ALPHARETTA HIGH SCHOOL
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ALPHARETTA HIGH SCHOOL
STRATEGIC PLAN SY 2015/16 – SY 2017/18
APPROVED AUGUST 2015
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 this 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 lead effectively 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.

Alpharetta High School began the strategic planning process in the spring of 2015. 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 address them collectively. The AHS School Governance Council was strategically created through a combined election and appointment process. The AHS SGC includes AHS Principal Shannon N. Kersey, AHS elected parents Aileen Horton, Sara Marbaugh and Susan Schulz, AHS elected teachers Tom Hatcher and Ira Jenkins, AHS appointed community members March Fribush and Nicole Lawson, and AHS appointed faculty members Keisha Iton and Rebecca Perkins. Additionally, the AHS School Governance Council includes three student members.

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) revisions and 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 Alpharetta 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 while overcoming any weaknesses or areas for improvement.

Alpharetta 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, the leaders of Alpharetta High School clarified performance trends and identified the school’s most critical areas for improvement.

Needs Assessment – Process

We began our Needs Assessment Process with an in depth-analysis and discussion of Student Learning Data. Both the School Governance Council as well as the AHS Leadership Cabinet reviewed and analyzed three years of student learning data across various high stakes assessments and measurements. The AHS Cabinet includes AHS administrators, Department Chairs and other faculty leaders. Through the combined use of presentations, protocols and collaborative dialogue, these groups reviewed trends in Advanced Placement data, EOCT data, SAT scores, and ACT scores. Additionally, the SGC reviewed our Graduation Rate for the past three years as well as our CCRPI data. As the CCRPI data is the newest and most complex data, Assistant Principal Tina Johnson provided in depth presentations to both the SGC as well as Cabinet. Additionally, Dr. Kersey provided the SGC with a presentation in March of Achievement Gap data and comparison data against other North Fulton high schools related to AP results, SAT results, EOCT results and Graduation Rate. The SGC worked collaboratively to refine and articulate findings from the Student Learning Data. Principal Kersey shared the SGC’s findings with the AHS Cabinet at the end of May for review, refinement and feedback.

In addition to student learning data, the SGC also engaged in a review and analysis of stakeholder survey responses and stakeholder focus group responses. Students, staff and parents participated in AdvanceEd Surveys in the fall of the 2014 – 2015 school year. The SGC analyzed the survey responses to further develop our findings. Additionally, the SGC engaged in numerous focus groups throughout the spring with students of all grade levels, all faculty and a variety of parents and community members. All focus group participants engaged in structured, facilitated dialogue around these five questions: 1) What is the one thing our school did best in the past few years? 2) What has been our school’s greatest struggle in the past few years? 3) Think about the five best teachers in our school. If you could fuse them into one super teacher, what attributes would the super teacher have and why? 4) If you could make 1 – 2 changes to Alpharetta High School, in terms of how students are taught, opportunities offered, the school environment, etc… what would those changes be? 5) If a perfect high school opened across the street from you tomorrow, what would that school be like? Of the qualities you just listed, which three are most important to you? Then, the SGC sent each participant who engaged in the focus group a link to complete an electronic survey with the same five questions in order for us to be able to capture the feedback for analysis.
One of our Cabinet members, Ms. Allison Tubiak, consolidated the feedback by trends and quantity for the SGC to analyze and use to inform our findings.

The analysis of the data and the creation of the priorities, long terms outcomes and short-term goals took place over many months and several separate SGC meetings. Considerable dialogue occurred as the SGC wrestled with both the root causes for the findings as well as the precise wording to use to capture the data and sentiments underpinning the written findings and written goals. The process utilized was thorough, inclusive and comprehensive ensuring that the SGC has developed a strategic plan that meets the diverse needs of our diverse student population.

Needs Assessment – Summary of Findings

Developing our Strategic Plan has been an iterative process. We started with an analysis of data from a variety of sources and developed a set of findings that emerged from the data. A summary of our original findings are:

- Achievement in graduation and standardized tests is lower in certain subgroups; Our lowest performing subgroups are Black students, Economically Disadvantaged students, and Students with Disabilities; Student personal issues and stress are high; Students are seeking assistance for both stress and personal issues; Various stakeholders perceive school spirit as low; The number of students with 504s has increased; Students, staff and parents desire a more flexible schedule and more personalized learning; Teacher turnover is perceived as high; Teacher morale and stress is a concern; Students and parents desire top quality, passionate, and knowledgeable teachers; Students, parents and teachers desire smaller class sizes; The AHS community wants cutting-edge technology and more virtual labs.

Our next step in the process was to prioritize our findings and develop our focus areas. In order to achieve this outcome, we engaged in a group process to understand the root causes of these findings. For each of the findings, the SGC discussed and articulated in writing what we believed to be the root causes of the findings. We color coded the root causes into like categories over several SGC meetings, again engaging in important dialogue about why Alpharetta High School is having such great academic success and where we see needs for future growth in a variety of important areas. Once all of our root causes were articulated and color-coded, we then determined how we would label each category. We started with six categories, but through dialogue were able to combine and ultimately agree on five focus areas. We also noticed that several of our root cause statements needed to be copied and pasted because the root cause issue influenced multiple focus areas. Finally, we refined our long-term outcomes and then carefully crafted our short-term goals, ensuring they aligned to the focus area and the long term outcomes.

We submitted our draft of our focus areas, long-term outcomes and short-term goals to our Area Superintendent for feedback on June 1st. We reviewed the feedback at our June SGC meetings and through collective discourse made requested adjustments. We revised our focus areas from five to four in September of 2015.
SECTION III. Long-term Outcomes

LONG-TERM OUTCOME 1. Increase student achievement for all students to their highest performance level

AHS is nationally recognized for academic success due to excellence in SATs, ACTs, and Advanced Placement. The majority of our students do extremely well academically. However, our data reveal that we have an achievement gap that is negatively affecting our Black students, economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities. We must continue supporting all of our students, including our highest achieving students, while at the same time ensuring that students in underperforming sub groups are able to achieve at their highest levels as well. We have an extremely diverse student body and must increase the variety and intensity of the supports and courses we offer in order to meet the diverse academic needs of our students. The student success goals that underlie this long-term outcome are that all students will participate in rigorous coursework, all students will increase achievement on standardized assessments and our graduation rate will continue to increase.

This goal will be measured by:

Frequency of common test items on major, summative assessments in EOC courses (self-contained, IRR team taught and Gen Ed courses).
- Baseline 15-16: to be collected
- Target 17-18: 75%

% of Honors/AP course enrollment closer to school-wide demographics
- Baseline 15-16: to be determined once student schedules are set
- Target 16-17: 2% closing the gap between H/AP course and school-wide
- Target 17-18: 5% closing the gap between H/AP course and school-wide

LONG-TERM OUTCOME 2. Increase support for student well-being and independence

AHS has an extremely diverse student body with a variety of needs. Just as we have an academic achievement gap that requires a diverse set of academic supports, we also have a social and emotional gap that requires a diverse set of school affective supports. For some students, the pressure to achieve is intense both in the classroom and outside the classroom with athletics, arts and service. These students need assistance managing time and stress in order to find a healthy emotional balance while learning to communicate effectively and advocate for themselves. For other students, academic excellence and college attendance are not a tradition or priority in the home. These students need support in understanding and embracing the social and cultural norms that support academic achievement including how to communicate effectively and advocate for themselves as well. With such a diverse student population, we must develop a diverse, systematic support structure in order to meet the social and emotional needs of each student.

This goal will be measured by:

- Recognize positive behaviors and provide incentives for them.
  - Baseline 14-15: 0
  - Target 15-16: 10% of students recognized for positive behaviors
LONG-TERM OUTCOME 3. Increase students’ opportunities to participate in customized curriculum Pathways.

More and more, our students experience choice and customization in their lives outside of school; however, the traditional public high school continues to operate in largely the same manner it has for decades. In order to remain relevant, we must adapt to meet the diverse needs and desires of our students. Students and parents want options, flexibility and assurance that the unique needs of each student will be fulfilled. In order to do this, we must create a high school that is flexible, and we must increase and support more individualized curriculum pathways for students.

This goal will be measured by:

- **# of courses offered to AHS students**
  - Baseline 14-15: (tbd – need e-school report)
  - Target 16-17: 5% increase of courses offered in 14-15

- **# of offerings during-the-day providing academic support for students**
  - Baseline 15-16: (1 e.g. SAT)
  - Target 16-17: 3

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

FOCUS AREA 1. Culture and Community

Like all organizations, Alpharetta High School operates within a unique school culture affected tremendously by both the internal and external Alpharetta community. Our primary attributes are that we are relatively young as a school and that we are an extremely diverse community serving students with a wide range of academic goals and needs. As a young school, we are still in the process of developing meaningful traditions that build a sense of school and community pride. As a diverse school community, we have students who are extremely academically successful as well as students who are underperforming to their potential. Finally, we have extremely engaged parents as well as parents who are not engaged with our school. This parental engagement gap often leads to miscommunication and misplaced support.
As measures of progress, we will:

1 Increase school pride and community involvement.
   - Grand Mean Score on Gallup Student Engagement Survey (10th and 11th grade following as a cohort)
     - baseline established 15-16
     - target 16-17: set based on baseline

2. Expand Participation from School Support Agencies
   - Increase number of School Support Agencies that give at least $500 in-kind or monetary support
     - Baseline established 15-16
     - Target 16-17: set after baseline established

Summary of strategic initiatives:

- Increase spirit activities throughout the year
- Improve modes and effectiveness of communication and information.

FOCUS AREA 2. Professional Development

Our profession requires all teachers to be highly qualified in a variety of essential academic skills related to Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. In order to ensure that our teachers are effective, we must provide professional development. Just as students have diverse learning needs so do our teachers; therefore, we must develop more individualized pathways for our teachers to learn and grow. Not only do our teachers need professional development in Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, but we have also identified a need to provide teachers with additional, focused training related to cultural awareness and social-emotional needs of students to meet our school’s diversified student and parent culture.

As measures of progress, we will:

1. Enhance daily schedule and annual calendar structure to allow for additional time for teacher PLCs, planning, preparation and differentiated professional development.
   - a school schedule with more teacher professional development hours in addition to district allotment
     - baseline 15-16: 0 hours
     - target 16-17: 30 hours

2. Increase staff preparedness in cultural and social-emotional student behaviors
   - % of staff members involved in professional development regarding cultural and socio-emotional student behaviors
     - baseline 15-16: 0%
     - target 17-18: 10%
Summary of strategic initiatives:

- Establish AHS Professional Learning Days
- Research and establish a diversity training program
- Increase the effectiveness of PLCs through the implementation of common assessments among collaborative teams

FOCUS AREA 3. Student Support

We have a diverse student body with a diverse set of academic, social and emotional needs. While we have many students who are extremely high achieving academically, we have discovered that the pressure associated with such success can have adverse effects for many students. Many of our high achieving students are emotionally healthy, but we also serve students who are struggling socially and emotionally to achieve balance and fulfillment in their lives. Additionally, we have an achievement gap for certain subgroups of students. Not all of our students have the social and cultural experiences to achieve academically and thus are not living up to their full potential. More targeted, systematic supports for these students are needed in order to ensure all of our students are college and career ready.
As measures of progress, we will:

1. **Increase standardized test scores in targeted populations.**
   - Frequency of common test items on major, summative assessments in EOC courses (self-contained, IRR team-taught and Gen Ed courses).
     - Baseline 15-16: to be collected
     - Target 17-18: 75%
   - % of Honors/AP course enrollment closer to school-wide demographics
     - Baseline 15-16: to be determined once student schedules are set
     - Target 16-17: 2% closing the gap between H/AP course and school-
     - Target 17-18: 5% closing the gap between H/AP course and school-

2. **Expand curriculum and flexible scheduling options for students.**
   - # of courses offered to AHS students
     - Baseline 14-15: (tbd – need e-school report)
     - Target 16-17: 5% increase of courses offered in 14-15

3. **Increase positive behavior incentives and recognition programs for students.**
   - Recognize positive behaviors and provide incentives for them.
     - Baseline 14-15: 0
     - Target 15-16: 10% of students recognized for positive behaviors

4. **Increase opportunities for individualized academic support for students.**
   - # of offerings during-the-day providing academic support for students
     - baseline 15-16: 1 (e.g., SAT)
     - target 16-17: 3

**Summary of strategic initiatives:**

- Implement Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS)
- Implement technology for automated student ID/attendance system
- Create academic policies to allow for flexibility with scheduling in order to increase non-traditional pathways to meet graduation requirements

**FOCUS AREA 4. Professional Climate**

Our parent community holds high expectations for our teachers yet does not always provide corresponding respect and support for teachers as professionals. Moreover, with the implementation of a new evaluation system (TKES) and increased emphasis on student assessment outcomes, the professional climate for the teaching profession has diminished. Teaching continues to have higher expectations and increased accountability and our desire is to equally increase support and recognition in order to ensure highly effective, talented educators choose to remain in the profession and serve the Alpharetta High School community.
### Strategic Plan SY 2015/16 – 2017/18

**As measures of progress, we will:**

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**Summary of strategic initiatives:**

- Increase community support of teaching as a profession.
- Create a systematic recruiting system to hire and retain the best instructors

### SECTION V. Next Steps

The Alpharetta High School Administrative Team, Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), Cabinet, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and School Governance Council (SGC) will lead and monitor the implementation of our Strategic Plan. The administrative team and PLCs meet weekly while Cabinet, ILT and SGC meet monthly. Leaders will design agendas to review the progress of our goals and make any adjustments needed in the plan. Informational meetings will facilitate the communication and progress of our strategic plan. The SGC will post regular updates to our website. The SGC also will provide all school and community stakeholders with opportunities to be involved with the initiatives to generate more buy-in and to build a more positive, collaborative environment. The next community update will occur in September on Curriculum Night. The strategic plan for Alpharetta High School is a dynamic document that will be revised as needed.