more individualized help in planning their high school career and transitioning into the next phase of their lives. While resources exist, awareness and use of these resources is nominal at best.

As measures of progress, we will:

1. Increase academic advisement touch-points with students and/or parents—with particular emphasis on the “average” student. Our goal is to meet with each student annually to discuss one-on-one goals, strategies, and plans for academic success in high school and beyond. We will track this through student survey feedback, documenting contact with student/parent, and participation GCIC (Georgia Career Information Center). Staggered implementation will result in full implementation by 2016.
2. Increase use of project based learning to explore the connections between content and real world. Our goal is that each teacher implement a minimum of one project based learning experience per course they teach. We will track this through department reports, see evidence in formal/informal teacher observations, and through student feedback. Full implementation is scheduled for 2015.
3. Improve college and career readiness, as measured by student performance on the SAT and ACT and the ACT WorkKeys Assessment (a job skills assessment test).

Summary of Strategic Initiatives:

- Create an academic success lab where on-level students can receive support for not just meeting but exceeding curricular and skill expectations.
- Integrate video editing suite and distance learning opportunities into the media center.
- Increase the amount of time spent on one and one counseling and advisement, especially for the on-level student
- Institute a series of lunchtime seminars on special interest topics (like finance, scholarships, study skills, career exploration, etc)
- Provide additional training for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in order to establish instructional goals for each grade level/curriculum
- Create alternate courses/numbers to broaden the credit selections for interdisciplinary courses (ie. architectural drawing can be used as credit for art or engineering)
- Increase alternative ways for earning mandatory credits
- Institute ACT/SAT test for incoming freshmen to determine strengths
- Garner outside test preparation agency to work with students on ACT/SAT readiness during the school day

FOCUS AREA 2. Student responsibility and character development

All of our stakeholders indicated that student responsibility and character development were an area of need at Chattahoochee HS. Character in this sense is defined loosely as Emotional Intelligence Quotient, EQ, (i.e. personal accountability, persistence, accuracy, curiosity, intelligent risk taking, etc) that a person needs to be successful in life beyond the walls of academia.

As measures of progress, we will:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase and make more visible discussion of character development (integrity, perseverance, responsibility, flexibility, etc) in the Chattahoochee community. Our goal is to implement this initiative in 2015 throughout all disciplines. We will measure student/teacher perception of cheating both pre and post discussion via survey, through department reports, and see evidence in formal/informal teacher observations. 2. Increase student involvement in the decision-making process. Our goal is to implement in 2015 throughout all disciplines. We will measure through statistical analysis of course enrollment, narrative interviews, artifacts, and surveys. 3. Increase student participation in volunteerism. Our goal is to find an area for each student find their niche in helping their community and others. This will be implemented in 2015.

Summary of Strategic Initiatives:

- Create and administer pre- and post- survey assessments on the nature of personal and academic integrity.
- Improve professional development linked to instruction of Emotional Intelligence Quotient (EQ)
- Establish a process for formal goal-setting during one-on-one advisement appointments
- Develop an environment that motivates students to think beyond themselves. Work with students to identify appropriate volunteer opportunities.

FOCUS AREA 3. Rigorous and Relevant Academic Opportunities

Long term outcomes 1 and 3 (Improve the student’s ability to successfully transition, in terms of academics and life skills, between high school and college/career; Improve student alignment of curriculum choices to match career, college, and personal interests) will be impacted greatly by the degree of academic rigor in all classrooms. Therefore, it is a priority not only to improve the quality of teaching and learning for students and staff, but also to encourage students to take more challenging course loads and/or classes related to career pathways.

As measures of progress, we will:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase teacher inclusion of critical thinking in the classroom, as measured by departmental reporting, Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), and implementation of professional learning. 2. Increase student performance on EOC and AP exams, as measured by percentage of meets (3) and exceeds scores (4-5). 3. Increase participation in Career Technology Student Pathways, as measured by the percentage of students participating in the CTS aligned to the student’s specific career pathway. 4. Increase the number of on-level students engaging in academically rigorous (honors/AP/dual enrollment) courses as measured by enrollment figures.

Summary of Strategic Initiatives:

- Improve processes and professional development linked to instructional accountability, rigor, and data monitoring.
- Increase number of teachers with TAG/AP certification.
- Implement lunchtime seminars related to importance of PSATs, challenging one’s self, etc.
- Develop a system for follow through on the data provided through AP Potential so that the information is used to increase appropriate course enrollment.
- Design a separate AP orientation event and related literature/videos that target students more than parents.
- Make available additional opportunities for college preparation, work studies or career interests by allowing P.E. credit if involved in sports or band.
- Implement student/parent survey to determine additional career pathway options
- Explore seat time options in honors and AP courses
- Exceed state classroom limits in selective AP courses, allowing for more students to benefit in course selections.
- Create an atmosphere where all students are able to engage in an internship, not just TAG students.

SECTION V: Next Steps

The strategic plan is a living document and provides important opportunities for the school community to collaborate. The next step forward is for the plan to be shared with all stakeholders, including students, faculty, parents, and community members. The plan will be available in both hard copy and electronic copy for review. Two documents, an executive summary of the plan for adults and an executive summary version of the plan for students, will also be available. These short summaries are designed to avoid all jargon and communicate clearly the plans, goals, and expected outcomes of the strategic plan. Feedback will be solicited through email as well as informal interviews. Continuous communication of the plan via the school website, staff meetings, parent nights, and student meetings will be the norm.

The principal will manage the Strategic Plan while various leadership team members will share in the collective accountability for the document. Key staff members in this process will include the administrative team, the department chairs, student leaders, and key parent leaders.

Committees overseen by the leadership team will develop specific actions for each initiative. The committees will create project plans and determine timelines. The administrative team will collect and communicate data. Updates will be provided to the School Governance Council following each semester.