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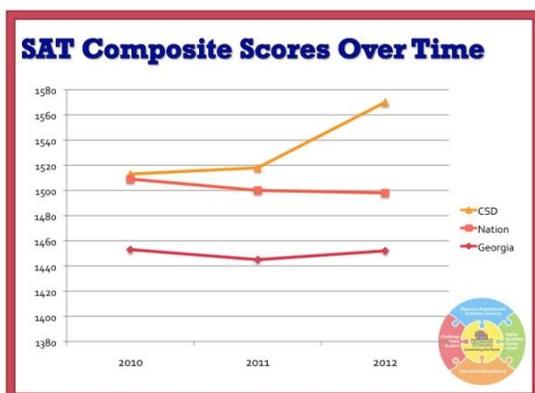
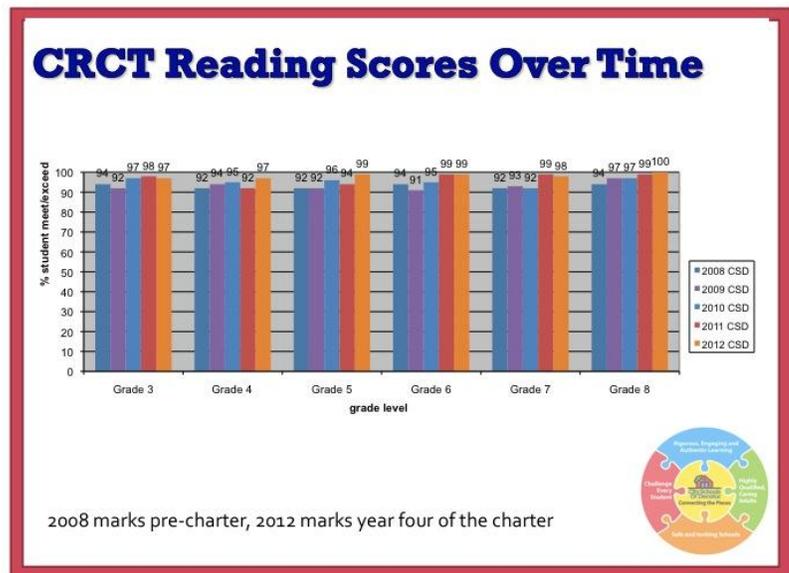
THE CASE

1. Why do you want a charter?

City Schools of Decatur was one of the first four public school systems to submit a charter petition application in 2007. City Schools of Decatur is pleased to communicate the deep impact of system charter. Through recent discussions with our School Leadership Team Members, Board Members and stakeholders, it is clear that the shared governance is a key reason in asking for an extension of our original contract with the State Board of Education. The system charter legislation was timely for our system as we sought flexibility in order to meet the innovations required by our 2004-2010 Strategic Plan. Our second Strategic Plan 2011-2016 requires even further freedom from state constraints. City Schools of Decatur wishes to continue our contractual relationship with the State Board of Education for three main reasons: Student Achievement, Innovations and Flexibility, and expanded opportunities for School-level Governance.

Student Achievement

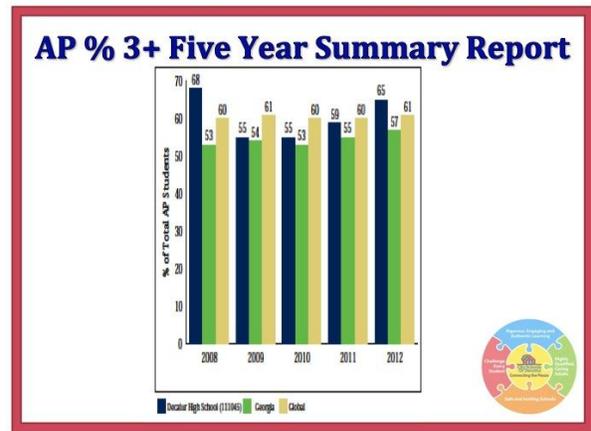
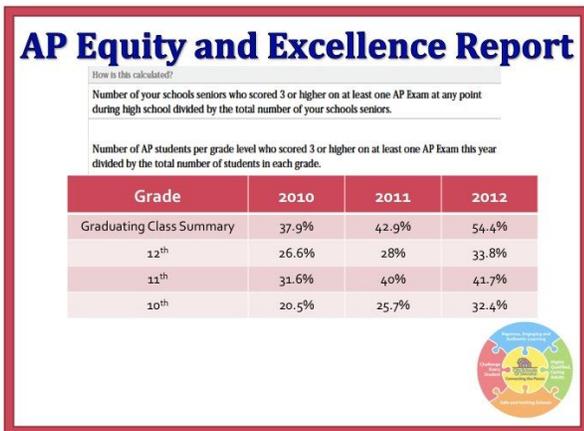
Student performance speaks loudly: Student achievement for all students was Goal One of the 2004-2010 City Schools of Decatur



Strategic Plan and the 2008-2013 Charter System Contract. This primary purpose and core work will continue through the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan and the 2013-2023 System Charter contract. City Schools of

Decatur is proud of the myriad of student achievements as well as of the work teachers and support staff do every day that create these favorable conditions. Using state measures is certainly one way to describe the student performance of the City Schools of Decatur. The reporting of each measure would be exhaustive! To offer one content test showing improvement within the school district tells the representative story. In the areas of reading, City Schools of Decatur students have shown continued and growing achievement exceeding peers within the state.

National performance measures taken by Georgia high school students is another way to compare: SAT and Advanced Placement (AP). City Schools of Decatur has been recognized by the state and the Governor for high performance: named a 2012 AP Challenge School and a 2012 AP STEM School. In addition, AP participation rates have skyrocketed, providing more access to rigorous coursework. Decatur High School was awarded the Governor’s Honors Cup for SAT achievement, with five-year SAT trends continuing strong with scores and participation rates higher than the nation and



Georgia.

In addition, as part of our first Charter Application, City Schools of Decatur chooses to use an assessment taken by 5,000,000 students nationwide, providing norm-referenced data that helps school districts identify similarly-performing school districts from around the country and benchmark accordingly. The Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) allows City Schools of Decatur to accomplish exactly that. For instance, Clairemont Elementary third graders started the 2011-2012 school

year in the 97th percentile of all 3rd graders taking the computerized, adaptive MAP assessment. In the spring, those same students scored in the 99th percentile. More impressive is that for all schools that started in the 97th percentile, Clairemont scored in the 99th percentile of all those schools. This sort of comparison truly marks great instruction and student performance. MAP is a computerized adaptive assessment engaged in by all students in grades K-10 three times each year. The rich data MAP provides is instantaneous and presented in very helpful ways to teachers. Student performance is measured on a scale that can legitimately measure growth, which is the direction the state of Georgia is heading towards under Race to the Top.

Since City Schools of Decatur began to utilize this assessment, several other high-performing Georgia school systems have recognized the merits of this assessment and the student differentiation it supports. This third method of measurement, by far the most rigorous, characterizes our charter renewal petition. By using MAP, teachers and principals have become continually more efficient at accessing and understanding the data, changing instruction to meet the needs of the child. City Schools of Decatur believes that eventually there might be some form of flexibility for charter systems to use this methodology as a tool and result of their performance especially as we can show the direct comparison to CRCT or other state provided tests. City Schools of Decatur would welcome the opportunity to become a pilot for the state in this initiative.

Innovations and Flexibility

The charter was squarely embedded on the 2004-2010 City Schools of Decatur Strategic Plan, particularly the implementation of the nationally-recognized school reform models of Expeditionary Learning and International Baccalaureate (IB). City Schools of Decatur is the only system in Georgia with both these school reforms, and City Schools of Decatur is the only district that built IB from younger grades up so that students are properly prepared by the time they are able to earn college credit as part of the IB Diploma Programme.

Concurrent with these school reforms existed a systematic Teacher Quality Initiative. This work included a complete overhaul of the teacher evaluation process as well as the pervasive use of MAP data

to create the most rigorous work for each student. The City Schools of Decatur Teacher Quality Initiative, centered on the Georgia CLASS Keys teacher evaluation system and MAP, takes a bold next step in this charter petition, creating the City Schools of Decatur Leadership Academy. City Schools of Decatur has accomplished all this work beyond the scope of the Race to the Top school districts, without Race to the Top funding. A next step to be accomplished over the next phase of the Charter is the implementation and institutionalizing of the administrative assessment. Using the Leader Keys, City Schools of Decatur is making the systemic connection between how teachers are evaluated and how administrators are evaluated. Administrators are also being asked in this charter petition to utilize an electronic portfolio system to document their work on the charter, Strategic Plan and School Improvement Plans. City Schools of Decatur dedicates itself to teaching others how to utilize this portfolio system and how it can align and improve their work.

As our improvement initiatives began to redefine City Schools of Decatur in important ways, it became problematic to use state-required, traditional grading structures for students (e.g., 0-100 numerical scales). City Schools of Decatur used its charter flexibility to create more responsive and informative grading structures: standards-based grading for grades K-5 and IB criterion-based grading for grades 6-10. Students, teachers, and families clearly have benefited from crystal-clear expectations before instruction that align perfectly to the evaluations at the end. This work will extend to grades 11-12 in this submitted charter renewal petition.

For example, in a 6th grade Humanities class (Social Studies), four IB criteria with qualitative rubrics are used to teach and assess all year. These criteria are the following: Knowledge and Understanding, Investigating, Thinking Critically, and Communicating. Each rubric is scored from 0-8 points. What is particularly exciting about the IB rubrics for grades 6-10 is that in order to score the highest scores (in this case, a 7 or an 8), the student must be able to proficiently demonstrate the transfer of knowledge and learning to a new environment or example. Why this is critical to City Schools of Decatur's quest for rigor is that these rubrics require teachers to design assessments that contain these sorts of opportunities for students.

Figure 1 offers a glimpse of what a report card looks like for a 6th grade Humanities student and his/her family (reproduced with permission):

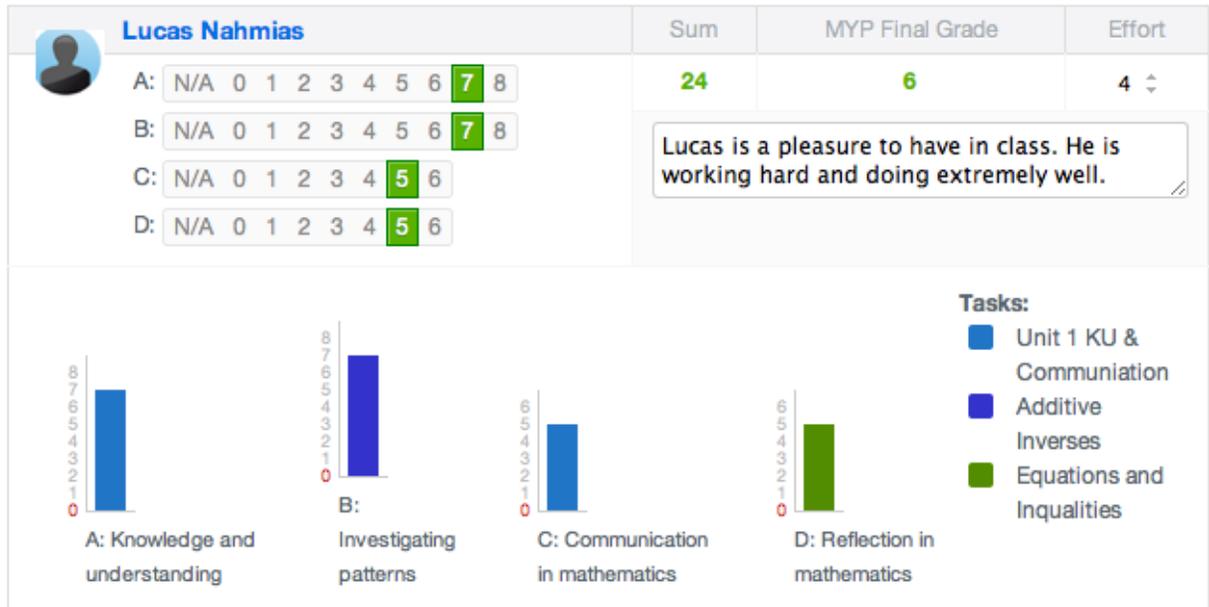


Figure 1

Finally, we need this flexibility. With unparalleled growth since 2007, charter system status will allow us to think differently about how schools currently look and work. As the fastest-growing school district in Georgia, we look forward to exploring and offering school choice with instructional framework options, such as STEM grades 4-8, foreign language immersion K-3, and International Baccalaureate K-5.

School-level Governance

School Leadership Teams (SLTs) govern according to the charter approved by the State Board of Education. The City of Decatur Board of Education clearly defined the scope of decision-making for each group, including Board responsibilities. The Board of Education of the City of Decatur is committed to the dynamic nature of decision-making as schools have helped redefine those initial delineations, evidenced by two charter revisions in the past four years. This charter renewal submission captures that commitment.

City Schools of Decatur was the first charter system to utilize an intermediary group: the System

Charter Leadership Team. This is a group made of representatives from each school leadership team and has had the responsibility of determining ways in which the charter could be revised. The role of this group continues to evolve and is expected to play a larger role within the next charter contract.

Two relevant examples define the scope of decision-making: (1) After intensive study and data analysis, the Decatur High School SLT made the decision to change the instructional day from a 4 x 4 block schedule to a modified 7-period day; (2) Renfroe Middle School utilized a solid data-informed process to create a gifted model that was inclusive of gifted and non-gifted students while also rigorously serving the 33% of students that are gifted-identified. Other examples exist that clearly show the SLTs, the governing bodies closest to the students, are capable of writing meaningful school improvement plans and implementing their own strategies (such as tutoring models) to increase student achievement.

City Schools of Decatur is already a charter system and was one of the first four charter systems. This application seeks to extend City Schools of Decatur's charter system status. It is not a question of becoming one or another organization or entity naming us as such. This charter renewal petition allows us to continue the past four years where we have helped define this concept for the state of Georgia. On numerous occasions, City Schools of Decatur has provided input and workshops to other systems thinking about becoming charter systems.

ACADEMIC OBJECTIVES, PLANS, AND WAIVERS

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

The Georgia student assessment system is designed to provide a sound accountability system for each Georgia child enrolled in public schools. The task is both laudable and massive. It is conceivable, albeit probable, that these assessments will not serve all learners in ways that are useful to teachers, informative to parents, and instructive to students. City Schools of Decatur believes the assessment system they have used charter system funds to obtain, MAP, provides the necessary data set to meet all three aforementioned needs. Additionally, it provides the state Board of Education the ideal method of assessing the impact of our system charter.

However, before learning about how MAP has transformed our system and will continue to over the duration of the next charter petition, the following figures demonstrate City Schools of Decatur’s performance on Georgia statewide assessments. Figure 2 demonstrates the CSD schools compared to other Georgia schools using the mean score of each CRCT content test. These two years of data are indicative of more longitudinal data demonstrating the continuous improvement of CSD as compared to other Georgia districts. The grayscale columns indicate the ordinal place CSD earned on the list of all Georgia schools at that grade level. The corresponding percentile in the adjacent column translates that ordinal number into a percentile. Using Winnona Park 3rd grade as an example:

- Winnona Park is in the top 5% of all Georgia elementary schools in reading.
- Winnona Park is in the top 10% of all Georgia elementary schools in English language Arts (ELA).
- Winnona Park is in the top 25% of all Georgia elementary schools in mathematics.
- Winnona Park is in the top 10% of all Georgia elementary schools in science.
- Winnona Park is in the top 10% of all Georgia elementary schools in social studies.

2012

school	grade	R mean	R mean %ile	ELA mean	ELA mean %ile	M mean	M mean %ile	sci mean	sci mean %ile	SS mean	SS mean %ile		
RMS	8	52	90%	81	85%	83	85%	76	86%	47	91%		
RMS	7	39	93%	53	90%	96	82%	64	88%	103	81%		
RMS	6	63	89%	188	67%	62	89%	39	93%	92	84%		
FAVE	5	96	92%	216	83%	205	83%	157	87%	126	90%		
FAVE	4	97	92%	247	80%	177	86%	137	89%	187	85%		
CL	3	10	99%	36	97%	30	98%	56	96%	63	95%	90-100%	73%
GL	3	203	84%	286	77%	295	77%	141	89%	126	90%	95-100%	23%
OA	3	54	96%	119	91%	93	93%	34	97%	74	94%		

WP	3	76	94%	128	90%	334	73%	100	92%	128	90%
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includes state-sponsored charter schools

removes any schools/districts with less than 10 students at a particular grade level

2011

school	grade	R mean	R mean %ile	ELA mean	ELA mean %ile	M mean	M mean %ile	sci mean	sci mean %ile	SS mean	SS mean %ile
RMS	8	21	96%	59	89%	33	94%	14	97%	40	93%
RMS	7	40	92%	85	84%	81	85%	82	84%	99	81%
RMS	6	41	93%	176	68%	71	87%	32	94%	45	92%
GL	5	144	88%	297	76%	217	83%	265	79%	219	82%
GL	4	166	87%	270	78%	175	86%	243	81%	179	86%
CL	3	91	93%	277	78%	126	90%	67	95%	72	94%
OA	3	226	82%	351	72%	467	63%	117	91%	289	77%
WP	3	94	93%	359	71%	334	73%	260	79%	215	83%

90-100%	47%
95-100%	10%

Figure 2

What may be most telling and informative about Figure 2 is the final two columns that indicate the number of possible content tests and grades that are in the top 10% of all Georgia school districts and top 5% of all Georgia school districts (Figure 3):

	Top 10%	Top 5%
2011	47%	10%
2012	73%	23%

Figure 3

This charter renewal petition requires the applicant to present student performance data from the past five years (Figures 4-8).

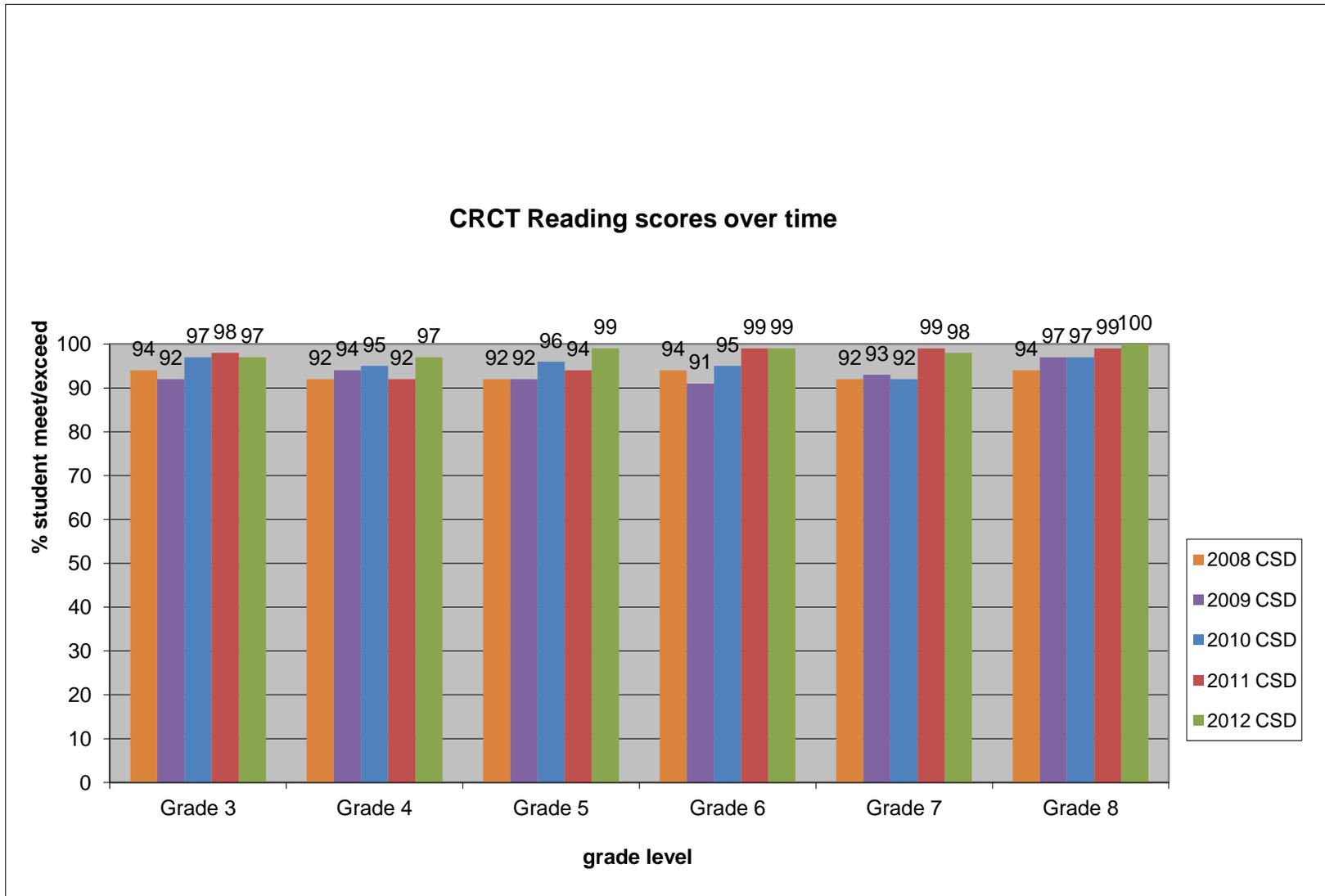


Figure 4

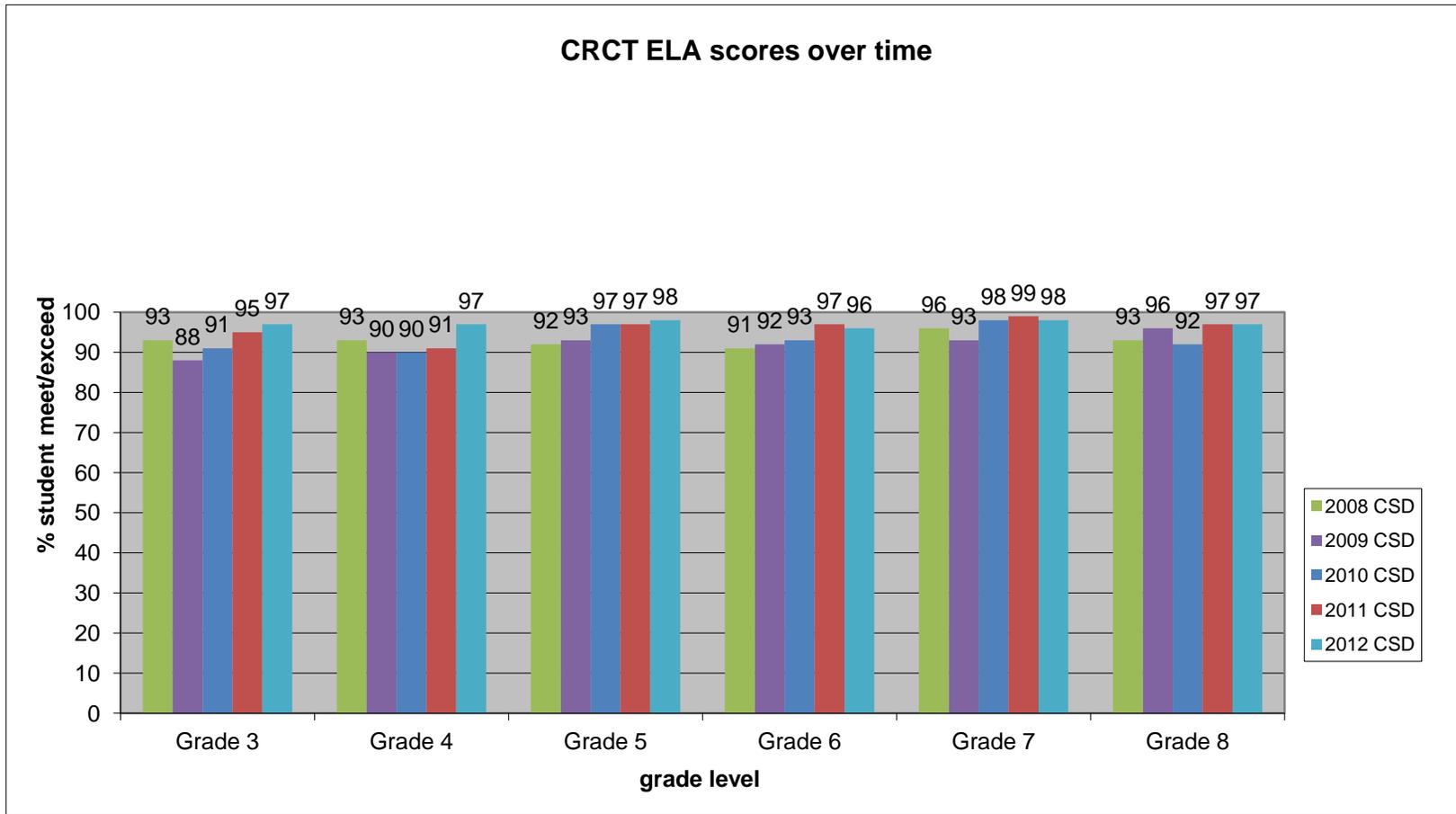


Figure 5

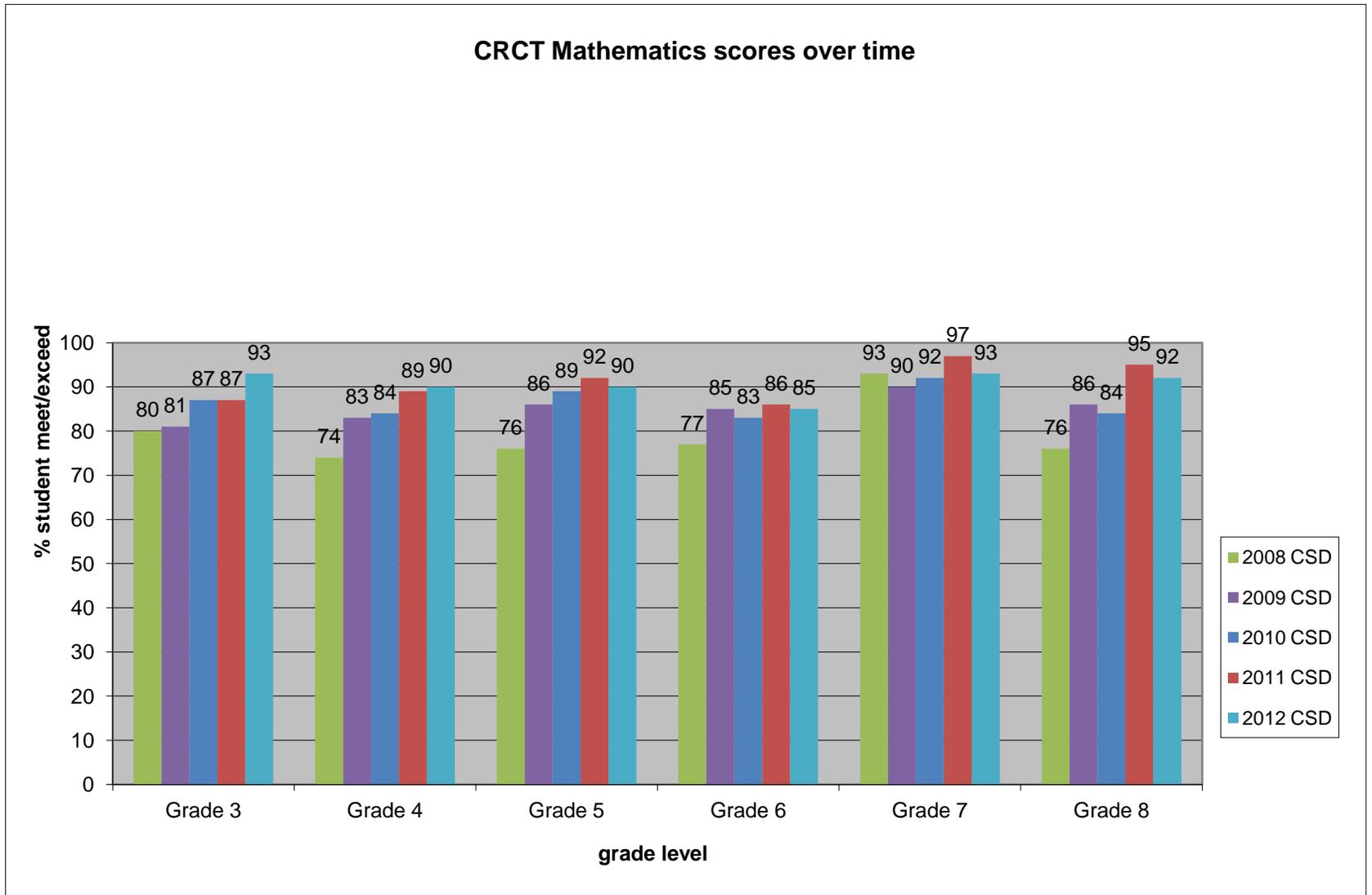


Figure 6

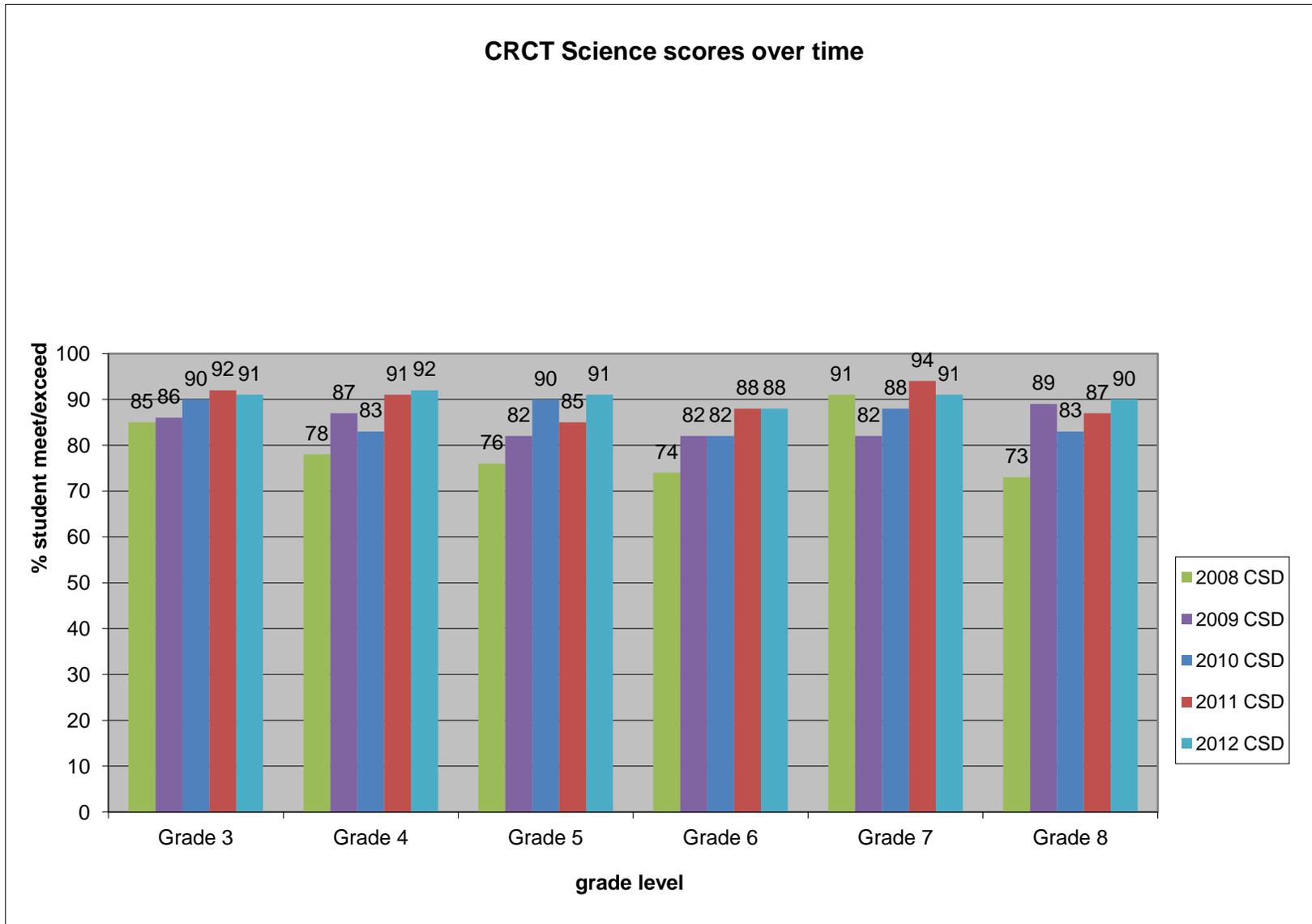


Figure 7

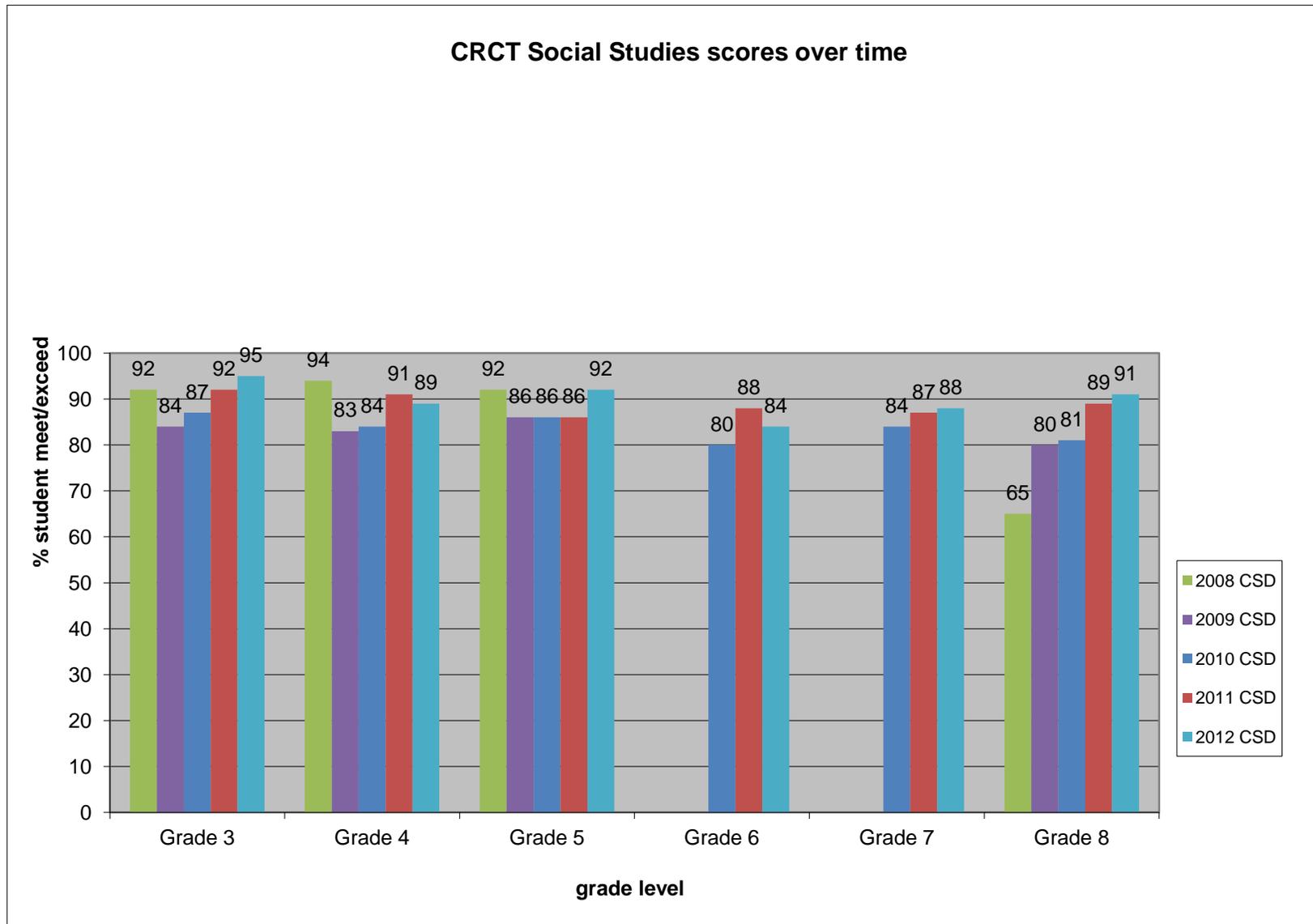


Figure 8

End-of-Course Tests (EOCT) offer equivalent opportunities for celebration (Figure 9).

	US History	Math I	Math II	Economics	Biology	American Literature	9 th Grade Literature
School level Ranking DHS	72	31	129	65	24	44	38
School level %iles	83%	92%	75%	84%	95%	90%	92%
System level Ranking CSD	20	10	3	17	2	7	3
System level %iles	89%	94%	98%	91%	99%	96%	98%

Figure 9

It is not feasible or reasonable to present EOCT data over five years due to the nature of block scheduling at Decatur High School. With block scheduling, some courses may be offered certain semesters and not another. The State of Georgia does not provide year-long comprehensive EOCT data. Presenting semester-by-semester EOCT data will not produce viable interpretations without knowing the substantial context of the high school schedule.

City Schools of Decatur commits to its current course: exceeding state averages and meeting College and Career Readiness Performance Index targets. City Schools of Decatur is ready and willing to create student performance objectives based on state assessments if required by the State Board of Education. Examples of those possible targets include the following:

- Increasing percentage of CRCT and EOCT grade levels and contents scoring in top 10% as measured by mean score
- Increasing percentage of students scoring CRCT and EOCT exceeds
- Increasing of state and federal CCRPI targets met

However, as is the rationale for charter to be different, do something different, and measure differently, City Schools of Decatur respectfully asks our charter efficacy to be measured differently.

MAP is an adaptive test taken on computers: as students answer questions correctly, more advanced questions are posed to students. The converse is also true, thus creating a differentiated student assessment system. This norm-referenced experience provides parents, educators, and students with comparison to children in the same grade in their district and the nation. In addition, and possibly most

importantly, MAP creates a growth projection that is unique to that learner. For instance, if a third grader scores a 185 RIT (Rausch Interval Unit, named after the Danish mathematician) in the fall testing window, millions of testing events are searched to find what other students across the country who also scored a 185 in the fall testing window usually score. Those scores are placed in sequential order and a mean is calculated. Perhaps the student is given a growth projection of 10 RIT. 50% of the students will theoretically score less than 10 RIT in the spring testing window, 50% will meet or exceed that projection. The projection is norm-referenced and rigorous. It is not grade-level specific, nor is it a target that all students would achieve. Since it is set at the 50% mark, it indeed is an accomplishment and a celebration when it occurs!

The most exciting part for teachers is twofold: expediency and depth. Data is available immediately as the student score is displayed at the conclusion of the test. Additionally, the next day, teachers can access aggregate reports of their class, complete with flexible groups created to manage their academically-diverse learners. The depth of the data is unparalleled. By selecting a group of students that has been grouped for a particular content strand (e., Geometry for 2nd graders), MAP provides the very skills these students are ready to be taught, aligned to the Common Core Curriculum.

MAP's research arm, The Kingsbury Center, collects test data from 5,000,000 students in 48 states each year. Students enrolled in many international schools also take MAP but those data are not included in the United States norming studies. The most recent accomplishment of the Kingsbury Center is a method of schools measuring their growth against other schools that score similarly. Schools can now benchmark themselves against unidentified schools around the country that had a grade level that scored similarly in the fall testing window. Schools then use the tool provided by the Kingsbury Center to set school improvement goals and performance measures. Once the spring data has arrived, schools can determine where they fall within that very specific school cohort group, matched to their performance.

For instance, Clairemont Elementary third graders started the 2011-2012 school year in the 97th percentile of all 3rd graders in the United States. In the spring, those same students scored in the 99th percentile. More impressive is that for all schools that started in the 97th percentile, Clairemont scored in

the 99th percentile of all those schools. This 99th percentile score is called the Growth Norm Score. The tool is so sensitive that it also compares the weeks of instruction between testing windows between schools to provide equity. For instance, City Schools of Decatur has approximately 26 weeks between testing when a school in another area of the country might have 24. City Schools of Decatur would not be compared to that particular school.

This tool has radically changed every environment and context at City Schools of Decatur: classroom grouping and instruction, student and parent conferences with teachers, eligibility for programs (e.g., gifted, Early Intervention Program, tutoring, Title I), school improvement plans, school-level governance data analysis, even School Board and Superintendent performance and evaluation targets.

Using the 2011-2012 Growth Norm Scores as a guide, the Figures 10-11 indicate the student performance objectives for this charter renewal petition. It is our firm belief, as demonstrated during the last four years of student performance data from the City Schools of Decatur, that MAP data is a far more rigorous performance metric than the Georgia assessment system could provide. We are confident that our students will continue to meet and exceed Georgia accountability targets, and achieve high marks on the College and Career Readiness Performance Index.

Methodology for setting performance objectives is as follows:

1. Over 10 years, 20% growth in the difference between 99th percentile and the 2012 benchmark score (e.g., 77thile score 2012: 99th percentile – 77th percentile = 22% difference; 20% growth of 22% = 4th percentile growth distributed over 10 years)
2. For any score above 90th percentile, objective remains to stay above 90th percentile each year of the charter.

The previous five-year charter petition did not use MAP as a primary data source since MAP was one of the instructional innovations the charter supported. Since this petition requests that the State Board of Education allow City Schools of Decatur to use MAP as its student performance measure, this renewal petition does not meet the criterion required in the renewal charter: “Present graphs that show the past

five years performance with the system student performance objectives for each year of the proposed charter term plotted out to demonstrate graphically what the charter system is striving to achieve.”

City Schools of Decatur

Mathematics Performance Objectives

Measures of Academic Progress Growth Percentiles

		May-12	May-13	May-14	May-15	May-16	May-17	May-18	May-19	May-20	May-21	May-22
		Gain										
		Growth %ile										
Clairemont	K	95	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
	1st	77	77	78	78	79	79	80	80	81	81	81
	2nd	64	65	65	66	67	68	68	69	70	70	71
	3rd	99	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
Glennwood	K	57	58	59	60	60	61	62	63	64	65	65
	1st	78	78	79	79	80	80	81	81	81	82	82
	2nd	66	67	67	68	69	69	70	71	71	72	73
	3rd	97	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
Oakhurst	K	76	76	77	77	78	78	79	79	80	80	81
	1st	69	70	70	71	71	72	73	73	74	74	75
	2nd	80	80	81	81	82	82	82	83	83	83	84
	3rd	94	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
Winnona	K	67	68	68	69	70	70	71	71	72	73	73
	1st	82	82	83	83	83	84	84	84	85	85	85
	2nd	94	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
	3rd	60	61	62	62	63	64	65	65	66	67	68
FAVE	4th	87	87	87	88	88	88	88	89	89	89	89
	5th	83	83	84	84	84	85	85	85	86	86	86
RMS	6th	66	67	67	68	69	69	70	71	71	72	73
	7th	66	67	67	68	69	69	70	71	71	72	73
	8th	74	75	75	76	76	77	77	78	78	79	79
DHS	9th	93	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
	10th	68	69	69	70	70	71	72	72	73	74	74

Figure 10

City Schools of Decatur

Reading Performance Objectives

Measures of Academic Progress Growth Percentiles

		May-12	May-13	May-14	May-15	May-16	May-17	May-18	May-19	May-20	May-21	May-22
		Gain										
		Growth %ile										
Clairemont	K	84	84	85	85	85	86	86	86	86	87	87
	1st	35	36	38	39	40	41	43	44	45	47	48
	2nd	66	67	67	68	69	69	70	71	71	72	73
	3rd	99	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
Glennwood	K	36	37	39	40	41	42	44	45	46	47	49
	1st	19	21	22	24	25	27	29	30	32	33	35
	2nd	94	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
	3rd	99	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
Oakhurst	K	76	76	77	77	78	78	79	79	80	80	81
	1st	35	36	38	39	40	41	43	44	45	47	48
	2nd	90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
	3rd	93	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
Winnona	K	64	65	65	66	67	68	68	69	70	70	71
	1st	34	35	37	38	39	41	42	43	44	46	47
	2nd	98	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
	3rd	98	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
FAVE	4th	98	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
	5th	99	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
RMS	6th	85	85	86	86	86	86	87	87	87	88	88
	7th	94	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
	8th	99	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90	>90
DHS	9th	79	79	80	80	81	81	81	82	82	83	83
	10th	74	75	75	76	76	77	77	78	78	79	79

Figure 11

The State of Georgia is using Race to the Top as a vehicle to explore the use of CRCT as a growth measure, reducing student scores to z-scores and calculating percentile performance. This statistical work is useful if, and only if the assessment has a vertical scale that is designed to measure growth. MAP, for example, measures changes in achievement over time, and MAP uses growth norms that permit users to assign a student growth percentile to any student's observed growth, given initial achievement, age, and amount of instruction that was received.

When growth is measured, a particular attribute is used at both measurement points. For instance, if a child is 22 pounds last spring and is now 28 pounds, the gain (growth) is 6 pounds. A pound serves as the vertical scale. A pound is always a pound no matter the age, gender, or socioeconomic status of the child. On the CRCT, a passing score of 800 is not the same from year to year.

Georgia's plan purports to use percentile ranking as a way to measure growth: if a student performed at the 78th percentile last year and now scores in the 80th percentile – is that growth? It is impossible to tell. If someone ran a 5K race and placed 10th last year and this year placed 12th, the time to run the race may have improved even though the relative standing did not. This Georgia plan measures consistency of performance, which is a laudable improvement over the CRCT of the past. However, MAP provides a more comprehensive view of a child, thus we are desirous of using it as our student performance accountability measure.

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

The educational innovations that support student performance are foundational for our current 2008-2013 system charter contract. The innovations posed in this charter renewal petition require a deeper level of implementation and a deeper level of trust from the State Board of Education in the City Schools of Decatur. These innovations can be grouped in the following way:

- What Students are Learning
- How Students are Learning What They are Learning
- How Students' Progress is Assessed and Communicated

City Schools of Decatur engaged in an extensive Strategic Planning process in 2011 and much of that work has been drawn out in this charter renewal petition.

What Students are Learning

City Schools of Decatur embraces the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards. As a matter of point and fact, our work with teacher evaluation and student evaluation has the understanding of the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards as an underpinning in terms of what all students must know and be able to do. City Schools of Decatur has developed an instructional model that requires what standards must be present in every classroom with evidence demonstrating a deep understanding of Standards-Based Instruction and Assessment.

City Schools of Decatur has codified in its Strategic Plan that every student will graduate from Decatur High School with a diploma and a career pathway certificate. Students at Decatur High School, after experiencing all 8 subject areas through the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme in grades 9-10 will have a broad knowledge and a more informed view of their individual skill sets in an effort to choose a career pathway that is matched to their gifts and passions. In the last two years, with the help of being a Charter System, City Schools of Decatur built the Decatur Career Academy with state-of-the-art design and equipment. All students, not just upperclassmen, must take part in the development of a career pathway. Currently, City Schools of Decatur has developed agreements with higher education and career-oriented institutions to allow our students to graduate with a high school diploma and two years of college. This charter renewal petition will see an increase in these endeavors for our high school students.

This charter renewal petition includes the implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) in grades 11-12. IBDP represents the most rigorous high school classes offered in the state of Georgia, as well as a lauded school reform model, even supported by Title I as a research-based strategy. IBDP is frequently reserved for the top 5-10% of high school students, as manifested by Georgia-authorized school IBDP diploma rates. Decatur High School believes the content of IBDP is appropriate for all students, and the intentional planning of IBDP six years ago has provided the proper foundation. The citizens of the city of Decatur encouraged the Board of Education to consider

IB at the dawn of the first strategic plan in 2003. Unlike many school systems that start an IB implementation with IBDP, City Schools of Decatur began IB with the Primary Years Programme at the 4/5 Academy. After two years of experiences before middle school, the IB Middle Years Programme begins in 6th grade and continues (literally across the train tracks) to Decatur High School through 10th grade. The 2013-2014 school year marks the first class that has experienced an IB implementation from 4th grade. Despite austerity cuts, City Schools of Decatur has not waived from its commitment.

At least four IB Higher Level (HL) courses will be offered for students pursuing the full diploma (equivalent to one year of college). In addition, this charter petition requires all Decatur High School juniors to enroll in at least one IB Standard Level (SL) two-year course, thus providing an opportunity for 100% of Decatur High School juniors and seniors to earn college credit.

City Schools of Decatur seeks freedom from State Board of Education Rule IHF in this charter renewal petition in order to maximize the opportunities for academically-gifted students to take rigorous IBDP coursework. Under this petition, students that are enrolled as full IB Diploma-seeking students would not take state-required World History; instead, they would take a deeper-level IB course in Individuals and Societies.

As teenagers consider a career pathway, some are stymied by a lack of proficiency in another language other than English. This charter renewal petition seeks to ameliorate that barrier, even at earlier ages. City Schools of Decatur's first system charter petition included performance objectives about second language learning. That focus continues, even after all state funding has been removed for elementary foreign language.

City Schools of Decatur requires foreign language for all students grades K-10. The IB school reform models in grades 4-10 require a certain amount of study that City Schools of Decatur exceeds at every grade level. Expeditionary Learning, the K-3 school reform model, does not require foreign language but City Schools of Decatur provides at least two hours of Spanish instruction/week starting in Kindergarten.

As part of this charter renewal petition, several entry points toward improving second language learning exist. The first exists in an opportunistic way as a new elementary school needs to open for the 2014-2015 school year due to increased enrollment in the City Schools of Decatur. Since achieving system charter status, City Schools of Decatur has grown by 38% - the fastest growing school district in Georgia. This charter renewal petition will require the City Schools of Decatur to explore a dual language immersion model in one or more elementary schools, starting in Kindergarten. This is the next logical move for this community due to its intense support of world languages.

Norm-referenced proficiency testing will be used at transition points (5th and 8th) grade to provide necessary placement information for receiving schools as well as program evaluation data for schools where students are matriculating. As part of this charter renewal petition, City Schools of Decatur will create an articulated K-12 foreign language plan, quite missing from the educational research of second language learning.

Finally, once more fluent second language learners reach Decatur High School, a new vein of second language course will be offered when these students have placed beyond Advanced Placement Spanish: dual-credit core classes taught in a second language. Decatur High School anticipates a course such as World Literature taught in Spanish, thus allowing students to earn two credits: Spanish and English. City Schools of Decatur is dedicated to integrating courses whenever possible.

Enrollment growth impacts our Strategic Plan implementation and thus, our charter implementation. This growth has positively prompted us to consider new structures and new grade configurations. This charter renewal petition calls the City Schools of Decatur to explore the feasibility of a STEM Academy for grades 4-8. In addition, International Baccalaureate may be extended from the current offerings of grades 4-10 to Kindergarten-12.

How Students are Learning What They are Learning

The word flexibility has been connoted with charter schools since their inception. This charter renewal petition poses flexibility in location, seat time, and requirements. The duration of this charter requires City Schools of Decatur to explore an innovative model where high school students might attend

class certain days during the week and be assigned off campus in work-based learning programs or engage in college-like projects on the alternate days. Students may exhibit mastery in some learning standards for a course, thus only needing to be present for the standards they have yet to learn. This radical approach to the factory model of high school will take several years and extensive planning to implement. Concurrent with this change includes a 1:1 technology initiative that will increase the probability and possibility of virtual learning experiences. In the final year of our current charter, City Schools of Decatur moved beyond the scope of required work to implement a 1:1 iPad initiative in the 4th and 5th grades (launch Spring 2013). These students will have graduated by the end of the ten-year duration of this charter renewal request. This charter renewal petition requires City Schools of Decatur to implement 1:1 in grades 4-8 and examine best practices for adolescents and device usage.

In order for this approach to take root, City Schools of Decatur will create a Decatur Online Academy that will serve as the repository for blended courses and 100% online courses, starting with grades 9-12. Over the duration of the charter, the Decatur Online Academy will extend opportunities to earlier grades.

These learning experiences, whether inside the walls of a City Schools of Decatur building or virtually-sponsored, will operate within the agreements of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) programs. PBIS is one of the few recognized research-based behavior programs recognized broadly as having a positive impact on student achievement. Supported by the Georgia Department of Education, implementation can last as long as 4-6 years. As part of self-assessments conducted about City Schools of Decatur's Response to Intervention process, behavior interventions and a system-wide behavior approach was missing. If this renewal petition is approved, each SLT will examine PBIS and officially make a determination of use within their school.

How Students' Progress is Assessed and Communicated

Ask any student at Renfroe Middle School about their assessment plans and you will hear an earful: criteria, IB rubrics, summative, formative. In the past few decades, the purpose of student assessment was lost: it became an exercise in grading rather than providing feedback. Renfroe Middle

School has accepted the charge of creating students literate in assessment, and therefore, literate in their own learning and growth. This charter renewal petition translates the important work Renfroe has done to other grade levels and buildings.

Currently, grades 6-10 use the IB Middle Years Programme (IBMYP) assessment rubrics. All IBMYP sites must use the rubrics, but Renfroe is the only public middle school in Georgia we know of that does not also use a 0-100 scale to communicate evaluated work.

Renfroe Middle School is proud that it does not engage in grade conversion, for as is the case in any conversion in the world, something is lost. Grades 9-10 use the IBMYP rubrics, as is the requirement, but after assessing with the rubrics, a conversation guide is used to end with a 0-100 score.

This charter renewal petition would create an entire high school of criterion-based grading – no 0-100 scores or letter grades. Students would not compete against each other – rather, they would compete against themselves and the criteria. This represents a substantial change in the way student assessment is conducted. As such, stakeholders will engage in training and understanding as well as input prior to acceptance by the System Charter Leadership Team and the School Board.

Additionally, the success of the criterion-based rubrics would work backwards to grades K-5. As is the case in many Georgia school districts, City Schools of Decatur uses standards-based reporting practices for young learners. Although these practices have been helpful in some regards, they do not appear to create sixth graders that are more prepared to own the IBMYP rubrics in any meaningful way. This charter renewal petition would require City Schools of Decatur to work backwards from grade 6 to examine the feasibility of grades 4-5 IB Primary Years Programme as well as setting criteria for the K-3 Expeditionary Learning Schools.

Summary:

Phase 1:

- Implement IB Diploma Programme (grades 11-12) at Decatur High School
- Norm-referenced proficiency testing in second languages
- Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports

- Criterion-based grading at 9-12
- 1:1 Technology Initiative
- Efforts to merge stand-alone high school courses to thematic-based learning model

Phase II:

- All students graduate with a diploma and career pathway certificate
- Offering parents choice at the elementary level based on grade configuration and programs
- Dual Language immersion or other choices for K-8 schools
- Flexibly scheduled and attended classes at Decatur High School
- Criterion-based grading at K-5

Phase III:

- Core content at Decatur High School taught in second language
- Course offered for students in a virtual format

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

Based on the educational innovations described in question #3, the following would require City Schools of Decatur to utilize the broad flexibility waiver:

- Graduation (SBOE Rule IHF) flexibility for social studies changes
- Graduation (SBOE Rule IHF) flexibility for seat time
- Graduation (SBOE Rule IHF) flexibility for mastery learning
- Graduation (SBOE Rule IHF) flexibility for granting two Carnegie units for one core course taught in a second language
- Grading flexibility (SBOE Rule IHA) to use other than a 0-100 scale for grades 4-12

ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTIVES, PLANS, AND WAIVERS

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

Performance objective	Current status	2023 goal
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Families that choose “agree” or “strongly agree” on at least 75% of the questions on the yearly school improvement parent perception survey.	90%	90%
# of grade levels with 1:1 handheld initiative	0	9
% of classrooms with rooms with ACTIVBoards	84%	100%
% of days when a fresh fruit and/or vegetable is offered in Grades 4-12	50%	100%
% of K-12 teachers with Gifted Endorsement	28%	50%
# of teachers with K5 Math Endorsement	7	54
% of students walk, roll, bike to school	32%	50%
Gallup Employee Engagement Q ¹² : Overall Satisfaction score	4.05	4.20

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

A respected Georgia superintendent perpetually offers this quip: “Some of us teach, and the rest of us support those that do.” Some organizational measures seek to quantify the support that schools feel each day. Other organizational metrics also involve teachers not framed through the lens of student performance.

Wellness for students is an important part of this charter renewal petition. While tracking the rising percentage of students that walk, roll, or skate to school, the Decatur Farm to School Program, a grassroots collaboration between parents, the City Schools of Decatur School Nutrition Program, and the Wylde Center (formerly Oakhurst Garden Cooperative) create the necessary conditions to provide healthier meal choices for both students and adults. Locally-grown vegetables and fruits of the month gives one specific method toward influencing the wellness patterns of our students.

The Ultimate Menu Committee met in the City Schools of Decatur during Fall 2012 to examine current school nutrition program menu offerings in light of the new federal guidelines. This Committee, composed with a broad base of students, families, experts, and staff, made a recommendation to the Board of Education regarding what are the Top 10 menu changes that would have the greatest impact on the wellness of students and adults.

Wellness for adults could certainly refer to medical and biological needs (e.g., Mobile Mammogram options, Flu shots, informational sessions); however, in this charter renewal petition, adult wellness includes organizational performance and feedback.

A multi-year implementation of a comprehensive Teacher Quality Initiative has created more positive working conditions, changes in leadership, district-wide professional development, practices of modeling for all learners what meaningful learning can look like. Over the duration of this charter renewal, City Schools of Decatur requests that any legislation rewriting teacher evaluation requirements be inserted into Georgia code in an area that allows City Schools of Decatur to utilize its broad flexibility to not comply.

City Schools of Decatur's Teacher Quality Initiative is a systematic professional learning effort, increasing the quality of feedback offered to teachers, accelerating improvement in teacher practice. Unique to this community and initiative is the teacher's voice and presence in the process. At least 35% of the members of the Teacher Quality Team are teachers: teachers that have demonstrated proficiency in a specialized professional learning experience focused on crafting high-quality feedback to accelerate improvements in classroom practice.

This charter renewal petition institutionalizes the development of the CSD Leadership Academy whose purposes are to (1) codify the leadership skills and dispositions needed to successfully lead in the Decatur community, and (2) build succession plans for each school and central office department.

Organizational health is certainly impacted by employees who receive helpful and actionable performance feedback. In addition, professional learning opportunities are vital for short-term and long-term organizational viability. In this charter renewal petition, increased emphasis is placed on teachers acquiring state-sponsored endorsements that will impact the specific population in City Schools of Decatur.

As the population of gifted-identified students in City Schools of Decatur grows, so must the population of gifted-endorsed teachers. City Schools of Decatur will budget opportunities for teachers to engage in the learning required to earn the Georgia Gifted Endorsement.

Additionally, City Schools of Decatur's student performance data show a slower reduction in the mathematics achievement gap as compared to literacy. The K-5 Mathematics Endorsement will be offered and incentivized to teaching staff at least twice over the course of the charter petition. City Schools of

Decatur will responsively plan for the endorsement learning designs that best fit City Schools of Decatur's teachers, and then will find those professional learning providers. This endorsement is a particularly-important fit for the City Schools of Decatur due to the IB Primary Years Programme which prohibits departmentalizing subjects. Thus, all 4th and 5th grade teachers in City Schools of Decatur teach all subjects. As the content for upper grades mathematics has increased in rigor due to two curriculum changes since 2005, early childhood-endorsed teachers need additional content learning as well as pedagogical content knowledge connections.

City Schools of Decatur realizes that as the quality of student experiences improves, it becomes more and more difficult to fit everything into the current daily schedule. This charter calls the community to examine extended school days in order to attend to the desires of community members to expand these ideas, such as foreign language and wellness.

A final aspect of organizational health requires employers to provide tools that assist employees in self-assessing. The CLASS Keys provides that for most teaching areas, but even this recent CLASS Keys instrument does not capture the nuances of the federally-mandated Response to Intervention (RtI) process. With no federal or organizationally-developed standards, City Schools of Decatur staff chose to create their own. After 24 months of iterations and feedback, City Schools of Decatur has created an instrument, called Innovation Configuration Maps, to measure implementation. Innovation Configuration Maps grew from the Concerns-Based Adoption Model research from the SouthEast Developmental Laboratory. RtI is a comprehensive framework that requires multiple years to implement. This charter renewal petition calls City Schools of Decatur to self-assess using the Innovation Configuration Map and annually re-set the expectations delineated in the tool.

Rewarding individuals in the social sciences is sometimes complicated. Educators are dedicated to the development of communities and people that comprise them but also need fair and competitive compensation in order to continue these commitments. If austerity cuts allow during the duration of the 2013-2023 charter, City Schools of Decatur will explore the feasibility of rewarding school faculties, principals, and SLTs for meeting CCRPI targets, regardless of their Title I status.

City Schools of Decatur seeks operational flexibility in two additional areas: teacher certification and building codes/requirements. City Schools of Decatur values certification and highly qualified status for teachers and paraprofessionals. However, City Schools of Decatur broadens its certification statement from the 2008 petition and will not require teacher certification. In saying this, this petition in no way confines the school system from prioritizing potential teacher candidates that have proper certification.

Capital projects have been ever-present in City Schools of Decatur since 2004. Becoming a charter system has not offered any additional flexibility in this critical area. In this charter renewal petition, City Schools of Decatur seeks additional flexibility in creating the spaces our community desires for their children, our students. Only in dire situations where safety of students is reasonably questioned would City Schools of Decatur not be granted use of their full flexibility waiver. As the City Schools of Decatur has been named the fastest-growing school system by the Georgia Department of Education Facilities Division, capital projects will continue to characterize our work for the foreseeable future.

Summary:

Phase I:

- Walk and Roll to School, Farm to School Program
- City Schools of Decatur Leadership Academy
- Response to Intervention assessment
- Teacher certification
- Building codes/requirements

Phase II:

- Gifted endorsement
- K5 mathematics endorsement

Phase III:

- Institutionalize the evaluation of administrative staff and document evidence through a portfolio system.

- Forge a plan to reward school faculties, schools, and SLTs

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

Dependent upon interpretation, City Schools of Decatur seeks waiver release from any Georgia Code regarding teacher evaluation. Georgia Department of Education Teacher and Leader Quality staff has indicated that the Race to the Top teacher effectiveness observational tool is not as rigorous as the CLASS KEYS process developed in 2008 (which is the framework City Schools of Decatur uses). If City Schools of Decatur cannot waive from this eventual requirement, City Schools of Decatur would not be allowed to willingly assume a more rigorous standard for their teaching staff.

Both teacher certification and building codes/requirements require full flexibility waiver usage.

GOVERNANCE

8. What is the system’s plan to maximize school level governance?

Undoubtedly, the area of school level governance has experienced the most conversation, wondering, and hence, growth in the past four years of our system charter. Without any state definition of exemplar, City Schools of Decatur attempted to define what a system charter might be in Decatur and what those responsibilities would look like. Those initial thoughts, submitted in 2008, changed twice officially, and were interpreted differently many more times over the duration of the first four years.

Both employees who have served on SLTs and parents (non-employees) that have served on SLTs have specifically shaped this portion of the charter renewal petition. Very specific actions are present here at their request. To be very clear about the changes that would take place in school-level governance, Figure 12 is offered:

2008 Petition	2013 Renewal Petition	Rationale
11 member minimum	5-7 members	Some governing boards became too large, trying to use equal representation to equalize varying school groups
At least 9 meetings	At least 4 meetings	Various constituent groups reported meeting too often, thus not garnering parent interest to either (1) serve on the SLT or (2) come to a meeting

Anyone can serve as chair	Anyone can serve as chair	
At least 51% membership must be non-employee	At least 51% membership must be non-employee at that particular school	An example here could be that a parent of a child at Decatur High School serves as an after-school provider in the four year-old program at another school. This individual would not be counted as an employee because s/he is not an employee at Decatur High School.
Robert's Rules of Order	A consensus-building process	For some SLTs, Robert's Rules were their demise – for others, it was the structure they needed.
Elected parents	Elected parents	After considerable conversation, it was agreed that the democratic process of electing parents was important to preserve.
Originally: Election by majority vote, changed to Election by plurality vote	Election by plurality vote	
Parent representatives must have a child at that school	Representatives that are not employees do not have to be parents	Pursuant to best practices for charter school boards, individuals that do not have children at that particular school often make the best board members.
System Charter Leadership Team (2 representatives from each SLT) plus Board member and Superintendent	System Charter Leadership Team composed of 1 representative from each SLT and "retired" SLT members	Holding onto history and longevity on SCLT is important.
Board had the right to appoint any community member to any SLT to guarantee diversity	SLTs define diversity within their school context and appoint as they see fit	This change demonstrates the trust in charter and SLTs in general grew over the duration of the charter.
SLT agenda models the Board of Education	SLT agenda models the Board of Education, only in formal meetings; SLTs can also "meet" in more informal ways	Parents were particularly interested in creating spaces that were sponsored by SLT (e.g., Town Hall, Family Math Night), thus increasing SLT exposure, informing their community of SLT's tasks/scope
Terms are staggered so the entire SLT does not rotate off the same year	Terms are staggered so the entire SLT does not rotate off the same year	
Two certified staff	Each SLT decide how many staff participate	This opens up the possibilities for classified staff to participate and can help manage the number of members in order to still maintain the 51% membership requirement
Original: Terms run from August – July, changed to October – September	Terms run from October – September	This changed timeframe allows the same SLT to vote on the School Improvement Plan they have been crafting instead of creating one then passing the content to a

		new team
Officers: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary	Officers: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary	

Figure 12

Any member may withdraw from the School Leadership Team by delivering to the Chair of the School Leadership Team a written resignation and submitting a copy to the secretary of the School Leadership Team or school principal. Should School Leadership Team members determine that a member of the team is no longer active in the team as defined by the bylaws of the team, the School Leadership Team may, by a majority vote, remove such person from the School Leadership Team, effective as of a date determined by the team.

The office of School Leadership Team member shall be automatically vacated under the following conditions:

- (1) If the member resigns; or
- (2) If the member is removed as a member by a majority vote of the School Leadership Team

An election within the electing body for a replacement to fill the remainder of an unexpired term shall be held within 60 days, unless there are fewer than 90 days left before the end of the school year, in which case the School Leadership Team will decide whether to fill the position before the end of the school year.

Figure 13 summarizes the roles and responsibilities of the governing bodies:

School Board	System Charter Leadership Team	School Leadership Teams
<p>The Board will continue to make decisions in the following areas and have final jurisdiction over:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall fiscal management (including but not limited to purchasing and contracting) • Final development and approval of the annual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing the effectiveness of the system charter; • Sharing information and innovations from each school; • Focusing on system goals and outcomes; • Providing oversight for the systemic nature of the School Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input to the Superintendent regarding the performance of the school principal; • Recommend personnel for submission to the Superintendent for hire by participating on hiring teams; • Determine use of funding for school operations,

<p>system budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiscal expenditures beyond the school’s allocations • Legal oversight • Fair/non-discriminatory personnel practices • System Strategic Plan, including overall goals and objectives of the charter system • Final approval regarding school improvement plans • Calendar • Curriculum, assessment, and school reform models • Overall safety/maintenance of buildings • School nutrition • Transportation • Decisions related to one school that will impact another school (<i>The Impact Principle</i>) • Existing and future Board policy • Final approval regarding personnel, including hiring and termination • Attendance zones • Appeals • Facilities • Supervision of the Superintendent • Other areas as necessary 	<p>Teams;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an Administrator appraisal process; • Mediating between School Leadership Teams and other entities; • Discussing possible charter revisions; and • Provide oversight and recommendations to the Superintendent on issues submitted by the School Leadership Teams with a scope and impact beyond the local school. 	<p>other than personnel and benefits ;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, approve, and monitor the continuous school improvement planning process (three year plan with annual reviews and updates that includes plans to foster student and teacher development)); • Determine course offerings • Review assessment data and use it for decision-making purposes; • Assist with school accreditation and improvement reviews and assessments, such as SACS; • Review and approve the implementation of any state waiver (within the School Leadership Team’s purview) considering the following impacts; impact will be considered in this order: impact on the student(s) in question, students in the affected class, students in the affected grade, teacher in the affected class, students in the entire school, teachers in the entire school, and the families in the entire school. • Review and approve changes to its bylaws; and • Recommend school needs to the Board during the annual budget process.
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Figure 13

As a charter system for the past four years, three community members have emerged as trainers for newly-elected SLT members. Two of these members ran during the last school board election after completing their SLT terms. This structure was used at the onset of the 2011 school year, resulting in positive feedback. The training will take place no later than October 15 each year and may include but not be limited to the following topics: roles and responsibilities of SLT members, Open Meetings Act, Charter System flexibility, school finance, school improvement planning including student assessment analysis.

9. What are the system’s financial performance objectives for the terms of the contract?

Performance objective	Current status	2023 goal
# of Financial Best Practices met: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2 months of reserves available 2. Available fund balance 3 – 5% 3. Budget variance (Revenues and expenditures) of <=4% 4. Schools and departments exceed budget <=5% 	2	4
# of unqualified audits with no findings	0	1

The City Schools of Decatur and the Board of Education will continue to demonstrate the fiscal responsibility shown over the past decade through austerity cuts and an economic downturn. The aforementioned performance objectives are the next logical metrics.

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

It is not foreseen at this time that any new financial innovations need to be implemented in order to reach the performance objectives indicated in Application Question #9.

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

It is not foreseen at this time that any waiver be required for City Schools of Decatur to meet the performance objectives indicated in Application Question #9.

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

Any funds received due to System Charter Status have been used to offset stated Charter initiatives, such as the following:

- Expeditionary Learning
- International Baccalaureate
- Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments
- Computer hardware needed for MAP assessments
- Training for School Leadership Team members

An area not addressed by the previous charter was an attempt to fund performance-based evaluations. Austerity cuts did not allow the system the cushion to implement this objective. The groundwork of the evaluation system has been completed. It is probable that additional funds from Charter System Status may fund this innovation.