



Charter System Application

DISTRICT NAME

Banks County School System

DISTRICT ADDRESS

102 Highway 51 South
Post Office Box 248
Homer, Georgia 30547

Dr. John D. Barge
State School Superintendent

DECEMBER 2011

Introduction

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

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

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

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

DEADLINE AND SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

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

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

APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST

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

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

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

CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION COVER SHEET

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

Proposed Charter System Information			
1. Full Name of Proposed Charter System: Banks County School System			
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? 4		
4. How many of each of the following schools are you proposing to include in your charter system? <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> Primary School(s) 1 Middle School(s) 1 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> Elementary School(s) 1 High school(s) 1 </div>			
5. On July 1 of what year do you want your charter contract to be effective? 2012			
6. How many years are you proposing for the term of your charter contract? (Note that an initial charter cannot exceed five years) 5			
7. Charter System Street Address 102 Highway 51 South	8. City Homer	9. State Georgia	10. Zip 30547
11. Contact Person Christopher B. Erwin Ann Hopkins		12. Title Superintendent Director of Federal Programs	
13. Contact Street Address 102 Highway 51 South	14. City Homer	15. State Georgia	16. Zip 30547
17. Contact's telephone number 706.677.2224	18. Contact's fax number 706.677.2223	19. Contact's E-mail Address cerwin@banks.k12.ga.us ahopkins@banks.k12.ga.us	

CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION

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

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

THE CASE

Why do you want a charter?

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

The Banks County School System’s motivation for applying to be a charter system is driven by both community and school leadership as the district works toward providing the future work force that is needed for the 21st century. The Banks County community petitions for Charter System status for Banks County Schools to provide the school system with the flexibility to best meet the needs of the students and to further the mission of the school system and serve the community. Becoming a charter system is necessary to support the community and district’s priorities and long-term goals.

As the Banks County School System (BCSS) seeks to lead the state in student achievement, the system must be able to address and support current and future needs and expectations. The flexibility that the charter system status provides will allow the school system to be a true partner in providing a 21st Century workforce for Banks County and play a major role in creating a community that will remain

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strong and viable even in the midst of economic difficulties. This school system seeks to provide a challenging academic curriculum that prepares every student for a productive life. In partnership with parents and the greater community, the system aspires to foster in every student a desire for lifelong learning, a commitment to personal fitness, an appreciation of the arts, a deep-rooted understanding of right and wrong, and a desire to participate responsibly in a free and democratic society. The small community atmosphere is one of the strengths of the school system. The faculty and staff provide a caring, nurturing, challenging, and supportive environment. The students in Banks County classrooms must be able to be successful in life and be contributing members in a global society. It is incumbent upon us to prepare our children to reach their full potential. It is clear that we cannot continue to hold to the tenets of the past relative to the structure, organization, and methodology of schools and school systems. We must approach education of the millennial youth through academic and organizational innovation.

The system initially sought to become a charter system in the Fall of 2010. The petition was denied citing the need for more community input and program innovation. Since that time, the school system staff has informally met with teachers, community members, and parents to determine the direction of the revised application. The delay in redrafting the application has been due to the fact that system personnel wanted to ensure that the new, completed application detailed a thoughtful, comprehensive, innovative plan based on community input.

As the school system continues to place an emphasis on changing the culture of education and creating a climate of excellence, parental involvement and community input is continually invited. The course of becoming a charter system has provided system and school leaders with valuable insight from the community regarding their feelings, beliefs, and ideas about education and the state of the local school system. The process has opened some communication avenues between the school and the community. The newly designed governance structure will allow the school system to capitalize on this communication and these insights.

When meeting with groups regarding the state of the school system and the future course of academics, two particular themes continued to materialize including advancing the technology

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infrastructure, hardware and software in our schools and implementing a foreign language program system-wide. While neither of these suggestions requires waivers or charter system status to implement, we have attended to these ideas and included them in the charter system application. After much consideration and many critical conversations with community members, staff, parents, and students, the following plan emerged. While many of the details have yet to be completely designed regarding all of the nuances of the application, the vast idea is accounted for within the subsequent pages of the application.

BCSS will utilize the broad flexibility from law, rule, and regulation permitted by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(a), Waiver of provisions of this title; requirements for operating; control and management. BCSS proposes utilizing flexibility as a means of better meeting the needs of individual students which will result in exceeding the state performance goals and community expectations: Initially, the school system will utilize the outlined waivers including: class-size waiver (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-161(b), SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.08, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-182(i)); seat time waiver (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.4, SBOE Rule), school year requirement waiver (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-151, 20-2-160, 20-2-161.1, 20-2-165, 20-2-168, 20-2-168(c), 20-2-240, SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.02); course development waiver (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-161.3, SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.03); certification waiver 505-2.40, EIP identification and placement waiver (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-153, SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.17); and REP identification and placement waiver (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-154, SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.01).

As a charter system, Banks County will be able to take a more aggressive approach to remediation and acceleration. Teachers will be able to participate in a more job-embedded professional development program based on real time with real time solutions to instructional challenges. Students entering the high school will be targeted immediately in 9th grade before a failure track is established. Smaller, more targeted instructional environments will allow teachers the opportunity to intervene and provide support or acceleration. Non-traditional teachers will have the opportunity to instruct students in areas of expertise not typically found in Banks County Schools. The combination of the system leadership team and school governance teams will help ensure that schools are maintaining accountability

to not only to the school and state standards but the community standards as these groups are engaged in decision making opportunities and program oversight.

ACADEMIC OBJECTIVES, PLANS, AND WAIVERS

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

System student performance objectives should:

- *Show the system's student performance during the past five years*
- *Reflect where the system envisions itself academically at the end of the proposed charter term*
- *Indicate the expected rate of student performance growth in each year of the proposed charter term*
- *Exceed the rate of growth mandated by the State*
- *Demonstrate compliance with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and State Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) and their successors.*
- *You are welcome – but not required – to include all or some of the components of the current draft of the Georgia Department of Education's College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI).*
- *You are urged to include cohort measures that show the progress over time of a single cohort of students.*
- *You are also urged to include national norm-referenced test results among your performance measures.*
- *Be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based (SMART).*
- *Present graphs that show the past five years performance with the system student performance objectives for the each year of the proposed charter term plotted out to demonstrate graphically what the charter system is striving to achieve with its new innovations (see example below).*
- *Please feel free to present any additional graphs you desire to show a more nuanced picture of your charter system's academic goals and targets.*

Banks County Schools will utilize its Balanced Scoreboard and SMART goals as a means of monitoring and report academic progress, stakeholder engagement, instructional and administrative processes, and team learning and growth. The achievement goals will comply with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and State Annual Measureable Objectives (AMOs). Organizational and financial goals

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are presented in their respective sections of the application. The Balanced Scoreboard can be viewed at the system web site www.banks.k12.ga.us.

While drafting this application, Banks County Schools awaits direction regarding determining factors for AYP for future years. As advised, Banks County Schools will rely upon 2010-2011 standardized test data as baseline for the purposes of this application. Once the 2011-2012 standardized test scores are released as official and all College and Career Readiness Performance Index indicators are aligned with these scores, benchmarks will be established and designated for the resolution of the charter application.

Banks County Schools is proud of the achievement level of the students and recognizes, while there is always room for improvement, these scores are high and; therefore, there it is not applicable to predict great gains in some areas. Specifically, 95% of students in grades 3-8 in reading and language arts are meeting or exceeding expectations. Due to the high rate of success in these areas, we seek to maintain performance level during the years of the charter status. Yet, student CRCT performance in math in grades 3-8 is at 92% meeting and exceeding expectations; therefore, we anticipate additional growth in this subject area. The system is not naive to the lowest level achievers. While there are adequate interventions currently in place to meet the needs of these students, the system is unable to utilize some resources and opportunities for learning as a result of many of the state rules limiting the system's flexibility. The broad flexibility the charter status will afford the system will assist in meeting the needs of these lowest achieving students. For example, waiving EIP and REP identification and placement rules will allow the system focus on student need to dictate instructional, scheduling, and staffing decisions rather than having to adhere to strict guidelines and labels for these lower achieving students. In addition to ensuring that students meet the required standards, the system seeks to increase the percentage of students exceeding standards. The flexibility of the charter system status will satisfy the escalated accountability. Below are the SMART goals which will provide the foundation for the charter system term.

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Student Performance Goal 1: The percentage of 3rd – 8th grade students meeting or exceeding state standards of each subject area of the CRCT (Reading, ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies) will be 95% or better by the 2016-2017 school year.

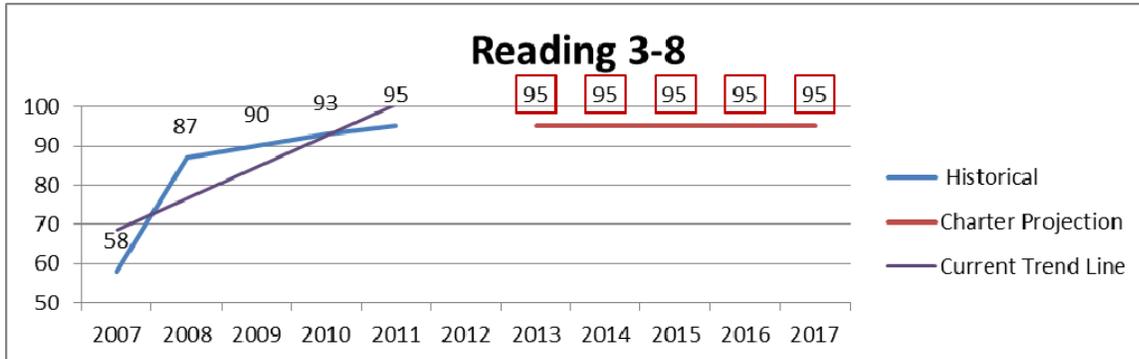


Chart 1 Reading Grades 3-8 Meets/Exceeds

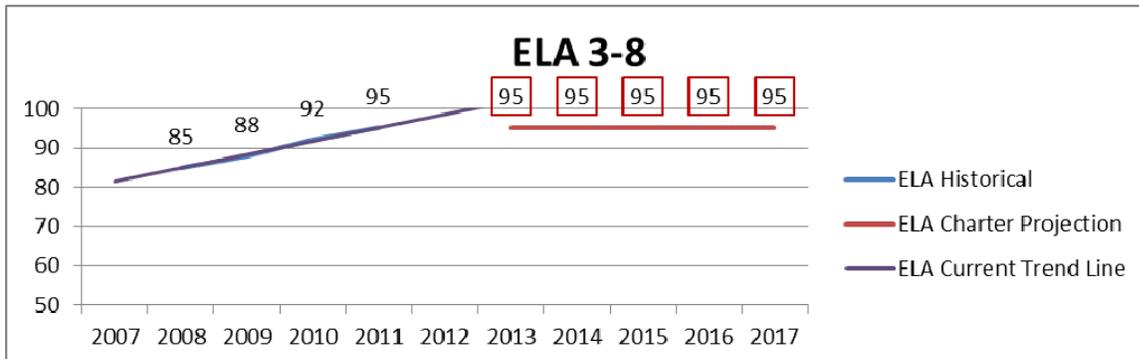


Chart 2 ELA Grades 3-8 Meets/Exceeds

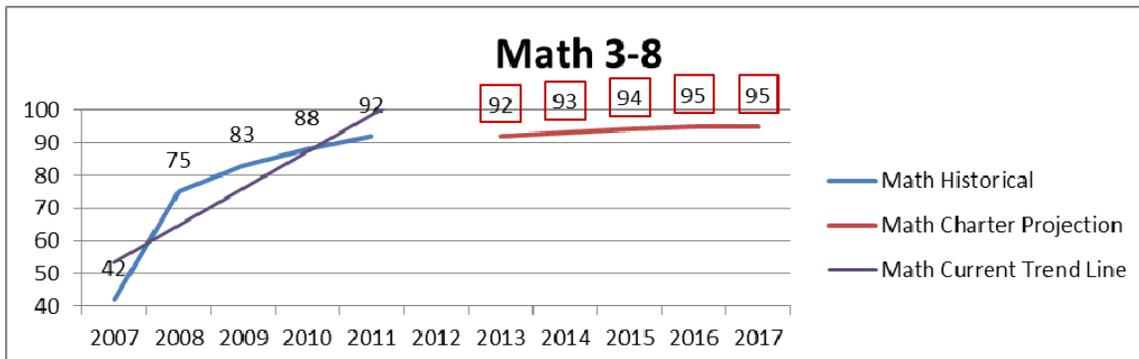


Chart 3 Math Grades 3-8 Meets/Exceeds

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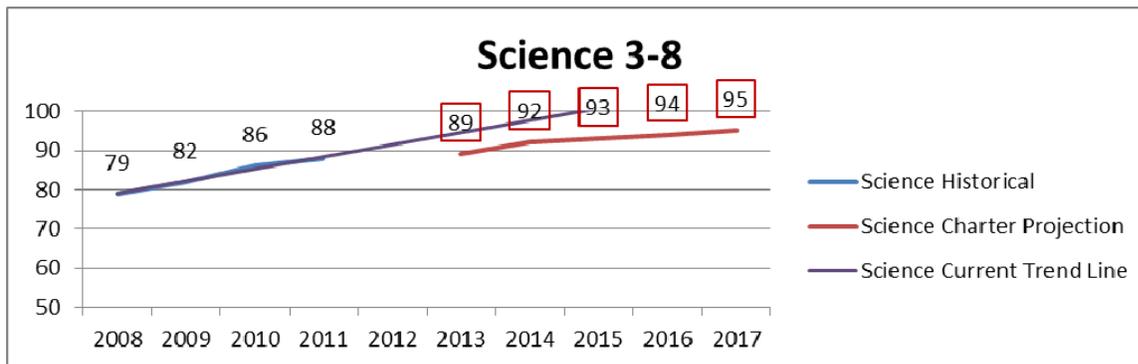


Chart 4 Science Grades 3-8 Meets/Exceeds

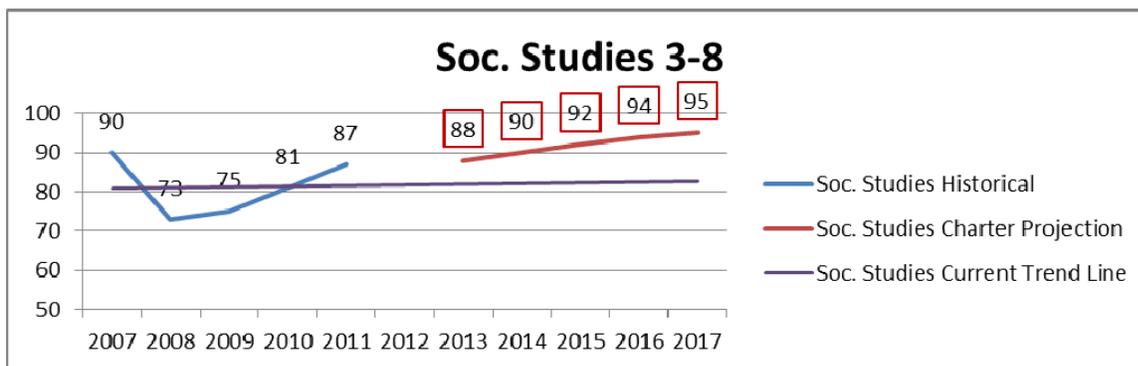


Chart 5 Social Studies Grades 3-8 Meets/Exceeds

Student Performance Goal 2: Achievement among the lowest 25% of elementary and middle school students will improve by 5% or higher in the areas of reading, English language arts, and mathematics by the 2016-2017 school year.

Student Performance Goal 3: The percentage of 3rd-8th grade students exceeding state standards of each subject area of the CRCT (Reading, ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies) will be 45% or better by the 2016-2017 school year.

Student Performance Goal 4: The percentage of high school students meeting or exceeding state standards of each EOCT (9th Lit, Am. Lit, Math I, Math II, Physical Science, Biology, US History, Econ) will be 85% or better by the 2016-2017 school year.

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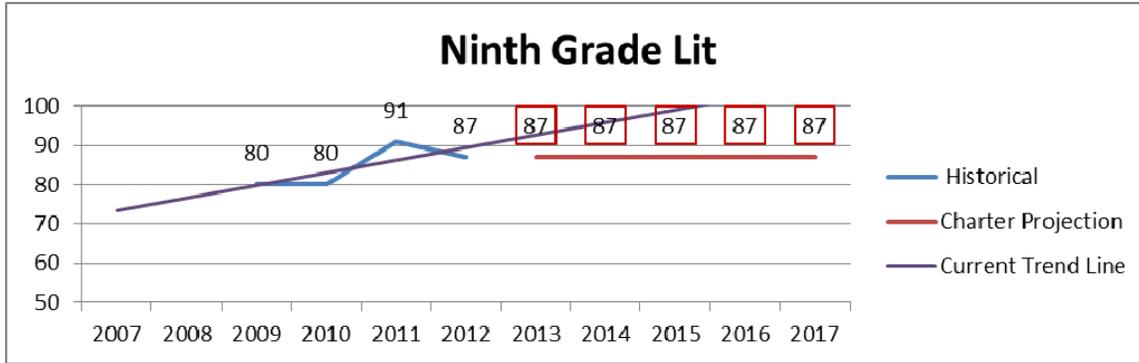


Chart 6 Ninth Grade Lit EOCT Meets/Exceeds

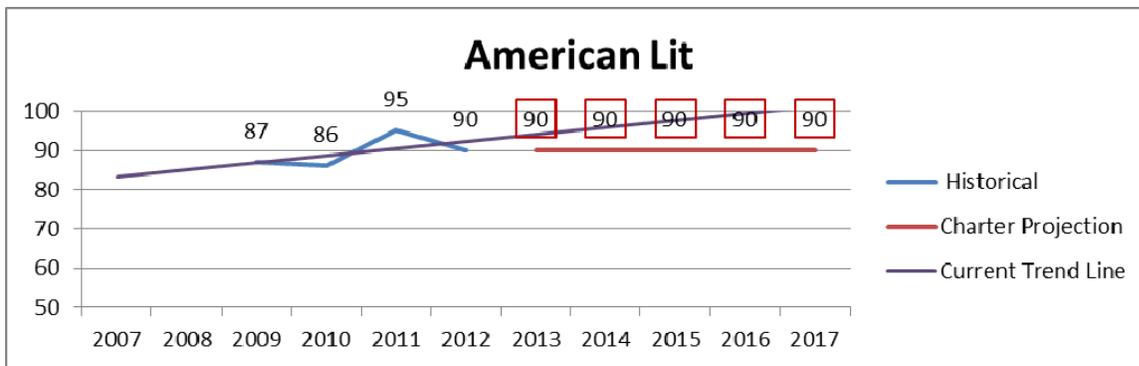


Chart 7 American Lit EOCT Meets/Exceeds

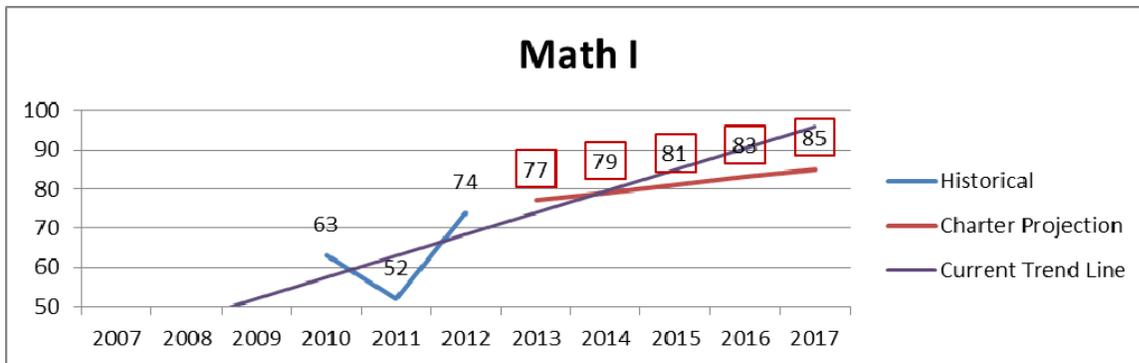


Chart 8 Math I EOCT Meets/Exceeds

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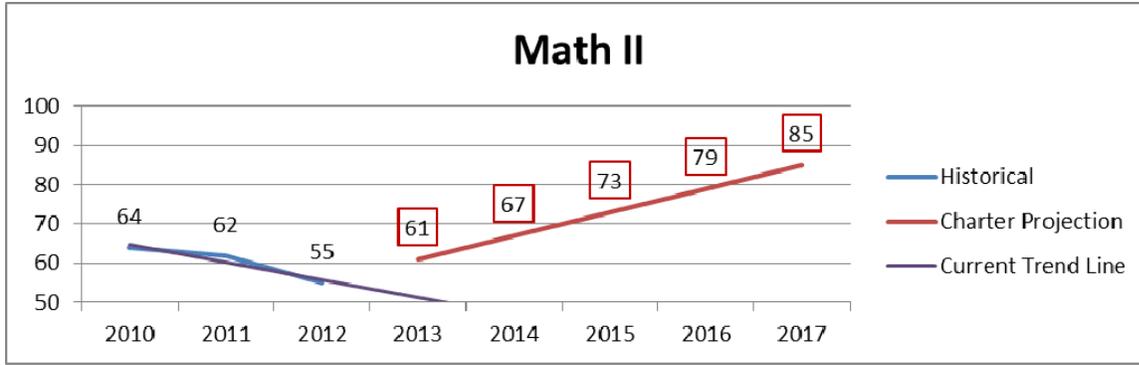


Chart 9 Math II EOCT Meets/Exceeds

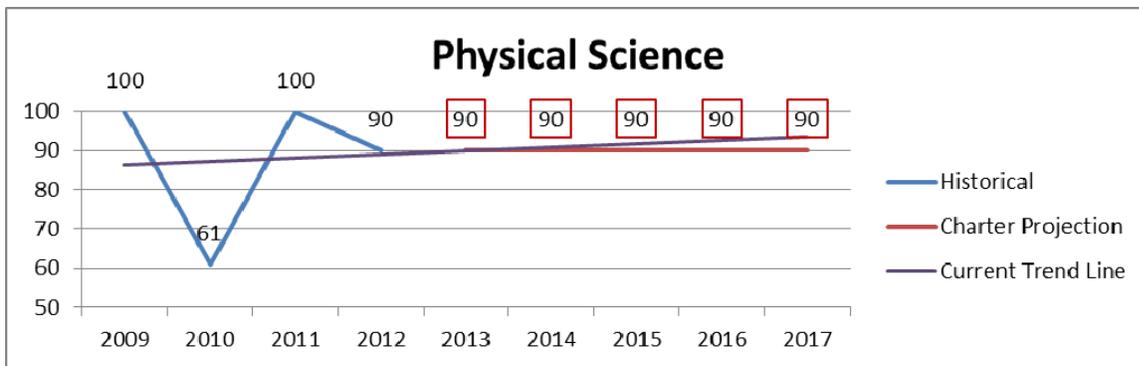


Chart 10 Physical Science EOCT II Meets/Exceeds

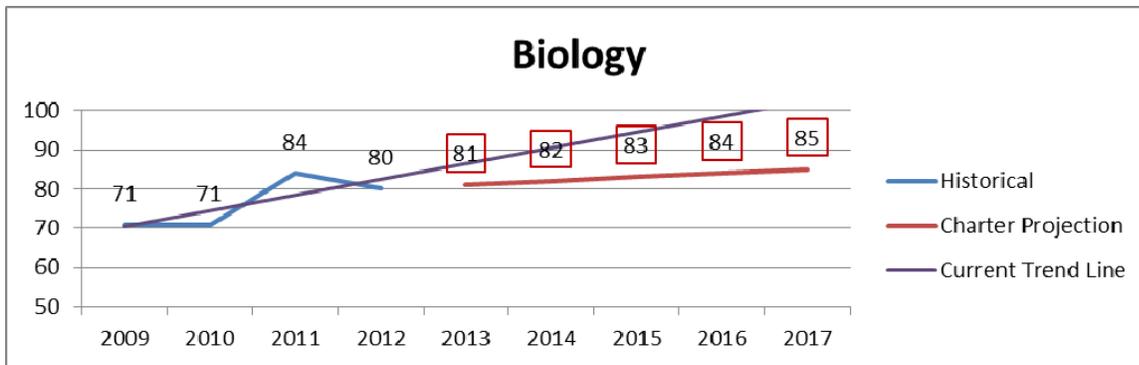
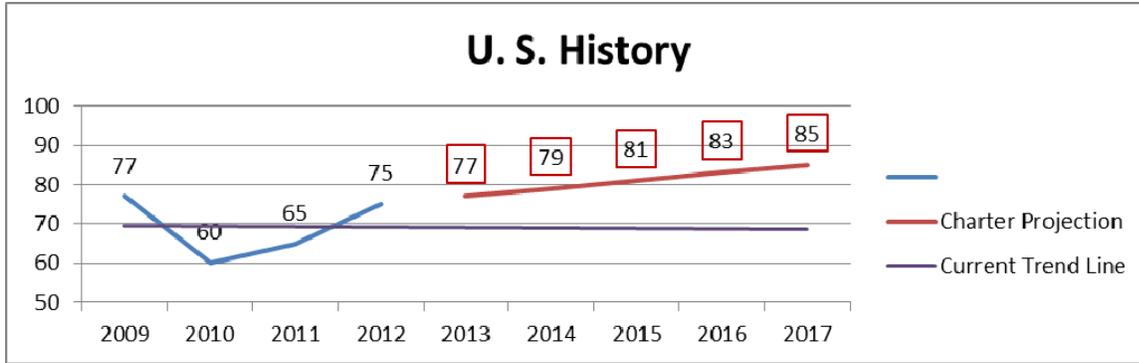


Chart 11 Biology EOCT Meets/Exceeds

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Charts 12 U. S. History EOCT Meets/Exceeds

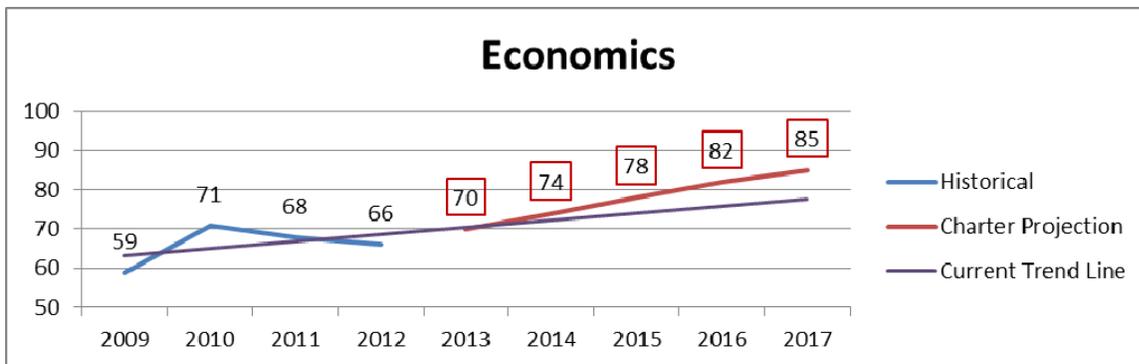


Chart 13 Economics EOCT Meets/Exceeds

Student Performance Goal 5: The percentage of high school students exceeding state standards on each EOCT (9th Lit, Am. Lit, Math I, Math II, Physical Science, Biology, US History, Econ) will be 38% or better by the 2016-2017 school year.

Student Performance Goal 6: Achievement among the lowest 25% of high school students who are not meeting state standards will decrease to 15% or lower in the areas of English language arts and mathematics by the 2016-2017 school year.

Student Performance Goal 7: The percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards on the 5th grade, 8th grade and 11th grade Writing Tests will be 95% or better by the 2016-2017 school year.

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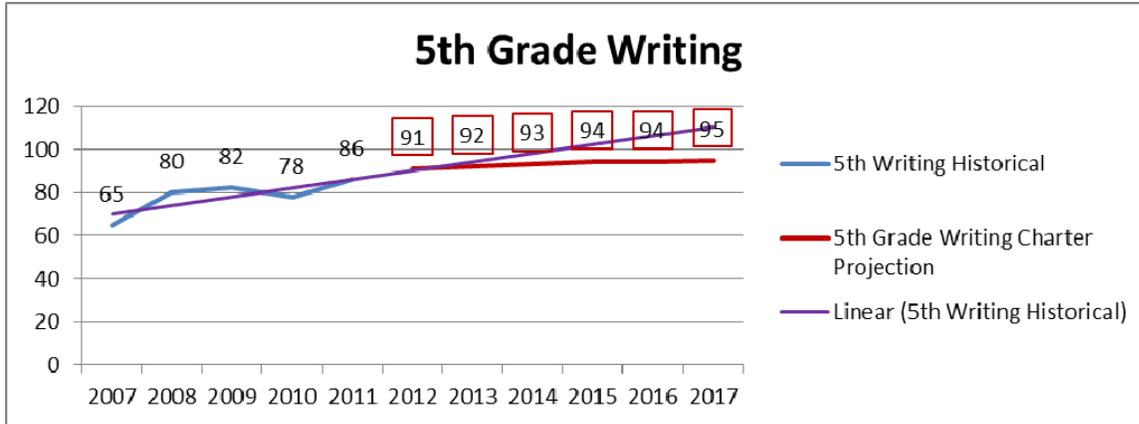


Chart 14 5th Grade Writing Meets/Exceeds

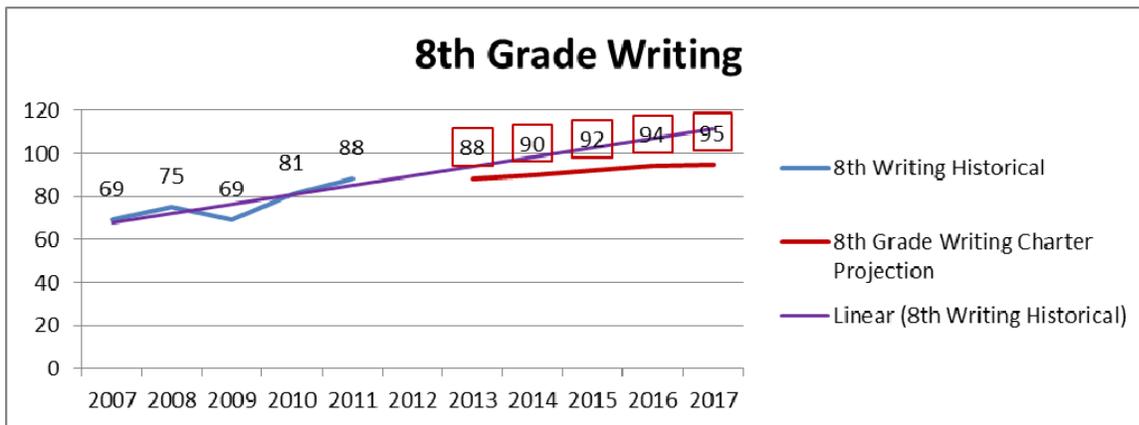


Chart 15 8th Grade Writing Meets/Exceeds

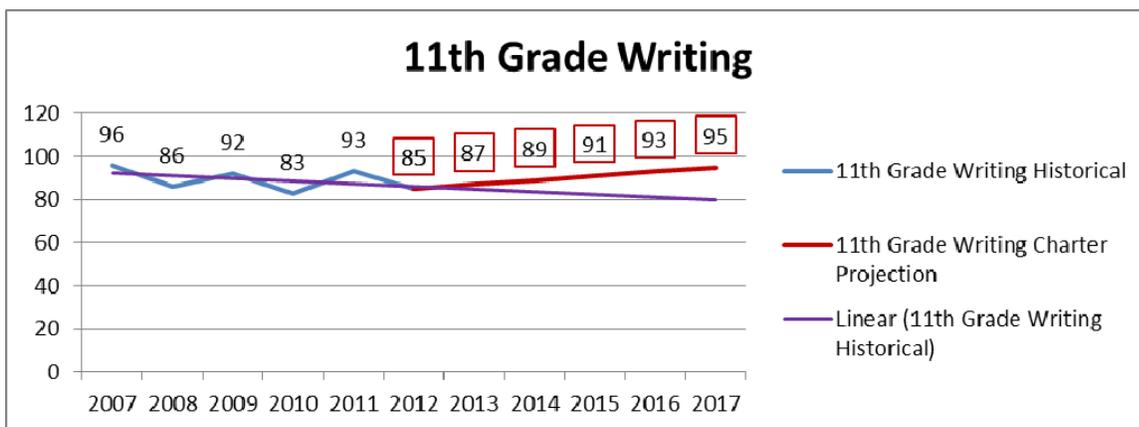


Chart 16 GHSWT Meets/Exceeds

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Student Performance Goal 8: The percentage of students exceeding standards on the 5th grade, 8th grade and 11th grade Writing Tests will be 30% or better by the 2016-2017 school year.

Student Performance Goal 9: The Banks County graduation rate will be 95% or better in 2017.

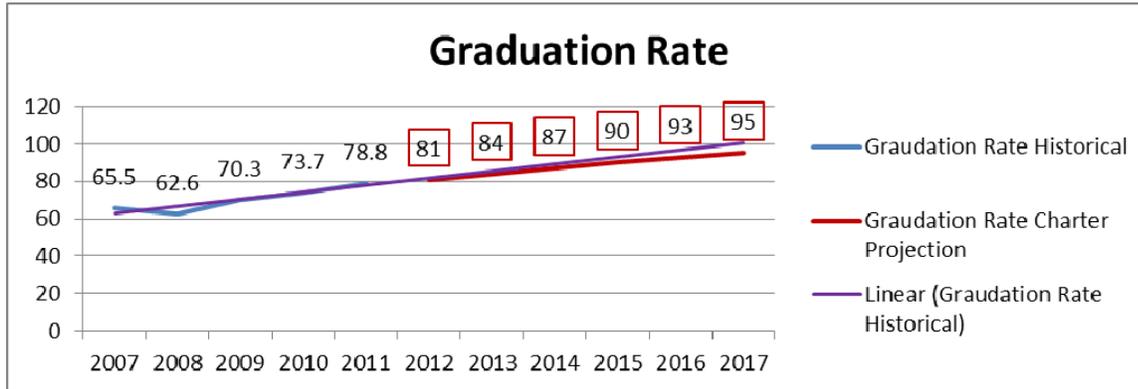


Chart 17 Graduation Rate

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

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

The Banks County School System has research-based programs and interventions in place to support standards-based instruction. Using the flexibility of the charter system, these programs will be improved and expanded to more closely meet the needs of students and staff. The restrictions of state program regulations (e.g., Early Intervention Program - EIP, gifted services, Remedial Education Program - REP) will be lifted so that resources and support will be targeted when and where needed. Each of the following innovations allows the school system to identify and meet the individual needs of the students. These innovations are in the introductory stages and will be implemented when a complete plan and timeline is approved by the governance teams. Additionally, an evaluation system will be

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implemented to determine effectiveness of each innovation. Because the school system is small and personnel is limited and resources are few, these innovations will allow the students opportunities that would otherwise not be possible. Banks County has been developing the charter system petition since summer of 2010. During the petition development process the community was surveyed in public meetings (Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce meetings, community advisory groups, school staffs, etc.) to determine the needs of the community and students. The innovations addressed in the petition reflect the needs and desire of the community and staff.

- Flexible scheduling will be utilized in grades K-12 in order to implement remediation and acceleration opportunities based on student performance and progress. The interventions used to meet the needs of the students will be continually changing as will the constitution of the groups of students and the amount of instructional time using the particular interventions. To achieve this innovation, various waivers will be necessary including class size, seat time, certification requirements, EIP identification, EIP placement, REP identification, and REP placement.
- Implementation of Foreign Languages at all grade levels K-12 will be phased in. While no waiver is necessary for this particular innovation, it is a new proposed academic endeavor that will enhance the education of Banks County students.
- The credit recovery program will be enhanced at the high school in order to serve more students to decrease the dropout rate and improve the high school graduation rate. This innovation will be seen through the flexible scheduling model that will require a class size waiver, seat time waiver, and certification requirements waiver.
- Distance learning participation and successful completion of course credit for those students on an accelerated learning track will be increased. Currently, the school system is not capitalizing virtual learning opportunities. Under the operation of the charter system status, students will have the additional opportunities to take virtual learning classes under the charter system status with

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the utilization of the flexible scheduling model that will require a class size waiver, seat time waiver, and certification requirements waiver.

- The Freshman Transition Program will focus on ensuring the success of ninth grade students and successful completion of high school. The program will offer courses that direct career choice, enhance study skills, and provide direct and strategic literacy instruction for identified students. To implement this program, the system will rely upon the following waivers: seat time, class size, and course development.
- Differentiated instruction, data review, assessment, and mastery learning will be the emphasis of professional learning. In order to focus on these areas and professional development and implement specific strategies, not only will the flexible scheduling model and relative waivers (class size, seat time, and certification requirements) need to be utilized, the school year requirement may need to be waiver which would allow for an increase, decrease or exchange in the number of required student and staff days of attendance for collaborative planning and instructional coordination.
- The dual enrollment program will be enhanced to encourage more student and teacher participation. The dual enrollment program has already been implemented in some content areas. The goal is to increase successful participation and completion by adding course credit opportunities. Again, this program enhancement will be realized through the flexible scheduling model requiring a class size waiver, seat time waiver, and certification requirements waiver. The high school will utilize the exchange partnerships with local colleges (Gainesville State College and Lanier Technical College). Interested teachers will be provided with professional learning in order to prepare them to serve as adjunct faculty members of those colleges and schools. This will enable the students of Banks County High School to participate in dual enrollment without leaving campus.

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

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

Required Waivers and Impact on Student Achievement

1. Class Size Waiver (all grade levels)- This waiver will allow for an increase in the number of students in some classes creating financial opportunities to have smaller class sizes where more appropriate for the students of Banks County. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-161(b); SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.08; O.C.G.A. § 20-2-182(i)). Governance team training for class size waivers will be conducted February of 2013.
2. Seat Time Waiver (high school)- This waiver will allow for flexible scheduling on minutes required and time for remediation/acceleration, distance learning, collaboration with colleges (including technical colleges), and credit-recovery during the school year. Students, who meet defined criteria, can receive course credit if they are able to demonstrate competency in specific course. This waiver will be utilized only when specific criteria establishing competence are determined and validated (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.4). Upon the charter system status approval, the governance team will assist in identifying the criteria for these competencies. Governance team members will participate in training regarding seat time in February of 2013.
3. School Year Waiver (all grade levels)- The school year requirement waiver will allow for an increase, decrease or exchange in the number of required student and staff days of attendance for collaborative planning, instructional coordination, professional learning, and data review (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-151, 20-2-160, 20-2-161.1, 20-2-165, 20-2-168, 20-2- 168(c), 20-2-240, SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.02). It is currently unclear how best to utilize this school waiver. The school system will solicit further community input and utilize the governance teams to determine school

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calendar options based on meeting the needs of the student population. School Calendar is a governance team training topic scheduled for April of 2013.

4. Course Development Waiver (high school) - Courses, specific to the needs and interests of Banks County students, will have to be developed for the freshmen transition program. These types of courses may include job preparedness, study skills, personal finance, and others deemed necessary and interesting. The courses crafted would help to ease the transition to high school, decrease the dropout rate, and increase the graduation rate (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-161.3, SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.03). The governance team will assist in developing these courses that will best meet the needs of the student population. The governance team training for course development is scheduled for January of 2013.
5. Certification Requirements Waiver (all grade levels)- Waiving certification requirements for personnel 505-2.40 will maximize all certified professionals to reduce teacher to student ratio during a flexible scheduling block during which students receive remediation and enhancement instruction (grades k-12).
6. Remedial Identification and Placement Waiver- Waiving remedial (EIP- elementary grades, and REP- middle grades and high school grades) identification and placement regulations will allow for utilization of flexible scheduling during which students receive remediation and enhancement instruction (grades k-5, grades 6-12). Students will receive instruction based on specific needs related to specific skills in targeted, instructional environments ((EIP identification and placement waiver (O .C.G.A. § 20-2-153, SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.17); and REP identification and placement waiver (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-154, SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.01)).

7. Organizational objectives, plans, and waivers

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

System organizational performance objectives should:

- a. *Indicate the system's organizational performance over the past five years*
- b. *Reflect where the system envisions itself organizationally at the end of the charter term.*

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- c. *Indicate the anticipated organizational targets in each year*
- d. *Include objectives related to items such as stakeholder satisfaction, teacher and/or student retention, professional development and technology.*
- e. *Be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based (SMART).*

While there has been a great deal of thoughtful planning for this application, all of the organizational guidelines and constraints have not yet been established. These will be defined during the initial phase of implementation and redefined as necessary during the operation of the charter system. However, without a doubt, the system will maintain its integrity, transparency, and accountability to the public and community it serves. Below are the three goals that have been developed. The school governance teams will be tasked with designating baseline data and crafting SMART goals.

Organization Goal 1: The number of Banks County graduates who meet employer satisfaction of the skill level will increase. A baseline will be established and SMART goals developed.

Organization Goal 2: The number of Banks County graduates who need remediation course work at the college level will decrease as measured on the CCRPI. A baseline will be established and SMART goals developed.

Organization Goal 3: The number of Banks County graduates who complete college will increase. A baseline will be established and SMART goals developed.

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

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

Organizational Innovations:

The Banks County School System has identified the following organizational innovations which will utilize the broad flexibility privilege that accompanies being a charter system status. These

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innovations are just the beginning. As the charter system process matures, more organizational opportunities will present themselves that will allow the system to run more efficiently and effectively in order to serve students. The organizational innovations for the charter are described below.

- The creation and implementation of the Governance Structure will allow for more stakeholders to be involved in the decision-making process. This organizational change will encourage more parental and community involvement leading to a stronger organization, smoother operations, and a stronger commitment from all parties to school success. As stronger ownership is established more solutions/innovations and support for those solutions will develop. Training for the governance team will be specific and delivered on topics such as school operations, budget, maintenance, and safety. Targeted training will be provided to all layers of the governance structure so that decisions or recommendations are made with the necessary background information. Upon approval as a charter system, training for governance teams will begin immediately. GSBA will begin conducting the relative trainings as soon as the charter status is approved. The detailed planning timeline can be found in the Governance section of this application beginning on page 28.
- Flexible scheduling for grades K-12 will have the single most immediate impact on the day to day operation of the school system. Utilizing this new schedule will assist the system in being more efficient as instructional time will be direct, more intense, and focus on specific student needs. While portions of the flexible scheduling will be implemented prior to charter status approval, others will only be implemented after several months of in depth study and then followed with training for governance teams and faculty.
- The dual enrollment program will impact organizational functions at the high school level. As noted, this program enhancement, which is to operate as part of the flexible scheduling model, will enable Banks County High School students to participate in the dual enrollment classes on campus rather than the students having to leave campus and attend the co-operating colleges. This will be possible as Banks County High School teachers will be trained and certified as adjunct faculty members of these participating institutions. With this operational and organizational change, the school system is

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creating a safer environment as students do not have to travel and teacher effectiveness should be enhanced as they receive advanced professional learning and training. This process of negotiating with the local colleges will begin as soon as the charter status approval is granted. The governance team will assist in this process. Training for the governance team regarding dual enrollment is scheduled for September of 2013.

- Certification requirement changes will allow for a reduced student teacher pupil ratio where possible. This reduction will be realized as other outstanding teachers with various certifications, expertise, and experience will provide instruction to those students with specific skill and standards needs. This organizational change will be paralleled with the enactment of the flexible scheduling model.
- The implementation of the Freshmen Transition Program will not only create much needed physical space for the growing population, but it will also provide an invisible barrier to separate freshmen students who are not yet ready to socialize with upperclassmen. The new philosophy, newly designed courses to meet the needs of Banks County freshmen and physical location of the building will create an atmosphere of success and high expectations married with one of acceptance and assistance. The new program will begin when the facility is ready to be occupied. The anticipated date is FY14. Governance team training for the transition program is set for January 2013.
- The implementation of a phased-in foreign language curriculum in grades K-12 will be directly different from the current practice of offering only two foreign language programs at the high school level. This change will hopefully spark the interest of parents, students, and community members, extend an invitation of cultural awareness, and promote involvement from those not traditionally involved in the school system. This change will also follow that of the flexible scheduling model. Implementation will begin with primary and elementary grades in the initial years. By year 5 of the charter system status, implementation at the middle school level will be complete. The focus on foreign language is a result of community interest. A dichotomy concerning the implementation of foreign language in all grade levels exists within the community. A group of community members, including school educators, adheres to the need for implementing foreign language system-wide.

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However, a small faction has voiced concerns about the foreign language implementation insisting that there is no need for the proposal. The governance team will assist in directing this initiation as soon as the charter system status is approved even though training on this topic is not scheduled until January of 2014.

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

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

The flexibility afforded through charter system status, staff will be encouraged and supported by the superintendent and the board of education in order to meet challenges of increasing the graduation rate, re-engaging disconnected students in the learning process, and preparing students for career or post-secondary education. Required waivers to support the innovative organizational endeavors include the following.

- The flexible scheduling encompasses many of the waivers outlined in this application including class size, seat time, certification requirements, EIP identification, EIP placement, REP identification, and REP placement. Various organizational innovations are directly aligned to the implementation of the flexible scheduling model and will be accomplished in conjunction with or after successful execution of this model such as the dual enrollment program, the freshmen transition program, and foreign language program.
- Certification requirement changes to lower the teacher pupil ratio and implement the flexible scheduling model with success will require a waiver.
- The implementation of the freshmen transition program hinges on the success of the flexible scheduling model and its requirements. Additionally, the program will require the course development waiver. Utilizing this waiver, the system can craft courses specific to the needs of the Banks County freshmen based on the historical weaknesses and strengths of these students as

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identified by the community, staff, and students. Such course may include study skills, finance, career readiness, etc.

- While the dual enrollment program and the foreign language program will rely on the flexible scheduling model for implementation, there are no required waivers independent to these two innovations.

GOVERNANCE

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

9. What is the system's plan to maximize school level governance?
 - a. Highlight the differences between the current local school governance structure and the new structure the system will implement.*
 - b. 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.*
 - c. 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.*
 - i. Presenting this responsibility description in the form of a chart or a grid would be helpful to both you to ensure you've captured everything – and to us as we review your Application.*
 - d. 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*

Presently, the local board of education and superintendent assume total responsibility of the school system. The five member board is elected and service is for a four year term with staggered elections. The school board serves to create and adopt policy and all other services and decisions are based on the recommendation of the school superintendent. Currently, each school has a school council

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with limited authority. The superintendent has an advisory team, again with limited authority. Presently, there is little to no formal or consistent method of acquiring input from community members for recommendations regarding the operations of the school system. **The suggested change in governance as presented in this section of the application will be a paradigm shift for the community, the board members, administration, and staff. These changes will not occur, however, until elections are held, training is provided, and roles are established and written by-laws adopted.**

The system will begin implementation of charter system with the formation of the local school governance teams in the first year. The focus will be on the election of qualified representatives to lead the local teams and the training needed to help the groups fulfill their mission.

In order to maximize school level governance, each charter system school within BCSS shall utilize the described framework for the school governing team. This team will be the body entrusted with the responsibility of providing input, making recommendations, and rendering decisions regarding various aspects of the instructional program of the school and the school's operational scheme. The school governing team's role in upholding the school system's mission and vision will be ensured by an emphasis on the governing group functioning as a unit, rather than a collection of individuals with individual agendas.

Stakeholders will be elected to the school governing team. Numerous opportunities are available for parents and community members to become involved. The purpose of this participation is to encourage a variety of ideas and/or recommendations to consider before policy and procedures are established and implemented.

Formation of the Local School Governing Teams

Each school in the charter system will have a governing team under the direction of the school principal. The governing team shall operate with the intent and purpose of maximizing school level decision making, upholding the charter system's mission and vision, setting policy for the system charter school, ensuring effective organizational planning, assisting in analyzing results and deciding on

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recommendations based on research, and ensuring the performance-based goals and measurable objectives set forth in the application are met. The governing teams will be responsible for complying with and carrying out the provisions of the charter, including compliance with all applicable laws. The governing teams' scheduled meetings will be subject to the Open Meetings Act. The school governing team shall comply with the Open Records Act.

The charter system will employ a financial director who will conduct monthly audits of all schools in the charter system. This information will then be presented at the monthly Board of Education meetings. The financial director will conduct update and/or training sessions with all school bookkeepers four times per year. The financial director will meet upon request with all school governing teams to explain financials of local schools and the system. A financial report will be generated for each school's governing team meeting throughout the year. The Banks County Charter System will participate in an annual state financial audit. The findings will be shared with the superintendent and Board of Education and responses to corrective actions will be addressed within a five-day time frame.

Membership Selection:

Composition of Governing Team: Each school's governing team will consist of a minimum of 7 members and a maximum of 9 members. The principal will serve as a permanent member and facilitator. The additional members will consist of at least 3 building level employees and at least 3 community members. The make-up of the 3 community members must include parents of students in the school and/or Banks County residents. There must be at least 2 parents from different families - only 1 of which may be employed by the school system. This employee of the school system may not be employed at the school where he/she wishes to serve on the School Governing Council. Two additional members may be added but only by adding one member to each group.

Building Level Members: Only certified teachers, excluding any personnel employed in administrative positions, who are employed full time at the school are eligible to serve. The electing

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body of teacher members is comprised of all of the teachers who are eligible to serve as a teacher member.

Community Members: Parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school are eligible to serve as parent members of the governing team. Parents of students in the school who are employees of the school system are excluded if they work at that school. An employee of the school system may serve as a parent representative on the governing team of a school in which his/her child is enrolled if the employee works at a different location than the school. Only parents who are eligible to be elected to serve are eligible to vote. Community members may also be a resident of Banks County and/or employed in Banks County (other than with the school system).

Election Process: Members of the governing team will be elected by members of each sub-group, except for the principal who will serve as a permanent member. The principal will be responsible for presenting a slate of candidates to the stakeholders at an open meeting. Elections will take place during the month of May or August of each school year.

Terms: Except for the facilitator of each body, the members of the school governing team will serve 4 year terms on a rotating basis.

How Members Are Removed:

Members may be removed from office as follows – The governing body at each level may, by majority vote, determine a position vacant if they find that a member is no longer active.

Why Members Are Removed:

Inactivity will be defined as failure to attend 50% of the meetings (excluding emergencies) and not fulfilling duties and responsibilities as necessary to conduct business.

Responsibilities – Board of Education, Superintendent, Principal, School Governance Teams

The Banks County Board of Education, superintendent, principals, and teachers will still be in place with their current rights and responsibilities. The Banks County Board of Education will continue as the legal entity and will have the final decision making authority to review, revoke, approve, and/or deny any and

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all decisions made including but not limited to the following areas:

- Personnel decisions, including hiring school principals and teachers
- Financial decisions, including autonomy of budget and expenditures
- Curriculum and instruction
- Resource allocation at the school level
- Establishing and monitoring the achievement of school improvement goals
- Other school operations

Charter System Governance

Area of Responsibility	School Governance Team	Principal	Superintendent	Board of Education
Budget	Approve Title I budget Approve Fund Raiser Budget Create and Approve budget for charter QBE funds	Recommend to Superintendent	Recommend to BOE	Approve
Resource Allocation	Recommend school level resources based on school plan	Recommend to Superintendent	Recommend to BOE	Approve
Personnel	Recommend principal finalists to superintendent	Recommend to Superintendent	Recommend to BOE	Approve
School Improvement Plan	Member of planning team (review data, plan, results)	Recommend to Superintendent	Recommend to BOE	Approve
Curriculum	Member of planning team Recommend waiver needs	Recommend to Superintendent	Recommend to BOE	Approve
Other School Operations	Approve Field Trips	Recommend to Superintendent	Recommend to BOE	Approve

Table 1 Governance Team Responsibilities

Governance Training Topics and Timeline:

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As a charter system, BCSS will provide the training necessary at each level of the governance structure to build expertise and the capacity for making school-level and system decisions. The initial training will be conducted by the Georgia School Boards Association. On-going training will be scheduled to ensure the acquisition of the skills and knowledge needed to make decisions and recommendations. Training will be scheduled with GSBA as soon as the charter application is approved and the members of the various levels of governance are identified. General GSBA Training topics will include: 1.) Role of the Governing Board, 2.) What's the Role of the BOE, 3.) Parliamentary Procedures, 4.) Open Meetings and Open Records Laws, 5.) Student Records and 6.) Communication between Members of Governing Levels and Parents/Community

During the first year of the charter system, there will be a gradual implementation of all academic and organizational innovations. Implementation will be determined by resources and funding. It is the intent of BCSS, to fully implement all proposed academic and organizational innovations within the first 2 years of the charter in order to begin to analyze results and refine processes.

Timeline for Governance Introduction Banks County School System

- Sept-Oct 2012:** Election for governance team members (once charter petition is approved)
Person Responsible: Principals at each school (the process for conducting elections will be reviewed at the Dec 2012 staff meeting to ensure that all schools have a clear understanding on how to conduct elections.
- Oct-Nov 2012:** **Develop draft governance team by-laws**
Person Responsible: Assistant Superintendent with principal input
- November 2012:** **Principal Governance Training**
Person Responsible: Assistant Superintendent
- December 2012:** **Governance Team Training**
Topics:
1. What is the charter system governance structure for Banks County Schools?
 2. What are the roles and responsibilities for the different governance team, BOE?
 3. How do you conduct a governance team meeting?
 - a. Agenda

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- b. Open meetings act
 - c. Minutes
 - d. School-wide perspective
 - e. Parliamentary procedures
4. What are the governance team training topics for 2013-2014?
 5. How do the school governance teams get started?

Based on the topic, schools will specify the topics according to the needs of the school population. However, the initial focus of training on gaining a shared understanding of the operation of the school district as a charter system and purpose of governing council.

All minutes of meetings by schools will be thoroughly reviewed by the superintendent and his staff at the monthly staff meetings. All principals and central office administrators attend these meetings. The purpose for bringing the minutes to the monthly meetings is to maintain transparency and to make sure that the ideas and suggestions that are utilized at one school could benefit other schools.

January 2013: Freshmen Transition Philosophy/Course Development

February 2013: Flexible Scheduling/Seat Time/Class Size

March 2013: AYP- CCRPI/Data Team

April 2013: SACS planning/School Calendar

May 2013: Personnel

June 2013: State Board Rules and Waivers

July 2013: School Improvement Plan

August 2013: Finance/Resource Allocation

September 2013: Dual Enrollment

November 2013: Technology in the Classroom

December 2013: Curriculum Updates

January 2014: Foreign Language

February 2014: Needs Assessment

March 2014: Future Direction of Schools and System

FINANCIAL OBJECTIVES, PLANS, AND WAIVERS

10. What are the system’s financial performance objectives for the term of the contract?

System financial performance objectives should:

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

Banks County School System operates efficiently and leanly while providing the best education for all students. The financial goals outlined within this application will soon become part of the Balanced Scoreboard. These goals are included the Operations section of the document. During the past five years, Banks County School System has had no audit findings. A complete audit report can be found on the Banks County web site at www.banks.k12.ga.us. The school system will continue to meet its fiscal responsibilities while providing the best possible educational opportunities for the students.

The financial performance goals for the charter system petition are:

Financial Performance Goal 1: To maintain a minimum of 65% of budget expenditures for instructional activities.

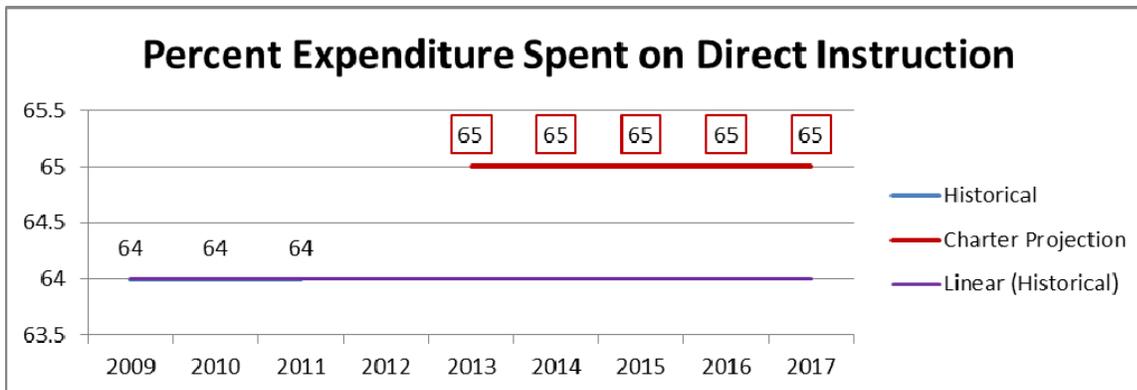


Chart 18 Percent Expenditures

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Financial Performance Goal 2: To maintain yearly favorable audit status with no material findings.

Year	Favoral Audit Status
2009	Yes
2010	Yes
2011	Yes
2012	Yes
2013	Yes
2014	Yes
2015	Yes
2016	Yes
2017	Yes

Table 2 Audit Status

Due to the economic downturn and precipitous decline of revenue, the Banks County School System has had to make various decisions and changes in function to deflect costs of operation. While Banks County hopes to continue to maintain its financial stability, the Banks County Board of Education has determined that the school system cannot continue to sustain educational programs at the existing level of operation at the present rate of state and local revenues. In order to balance reduction of operation costs and continue to maximize student achievement, the Banks County Board of Education has approved resolutions to increase maximum class size for various program areas. Additionally, cuts in personnel and pay reductions have been made for the last three consecutive years. These measures have allowed the system to continue its operation.

The anticipated fiscal status at the end of five years is more promising. Each year, the financial target is to maintain the focus of allocating resources to provide the best possible education for all students. Additionally, the Board of Education hopes to meet this goal while maintaining an appropriate tax rate. The system would like to continue to sustain at its current rate without having a negative ending year balance and utilizing funds from reserve accounts.

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

- a. *Describe the financial innovations that will be implemented.*
- b. *Provide a clear explanation of how the innovations will increase financial performance.*

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- c. *Describe the anticipated timeline for implementation of the innovations*
- d. *Describe why the innovations are appropriate for this unique system*

The majority of revenue is derived from QBE funds and local tax revenue. Though federal funds have recently declined as much as 20%, they will continue to supplement revenues. The flexibility offered by the charter system status will help us to deal with some of the financial burdens that currently exist. The following financial innovations will be utilized:

- Spending will be more flexible for the district under the operation of the charter. However, expenditures will support instructional and operational goals. Training for the governance teams will be held in December of 2013 in order to provide a comprehensive overview of school finance and the teams' responsibilities. The input from the governance teams will help to foster greater financial stability and transparency throughout the community.
- The flexible scheduling model and the utilization of the waivers associated with the model will help to reduce expenditures. These reductions will be in the form of maximizing existing personnel without restriction to certification requirements. Rather, those with appropriate skill and expertise will provide instruction to small groups of students based on need. The flexible scheduling will begin as soon as feasible when the charter system status approved.

These innovations are directly related to the academic and organizational goals which are unique to the school system.

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

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

The financial innovation requiring a waiver is related to the flexible scheduling model to be implemented under the operation of the charter status. The waivers associated with this model include class size, seat time, certification requirements, EIP identification, EIP placement, REP identification, and REP placement.

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

- b. 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.*
- c. There are no limitations or requirements on the use of such funds.*

Banks County will allocate any extra QBE funds to each school governance team to determine how they will use the extra resources to support their school improvement plan. The team must show alignment to goals and improvement strategies.

ASSURANCES FORM AND SIGNATURE SHEET

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

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

1. Shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations;
2. Shall not discriminate against any student or employee on the basis of race, color, ethnic background, national origin, gender, disability or age;
3. Shall be subject to all federal, state, and local rules, regulations, court orders, and statutes relating to civil rights; insurance; the protection of the physical health and safety of school students, employees, and visitors; conflicting interest transactions; and the prevention of unlawful conduct;
4. Shall be subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A § 20-2-1050 requiring a brief period of quiet reflection;
5. Shall ensure that the system and the system charter school's governance boards are subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 et seq. and O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 et seq.;
6. Shall ensure that the system charter school governance board members may only receive compensation for their reasonable and actual expenses incurred in connection with performance of their duties;
7. Shall ensure that all teachers will be certified or highly qualified in compliance with No Child Left Behind;
8. Shall comply with the accountability provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-14-30 through § 20-14-41 and federal accountability requirements, and participate in statewide assessments;
9. Shall adhere to all provisions of federal law relating to students with disabilities, including the IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as applicable;
10. Shall provide state and federally mandated services for English Language Learners, as applicable;
11. Shall provide for supplemental educational services as required by federal law and pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.03, and for remediation in required cases pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.01;
12. Shall notify the state of any intent to contract with a for-profit entity for education management services;
13. Shall be subject to the requirement that it shall not charge tuition or fees to its students except as may be authorized by local boards by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-133;
14. Shall comply with federal due process procedures regarding student discipline and dismissal;

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15. Shall be subject to all laws relating to unlawful conduct in or near a public school;
16. Shall have a written grievance procedure to resolve student, parent, and teacher complaints;
17. Shall have a written procedure for resolving conflicts between the system charter schools and the local board of education;
18. Shall comply with the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20 -2-211.1 relating to fingerprinting and criminal background checks;
19. Shall remit payments to TRS on behalf of employees;
20. Shall ensure that if transportation is provided for its students, the system shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws;
21. Shall ensure that if the charter system participates in federal school meals programs, then each participating system charter school shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws;
22. Shall prepare a safety plan in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1185 and submit and obtain approval from the Georgia Emergency Management Agency;
23. Shall comply with the state facility requirements regarding site codes, facility codes, the submission of architectural plans for any new facility that the system may build or occupy during the charter term and all other facility requirements as established by the Department;
24. Shall be subject to all reporting requirements of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-160, subsection (e) of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-161, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-320, and O.C.G.A. § 20-2-740;
25. Shall be subject to an annual financial audit conducted by the state auditor or, if specified in the charter, by an independent certified public accountant licensed in this state;
26. Shall acknowledge that all criteria used to calculate QBE funding may not be waived; and
27. Shall follow any and all other federal, state, and local laws and regulations that pertain to the applicant or the operation of the charter system.

This Charter System Application, Assurance Form, and attached Exhibits were approved by the Banks Board of Education on the 23rd day of June, 2012.

Superintendent

Date

Chair, Local Board of Education

Date

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

Superintendent

Date

Chair, Local Board of Education

Date

EXHIBITS

The following Exhibits are required to complete your Charter System Application Package. Please tab the Exhibits to match the item numbers below. Exhibits should be as limited in size as possible (no more than 5 pages per Exhibit). The only exceptions to this size limitation for Exhibits are your most recent annual audit and your most recent accreditation report.

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