

Stephens County School System

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.

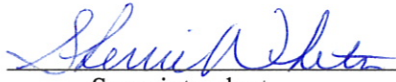
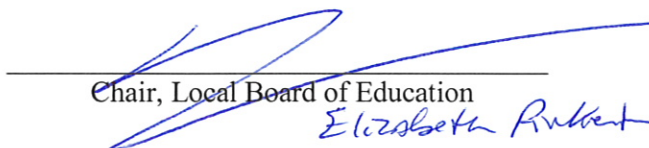
As the authorized representative of the applicant, I hereby certify that the information submitted in this application for a charter for Stephens County School System located in Stephens County is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; I also certify that if awarded a charter the school system:

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;
15. Shall be subject to all laws relating to unlawful conduct in or near a public school;

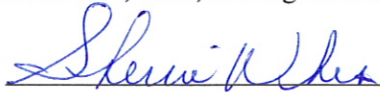
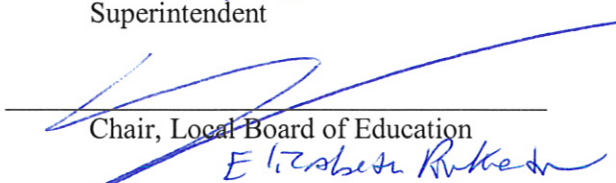
Stephens County School System

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 Stephens County Board of Education on the 15th day of October, 2013.

 _____ Superintendent	 _____ Chair, Local Board of Education Elizabeth Rutledge
_____ 10-15-13 Date	_____ 10/15/13 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	 _____ Chair, Local Board of Education Elizabeth Rutledge
_____ 10-15-13 Date	_____ 10/15/13 Date

Report of the Quality Assurance Review Team for Big A Elementary School

Route 2, Box 384 Sorrells Road
Eastanollee, Georgia 30538
United States

Ms. Gail S. Fry

Review Dates: 11/19/2008 - 11/20/2008



North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

Quality Assurance Review Report

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About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

Background. Founded in 1895, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) accredit public and private schools and districts in 30 states, the Navajo Nation, Latin America, and the Department of Defense Schools worldwide.

In 2006, NCA CASI, SACS CASI, and the research and development arm of the accrediting associations, the National Study of School Evaluation, unified to form AdvancED. Dedicated to advancing excellence in education, AdvancED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 23,000 schools in 65 countries, serving 15 million students.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. Through AdvancED, NCA CASI and SACS CASI have defined shared, research-based accreditation standards that cross state, regional, and national boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified accreditation process designed to help schools continuously improve.

The Accreditation Process. To earn and maintain accreditation from NCA CASI or SACS CASI, schools must:

1) Meet the AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools. Schools demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.

2) Engage in continuous improvement. Schools implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results).

3) Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review. Schools engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, schools host an external Quality Assurance Review Team once every five years. The team evaluates the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and recommendations to help the school improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school and a written report detailing the team's recommendations. The school acts on the team's recommendations and submits a progress report following the review.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI accreditation engages the entire school community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help schools be the best they can be on behalf of the students they serve.

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

Purpose. The purpose of the Quality Assurance Review is to:

1. Evaluate the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards.
2. Assess the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and recommendations to improve the school.
4. Make an accreditation recommendation for review by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission.

A key aim of the Quality Assurance Review is to verify that the school is operating with institutional integrity - that it is fulfilling its vision and mission for its students.

School Preparation. To prepare for the Quality Assurance Review, the school community engages in an in-depth self assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. The school identifies and describes the evidence that demonstrates that it is meeting each standard. Through this internal review, the school examines how its systems and processes contribute to student performance and school effectiveness.

Summary of Team Activities. The Quality Assurance Review Team is led by an AdvancED certified team chair and comprised of professionals from outside the school. The team reviews the findings of the school's internal self-assessment, conducts interviews with representative groups of stakeholders, reviews student performance data and other documentation provided by the school, and observes practices and daily operations. The team engages in professional deliberations to reach consensus on the school's adherence to the standards for accreditation. The team provides an oral exit report and prepares a written Quality Assurance Review Team Report designed to help the school improve.

The Quality Assurance Review Team Report. Following the visit, the review team completes the Quality Assurance Review report. After review by a nationally-trained reader, the report is submitted to the school. The report contains commendations and recommendations for improvement.

Using the Report - Acting on the Recommendations. The school uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school is held accountable for addressing the recommendations identified in the report. The NCA CASI/SACS CASI State Office is available to assist schools in addressing the recommendations. Following the Quality Assurance Review Team visit, the school must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress the school has made on the team's recommendations. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school is addressing the recommendations.

Accreditation Recommendation. The Quality Assurance Review Team uses the findings from the onsite visit to make an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed at the state level and by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is granted by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission and communicated to the school following action from the commission.

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), a division of AdvancED, visited the Big A Elementary School in Eastanollee, Georgia, United States on 11/19/2008 - 11/20/2008.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed Gail S. Fry, 1 member of the administrative team, 19 students, 11 parents, and 41 teachers. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the school. Specifically, the team examined the school's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

- Vision and Purpose
- Governance and Leadership
- Teaching and Learning
- Documenting and Using Results
- Resource and Support Systems
- Stakeholder Communications and Relationships
- Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The AdvancED standards focus on systems within a school and systematic methods of attaining high student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of the standards lies in the connections and linkages between and among the standards. The Quality Assurance Review Team used the AdvancED standards to guide its review of the school, looking not only for adherence to individual standards, but also for how the school functions as a whole and embodies the practices and characteristics of a quality school.

Through its examination of the school's adherence to the standards, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following commendations and recommendations.

Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the school for the following strengths and accomplishments. While additional strengths are noted in the detailed review of each standard that appears later in this report, the commendations listed below are the strengths that the team believes are most deserving of being highlighted.

- NA

NA

NA

Recommendations

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following recommendations for improvement. The team focused its recommendations on those areas that, if addressed, will have the greatest

impact on improving student performance and overall school effectiveness. The school will be held accountable for making progress on each of the recommendations noted in this section. Following this review, the school will be asked to submit a progress report on these recommendations.

- **Formalize systematic procedures for evaluating both the implementation and the impact of professional learning activities. Examples include: classroom observations, focus walks, and collaborative meetings to analyze artifacts and evidence and discuss implementation issues.**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

Administrators will be better enabled to identify specific classroom changes and student performances that have resulted from professional learning initiatives.

- **Examine the effectiveness of teachers' use of technology for classroom instruction.**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, classroom observations, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

This strategy will ensure that teachers effectively use technology to provide real world application, enhance students' research skills, and differentiate instruction to maximize student learning.

- **Engage teachers in developing protocols designed to systematically examine student work during team meetings.**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

The development and implementation of refined protocols will increase the effectiveness of teacher leaders use of performance data designed to revise curriculum implementation and alignment of resources.

- **Systematically monitor and evaluate curriculum implementation throughout the year by focusing classroom observations and awareness walks with curriculum maps and pacing guides in hand, and evaluating student work products to ensure that performance tasks are closely aligned to the standard(s).**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

Monitoring and evaluating implementation of the curriculum through an ongoing, systematic school-wide process throughout the school year will ensure consistency within and across classrooms, grade levels, and subject areas relative to all Georgia Performance Standards.

Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools: The team reviewed the school's adherence to each of the AdvancED standards. The findings from this review are provided in the next section of this report.

Next Steps

The school should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the commendations section to maximize their impact on the school.
3. Develop action plans to address the recommendations made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the recommendations.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school's efforts to improve student performance and school effectiveness.
5. Following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the team's recommendations. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the recommendations. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Resources

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your school as it acts on the findings in this report. The AdvancED Resource Network, available at www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork, provides an online network of peer-to-peer practices, best practices, and resources and tools designed to help schools with their improvement efforts. Available any where, any time, the network can be queried for information on a variety of school improvement subjects. The AdvancED Research and Development division provides research, handbooks, and tools to assist schools with continuous improvement. In addition, your state office provides hands-on professional development and ongoing technical assistance. Contact your state office for more information on the range of resources available to you.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for state review and for action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school should celebrate its achievement with the school community. The SACS CASI accreditation seals are available at www.advanc-ed.org/communicationskit for accredited schools and districts to post on their website and to use in school communications. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and lapel pins are also available and can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary

The accreditation process engages the school in an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. The next steps in this journey are to build on the strengths and address the recommendations noted in this report. Doing so will enable the school to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for all students.

Standards for Accreditation

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the Big A Elementary School demonstrates that it meets the seven standards for accreditation. The findings of the Quality Assurance Review Team regarding the standards for accreditation are summarized on the following pages.

Standard 1. Vision and Purpose

Standard: The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Big A Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

Standard: The school provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Big A Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

Standard: The school provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Big A Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results

Standard: The school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Big A Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

Standard: The school has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Big A Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

Standard: The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Big A Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Standard: The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Big A Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Conclusion

The commendations and recommendations in this report are designed to focus the school on those areas that will have the greatest impact on student performance and school effectiveness. While powerful in potential, the commendations and recommendations only have meaning when acted upon by the school. The strength of this report lies in the school's commitment to using the findings to continuously improve. The key is action. The school is encouraged to use the report as a call to action, a tool to sustain momentum in the ongoing process of continuous improvement.

The team identified several recommendations for improvement that the school will need to address. Following this review, the school will be required to submit a progress report summarizing its progress toward addressing the team's recommendations.

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to Gail S. Fry, members of the professional staff, students, parents and other community representatives for their hospitality throughout the visit. The team wishes the school and its students much success in the quest for excellence through SACS CASI accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Dane Ward, Chair (Georgia Department of Education)

AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

The AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools are comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness. As schools reach higher levels of implementation of the standards, they will have a greater capacity to support ever-increasing student performance and organizational effectiveness. Each of the seven standards listed below has corresponding indicators and impact statements which can be accessed at www.advanc-ed.org.

Vision and Purpose

The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Governance and Leadership

The school provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

Teaching and Learning

The school provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Documenting and Using Results

The school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

Resource and Support Systems

The school has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Report of the Quality Assurance Review Team for Eastanollee Elementary School

50 Livestock Road
Eastanollee, Georgia 30538
United States

Mrs. Susan H. Crawford

Review Dates: 01/14/2009 - 01/15/2009



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Through its examination of the school's adherence to the standards, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following commendations and recommendations.

Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the school for the following strengths and accomplishments. While additional strengths are noted in the detailed review of each standard that appears later in this report, the commendations listed below are the strengths that the team believes are most deserving of being highlighted.

- NA

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NA

Recommendations

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following recommendations for improvement. The team focused its recommendations on those areas that, if addressed, will have the greatest

impact on improving student performance and overall school effectiveness. The school will be held accountable for making progress on each of the recommendations noted in this section. Following this review, the school will be asked to submit a progress report on these recommendations.

- **Systematically monitor and evaluate curriculum implementation throughout the year by conducting classroom observations and awareness walks with curriculum maps in hand, and evaluating student work products to ensure that performance tasks are closely aligned to the standard(s).**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

Refinement of the school's curriculum monitoring system will enhance administrators' and teacher leaders' use of performance data and the review of student work to revise curriculum implementation and alignment of resources.

- **Formalize the peer observation framework through systematically connecting scheduled observations in model classrooms to observe such practices as effective instructional technology, flexible grouping, differentiation, higher order thinking skills and processes.**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

This systematic and targeted approach to job-embedded professional learning will effectively support high-priority school improvement goals and technology supporting student learning.

- **Expand posted student work and ensure that written commentary is meaningful and purposeful by providing specific feedback using the language of the standards.**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and classroom observations indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

Students will be better enabled to compare their work to benchmark work and explain how their work is progressing toward meeting the standard(s) and developed goals.

- **Expand structured opportunities to ensure that fifth and sixth grade teachers collaboratively study the vertical scope of the standards and expand understanding about appropriate instruction that will prepare students for growing levels of mastery.**

Faculty interviews and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

Fifth grade teachers will develop a better understanding of how current content provides the foundation for what is taught the following year. Middle school teachers will be more enabled to explain how the previous year's content provides the foundation for what is taught the previous year.

Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools: The team reviewed the school's adherence to each of the AdvancED standards. The findings from this review are provided in the next section of this report.

Next Steps

The school should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the commendations section to maximize their impact on the school.
3. Develop action plans to address the recommendations made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the recommendations.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school's efforts to improve student performance and school effectiveness.
5. Following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the team's recommendations. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the recommendations. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Resources

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your school as it acts on the findings in this report. The AdvancED Resource Network, available at www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork, provides an online network of peer-to-peer practices, best practices, and resources and tools designed to help schools with their improvement efforts. Available any where, any time, the network can be queried for information on a variety of school improvement subjects. The AdvancED Research and Development division provides research, handbooks, and tools to assist schools with continuous improvement. In addition, your state office provides hands-on professional development and ongoing technical assistance. Contact your state office for more information on the range of resources available to you.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for state review and for action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school should celebrate its achievement with the school community. The SACS CASI accreditation seals are available at www.advanc-ed.org/communicationskit for accredited schools and districts to post on their website and to use in school communications. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and lapel pins are also available and can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary

The accreditation process engages the school in an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. The next steps in this journey are to build on the strengths and address the recommendations noted in this report. Doing so will enable the school to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for all students.

Standards for Accreditation

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the Eastanollee Elementary School demonstrates that it meets the seven standards for accreditation. The findings of the Quality Assurance Review Team regarding the standards for accreditation are summarized on the following pages.

Standard 1. Vision and Purpose

Standard: The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Eastanollee Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

Standard: The school provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Eastanollee Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

Standard: The school provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Eastanollee Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results

Standard: The school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Eastanollee Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

Standard: The school has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Eastanollee Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

Standard: The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Eastanollee Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Standard: The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Eastanollee Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Conclusion

The commendations and recommendations in this report are designed to focus the school on those areas that will have the greatest impact on student performance and school effectiveness. While powerful in potential, the commendations and recommendations only have meaning when acted upon by the school. The strength of this report lies in the school's commitment to using the findings to continuously improve. The key is action. The school is encouraged to use the report as a call to action, a tool to sustain momentum in the ongoing process of continuous improvement.

The team identified several recommendations for improvement that the school will need to address. Following this review, the school will be required to submit a progress report summarizing its progress toward addressing the team's recommendations.

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to Susan H. Crawford, members of the professional staff, students, parents and other community representatives for their hospitality throughout the visit. The team wishes the school and its students much success in the quest for excellence through SACS CASI accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Dane Ward, Chair (Georgia Department of Education)

AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

The AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools are comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness. As schools reach higher levels of implementation of the standards, they will have a greater capacity to support ever-increasing student performance and organizational effectiveness. Each of the seven standards listed below has corresponding indicators and impact statements which can be accessed at www.advanc-ed.org.

Vision and Purpose

The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Governance and Leadership

The school provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

Teaching and Learning

The school provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Documenting and Using Results

The school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

Resource and Support Systems

The school has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

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Exhibit 1: Signed local Board of Education resolution approving the creation of the charter system.

Stephens County School System

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 Stephens County School System located in Stephens 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;
15. Shall be subject to all laws relating to unlawful conduct in or near a public school;

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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 Stephens County Board of Education on the 15th day of October, 2013.



Superintendent

Date 10-15-13



Chair, Local Board of Education
Elizabeth Rutledge

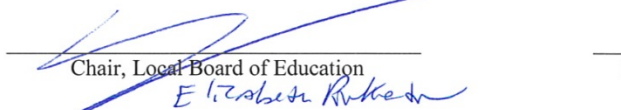
Date 10/15/13

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 10-15-13



Chair, Local Board of Education
Elizabeth Rutledge

Date 10/15/13

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Stephens County Schools

Meeting Minutes

Printed : 1/30/2013 11:10 AM EST

Called Meeting
1/29/2013 5:30:00 PM
2332 Mize Road
Toccoa, GA 30577

Attendees - voting members

Mr. Jerry Steele	Chair
Ms. Sandra Childs	Board Member
Tony Crunkleton	Board Member
Mr. David J. Fricks	Board Member
Jim Ledford	Board Member
Dr. Elizabeth Pinkerton	Board Member
Mr. Jeff T. Webb	Board Member

Attendees - other

Ms. Sherrie Whiten	Superintendent
Jason Kaup	Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Sandy Steele	Assistant Superintendent

I. Call to Order - Welcome - Invocation - Pledge of Allegiance

II. Discussion Agenda

III. Enter Executive Session

Motion made by: Dr. Elizabeth Pinkerton

Motion seconded by: Ms. Sandra Childs

Voting

Unanimously Approved

IV. Exit Executive Session

Motion made by: Mr. David J. Fricks

Motion seconded by: Dr. Elizabeth Pinkerton

Voting

Unanimously Approved

V. Approval of Board to continue support for litigation

Motion to continue monetary support for Wilbros litigation in the amount of \$14,000.

Motion made by: Ms. Sandra Childs

Motion seconded by: Dr. Elizabeth Pinkerton

Voting

Unanimously Approved

VI. Approval of Board to pursue Charter System status

Motion made by: Mr. David J. Fricks

Motion seconded by: Ms. Sandra Childs

Voting

Unanimously Approved

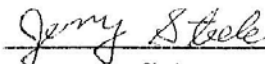
VII. Adjourn


Motion made by: Ms. Sandra Childs

Motion seconded by: Mr. David J. Fricks

Voting

Unanimously Approved


Chairperson


Secretary

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Exhibit 2: Notice that was sent to each principal within the proposed charter system regarding required hearings on the charter system application.

Notice

To: The Toccoa Record
 Radio Station WNEG
 Principals, Stephens County School System

From: Sherrie Whiten, Superintendent

Date: September 9, 2013

Re: Public Hearing

There will be two public hearings to review the draft of the Charter System Petition for Stephens County School System.

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The meetings will be held Monday, September 30, 2013 at 9:00am, and at 5:00pm. The meetings will be held at the Administrative Offices of Stephens County School System, 2332 Mize Road, Toccoa, GA.

Exhibit 3: Description of how stakeholders, including parents and community members, were involved in the development of the Charter System Application.

As the 2012-2013 school year began, Stephens County School System started the process of consolidating many of the systems' plans as we began to prepare for district SACS accreditation. These plans included: school level accreditation plans, technology plans, consolidated grant application for the state of Georgia, professional development plans, Title I plans, Title II-A Equity plan, CTAE plan, IDEA plan, safety plans, facilities plans, charter system application requirements, and annual school improvement plans. The goal was to see how the different plans were connected and were used to guide teaching, learning, and assessment in Stephens County.

In January 2013, the Stephens County Board of Education submitted a letter of intent to the Georgia State Department of Education to become a charter system. The Stephens County Charter System development process started immediately and involved approximately 400 community members, staff, and parents. The information was presented to all employees of the school system, including bus drivers, cafeteria staff, clerical staff, paraprofessionals, maintenance staff, teachers, administrators, and the school board members. Several Town Hall and community meetings were held to present Charter System information to parents and community members, and many community members served on the Governance, Innovations, and Waiver Committees who contributed to the charter application. The 10-month process involved many hours of meetings, presentations, surveys, discussions, visits, and conversations with other Charter Systems. During the Charter System planning meetings, the parents, community, and staff expressed concerns that students graduating from Stephens County School System are not always prepared for the level of problem-solving, team building, and critical thinking that are essential in today's fast-paced and complex work environments. A survey of business leaders in the

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community supported this observation. The Charter System development process is chronicled on the district web site: www.stephens.k12.ga.us

From March until May, the community and staff provided input and discussed the decision to become a Charter System and were in full agreement that it was the right choice. The details for implementing the plan are not in place, since the School Governance Teams will be critical in developing the specifics to a well-rounded and rigorous experience for all students in Stephens County.

Once a draft concept was formed the draft was shared with principals, Board of Education members, teachers, and community members. In September, two public hearings were held seeking input into the petition draft. Suggestions were incorporated into the draft. Throughout the process, a copy of the draft was posted on the school system's website and available for review. At the October Board of Education meeting, the petition was approved and ready for submission to the Georgia Department of Education.

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Exhibit 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.

1. Big A Elementary School
2. Eastanollee Elementary School
3. Liberty Elementary School
4. Toccoa Elementary School
5. Stephens County Middle School
6. Stephens County High School

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Exhibit 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.

- *Your description will be used by the Department to provide information to the public about applicants and new charter systems.*

The Stephens County Schools System's mission continues to be "Schools Committed to Student Success" which is supported through clear expectations of the students, parents, teachers, and community members. Foundational in this mission is a set of beliefs that guide the system's commitment to student success.

They are:

- We believe ALL students can learn and achieve success.
- We have high expectations for ALL students and staff.
- We encourage and appreciate parent involvement.
- Our focus on constant improvement is imperative to our continued success.
- The integration of new and engaging technology into the curriculum is a focus within all departments and at all grade levels.
- We believe in offering multiple, high-quality extra-curricular activities for our students.
- We believe that all children, kindergarten through high school, should be exposed to multiple opportunities to participate in the Arts.
- Our Career Technical and Agricultural Education departments are second to none and provide yet another means by which our children can become engaged students and productive citizens.
- The teachers of Stephens County Schools believe in continuing education, with over 78% having advanced degrees.

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- Our administrators, board of education, and superintendent support us in our efforts to reach and teach all of our students.

Stephens County is a rural community of approximately 26,000 located in the mountains of Northeast Georgia. The community places an emphasis on agriculture. Manufacturing has long been a cornerstone of the Stephens County economy, but as the global economy changed, many of the plants closed down. However, companies such as Crown, Caterpillar, Patterson Pump, and GEM Southeast are helping drive down an unemployment rate that was once around 11%. In July 2013, the unemployment rate was 8.8%, compared to the national average of 7.6%. Employers in Stephens County are interested in supporting the system's efforts to build a solid local workforce around technology, science, math, as well as "soft" skills such as work ethics, social skills, and responsibility. The school system is committed to working together with the community to improve this rate by graduating students who will be viable and capable employees. Community demographics should be considered in order to improve the unemployment rate. The median income is \$37,502, significantly below the state's which is \$49,736. Educational attainment in Stephens County indicates that 20.7% of county residents have a college degree and above compared to 27.5% in Georgia. Forty percent (40.9%) have a high school diploma compared with 84% across the State of Georgia. Stephens County School System is a high poverty district as evidenced by a free and reduced lunch rate of over 62%. Demographically, our student population is made up of 77% White, 19% African-American, and 4% Hispanic.

Stephens County School System has approximately 4,000 students (Pre-K to 12th Grade), and the school system has six schools: four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Programs include: Standards-Based Instruction (Pre-K to 12); academic after-school tutoring (K-12); technology integration (Pre-K to 12); Georgia Lottery Pre-kindergarten; Schoolwide Title I (K-12); Technology courses (K-12); Career Tech and Agricultural Education (CTAE, 9-12); Advanced Placement (9-12); Post-Secondary Articulation (9-12); Jr. ROTC (9-12); High Schools That Work (9-12), and a 9th Grade Academy.

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Exhibit 6: Local school governance training timeline including training topics.

August 2014- Purpose, Parliamentary Procedure, Protocol, Sunshine Laws, Etiquette

September 2014- By-laws

October 2014- School Improvement Plan/SACS process

November 2014- Report of Progress, CCRPI/Standards

January 2015- Budget

February 2015- Effective Decision Making

March 2015- Personnel

April 2015- Conflict Resolution/Team Building/Reaching Consensus

May 2015- Technology Integration

Year Two Topics:

Assessment, Hiring Practices, Parent and Community Engagement, Special Education Law, Federal Programs, Strategic Planning, School Operations, SACS Recommendations

Year Three Topics:

Topics will be based on the Needs-Assessment of the School Governance Teams and the schools.

Exhibit 7: Conflict of interest policy for local school governing councils.

Board Policy
Board Member Conflict of Interest

Descriptor Code: BHA

The Stephens County Board of Education shall adhere to these Conflict of Interest provisions, as set forth in state law.

Financial Governance

1. No Board member shall use or attempt to use his or her official position to secure unwarranted privileges, advantages, or employment for himself or herself, his or her immediate family member, or others.

2. No Board member shall act in his or her official capacity in any matter where he or she, his or her immediate family member, or a business organization in which he or she has a material financial interest that would reasonably be expected to impair his or her objectivity or independence of judgment. Compliance with Code Section 20-2-505 shall not constitute a violation of this paragraph.

3. No Board member shall solicit or accept or knowingly allow his or her immediate family member or business organization in which he or she has an interest to solicit or accept any gift, favor, loan, political contribution, service, promise of future employment, or other thing of value based upon an understanding that the gift, favor, loan, contribution, service, promise, or other thing of value was given or offered for the purpose of influencing that board member in the discharge of his or her official duties. This paragraph shall not apply to the solicitation or acceptance of contributions to the campaign of an announced candidate for elective public office if the local board of education member has no knowledge or reason to believe that the campaign contribution, if accepted, was given with the intent to influence the local board of education member in the discharge of his or her official duties. For purposes of this paragraph, a gift, favor, loan, contribution, service, promise, or other thing of value shall not include the items contained in subparagraphs (a)(2)(A) through (a)(2)(J) of Code Section 16-10-2.

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4. No Board member shall use, or knowingly allow to be used, his or her official position or any information not generally available to the members of the public which he or she receives or acquires in the course of and by reason of his or her official position for the purpose of securing financial gain for himself or herself, his or her immediate family member, or any business organization with which he or she is associated.

5. No Board member or business organization in which he or she has an interest shall represent any person or party other than the local board of education or local school system in connection with any cause, proceeding, application, or other matter pending before the local school system in which he or she serves or in any proceeding involving the local school system in which he or she serves.

6. No Board member shall be prohibited from making an inquiry for information on behalf of a constituent if no fee, reward, or other thing of value is promised to, given to, or accepted by the local board of education member or his or her immediate family member in return therefor.

7. No Board member shall be deemed in conflict with these provisions if, by reason of his or her participation in any matter required to be voted upon by the local board of education, no material or monetary gain accrues to him or her as a member of any profession, occupation, or group to any greater extent than any gain could reasonably be expected to accrue to any other member of that profession, occupation, or group.

8. No Board member may also be an officer in any organization that sells goods or services to that local school system, except as provided in Code Section 20-2-505 and excluding nonprofit membership organizations.

9. No Board member shall be deemed in conflict with these provisions if, by reason of his or her participation in any matter required to be voted upon by the local board of education, no material or monetary gain accrues to him or her as a member of any profession, occupation, or group to any greater extent than any gain could reasonably be expected to accrue to any other member of that profession, occupation, or group.

10. No Board member shall sell to any county board any supplies or equipment used, consumed, or necessary in the

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operation of any public school in this state unless there are fewer than three sources for such supplies or equipment within the county; provided, however, that any purchase pursuant to this subsection for supplies or equipment that is equal to or greater than \$10,000.00 shall be approved by a majority of the members of the board in an open public meeting. Any member violating this shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

11. No local board may do business with a bank or financial institution where a Board member is an employee, stockholder, director or officer when such board member owns 30% or more stock in that institution.

12. No Board member may have a financial interest in school buses, bus equipment or supplies, provide services for buses owned by the Board, or sell gasoline to the Board from a corporation in which the Board member is a shareholder.

13. No Board member shall accept a monetary fee or honorarium in excess of \$101.00 for a speaking engagement, participation in a seminar, discussion panel, or other activity that directly relates to the official duties of that public officer or the office of that public officer. Actual and reasonable expenses for food, beverages, travel, lodging, and registration for a meeting which are provided to permit participation in a panel or speaking engagement at the meeting shall not be monetary fees or honoraria.

Conduct As Board Member

1. No Board member shall disclose to or discuss any information which is subject to attorney-client privilege belonging to the local board of education to any person other than other Board members, the Board attorney, the local school superintendent, or persons designated by the local school superintendent for such purposes unless such privilege has been waived by a majority vote of the whole Board.

2. No Board member shall vote on the employment or promotion of any of his or her immediate family members. No immediate family member of a Board member may be employed or promoted unless a public, recorded vote is taken separately from all other personnel matters.

3. No Board member may be employed in any position in the school district in which they serve.

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4. No Board member shall hold another county office.
5. No Board member shall be employed by the State Department of Education or serve concurrently as a member of the State Board of Education.
6. No Board member shall serve on the governing body of a private elementary or secondary educational institution.

Each member of this Board understands and acknowledges that no person shall be eligible for election as a member of a local board of education unless he or she:

- (1) Has read and understands the code of ethics and the conflict of interest provisions applicable to members of local boards of education and has agreed to abide by them; and
- (2) Has agreed to annually disclose compliance with the State Board of Education's policy on training for members of local boards of education, the code of ethics of the local board of education, and the conflict of interest provisions applicable to members of local boards of education.

Each person offering his or her candidacy for election as a member of a local board of education shall file an affidavit with the officer before whom such person has qualified for such election prior to or at the time of qualifying, which affidavit shall affirm that he or she meets all of the qualifications required pursuant to this subsection. This subsection shall apply only to local board of education members elected or appointed on or after July 1, 2010.

Stephens County Schools

Date Adopted: 1/18/2011

NOTE: *The State of Georgia has moved the Georgia Code. This new environment no longer allows us to link directly to the Georgia Code. For example **enter 20-02-0211 in the search window** and the Georgia Code will appear.*

Georgia Code	Description
O.C.G.A. 20-02-0049	Standards for local board of education members
O.C.G.A. 20-02-0063	Prohibit certain conflicts of interest of board members
	Filing by public officers; filing by candidates for public office; filing by elected officials and members of the General Assembly; electronic filing
O.C.G.A. 21-05-0050	Financial interest in transportation services by board members/superintendent prohibited
O.C.G.A. 20-02-1072	School board members prohibited from selling school supplies or
O.C.G.A. 20-02-0505	

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	<u>equipment to county board</u>
O.C.G.A. 20-02-0505.1	<u>Board transacting business with bank or similar institution in which member has interest</u>
O.C.G.A. 20-02-0051	<u>Election of county board members; persons ineligible to serve</u>
O.C.G.A. 20-02-0058.1	<u>"Immediate family" defined; employment of family members</u>
O.C.G.A. 21-05-0001	<u>Ethics in Government Act - short title</u>
O.C.G.A. 21-05-0011	<u>Acceptance by public officers of monetary fees or honoraria</u>
O.C.G.A. 21-05-0033	<u>Disposition of contributions</u>
O.C.G.A. 21-05-0034	<u>Campaign Disclosure Reports</u>
O.C.G.A. 21-05-0041	<u>Maximum allowable contribution by persons or partnerships</u>
O.C.G.A. 21-05-0070	<u>Public Officials Conduct and Lobbyist Disclosure - Definitions</u>
O.C.G.A. 45-02-0002	<u>Person to hold only one county office; commissioned officer not to be deputy for another</u>
Rule 160-5-1-.36	<u>Local School Board Governance</u>

These references are not intended to be part of the policy itself, nor do they indicate the basis or authority for the board to enact this policy. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.

Stephens County School System

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Exhibit 8: A list of business arrangements of partnerships with existing schools, educational programs, businesses and non-profits and the nature of services provided, including disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest.

There are no potential conflicts of interest with any of the partners listed.

Big A Elementary School:

Bulldog Carwash

Big A Road
Toccoa, GA
Chuck Wright-Owner

Dominos Pizza

103 West Currahee Street
Toccoa, GA 30577
Contact: Beth Griner

Home Depot

302 Memorial Drive
Toccoa, GA 30577
Contact: Andrew Watson

Sonic Drive In

15 Wal-Mart Court
Eastanollee, GA 30538
Contact: James Addison

Inflate-A-Fun

55 Oak Street
Toccoa, GA 30577
706-244-4124
Contact: Wesley Copelan

Northeast Georgia Bank

624 S. Big A Road
Toccoa, GA 30577
706-886-4351
Contact: Brenda Sorrells

Stephens Teachers Federal Credit Union

Highway 106
Toccoa, Ga
706-886-7145

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Contact: Laura Dennison

Edward Jones

29 Wall St. Way

Toccoa, GA

706-886-0411

David Plaisted, Aaron Plaisted

Lanier Clothes Distribution Center

6124 Old Liberty Hill Road

Toccoa, GA 30577

706-886-0362

Contact: Burt Holmes

Hayes Automotive Group

933 W. Currahee

Toccoa, GA

706-886-3146

Contact: Stan Tabor

Wendy's - Calhoun Management Corporation

600 College Avenue

Clemson, SC 29631

Contact: Sherry Wynn

Cabe Crest Catering

251 Pulliam Road

Eastanollee, GA 30538

Contact: Alisha Adams

Eastanollee Elementary School

ACREE OIL COMPANY

AGRI AUCTION OF GA

ARROWOOD GENERAL CONTRACTING

BAR-B-QUE SHACK

CENTRAL CNC, LLC

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CROWN RESOURCES

DODD CONSTRUCTION

EASTANOLLEE ELEMENTARY PTO

EASTANOLLEE LIVESTOCK BARN

HART E.M.C.

HERRON GRADING

JAMES WHITEN LIVESTOCK

JERRY WHITE'S PHARMACY

MARTIN LIONS CLUB

MARTIN WOMEN'S CLUB

MOUNTAIN AIR

NEXT TO ME MEDICAL SUPPLIES

NORTH GEORGIA CREDIT UNION

PAYNE'S CONSTRUCTION & RENOVATION

RENAE FOWLER HAIR DESIGN

SAGE AUTOMOTIVE

SCOTT JEWELERS

TWO DAY DESIGN

Liberty Elementary School

Commercial Printing

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1st Franklin Financial

Talan Properties, LLC

DOCO Federal Credit Union

Java Station

North Georgia Credit Union

First United Methodist Church

New Hope Baptist Church

High Point Community Church

Toccoa Kiwanis Club

Toccoa Woman's Club

Toccoa Elementary School

Pruitt Corporation

David Benfield, CPA

Threads

First Citizens Bank

Elks Lodge

Toccoa National Guard

McDonalds

Hardees

Woodmen of the World

(Lodge 47-Toccoa)

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Stephens-Franklin Teachers Federal Credit Union

The Toccoa Record

Tates Creek Baptist Church

North Georgia Technical College

Arby's

Toccoa Christian Church

First Presbyterian Church

Stephens County Middle School

Community Bank and Trust

Stephens Federal Bank

Wal-Mart

Wendy's

Toccoa Clinic Medical Associates

Toccoa Falls College/Human Resources

Boys & Girls Club of Toccoa

Morgan Concrete Company

North Georgia Credit Union

Stephens-Franklin Teachers Credit Union

McDonald's

Regions Bank

Martin Lions Club

CROSSROADS SUCCESS ACADEMY

1stFranklin Financial Corp

Stephens Federal Bank

Stephens County High School

Stephens County School System

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1st Franklin Financial Corp

Accent on Beauty

Acree Oil

Advance Auto Parts

Applebee's

Arby's

Arrowood Contractors

Bar-B-Q Shack

Bojangles

Bowen and Watson

Brenda's Boutique

Brother John's Sub & Sandwich Shop

Bulldogs Xpress Lube

Café Kava. LLC

Carter's Royal Dispos-All, Inc.

Christ Fellowship Church

City of Toccoa

Community Bank and Trust

Constitutional Officers and Elected Officials

Cups and Cones

Currahee Club

Cutting Edge Day Spa

Dalco, Inc.

Department of Economic Development

DOCO Credit Union

Eaton

Fieldale Farms

First Citizens Bank

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Franklin Insurance

Foothills Community Church

G&M Manufacturing

Hair Design (Renee Fowler)

Harris Communications

Heavenly Desserts

Heritage Healthcare

Hill's Exxon

Lanier Clothes

Larry's Service Center

LeCroy Office Supplies

Little Caesars

McDonald's of Toccoa

Meadows Surgical Arts

Med Access of Toccoa

Morgan Concrete Company

Next to Me Medical Supplies

North Georgia Credit Union

North Georgia Technical College

Northland Cable

O'Reilly's

Patterson Pump

Perk Up Cafe

Physical Therapy Specialist

Piedmont College

Rabun County Hospital

Raceway of Toccoa

Rose Lane Bowling

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Sanders Drugs

Sonic Drive-In

Standard Register

Stephens County Hospital

Stephens County Literacy Foundation

Stephens Federal Bank

Sugar Creek Trucking

Terry and Kay Reed

Thread's Sports, Inc

Toccoa Clinic

Toccoa Falls College

Toccoa-Stephens County Chamber of Commerce

Troup's Studio and Hallmark

TruVista

Vanminos Insurance Agency-State Farm

WNEG

Stephens County School System

Bowen and Watson, Inc.

Global Partitions

TruVista

Stephens County Sheriff's Office

Energy Star Partner

Toccoa- Stephens County Chamber of
Commerce

Foodbank of Northeast Georgia

Toccoa Police Department

LeCroy Office Products

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Exhibit 9: A brief description of the system's fiscal history and whether the system is or has ever operated under a fiscal deficit.

One of the most effective ways of building public support for the school district is through demonstrating responsible use of the public funds that we are entrusted with. Over the past several years the national economic downturn has resulted in decreased budgets throughout the school district, however, with the fund balance, and strategic budgeting of resources we have been able to maintain our academic program with minimal charges to class sizes and the number of instructional days available to students. Over the past three fiscal years, we have had a district budget of \$42.6M (FY12), \$397.7M (FY13), and \$40.4M (FY14). Our fund balance over these years has been \$5.4M (FY12), \$4.2M (FY13), and \$1.7M (FY14). In the 2010-2011 school year we did implement a Reduction in Force (RIF) as a means to prevent fiscal deficit. Stephens County Schools has a bond rating of AA+ as evaluated by Standard & Poor (S&P).

To ensure the Stephens County School System budget targets our academic priorities, our budget process emphasizes a zero based budgeting philosophy and a detailed examination of all the budget line items to ensure there are no unnecessary budget line items that could be used to bolster the academic program. Additionally, the Stephens County School District has worked to implement a comprehensive energy management program that offsets operational costs in our district facilities to protect instructional dollars that are critical to the school level academic programs. Since 1999 we have realized over \$5M in energy savings through our energy management efforts.

The Stephens County School District has adequate insurance in place to protect the capital, fixed, and operational assets of the school system. There is comprehensive coverage through Wright Specialty Insurance that includes: property, casualty, business auto, education legal liability, law enforcement

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liability, and crime in a comprehensive commercial package. Further, our employees are covered under our workers' compensation policy through the Georgia Educators Workers' Compensation Trust (GEWCT). These policies are evaluated annually both in terms of appropriate coverage and rates to best meet the needs of the school district. Procedures are in place to ensure compliance with state and federal programs and all required records are maintained with fidelity by the school district.

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Exhibit 10: Online link to the school system's most recent annual audit.

<http://goo.gl/j1f58g>

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Exhibit 11: Online link to the school system's most recent accreditation report.

Big A Elementary School Accreditation Report - <http://goo.gl/tZ6XWw>

Eastanollee Elementary School Accreditation Report - <http://goo.gl/G7EnVh>

Liberty Elementary School Accreditation Report - <http://goo.gl/1Xn8Ic>

Toccoa Elementary School Accreditation Report - <http://goo.gl/WSKsDe>

Stephens County Middle School Accreditation Report - <http://goo.gl/nNqH8e>

Stephens County High School Accreditation Report - <http://goo.gl/kkVGxC>

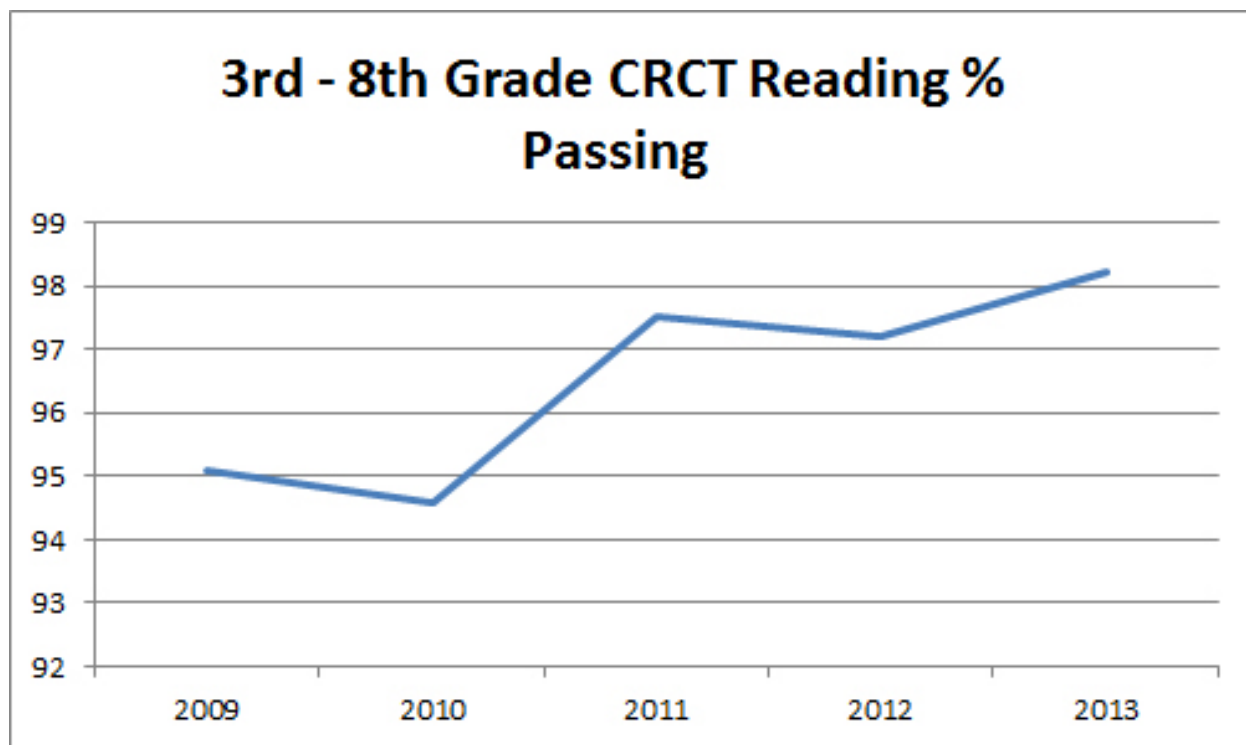
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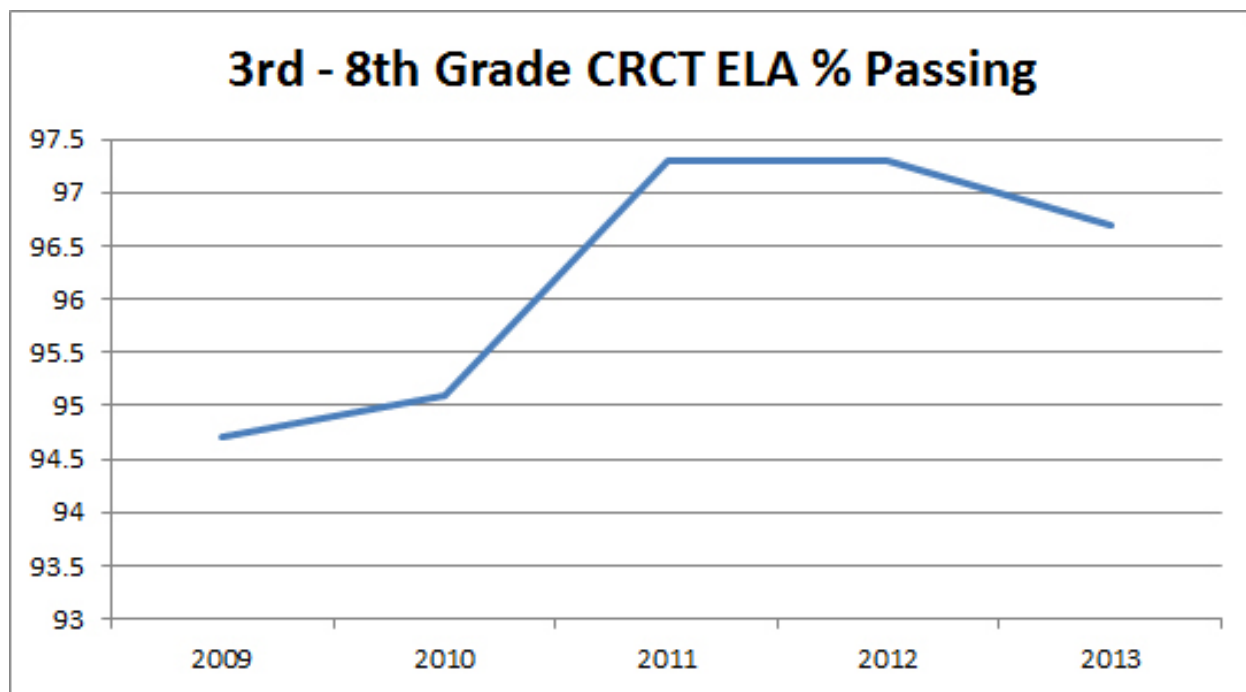
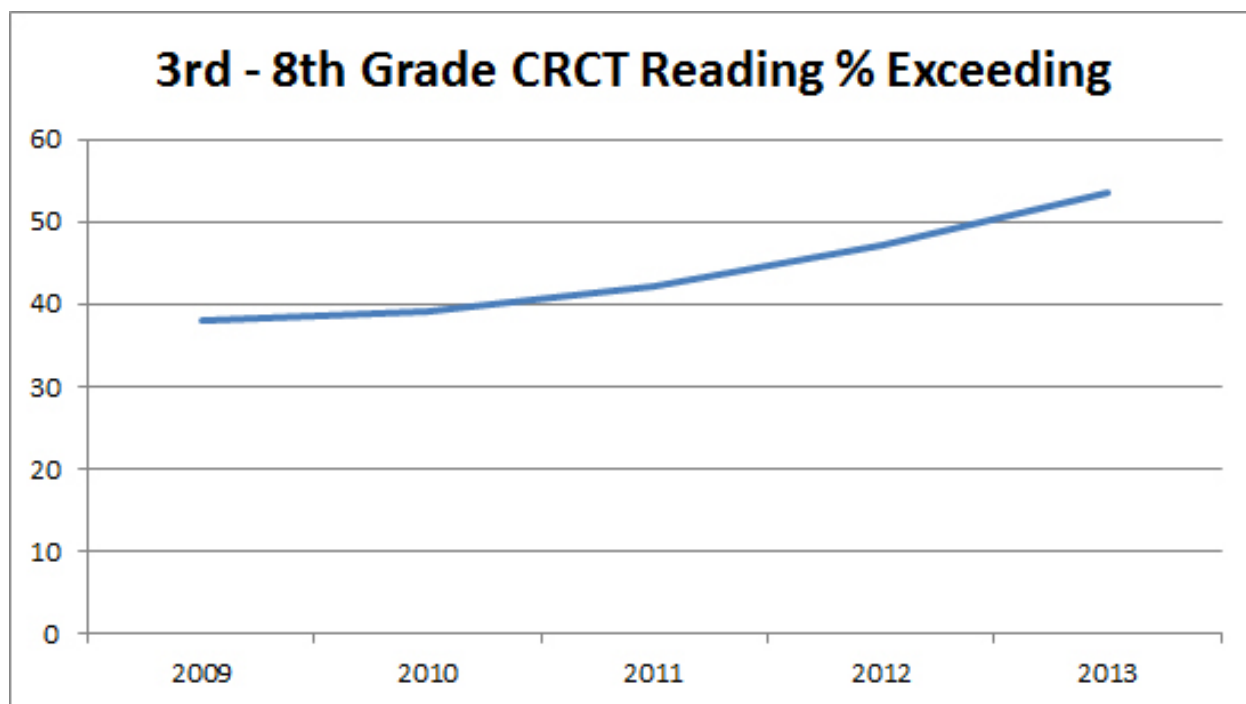
Exhibit 12: Online link to the school system's most recent strategic plan.

<https://eboard.eboardsolutions.com/StrategicPlan/MeasureScorecard.aspx?S=4145&PID=1803>

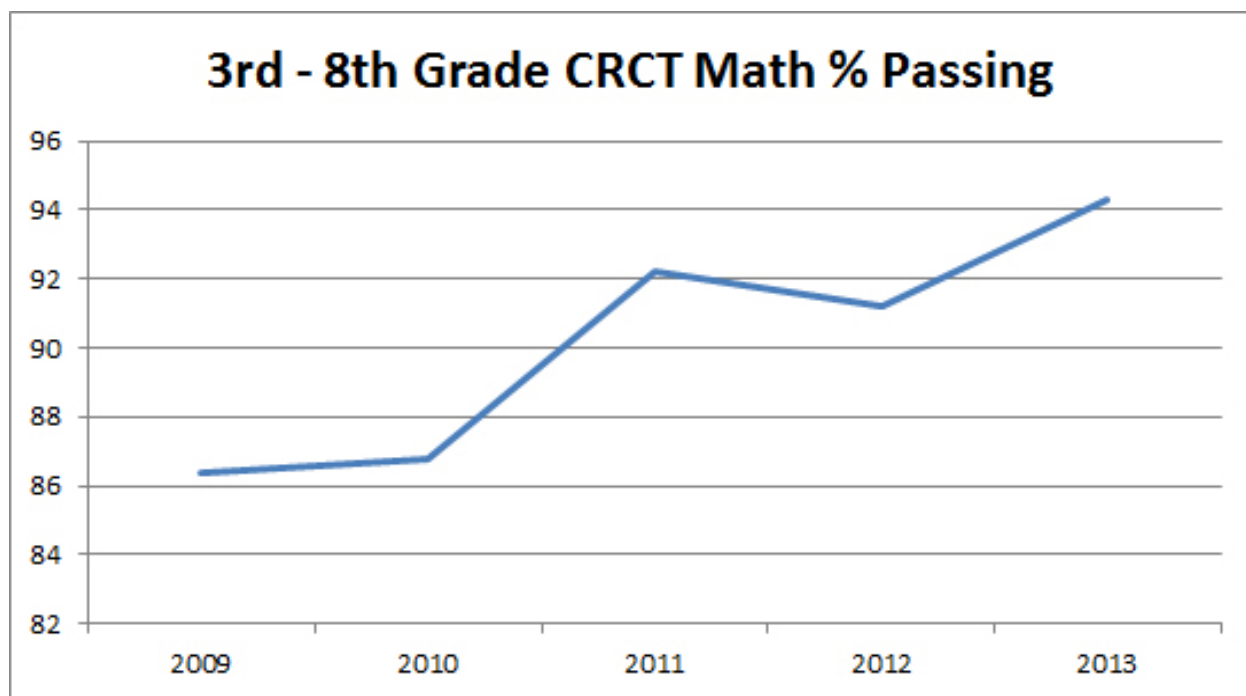
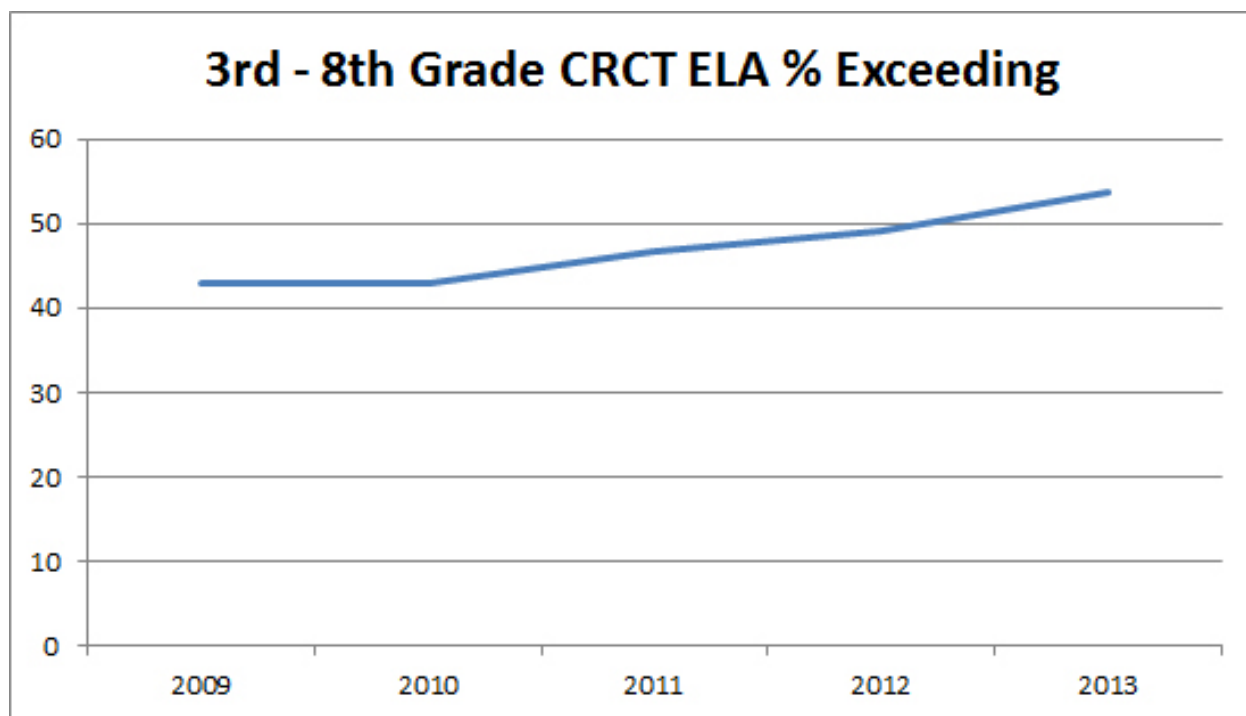
Additional Exhibit 13: Stephens County School System's student performance data for past five years.

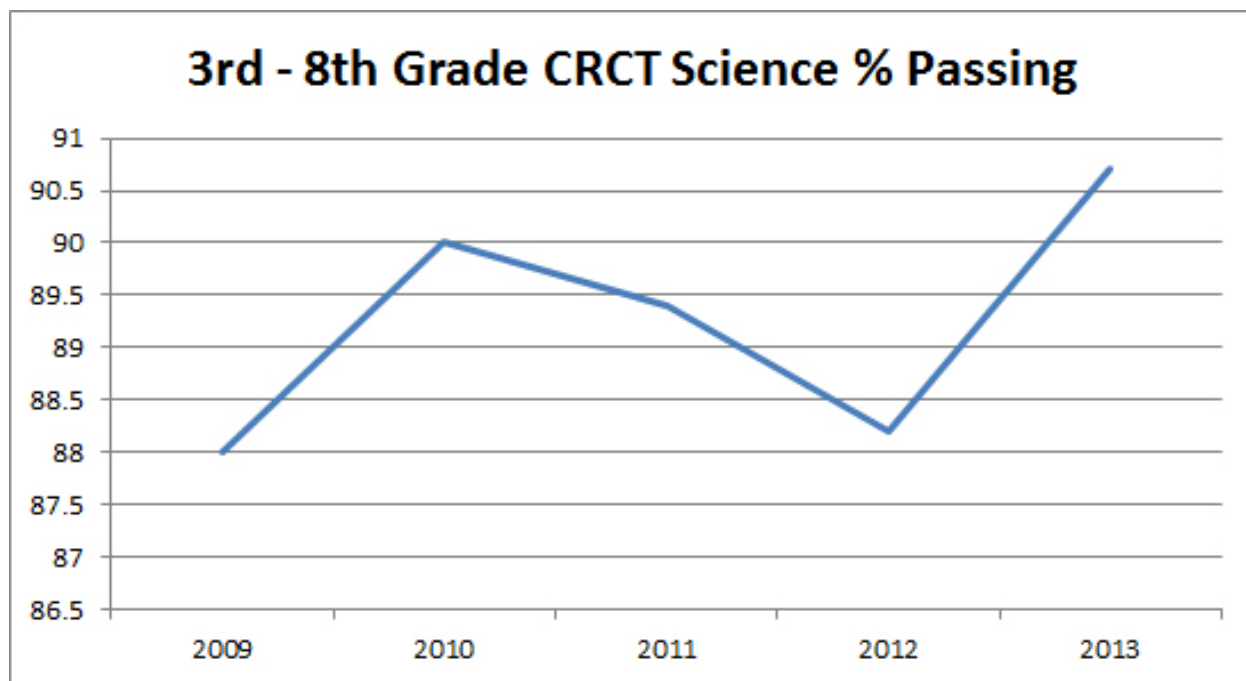
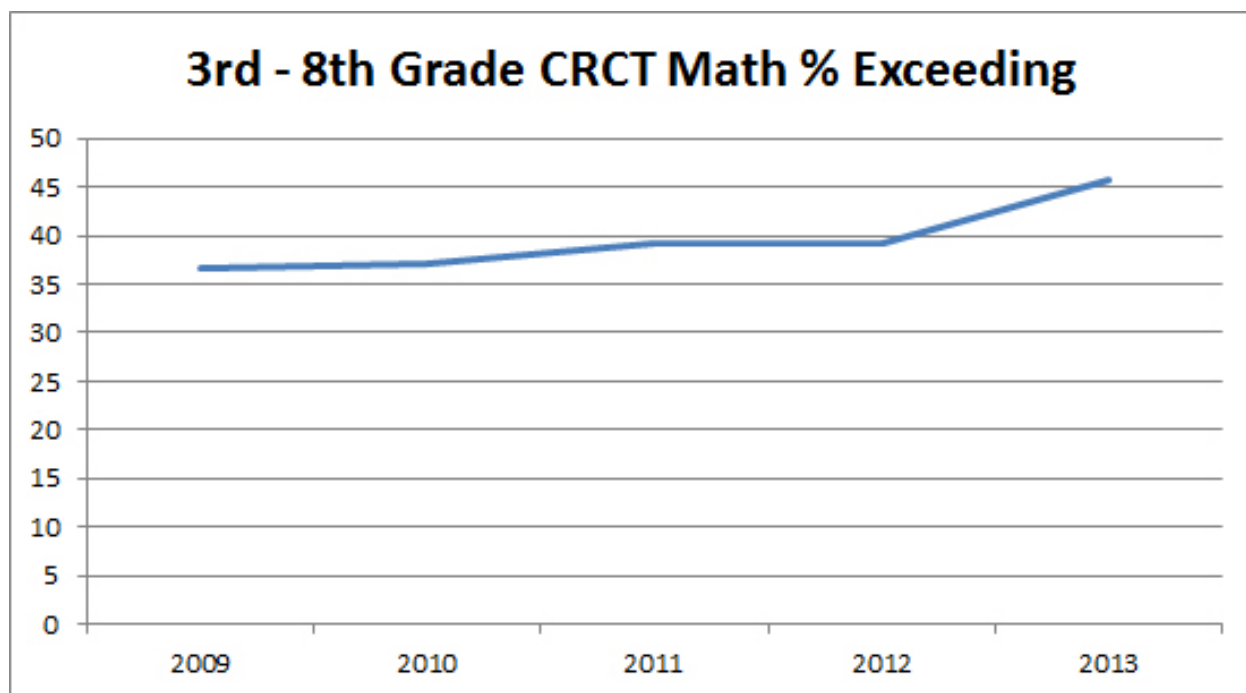


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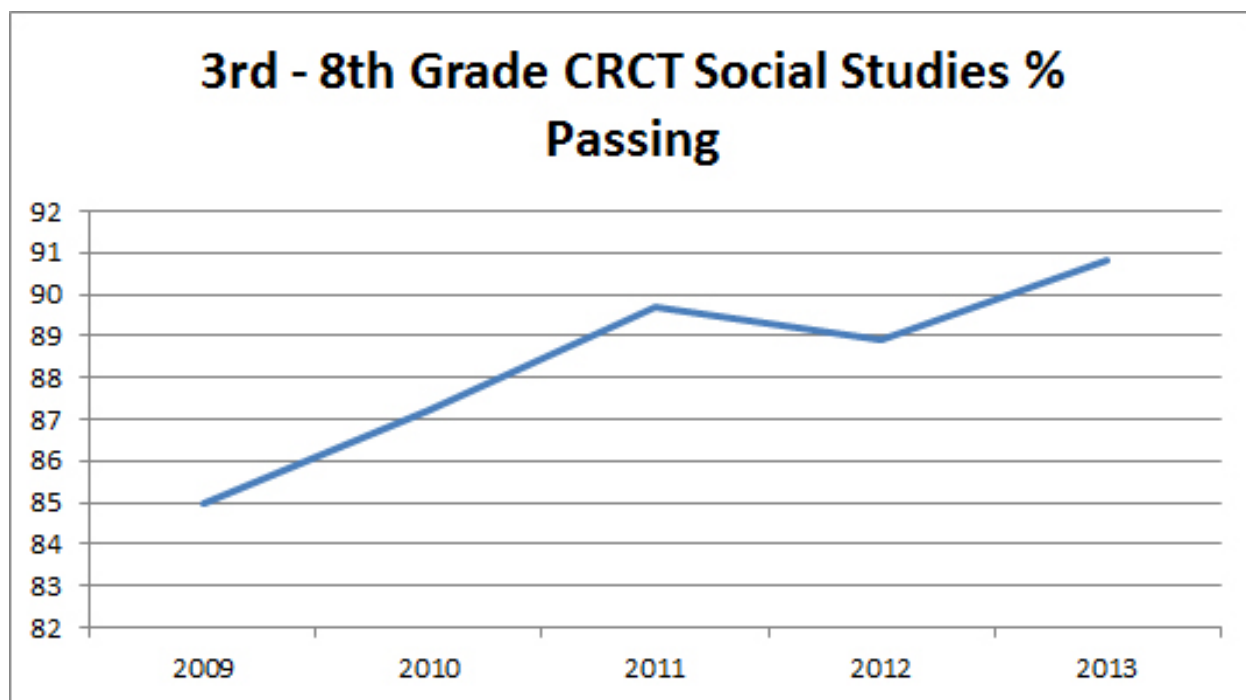
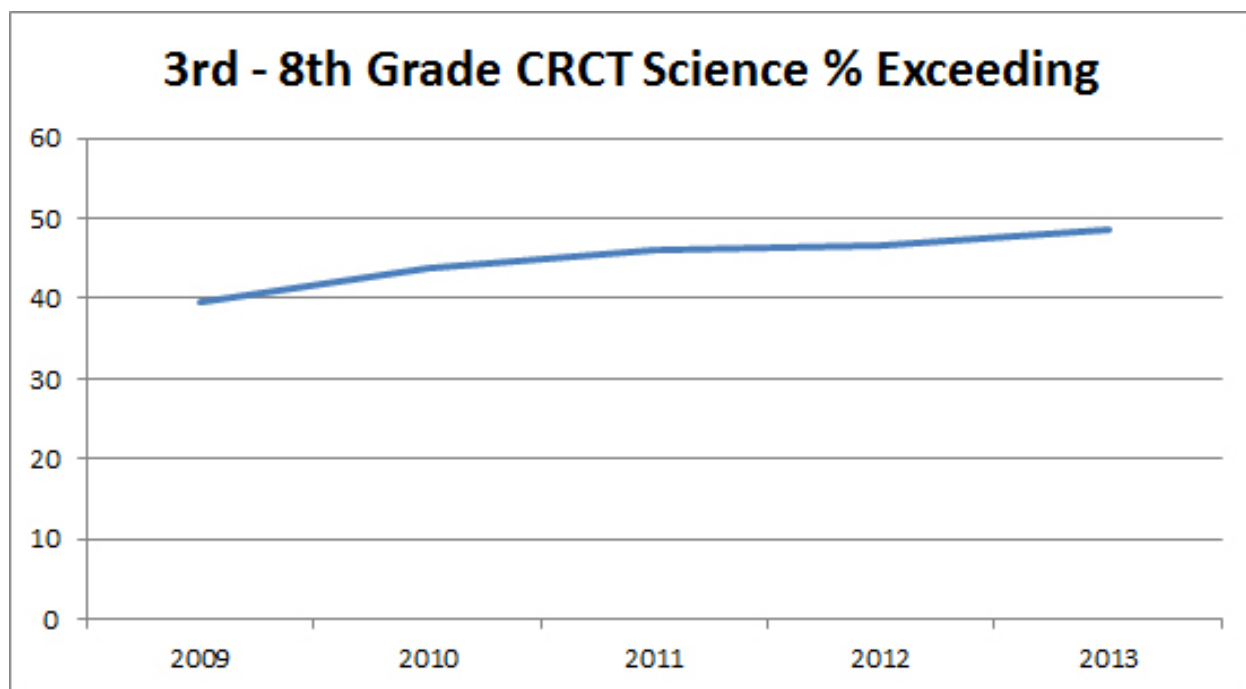


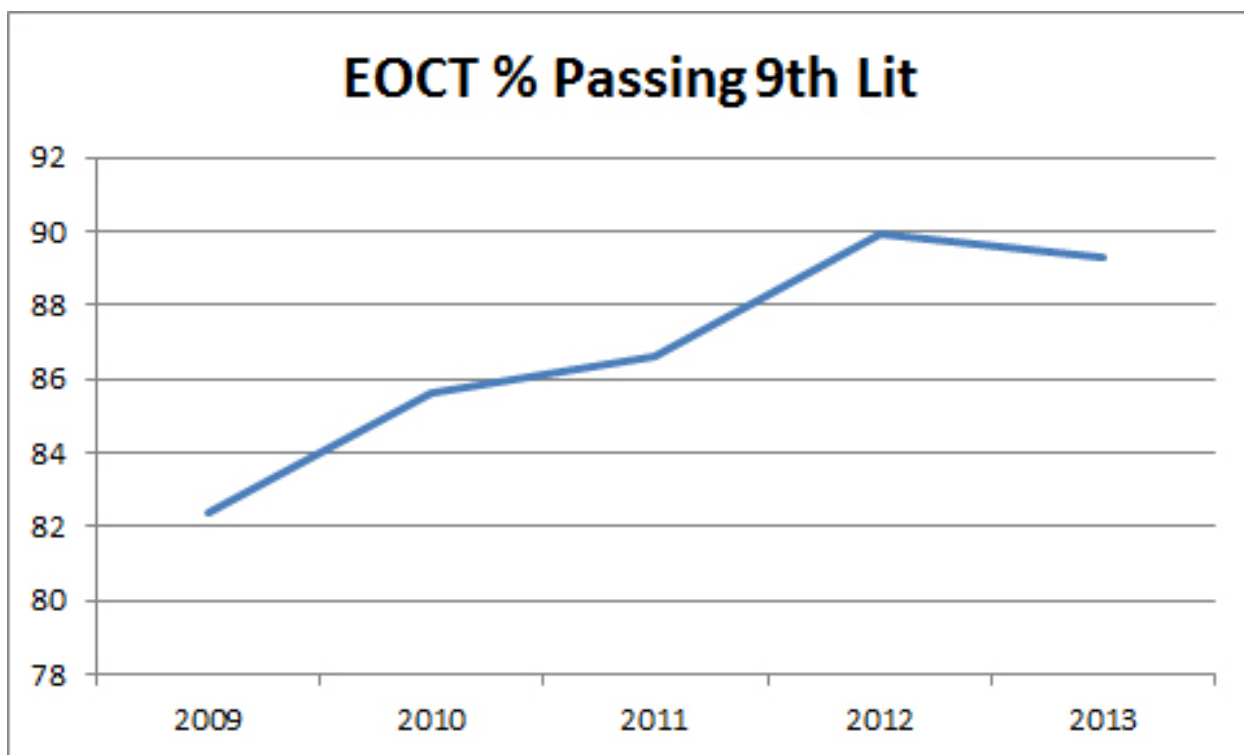
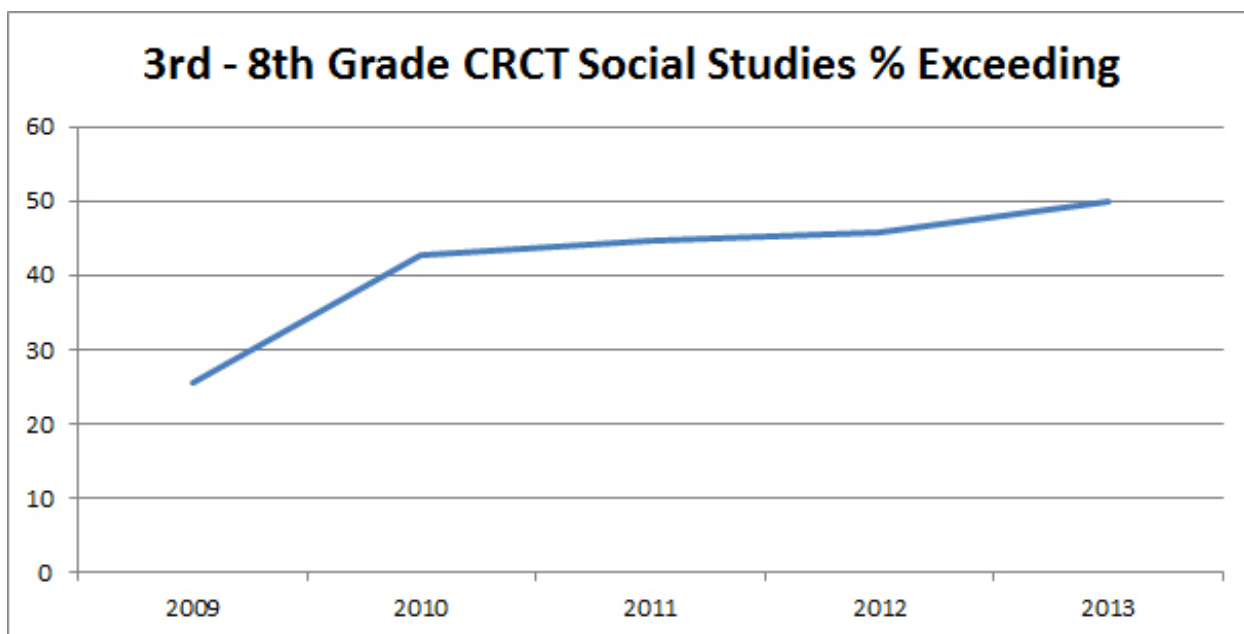
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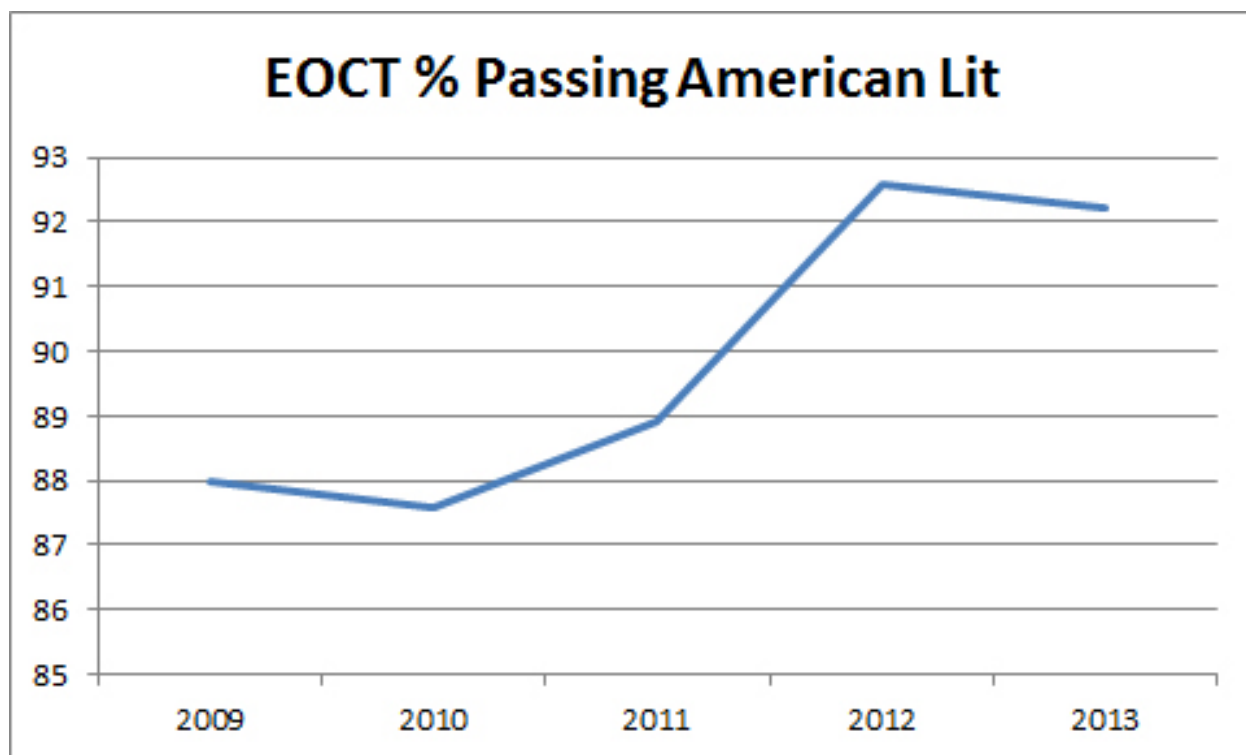
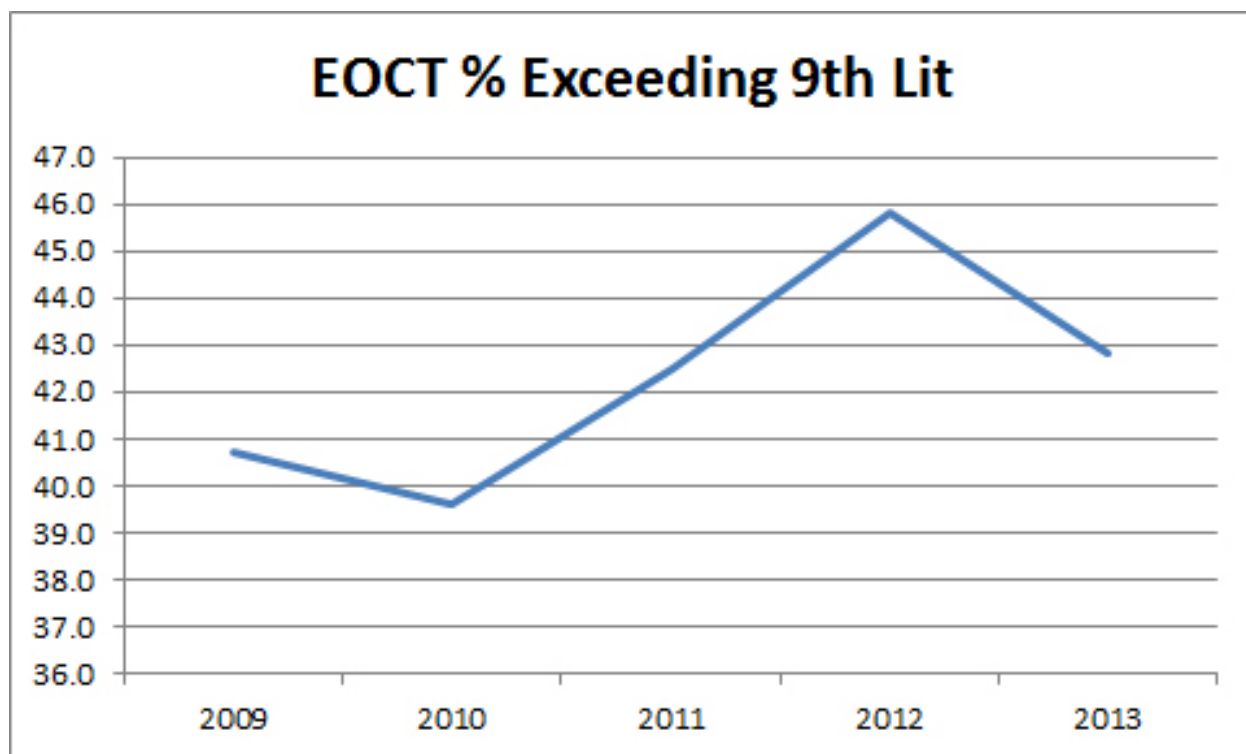


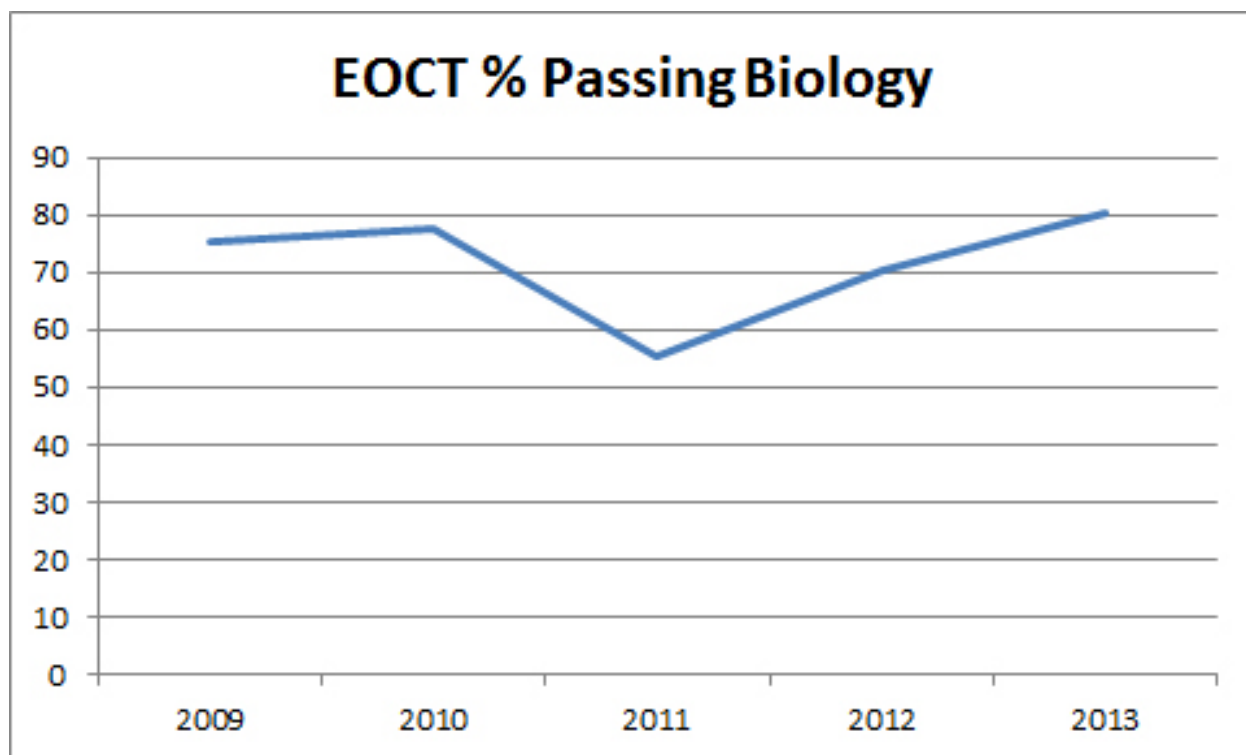
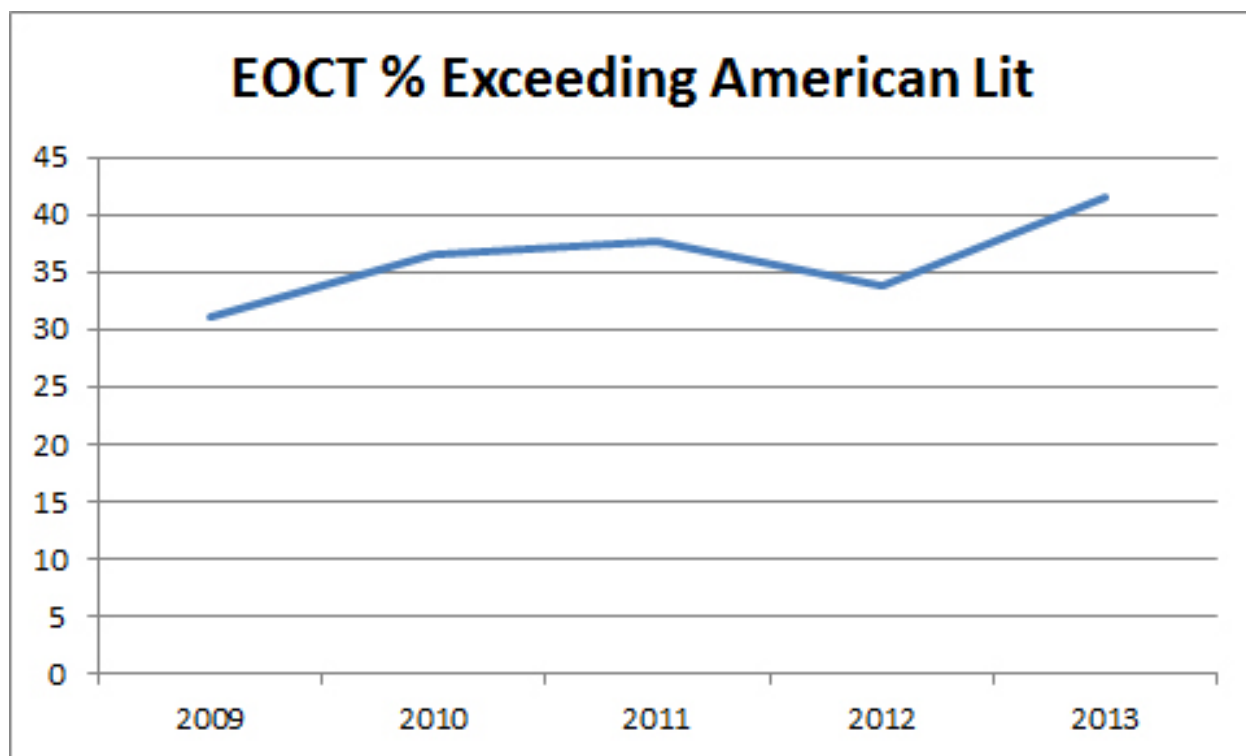


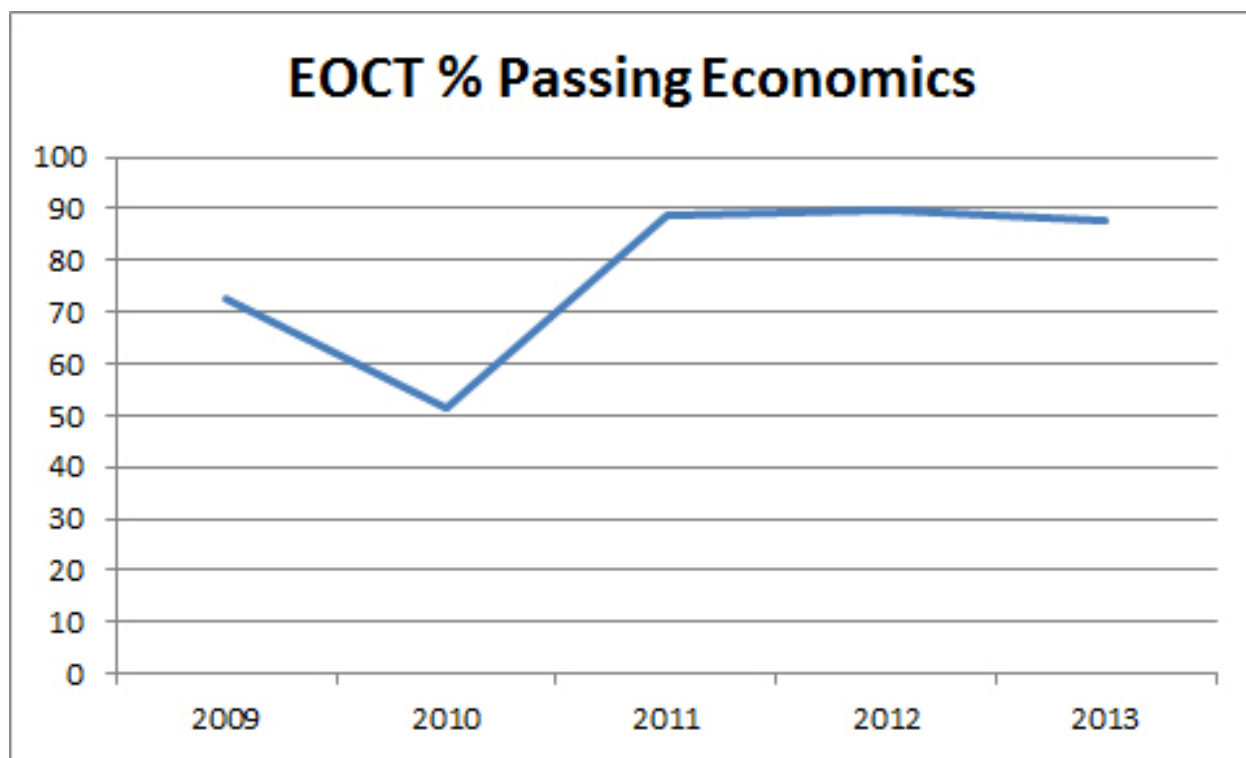
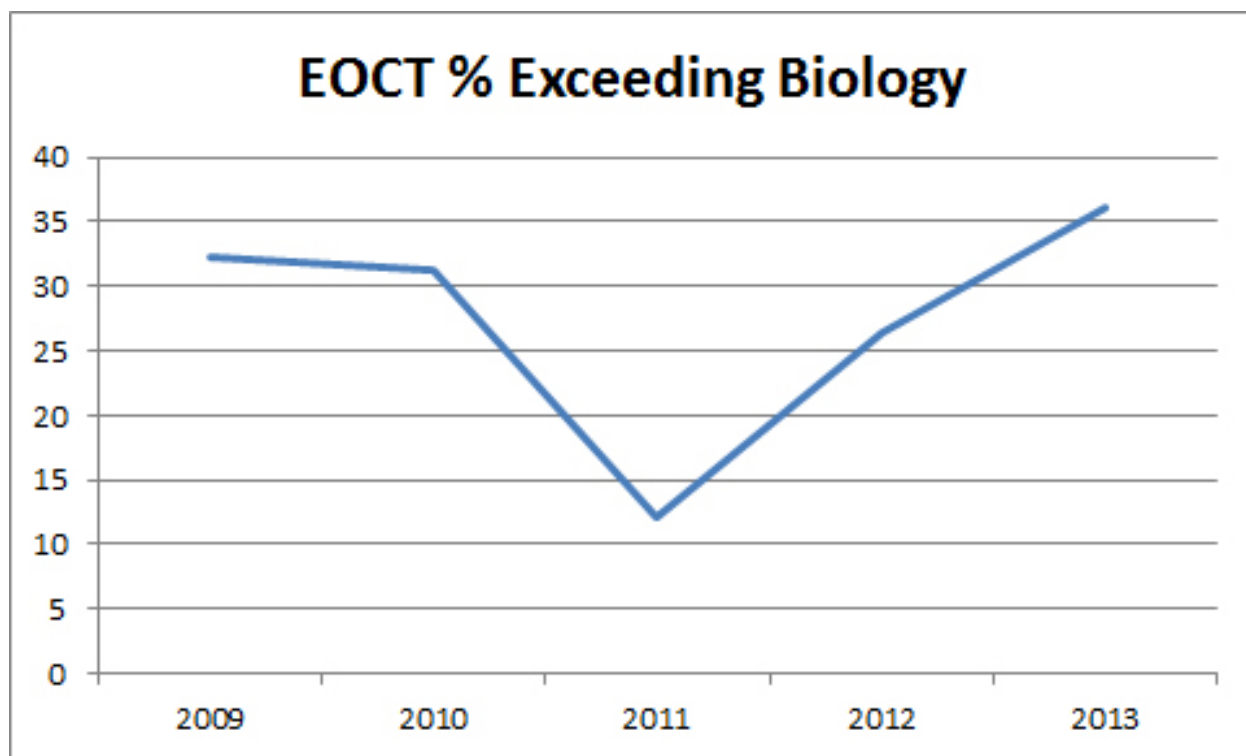
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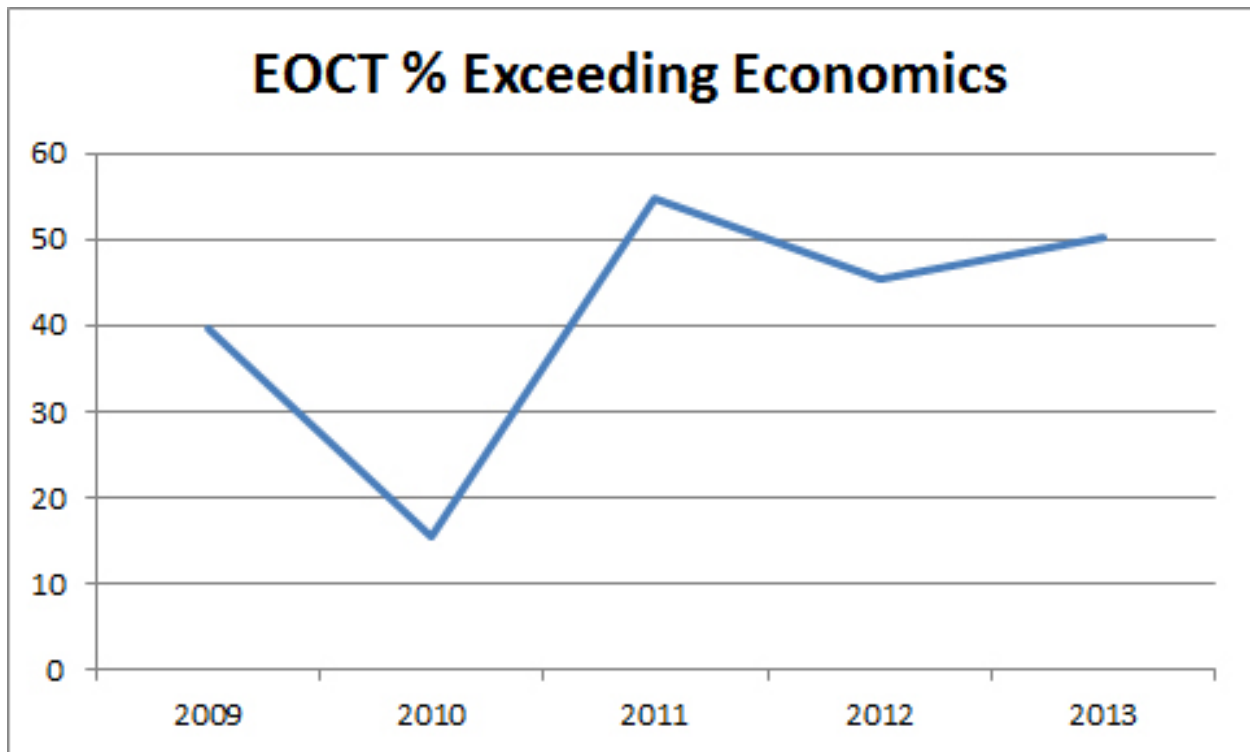




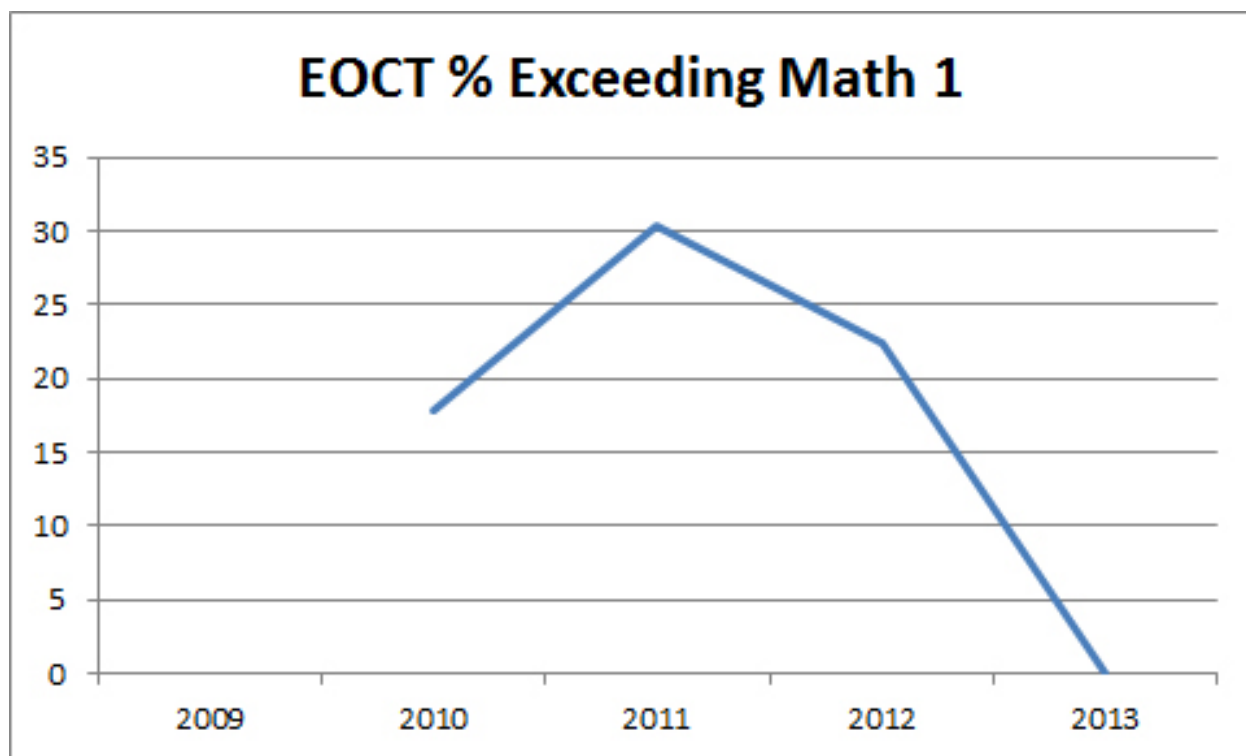
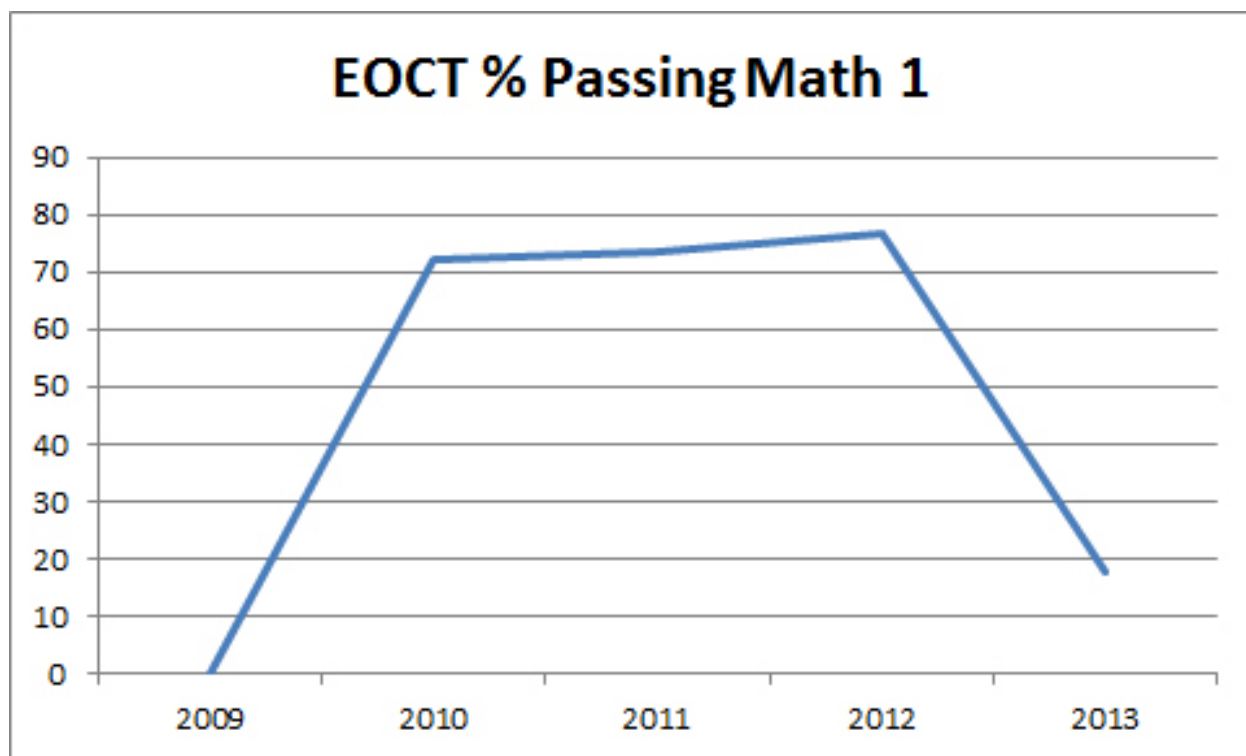


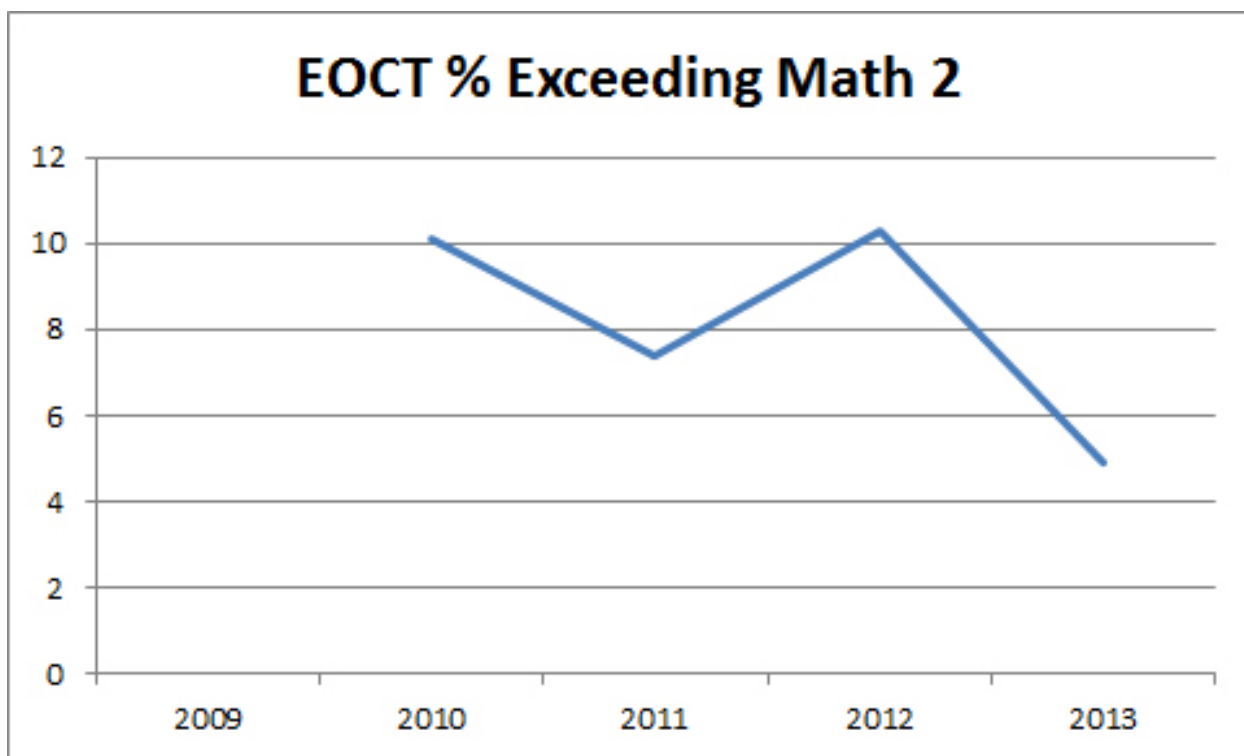
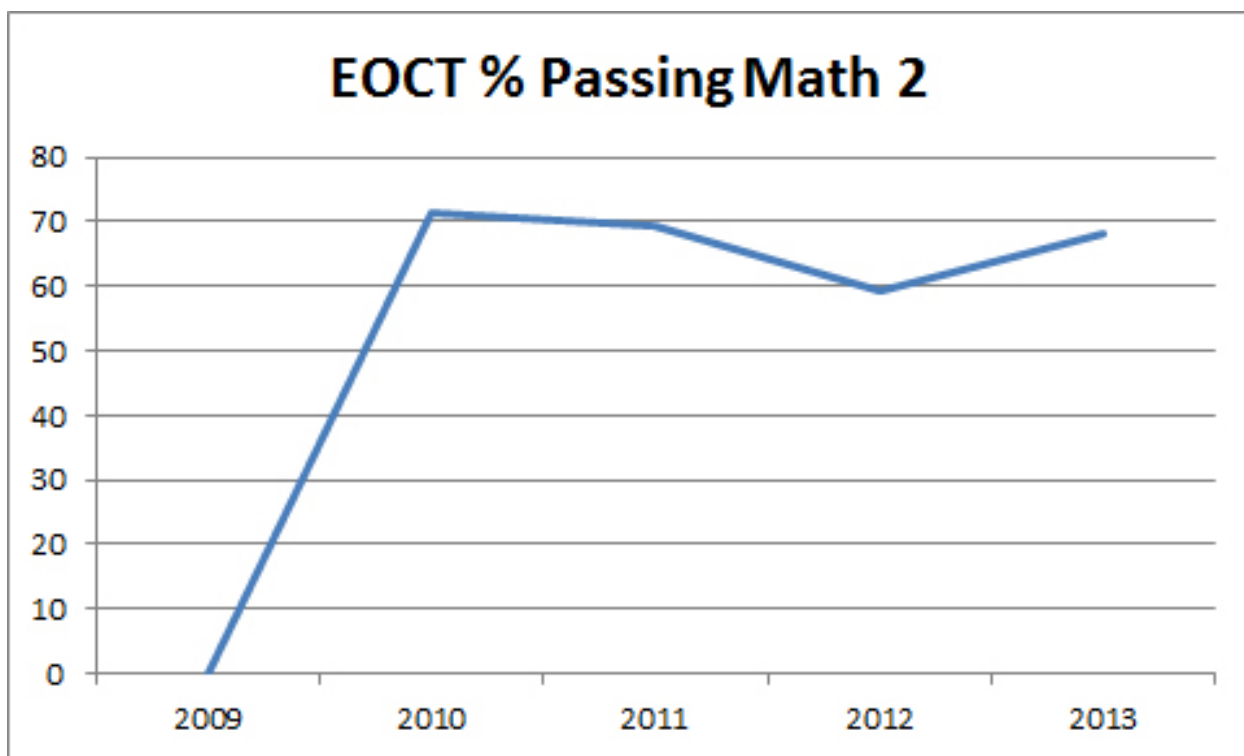


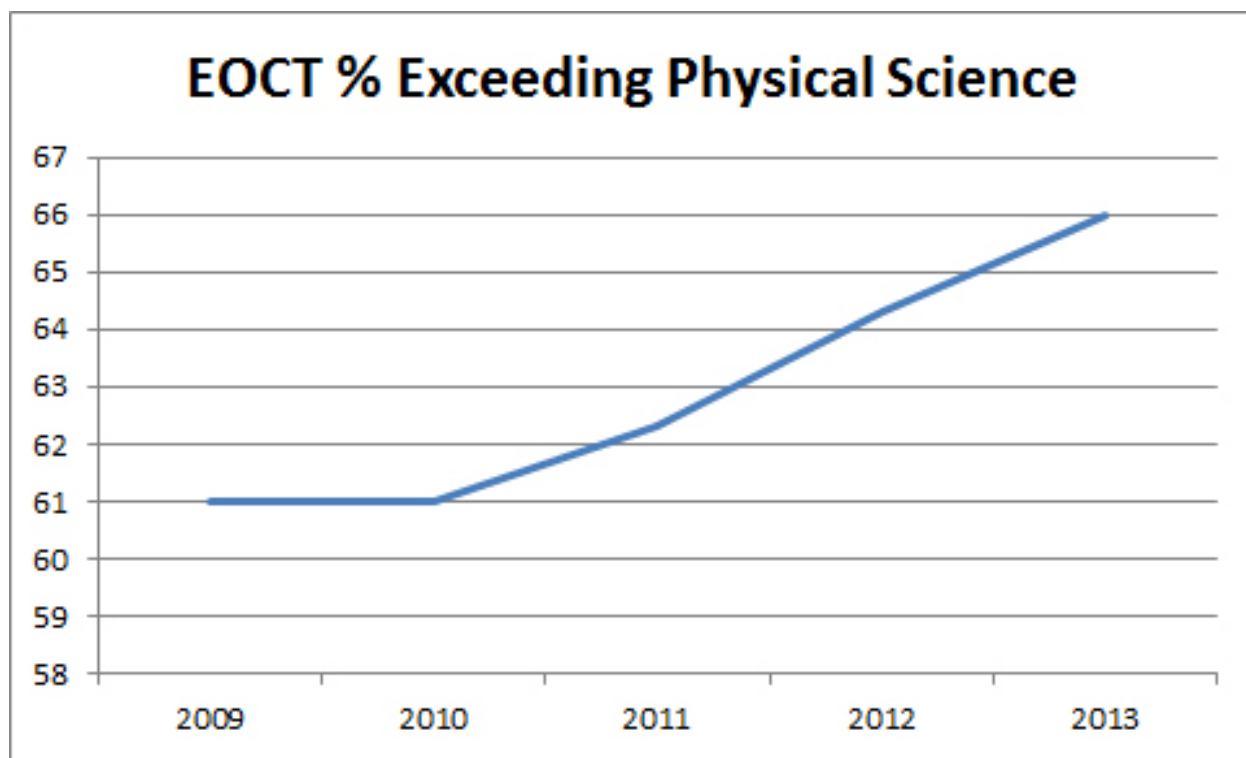
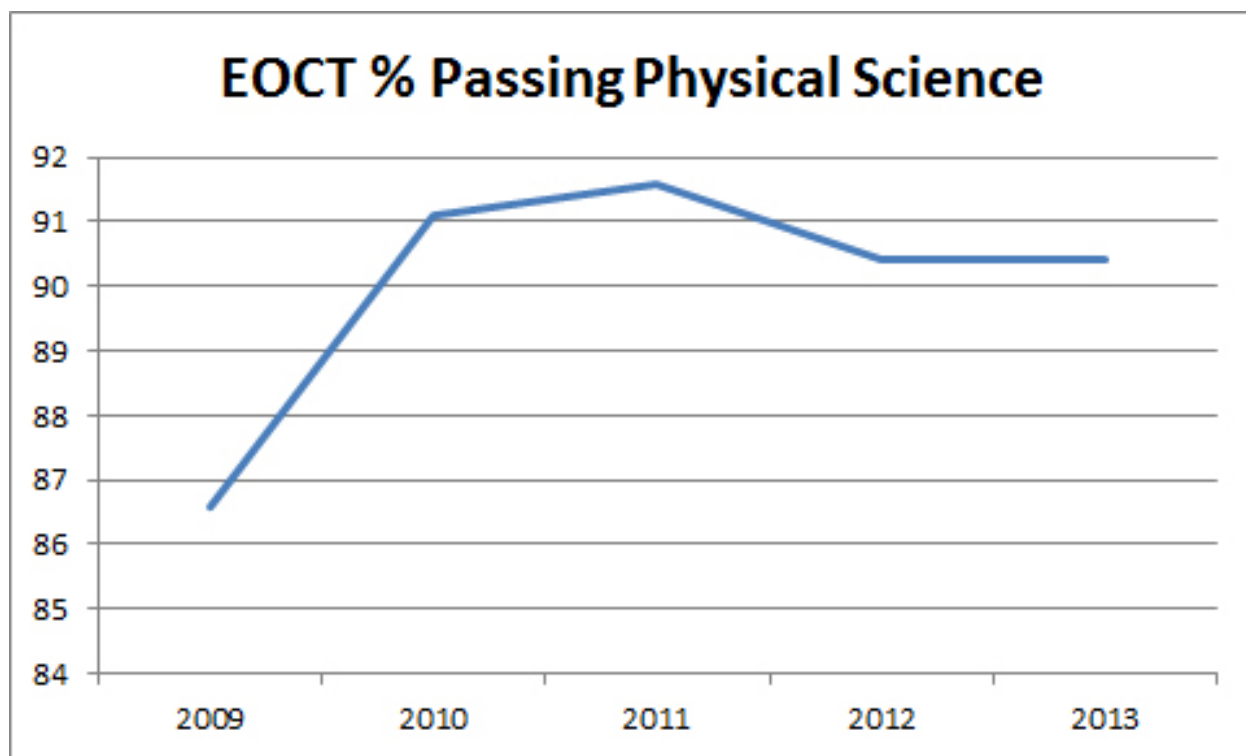




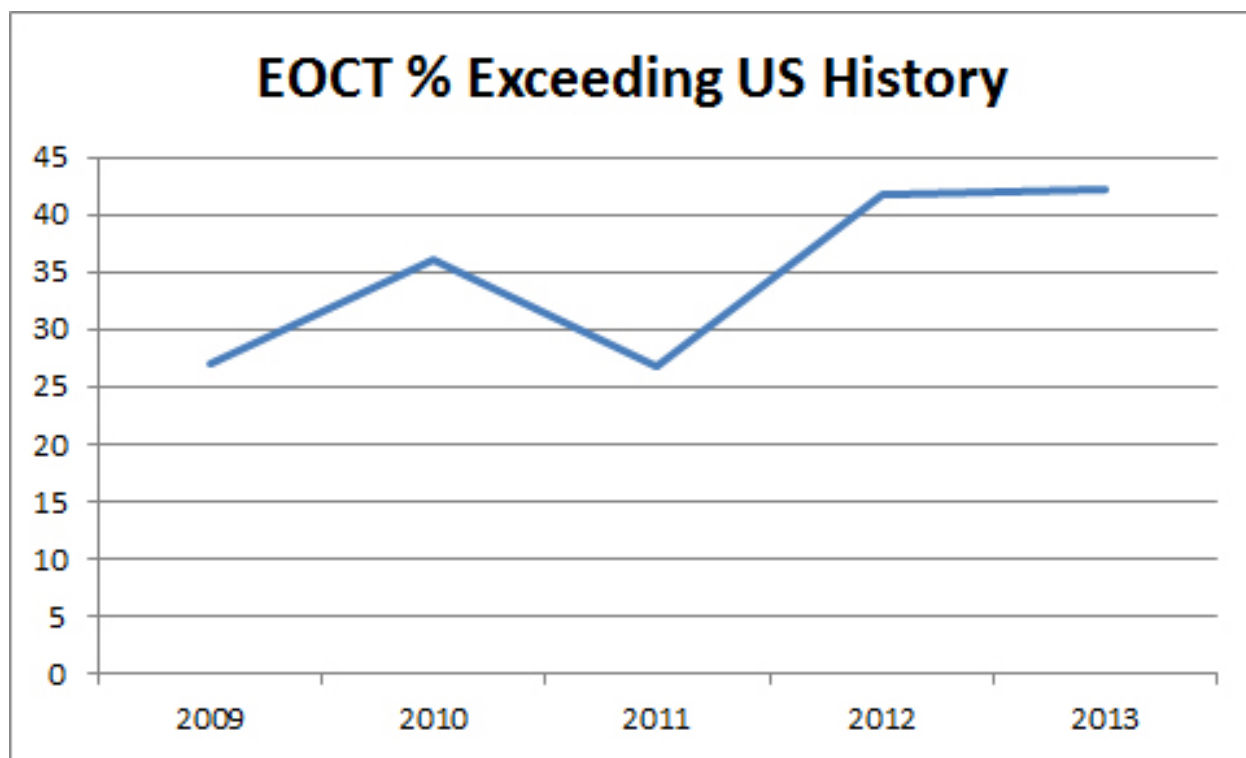
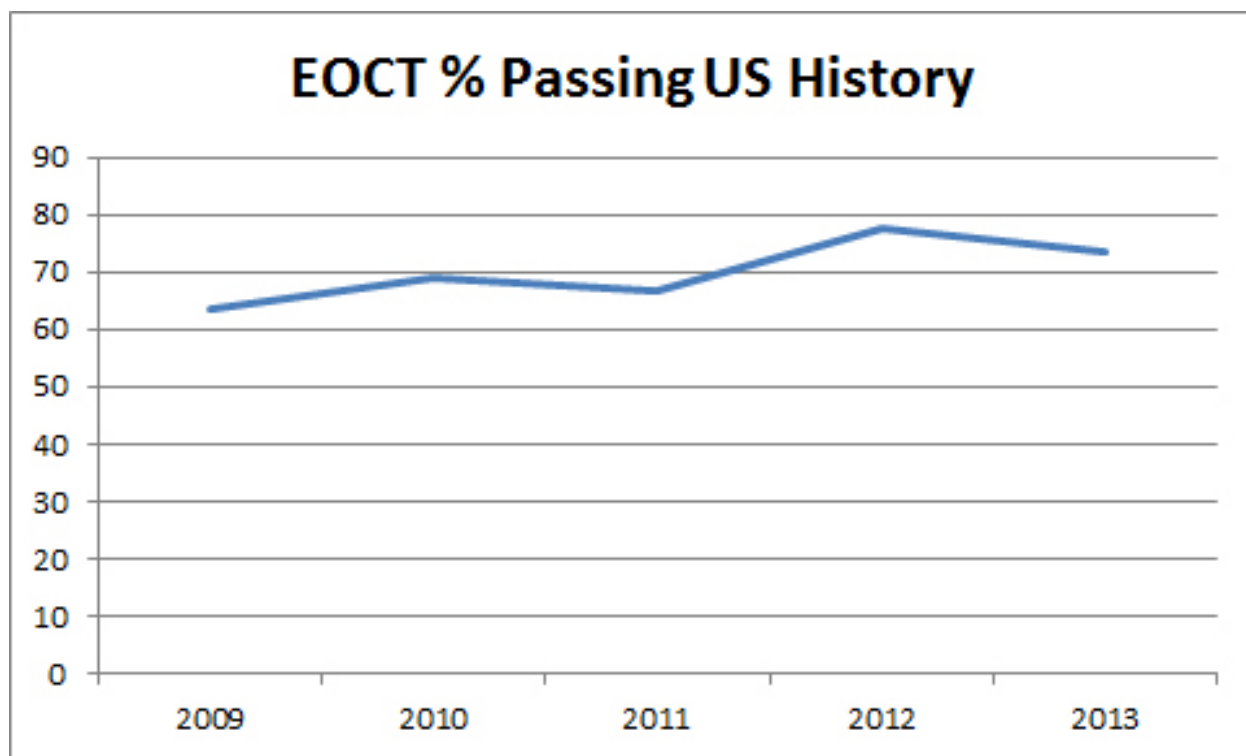
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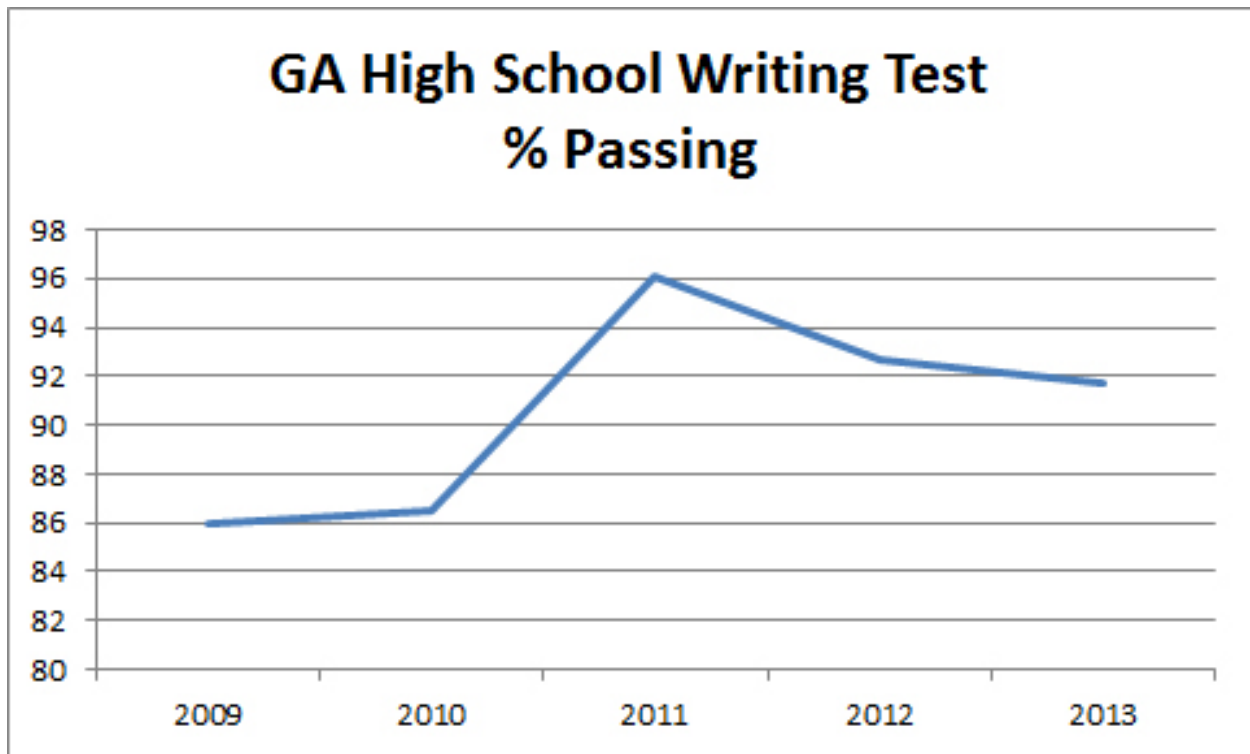






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Report of the Quality Assurance Review Team for Liberty Elementary School

6118 Old Liberty Hill Road
Toccoa, Georgia 30577
United States

Ms. Terri B. Bridges

Review Dates: 10/21/2008 - 10/22/2008



North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

Quality Assurance Review Report

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About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

Background. Founded in 1895, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) accredit public and private schools and districts in 30 states, the Navajo Nation, Latin America, and the Department of Defense Schools worldwide.

In 2006, NCA CASI, SACS CASI, and the research and development arm of the accrediting associations, the National Study of School Evaluation, unified to form AdvancED. Dedicated to advancing excellence in education, AdvancED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 23,000 schools in 65 countries, serving 15 million students.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. Through AdvancED, NCA CASI and SACS CASI have defined shared, research-based accreditation standards that cross state, regional, and national boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified accreditation process designed to help schools continuously improve.

The Accreditation Process. To earn and maintain accreditation from NCA CASI or SACS CASI, schools must:

1) Meet the AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools. Schools demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.

2) Engage in continuous improvement. Schools implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results).

3) Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review. Schools engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, schools host an external Quality Assurance Review Team once every five years. The team evaluates the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and recommendations to help the school improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school and a written report detailing the team's recommendations. The school acts on the team's recommendations and submits a progress report following the review.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI accreditation engages the entire school community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help schools be the best they can be on behalf of the students they serve.

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

Purpose. The purpose of the Quality Assurance Review is to:

1. Evaluate the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards.
2. Assess the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and recommendations to improve the school.
4. Make an accreditation recommendation for review by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission.

A key aim of the Quality Assurance Review is to verify that the school is operating with institutional integrity - that it is fulfilling its vision and mission for its students.

School Preparation. To prepare for the Quality Assurance Review, the school community engages in an in-depth self assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. The school identifies and describes the evidence that demonstrates that it is meeting each standard. Through this internal review, the school examines how its systems and processes contribute to student performance and school effectiveness.

Summary of Team Activities. The Quality Assurance Review Team is led by an AdvancED certified team chair and comprised of professionals from outside the school. The team reviews the findings of the school's internal self-assessment, conducts interviews with representative groups of stakeholders, reviews student performance data and other documentation provided by the school, and observes practices and daily operations. The team engages in professional deliberations to reach consensus on the school's adherence to the standards for accreditation. The team provides an oral exit report and prepares a written Quality Assurance Review Team Report designed to help the school improve.

The Quality Assurance Review Team Report. Following the visit, the review team completes the Quality Assurance Review report. After review by a nationally-trained reader, the report is submitted to the school. The report contains commendations and recommendations for improvement.

Using the Report - Acting on the Recommendations. The school uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school is held accountable for addressing the recommendations identified in the report. The NCA CASI/SACS CASI State Office is available to assist schools in addressing the recommendations. Following the Quality Assurance Review Team visit, the school must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress the school has made on the team's recommendations. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school is addressing the recommendations.

Accreditation Recommendation. The Quality Assurance Review Team uses the findings from the onsite visit to make an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed at the state level and by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is granted by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission and communicated to the school following action from the commission.

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), a division of AdvancED, visited the Liberty Elementary School in Toccoa, Georgia, United States on 10/21/2008 - 10/22/2008.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed Terri B. Bridges, 2 members of the administrative team, 15 students, 8 parents, and 31 teachers. In addition, Business Partner, Media Specialist and Counselor were interviewed. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the school. Specifically, the team examined the school's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

- Vision and Purpose
- Governance and Leadership
- Teaching and Learning
- Documenting and Using Results
- Resource and Support Systems
- Stakeholder Communications and Relationships
- Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The AdvancED standards focus on systems within a school and systematic methods of attaining high student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of the standards lies in the connections and linkages between and among the standards. The Quality Assurance Review Team used the AdvancED standards to guide its review of the school, looking not only for adherence to individual standards, but also for how the school functions as a whole and embodies the practices and characteristics of a quality school.

Through its examination of the school's adherence to the standards, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following commendations and recommendations.

Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the school for the following strengths and accomplishments. While additional strengths are noted in the detailed review of each standard that appears later in this report, the commendations listed below are the strengths that the team believes are most deserving of being highlighted.

- NA

NA

NA

Recommendations

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following recommendations

for improvement. The team focused its recommendations on those areas that, if addressed, will have the greatest impact on improving student performance and overall school effectiveness. The school will be held accountable for making progress on each of the recommendations noted in this section. Following this review, the school will be asked to submit a progress report on these recommendations.

- **Systematically involve stakeholders in order to articulate, formalize, and communicate an up-to-date vision statement. PO-1.1**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

A current school vision is the basis for all aspects of school improvement.

- **Ensure that teachers and students more routinely utilize the language of the standards to identify learning goals (beginning, middle, and end of lessons). I-1.3**

Faculty interviews and classroom observations indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

Frequent articulation of the standard and elements will help ensure that students know the learning goals for which they are responsible and are better able to self-evaluate based on learning goals and curriculum.

- **Expand student work with teacher commentary using the language of the standard. A-2.2**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

Increasing descriptive feedback will support students identifying the elements of the standards and identify strengths and next steps in their work.

- **Engage teachers in developing protocols to systematically examine student work during team meetings. C-3.2**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

The development and implementation of refined protocols will increase the effectiveness of teacher leaders use of performance data designed to revise curriculum implementation and alignment of resources.

Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools: The team reviewed the school's adherence to each of the AdvancED standards. The findings from this review are provided in the next section of this report.

Next Steps

The school should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.

2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the commendations section to maximize their impact on the school.
3. Develop action plans to address the recommendations made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the recommendations.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school's efforts to improve student performance and school effectiveness.
5. Following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the team's recommendations. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the recommendations. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Resources

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your school as it acts on the findings in this report. The AdvancED Resource Network, available at www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork, provides an online network of peer-to-peer practices, best practices, and resources and tools designed to help schools with their improvement efforts. Available any where, any time, the network can be queried for information on a variety of school improvement subjects. The AdvancED Research and Development division provides research, handbooks, and tools to assist schools with continuous improvement. In addition, your state office provides hands-on professional development and ongoing technical assistance. Contact your state office for more information on the range of resources available to you.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for state review and for action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school should celebrate its achievement with the school community. The SACS CASI accreditation seals are available at www.advanc-ed.org/communicationskit for accredited schools and districts to post on their website and to use in school communications. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and lapel pins are also available and can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary

The accreditation process engages the school in an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. The next steps in this journey are to build on the strengths and address the recommendations noted in this report. Doing so will enable the school to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for all students.

Standards for Accreditation

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the Liberty Elementary School demonstrates that it meets the seven standards for accreditation. The findings of the Quality Assurance Review Team regarding the standards for accreditation are summarized on the following pages.

Standard 1. Vision and Purpose

Standard: The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Liberty Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

Standard: The school provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Liberty Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

Standard: The school provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Liberty Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results

Standard: The school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Liberty Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

Standard: The school has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Liberty Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

Standard: The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Liberty Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Standard: The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Liberty Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Conclusion

The commendations and recommendations in this report are designed to focus the school on those areas that will have the greatest impact on student performance and school effectiveness. While powerful in potential, the commendations and recommendations only have meaning when acted upon by the school. The strength of this report lies in the school's commitment to using the findings to continuously improve. The key is action. The school is encouraged to use the report as a call to action, a tool to sustain momentum in the ongoing process of continuous improvement.

The team identified several recommendations for improvement that the school will need to address. Following this review, the school will be required to submit a progress report summarizing its progress toward addressing the team's recommendations.

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to Terri B. Bridges, members of the professional staff, students, parents and other community representatives for their hospitality throughout the visit. The team wishes the school and its students much success in the quest for excellence through SACS CASI accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Dane Ward, Chair (Georgia Department of Education)

AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

The AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools are comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness. As schools reach higher levels of implementation of the standards, they will have a greater capacity to support ever-increasing student performance and organizational effectiveness. Each of the seven standards listed below has corresponding indicators and impact statements which can be accessed at www.advanc-ed.org.

Vision and Purpose

The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Governance and Leadership

The school provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

Teaching and Learning

The school provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Documenting and Using Results

The school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

Resource and Support Systems

The school has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Report of the Quality Assurance Review Team for Stephens County High School

6438 White Pine Road
Toccoa, Georgia 30577
United States

Mr. David J. Friend

Review Dates: 01/14/2009 - 01/15/2009



North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

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About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

Background. Founded in 1895, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) accredit public and private schools and districts in 30 states, the Navajo Nation, Latin America, and the Department of Defense Schools worldwide.

In 2006, NCA CASI, SACS CASI, and the research and development arm of the accrediting associations, the National Study of School Evaluation, unified to form AdvancED. Dedicated to advancing excellence in education, AdvancED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 23,000 schools in 65 countries, serving 15 million students.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. Through AdvancED, NCA CASI and SACS CASI have defined shared, research-based accreditation standards that cross state, regional, and national boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified accreditation process designed to help schools continuously improve.

The Accreditation Process. To earn and maintain accreditation from NCA CASI or SACS CASI, schools must:

1) Meet the AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools. Schools demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.

2) Engage in continuous improvement. Schools implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results).

3) Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review. Schools engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, schools host an external Quality Assurance Review Team once every five years. The team evaluates the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and recommendations to help the school improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school and a written report detailing the team's recommendations. The school acts on the team's recommendations and submits a progress report following the review.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI accreditation engages the entire school community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help schools be the best they can be on behalf of the students they serve.

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

Purpose. The purpose of the Quality Assurance Review is to:

1. Evaluate the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards.
2. Assess the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and recommendations to improve the school.
4. Make an accreditation recommendation for review by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission.

A key aim of the Quality Assurance Review is to verify that the school is operating with institutional integrity - that it is fulfilling its vision and mission for its students.

School Preparation. To prepare for the Quality Assurance Review, the school community engages in an in-depth self assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. The school identifies and describes the evidence that demonstrates that it is meeting each standard. Through this internal review, the school examines how its systems and processes contribute to student performance and school effectiveness.

Summary of Team Activities. The Quality Assurance Review Team is led by an AdvancED certified team chair and comprised of professionals from outside the school. The team reviews the findings of the school's internal self-assessment, conducts interviews with representative groups of stakeholders, reviews student performance data and other documentation provided by the school, and observes practices and daily operations. The team engages in professional deliberations to reach consensus on the school's adherence to the standards for accreditation. The team provides an oral exit report and prepares a written Quality Assurance Review Team Report designed to help the school improve.

The Quality Assurance Review Team Report. Following the visit, the review team completes the Quality Assurance Review report. After review by a nationally-trained reader, the report is submitted to the school. The report contains commendations and recommendations for improvement.

Using the Report - Acting on the Recommendations. The school uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school is held accountable for addressing the recommendations identified in the report. The NCA CASI/SACS CASI State Office is available to assist schools in addressing the recommendations. Following the Quality Assurance Review Team visit, the school must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress the school has made on the team's recommendations. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school is addressing the recommendations.

Accreditation Recommendation. The Quality Assurance Review Team uses the findings from the onsite visit to make an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed at the state level and by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is granted by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission and communicated to the school following action from the commission.

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), a division of AdvancED, visited the Stephens County High School in Toccoa, Georgia, United States on 01/14/2009 - 01/15/2009.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed David J. Friend, 3 members of the administrative team, 11 students, 12 parents, and 75 teachers. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the school. Specifically, the team examined the school's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

- Vision and Purpose
- Governance and Leadership
- Teaching and Learning
- Documenting and Using Results
- Resource and Support Systems
- Stakeholder Communications and Relationships
- Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The AdvancED standards focus on systems within a school and systematic methods of attaining high student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of the standards lies in the connections and linkages between and among the standards. The Quality Assurance Review Team used the AdvancED standards to guide its review of the school, looking not only for adherence to individual standards, but also for how the school functions as a whole and embodies the practices and characteristics of a quality school.

Through its examination of the school's adherence to the standards, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following commendations and recommendations.

Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the school for the following strengths and accomplishments. While additional strengths are noted in the detailed review of each standard that appears later in this report, the commendations listed below are the strengths that the team believes are most deserving of being highlighted.

- N/A

N/A

N/A

Recommendations

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following recommendations for improvement. The team focused its recommendations on those areas that, if addressed, will have the greatest

impact on improving student performance and overall school effectiveness. The school will be held accountable for making progress on each of the recommendations noted in this section. Following this review, the school will be asked to submit a progress report on these recommendations.

- **Reexamine the make-up of the School Leadership Team by:**
 - **Clearly defining (or redefine) and articulating the roles and responsibilities of the Leadership Team to focus on instruction;**
 - **Using assessment data to monitor progress of the School Improvement Plan;**
 - **Holding regular meetings (bi-monthly recommended);**
 - **Collecting and analyzing data at the student level;**
 - **Formalizing a system of safety net interventions;**
 - **Prioritizing school improvement plan initiatives; and**
 - **Regularly monitoring progress.**

Staff interviews indicated that the schools' leadership team was not operating effectively.

School-wide communication and expectations will become more consistent within and across grade levels. The development and implementation of refined leadership team protocols will increase the effectiveness of teacher leaders use of collaborative planning and will distribute accountability throughout the school.

•

Systematically monitor and evaluate curriculum implementation throughout the year by focusing classroom observations and awareness walks with curriculum maps and pacing guides in hand, and evaluating student work products to ensure that performance tasks are closely aligned to the standard(s).

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

Monitoring and evaluating implementation of the curriculum through an ongoing, systematic school-wide process throughout the school year will ensure consistency within and across classrooms, grade levels, and subject areas relative to all Georgia Performance Standards.

- **Formalize systematic procedures for evaluating both the implementation and the impact of professional learning activities.**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

Administrators will be better enabled to identify specific classroom changes and student performances that have resulted from professional learning initiatives.

Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools: The team reviewed the school's adherence to each of the AdvancED standards. The findings from this review are provided in the next section of this report.

Next Steps

The school should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the commendations section to maximize their impact on the school.
3. Develop action plans to address the recommendations made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the recommendations.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school's efforts to improve student performance and school effectiveness.
5. Following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the team's recommendations. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the recommendations. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Resources

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your school as it acts on the findings in this report. The AdvancED Resource Network, available at www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork, provides an online network of peer-to-peer practices, best practices, and resources and tools designed to help schools with their improvement efforts. Available any where, any time, the network can be queried for information on a variety of school improvement subjects. The AdvancED Research and Development division provides research, handbooks, and tools to assist schools with continuous improvement. In addition, your state office provides hands-on professional development and ongoing technical assistance. Contact your state office for more information on the range of resources available to you.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for state review and for action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school should celebrate its achievement with the school community. The SACS CASI accreditation seals are available at www.advanc-ed.org/communicationskit for accredited schools and districts to post on their website and to use in school communications. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and lapel pins are also available and can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary

The accreditation process engages the school in an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. The next steps in this journey are to build on the strengths and address the recommendations noted in this report. Doing so will enable the school to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for all students.

Standards for Accreditation

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the Stephens County High School demonstrates that it meets the seven standards for accreditation. The findings of the Quality Assurance Review Team regarding the standards for accreditation are summarized on the following pages.

Standard 1. Vision and Purpose

Standard: The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

N/A

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

N/A

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

N/A

Finding: Stephens County High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

Standard: The school provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

N/A

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

N/A

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

N/A

Finding: Stephens County High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

Standard: The school provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

N/A

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

N/A

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

N/A

Finding: Stephens County High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results

Standard: The school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

N/A

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

N/A

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

N/A

Finding: Stephens County High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

Standard: The school has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

N/A

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

N/A

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

N/A

Finding: Stephens County High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

Standard: The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

N/A

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

N/A

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

N/A

Finding: Stephens County High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Standard: The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

N/A

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

N/A

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

N/A

Finding: Stephens County High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Conclusion

The commendations and recommendations in this report are designed to focus the school on those areas that will have the greatest impact on student performance and school effectiveness. While powerful in potential, the commendations and recommendations only have meaning when acted upon by the school. The strength of this report lies in the school's commitment to using the findings to continuously improve. The key is action. The school is encouraged to use the report as a call to action, a tool to sustain momentum in the ongoing process of continuous improvement.

The team identified several recommendations for improvement that the school will need to address. Following this review, the school will be required to submit a progress report summarizing its progress toward addressing the team's recommendations.

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to David J. Friend, members of the professional staff, students, parents and other community representatives for their hospitality throughout the visit. The team wishes the school and its students much success in the quest for excellence through SACS CASI accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Wendell Christian, Chair (GADOE)

AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

The AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools are comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness. As schools reach higher levels of implementation of the standards, they will have a greater capacity to support ever-increasing student performance and organizational effectiveness. Each of the seven standards listed below has corresponding indicators and impact statements which can be accessed at www.advanc-ed.org.

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The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

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Teaching and Learning

The school provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Documenting and Using Results

The school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

Resource and Support Systems

The school has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Report of the Quality Assurance Review Team for Stephens County Middle School

6270 Roselane
Toccoa, Georgia 30577
United States

Mr. Tony J. Crunkleton

Review Dates: 12/09/2008 - 12/10/2008



North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

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About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

Background. Founded in 1895, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) accredit public and private schools and districts in 30 states, the Navajo Nation, Latin America, and the Department of Defense Schools worldwide.

In 2006, NCA CASI, SACS CASI, and the research and development arm of the accrediting associations, the National Study of School Evaluation, unified to form AdvancED. Dedicated to advancing excellence in education, AdvancED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 23,000 schools in 65 countries, serving 15 million students.

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The Accreditation Process. To earn and maintain accreditation from NCA CASI or SACS CASI, schools must:

1) Meet the AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools. Schools demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.

2) Engage in continuous improvement. Schools implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results).

3) Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review. Schools engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, schools host an external Quality Assurance Review Team once every five years. The team evaluates the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and recommendations to help the school improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school and a written report detailing the team's recommendations. The school acts on the team's recommendations and submits a progress report following the review.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI accreditation engages the entire school community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help schools be the best they can be on behalf of the students they serve.

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

Purpose. The purpose of the Quality Assurance Review is to:

1. Evaluate the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards.
2. Assess the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and recommendations to improve the school.
4. Make an accreditation recommendation for review by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission.

A key aim of the Quality Assurance Review is to verify that the school is operating with institutional integrity - that it is fulfilling its vision and mission for its students.

School Preparation. To prepare for the Quality Assurance Review, the school community engages in an in-depth self assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. The school identifies and describes the evidence that demonstrates that it is meeting each standard. Through this internal review, the school examines how its systems and processes contribute to student performance and school effectiveness.

Summary of Team Activities. The Quality Assurance Review Team is led by an AdvancED certified team chair and comprised of professionals from outside the school. The team reviews the findings of the school's internal self-assessment, conducts interviews with representative groups of stakeholders, reviews student performance data and other documentation provided by the school, and observes practices and daily operations. The team engages in professional deliberations to reach consensus on the school's adherence to the standards for accreditation. The team provides an oral exit report and prepares a written Quality Assurance Review Team Report designed to help the school improve.

The Quality Assurance Review Team Report. Following the visit, the review team completes the Quality Assurance Review report. After review by a nationally-trained reader, the report is submitted to the school. The report contains commendations and recommendations for improvement.

Using the Report - Acting on the Recommendations. The school uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school is held accountable for addressing the recommendations identified in the report. The NCA CASI/SACS CASI State Office is available to assist schools in addressing the recommendations. Following the Quality Assurance Review Team visit, the school must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress the school has made on the team's recommendations. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school is addressing the recommendations.

Accreditation Recommendation. The Quality Assurance Review Team uses the findings from the onsite visit to make an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed at the state level and by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is granted by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission and communicated to the school following action from the commission.

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), a division of AdvancED, visited the Stephens County Middle School in Toccoa, Georgia, United States on 12/09/2008 - 12/10/2008.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed Tony J. Crunkleton, 2 members of the administrative team, 71 students, 7 parents, and 60 teachers. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the school. Specifically, the team examined the school's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

- Vision and Purpose
- Governance and Leadership
- Teaching and Learning
- Documenting and Using Results
- Resource and Support Systems
- Stakeholder Communications and Relationships
- Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The AdvancED standards focus on systems within a school and systematic methods of attaining high student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of the standards lies in the connections and linkages between and among the standards. The Quality Assurance Review Team used the AdvancED standards to guide its review of the school, looking not only for adherence to individual standards, but also for how the school functions as a whole and embodies the practices and characteristics of a quality school.

Through its examination of the school's adherence to the standards, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following commendations and recommendations.

Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the school for the following strengths and accomplishments. While additional strengths are noted in the detailed review of each standard that appears later in this report, the commendations listed below are the strengths that the team believes are most deserving of being highlighted.

- N/A

N/A

N/A

Recommendations

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following recommendations for improvement. The team focused its recommendations on those areas that, if addressed, will have the greatest

impact on improving student performance and overall school effectiveness. The school will be held accountable for making progress on each of the recommendations noted in this section. Following this review, the school will be asked to submit a progress report on these recommendations.

- **Examine the use of flexible grouping, differentiated instruction, and higher order thinking skills and processes in all classrooms and develop school-wide strategies to more effectively apply and monitor these proven best practices.**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, classroom observations and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

This will ensure that research-based instruction becomes the standard practice throughout the school.

- **Maximize instructional time throughout the school day by examining transition time between classes.**

The SACS team's observation of class change time indicated a need for a review of the transition time allowed in the master schedule.

The efficiency of the instructional schedule will ensure time in all content areas is maximized.

- **Provide collaborative opportunities (across all grade levels) for teachers to study the vertical scope of the standards and expand understanding about appropriate instruction that will prepare students for growing levels of mastery.**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

When teachers and administrators study the vertical and horizontal scope of the standards, this will better ensure appropriate instruction for grade or content area.

- **Deepen understanding of using student work and commentary to inform instruction (e.g. logs, journals, constructive response test items, performance tasks, projects, etc.).**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

The development and implementation of refined protocols will increase the effectiveness of teacher leaders use of performance data designed to revise curriculum implementation and alignment of resources.

Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools: The team reviewed the school's adherence to each of the AdvancED standards. The findings from this review are provided in the next section of this report.

Next Steps

The school should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the commendations section to maximize their impact on the school.
3. Develop action plans to address the recommendations made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the recommendations.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school's efforts to improve student performance and school effectiveness.
5. Following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the team's recommendations. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the recommendations. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Resources

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your school as it acts on the findings in this report. The AdvancED Resource Network, available at www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork, provides an online network of peer-to-peer practices, best practices, and resources and tools designed to help schools with their improvement efforts. Available any where, any time, the network can be queried for information on a variety of school improvement subjects. The AdvancED Research and Development division provides research, handbooks, and tools to assist schools with continuous improvement. In addition, your state office provides hands-on professional development and ongoing technical assistance. Contact your state office for more information on the range of resources available to you.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for state review and for action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school should celebrate its achievement with the school community. The SACS CASI accreditation seals are available at www.advanc-ed.org/communicationskit for accredited schools and districts to post on their website and to use in school communications. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and lapel pins are also available and can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary

The accreditation process engages the school in an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. The next steps in this journey are to build on the strengths and address the recommendations noted in this report. Doing so will enable the school to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for all students.

Standards for Accreditation

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the Stephens County Middle School demonstrates that it meets the seven standards for accreditation. The findings of the Quality Assurance Review Team regarding the standards for accreditation are summarized on the following pages.

Standard 1. Vision and Purpose

Standard: The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

N/A

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

N/A

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

N/A

Finding: Stephens County Middle School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

Standard: The school provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

N/A

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

N/A

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

N/A

Finding: Stephens County Middle School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

Standard: The school provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

N/A

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

N/A

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

N/A

Finding: Stephens County Middle School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results

Standard: The school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

N/A

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

N/A

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

N/A

Finding: Stephens County Middle School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

Standard: The school has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

N/A

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

N/A

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

N/A

Finding: Stephens County Middle School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

Standard: The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

N/A

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

N/A

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

N/A

Finding: Stephens County Middle School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Standard: The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

N/A

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

N/A

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

N/A

Finding: Stephens County Middle School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Conclusion

The commendations and recommendations in this report are designed to focus the school on those areas that will have the greatest impact on student performance and school effectiveness. While powerful in potential, the commendations and recommendations only have meaning when acted upon by the school. The strength of this report lies in the school's commitment to using the findings to continuously improve. The key is action. The school is encouraged to use the report as a call to action, a tool to sustain momentum in the ongoing process of continuous improvement.

The team identified several recommendations for improvement that the school will need to address. Following this review, the school will be required to submit a progress report summarizing its progress toward addressing the team's recommendations.

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to Tony J. Crunkleton, members of the professional staff, students, parents and other community representatives for their hospitality throughout the visit. The team wishes the school and its students much success in the quest for excellence through SACS CASI accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Wendell Christian, Chair (GADOE)

AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

The AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools are comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness. As schools reach higher levels of implementation of the standards, they will have a greater capacity to support ever-increasing student performance and organizational effectiveness. Each of the seven standards listed below has corresponding indicators and impact statements which can be accessed at www.advanc-ed.org.

Vision and Purpose

The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Governance and Leadership

The school provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

Teaching and Learning

The school provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Documenting and Using Results

The school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

Resource and Support Systems

The school has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.



Charter System Application

DISTRICT NAME

Stephens County School System

DISTRICT ADDRESS

2332 Mize Road

Toccoa, Georgia 30577

Dr. John D. Barge

State School Superintendent

DECEMBER 2012

Stephens County School System

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 contract 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 proposed in your Application will lead to the improved academic 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 your proposed academic 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.

Stephens County School System

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. Early submissions are encouraged.

Georgia Department of Education

Charter Schools Division

2053 Twin Towers East

205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive, SE

Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Stephens County School System

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 4-6).
- ☐ 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 7-9; 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 10).
- ☐ 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, accreditation report, and strategic plan (to which you will provide online links).
- ☐ 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

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- ☐ PDF Version of your signed Assurances Form
- ☐ Microsoft Word version of your Exhibits (except for your annual audit, accreditation report, and strategic plan)
- ☐ PDF version of your most recent annual audit
- ☐ PDF version of your most recent accreditation report
- ☐ PDF version of your most recent strategic plan

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.

Stephens County School System

CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION

COVER SHEET

Proposed Charter System Information			
Full Name of Proposed Charter System Stephens County School System			
Please indicate whether this is a: New Petition X or a Renewal Petition		How many schools in total are you proposing to include in your charter system? 6	
How many of each of the following schools are you proposing to include in your charter system?			
Primary School(s) 0		Middle School(s) 1	
Elementary School(s) 4		High school(s) 1	
On July 1 of what year do you want your charter contract to be effective? 2014			
How many years are you proposing for the term of your charter contract? (Note that an initial charter cannot exceed five years) 5			
Charter System Street Address 2332 Mize Road	City Toccoa	State GA	Zip 30577
Contact Person Sherrie Whiten		Title Superintendent	
Contact Street Address 2332 Mize Road	City Toccoa	State GA	Zip 30577
Contact's telephone number 706-886-9415	Contact's fax number 706-886-3882	19.Contact's E-mail Address sherrie.whiten@stephens.k12.ga.us	

Stephens County School System

CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION

The Charter System Application includes six 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 Plan, Local Governance Plan, and Use of the Charter System Funding. 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.

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.*

Over the last eight months, Stephens County School System has garnered the support of our community and schools to operate under a system charter. This potential increased flexibility from the state’s requirements will allow for the development of a school system that will be more responsive to the local needs of the students. Stephens County School System will be able to provide more flexibility for developing programs that better meet the needs of our students and reflect the needs, wishes, and desires of the local community. The projected areas of flexibility that will be used in the Stephens County Charter include: instructional programming, opportunities for students to earn credits for class through experience and community-based instruction, opportunities for students to earn high school credits in middle school, flexible uses of technology for instruction, funding, scheduling, seat time, credit by exam, course requirements, graduation requirements, teacher certification requirements, and others. As the School Governance Teams are developed and trained, and they better understand the potential of students and the educational process, it is anticipated that more waiver areas will be requested.

A critical component of the charter is the accountability of the school system to the public. Since 2003, Stephens County School System has presented its annual report to the community at a luncheon sponsored by the Toccoa-Stephens County Chamber of Commerce. This comprehensive report outlines school system accomplishments as well as identified areas of need. The annual report details the

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accomplishments of our students and staff and reflects a strong foundation of excellence that serves as catalyst for continued school improvement. This report is available to the community in booklet form and is available on the school system's website. Additionally, accountability measures will be developed, articulated, and communicated by and with the School Governance Teams and to all internal and external stakeholders. Accountability measures will go beyond standardized test scores and include measures such as completion of career pathways; attendance rates; graduation rates; 21st Century Skills including problem-solving and technology; and post-secondary measures. Indicators will include proficiency in math, science, technology, problem-solving and career-readiness. The community is ready and able to support the school system in its efforts to graduate students who are ready to become productive citizens both locally and globally. Programming will need to be developed to match these outcomes. The School Governance Teams will be a part of this programmatic planning process.

Stephens County School System's motivation for applying to be a Charter System is driven by community, school, and system leadership. Stephens County is exploring innovative solutions to better serve our students by providing a rigorous and well-rounded curriculum for all students, as well as intensive and on-going remediation for those students who may be struggling. Stephens County's graduation rate has steadily increased since 2006. The graduation rate in 2006 was 63.1%. The new cohort graduation rate for 2012 was 87.3%. Increasing the graduation rate and ensuring that graduates are college and career ready are objectives contained in this petition. We want all of our schools to provide the highest quality and most meaningful educational experience possible for every child.

In January 2013, the Stephens County Board of Education submitted a letter of intent to the Georgia State Department of Education to become a Charter System. The Stephens County Charter System development process started immediately and involved approximately 400 community members, staff, and parents. The information was presented to all employees of the school system, including bus drivers, cafeteria staff, clerical, paraprofessionals, maintenance staff, teachers, administrators, and the

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school board members. Several Town Hall and community meetings were held to present Charter System information to parents and community members, and many community members served on the Governance, Innovations, and Waiver Committees who contributed to the charter application. The 10-month process involved many hours of meetings, presentations, surveys, discussions, visits, and conversations with other Charter Systems. During the Charter System planning meetings, the parents, community, and staff expressed concerns that students graduating from Stephens County School System are not always prepared for the level of problem-solving, team building, and critical thinking that are essential in today's fast-paced and complex work environments. The Charter System development process is chronicled on the district web site: www.stephens.k12.ga.us

During the ten months of study and planning, the community and staff provided input and discussed the decision to become a Charter System and were in full agreement that it was the right choice. The details for implementing the plan are not in place, since the School Governance Teams will be critical in developing the specifics to a well-rounded and rigorous experience for all students in Stephens County. The Charter System planning process revealed four priority areas for Stephens County students: a) to earn credit through work and community-based experiences, b) increase rigorous academic opportunities to challenge all students, c) ensure smooth transitions from prekindergarten through twelfth grade and beyond into post-secondary options and employment, and d) increase employability skills, including “soft” skills through technology and career awareness opportunities. The Charter System planning process allowed all stakeholders to be included in creating a collective vision and focus for all students in Stephens County.

Schools Committed to Student Success is not just a theme for our school system, but a genuine commitment to educate each and every student in our community. We've stated our beliefs as expectations and we do expect all students to learn and be valued. We also expect parents, teachers and community members to work together for the success of our students. Knowing that a high school

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education is not enough to compete in today's global economy, our students will benefit from the commitment to a rigorous and well-rounded curriculum that will improve their educational and vocational opportunities.

In order to realize our vision and incorporate our beliefs into the daily work of the Stephens County School System, we need to have greater flexibility in serving students and using state and local resources, greater community and parent involvement in decision making, and innovative and supportive solutions for students who may be falling behind or may need acceleration. With this flexibility, Stephens County School System will be able to provide a seamless schooling process that feeds into and supports the wider community of Stephens County, and greater accountability to the community in meeting our local outcomes.

After the initial community meeting, several committees were formed to examine both governance and education issues in order to develop the Charter System application. These committees researched other charter systems, held meetings and discussions, and provided input to each other, faculty, parents, the community, and the Charter Review Committee. In addition, the superintendent and staff attended a Charter System Foundation Superintendents' Workshop held in September to become more informed on aspects of the Charter System Application. The work that the committees compiled became the Charter System application as they determined the educational innovations, the governance structure, and the waivers and flexibility that would be needed to support the identified outcomes for Stephens County School System. A broad flexibility waiver will be sought so that as needs arise, requests for additional waivers will not be necessary. Some possible waivers that will be needed to realize our vision are: create high school course work that prepares students for work or post-secondary school; expanding and redefining both remedial and gifted options, ESOL and SPED delivery models; instituting performance-based measures; allowing a wide variety of technology that fits the needs of the students and community; redefining seat time and the school day and week; allowing credit for academic application

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of skills and knowledge; providing flexibility for use of state and local funds; examining alternatives for teacher certification; aligning resources to respond to the needs of all students; and providing support for students outside of formula funding guidelines.

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 encouraged 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).*

Stephens County School System monitors student performance on standardized tests through School Improvement Plans and the District Strategic Plan in order to make instructional decisions to increase student achievement. As part of the District Strategic Plan, we developed a Balanced Scorecard to monitor the system's progress on goals in nine strategic areas: improve student achievement, increase student and stakeholder involvement, provide safe and timely student transportation, provide for the changing nutritional needs of students, improve the availability of technology resources, plan for a qualified workforce, maximize the efficient use of funds, improve facilities, and monitor college and career ready performance indicators.

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The student achievement goals are aligned with expectations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as well as goals for other areas. Many of the goals in our District Strategic Plan and School Improvement Plans are aligned with the Georgia Accountability System, College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI).

Equipped with the recently released CCRPI report, Stephens County will be better able to establish benchmarks and appropriate expectations regarding the rate of student performance growth for each year of the proposed charter. Included in the attached Exhibits are graphs of the student performance data for the past five years. By examining the student performance in the graphs, we are able to view grade level data which allows us to identify instructional concerns in grade/subject as well as cohort data which allows us to follow the progress of a group of students over time.

Overall our goal will be to consistently exceed the state percentage of students meeting or exceeding on standardized tests by the end of the charter term. In addition, we want to provide a rigorous educational program for our students and move more students into the exceeds category. The following SMART goals were written with these goals in mind.

Student Performance Goal 1: 3rd-8th grade students will meet or exceed state averages on each area of the CRCT.

Student Performance Goal 2: From a baseline established in Year 1 of the charter term, the Charter System will increase the percentage of students scoring in the exceeds category in each subject and grade level of the CRCT. If the baseline percentage is below 45%, then the system will increase by 2% each year up to 50%. Once 50% of students are exceeding by subject and grade level, the system will maintain that performance.

Student Performance Goal 3: High school students will meet or exceed state averages on each area of the EOCT.

Student performance goal 4: From a baseline established in Year 1 of the charter term, the Charter

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System will increase the percentage of students scoring in the exceeds category in each subject of the EOCT. If the baseline percentage is below 45%, then the system will increase by 2% each year up to 50%. Once 50% of students are exceeding by subject and grade level, the system will maintain that performance.

Student performance goal 5: From a baseline established in Year 1 of the charter term, the Charter System will increase the percentage of students scoring in the meets and exceeds categories on the 5th, 8th and 11th Grade Writing Test. If the baseline percentage is below 90% the Charter System will increase by 2% each year up to 90%. If the baseline is 90% or above, the Charter System will increase by 1% each year up to 95%. Once 95% of students are meeting and exceeding by grade the Charter System will maintain that performance.

Student performance goal 6: The Stephens County graduation rate will increase from 87% in 2013 to 95% or better in 2019.

The performance of a subgroup, students with disabilities, has been and continues to be an area of concern for Stephens County. The performance of this group of students will be followed in the areas of reading, English language arts, and math. Using Georgia Department of Education's Student Longitudinal Data System (SLDS), cohorts of students will be followed over time to get a true measure of student performance over the charter petition period. Results will be posted.

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.*

Stephens County School System has several innovative instructional processes in place that have proven successful over the past few years but also has additional ideas that we would like to explore through the charter system process. Potential innovations that are being discussed include flexibility in

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scheduling and requirements for remedial and accelerated courses, expansion of course offerings through internships with local business partners, blending of curriculum with core content and technical courses offering hands-on application through course combinations, serve by need and not by label, increased collaboration between post-secondary and community opportunities, and increased technology integration at all grade levels. In order to fully implement these innovations the School Governance Teams along with the local Board of Education and the faculty and staff will need to identify and secure the necessary plans, resources, and waivers and develop an evaluation system for each of the innovations to ensure the most effective and efficient use of the school day. The timelines for each of the innovations will be driven by the needs of the students and the availability of the aforementioned plans, resources and evaluation systems to ensure the readiness of the schools to implement the plans. School level governance teams will provide input into the planning and implementation process for each of the innovations.

1. Graduation requirements will be examined.

The Stephens County School System and the community would like to provide alternative ways for students to earn credit through the use of courses that are not found in the list of state funded class offerings. Some possibilities include Carnegie Units high school course work offered at the middle school level, application of skills through community–project and work based experiences that would count as credits, and a variety of dual enrollment opportunities to best prepare students for whatever path they choose after graduation.

2. Applied interventions for students will be based on student need.

Interventions will be systematically targeted, implemented, reviewed, and revised based on student progress. The artificial boundaries of the classroom, materials, and seat time will be ignored. Student progress and mastery will be the criteria for credit or exemption of course work. More aggressive support will be implemented for struggling and advanced students.

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3. Course work will be established for high school students that will prepare them for admission requirements to technical schools and colleges.

The business community will lend staff to the high school to help guide and instruct high school staff on areas where students need stronger preparation for the work force. Students will receive instruction on these identified areas of need. Staff from North Georgia Technical College, Piedmont College, and Toccoa Falls College will work with Stephens County School System to help develop course work and interventions that not only prepare students for entry into post-secondary options but will help ease the transition into the work place. An initial conversation is in place with local industries to provide instruction for high school students on the requirements of entry level jobs and hiring standards. Students will learn from those who are in the field practicing what they want to learn.

4. Flexibility in requirements and delivery of remedial and accelerated programs.

Stephens County School System uses the Georgia DOE's State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). Stephens County School system also uses INSIGHT, a cohort comparison growth model methodology that shows the instructional value added by teachers, programs and various interventions over time. This analysis is provided by Pioneer RESA's Data Department and has been used by the school system for approximately 10 years. Teachers use these systems and the data teams' analyses in order to inform instruction. As students transfer in and out of the county, their performance and data is available immediately for teachers in order to provide targeted and individualized instruction for all students. The above innovations in data analysis allow for systematic application of targeted and individualized interventions. By providing flexibility in instructional programs to support and accelerate students, administrators are able to use this information quickly to make schedule and programming changes to provide immediate support or acceleration for students. By ensuring that a wide variety of teachers are trained and endorsed in gifted and math instruction, the schools are able to provide a variety of models for instruction, including advanced content gifted model and remedial programs outside of Special Education.

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In FY12, SPED teachers participated in a reading endorsement program offered by Stephens County School System in collaboration with Pioneer RESA. During FY14, a similar cohort hosted by a neighboring county for a gifted endorsement program has started. Stephens County School System is currently planning a cohort for K-5 math endorsement to begin during the second semester. By providing a variety of professional learning opportunities for teachers, they are better able to tailor instruction for their students and provide rigor and support through differentiation and full student engagement through performance tasks.

5. Performance-based assessments will be used at all grade levels to measure 21st century and career preparedness skills, including technology.

Currently active student engagement and rigor are goals accomplished through the use of performance tasks. Charter system innovations will allow us to provide rigor and engage students through experiential projects that currently do not fit into the state funded course offerings to provide relevant learning opportunities in the community.

Students at all grade levels will be involved in career and community awareness projects that will facilitate their transition to the next level whether that is middle school, high school, or college and career opportunities. The community may be involved in providing input and support of these instructional initiatives in a variety of ways. Community members may come in to provide onsite field trips, instruction in specific skills or through the College and Career Academy model. “Soft” skills such as responsibility, work ethic, and problem-solving ability will be emphasized across all curriculum areas. Technology instruction and integration will also continue to be a focus. To date, we have provided limited technology instruction in grade K-8 and wish to expand this and initiate a one-to-one blended learning initiative at the high school. Stephens County School System will continue to provide and inform students of the most current technology in education by leveraging support and expertise from the community. Stephens County School System plans to explore options to involve students in the College

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and Career Academy in the near future which will allow the system to expand training and educational opportunities in preparation for post-secondary endeavors either career or educational.

6. Focus on priority goals identified from the Charter System survey of staff, community and parents.

As part of the planning process for the Charter System application staff, parents, and community members were asked to participate in a brief survey to identify their priorities for education in Stephens County. This survey was based on the eight identified goal areas of Georgia's Visioning Project. As mentioned before, the community has voiced its desires to combine local expertise to enhance student knowledge. This sentiment combined with the following priorities identified through survey results will guide decision making regarding potential course offerings that will include local community involvement. The top 4 priorities were:

- a. Critical thinking and problem solving,**
- b. Basic academic knowledge and skills,**
- c. Preparation for skilled employment, and**
- d. Social skills and work ethic**

School Governance Teams will keep their focus on these priorities when developing and improving instructional processes. Waivers will be granted in order to facilitate programs that support these priority areas. The task of the School Governance Team is to identify instructional processes, examine root causes, find solutions to barriers (which may include seeking waivers), look for resources, plan for implementation, and finally, implement these processes to work towards meeting these priority areas. The planning process will be a critical training area for all School Governance Teams. It is consistent with the district school improvement cycle and helps to ensure that all innovations are explored and monitored to ensure a positive impact on students.

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The business community will be involved by clearly articulating the desired entry level skills. They will be instructors to students and staff. They will communicate the strengths and weaknesses of Stephens County graduates work force. Benchmarks of skill achievement will be developed and applied in the high school setting.

Examples of education innovation in progress:

Upon entering the Stephens County School System in elementary school, students would be served by need and not by label with attention to their individual strengths and weaknesses. As they progress into middle school, students would be able to earn high school credit early setting them on a course to complete an accelerated path to post-secondary attainment. As students move into high school, they would not only complete the program of study required for a diploma but be prepared to enter the work force or a post-secondary institution.

Knowing that technology will play a huge role in not only high school academic courses but also through the preparation for a career, the Stephens County School System strives to prepare students as early as possible. The system has plans to implement a “Bring Your Own Technology” initiative. To further enhance student academic progress, credit will be received for courses not currently offered at the high school through the avenue of virtual learning opportunities.

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.

There are several areas of potential waiver requests from Stephens County that were discussed during the charter system planning process. We are requesting broad flexibility for waivers as we know that flexibility needs will arise as we move through the five years requested for the charter term. As these needs arise, the School Governance Teams will examine current data and root causes and explore options

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for fully supporting student achievement and engagement. Through this problem solving process, waivers may be needed that were not evident during the initial planning process.

Required Waivers and Potential Impact on Student Achievement

Certification: O.C.G.A. §20-2-200; DOE RULE: 160-5-1.22

- EIP teacher certification (teacher with SWD certification teaching EIP students)
- Teacher certification (use of industry expertise to provide instruction for internship courses and high school courses)
- Teacher certification (use of NGTC personnel to assist in Compass preparation and testing)

Class Size: O.C.G.A. §20-2-182; DOE RULE: 160-5-1-.08

- Extending the class-size waiver granted 2013-2014
- Allow up to 7 additional students per class size K-12
- Allow up to 7 additional students per gifted segment at the middle and high school
- Allow up to 7 additional students per REP segment at the middle and high school
- Allow up to 7 additional students per EIP segment at the elementary school

Early Intervention Program, K-5: O.C.G.A. §20-2-153; DOE RULE: 160-4-2-.17

- Deliver service by need, not by model (may have student with disability, ELL students, or EIP students, the labels are blurred)
- Select and serve students by data team process not state guidelines
- Monitor student progress by data teams

English Learners Program, K-12: O.C.G.A. §20-2-156; DOE RULE: 160-4-5-.02

- Deliver service by need, not by model (may have student with disability, ELL students, or EIP students, the labels are blurred)
- Select and serve students by data team process not state guidelines

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- Monitor student progress by data teams

Middle School Program Funding, 6-8: O.C.G.A. §20-2-290; DOE RULE: 160-4-2-.05

- Middle school programming requirements (will review)

Remedial Education Program, 6-12: O.C.G.A. §20-2-154; DOE RULE: 160-4-5-.01

- Deliver service by need, not by model (may have student with disability, ELL students, or EIP students, the labels are blurred)
- Select and serve students by data team process not state guidelines
- Monitor student progress by data teams

Seat time/Attendance: O.C.G.A. §20-2-151, §20-2-160, §20-2-161.1, §20-2-165, §20-2-168;

DOE RULE: 160-5-1-.02

- Minimum hours offered to earn grade level and/or Carnegie Units towards promotion and graduation. Stephens County High School would like to explore different avenues in which students can earn credit such as credit by exam and credit by application of skills through community and work based experiences.
- Full credit and funding for any course work that is completed through alternatives.
- Carnegie Units for high school course work that is offered at the middle school level through acceleration and transition programs between 8th and 9th grade or summer school opportunities.
- Off-site attendance for virtual programs and internships.

Course Offerings: O.C.G.A. §20-2-140

- Funding for courses exceeding current state offerings. Some examples would be technology (CTAE) courses for 5th grade, internships with different businesses that provide a mechanism to measure skills and competencies based on career preparedness coursework that has 21st Century

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skills as a focus, and dual enrollment opportunities that provide for both high school and college credits.

Changes that do not require a waiver:

School councils O.C.G.A. §20-02-0210

- Terminate School councils
- Operate governance teams at each school as a Charter System

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.

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

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

At present, there are seven elected Board of Education members. They are serving staggered four-year terms; 4 members are up for reelection in summer of 2014. BOE members work in conjunction with the Superintendent to approve policies and procedure, personnel, and facilities. The Stephens County Board of Education members are required to complete a self-assessment and participate in training on state board standards. The BOE is responsible for the approval of policy regarding

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instruction, personnel, students and facilities and ensuring that the policies align with federal, state, local and health/safety requirements.

Each of the 6 schools in Stephens County System has a school council. The schools created their councils based upon the guidelines that were set forth in 2007 General Assembly which changed the composition of school councils to include the following:

- The principal,
- At least 2 certified teachers elected by the teachers, and
- A number of parents or guardians elected by the parents so that parents make up a majority of the school council (2 parents must be local business owners).

The members of the school council serve 2 year terms, and their role is to serve in an advisory capacity. Each school is permitted to determine the parameters of their role through the council's bylaws. The councils must meet at least 4 times per school year and a quorum of members must be present in order to conduct business. All of the meetings are subject to the Open Meetings Act and the Open Records Act. The school councils are responsible for reviewing and providing input regarding the development and the monitoring of the School Improvement Plan, new policies and procedures, school budget, extracurricular activities, parent involvement, and academic progress. The school council members are offered training. The current councils have limited interaction with the local Board of Education. It is the hope of Stephens County School System that the new governing bodies will be more participatory and functional within their roles as School Governance Teams.

Stephens County's New Governance Structure

Upon receipt of charter system status, Stephens County will transition from school councils and to School Governance Teams. The School Governance Teams (SGTs) will have increased participation and input in providing recommendations for the local school administration and system leaders. The difference between school councils and the SGTs lies in the additional responsibility of making

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recommendations to the School Board regarding board policy, budgetary issues, school improvement plans, and personnel (specifically the principal). At present, school council members in Stephens County function primarily by attending “sit-and-get” meetings in which the principal relates pertinent school information: they discuss it, provide limited input, and adjourn. The School Governance Teams however will be asked to review pertinent school information, analyze it to the best of their ability, and provide the leadership with a recommendation which will then be taken to the Board of Education, thus creating a venue for local community members and parents to be heard.

Structure of the New School Governance Teams

School governance team guidelines will include the following requirements:

- 7 members-
 - the principal,
 - 2 staff members (one of which must be certified),
 - 2 parents that cannot be employed at the school and must have children in the school, and
 - 2 community members recommended by the principal.
- Middle School and High School SGT will include 2 students nominated by teachers and recommended by the principal to the SGT.
- 3 year terms of service July 1- June 30 of each year.
- Teachers and parents will be elected by the people they represent with nominations accepted in April/May and elections in May.
- Community members will be recommended by the principal and approved by the SGT.
- All members will sign a Conflict of Interest Statement.
- SGT members can be removed from their duty to serve due to:
 - Lack of participation
 - Conflict of interest issues

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- Lack of adherence to the bylaws
- Bylaws will outline responsibilities and requirements.

In the first year of implementation, the current school council members will elect new members as they have in the past, and then undergo governance team training which will give them an understanding of their role and responsibility as a SGT member. In the second year these teams will make a full transition to becoming an SGT. Members will receive formalized training through the GADOE Charter System department, the GSBA, or another training agency. The training topics will be determined at a later date and may include the following: Robert's Rules of Order, Sunshine Laws, School Improvement Plans, progress monitoring, school budget, curriculum, instructional technology, personnel, and strategic planning. Prior to becoming a SGT, each team will draft and gain approval for their bylaws. SGT will meet monthly and the meeting dates and times will be determined and posted by each school locally. The meetings will take place on the school campus and will last no longer than an hour. All recommendations from the SGT will be made with regard to the current BOE meeting schedule.

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Responsibility	Principal	School Governance Team	Board of Education
Budget	Recommend school annual budget for use of discretionary funds authorized by SCBOE	Set school budget spending priorities	Provides oversight to budget process; approves annual budget for school system
Resource Allocation	Present information to the SGT about resource allocation	Analyze past allocations and make improvement recommendations to principal/BOE	Makes informed decisions
Personnel	Recommends personnel for employment, evaluates, and recommends termination	Recruit candidates, interview and select candidates from an approved list provided by HR	Approves personnel recommendations
School Improvement	Organizes and directs goal setting and SIP development	Collaborative process with the SIP providing principal/BOE with recommendations	Holds superintendent, staff and school accountable for ensuring high reliability organization and satisfactory performance
Curriculum	Ensure effective implementation of curriculum and assessment programs. Ensures highly reliable and effective instruction in every classroom	Collaborative process regarding monitoring of the curriculum, curriculum changes, curriculum issues	Approves system curriculum and assessment program and provides oversight of implementation. Monitors student and staff performance
School Operations	Creates organization's structure that results in a highly reliable school with low variability in performance in all areas	Develop proposed innovations that are responsive to community needs, recommends options to improve school operations	Provides resources and establishes policies that support a high level of school autonomy in school operations
Parent Involvement	Presents all parent involvement activities and plans to the SGT	Makes decisions regarding improvement of parental involvement	Makes informed decision

The bylaws will be amended as it becomes necessary. The minutes of each meeting will be available to the community members and parents. Stephens County Charter System will publicize the dates, times, and minutes of the School Governance Teams' meetings through eBoard. This will allow the system to remain transparent in their intention and action.

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Timeline for governance Training

Stephens County will provide governance training to all members of SGTs on a three year training cycle. The training will be based upon structures provided by the GADOE Charter System Department, GBSA, or other training agent. The proposed schedule and outline of topics is below:

- **August 2014-** Purpose, Parliamentary Procedure, Protocol, Sunshine Laws, Etiquette
- **September 2014-** By-laws
- **October 2014-** School Improvement Plan/SACS process
- **November 2014-** Report of Progress, CCRPI/Standards
- **January 2015-** Budget
- **February 2015-** Effective Decision Making
- **March 2015-** Personnel
- **April 2015-** Conflict Resolution/Team Building/Reaching Consensus
- **May 2015-** Technology Integration

Year Two Topics:

Assessment, Hiring Practices, Parent and Community Engagement, Special Education Law, Federal Programs, Strategic Planning, School Operations, SACS Recommendations

Year Three Topics:

Topics will be based on the Needs-Assessment of the School Governance Teams and the schools.

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.*

Should the legislature decide to provide additional funds per pupil for charter systems, this money would be used to provide additional resources for the educational innovations prescribed in the charter.

The SGTs would be able to decide on a use of these expenditures in a manner that would best support the goals, priorities and needs of Stephens County School System students.

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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 Stephens County School System located in Stephens 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;
15. Shall be subject to all laws relating to unlawful conduct in or near a public school;

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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 Stephens County Board of Education on the 15th day of October, 2013.

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

Stephens County School System

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.
 - *This is where you can describe the process you used to develop your 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.
 - *Your description will be used by the Department to provide information to the public about applicants and new charter systems.*
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. Online link to the school system's most recent annual audit.
11. Online link to the school system's most recent accreditation report.
12. Online link to the school system's most recent strategic plan.

Planning Team

Sherrie Whiten
Sandy Steele
Jason Kaup
Terri Bridges
David Jacobson
Tony Crunkleton
Felton Stephens
Ron Rudd
John Anderson
Annah Dodge
Katherine Knox
Amy Garmon
Sherrie McAllister
George Sanders
Tammy Todd
Kevin Gaines
Cathie Wilson
Kevin Swiney
Doug Atkins
Carol Booth
Teacher Advisory Council

Beliefs

EXPECT all students to learn.
EXPECT every student to be valued.
EXPECT all adults to contribute to the success of students.
EXPECT parents, teachers, and community members to work together for the success of students.
EXPECT respect for students, faculty, and staff.
EXPECT students to be engaged in their learning.
EXPECT opportunities for success.
EXPECT high quality instruction.
EXPECT a safe, nurturing school environment.

Mission

Academic Achievement.....Personal Potential

Vision

Schools Committed to Student Success
Stephens County Schools

Financial Data

[Budget Summary](#)

Stephens County Schools

Stephens County Strategic Plan 7/1/2010-6/30/2011

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Stakeholder Input

[State Funding Formula Adjustments](#)

Stephens County Schools

Stephens County Strategic Plan 7/1/2010-6/30/2011

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Glossary of Terms

Listed below are phrases or words used in the GSBA Strategic Improvement Planning model.

Continuous Improvement Process – A process whereby the district, on a routine and systematic basis, reviews and updates the “district” and “school” strategic improvement plans. Questions used to facilitate this process include “Who are we?”, “Where are we now?”, “Where do we want to go?”, “How will we know when we have arrived?” and “How do we plan to get there?”.

“District” Strategic Improvement Plan – The district strategic improvement plan serves as the strategic and operational improvement plan for the school system. The district strategic improvement plan is developed and updated using a continuous improvement process.

School Improvement Plan – A school improvement plan is aligned to the district strategic improvement plan and serves as the strategic and operational plan for the school. The school strategic improvement plan is developed and updated using a continuous improvement process.

Planning Team – A group of 20 – 25 people, both internal and external, who work to develop the district Beliefs, Mission, Vision, Strategic Goal Areas or Goals and Strategic Priorities.

Action Team(s) – A group of 5 – 7 people, primarily staff, who work to develop the Performance Objectives, Measures & Targets for a Strategic Goal Area or Goal. Typically there will be a different action team for each Strategic Goal Area or Goal.

Who are we?

Beliefs – The fundamental convictions and core values that guide the actions and decisions of an district

Mission – Defines why a district exists; the district’s purpose/core work; all operational functions, actions and decisions should support the mission.

Vision – The statement of a district’s picture of future success which communicates; where it wants to be in the future. The vision helps to determine the district strategic perspectives.

Where are we now?

Stakeholder Input – Data gathered from stakeholders, internal and external. May be in the form of a survey or public engagement session.

SWOT Analysis – Listing of district’s strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O) and threats (T).

Where do we want to go?

Strategic Goal Areas or Goals – District Strategic Improvement Plans typically have between three to five strategic goal areas which provide a framework to describe the district’s mission and vision. Strategic Goal Areas highlight the key areas that a district must address as it works to achieve its mission.

Strategic Priorities – 2 to 4 key measurable performance areas under each strategic goal or

goal area in which the district needs to put special emphasis.

Strategic Dashboard – Graphical report that captures, for quick review, the strategic priority measures of the district.

How will we know when we have arrived?

Performance Objectives – Are concise statements that describe the specific strategies within each strategic goal or goal area that must be performed for a district to achieve its desired results. Performance Objectives along with specific performance measures will be used to determine progress towards overall strategic goals or goal areas. Performance objectives should be stated in action terms, beginning with an action verb, such as improve, increase, reduce, initiate, develop, lower, become, achieve, etc.

Performance Measures – Are quantifiable measures used to evaluate and communicate performance against targeted results. Performance Measures are tools used to determine whether districts, groups and individual performers are meeting performance objectives and moving toward the successful implementation of strategic goals.

Performance Targets – Desired levels of performance for performance measures, usually expressed as a number or percentage, and expected to be achieved by a specific time.

Performance Scorecard – An actual report of performance objectives used to evaluate target vs. actual results of performance measures over time. The performance scorecard presents a balanced view of the success of the district.

How do we plan to get there?

Action Plan(s) – A set of initiatives with individual action steps for the board of education, district and individual schools to implement one of the stated performance objectives. Action plans should reflect cost implications, resources needed, personnel responsible and timeframe for completion.

Initiatives – A plan, program, project, process, or task that will have a positive impact on progress towards a performance objective.

Action Steps – Individual steps needed to be completed to execute an initiative which is linked to a performance objective.

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**Stephens County Strategic Plan
7/1/2010-6/30/2011**

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SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. System-wide focus on student achievement2. Pride to succeed3. People4. Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education program5. Our approach to professional development6. Availability and support for technology7. Support for teachers in the classroom8. Well-rounded education our students receive9. Fiscal responsibility10. New and updates facilities11. Shared leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Need for improved communication2. Maximize use of already available resources3. Little awareness of conditions in other school systems
Opportunities	Threats
Availability of technology Support from BOE	State funding cuts Teacher furloughs

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**Stephens County Strategic Plan
7/1/2010-6/30/2011**

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» **Strategic Goal I-Improve Student Achievement**

- » Performance Objective A-Increase student learning as measured by assessment programs.

» **Strategic Goal II-Increase student and stakeholder involvement.**

- » Performance Objective A-Increase parent satisfaction
- » Performance Objective B-Increase student attendance.
- » Performance Objective C-Monitor student enrollment trends.
- » Performance Objective D-Increase and enhance communication

» **Strategic Goal III-Provide safe and timely student transportation.**

- » Performance Objective A-The SCSS Transportation Department will provide safe, efficient transportation for all students to and from school and school events.

» **Strategic Goal IV-Provide for the changing nutritional needs of students.**

- » Performance Objective A-SCSS Nutrition Department will provide all students healthy school meals that meet their nutritional needs and support optimal academic performance at school.

» **Strategic Goal V-Improve the availability of technology resources.**

- » Performance Objective A-The Technology Department will ensure that all teachers and students have access to the Internet and other technologies that are effective tools for improving student achievement by enhancing teaching and learning in Stephens County schools.

» **Strategic Goal VI-Plan for a qualified workforce.**

- » Performance Objective A-The SCSS Human Resources department will strive to ensure success for all students by addressing the needs of our employees and recruitment of qualified personnel.

» **Strategic Goal VII-Maximize the efficient use of funds.**

- » Performance Objective A-The Finance Department will provide sound financial management in assisting the superintendent and BOE in monitoring and managing district finances.

» **Strategic Goal VIII-Improve facilities.**

- » Performance Objective A-SCSS will maintain and continue to improve facilities.

I.Improve Student Achievement

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Stephens County Schools















Stephens County Strategic Plan 7/1/2010-6/30/2011

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I.A.Increase student learning as measured by assessment programs.

Performance Measures

Description	Ultimate Target	Year	Target	Actual	Result
Criterion referenced test (CRCT) results Reading: % scoring 2,3 – all	94	2008	92	93.7	 Meets or Exceeds
		2009	94	95.6	 Meets or Exceeds
		2010	95	95	 Meets or Exceeds
		2006	70	63.8	 No change or declined
Graduation rates: % graduating	75	2007	70	66.8	 Improvement but did not Meet
		2008	70	72.3	 Meets or Exceeds
		2009	75	77.1	 Meets or Exceeds
		2010	80	83	 Meets or Exceeds
Criterion referenced test (CRCT) results ELA: % scoring 2,3 – all	86	2008	94	92.9	 Meets or Exceeds
		2009	93	93.7	 Meets or Exceeds
		2010	94	94.4	 Meets or Exceeds
Criterion referenced test (CRCT) results Math: % scoring 2,3 – all	86	2008	84	84.69	 Meets or Exceeds
		2009	86	88	 Meets or Exceeds
		2010	90	88.1	 Improvement but did not Meet
Criterion referenced test (CRCT) results Science: % scoring 2,3 –	93	2008	85	88.1	 Meets or Exceeds
		2009	88	88	 Meets or

all						Exceeds
		2010	89	90		Meets or Exceeds
		2008	90	91.8	 	Meets or Exceeds
Criterion referenced test (CRCT) results Social Studies: % scoring 2,3 – all	90	2009	90	85	 	No change or declined
		2010	88	87.2		Improvement but did not Meet
		2008	90	91.5		Meets or Exceeds
HSGT scores ELA: percent meeting/exceeding	90	2009	93	91		No change or declined
		2010	92	90		No change or declined
		2008	95	95.5		Meets or Exceeds
HSGT scores Math: percent meeting/exceeding	95	2009	97	91		No change or declined
		2010	95	90.2		No change or declined
		2008	86	86.6		Meets or Exceeds
HSGT scores SS: percent meeting/exceeding	86	2009	89	84		No change or declined
		2010	86	78		No change or declined
		2008	88	89.9		Meets or Exceeds
HSGT scores Science: percent meeting/exceeding	88	2009	92	89		No change or declined
		2010	90	91.6		Meets or Exceeds
		2007	-	1387	-	-
SAT scores: Average SAT score	1500	2008	-	1440	-	-
		2009	-	1459	-	-
		2010	1500	-	-	-

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II. Increase student and stakeholder involvement.

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II.A. Increase parent satisfaction

Performance Measures

Description	Ultimate Target	Year	Target	Actual	Result
Liberty Climate survey data: parents quality	100	2009	100	95.9	-
		2010	100	100	-
Toccoa Climate survey data: parents quality	100	2009	100	96.3	-
		2010	100	87	-
Big A Climate survey data: parents quality	100	2009	100	75.8	-
		2010	100	73	-
SCMS Climate survey data: parents quality	100	2009	100	76.0	-
		2010	100	72	-
Eastanollee Climate survey data: parents quality	100	2009	100	91.6	-
		2010	100	92	-
SCHS Climate survey data: parents quality	100	2009	100	71.7	-
		2010	100	80	-

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II.B. Increase student attendance.

Performance Measures

Description	Ultimate Target	Year	Target	Actual	Result
Students absent 15 days or more: % of students	5	2007	5	4	 Meets or Exceeds
		2008	5	3.4	 Meets or Exceeds
		2009	5	4	 Meets or Exceeds

2010

4

7

No
change
or
declined

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II.C.Monitor student enrollment trends.

Performance Measures

Description	Ultimate Target	Year	Target	Actual	Result
Enrollment trends: number enrolled	NA	2005	-	4306	-
		2006	-	4256	-
		2007	-	4227	-
		2008	-	4205	-
		2009	-	4054	-
		2010	-	4078	-

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II.D.Increase and enhance communication

Performance Measures

Description	Ultimate Target	Year	Target	Actual	Result
Web site visits: #	20000	2009	-	44730	-
		2010	-	356900	-

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III.Provide safe and timely student transportation.

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III.A.The SCSS Transportation Department will provide safe, efficient transportation for all students to and from school and school events.

Performance Measures

Description	Ultimate Target	Year	Target	Actual	Result
Preventable accidents: Incidences per year	0	2007	0	2	-
		2008	0	1	-
		2009	0	0	 Meets or Exceeds
		2010	0	3	 No change or declined
Safety Training: Hours per staff member per year	15	2007	15	17 	 Meets or Exceeds
		2008	15	15 	 Meets or Exceeds
		2009	15	16 	 Meets or Exceeds
		2010	15	25	 Meets or Exceeds

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IV.Provide for the changing nutritional needs of students.

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IV.A.SCSS Nutrition Department will provide all students healthy school meals that meet their nutritional needs and support optimal academic performance at school.

Performance Measures

Description	Ultimate Target	Year	Target	Actual	Result
Free and reduced system	less than	2008	-	50.3	-

percentage: yearly percentage	50%	2009	-	53.85	-
		2010	-	59.5	-
		2008	100	85.4	 Improvement but did not Meet
Participation in school lunch program: Average daily participation	100	2009	100	86.3	 Improvement but did not Meet
		2010	100	85.8	 Improvement but did not Meet
					 Improvement but did not Meet

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V.Improve the availability of technology resources.

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V.A.The Technology Department will ensure that all teachers and students have access to the Internet and other technologies that are effective tools for improving student achievement by enhancing teaching and learning in Stephens County schools.

Performance Measures

Description	Ultimate Target	Year	Target	Actual	Result
Computers meeting standard: 95	100	2008	100	70	-
		2009	100	85	 Improvement but did not Meet
		2010	100	96	 Improvement but did not Meet
Student to computer ratio: Ratio	2:1	2008	2:1	2:1	-
		2009	2:1	2:1	-
		2010	2:1	2:1	-
Service tickets over 72 hrs: %	0	2009	0	34	 Improvement but did not Meet
		2010	0	23	 Improvement but did not

					Meet
Web site visits: #	20000	2009	-	44730	-
		2010	-	356900	-

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VI. Plan for a qualified workforce.

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VI.A. The SCSS Human Resources department will strive to ensure success for all students by addressing the needs of our employees and recruitment of qualified personnel.

Performance Measures

Description	Ultimate Target	Year	Target	Actual	Result
Education level: % teachers masters or above	60	2008	60	73 	Meets or Exceeds
		2009	60	72 	Meets or Exceeds
		2010	60	76 	Meets or Exceeds
Highly Qualified Staff: % HQ	100	2008	100	97.6 	Improvement but did not Meet
		2009	100	99.3 	Improvement but did not Meet
		2010	100	100 	Meets or Exceeds
National Board Certified Teachers: #	10	2008	10	3 	Improvement but did not Meet
		2009	10	10 	Meets or Exceeds
		2010	10	11 	Meets or Exceeds
Staff Attendance: Average days		2008	5	9.65	-
		2009	5	9.22 	Improvement but did not

absent

5

Meet

2010 5 8.8  Improvement but did not Meet

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VII.Maximize the efficient use of funds.

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VII.A.The Finance Department will provide sound financial management in assisting the superintendent and BOE in monitoring and managing district finances.

Performance Measures

Description	Ultimate Target	Year	Target	Actual	Result
Fund balance: amount	10% of budget expenditure	2008	-	5562312	-
		2009	-	4915877	-
		2010	-	3321950	 No change or declined
Per pupil costs: Average cost per student	5000.00	2008	-	10736	-
		2009	-	10469	-
		2010	-	10463	-

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VIII.Improve facilities.

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VIII.A.SCSS will maintain and continue to improve facilities.

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Report of the Quality Assurance Review Team for Toccoa Elementary School

304 North Pond Street
Toccoa, Georgia 30577
United States

Mr. David A. Jacobson

Review Dates: 12/09/2008 - 12/10/2008



North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

Quality Assurance Review Report

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About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

Background. Founded in 1895, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) accredit public and private schools and districts in 30 states, the Navajo Nation, Latin America, and the Department of Defense Schools worldwide.

In 2006, NCA CASI, SACS CASI, and the research and development arm of the accrediting associations, the National Study of School Evaluation, unified to form AdvancED. Dedicated to advancing excellence in education, AdvancED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 23,000 schools in 65 countries, serving 15 million students.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. Through AdvancED, NCA CASI and SACS CASI have defined shared, research-based accreditation standards that cross state, regional, and national boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified accreditation process designed to help schools continuously improve.

The Accreditation Process. To earn and maintain accreditation from NCA CASI or SACS CASI, schools must:

1) Meet the AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools. Schools demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.

2) Engage in continuous improvement. Schools implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results).

3) Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review. Schools engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, schools host an external Quality Assurance Review Team once every five years. The team evaluates the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and recommendations to help the school improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school and a written report detailing the team's recommendations. The school acts on the team's recommendations and submits a progress report following the review.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI accreditation engages the entire school community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help schools be the best they can be on behalf of the students they serve.

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

Purpose. The purpose of the Quality Assurance Review is to:

1. Evaluate the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards.
2. Assess the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and recommendations to improve the school.
4. Make an accreditation recommendation for review by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission.

A key aim of the Quality Assurance Review is to verify that the school is operating with institutional integrity - that it is fulfilling its vision and mission for its students.

School Preparation. To prepare for the Quality Assurance Review, the school community engages in an in-depth self assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. The school identifies and describes the evidence that demonstrates that it is meeting each standard. Through this internal review, the school examines how its systems and processes contribute to student performance and school effectiveness.

Summary of Team Activities. The Quality Assurance Review Team is led by an AdvancED certified team chair and comprised of professionals from outside the school. The team reviews the findings of the school's internal self-assessment, conducts interviews with representative groups of stakeholders, reviews student performance data and other documentation provided by the school, and observes practices and daily operations. The team engages in professional deliberations to reach consensus on the school's adherence to the standards for accreditation. The team provides an oral exit report and prepares a written Quality Assurance Review Team Report designed to help the school improve.

The Quality Assurance Review Team Report. Following the visit, the review team completes the Quality Assurance Review report. After review by a nationally-trained reader, the report is submitted to the school. The report contains commendations and recommendations for improvement.

Using the Report - Acting on the Recommendations. The school uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school is held accountable for addressing the recommendations identified in the report. The NCA CASI/SACS CASI State Office is available to assist schools in addressing the recommendations. Following the Quality Assurance Review Team visit, the school must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress the school has made on the team's recommendations. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school is addressing the recommendations.

Accreditation Recommendation. The Quality Assurance Review Team uses the findings from the onsite visit to make an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed at the state level and by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is granted by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission and communicated to the school following action from the commission.

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), a division of AdvancED, visited the Toccoa Elementary School in Toccoa, Georgia, United States on 12/09/2008 - 12/10/2008.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed David A. Jacobson, 1 member of the administrative team, 23 students, 11 parents, and 40 teachers. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the school. Specifically, the team examined the school's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

- Vision and Purpose
- Governance and Leadership
- Teaching and Learning
- Documenting and Using Results
- Resource and Support Systems
- Stakeholder Communications and Relationships
- Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The AdvancED standards focus on systems within a school and systematic methods of attaining high student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of the standards lies in the connections and linkages between and among the standards. The Quality Assurance Review Team used the AdvancED standards to guide its review of the school, looking not only for adherence to individual standards, but also for how the school functions as a whole and embodies the practices and characteristics of a quality school.

Through its examination of the school's adherence to the standards, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following commendations and recommendations.

Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the school for the following strengths and accomplishments. While additional strengths are noted in the detailed review of each standard that appears later in this report, the commendations listed below are the strengths that the team believes are most deserving of being highlighted.

- NA

NA

NA

Recommendations

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following recommendations for improvement. The team focused its recommendations on those areas that, if addressed, will have the greatest

impact on improving student performance and overall school effectiveness. The school will be held accountable for making progress on each of the recommendations noted in this section. Following this review, the school will be asked to submit a progress report on these recommendations.

- **As part of the school improvement planning process develop an up-to-date two to three year prioritized professional development plan.**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

This strategy will ensure that teams of teachers are engaged in long-term (two-to-three year period), in-depth professional learning with extensive school-based support for the implementation of new practices.

- **Formalize systematic procedures for evaluating both the implementation and the impact of professional learning activities.**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

Administrators will be better enabled to identify specific classroom changes and student performances that have resulted from professional learning initiatives.

- **Formalize the process of sharing awareness walk data in a transparent and timely manner.**

Faculty interviews and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

This will ensure that everyone in the school participates in an ongoing cycle of systematic gathering and analysis of data to identify discrepancies between actual and desired results or intentions, followed by additional short term goal setting and developing strategies to achieve the long term goals.

- **Use outside consultation to establish school-wide protocols (including protocols designed to systematically examine student work) for collaborative planning and develop a uniform collaborative planning scheduling expectation.**

Faculty interviews, the Certified Staff Survey, and the SACS team's review of artifacts indicate that this is an area of potential improvement.

Planning expectations will become more consistent within and across grade levels. The development and implementation of refined protocols will increase the effectiveness of teacher leaders use of performance data designed to adjust instructional planning and revise curriculum implementation.

Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools: The team reviewed the school's adherence to each of the AdvancED standards. The findings from this review are provided in the next section of this report.

Next Steps

The school should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the commendations section to maximize their impact on the school.
3. Develop action plans to address the recommendations made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the recommendations.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school's efforts to improve student performance and school effectiveness.
5. Following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the team's recommendations. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the recommendations. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Resources

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your school as it acts on the findings in this report. The AdvancED Resource Network, available at www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork, provides an online network of peer-to-peer practices, best practices, and resources and tools designed to help schools with their improvement efforts. Available any where, any time, the network can be queried for information on a variety of school improvement subjects. The AdvancED Research and Development division provides research, handbooks, and tools to assist schools with continuous improvement. In addition, your state office provides hands-on professional development and ongoing technical assistance. Contact your state office for more information on the range of resources available to you.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for state review and for action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school should celebrate its achievement with the school community. The SACS CASI accreditation seals are available at www.advanc-ed.org/communicationskit for accredited schools and districts to post on their website and to use in school communications. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and lapel pins are also available and can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary

The accreditation process engages the school in an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. The next steps in this journey are to build on the strengths and address the recommendations noted in this report. Doing so will enable the school to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for all students.

Standards for Accreditation

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the Toccoa Elementary School demonstrates that it meets the seven standards for accreditation. The findings of the Quality Assurance Review Team regarding the standards for accreditation are summarized on the following pages.

Standard 1. Vision and Purpose

Standard: The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Toccoa Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

Standard: The school provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Toccoa Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

Standard: The school provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Toccoa Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results

Standard: The school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Toccoa Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

Standard: The school has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Toccoa Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

Standard: The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Toccoa Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Standard: The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

NA

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

NA

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

NA

Finding: Toccoa Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Conclusion

The commendations and recommendations in this report are designed to focus the school on those areas that will have the greatest impact on student performance and school effectiveness. While powerful in potential, the commendations and recommendations only have meaning when acted upon by the school. The strength of this report lies in the school's commitment to using the findings to continuously improve. The key is action. The school is encouraged to use the report as a call to action, a tool to sustain momentum in the ongoing process of continuous improvement.

The team identified several recommendations for improvement that the school will need to address. Following this review, the school will be required to submit a progress report summarizing its progress toward addressing the team's recommendations.

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to David A. Jacobson, members of the professional staff, students, parents and other community representatives for their hospitality throughout the visit. The team wishes the school and its students much success in the quest for excellence through SACS CASI accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Dane Ward, Chair (Georgia Department of Education)

AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

The AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools are comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness. As schools reach higher levels of implementation of the standards, they will have a greater capacity to support ever-increasing student performance and organizational effectiveness. Each of the seven standards listed below has corresponding indicators and impact statements which can be accessed at www.advanc-ed.org.

Vision and Purpose

The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Governance and Leadership

The school provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

Teaching and Learning

The school provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Documenting and Using Results

The school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

Resource and Support Systems

The school has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.