Envisioning a System of World-Class Schools
Believe...

Becoming a system of world-class schools begins with believing—in the power of education, the potential of children, the impact of the school. Toward that end, in 2006, the Gwinnett County Board of Education adopted “Core Beliefs” that capture these basic principles...principles that have guided its decisions for over a decade. For each belief, the Board also stated its “Commitment” to actions that support the belief’s intent.

These beliefs are the foundation for the vision, mission, and goals of Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS). From the beliefs and commitments springs the Board’s “theory of action” for improving our schools and raising student achievement, which is the purpose of our strategic direction.

Crucial to our success is having a community that understands, embraces, and, yes, believes in our strategic direction. You are essential in our efforts to provide every Gwinnett child a quality and effective education. Believe...and together we can achieve.
Gwinnett County Board of Education’s Core Beliefs

Below are the Core Beliefs of the Gwinnett County Board of Education as adopted in December 2006. The Board is committed to putting its beliefs into action. (That commitment is paraphrased here.)

- Our core business is teaching and learning. (And we will give it priority over all other functions of the school system.)
- All children can learn at or above grade level. (It is our job to see that every Gwinnett student does so.)
- All children should reach their learning potential. (And through our best efforts, and theirs, Gwinnett’s students will.)
- The school effect is important and has a profound impact on every child’s life. (Gwinnett County Public Schools will have a positive impact on every child’s life.)
- A quality instructional program requires a rigorous curriculum, effective teaching, and ongoing assessment. (We will settle for nothing less in every Gwinnett school and classroom.)
- All children should be taught in a safe and secure learning environment. (We pledge to provide that for every Gwinnett student.)
The Core Beliefs connect to the GCPS “Vision” (what we aspire to be), our “Mission” (why we exist), and “Strategic Goals” (our plan for achieving the mission).

GCPS’ 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.”

GCPS’ 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.”
GCPS’ Strategic Goals:

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.
Effective Governance... Effective Schools

Our direction is clear... we are working to become a system of world-class schools. That means we always must focus on teaching and learning within a structure that supports and encourages excellence. The foundation of that structure is effective school governance.

The Gwinnett County Board of Education’s critical role is to govern the school system with integrity and vision. In doing so, the Board sets policies, oversees the management of the state’s largest school system, and provides the necessary resources. Guiding its governance actions are the core beliefs that keep the focus on what’s in the best interest of all students.

Constantly improving our schools is in every student’s best interest. The Board’s approach to school improvement is called Managed Performance/Empowerment, a theory of action that says we will manage our main business— teaching and learning—while empowering schools and employees that get the desired results.
Gwinnett’s theory of action takes into account what we know about how children learn, what motivates adults, and what makes an organization successful. It provides the framework that will help move our schools closer to the shared vision of being world-class. Titled “The Board’s Theory of Action for Student Achievement,” this adopted policy calls for high academic standards for all students, a challenging curriculum, engaging instruction, meaningful assessments, high-performing employees, and continuous improvement—all characteristics of world-class schools.

Fundamental to Managed Performance/Empowerment is striking the right balance between accountability and empowerment. While holding firm to its high standards for schools, teachers, and students, the Board of Education is willing to provide flexibility and recognition for schools getting positive results in terms of student achievement.

Standards, accountability, and empowerment are half of the essential components in Managed Performance/Empowerment. Equally important are instructional management, flexibility, and capacity. Read on...
Gwinnett’s Theory of Action for Student Achievement includes:

**Standards**  GCPS has high expectations for students and staff—academically and behaviorally. Rigorous academic content and performance standards spell out what must be taught and learned, as well as expected achievement results. Standards also apply for all business processes in the organization.

**Instructional Management**  High standards aren’t enough; a comprehensive instructional management system also must be in place. Essential elements are the Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) curriculum, staff development, a robust student information system, timely assessments, and appropriate interventions and extensions of learning.

**Flexibility**  Effective teaching is both an art and a science. Creativity and flexibility are the hallmarks of our teachers, the professionals who have the greatest impact in helping students achieve. Gwinnett teachers have the freedom to teach the AKS curriculum using their preferred teaching styles, but within the parameters of best professional practices and research-based quality teaching strategies. Additionally, flexibility extends to schools that are getting results academically and operationally.
Accountability  Without accountability, standards are simply goals. GCPS has a well-established accountability system for its schools and support divisions called the Results-Based Evaluation System. It identifies important performance indicators; measures results; collects and distributes data; and applies rankings, rewards, sanctions, or interventions.

Empowerment  Principals and teachers must have significant control over their work. Empowerment places decision-making at the lowest possible level while maintaining efficiency. The goal is to provide principals and teachers maximum empowerment in the highest-achieving schools. Empowerment builds ownership and stimulates innovation, and when balanced with accountability, creates a performance culture.

Capacity  High performance also requires “capacity.” For GCPS, this means providing facilities, resources, management systems, technology, training, and staff development to support teaching and learning. Building this capacity is the responsibility of the School Board and Superintendent.
Successful schools… today, tomorrow, and into the future

Gwinnett County Public Schools is committed to improving schools and providing students a quality and effective education; but change and initiatives that bring about improvement are not always easy to implement and are harder to sustain over time. Your Board of Education has firmly established core beliefs and commitments, along with a theory of action, that set a strategic direction consistent with what the Gwinnett community wants for its schools.

The structure is in place to ensure that the great strides Gwinnett schools have made in increasing student achievement in the past will continue in the future.
As a parent, citizen, or community leader you can help improve our schools by being involved. Become familiar with your schools and the work of your Board of Education. When it comes right down to it, we must as a community work together to make excellence happen for students. Our staunch commitment to student learning connects all our school system has done and achieved in the past with what we intend to do and achieve in the future. We must believe in the power of public education. That commitment, along with the support of parents and community leaders, provides the bedrock for Gwinnett County Public Schools’ continued effectiveness and success.

Believe...