Envisioning a System of World-Class Schools…

Our Strategic Direction

2005
Gwinnett County Public Schools’ vision is to become a system of world-class schools, and our mission is to pursue excellence for each student. We do not take these charges lightly... they drive our day-to-day work, as well as our plans for the future. The good news is that this strategic focus is getting results. Our students are achieving at higher and higher levels and we are making steady progress in closing the achievement gap between different groups of students.

However, the work necessary to achieve our vision reaches beyond the classroom. Improving schools so they educate all students well is the work of an entire community... a community that embraces a strategic vision. That is why it is important for all members of our school community to know what we mean when we say “world-class,” and to understand the important roles we all play in turning this vision into reality. It is not enough for our school leaders and staff to be committed to our vision; we all must work to ensure that vision becomes reality. Implementation of successful strategies and initiatives focused on achieving our strategic goals continues to move us forward.

This publication will help you learn more about our strategic direction. So please read on. Catch the vision, and be a part of Gwinnett County Public Schools’ success story… a system of world-class schools!

Confident in the vision, committed to success

“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.” In his famous quote, Henry David Thoreau spoke of dreams. It is a quote that has relevance for us in Gwinnett County Public Schools, but instead of dreams, we talk in terms of our vision— and that is to become a system of world-class schools. Our teachers and staff, parents, administrators, community members, and the students themselves are extremely confident in this vision, and show a high level of commitment to the direction established for pursuing it.

The school system’s vision, mission, and goals serve as the framework for the quality education we promise to every child. The undeniable success of our students and teachers is proof that our relentless focus on quality in every classroom is moving us closer and closer to our vision. So then, let’s continue to “go confidently” together to “live the life we have imagined”— and fully realize our vision of a system of world-class schools.
In Gwinnett County Public Schools, “world-class” describes any product, service, or organization that is judged by qualitative and quantitative measures as one of the best in its class, and that is acknowledged, accepted, admired, and emulated by customers, stakeholders, professional peers, and competitors alike. In the context of this definition, schools that are considered to be “world-class” are characterized by the following:

- High academic standards for all
- A comprehensive, challenging, and relevant curriculum
- Effective, engaging instructional strategies
- Accurate and meaningful assessments
- High-performing and inspiring employees committed to professional development, training, and lifelong learning
- A safe and secure learning environment
- A culture of continuous quality improvement
- Accountability for results
- Productive community and parental partnerships
- Information technology systems that advance teaching and learning
- Innovative approaches to scheduling, staffing, and use of resources
- Behavioral standards for all that are conducive to teaching and learning
- Commitment to meeting the needs of its internal and external communities while capitalizing on their diverse ideas and strengths.

Vision: Gwinnett County Public Schools will become a system of world-class schools where students acquire the knowledge and skills to be successful as they continue their education at the postsecondary level and/or enter the workforce.

Mission: The mission of Gwinnett County Public Schools is to pursue excellence in academic knowledge, skills, and behavior for each student, resulting in measured improvement against local, national, and world-class standards.

Achieving the mission

The Gwinnett County Board of Education adopted seven Strategic Goals for the school system that clearly connect to the vision and mission—the “world-class” status we intend to achieve.

Gwinnett County Public Schools will:

- Ensure a world-class education for all students by focusing on teaching and learning the Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) curriculum.
- Ensure a safe, secure, and orderly environment for all.
- Optimize student achievement through responsible stewardship of its financial resources and the proactive pursuit of all resources necessary to meet current and future demands.
- Recruit, employ, develop, and retain a workforce that achieves the mission and goals of the organization.
- Meet the continuing and changing demand for essential information through technological systems and processes that support effective performance and desired results.
- Provide and manage the system’s facilities and operations in an exemplary manner as determined by programmatic needs and best management practices.
- Apply continuous quality improvement strategies and principles as the way the organization does business.

Catch the vision, and be a part of Gwinnett County Public Schools’ success story... a system of world-class schools!

— J. Alvin Wilbanks, CEO/Superintendent
A Strategic Vision for Results—

How Gwinnett County Public Schools continually builds on what is best about the organization today to ensure the system becomes the best it can be tomorrow...

The “Strategic Vision for Results” reflects our ongoing commitment to excellence, instructionally and operationally. It looks at 11 major components of the organization and lists for each one the desired qualities and characteristics essential in a system of world-class schools. Many of the indicators have been achieved already; others describe the desired state toward which we continuously strive. The Strategic Vision for Results, therefore, serves as a beacon that calls the system to improve, as well as a yardstick by which we measure progress toward our vision. The 11 components are summarized here. The complete Strategic Vision for Results can be found on the GCPS Web site at www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us.

Vision for Leadership
GCPS is led by “Quality-Plus” leaders who focus on results. They lead by example, energize others, and execute plans that turn vision into reality. They promote a performance culture by helping other employees see how their work contributes to excellence in teaching and learning. Lifelong learners, they continually improve their own performance so that the organization continues to improve, and accept responsibility for effective communication of the system’s direction.

Vision for Students
Students perform on or above grade level in learning our Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) curriculum. As effective problem-solvers, communicators, and users of technology, students take responsibility for their learning and achievement. They learn in safe, orderly classrooms where good work habits are developed. Their GCPS experience prepares them to be successful after high school, whether in further education or the workforce.

Vision for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment
Gwinnett’s Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) is acknowledged to be a world-class curriculum. Relevant, challenging, and engaging instructional strategies to meet the needs of all learners are our instructional hallmarks. The curriculum is clearly aligned with instruction and assessments, which are teaching and learning tools as well as measures of performance. Teachers are able to access student data in order to plan instruction, ensuring that both interventions and extensions are offered as appropriate for individual students.

Vision for GCPS
Gwinnett County Public Schools strives to become a system of world-class schools where students are prepared for future success. “World-class” means that the school system is acknowledged, admired, and emulated as best in its class. We are a “practicing quality organization” and the school system of choice, worthy of the public’s support and confidence.

Vision for Employees
All GCPS employees are committed to high expectations for student learning and willingly take responsibility for the results achieved. Caring and competent professionals, they are loyal to the organization and committed to continuous improvement and professional growth. They are respectful of the cultural differences in our community and strive for excellent performance at all times.
Vision for Communication
The school system's communication culture promotes honest, reliable, two-way communication that builds trust within the school community. Multiple communication channels are used to empower students, parents, staff, and the general community to be knowledgeable participants in the decision-making processes of the school system. Communication is everyone's responsibility.

Vision for Facilities
Attractive, well-maintained facilities provide classrooms within school buildings for all students. Improvements meet system and community expectations for classrooms and technology. Our schools are designed and managed to create small learning communities within larger schools. Facilities are provided for alternative, nontraditional, and special programs to meet students' varying instructional needs. Systemwide facilities including a performing arts center, an adult/teacher learning facility, and an instructional support center contribute to increased student achievement.

Vision for Parents/Guardians
A child's first teachers, parents are essential partners with the school. They support and reinforce high expectations for their student's learning and behavior, and actively participate in their child's education. They share accountability for the child's success at school. Parents are diligent in communicating information, concerns, and ideas with the teacher and school, and are well-informed about the school system's direction and initiatives.

Vision for Financial Stewardship
The school system is a good steward of taxpayers' money, ensuring the necessary resources to support a world-class teaching and learning organization—today and into the future. A transparent financial management system builds confidence in how GCPS acquires, allocates, and expends its resources. It uses best practices and follows established business procedures, exceeding the industry's highest standards for accountability, integrity, and trust.

Vision for Information Management and Technology
Information management and technology supports student achievement and operational efficiency. It provides learning opportunities for students and staff, and helps teachers evaluate student progress through a variety of methods with anytime, anywhere access. All employees have the information, skills, and tools they need to perform their jobs effectively and to make data-driven decisions. Technology is an important communication tool, and it contributes to organizational excellence through progressive solutions in our day-to-day operations.

Vision for Public Image and Community Pride
A major factor in the economic vitality of the community, GCPS continually earns the trust of taxpayers and citizens through effective management of its financial, human, and physical resources. Business partners are involved, and parents and community leaders are actively engaged in the work of the schools and the system. GCPS is regarded by the public as a school system of choice, worthy of citizens' support and confidence.
Organized to Support Schools

The school system’s organizational structure is composed of six divisions. Each division’s work is focused on supporting the teaching and learning that occurs in local schools. That fact is made clear in the graphic below depicting GCPS’ organizational structure. How each division carries out its role and responsibilities is captured in the “division objectives” that guide their daily operations. They are listed on the next two pages. The various departments within each division have their own objectives and action plans that are spelled out in annual “comprehensive management plans.” Every school has a document with a similar purpose known as the “local school plan for improvement.” All of these documents are grounded in the school system’s vision, mission, and strategic goals. The alignment of these foundational components keeps everyone moving in the same strategic direction... toward realizing our vision of becoming a system of world-class schools!
Division Objectives

Division of Educational Leadership

- Assure school improvement and accountability for exceeding state and national averages on student achievement measures through the Results-Based Evaluation System (RBES).
- Ensure the safe, secure, and effective operation of all school facilities.
- Lead and support school operations for the maximum benefit of student achievement.
- Support the selection, development, mentoring, and supervision of school leaders to ensure all schools are staffed with leaders who will provide a world-class education for students.

Division of Organizational Advancement

- Provide and maintain a rigorous Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) curriculum that is supported by quality instructional materials, ongoing assessments, and curriculum technology resources that meet the needs of all learners.
- Refine the Results-Based Evaluation System (RBES) to support school accountability and improvement.
- Support schools in establishing instructional and assessment procedures to increase student achievement.
- Advance the organization’s effectiveness through reliable enrollment forecasting and planning, meaningful professional development activities, and efficient and effective data collection and analysis.
- Lead and promote the use of continuous quality improvement strategies and principles throughout the organization.

Division of Business and Finance

- Ensure that budgeted resources are aligned with GCPS’ goals and objectives and are used in an efficient and effective manner.
- Accurately forecast future funding needs and identify and pursue the resources required to meet them.
- Provide timely, continuous stewardship reports on the 2002–2007 Education SPLOST program.
- Monitor the financial processes of all GCPS units to ensure that funds are used and accounted for consistent with the Board’s adopted budget.
Division of Facilities and Operations

- Ensure GCPS remains the leader in the design and construction of school and support facilities relative to functionality, total cost of ownership, and timely completion schedules.
- Provide for the daily transport of students to and from school in a safe, orderly, and timely manner.
- Provide and maintain a comfortable, healthy environment that supports quality teaching, learning, and employee performance at all schools, campuses, and facilities.
- Ensure that all school system operations comply with accepted risk-management standards.
- Implement efficient, effective supply management processes that ensure all schools and support facilities have reliable, on-time access to needed textbooks, materials, supplies, commodities, and equipment.

Division of Human Resources

- Ensure that all positions in Gwinnett County Public Schools are staffed with highly qualified employees.
- Ensure a highly qualified applicant pool that meets the staffing needs of the school system.
- Increase employee retention throughout the organization in order to sustain the highly qualified workforce needed to achieve the school system’s goals.
- Ensure market competitiveness of the school system’s classification and compensation structure for all employees.
- Ensure the effectiveness of all principals and district leaders in implementing the organization’s employment processes and procedures.

Division of Information Management

- Implement and sustain an information management system that supports systemwide collaboration and provides employees across the school system access to the information they need to perform their jobs.
- Maximize the benefits of GCPS’ investment in information technology by ensuring that these resources are efficiently deployed, maintained, and enhanced to meet GCPS’ growing instructional and business needs.
- Design and deliver technology training for redistribution by technology team members throughout the district in support of new technology and systems used in the delivery of teaching and learning.
- Enhance the effectiveness of the organization’s internal and external communication through collaborative use of information and technology tools, including GCPS’ intranet, the broadcast studio, and the Internet.
- Direct the work of the school district’s external systems integrator/strategic technology partner to ensure that GCPS has the knowledge, expertise, and foresight needed to plan, identify, acquire, and effectively use future information technology solutions.