



Charter System Application

DISTRICT NAME

Gainesville City Schools

DISTRICT ADDRESS

508 Oak Street
Gainesville, Georgia
30501

Dr. John D. Barge
State School Superintendent

DECEMBER 2011



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Introduction

The Charter Schools Act of 1998 established a flexibility option for Georgia school districts that wish to become a Charter System. A Charter System is a local school district that operates under the terms of a charter between the State Board of Education and the local Board of Education. The system receives flexibility in the form of waivers of certain state laws, rules and guidelines in exchange for greater accountability for increased student performance and an emphasis on school-based leadership and decisionmaking.

Your Charter System Application is a petition to the Georgia State Board of Education asking it to create or renew your charter system. The evaluation of your Application will be led by the Charter Schools Division of the Georgia Department of Education, in partnership with others within the Department (including the Finance and Budget Office, the Office of School Improvement, the Office of School Turnaround, and the Accountability Division) and with the independent Charter Advisory Committee (CAC) that was also established by the Charter Schools Act.

The evaluation of your Application will focus on whether implementing the charter system proposed in your Application will lead to the improved academic, organizational, and financial performance you are promising in exchange for freedom from much of Georgia's education law, rules and guidelines. It will also determine whether the proposed charter system would comply with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, policies and procedures (including the Charter Schools Act of 1998, as amended [O.C.G.A. §§ 20-2-2060 through 20-2-2071], State Board of Education Rule 160-4-9-.04 et. seq., and Department of Education Guidelines accompanying the Charter School Rules); whether the academic, organizational and financial plans are viable; and whether the charter system is in the public interest.

Please note that submitting a Charter System Application does not guarantee that a charter will be granted. It does guarantee, however, that the Georgia Department of Education will work closely with you to improve your chances of State Board of Education approval of your charter system contract.

DEADLINE AND SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

Your Charter System Application must be approved by your local Board of Education in accordance with the rules and regulations of your local board. After local submission, review and approval, charter system applications must be received at the address below by November 1 of the year prior to the start of the July-June fiscal year in which the charter system contract would go into effect:

Georgia Department of Education
Charter Schools Division
2053 Twin Towers East
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive, SE
Atlanta, Georgia 30334



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APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST

Your Charter System Application Package must comply with the following submission procedures.

- An Application Package includes an original and two copies of the following items:
 - SYSTEM APPLICATION COVER SHEET** (Use the form on page 3; the form may not be altered in any way).
 - CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION** (Your answers to the questions posed on pages 4-8).
 - The Charter System Application is limited to 50 double-spaced pages using an 11-point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins with a header showing the school system's name and a footer showing consecutive page numbers.
 - The original must be signed in blue ink. Stamped signatures will not be accepted.
 - ASSURANCES FORM AND SIGNATURE SHEET** (Use the Assurances Form and Signature Sheet below on pages 9-11; the Form and the Sheet may not be altered in any way).
 - The original must be signed in blue ink; stamped signatures will not be accepted.
 - EXHIBITS** (See list of required Exhibits below on page 12).
 - Required Exhibits should be as limited in size as possible (no more than 5 pages per Exhibit). The only exceptions to this size limitation for Exhibits are your most recent annual audit and your most recent accreditation report.
 - All Exhibits must be tabbed.
- Your Application Package must be bound by a binder clip; do not enclose your Application Package in a notebook, binder, or folder.
- Your Application Package must also include a single CD or USB drive that includes a:
 - Microsoft Word version of your Charter System Application Cover Sheet
 - Microsoft Word version of your Charter System Application
 - PDF Version of your signed Assurances Form
 - Microsoft Word version of your Exhibits (except for your annual audit and your accreditation report)
 - PDF version of your most recent annual audit
 - PDF version of your most recent accreditation report

Faxed or emailed copies will not be accepted. Only complete petitions that comply with these guidelines will be evaluated. Applications will not be returned; please keep a copy for your records.



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CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION COVER SHEET

Please enter the requested information in the gray boxes following each question. Thank you!

Proposed Charter System Information			
1. Full Name of Proposed Charter System Gainesville City Schools			
2. Please indicate whether this is a: New Petition No or a Renewal Petition Yes	3. How many schools in total are you proposing to include in your charter system? 8 (* 9)		
4. How many of each of the following schools are you proposing to include in your charter system? Primary School(s) 0 Middle School(s) 1 Elementary School(s) 5 High school(s) 1 Middle- High School Grade 6-12 1 * Proposed New Mundy Mill School (opening 2016) 1 - (would request to include in this application; however, we can add the school later as amendment if necessary)			
5. On July 1 of what year do you want your charter contract to be effective? 2013			
6. How many years are you proposing for the term of your charter contract? (Note that an initial charter cannot exceed five years) July 1, 2013- June 30, 2018			
7. Charter System Street Address 508 Oak Street	8. City Gainesville	9. State Georgia	10. Zip 30501
11. Contact Person Dr. Merrienne Dyer		12. Title Superintendent	
13. Contact Street Address 508 Oak Street	14. City Gainesville	15. State Georgia	16. Zip 30501
17. Contact's telephone number 770-536-5275	18. Contact's fax number 770-287-2019		19. Contact's E-mail Address merrienne.dyer@gcssk12.net



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CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION

The Charter System Application includes eleven questions grouped into four sections. The first section is "The Case", where you justify your schools system's need for a charter. The final three sections focus on your Academic, Organizational, and Financial Objectives, Plans, and need for Waivers.

Please note that the italicized bullet points after each question are included to clarify the question being asked and to provide guidance regarding what we will be looking for in your answers. Please note also that you can include links to websites in your answer if you want to make optional additional information available to us as we review your application. If possible, we will access those additional optional resources – but we cannot guarantee we will, so please be sure to include your answers in the text of your Application (within the 50-page limit).

THE CASE

1. Why do you want a charter?

- *What is your school system's motivation for applying to be a charter system?*
 - *To what extent are you being driven by district or community leadership, community members, funding issues, the need for waivers, study of the issue and the realization that being a charter is best for your school district at this point in your history, and/or other factors?*
- What will you be able to do *with* a charter that you can't do *without* a charter?
- Thinking of the answer to this question as an Executive Summary of your Charter System Application may help.

In order to sustain a culture of innovation that improves learning for students, it is necessary to have a comprehensive and coherent vision, strategic plan, and the freedom of flexibility to carry out the plan. Gainesville City Schools seeks a charter in order to fulfill our mission of *inspiring, nurturing, challenging, and preparing our students as we educate them to be successful in a 21st century global society*. Gainesville City Schools seeks charter system status for two primary reasons. First, we want to continue and improve customized school offerings that transform traditional classrooms into deeper, more challenging, and real-world connected learning centers. Secondly, we want to continue and further improve a shared governance system that includes the Board of Education and School Governance Councils with systematic input from parents,



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students, teachers, and the community-at-large. To ensure that our charter system goals are embedded into policy and practice, Gainesville City Schools uses a framework of comprehensive systems of learning support in the *Rebuilding for Learning Initiative*. This approach provides a systematic way for the district to operate in a unified manner to address the social, emotional, and learning challenges that our schools face. This includes the full integration of charter system goals into the classroom, family, and community. (See <http://www.aasa.org>, link to Leadership Development- LEAD Collaborative.)

In order to continue the work of improving customization of schools and classrooms, Gainesville City seeks the flexibility to use class time, structure, and fiscal and human capital to adapt to the learning needs of the students enrolled. This includes the flexibility to offer a broad range of choices for students based on their interests and needs, flexible instructional practices, and organizational structure, including staffing patterns, to personalize learning.

To continue the work in shared governance and decision-making, Gainesville City Schools seeks charter system status as the organizational structure to guide official roles and responsibilities of each entity involved. By institutionalizing governance structures, the district and individual schools are guided in maintaining the integrity of shared governance.

ACADEMIC OBJECTIVES, PLANS, AND WAIVERS

2. What are your school system's student performance objectives for the proposed charter term?

System student performance objectives should:

- *Show the system's student performance during the past five years*
- *Reflect where the system envisions itself academically at the end of the proposed charter term*
- *Indicate the expected rate of student performance growth in each year of the proposed charter term*
- *Exceed the rate of growth mandated by the State*
- *Demonstrate compliance with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and State Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) and their successors.*



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- *You are welcome – but not required – to include all or some of the components of the current draft of the Georgia Department of Education’s College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI).*
- *You are urged to include cohort measures that show the progress over time of a single cohort of students.*
- *You are also urged to include national norm-referenced test results among your performance measures.*
- *Be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based (SMART).*
- *Present graphs that show the past five years performance with the system student performance objectives for the each year of the proposed charter term plotted out to demonstrate graphically what the charter system is striving to achieve with its new innovations (see example below).*
- *Please feel free to present any additional graphs you desire to show a more nuanced picture of your charter system’s academic goals and targets.*

The targeted metrics we have identified on our five year charter application plan will be measured on our system balanced scorecard as well as Georgia’s College and Career Readiness Performance Index. The following chart contains the chosen academic indicators that we will be measuring and the key concepts that we will use to achieve our targets.

Chart #1

Personalization is the process of accounting for individual differences in capability and motivation. It makes mastery of standards (student achievement) possible. True personalization can only be achieved when certain conditions are in place: quality teaching, technological innovation and appropriate learning supports.			
Condition	Strategies, Structures, Systems	Outcome	Indicator
Quality Teaching Individualized Graduation Plans Authentic Assessment Increased frequency of formative assessment	Professional Development Instructional Leader Support Online Staff Development	Improvement of Teacher Effectiveness Personalization of Learning for Students	Teacher, Leader, and District Effectiveness Measure Scores Total number of common assessments by



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<p>Student Centered Differentiated Instruction (Teaching students how to know what they need.)</p> <p>Student Choice</p> <p>Universal Design for Learning</p> <p>Teacher Keys Effectiveness System Standards</p>	<p>Data Informed Planning</p> <p>Professional Learning Communities</p> <p>Teacher Induction</p> <p>Data Specialists</p>		<p>school</p> <p>CTAE pathways completers</p> <p>ACT Participation SAT Participation AP Participation</p> <p>The number of eighth graders passing four core courses</p> <p>State Health Surveys</p> <p>Teacher retention/Leader retention</p>
<p>Technological Innovation</p> <p>Leveraging of Modern Technologies</p> <p>Student-Centered, customized learning model</p> <p>Flipped classrooms</p> <p>Blended Learning</p> <p>Virtual Learning Opportunities</p>	<p>1:1 Devices</p> <p>Bring Your Own Device Initiative</p> <p>Instructional Technology/Media Specialists</p> <p>Game-based Learning</p> <p>Use of video/social networking (teachers)</p> <p>Remote learning opportunities</p> <p>STEM- Robotics</p>	<p>Improved Student Achievement</p> <p>Increased Technological Capacity</p> <p>Flexible Learning Opportunities</p>	<p>CRCT, EOCT, Writing Assessments, PARCC Assessments</p> <p>Student/Computer Ratio</p> <p>Internet Bandwidth Availability</p> <p>Technology Satisfaction Survey</p> <p>District Enrollment</p>



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Learning Supports Leveraging student Interests/Experiences for Engagement Intrinsic Motivators: Autonomy Soft Skills Prevention, Proactive, Promotion of healthy development Focus on Transitions 6-8, 8-9, New to System	Collaboration/ Teams, parents, community Labs open to public Induction Team Teacher Leaders Counselors	Increased Student Engagement/Motivation Increase "on task" behaviors Decrease negative behaviors	Attendance Discipline Health Survey Satisfaction Surveys Achievement Gap Reduction

The goal we have set for the longitudinal academic data for Gainesville City Schools is to show both compression and elevation on our trend charts. By compressing the data we intend to close our achievement gap between our bottom and top data quartiles. The goal of elevation sets our expectations of raising scores for all students while closing the achievement gap. Our past five years of overall data show improvement in both arenas. Charts #2 and #3 show our data trend line for the past five years (when available) as well as our performance targets through 2018 for the CRCT and EOCT. All of the targets listed exceed the rate of growth mandated by the Georgia Department of Education written into the federal waiver.

Chart #2



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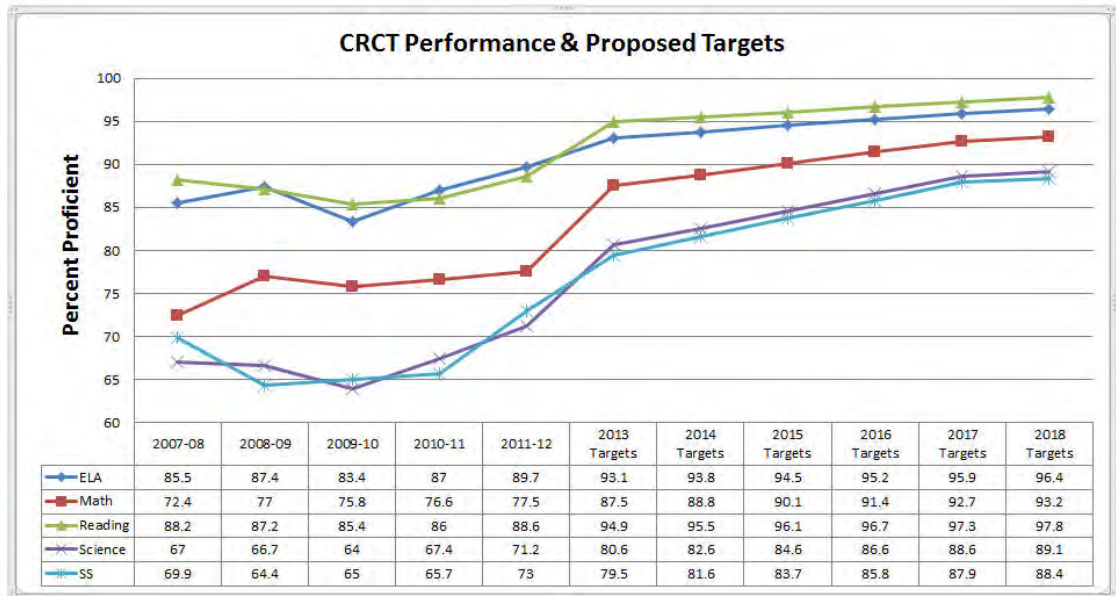
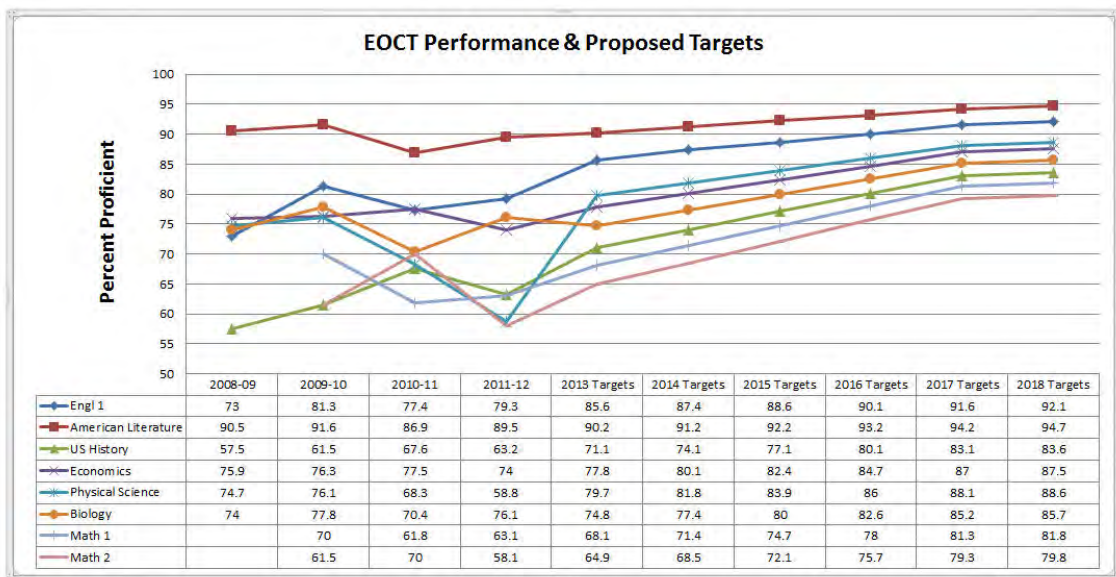


Chart #3



The data from our last two years attempting to meet the adequate yearly progress goals of No Child Left Behind found in chart #4 shows the upward trend for most of the data point



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subgroups in the district Criterion Referenced Competency Test and Georgia High School Graduation Test data.

Chart #4

GCSS AYP 2010-2011 Gains								
AYP Comparison	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011
	GHSGT Math	GHSGT Math	GHSGT RELA	GHSGT RELA	CRCT Math	CRCT Math	CRCT RELA	CRCT RELA
All Students	81.30%	84.30%	96.30%	96.90%	78.20%	81.50%	89.20%	89.60%
White Students	93.50%	96.20%	96.10%	100%	92.40%	94.10%	96.40%	97.00%
Black Students	74.20%	76.50%	96.80%	92.60%	69.60%	75.40%	84.60%	86.90%
Hispanic Students	74.20%	81.80%	95.70%	96.60%	75.50%	78.50%	87.80%	87.30%
Economically Disadvantaged Students	73.80%	80.80%	95.00%	96.20%	73.90%	78.20%	87.00%	87.30%
English Language Learners	33.30%	60.00%	85.70%	97.60%	65.00%	72.10%	81.20%	82.90%
Students With Disabilities	60.90%	70.00%	78.30%	90.00%	47.20%	63.80%	62.60%	66.50%

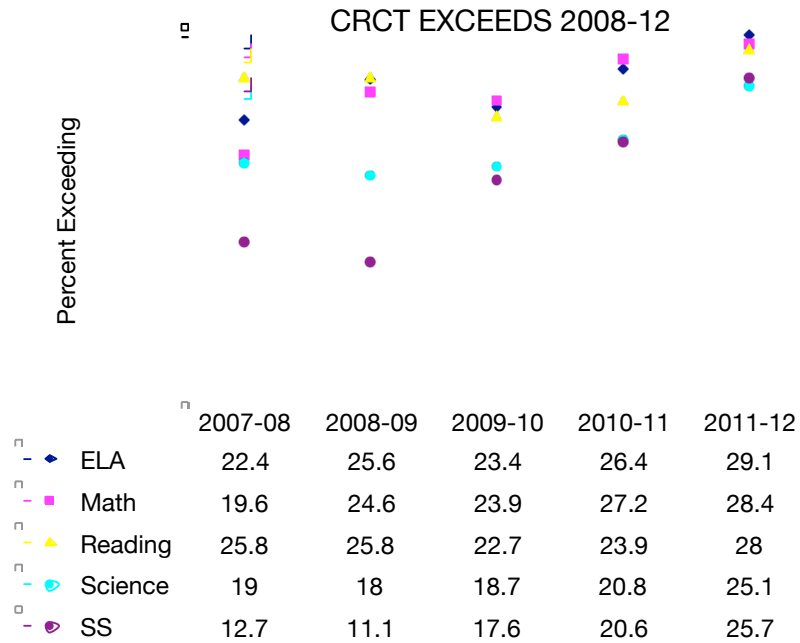
***Gains are identified in Green**

As a district, we continue to emphasize the growth of all students in the district. We are careful to look at our full range of data to make decisions that meet the needs of all students. The percentage of students exceeding the state standards on the Criterion Referenced Competency Test shown on chart #5 continues to increase over the term of our charter.

Chart #5



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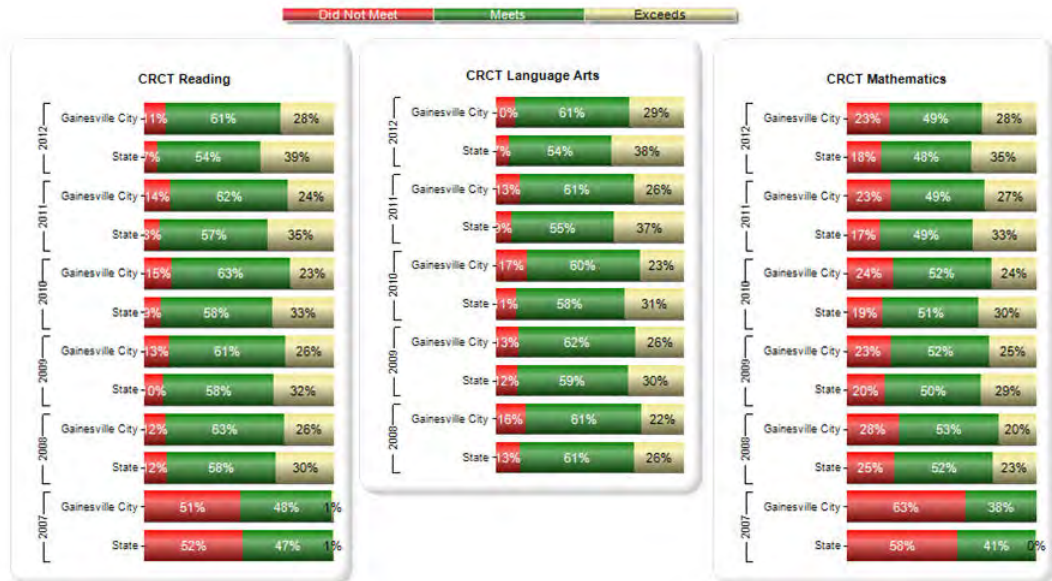
By the end of the proposed charter term in 2018, Gainesville City Schools will continue narrowing of the achievement gap while continuing to move students into the exceeds cohort on our summative state testing. More students will graduate from our high schools. Our schools will increase the depth of implementation of personalized student learning through our commitment to our learning supports process, professional learning communities, and technological innovation. We will have an increase in the number of common assessments occurring in schools. More eighth grade students will be passing core courses. All of our high school students will be completing a CTAE pathway ending in a capstone project or internship. We envision that more students will be participating on national assessments to open postsecondary opportunities. We will continue our gains on our Science and Social Studies test scores by surpassing the state overall scores and subgroup scores for these subject areas. Our survey data will continue to show more students and parents who are pleased with our schools. Our learning supports interventions will continue to positively impact our discipline and attendance trend data. Our quality



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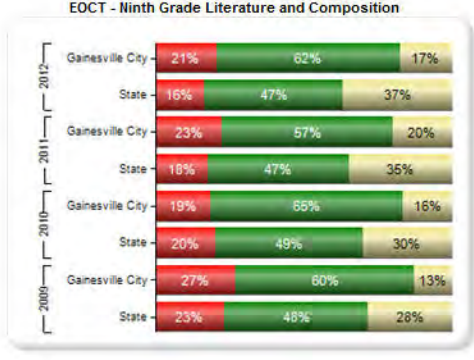
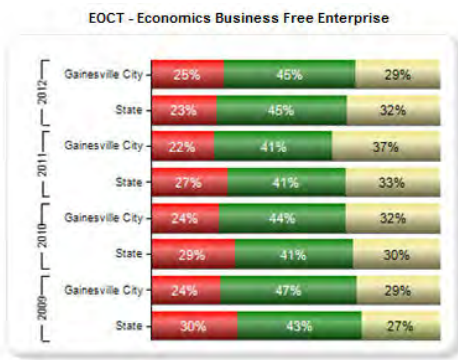
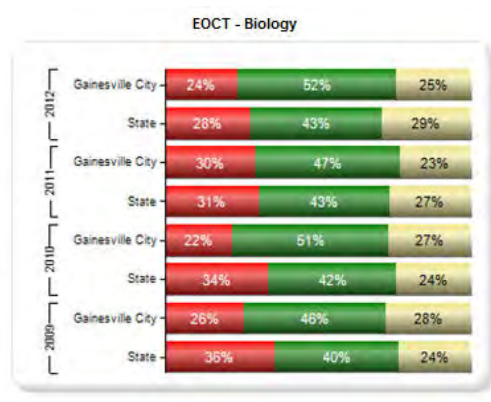
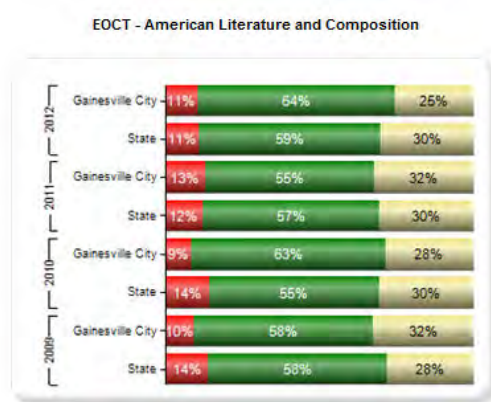
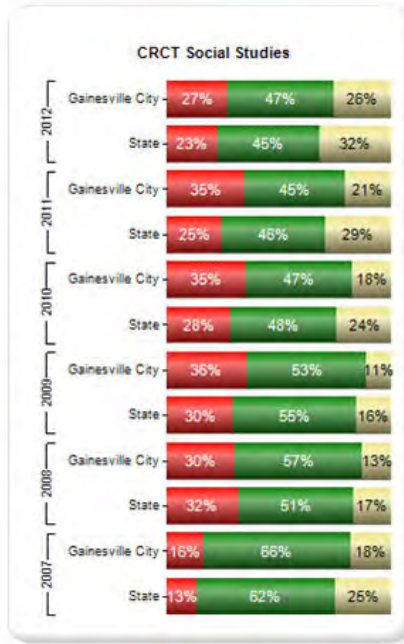
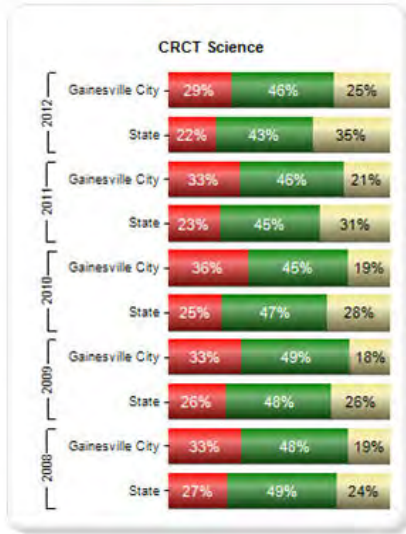
implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System and Teacher Induction will increase our retention of quality teachers and leaders. Our internet bandwidth and student to computer ratio will continue to improve to support our technological innovation and offerings to our community.

The following series of charts show comparative data between the State of Georgia and Gainesville City for the Criterion Referenced Competency Tests and End of Course Tests.



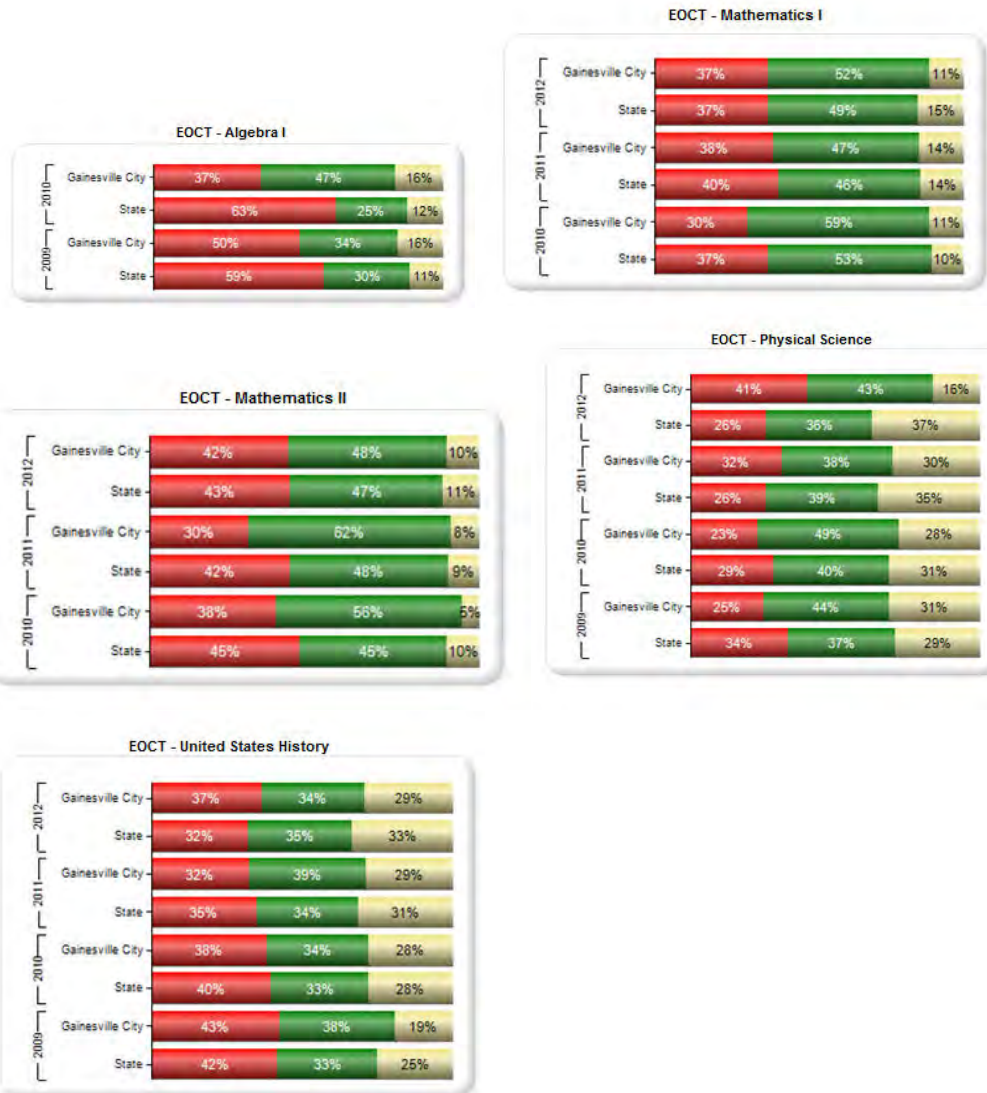


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3. What specific actions will the system take to achieve the student performance objectives during the proposed charter term?

- *Describe the educational innovations that will be implemented.*
- *Provide a clear explanation of how the innovations will increase student achievement.*
- *Describe the anticipated timeline for implementation of the innovations*
- *Describe why the innovations are appropriate for this unique system*



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Gainesville City Schools believes that all students are unique. They come to us with different circumstances, interests, abilities, experiences, and resources. We fundamentally believe that despite these differences, every child can succeed with sufficient support, commitment from all stakeholders, and personalized learning opportunities that are student centered. Our plans are to target educational transitions. We will examine students' progression through our schools. In this work we will identify opportunities for breakthroughs and work on hard problems that need new insights and innovative solutions.

Furthermore, we are committed to increasing teacher effectiveness, empowering excellent teachers, and engaging and motivating students. We will remain focused on accelerating the development and adoption of breakthrough educational strategies that will enable every student to follow a more personalized pathway to college and or career success. Student engagement is the key to academic success. Personalization requires knowing when, how, and what to teach. We also must know when and how to structure the situation so students can learn on their own.

As the Gainesville City School District continues to implement the Common Core Standards and prepare for the common assessment of these standards, it will become more important than ever that our teachers are well prepared to use personalization in the classroom and that they have the appropriate tools to do so. The Common Core Standards outline what all students should know, learn, and be able to do. The expectations are clear and they are rigorous. However, what is less clear is how to make the standards accessible for students with disadvantaged backgrounds, students with disabilities, and English Learners. In fact, the authors of the standards originally left the application of these standards to students from these groups open to the interpretation of states



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and districts. What became evident during this period was that the only way to make the standards accessible for these students was to embrace the concept of personalization. Because of the rigorous expectations of the Common Core, it is likely that students who have traditionally faced challenges in schools will continue to have difficulty unless teaching methods such as Universal Design for Learning, “flipped” classrooms, and other means of personalization are utilized. New guidance on making the standards accessible for English Learners has now emerged. The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers suggest that diagnosing each student instructionally, adjusting instruction accordingly, and closely monitoring student progress are appropriate methods to be used with English Learners (<http://www.corestandards.org/assets/application-for-english-learners.pdf>). These concepts certainly align with the idea of personalization. For students with disabilities, the following suggestions for making the Common Core accessible are offered (<http://www.corestandards.org/assets/application-to-students-with-disabilities.pdf>):

- use of Instructional supports for learning— based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) —which foster student engagement by presenting information in multiple ways and allowing for diverse avenues of action and expression
- use of instructional accommodations (Thompson, Morse, Sharpe & Hall, 2005) —changes in materials or procedures— which do not change the standards but allow students to learn within the framework of the Common Core
- use of assistive technology devices and services to ensure access to the general education curriculum and the Common Core State Standards



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Opportunities to express preferences and make choices lead to positive trends with motivation, academic gains, productivity, and on-task behavior and decrease aggressive behavior. Similarly, researchers report that student participation in goal setting leads to more positive outcomes (e.g. higher commitment to a goal and increased performance) Adelman, Howard & Taylor, Linda .“Unit 1 -Personalizing Learning.” July 2012. Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA.

Technological innovations are an integral part of the changing Pre K –20 educational landscape. The digital age is helping redefine boundaries that once separated students, families, and educational opportunities. Accessible information about content, students, and performance can be a powerful resource for improving educational practice in classrooms. We will be implementing the following innovations:

- Using technology innovations such as 1:1 devices (tablets, laptops, netbooks, Ipods, etc.) to support teachers and students (K-12) in blended learning environments to continuously improve student learning.
- Implementing blended learning on all of our campuses (PreK-12) that combines face to face classroom methods with computer-mediated activities to form an integrated instructional approach.
- Using game based learning to engage students with rigorous learning opportunities.
- Continued support of our Bring Your Own Device initiative in schools.

The goal of a blended approach is to join the best aspects of both teacher and virtual instruction. Classroom time can be used to engage students in advanced interactive experiences. Meanwhile, the online portion of class can provide students with multimedia-rich



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content at any time of day and anywhere the student has internet access, from computer labs, the coffee shop, or the students' homes. This allows for an increase in scheduling flexibility for students. By flipping the classroom, we can maximize the time spent doing hands on critical thinking by delivering content through virtual resources.

Some of the blended learning models we will implement include lab rotation, station rotation, and individual rotation models.

The **lab rotation model** retains the basic structure of the traditional course and uses technology resources to supplement traditional lectures and textbooks. The blended model for blended learning incorporates technology into the instructional approach of the course, but does not alter its basic structure. During the Learning Lab block, students go to a separate room where they work on computers to focus on individual learning needs and general skills practice. This online learning and practice time allows classroom teachers to focus more of their student interactions on concept extension and critical thinking skill development. In Learning Lab, students sit at assigned computer terminals where they initially encounter a screen from which they choose the content program specified for the day. After selecting the program, students complete activities under the program's guidance. They may also engage in offline activities, such as independent reading and enrichment programs.

- The **station rotation model** encourages students to rotate among individualize online learning, teacher-led instruction, and collaborative activities and stations within each classroom. Blended learning occurs within the core academic classroom. Each classroom is equipped with about 15 computers. Throughout the day the teacher rotates students among the computers, small-group instruction, and individualized instruction. During



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teacher-led instruction, group size is under 14 students per group for reading, math, writing, and science.

- In the **individual rotation model** students rotate between online learning for concept introduction and instruction and face-to-face learning for reinforcement and application. Class time is flexible from 1-4 days per week. Course content is delivered via online materials, and in-person help is provided in the learning resource center. This resource center, typically a large computer lab, offers access to online course materials in addition to live assistance and guidance. Additionally, we will implement innovative modes of professional development (e.g., use of video and social networking tools) to provide examples of outstanding instructional practice)

We will also continue our commitment to our Comprehensive System of Learning Supports (CSLS). Learning supports are the resources, strategies, and practices that provide physical, social, emotional, and intellectual supports to directly address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students. A comprehensive system of learning supports seek to provide supportive interventions in classrooms and school-wide and is fully integrated with efforts to improve instruction and management at a school. It is important to stress that in addition to the focus on addressing barriers to student learning, a CSLS also focuses on the prevention of problems before they arise while proactively promoting healthy development for all students. Hence, the emphasis is placed on prevention, being proactive, and promoting healthy development for all students. By taking this approach, schools end of with relatively fewer students needing intensive and costly interventions, thus maximizing student engagement and positive learning outcomes. The Gainesville City School district firmly believes that a child's learning is



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supported by the quality and effectiveness of the teacher. Research suggests that one effective teacher can accelerate students' learning over more than one grade level, while an ineffective teacher can cause students to fall irreparably behind. We are committed to attracting and retaining the best teachers for our children by developing teacher leader teams at each of our schools. This will mean creating opportunities and cultures within schools for teachers that promote collaboration, sharing of practice, leading from the classroom, and sharing responsibility for the success of students. The work of Professional Learning Communities will guide our process. In promoting this collaborative culture among fellow teachers, administrators, and other school leaders, the teacher leaders ensure improvement in educator instruction; consequently, they will improve student learning opportunities.

Innovation	Timeline	Who is impacted?
Using technology innovations such as 1:1 devices (tablets, net books, laptops, desktops, smart phones, etc.) to support teachers and students (K-12) in blended learning environments to continuously improve student learning	2012-2018	3 rd - 12 graders
Implementing blended learning on all of our campuses (PreK-12) that combines face to face classroom methods with computer-mediated activities to form an integrated instructional approach.	2012 - 2018	PreK – 12 graders Classroom teachers Technology Department



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Implementing innovative modes of professional development (e.g., use of video and social networking tools) to provide examples of outstanding instructional practice)	2012-2018	Classroom Teachers Instructional Technology Specialists Technology Department
Implementing teacher and leader evaluation instruments (using electronic platform and 1:1 devices).	2012-2018	Classroom Teachers Technology Department
Teaching soft skills and leveraging student interests and experience in the learning.	2012-2018	PreK – 12 graders
Student centered teaching strategies to personalize learning through differentiation.	2012-2018	PreK – 12 graders

4. Which of the specific actions in the academic plan require a waiver of state law, rule, or guidelines?

- *Although you will be granted a broad flexibility waiver if you are granted a charter, please numerate specific actions, the required waivers, and provide examples of how they will be implemented.*

Gainesville City Schools will use the waivers of the requirements for:

- seat time for high school to develop flexible schedules for multiple delivery models based on student needs, interests.
- seat time for high school to implement independent studies based on career interests and apprenticeship opportunities.
- seat time for elementary, middle, and high school students to offer part-time or full-time virtual learning options.
- class size requirements for state programs and grade levels in order to utilize flexible grouping for personalized learning.
- use of advanced content and innovative models for Gifted Education, ESL, EIP, Remedial, and world languages.
- use of highly qualified teachers in staffing patterns based on needs so as to use secondary teachers in middle grades and middle grades teachers in elementary grades particularly in STEM fields.
- Teacher Keys Effectiveness Measures flexibility for teacher of record, and student learning objective implementation.



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ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTIVES, PLANS, AND WAIVERS

5. What are the system's organizational performance objectives for the term of the charter contract?

System organizational performance objectives should:

- *Indicate the system's organizational performance over the past five years*
- *Reflect where the system envisions itself organizationally at the end of the charter term.*
- *Indicate the anticipated organizational targets in each year*
- *Include objectives related to items such as stakeholder satisfaction, teacher and/or student retention, professional development and technology.*
- *Be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based (SMART).*

During this first term as a charter system, we have accomplished many of our goals for our organizational performance. We have thoroughly transitioned to site-based governance of all schools in our district. We have deeply embedded school and district leadership teams that use clearly defined, data rich protocols to guide the decision-making process. We have moved away from a hierarchical structure of disconnected departments to a model of collaborative, distributed leadership. We have further aligned our organizational structure with our Comprehensive System of Learning Supports.

By the end of our new charter term, we will align all of our actions clearly through the lens of our comprehensive system of learning supports. This will mean that our management, instruction, and learning supports components will not work in isolation. Instead, all of our strategic planning will require each component to be integrated into our solutions. The teacher leader teams in each school will be ensuring job-embedded professional development is in place for teachers, thus a greater percentage of quality teachers and leaders will be retained in our system. We will have instructional technology specialists, data specialists, media specialists, and academic coaches supporting the professional development and technological innovations of our charter. Student



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survey data will show increases in satisfaction due to the more student centric personalization that will be provided by our innovative models.

Organizational Innovation Targets	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-2018
Student/Computer Ratio	Increase the number of available devices for students.	Meet the requirements needed for Parcc assessments.	Increase the number of available devices for students.	Increase the number of available devices for students.	Increase the number of available devices for students.
Internet Bandwidth Availability	Increase the bandwidth available to our schools.	Provide appropriate bandwidth to administer testing.	Increase the bandwidth available to our schools.	Increase the bandwidth available to our schools.	Increase the bandwidth available to our schools.
Technology Satisfaction Survey	Increase the satisfaction survey data by 1% until 100% is reached at each school.	Increase the satisfaction survey data by 1% until 100% is reached at each school.	Increase the satisfaction survey data by 1% until 100% is reached at each school.	Increase the satisfaction survey data by 1% until 100% is reached at each school.	Increase the satisfaction survey data by 1% until 100% is reached at each school.
Quality Teacher Retention	Increase the retention numbers of teachers scoring proficient on the TKES by 2 percent.	Increase the retention numbers of teachers scoring proficient on the TKES by 2 percent.	Increase the retention numbers of teachers scoring proficient on the TKES by 2 percent.	Increase the retention numbers of teachers scoring proficient on the TKES by 2 percent.	Increase the retention numbers of teachers scoring proficient on the TKES by 2 percent.
Charter Satisfaction Parent Survey	Increase the satisfaction survey data by 1% until 100% is reached at each school.	Increase the satisfaction survey data by 1% until 100% is reached at each school.	Increase the satisfaction survey data by 1% until 100% is reached at each school.	Increase the satisfaction survey data by 1% until 100% is reached at each school.	Increase the satisfaction survey data by 1% until 100% is reached at each school.
Provide Job Embedded Professional Development	Increase the job embedded pd data by 1% until	Increase the job embedded pd data by 1% until 100% is	Increase the job embedded pd data by 1% until	Increase the job embedded pd data by 1% until	Increase the job embedded pd data by 1% until



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	100% is reached at each school.	reached at each school.	100% is reached at each school.	100% is reached at each school.	100% is reached at each school.
District Service to Schools Satisfaction Data	Increase the satisfaction survey data by 1% until 100% is reached at each school.	Increase the satisfaction survey data by 1% until 100% is reached at each school.	Increase the satisfaction survey data by 1% until 100% is reached at each school.	Increase the satisfaction survey data by 1% until 100% is reached at each school.	Increase the satisfaction survey data by 1% until 100% is reached at each school.

6. What specific actions will the system take to achieve the organizational performance objectives?

- *Describe the organizational innovations that will be implemented during the proposed charter term.*
- *Provide a clear explanation of how the innovations will increase organizational effectiveness.*
- *Describe the anticipated timeline for implementation of the innovations*
- *Describe why the innovations are appropriate for this unique system*

During the term of our next district charter, we will further define our distributed leadership designations into highly functioning teams that work in collaboration based on skills and needs within the district. By organizing as teams, we will provide the appropriate skillsets needed to support schools. We will cut down on redundancy in the district requirements. Most importantly, we will increase district collaboration to foster a culture of service for our schools. District personnel will have a greater presence in schools supporting instruction, management, and learning supports. The district will minimize interruptions to school operations by going out to schools instead of requiring personnel to come to the central office for training, dissemination of information, or district requirements. The time on task at schools and the focused assistance specific to a school’s need will increase our organizational effectiveness.

We will also be working to distribute leadership at our schools through our teacher leader mentoring teams. The teams will have a primary role of supporting new teachers, but they will



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also contribute to the school leadership teams and will be the skill-based experts that support management, instruction, and learning supports throughout the schools.

The timeline of implementation for our organizational structure changes will be ongoing throughout the term of our new charter. We have begun much of the work on the implementation of our organizational innovations. Still, the changes are broad and sweeping, and they will require years of refining to realize the potential that they offer to our district.

Gainesville City Schools have always been grounded in traditions that amplify the team over the individual. Our innovative move to distributed leadership teams at all levels aligns perfectly with the desires of our community and the traditions of our schools. Our use of the comprehensive system of learning supports to define all of our process also aligns well with our unique system because it has at its foundation the desire to break down barriers. Gainesville City School System has always been on the front line of innovation to break down the barriers that exist for our students.

7. Which of the specific actions in the organizational plan require a waiver of state law, rule, or guidelines?

- *Enumerate the specific action, the required waivers, and provide examples of how they will be implemented.*

Gainesville City Schools will use the waivers of the requirements for:

- (a) seat time for high school to develop flexible schedules for multiple delivery models based on student needs, interests.
- (b) seat time for high school to implement independent studies based on career interests and apprenticeship opportunities
- (c) seat time for elementary, middle, and high school students to offer part-time or full-time virtual learning options.
- (d) class size requirements for state programs and grade levels in order to utilize flexible grouping for personalized learning.
- (e) use of advanced content and innovative models for Gifted Education, ESL, EIP, Remedial, and world languages.



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- (f) the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System teacher of record requirements and Student Learning Objective requirements.

GOVERNANCE

A key characteristic of charter systems is their decentralized decision-making structure. It is imperative that local school governing councils demonstrate autonomy and decision-making authority.

8. What is the system's plan to maximize school level governance?
- *Highlight the differences between the current local school governance structure and the new structure the system will implement.*
 - *Address the formation of the local school governing councils, including how members are selected, the terms of members, and how and why members may be removed.*
 - *Describe the general responsibilities for the principal at each charter system school, the local school governing council at each charter system school, the system governing council (if applicable), and the local board of education in the areas of budget, resource allocation, personnel decisions (primarily principal selection, evaluation, and termination), establishing and monitoring the achievement of school improvement goals, curriculum and school operations.*
 - *Presenting this responsibility description in the form of a chart or a grid would be helpful to both you to ensure you've captured everything – and to us as we review your Application.*
 - *Provide a timeline for governance training to be provided to principals and members of the local school governing councils in order to build the capacity needed to make decisions in the above-mentioned areas*

Gainesville City Schools currently has decision-making roles assigned to the **Board of Education** and **School Governance Councils**. Each school develops and annually reviews bylaws to guide procedures. Both the **Board of Education** and **Governance Councils** receive annual training. A **Charter System Advisory Group (formerly called the Charter System Leadership Team)** serves as a district unifying communication tool and as a Board focus group.

School Governance Council members are elected for a two-year term. The council is composed of a minimum of seven members which include the principal, four parents, two of



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which will be businesspersons, and two teachers. Parents are nominated by parents and are elected by majority vote. Teachers are nominated by the school staff and are elected by a majority vote. Governance Councils stagger elections of both parents and teachers so that there is a seamless transition between school years. The School Governance Councils determine their by-laws and review them annually. Newly elected School Governance Council members receive an orientation and training. Any member of the School Governance Council may withdraw by providing a written resignation to the principal or secretary of their Council. Any member of the School Governance Council or Charter System Advisory Group may be removed under the following conditions: 1. Member resigns. 2. Member is removed by majority vote of the School Governance Council. 3. Member no longer has a child enrolled in the school. If any positions on the School Governance Council have to be replaced prior to an unexpired term, an election will be held within 30 days.

The Charter System Advisory Group is composed of two members of each School Governance Council: the chairperson and the principal. Each Board Member will appoint one member from their respective ward / district to the team. The Advisory Group will meet in October and March as well as participate in budget meetings or hearings from January- April of each fiscal year.

The **Board of Education** is elected from within the district of the City of Gainesville in which they reside for a four-year term. There are five members. The Board of Education serves as the legally responsible body empowered as elected officials to create policies, rules and regulations, consistent with the laws of the State of Georgia, the United States of America, and recommendations of the Georgia School Boards Association.



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Timeline for Training

WHO	WHEN	WHAT
Board of Education	Submits Training Plan to DoE by August 1. Training to be completed by June 30 of fiscal year.	Training plan is based on Board Standards and addresses needs identified in Self-Assessment. An emphasis on Board leadership of Charter Systems is included in plan.
School Governance Council New Members and Principals	August- September G.S.B.A. Provided Orientation and Training 3 hours	Governance and Responsibilities Includes: FERPA Open Meetings Act Basic HR Protocols for Hiring and Interviews Roles and Responsibilities Mandated Reporting
Principal	June-July	Policy and legal updates Data Collection Budget and Finance Workshops
School Governance Council	September- May	Principal and staff re-deliver training on policy and legal updates, budget process
Principal	October- June	Research-based strategies to inform school improvement planning and provide consultancy to School Governance Councils

Gainesville City Schools: Governance Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Education	School Governance Council	Charter System Advisory Group	Principal and School Leadership Team
Hire and evaluate the Superintendent	Conduct surveys of parents, students, and teachers to provide data on Superintendent effectiveness to the principal; provides data on qualifications and attribute for hiring of Superintendent.	Provides data on qualifications and attributes	Provide data to the Board to assist in the evaluation and hiring of the Superintendent
Hire and assign employees based on the	Review staffing patterns and allocations of human resources with the principal		Recommend teachers and staff for hire to the Superintendent



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recommendation of the Superintendent	and school leadership team.		
Hire and assign building level administrators based on the recommendation of the Superintendent	Conduct surveys and/or focus groups to identify the specific attributes and qualifications desired for school level administrators. Review for recommendation to the Superintendent all potential external administrative employees considered for hiring. Review internal administrative transfer recommendations from the Superintendent.		Review and recommend to the Superintendent any new administrative hiring and internal transfers.
Approve the organizational structure of the school district with the Superintendent. (Develop Strategic Short and Long Term plans.) Assures the school system works with a teamwork approach toward shared goals and focuses on student improvement. Regularly reviews data to monitor progress toward the goals in the Strategic Plan. Maintains	Makes decisions for the school in areas to provide learning supports and maximize parent involvement and engagement. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Communication strategies</u> to be used by the school • <u>Methods to involve</u> parents and community, including survey data and focus groups • <u>Parent and community events</u> planned based on student achievement goals and survey data • <u>Extra-curricular activities</u> that will maximize student engagement and promote learning 	Participate in focus groups to make recommendations for organizational structure for the district. Reviews district progress toward goals in Strategic Plan. Provides feedback and input into budget development.	Participate in process of recommending organizational structure to the Board and Superintendent. Participates in district Strategic Plan and ensures the development of shared goals that focus on student improvement. Develops School Improvement Plan. Participates in accreditation process. Serves as professional consultant on research-based practices and provides research, literature, and data to the Council in order to make decisions on goals and actions in the School Improvement Plan.



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accreditation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement strategies based on systematic <u>review of assessment data</u> for school improvement plans • <u>Recommend school needs</u> during budget planning • Participates in accreditation process 		
Develops and reviews policy in accordance with the laws of Georgia and the U.S.A. and upon recommendation by GSBA.	Reviews policies to make recommendations to the Board of Education		Reviews policies to make recommendations to the Board of Education.
Sits as a court to decide local controversies involving school law.			
Dismisses and suspends employees based on the recommendation of the superintendent.			<p>Participates in state teacher and leader evaluation systems.</p> <p>Recommends to the Superintendent personnel for hiring.</p>
Approves the local budget for submission to the state Board of Education; levies the local educational millage rate to support the approved budget	Participates in development of school level budget with the principal and leadership team		<p>Develops, manages, and administrates the school level budget. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All data entry • All reporting schedules • Financial software management



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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of FTE enrollment • Participates in CPI management
Care for all school system property, Including purchase, construction, lease, repair, and sale of such property	Makes recommendations for facility planning and improvements	Serves as focus group for facility planning	Manages fixed assets; participates in state facility planning
Ensure that the superintendent and other employees handling money are bonded			
Approval of all contracts binding the school system			
Sits as an appellate court in all disciplinary matters			

The principal of each academy will have the responsibility to resolve any conflicts within the school building. If the principal needs assistance with resolving any conflict, central office personnel will be available to assist and provide support in implementing board policy GAE: complaints and grievances. The duties and responsibilities of the School Governing Council will be to provide support to the principal about concerns and issues.



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The school board will conduct a hearing when the superintendent seeks to terminate the employment of an employee who has a contract for a definite term or when the superintendent has not recommended the rehiring of a "tenured" employee and that employee demands a hearing under the Fair Dismissal Act. The school board may be required, under certain circumstances, to convene a hearing to determine if the superintendent's decision with regard to other employment issues was based on an illegal reason. The school board also serves as an appellate tribunal when students appeal the results of the disciplinary tribunal proceedings, but in these situations the board only reviews the record created by the disciplinary tribunal to determine the sufficiency of the evidence. Finally, the school board will serve as a tribunal to hear and determine "any matter of local controversy in reference to the construction or administration of school law. (O.C.G.A. 20-2-1160)

FINANCIAL OBJECTIVES, PLANS, AND WAIVERS

9. What are the system's financial performance objectives for the term of the contract?

System financial performance objectives should:

- *Describe the system's financial performance during the past five years.*
- *Reflect where the system envisions itself financially at the end of the charter term.*
- *Indicate the anticipated financial targets in each year.*
- *Include objectives related to fiscal feasibility required for implementation and sustainability of system organizational and academic plans.*
- *Be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based (SMART).*

During the period of initial Charter System status, Gainesville City Schools has experienced a recovery and improved financial performance. Gainesville City Schools entered



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FY 2009 with an approximate \$5.6 million deficit. This resulted from a culmination of inadequate financial controls from FY 04 through FY 08. The Board of Education replaced the Superintendent and Finance Director in 2007 prior to finding the deficit. In FY 09, the district submitted a Deficit Elimination Plan to the Georgia Department of Education. Gainesville City Schools restored a positive fund balance by FY 10 and has continued to report a positive fund balance each year thereafter. An audit of FY 11 resulted in no findings and no questioned costs. Gainesville City Schools is no longer under supervision from the State of Georgia for deficit recovery. In the fall of 2011, Standards and Poor's completed their annual review, and the district was able to restore the long term bond rating of AA+/ Stable.



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Summary:

Gainesville City School District, Georgia; School State Program

Credit Profile

US\$15.0 mil GO Bonds ser. 2011 due 12/01/2017

Long Term Rating	AA+/Stable	New
School Issuer Credit Rating	BBB+/Stable	New
Gainesville City Sch Dist GO		
Long Term Rating	AA+/Stable	Affirmed
School Issuer Credit Rating	BBB+/Stable	Upgraded

Rationale

Standard & Poor's Ratings Services raised to 'BBB+' from 'BBB' its school issuer credit rating (ICR) on Gainesville City School District, Ga.'s series 2006 general obligation (GO). The outlook is stable. At the same time, Standard & Poor's assigned its 'BBB+' ICR and 'AA+' enhanced rating to the district's series 2011 general obligation (GO) bonds.

The upgrade is based on significant improvement in the district's financial performance and position.

The 'AA+' enhanced rating reflects:

- The district's participation in Georgia's voluntary state aid intercept program;
- The additional security provided by the pledge of the 1% special-purpose local-option sales tax (SPLOST); and
- Additional bond resolution enhancements, including an additional bonds test of 2x state aid coverage of maximum annual debt service on the bonds.

The bonds are GOs of the district and constitute a pledge of the full faith and credit of the district. To the extent that the district's share of the proceeds of the SPLOST are insufficient to make debt service payments, the principal of and interest on the bonds are payable from an ad valorem tax unlimited as to rate or amount, upon all taxable property within the district's boundaries.

The latest bond issue will finance the replacement of an elementary school and as well some modernization repairs.

The 'BBB+' ICR reflects the district's:

- Restoration of what we consider adequate fund balance after a rapid deterioration of reserves in fiscal 2007 and 2008;
- Limited but stable economy, with adequate income indicators;
- High debt levels although amortization is rapid; and
- Sizable tax base, with per capita market value over \$90,000.

Unaudited results for fiscal 2011 indicate the district will record an operating surplus of nearly \$7 million.



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Summary: Gainesville City School District, Georgia; School State Program

compared with an unreserved fund deficit of \$3.1 million (a negative 5.6% of general fund expenditures) in fiscal 2008. The latest result is primarily due to the implementation of 10 furlough days to offset an anticipated state aid decrease that did not materialize. Officials report that other contributing factors include the receipt of additional stimulus funds that were not used to offset operating costs in 2011 and improved collection of delinquent taxes. To satisfy its cash flow needs, the district issued tax anticipation notes in fiscal 2008 through 2010. Such issuance, according to officials was not needed in fiscal 2011 due to improved cash levels.

The district's financial turnaround began in fiscal 2009. In response to its eroding finances in fiscal 2007 and 2008, the district adopted a five-year plan that projected a positive fund balance by fiscal 2013. During fiscal 2009, the district reduced spending through a hiring freeze and conservative budgeting of some key program expenses. It also increased its millage rate to 7.82 mills, a 12% year-over-year increase. Audited financial results for fiscal 2009 indicate the district posted an operating surplus (net of transfers) of \$4.6 million. The unreserved fund deficit narrowed to a negative 2.7% of general fund expenditures. Financial performance continued to improve in fiscal 2010, as the district posted its second consecutive operating surplus (\$5.1 million) and reported an unreserved fund balance of \$2.2 million, or 3.7% of expenditures.

In fiscal 2007 and 2008, the fund balance shrank by a cumulative \$5.5 million because of poor revenue and expenditure controls and weak financial oversight. The unreserved fund balance at fiscal 2008 year-end 2008 showed a deficit of \$3.1 million (a negative 5.6% of general fund expenditures).

The fiscal 2012 budget includes \$62.2 million of appropriations and the use of \$3.2 million of fund balance. However, district officials do not anticipate using this entire amount. State aid makes up about 49% of the 2012 budgeted operating revenues, followed by local taxes (36%), and federal funds (14%).

Given its negative financial position in fiscal 2007 and 2008, the district had been required to file a deficit elimination plan as well as submit monthly financial reports to the state. School officials report that the state has lifted this requirement given the improved financial position.

The district's tax digest has decreased in the last few years. The 2010 digest was estimated at \$3.6 billion, down 6.2% from 2008. Officials report that the 2011 digest fell about 4.4%. We understand that the level of tax appeals has contributed to the digest declines and additional appeals could affect property tax revenues in fiscal 2012. However, officials report that property tax collections are budgeted conservatively, which should at least somewhat offset any additional digest reductions for fiscal 2012. Market value per capita remains strong at over \$90,000. The tax base is, in our view, diverse, with the leading taxpayers making up about 10% of total assessed value.

The district's financial management practices are still considered "standard" under Standard & Poor's Financial Management Assessment. This indicates that the city maintains adequate policies in some, but not all, key areas. We view the district's improved financial controls and budgeting as a positive factor. Furthermore, 2011 unaudited results indicate the district has increased unreserved levels above its 5% minimum target.

In our opinion, the district's overall debt burden is high at \$6,100 per capita. Debt service carrying charges are moderate, comprising 11% of fiscal 2010 expenditures. Debt amortization is rapid, with nearly 100% of principal due to be repaid in 10 years. The district makes annual contributions to statewide plans for pension and other postemployment benefits. Total contributions for fiscal 2010, totaled \$7.7 million, or 13% of general fund expenditures.

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Summary: Gainesville City School District, Georgia; School State Program

The district, which is coterminous with the city of Gainesville, is 50 miles northeast of Atlanta in Hall County. Enrollment has grown almost 5% annually since fiscal 2007, to just over 7,000 students for fiscal 2012. The construction of the new elementary school should relieve capacity issues in the near term, though officials expect capacity pressure to increase within five to 10 years.

The local economy is primarily concentrated in poultry processing, although officials report ongoing diversification into manufacturing. Five of the 10 leading area employers are poultry-related, while durable manufacturing, health care, and the public sector (government and education) provide additional employment opportunities. The county's unemployment rate for July 2011 was 8.7%, compared with the state's 10.4% and nation's 9.3%. Income indicators for the district are what we consider good, with median household effective buying income at 99% of the national level in 2010.

Intercept or withholding programs

Standard & Poor's rates four different types of state programs, in more than 20 states, that provide enhancement for school bond issues. These program types include state guarantee, permanent fund, annual appropriation, and state intercept or withholding programs. Each state program is analyzed according to the program type and the rating is based on the characteristics of the particular program and funding mechanisms. Georgia is one of 12 states with Standard & Poor's-rated intercept or withholding programs that provide enhancement for school bond issues.

Intercept or withholding programs operate on the strength and availability of state aid, which can be diverted to a paying agent in the event a local government cannot make its full and timely debt service payment. Since school aid is a priority state expenditure, Standard & Poor's considers this revenue stream to be a reliable, stable source of funds. The program rating and outlook may not improve because of an upgrade to the state's rating or an outlook revision. In addition, this program rating can never be higher than the state's rating. Therefore, in the event a state's rating is lowered to a level at, or below, the program rating, the program rating may be lowered to a level at, or below, the revised state rating. Other states with intercept or withholding programs include Colorado, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Virginia.

Georgia State Intercept Program

Georgia's voluntary state aid intercept program, which was authorized by Georgia House Bill 792 in 1991, allows the state to withhold state aid funds for the payment of debt service on a school district's GO bonds. Under the program, the paying agent must notify the board if monies held in the sinking fund are insufficient for timely payment of principal and interest. Notification must be given no later than the 15th day of the month before the scheduled debt service payment date. On notification, the board will transfer to the paying agent the lesser of an amount sufficient to make the debt service payment or the balance of any funds due to the local school district under any state education appropriation authorized for the current fiscal year.

In addition, Georgia's program rating can be enhanced by the inclusion of structural elements to a school district's bond resolution. To qualify for the enhancement, the school district must meet the following criteria:

- Maintenance of at least 2x state aid maximum annual debt service coverage, and
- An additional bonds test that requires at least 2x maximum annual debt service coverage for all outstanding and proposed bonds under the program.



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From FY 08 through FY 12, Gainesville City Schools has experienced continuing

austerity reductions from the QBE formula as well as declining property tax revenue.

Details are reported in this chart:

Gainesville City Schools								
5-year Funding History Plus Projections for FY13								
	FTE	State QBE Allotment		Property Taxes			Reduction in Federal Funding	
		Austerity Reductions		Budgeted				
		From	To	Amount	% of Billing	O&M Millage		
FY 08	6,216	(506,900)		23,500,000		6.62		
FY 09	6,531	(355,901)	(1,865,624)	25,100,360	95.0%	7.42		
FY 10	6,646	(3,730,008)	(5,317,414)	24,157,781	93.5%	7.41		
FY 11	7,171	(4,310,062)		23,087,476	93.9%	7.39		
FY 12	###	(4,623,376)	(4,667,796)	A 21,318,105	93.9%	7.39	(109,026)	
FY13	###	(4,792,616)		B 20,553,144	95.9%	7.39	not yet known	
				C= B-A	(764,961)		Title I	(90,489)
							A	(4,537)
							Title VI-B	(14,000)
								(109,026)

Gainesville City Schools envisions the financial position for 2013-2018 as stable yet challenging. We anticipate continuing cost-saving measures and conservative revenue budgeting practices. It is our understanding that we will see continued austerity reductions. We anticipate, and hope, that property tax revenue will remain stable. The district is committed to maintaining a positive fund balance through prudent budgeting practices and continued strengthening of internal controls.



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The anticipated financial targets for the next five years are to maintain at the end of each fiscal year a fund balance that reflects a minimum of 7% of budgeted expenditures for that year. The **specific** goal is:

On **June 30th of FY 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18**, Gainesville City Schools will post an ending fund balance that equals **7%** of the fiscal years budgeted expenditures.

10. What specific actions will the system take to achieve the financial performance objectives?

- *Describe the financial innovations that will be implemented.*
- *Provide a clear explanation of how the innovations will increase financial performance.*
- *Describe the anticipated timeline for implementation of the innovations*
- *Describe why the innovations are appropriate for this unique system*

INNOVATION	HOW TO INCREASE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE	TIMELINE	RATIONALE (WHY INNOVATIONS ARE APPROPRIATE FOR DISTRICT)
1. Flexible use of seat time for instructional settings	1. Maximize use of personnel and classroom space; ability to offer part-time and/or full-time virtual learning and earn QBE funds	1. July 2013- June 2018	1. Personalized learning environments demand customization of time and settings



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<p>2. Elementary open choice enrollment for parents; flexible class sizes</p>	<p>2. Enable district to earn QBE funding without specific class size restrictions; reduces personnel costs</p>	<p>2. July 2013- June 2018</p>	<p>2. Parental choice results in increased parental support, engagement, and satisfaction; community supports school choice</p>
<p>3. Innovative models for gifted and other program services (ESL, EIP, Remedial)</p>	<p>3. Enables district to earn QBE funding in innovative models other than prescribed state models; allows district to deliver program services in compliance with federal law without state restrictions</p>	<p>3. July 2013- June 2018</p>	<p>3. Schools may design programs based on needs, interests, and backgrounds of the learners and school governance recommendations</p>
<p>4. Use of highly qualified teachers across certification fields; ie: secondary teachers teach middle school, middle school to elementary</p>	<p>4. Flexibility of personnel would reduce personnel costs</p>	<p>4. July 2013- June 2018</p>	<p>Use of teachers across certification fields would allow schools to implement increased academic rigor, promote career-college ready initiatives at elementary schools, and advance STEM education in early grade levels.</p>

11. Which of the specific actions in the financial plan require a waiver of state law, rule, or guidelines?

- *Enumerate the specific action, the required waivers, and provide examples of how they will be implemented.*



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Gainesville City Schools will use the waivers of the requirements for:

- (a) seat time for high school to develop flexible schedules for multiple delivery models based on student needs, interests.
- (b) seat time for high school to implement independent studies based on career interests and apprenticeship opportunities
- (c) seat time for elementary, middle, and high school students to offer part-time or full-time virtual learning options.
- (d) class size requirements for state programs and grade levels in order to utilize flexible grouping for personalized learning.
- (e) use of advanced content and innovative models for Gifted Education, ESL, EIP, Remedial, and world languages
- (f) use of highly qualified teachers in staffing patterns based on needs so as to use secondary teachers in middle grades and middle grades teachers in elementary grades particularly in STEM fields.

12. Should the QBE weight for charter systems be funded, for what purposes would you use the approximately \$100 per pupil in extra funds you would earn as a charter system?

- *A school system's decision to become a charter system should not be based on the expectation of additional funding, since the funding is not guaranteed.*
- *There are no limitations or requirements on the use of such funds.*

Gainesville City Schools could support the charter system model using regular QBE earnings if the austerity reductions were restored. This would include



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transportation costs associated with providing open choice enrollment. Since it is unlikely that this will occur during the terms of the charter, Gainesville City Schools would use charter system funding of \$100 per student to support blended learning, additional Advanced Placement courses, and school STEM initiatives.

ASSURANCES FORM AND SIGNATURE SHEET

The law requires your school district to provide assurances that it will do certain things and comply with certain laws. This Assurance Form enumerates all of these requirements and, when you submit this signed Signature Sheet with this Assurance Form as part of your Charter System Application Package, you are providing the legal assurance that your charter system understands and will do these things. This form must be signed by a duly authorized representative of the school system.

As the authorized representative of the applicant, I hereby certify that the information submitted in this application for a charter for **Gainesville City Schools** located in **Hall** County is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; I also certify that if awarded a charter the school system:

1. Shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations;
2. Shall not discriminate against any student or employee on the basis of race, color, ethnic background, national origin, gender, disability or age;
3. Shall be subject to all federal, state, and local rules, regulations, court orders, and statutes relating to civil rights; insurance; the protection of the physical health and safety of school students, employees, and visitors; conflicting interest transactions; and the prevention of unlawful conduct;
4. Shall be subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A § 20-2-1050 requiring a brief period of quiet reflection;
5. Shall ensure that the system and the system charter school's governance boards are subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 et seq. and O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 et seq.;
6. Shall ensure that the system charter school governance board members may only receive compensation for their reasonable and actual expenses incurred in connection with performance of their duties;
7. Shall ensure that all teachers will be certified or highly qualified in compliance with No Child Left Behind;



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8. Shall comply with the accountability provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-14-30 through § 20-14-41 and federal accountability requirements, and participate in statewide assessments;
9. Shall adhere to all provisions of federal law relating to students with disabilities, including the IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as applicable;
10. Shall provide state and federally mandated services for English Language Learners, as applicable;
11. Shall provide for supplemental educational services as required by federal law and pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.03, and for remediation in required cases pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.01;
12. Shall notify the state of any intent to contract with a for-profit entity for education management services;
13. Shall be subject to the requirement that it shall not charge tuition or fees to its students except as may be authorized by local boards by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-133;
14. Shall comply with federal due process procedures regarding student discipline and dismissal;
15. Shall be subject to all laws relating to unlawful conduct in or near a public school;
16. Shall have a written grievance procedure to resolve student, parent, and teacher complaints;
17. Shall have a written procedure for resolving conflicts between the system charter schools and the local board of education;
18. Shall comply with the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-211.1 relating to fingerprinting and criminal background checks;
19. Shall remit payments to TRS on behalf of employees;
20. Shall ensure that if transportation is provided for its students, the system shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws;
21. Shall ensure that if the charter system participates in federal school meals programs, then each participating system charter school shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws;
22. Shall prepare a safety plan in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1185 and submit and obtain approval from the Georgia Emergency Management Agency;
23. Shall comply with the state facility requirements regarding site codes, facility codes, the submission of architectural plans for any new facility that the system may build or occupy during the charter term and all other facility requirements as established by the Department;



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24. Shall be subject to all reporting requirements of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-160, subsection (e) of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-161, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-320, and O.C.G.A. § 20-2-740;
25. Shall be subject to an annual financial audit conducted by the state auditor or, if specified in the charter, by an independent certified public accountant licensed in this state;
26. Shall acknowledge that all criteria used to calculate QBE funding may not be waived; and
27. Shall follow any and all other federal, state, and local laws and regulations that pertain to the applicant or the operation of the charter system.

This Charter System Application, Assurance Form, and attached Exhibits were approved by the Gainesville City Schools Board of Education on the 15 day of October, 2012.

_____ Superintendent	_____ Date
_____ Chair, Local Board of Education	_____ Date

If a Charter is granted, all Petitioners assure that the proposed charter system programs, services, and activities will operate in accordance with the terms of the Charter and all applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations.

_____ Superintendent	_____ Date
_____ Chair, Local Board of Education	_____ Date

EXHIBITS

The following Exhibits are required to complete your Charter System Application Package. Please tab the Exhibits to match the item numbers below. Exhibits should be as limited in size as



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possible (no more than 5 pages per Exhibit). The only exceptions to this size limitation for Exhibits are your most recent annual audit and your most recent accreditation report.

1. Signed local Board of Education resolution approving the creation of the charter system.
2. Notice that was sent to each principal within the proposed charter system regarding required hearings on the charter system application.
3. Description of how stakeholders, including parents and community members, were involved in the development of the Charter System Application.
 - *This is where you can describe the process you used to develop your Application.*
4. A list of all schools to be included in the charter system, including new schools or college and career academies that will be formed throughout the life of the charter, with an indication of which existing schools are currently in Needs Improvement status.
5. A brief description of the charter system that includes the name, the mission, grades served, the focus of the curriculum, instructional methods to be used, including any distinctive or unique instructional techniques or educational programs to be employed, and other pertinent information.
 - *Your description will be used by the Department to provide information to the public about applicants and new charter systems.*
6. Local school governance training timeline including training topics.
7. Conflict of interest policy for local school governing councils.
8. A list of business arrangements or partnerships with existing schools, educational programs, businesses and non-profits and the nature of the services provided, including disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest.
9. A brief description of the system's fiscal history and whether the system is or has ever operated under a fiscal deficit.
10. Copy of the school system's most recent annual audit.
11. Copy of the school system's most recent accreditation report.