



Charter System Application

DISTRICT NAME

Union County School System

DISTRICT ADDRESS

**124 Hughes Street
Blairsville, GA 30512**

Dr. John D. Barge
State School Superintendent
DECEMBER 2012



Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent
"Making Education Work for All Georgians"

CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION COVER SHEET

Proposed Charter System Information			
1. Full Name of Proposed Charter System <u>Union County School System</u>			
2. Please indicate whether this is a: New Petition <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or a Renewal Petition	3. How many schools in total are you proposing to include in your charter system? <u>5</u>		
4. How many of each of the following schools are you proposing to include in your charter system? Primary School(s) <u>1</u> Middle School(s) <u>1</u> Elementary School(s) <u>1</u> High school(s) <u>2</u>			
5. On July 1 of what year do you want your charter contract to be effective? <u>2014</u>			
6. How many years are you proposing for the term of your charter contract? (Note that an initial charter cannot exceed five years) <u>5</u>			
7. Charter System Street Address <u>124 Hughes Street</u>	8. City <u>Blairsville</u>	9. State <u>GA</u>	10. Zip <u>30512</u>
11. Contact Person <u>Gary Steppe</u> <u>Dr. Jeremy Williams</u>		12. Title <u>Superintendent</u> <u>Assistant Superintendent</u>	
13. Contact Street Address <u>124 Hughes Street</u>	14. City <u>Blairsville</u>	15. State <u>GA</u>	16. Zip <u>30512</u>
17. Contact's telephone number <u>706-745-2322</u>	18. Contact's fax number <u>706-745-5025</u>	19. Contact's E-mail Address <u>jwilliams@ucschools.org</u>	

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THE CASE

1. What will you be able to do with a charter that you can't do without a charter?

- *Use this question to present a brief executive summary that makes the case for your school system being granted a charter.*

While school systems across the state and nation are challenged to meet the basic needs of students, Union County School System is organized and prepared to serve as a model to rural districts in advancing educational opportunities. As a community, partnerships are emerging to increase quality learning experiences, integrate disciplinary literacy, and develop personalized education plans. The resulting focus and direction was the major outcome of the Strategic Planning process utilized in the spring of 2012.

The Strategic Planning process involved the Board of Education and student, teacher and administrative leadership at each school. Parents and community members joined the effort in guiding the path for Union County Schools. Also included were the Economic Developer, Blairsville Mayor, and Union County's Sole Commissioner. Members of the Strategic Planning sessions reviewed and revised the vision, mission and belief statements of Union County School System.

Vision: Cultivating the leaders of tomorrow.

Mission: The mission of the Union County School System is to prepare each student for a productive life in the changing world by providing flexible student-focused instruction.

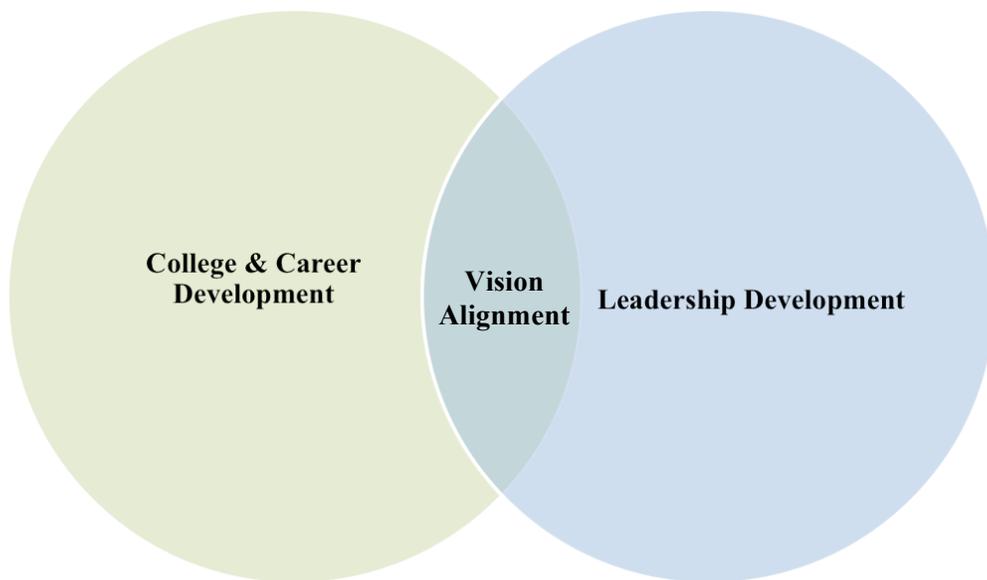
Belief Statements

- The worth and the dignity of each student and staff member are respected.
- Schools provide a safe and positive environment for students and employees.
- Schools collaborate with parents and community to ensure a quality instructional program.
- Schools promote the value of a strong work ethic.
- Students accept responsibility for their learning and behavior.

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- Teachers facilitate student-centered instruction, nurture dreams, and exemplify role models.
- The instructional process is relevant in preparing students for life as productive citizens in a global society while preserving mountain heritage.
- Learning is a life-long responsibility involving parents, schools, and community.

The concluding Strategic System Improvement Plan consisted of three groups: College and Career Development, Leadership Development, and Vision. The purpose of the Vision group was to take the recommendations from the other committees and investigate common themes and potential areas for success. The graphic below depicts the function of the three groups.



After receiving input from stakeholders and holding numerous work sessions, the Vision group integrated College and Career Development Goals with Leadership Development Objectives. The finalized goals and objectives are specific to the needs of Union County students and project the expectations for the next five years.

College and Career Development Goals

- Create Standards-Based Learning environments in all schools.

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- Demonstrate work-ready skills and a mastery of learning in academics through collaboration among students, parents, and teachers.
- Strengthen connections between content relevancy and real-world application.
- Increase opportunities for students to utilize a variety of technologies to demonstrate mastery of content.

Supporting Leadership Development Objectives

- Demonstrate creativity in critical thinking, decision making, and problem solving.
- Develop a variety of relevant research skills for analysis and application.
- Develop and demonstrate a variety of enhanced communication skills.
- Develop, apply, and assess soft skills.

Through the Strategic System Improvement Plan, Union County School System will accomplish charter goals and measures in a quicker timeframe than initially expected. The goals in the charter align with district initiatives and serve as the foundation for student learning experiences. The district historically performs well on the CRCT and in most areas of the EOCTs. During the 2012-2013 school year, Union County School System achieved the second highest average ranking in Georgia on CRCT proficiency levels. Additionally, the district had the seventh highest average ranking on the CRCT exceeds. To extend students beyond the basic proficiency levels, attention to specific improvement areas drives the charter petition. Three major goals and measures within each goal focus the charter efforts of Union County School System by leveraging partnerships and supporting the Strategic System Improvement Plan.

Goal #1: Union County School System will perform above the level that would place it on a Priority, Focus, or Alert status. The district will also meet all targets, as defined by Georgia state requirements and the state's waiver of No Child Left Behind, subject to any amendment, waiver or reauthorization thereof. Students will demonstrate proficiency and improvement over prior years' performance.

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Measure #1: During each year of the term, the district will meet or exceed all State Performance Targets and all other statewide accountability requirements as established by the Department each year for all content areas of the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), the End of Course Test (EOCT) and the graduation rate.

Measure #2: During each year of the charter term, the percentage of students in the district scoring in the exceeds category on the CRCT in all grade levels and subject areas will increase by 1.90% annually for a target of 65.7% by the 2018-2019 school year.

Measure #3: During each year of the charter term, the percentage of students scoring in the meets or exceeds category on the End of Course Test (EOCT) will increase by 1.60% annually in all subjects in all grade levels for a target of 90.4% by the 2018-2019 school year.

Measure #4: During each year of the charter term, the percentage of students scoring in the exceeds category in all subject areas on the EOCT will increase by 2.64% annually for a target of 52.5% by the 2018-2019 school year.

Measure #5: The district has exceeded the state graduation averages and will continue to grow by 1.23% annually for a target of 92.7% by the 2018-2019 school year.

Goal #2: Union County School System will demonstrate post high school, high school and middle school readiness.

Measure #1: 84.6% of graduates will complete a pathway within their program of study by the 2018-2019 school year.

Measure #2: 97.6% of graduates will score Meets or Exceeds on the Georgia High School Writing Test by the 2018-2019 school year.

Measure #3: 90.7% of students will score Meets or Exceeds on the Grade Eight Writing Assessment by the 2018-2019 school year.

Measure #4: 94.5% of students will score Meets or Exceeds on the Grade Five Writing Assessment by the 2018-2019 school year.

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Goal #3: Union County School System will increase postsecondary opportunities and leadership development.

Measure #1: 100% of students in grades 3-12 will explore, apply, and/or evaluate STEM-based research with community partners by the end of the charter term. Community partners will include UGA Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center, Union General Hospital, Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, Corrugated Replacements, Inc., Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, USDA Forest Service, and Vogel State Park.

Measure #2: 50% of graduates will receive postsecondary credits through accelerated courses via ACCEL, Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement offerings, or Move on When Ready by the end of the charter term. The district will leverage partnerships with Young Harris College and North Georgia Technical College to develop pathway-specific sequences.

Measure #3: 15% of students in grades K-5 will receive partial language immersion in content areas through Portuguese.

To achieve the goals and measures in the charter petition, streamlined efforts are critical. One component was the recent passage of the education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). Of the goals in the charter, adequate lab space is necessary for students to achieve higher learning. Two projects to assist with hands-on learning experiences are the addition of classrooms at the high school, which are expected to serve as STEM labs, and the construction of an Agricultural Sciences Center. Funds possibly earned through charter status will be utilized to purchase equipment and supplies for STEM-based learning.

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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 Georgia’s ESEA Waiver.*
- *You are encourage 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).*

Union County School System has taken great strides over the last five years with increasing academic achievement for all students. As a district that continuously scores near the top of the state with CRCT performance, vertical alignment with goals and vision are taking shape. The impact of student achievement in the district drives the decision for charter status. Under the current accountability system in Georgia, the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) results indicate positive performance. The table below represents the 2012 CCRPI scores for Union County Schools in grades 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12, which result in all CCRPI ratings above the state averages.

	<i>Elementary (3-5)</i>	<i>Middle (6-8)</i>	<i>High (9-12)</i>
<i>Union County School System</i>	96.6	92.0	83.2
<i>Georgia Districts (Average)</i>	83.4	81.4	72.6

Georgia’s waiver with the Elementary Secondary Education Act does not conflict with any goals or measures submitted by Union County Schools. In the ESEA Waiver, the Georgia Department of Education set overall and subgroup performance targets based on 2011 achievement and expected targets. Union County School System exceeded the expected rate of growth by reducing the number of years to achieve the expected proficiency targets. The district targets for 2018-2019 are based on increasing the

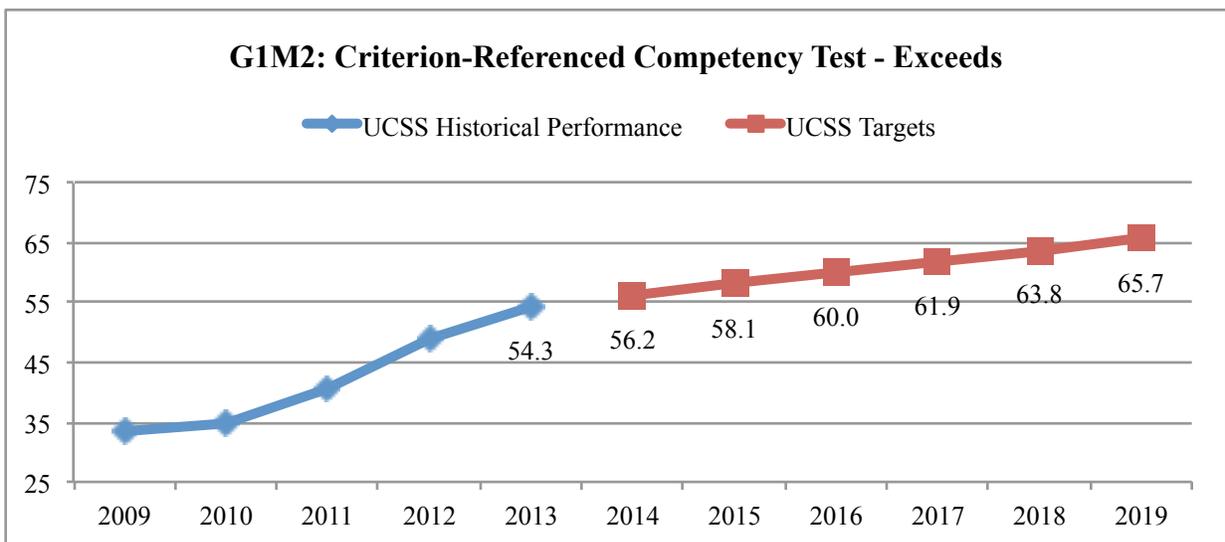
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score by 50% of the potential growth the charter term. For each annual growth and 2018-2019 target, the district projected targets based on the most current data and reasonable expectations. For measures including Exceeds targets, the rate of growth was 25% of the potential growth. Each goal and subsequent measure address the historical performance of Union County School System and the projected targets for the charter term. Although not included in the charter term, the 2013-2014 target is included.

Goal #1: Union County School System will perform above the level that would place it on a Priority, Focus, or Alert status. The district will also meet all targets, as defined by Georgia state requirements and the state’s waiver of No Child Left Behind, subject to any amendment, waiver or reauthorization thereof. Students will demonstrate proficiency and improvement over prior years’ performance.

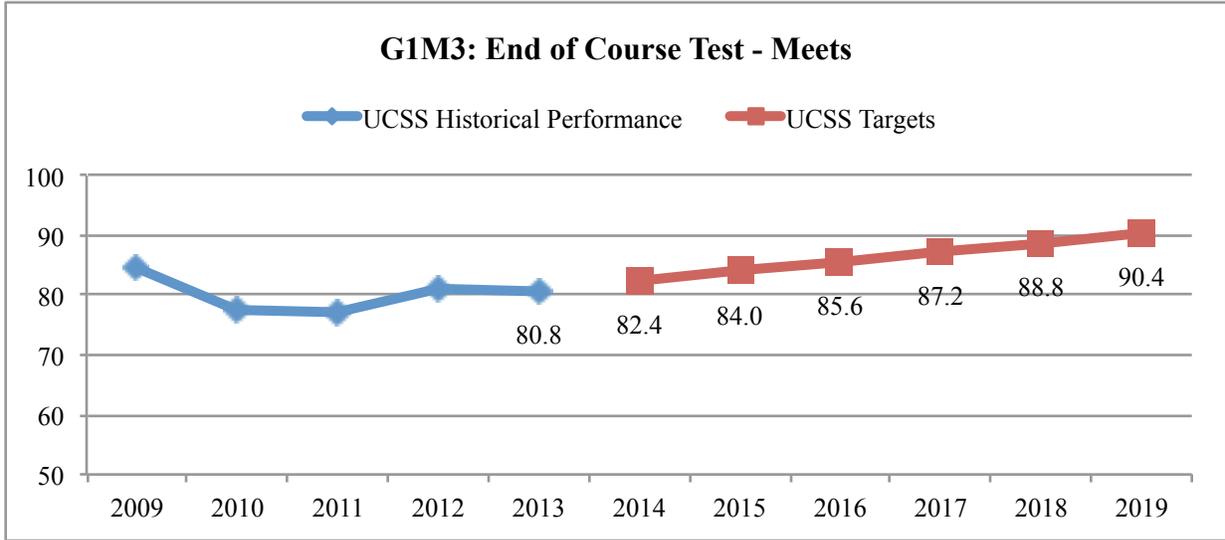
Measure #1: During each year of the term, the district will meet or exceed all State Performance Targets and all other statewide accountability requirements as established by the Department each year for all content areas of the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), the End of Course Test (EOCT) and the graduation rate.

Measure #2: During each year of the charter term, the percentage of students in the district scoring in the exceeds category on the CRCT in all grade levels and subject areas will increase by 1.90% annually for a target of 65.7% by the 2018-2019 school year.

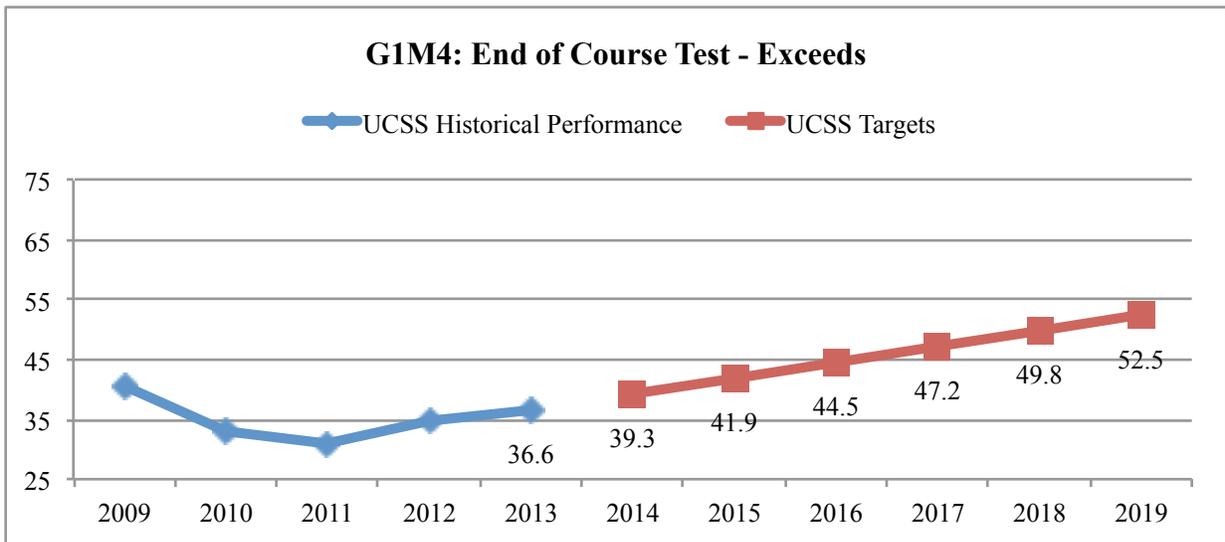


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Measure #3: During each year of the charter term, the percentage of students scoring in the meets or exceeds category on the End of Course Test (EOCT) will increase by 1.60% annually in all subjects in all grade levels for a target of 90.4% by the 2018-2019 school year.

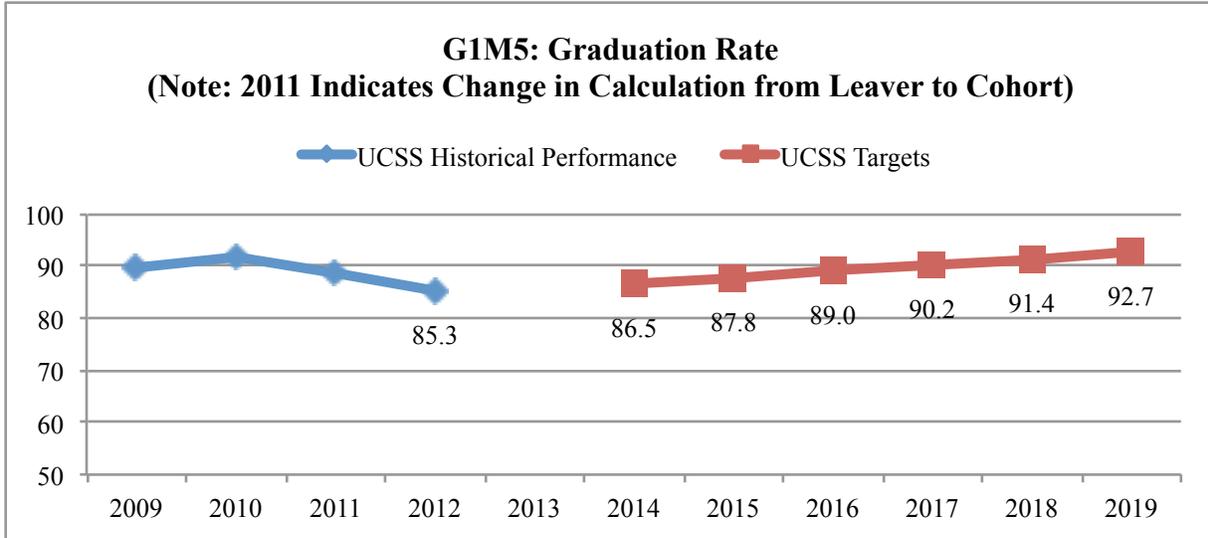


Measure #4: During each year of the charter term, the percentage of students scoring in the exceeds category in all subject areas on the EOCT will increase by 2.64% annually for a target of 52.5% by the 2018-2019 school year.



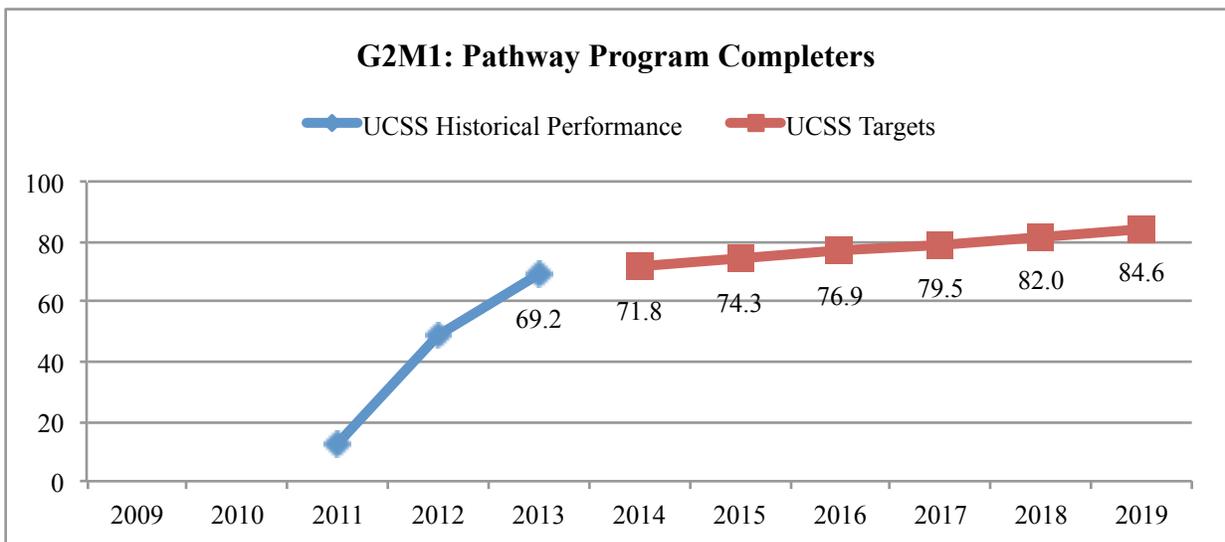
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Measure #5: The district has exceeded the state graduation averages and will continue to grow by 1.23% annually for a target of 92.7% by the 2018-2019 school year.



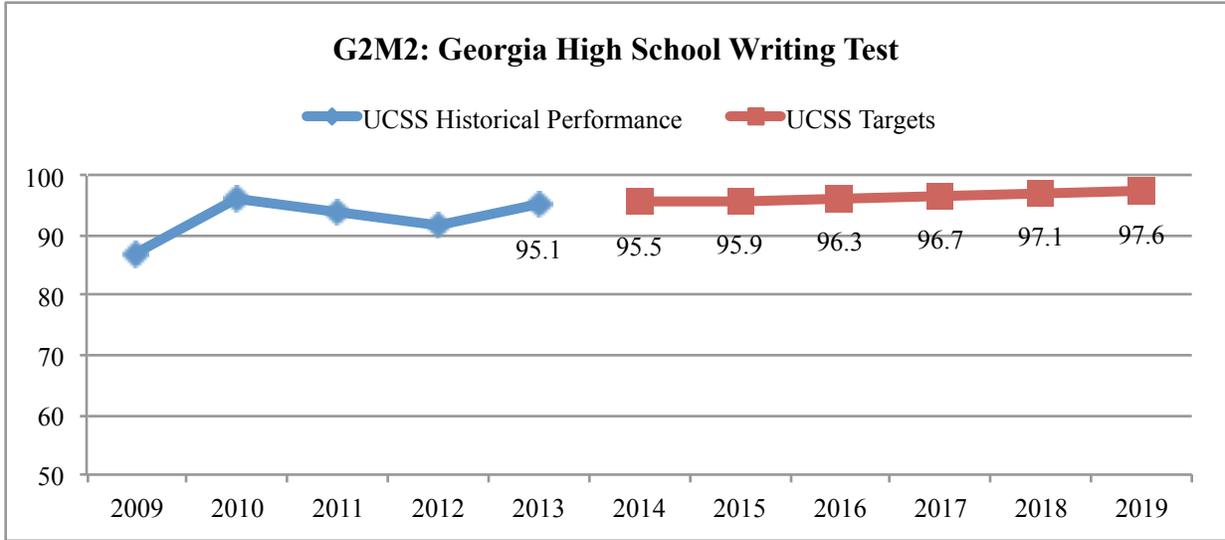
Goal #2: Union County School System will demonstrate post high school, high school and middle school readiness.

Measure #1: 84.6% of graduates will complete a pathway within their program of study by the 2018-2019 school year. Current data only reflects CTAE Pathway Completers.

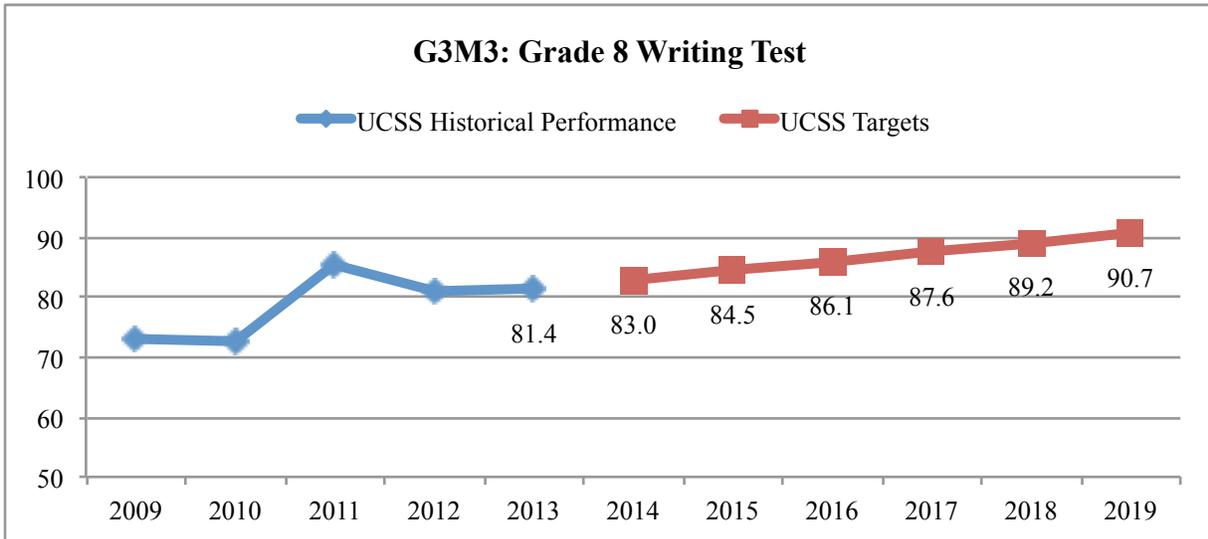


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Measure #2: 97.6% of graduates will score Meets or Exceeds on the Georgia High School Writing Test by the 2018-2019 school year.

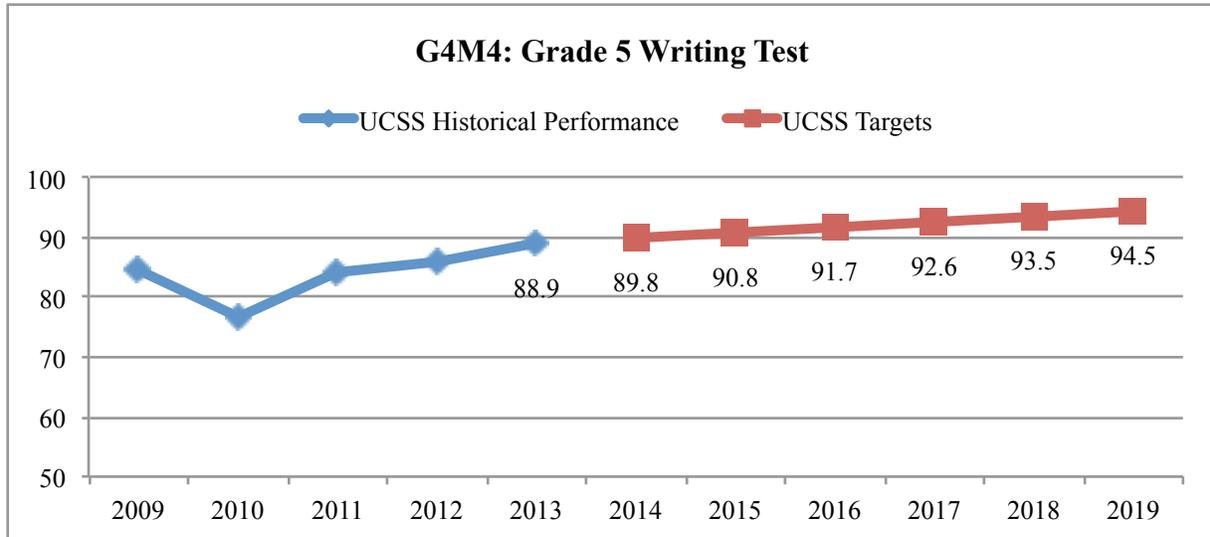


Measure #3: 90.7% of students will score Meets or Exceeds on the Grade Eight Writing Assessment by the 2018-2019 school year.



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Measure #4: 94.5% of students will score Meets or Exceeds on the Grade Five Writing Assessment by the 2018-2019 school year.



Goal #3: Union County School System will increase postsecondary opportunities and leadership development.

Measure #1: 100% of students in grades 3-12 will explore, apply, and/or evaluate STEM-based research with community partners by the end of the charter term. Community partners will include UGA Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center, Union General Hospital, Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, Corrugated Replacements, Inc., Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, USDA Forest Service, and Vogel State Park.

Measure #2: 50% of graduates will receive postsecondary credits through accelerated courses via ACCEL, Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement offerings, or Move on When Ready by the end of the charter term. The district will leverage partnerships with Young Harris College and North Georgia Technical College to develop pathway-specific sequences.

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Measure #3: 15% of students in grades K-5 will receive partial language immersion in content areas through Portuguese.

The presence of the five goals for Union County School System is a result of the historical data for each measure. The majority of the data indicates high achievement but inconsistent results. The proposed charter will allow the district to focus on raising the bar for each measure and remaining consistent within and across each school. At the end of the charter term, Union County School System envisions itself as the premier rural district in Georgia. While many districts may focus on certain areas, Union County School System has the foundation to accelerate learning and opportunities for students. Too much focus in the past lies on students meeting proficiency while little focus is placed on the large majority already proficient. The district will focus its attention on students from proficiency to exceeding. With support from the community to increase the horizons of students, the academic future for Union County is limitless.

3. What specific actions will your school system take to achieve your 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.*

The resulting College and Career Development Goals and the Leadership Objectives from the Strategic System Improvement Plan allow Union County School System to implement educational innovations specific to the needs of the district. Each educational innovation is aligned with one or more of the districts goals and measures indicated in Section 2. Below are the four major education innovations for Union County School System proposed in this charter:

1. Flexible Service Models
2. Integrated Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Partnerships
3. Global Engagement Initiative through Portuguese Language
4. Postsecondary Partnership Expansion

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Although other initiatives were developed through the strategic planning process, these four pillars will serve as the foundation for the charter petition

Flexible Service Models

Description: Union County School System will implement Flexible Service Models to serve students based on their individual needs rather than the state-identified label. While students will be identified for services, their status of EIP or EL will only be used for state funding and not separate services. Services for students will be integrated to best serve the needs of the students identified. For the district, waivers will include early intervention program, program for limited-English-proficient students, remedial education program, and gifted program.

Impact on Student Achievement: Flexible Service Models will allow Union County School System to serve students based on their predetermined need of service rather than a state-identified label. The primary use of this innovation will be to serve EL students in an EIP environment with a highly qualified teacher. Currently, small groups of EL students are pulled for services similar to EIP services, but the accounting for those services do not allow the district to serve similar needs. As a result, the student retention rate of material will increase the impact on student achievement. A service based on student needs will create a more streamlined approach while integrating current service models.

Goal/Measure Alignment: The proposed education innovation aligns with the following goals/measures:

G1M1: Exceed State Performance Targets (CRCT, EOCT & Graduation Rate)

G1M2: District CRCT Targets – Exceeds Rate

G1M3: District EOCT Targets – Proficiency Rate

G1M4: District EOCT Targets – Exceeds Rate

G1M5: District Graduate Rate Targets

G2M1: Pathway Program Completion Rate Targets

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Timeline: The district will begin implementation beginning in the 2014-2015 school year in high-risk areas and will expand services annually based on student needs.

Uniqueness: Union County School System serves approximately 2600 students. The need for Flexible Service Models greatly impacts the efficiency and effectiveness of personnel and fiscal management. For personnel, the district must follow EIP and EL service requirements. Current program models for EIP include Reduced Class Size and Pull Out. The number of students receiving services through Reduced Class Size remains fairly consistent in grades K-5, which is approximately two classrooms per grade. The district follows state guidelines on the number of EIP and Non-EIP students in each classroom. For maximum effectiveness, certain EIP students receive Pull Out services. All students in kindergarten are pulled out on a daily basis to receive direct EIP services. As each grade progresses, the number of students pulled for EIP services decreases. The district's philosophy is to intensely serve the early learners in the district to reduce the academic challenges in upper elementary and secondary grades. The district's uniqueness is the small number of EL students being served by the district. With an enrollment of no more than 25 (less than 1%) students receiving EL services annually, the district has been challenged to provide adequate services during difficult economic situations. The district proposes serving EL students in an EIP environment using the personnel waiver. Each EIP teacher serving EL students will complete the required EL endorsement through the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. The benefit to Union County School System for Flexible Service Models will be more effective and efficient use of personnel.

Integrated STEM Partnerships

Description: The Union County School System will offer a unique approach increase student exploration, application, and evaluation in STEM concepts utilizing a vertical approach in elementary, middle, and high school. The district will merge multiple STEM models by developing content

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knowledge, utilizing research mentors locally and regionally, and providing field research opportunities for students in a rural school district. Partnerships for the petition include UGA Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center, Union General Hospital, Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, Corrugated Replacements Inc., Hiawassee River Watershed Coalition, USDA Forest Service, and Vogel State Park. The partnerships developed will vary based on the need of each school and the level of involvement available. Elementary school students will explore STEM concepts through STEM curriculum and module completion during weekly-designated schedules. Middle school students will apply STEM concepts specific to the grade-level science. Each grade level will require groups of students to apply STEM research through data collection and analysis relative to student interest and alignment with research mentors. Additionally, course acceleration will begin in middle school. High school students will continue to receive course acceleration while evaluating STEM concepts through in-depth research with a research mentor. Students will be provided an opportunity to enter one of four Career Clusters: 1) Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources; 2) Energy; 3) Health Science; 4) Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics. The purpose of each cluster will be to collaborate on research with students, research scientists, and field observers. Every two years, students at the high school level will complete a research project. The purpose of the Integrated STEM Partnerships is to provide a foundation for elementary school students (Explore), extend learning opportunities for middle school students (Apply), and provide job-embedded research for high school students (Evaluate). Future expansion will include a Career Academy for STEM. For the district, waivers will include gifted program, policies and guidelines for awarding units of high school credit based on demonstrated proficiency, dual credit courses and requirements, certificated personnel, and “In loco parentis” status of aides and paraprofessionals.

Impact on Student Achievement: The Integrated STEM Partnerships will benefit students through applied learning opportunities by integrating standard curriculum, field-based research and interaction, and disciplinary literacy. Along with goals represented in the Striving Readers Comprehensive Grant that Union County School System is implementing, literacy efforts in cross-disciplinary subjects have

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increased in grades K-12. The integration of content and literacy in all subjects will positively impact student achievement by increasing academic rigor, enhancing self-management skills through research, and applying real-world scenarios. Literacy efforts integrated with the STEM partnerships will support the goals and measures in the petition.

Goal/Measure Alignment: The proposed education innovation aligns with the following goals/measures:

G1M2: District CRCT Targets – Exceeds Rate

G1M4: District EOCT Targets – Exceeds Rate

G2M1: Pathway Program Completion Rate Targets

G2M2: Georgia High School Writing Test Proficiency

G2M3: Grade 8 Writing Test Proficiency

G2M4: Grade 5 Writing Test Proficiency

G3M1: STEM-Based Integration with Community Partners

Timeline: The district will begin developing partnerships during the 2014-2015 school year at each school level. Implementation in accelerated and advanced courses will begin during the 2015-2016 school year to determined adjustment for full implementation. Full implementation will begin in the 2016-2017 school year.

Uniqueness: The Integrated STEM Partnerships will serve all students in grades 3-12. Due to the limited existence of rural STEM schools in Georgia serving grades 3-12, Union County School System will serve as a model for implementation and leveraging partnerships in rural areas. As school districts across Georgia increase options for students in STEM fields, resources in and around Union County are primed for leveraging. The amount of broadband capacity in the increased fiber optic expansion of the North Georgia Network to Union County has enabled opportunities for collaboration, resource attainment, and professional learning. Additionally, establishing partnerships with regional businesses that have

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experience in hiring and training personnel in STEM-related fields will enrich long-term opportunities for Union County students. Expertise in the community with non-businesses includes a growing retirement community, which is evidenced by the percent of school-age children in the county (12.1%) compared to the state (17.4%). Recent Census data also determined that 26.6% of the residents in Union County are 65 years and over compared to the state rate of 10.7%.

Postsecondary Partnerships

Description: Union County School System will expand postsecondary partnerships to include academic and vocational opportunities for all students based on the needs of the student population and the regional economic community. Partnerships with North Georgia Technical College and Young Harris College are not being utilized to their maximum potential. The charter petition will allow the district to implement postsecondary opportunities for all students. As referenced in Goal #3 - Measure #2, 50% of graduates will receive postsecondary credits through accelerated courses via ACCEL, Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement offerings, or Move on When Ready by the end of the charter term. To achieve the measure, Union County School System must develop a comprehensive approach to serving the community. Students will have the potential to receive academic credit in Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies while fulfilling their high school requirements. Credit in vocational areas will include machine tool technology, welding and healthcare science. Other areas deemed critical to the work force will be developed throughout the execution of the charter. For the district, waivers will include policies and guidelines for awarding units of high school credit based on demonstrated proficiency, dual credit courses and requirements, and certificated personnel.

Impact on Student Achievement: Expansion of Postsecondary Partnerships will cultivate a culture of continued education for every student in Union County School System. Of the obstacles facing many students upon graduating high school, preparation for academic success and workforce readiness are essential. Providing postsecondary opportunities to students while enrolled in high school bridges the gap

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between K-12 education and reality. For Union County to continue its influence on economic development and community engagement, students must be prepared to surpass old expectations and rise to the new expectations facing future generations. The increased postsecondary opportunities will positively impact student achievement and allow for acceleration of courses determined by student need rather than programmatic needs.

Goal/Measure Alignment: The proposed education innovation aligns with the following goals/measures:

G1M2: District CRCT Targets – Exceeds Rate

G1M4: District EOCT Targets – Exceeds Rate

G1M5: District Graduate Rate Targets

G2M1: Pathway Program Completion Rate Targets

G3M2: Postsecondary Credit Accrual through Regional Partnerships

Timeline: The district will begin implementation of increased postsecondary opportunities in the 2014-2015 school year. As course acceleration and credit accrual increases, postsecondary opportunities will be available to all 2017 graduates.

Uniqueness: Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains of north Georgia, Union County is fortunate to be able to leverage postsecondary partnerships to benefit students. Although considered rural, Union County's educational resources have the ability to increase postsecondary credit in a variety of ways. The Blairsville Campus of North Georgia Technical College is located 2 miles from Union County High School while the private Young Harris College is located 8 miles from Union County High School. Both campuses allow students to obtain postsecondary credit through Dual Enrollment in academics and/or vocational trades. The potential partnership between the district and the two postsecondary institutions will create an environment tailored to meet the needs of the students and local community. As the district

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continues to increase partnerships with local businesses, the pipeline of highly qualified workers begins in Union County School System.

Global Engagement through Portuguese Language

Description: Union County School System will implement the Portuguese Language in grades K-5 to expand the vision of global competition. The global engagement for students is related to other goals and measures in the charter petition, Integrated STEM Partnerships and Postsecondary Partnerships. As the first school district in Georgia to implement Portuguese, successful implementation is dependent upon quality partnerships and long-range sustainability. The district employs one native Brazilian who is certified to teach P-5 and Special Education; however, additional personnel are limited. The partnerships with UGA Portuguese Flagship Program and UNG Center for Global Engagement will increase visibility of the language program and will serve as a foundation for new teachers and classroom aides. For the district, waivers will include certificated professional personnel, “In loco parentis” status of aides and paraprofessionals, and program for limited-English-proficient students.

Impact on Student Achievement: The research about the benefits of language learning is well documented. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) summarized research and concluded that three major areas have been identified as it relates to language learners.

1. Increased academic achievement.
2. Increased cognitive abilities.
3. Increased awareness about other cultures.

All three areas add value to the education of Union County students by broadening experiences and increasing abilities.

Goal/Measure Alignment: The proposed education innovation aligns with the following goals/measures:

G3M3: Portuguese Language in Grades K-5

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Timeline: The district began the Portuguese Language for students in grades K-2 in the 2013-2014 school year with students receiving 45 minutes of daily instruction through the Portuguese Language. As growth of the program continues, current 2nd grade students will transition to Union County Elementary School with the language. Full implementation in grades K-5 will conclude in 2016-2017.

Uniqueness: When the district explored foreign language implementation for the future, the focus relied on global initiatives and critical language identification. Portuguese is the primary language of Brazil and is the 7th most spoken language in the world and the mostly widely used languages on the Internet after English. Brazil's rapidly expanding economy currently ranks 6th in the world. For students in Union County, the Portuguese Language offers a gateway to the economy, community, and education.

Economy: Union County has a rich history in agricultural sciences and research similar to Brazil, which is the world's leading exporter of iron, coffee, soy beans, orange juice, beef, chicken, sugar and ethanol. The current growth of the district's agriculture department will merge with the classroom academics to create a pipeline of hands-on research. The charter petition includes a comprehensive approach to postsecondary opportunities and leadership development (Goal #3, Measures #1-3).

Community: With a high demand in the community on language immersion, the school district began successful implementation at Union County Primary School with Portuguese. More than 150 students (25%) are enrolled in the current program. Community needs extend beyond the classroom walls where businesses are in need of Portuguese-speaking employees and services are provided to families in Brazil through outreach ministries.

Education: Opportunities for students in STEM-based fields align with some of Brazil's strengths, which include one of the world's largest petroleum reserves, a global reference in the production of biofuels, and a large manufacturer of automobiles and aircraft. In conjunction with the district's global initiative, potential partners include the University of Georgia Flagship

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Program, the University of North Georgia Center for Global Education, and the Georgia Department of Education initiatives.

The introduction of Portuguese to students will expand global initiatives while developing STEM fields and increasing real-world application through Career Clusters.

4. Which of the specific actions in your 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 list specific waivers needed to implement the educational innovations you have proposed.*

Union County School System anticipates utilizing a broad flexibility waiver if granted the charter petition. The waiver process for the district allows for a thorough examination of the specific district needs. As a result of the charter planning process, the specific innovations proposed will require a waiver at the state level to meet the academic goals and measures. Although not stated in the table below, the charter will appropriately use the Seat Time waiver to allow students to progress through courses at their respective pace to achieve the four different district innovations.

Innovation	Legal Waivers Requested	SBOE Provisions Requested
Flexible Service Models	O.C.G.A § 20-2-153. Early intervention program for students at risk of not reaching or maintaining academic grade level.	160-4-2-.17 Early Intervention Program (EIP).
	O.C.G.A § 20-2-156. Program for limited-English-proficient students.	160-4-5-.02 Language Assistance Program for English Learners (ELs).
	O.C.G.A § 20-2-154. Remedial education program.	160-4-5-.01 Remedial Education Program.
	O.C.G.A § 20-2-152; O.C.G.A § 20-2-161. Gifted Program.	160-4-2-.38 Education Program for Gifted Students.
Integrated STEM Partnerships	O.C.G.A § 20-2-152; O.C.G.A § 20-2-161. Gifted Program.	160-4-2-.38 Education Program for Gifted Students.
	O.C.G.A § 20-2-159.4. Policies and	160-4-2-.34 Dual Enrollment.

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	<p>guidelines for awarding units of high school credit based on demonstrated proficiency.</p> <p>O.C.G.A § 20-2-159.5. Dual credit courses; requirements.</p> <p>O.C.G.A § 20-2-200. Regulation of certificated professional personnel by Professional Standards Commission; rules and regulations; fees.</p> <p>O.C.G.A § 20-2-215. “In loco parentis” status of aides and paraprofessionals.</p>	<p>160-5-1-22 Personnel Required.</p>
<p>Postsecondary Partnerships</p>	<p>O.C.G.A § 20-2-159.4. Policies and guidelines for awarding units of high school credit based on demonstrated proficiency.</p> <p>O.C.G.A § 20-2-159.5. Dual credit courses; requirements.</p> <p>O.C.G.A § 20-2-200. Regulation of certificated professional personnel by Professional Standards Commission; rules and regulations; fees.</p>	<p>160-4-2-34 Dual Enrollment.</p> <p>160-4-3-14 Work-Based Learning Programs.</p> <p>160-4-2-38 Education Program for Gifted Students.</p> <p>160-5-1-22 Personnel Required.</p>
<p>Global Engagement through Portuguese Language</p>	<p>O.C.G.A § 20-2-200. Regulation of certificated professional personnel by Professional Standards Commission; rules and regulations; fees.</p> <p>O.C.G.A § 20-2-215. “In loco parentis” status of aides and paraprofessionals.</p> <p>O.C.G.A § 20-2-156. Program for limited-English-proficient students.</p>	<p>160-5-1-22 Personnel Required.</p> <p>160-4-5-02 Language Assistance. Program for English Learners (ELs).</p>

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GOVERNANCE

5. What is the system's plan to maximize school level governance?

During the Strategic System Improvement Planning Process, stakeholders from Union County supported the belief that “schools collaborate with parents and community to ensure a quality instructional program.” In reviewing the beliefs of the community, a gap existed between expected governance and actual governance. Support prior to the charter system application was passive and lacked the involvement required to increase accountability and build capacity. The proposed local governance structure will aim to increase the decision-making process at each school level while the Board of Education will abide by state and federal statutory and regulatory requirements. In an effort to create an environment of autonomy, a consistent vision with supporting mission and beliefs will be maintained at the district level through the Strategic System Improvement Plan.

- *Highlight the differences between the current local school governance structure and the new structure your new charter system will implement.*

The current local school governance structure resulted from the A+ Education Reform Act of 2000. The five schools in Union County follow the federal guidelines and subsequent Georgia General Assembly adjustments over the last decade. The implementation of school councils in Union County Schools was a result of state law (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86). The resulting law, adopted most recently in Policy BBFA in 2005, requires school councils to provide advice and recommendations to the school principal. Additionally, the law requires input from the school council when a principal vacancy occurs regarding characteristics and qualities appropriate for the new principal. There is currently limited involvement from school councils on the decision-making process. Decision-making authority is limited and the school council primarily serves as the representative to the school's stakeholders. Quarterly meetings are held in an effort to disseminate information that has become standard over the last decade where participation requirements are reflective of state guidance.

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The transition from School Councils to School Governance Teams will take place over the first two years of the charter. The School Governance Team will meet the School Governance Standards established by the Georgia Department of Education:

- Governing council composition reflects the diversity of the community
- Meets regularly and complies with Open Records and Open Meetings Laws
- Governing council sticks to governance and stays out of management
- Substantially autonomous from the local school district
- Receives regular updates on academic, operational, and financial progress of the school
- Participates in regular governing council training each year.

For elected members to serve on the School Governance Team, an orientation will be required. The orientation training will establish basic parameters and expectations of School Governance Team Members and must be completed prior to running for the School Governance Team. Once elected, a total of eight training sessions will be required of all members prior to effective implementation. Effective implementation will be accomplished through meeting the general responsibilities required of School Governance Teams in various management areas:

Management Area	School Governance Team
Budget	Approves annual budget for use of discretionary funds
Resource Allocation	Provides input on principal’s recommended resource needs
Personnel Decisions	Participates with district to develop the principal selection process
School Improvement Plan	Provides input on school’s goals
	Approves and monitors SIP performance
Curriculum	Reviews school performance data periodically
	Serves as a resource and supports school and teachers through volunteer efforts
School Operations	Provides guidance on possible school-based initiatives
	Recommends improvements to school operations as weaknesses arise

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- *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.*

The local School Governance Team for each school will operate independently of each other and the district. Each School Governance Team will consist of 7 voting members. To qualify for candidacy, each prospective elected member will receive a brief orientation of School Governance Teams and district initiatives. Once each prospective member has completed the orientation he/she is qualified to serve on a School Governance Team. The orientation process only applies to parents and teachers. School Governance Team representation will include parents (2), community members (2), teachers (2), school employee (1), and students, where applicable. The principal at each school serves on the council but does not participate in voting. In cases where students are involved on the School Governance Team, they will not participate in voting. Only voting members will be allowed to serve as officers on the School Governance Team. The officer positions will include a chair and vice-chair. For each school in Union County School System, respective participation is included in the table below.

	Parents	Community Members	Teachers	School Employees	Students
UCPS	2	2	2	1	0
UCES	2	2	2	1	0
UCMS	2	2	2	1	1
UCHS	2	2	2	1	2
WGS	2	2	2	1	2 (1 MS, 1 HS)
<i>Voting Rights</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>

Service on the School Governance Team varies based on the representation.

- Parents: Selected by other parents at school level.
- Community Members: Nominated by the principal and approved by the remaining School Governance Team Members.
- Teachers: Selected by other teachers at school level.
- School Employee: Appointed by the principal.
- Students: Appointed by the principal.

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The 2014-2015 school year will begin the charter term. All members will begin service on the School Governance Team with a one-year hold harmless in order to allow for training and effective implementation. After the hold-harmless year, half of the members will serve a one-year term while the remaining half will serve two-year terms. Once the first cycle of terms are served, all terms will rotate on a two-year cycle. If a School Governance Team member serves on more than one term, initial election/selection guidelines apply. No voting member may serve more than 3 consecutive terms. The resulting School Governance Teams will serve as the supervisory body of each school.

Consistent with the majority of elected positions and governing boards, issues may arise where individual termination or whole board termination is necessary. In the case of individual removals, issues involving conflict of interest, non-qualifying status such as child no longer student or business relocates, or code of ethics violation will require immediate suspension and possible removal. A portion, or the entire School Governance Team, may be suspended or removed if the local superintendent and the local Board of Education receive evidence of ethical violations or if major conflicts arise.

- *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.*

Management Area	Principal	School Governance Team	Central Office Staff	Board of Education
Budget	Recommends annual budget for use of discretionary funds	Approves annual budget for use of discretionary funds	Assists schools in maximizing QBE funding for discretionary use Incorporates school budgets into system budget	Accountable to citizens for local tax digest Approves annual budget for school system
Resource Allocation	Recommends resource needs (human, technological, etc.)	Provides input on principal's recommended resource needs	Identifies district resource needs and allocations to each school	Approves expenditures of resource external to QBE funds such as

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				local and SPLOST
Personnel Decisions	Recommends school staffing needs, identifies potential candidates Evaluates and recommends personnel action	Participates with district to develop the principal selection process	Recruits, screens and identifies personnel for employment Annual reviews performance	Employs and evaluates the superintendent Approves superintendent recommendations
School Improvement Plan	Collects data, develops, and recommends School Improvement Plan	Provides input on school's goals Approves and monitors SIP performance	Analyze school goals to incorporate with district plan Evaluates school performance	Receive periodic updates on school progress toward goals Holds superintendent accountable for ensuring performance
Curriculum	Ensures effective instruction and assessment of curriculum Reviews student performance data	Reviews school performance data periodically Serves as a resource and supports school and teachers through volunteer efforts	Oversees vertical implementation of curriculum and identifies gaps in school transitions Monitors performance of teachers and administrators	Approves purchases to support curriculum Monitors district performance on initiatives and state assessments
School Operations	Creates challenging academic environment, safe learning environment and positive school culture	Provides guidance on possible school-based initiatives Recommends improvements to school operations as weaknesses arise	Assesses manageability of proposed initiatives prior to recommendation Supports school administration with operations as needed	Provides resources relevant to need of individual schools Establishes policies that support school autonomy

- *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*

Effective operation of the School Governance Team depends on the quality training provided and adequate implementation time. Union County School System will provide a comprehensive set of

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training modules to School Governance Team Members during the first two year of the charter term. Five training sessions will be conducted during the first year while three training sessions will be conducted during the first half of the second year. For each respective training session, initial training will be followed by initial implementation then full implementation. The eight training sessions and topics covered will be required for all School Governance Team Members:

1. *Roles and Responsibilities* – scope of roles and responsibilities for board members including code of conduct and bylaws.
2. *Effective Meetings* – accountability under Open Meetings and Records and parliamentary procedures
3. *School Funding and Budget* – education funding with local, state and federal funds; budget development and implementation.
4. *School Improvement Planning* – alignment to Strategic System Improvement Plan, CCRPI and school improvement planning
5. *Curriculum, Assessment & Instruction* – educational initiatives, curriculum expectations, assessment programs and instructional models
6. *School Operations* – safety and security procedures, principal management of school and student/school support services
7. *Human Resources and Resource Allocation* – resource overview including technology, personnel earnings with state funds, employment/termination process, Teacher Keys Evaluation System and professional learning
8. *Community Engagement* – parent engagement strategies, activities and federal compliance.

The legend and table below indicate the training sessions and monthly timeline for initial training. Subsequent years will require new members to obtain the training credentials for effective school governance.

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Legend	No Training	Training	Initial Implementation	Full Implementation
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Training Component	Year 1 2014- 2015	Year 2 2015- 2016	Year 3 2016- 2017	Year 4 2017- 2018	Year 5 2018- 2019
Roles and Responsibilities	Nov.				
Effective Meetings	Dec.				
School Funding & Budget	Jan.				
School Improvement Planning	Feb.				
Curriculum, Assessment & Instruction	Mar.				
School Operations		Sept.			
Human Resources and Resource Allocation		Oct.			
Community Engagement		Nov.			

FUNDING

6. If funds are appropriated for the QBE weight for charter systems, for what purposes would you use the additional funds you would earn as a charter system?

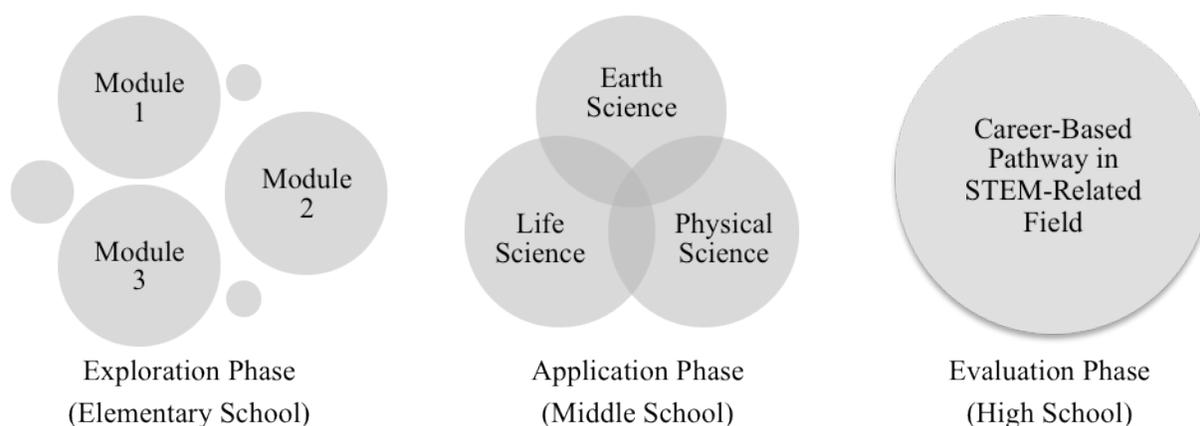
- *A school system's decision to become a charter system should not be based on the expectation of additional funding, since the funding is not guaranteed.*
- *There are no limitations or requirements on the use of such funds.*

With the presence of charter status and possible funds available for Union County School System, the district would appropriate funds to support Goal #5, Measure #2: 100% of students in grades 3-12 will explore, apply, and/or evaluate STEM-based research with community partners by the end of the charter term. Community partners will include UGA Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center, Union General Hospital, Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, Corrugated Replacements, Inc., Hiawassee River Watershed Coalition, USDA Forest Service, and Vogel State Park. Union County School System would structure and implement a school-within-a-school model to support STEM-based initiatives. The resulting Center for Advanced Academics and Innovation would operate under the mission of “STEMulate Community.” The district will provide applied learning opportunities to students while

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leveraging local, regional, and state partnerships. The district will merge multiple STEM models by developing teaching content knowledge, introducing research mentors locally and regionally, and providing field research opportunities for students in a rural school district. The structural concept and implementation schedule described below represent an exceptional approach to serve students in Union County by providing connected, vertical phases dedicated to STEM: Exploration, Application, and Evaluation.

Three vertical phases provide the structure needed to develop positive student outcomes that are focused on demonstrating experience through applied learning while embedding higher order thinking skills. The graphic below depicts the three phases organizing the Union County STEM: Exploration Phase, Application Phase and Evaluation Phase.



At Union County Elementary School, the Exploration Phase will designate STEM enrichment time for project-based learning where students will build a comprehensive portfolio based on the STEM projects completed. The Exploration Phase will use supplemental materials that will include Engineering is Elementary curriculum series, site-based learning, and technology integration through robotics and additional engineering modules. Each module developed at the elementary level will integrate STEM processes to solve real-world problems. Throughout each school year, students will develop electronic portfolios displaying their work products. The modules completed at the elementary level will include a

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rubric, allowing students and teachers to monitor the quality of the work, provide effective feedback, and increase two-way communication. The purpose of the Exploration Phase is to build a STEM foundation by providing a range of student experiences in various STEM fields enhancing interest in STEM-related Career Clusters.

At Union County Middle School, the Application Phase will integrate planning between math and science teachers to develop cross-curricular units. Building on the Exploration Phase that exposed students to various experiences, the Application Phase will align with the disciplinary literacy embedded in Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) and the Next Generation Science Standards by providing research opportunities to science courses at 6th grade (Earth Science), 7th grade (Life Science), and 8th grade (Physical Science). At each grade level, individual students or groups of students will partner with a mentor from a career field related to the grade level science. The mentor relationship established at each grade level will provide students a summative opportunity to apply knowledge and real-world problem solving in an area specific to the grade level science. As students progress through the sciences in middle school, select students will participate in various state and national competitions designed for students to showcase their experiences in STEM-related research. At each grade level, students will submit a portfolio of the research completed and present to numerous audiences. The purpose of the Application Phase is to focus students' experiences in specific career fields of STEM, integrating academic knowledge and experiences with disciplined soft skill development. As a necessary course sequence adaptation, the middle school will continue offering Carnegie credits in math and science at 8th grade. The opportunity for course acceleration will increase STEM-related paths at the high school level.

At Union County High School, the Evaluation Phase will provide students the opportunity to apply and participate in one of four Career Clusters: 1) Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources; 2) Energy; 3) Health Science; 4) Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics. Based on the course acceleration offered in 8th grade, participating students will receive rigorous instruction and acceleration of courses designed to provide opportunities for collaboration, extensive student research, and analysis.

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Building on the structure of field-based research, students in the Center will complete a research project based on their individual interests while partnering with a professional in the field. Partnerships in the proposal are primarily to serve as research mentors where an in-depth research will be completed every two years. The field research completed by the students will be an end-to-end research project designed to provide real-world exploration, application, and evaluation of an issue. Students within the Center for Advanced Academics and Innovation at the high school level will compete at the state and national levels in field-specific competitions, complete and present their research to partners and research organizations, and serve as an advocate for the Center for Advanced Academics and Innovation.

If funds are available for being a charter system, Union County School System envisions a STEM-based Career Academy for advanced academics and the resulting equipment, supplies, and instruction needed to implement the Academy.