



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

Charter System Renewal Addendum to the Charter System Application

Charter systems applying for renewal will need to fill out a new charter system application and this addendum. This information will allow the Charter Schools Division to assess your charter system's performance during your past charter term and to assess the rigor of proposed new charter goals. Please limit your response to 10 pages total.

PAST PERFORMANCE

- 1. Please provide a narrative describing how your charter system performed in meeting the academic and performance goals set forth in their previous charter contract. Please provide any charts, tables or graphs that provide quantitative data that can support your narrative. Please make sure to address your system's performance in each year of its charter term.**

Fulton County Schools (Fulton) became the state's largest charter system in July 2012. The district has experienced much success with the transition to, and operation of, its charter system framework. Fulton has 93 charter system schools spread across a system that spans more than 70 miles from south to north. This make-up allots for more than 950 parents, teachers, schools employees, and community members providing strategic direction and shared governance to their schools as School Governance Council members. This new structure for shared governance, coupled with flexibility from state law and state and local policies, has been a key lever in moving our district in the right direction.

To date, School Governance Councils have sought and utilized more than 100 waivers of law or policy to implement new strategies outlined in their school strategic plans. Many schools have waived laws and policies related to the school calendar to provide targeted professional development for their staff. Two of our elementary schools, in particular, used these additional professional development days to focus on the implementation of a STEM curriculum in their school, which served as a significant contributor to both of these schools becoming Georgia Department of Education STEM certified schools. Another of our elementary schools became a dual-immersion school, with students learning their curriculum in both English and Mandarin Chinese. Additionally, several of our high schools are waiving the required half-credit of personal fitness to allow student athletes, who commit a significant amount of time to physical and athletic activity, the opportunity to add academic or elective courses to their schedule.

In Fulton, we have used our charter system funding to directly support school strategic plan initiatives outlined by the School Governance Councils. We used the charter system funding to set up our Seed Fund, an internal "shark tank" style grant program where School Governance



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Council members and principals pitch their proposals to our Fulton Education Foundation, unbiased district business partners. The Fulton Education Foundation then makes funding recommendations to the Fulton County Board of Education, which makes the final decision. To date, the Seed Fund has provided \$13.9 million to fund more than 130 school initiatives. Schools have used this funding to provide guidance and support services for alternative suspension programs, fund transportation to support after-school learning initiatives, and redesign learning spaces to meet student learning needs. In fact, one high school took the leap to redesign their media center into a collaborative, 21st century learning environment that emulates the type of learning spaces their students could expect to see at postsecondary institutions. The school gathered input from parents, community members, and most importantly, students about the design and use of the new media center. This media center project was so successful that the district (Fulton) took note and redesigned all high school media centers after this school's model. This is a prime example of schools and School Governance Councils having a direct impact on the district.

Being a charter system has also been helpful with the implementation of district initiatives. To focus resources and support on our most struggling schools, Fulton established the Achievement Zone to dramatically improve student performance in the ten schools comprising the Banneker High School cluster. We are using the school calendar waivers to allow for additional teacher work days to provide targeted professional development for all schools in the Achievement Zone cluster, while simultaneously utilizing the school day waiver to extend the school day so that instructional time is not diminished for these students. This allows the schools in the Achievement Zone cluster to collaborate and align their strategies for increasing student achievement. Additionally, Fulton partnered with Junior Achievement to open a Magnet Business Academy (JA-MBA) at Banneker High School, which provides a full immersion curriculum that integrates business and leadership concepts into learning while focusing on entrepreneurial thinking. Fulton has also opened the Academy of Film Production and the Academy of Aviation Sciences, a new Career and Technical Education (CTE) expansion offering Audio, Video, Technology & Film, and Digital Media & Animation, as well as Culinary, Construction, and Aviation. This new CTE school, located in the south end of the county, will allow students to complete a pathway in one year and achieve industry credentials as well as participate in internship and job shadowing opportunities.

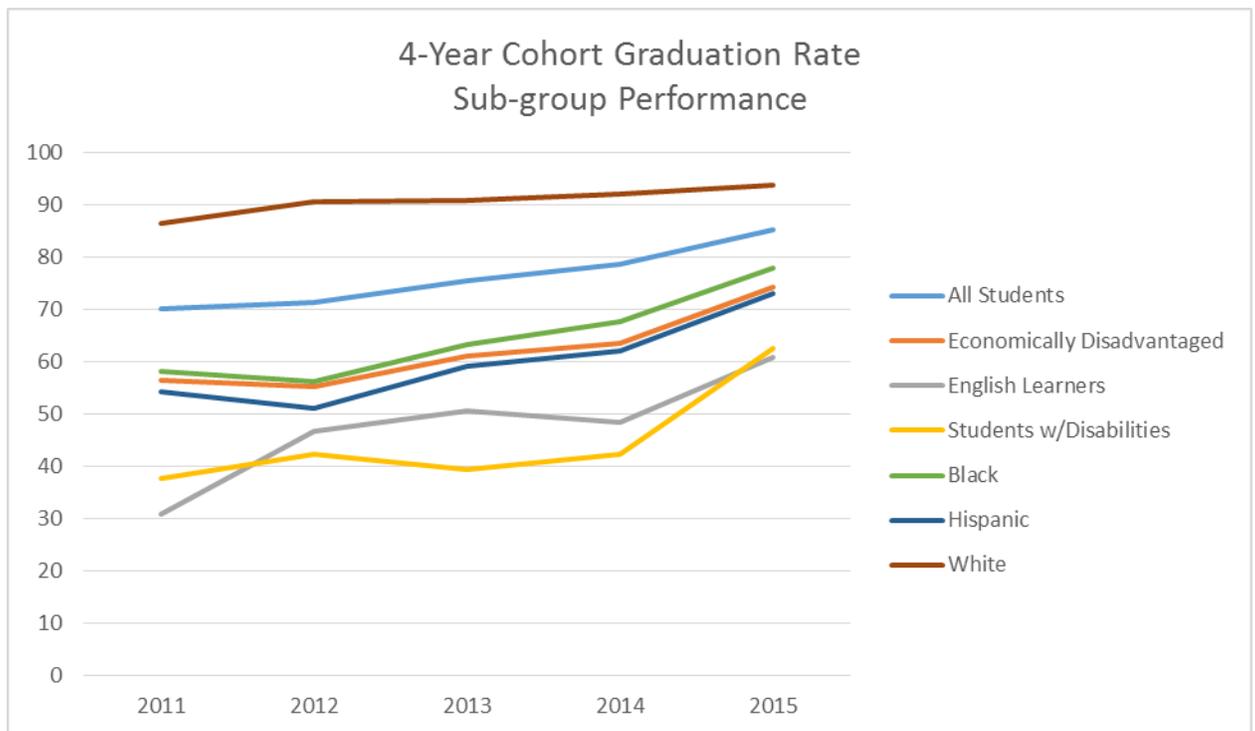
The success of our charter system is not just visible in qualitative data. Since transitioning to a charter system, Fulton has enjoyed an annual increase in graduation rate. Starting at a rate of 71.3 in 2012, Fulton's graduation rate in 2015 was 85.3 – a 14 point increase! This increase in graduation rate is experienced by all subgroups (see chart below).



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Fulton County Schools
4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	3-year Gain 2015 vs. 2012
All Students	70.1	71.3	75.5	78.7	85.3	14.0
Economically Disadvantaged	56.5	55.3	61.2	63.7	74.4	19.1
English Learners	30.9	46.8	50.7	48.4	60.8	14.0
Students w/Disabilities	37.7	42.3	39.5	42.4	62.7	20.4
Asian	86.2	92.9	94.3	92.5	96.0	3.1
Black	58.2	56.3	63.3	67.7	78.1	21.8
Hispanic	54.3	51.2	59.3	62.1	73.0	21.8
White	86.6	90.7	91.0	92.2	93.9	3.2
Multi-Racial	63.8	74.4	70.5	83.1	88.4	14.0





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The percentage of students participating in AP, IB and/or Dual Enrollment has increased from 47% pre-charter system status to 53% in the 2014-15 school year, in part due to expanded opportunities at our high schools and new partnerships with higher education institutions. During the 2014-15 school year, Fulton implemented accelerated options for middle school students in reading/English language arts with 765 middle school students taking above grade level courses in 2014-15 and 1,507 students taking above grade-level courses during the 2015-16 school year. This success contributed to Fulton being the first recipient of the Charter System of the Year award by the Charter System Foundation for our innovative practices, dedication to local school governance, and leadership in the charter system community.

- a. In addition to the narrative above, please fill out the accountability spreadsheet available on the Department's website. The spreadsheet has spaces for your initial charter goals and objectives, as well as your actual progress towards meeting those goals and objectives in each of the first four years. Please be sure to highlight in green those targets which were met in a given year and use red for those that were not met -- and a yellow highlight for those that were close or showed significant growth or progress. This spreadsheet will be presented to the State Board of Education with your charter system application so please ensure its accuracy.**

See attached spreadsheet.

- b. If your charter system did not meet all the goals in your charter contract, please explain any mitigating factors to which this can be attributed, and explain how the system plans to address these issues in the next five years if your charter is renewed.**

Fulton County Schools has experienced great success as a charter system. A number of our goals were established based on the CRCT, which is no longer in circulation. Changes to required state tests, and the accompanying rollout, have had an impact on our targets and charter system performance goals. We have one year worth of CRCT data to highlight.

We missed some targets in meeting or exceeding State performance targets on all CRCTs and EOCTs. Our missed targets were between .02 and 1 percentage point off target. While we missed some of our CRCT targets, we did see increases on all metrics except Elementary (ES) math, which remained stable. Missed targets were ES and Middle (MS) math and MS science. At the time, math was a particular challenge due to the rollout of Common Core, a need for professional development, and a lack of alignment between curriculum and assessments.

In response to these challenges, the district designed a personalized learning program to ensure students' unique learning needs are met. This rollout is currently underway and the support for



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personalized learning will continue in the next charter term. In addition, many schools are focusing professional development on project-based learning and/or STEM, in an effort to support math and science achievement. Our Professional Learning Department created and delivered courses to assist teachers in implementing the Continuous Achievement Framework in math.

Two schools piloted "Teach to One" - a hyper-personalized math program that utilizes a mixture of technology and human capital strategies to tailor instruction to students' daily needs. The intent in the next term of the charter is to learn from these programs and implement similar models/portions of current model across the district.

We also developed a comprehensive balanced assessment system to provide timely feedback to teachers about student progress. Additional training, supports and resources will be provided to assist teachers in use of this assessment system to use data to inform instruction.

We are aware that the new charter system contract goals are geared towards CCRPI and Beating the Odds. As we develop our new district strategic plan, we will be focused, first and foremost, on increased student achievement and the overall wellbeing of our students, with an eye towards improving the measures related to CCRPI and Beating the Odds. Additionally, our shift to aligning school strategic plans to focus on feeder schools will provide a more cohesive learning experience for our students, which should also result in increased student achievement.

2. Please provide a brief overview of your system's current organizational structure. Please provide a summary of any organizational or governance changes that your system made since the beginning of your charter term.

Fulton County Schools is the fourth largest school district in Georgia. We have more than 96,000 students, 93 charter system schools, 10 independent charter schools and 14,000 employees. We are governed by a seven-member board of education and a superintendent that provides oversight of daily operations.

Each of our charter system schools are governed by a School Governance Council comprised of:

- Three parents/guardians
- Two teachers
- Two school employees
- Two community members
- 2 students (high school only)

Our School Governance Councils are tasked with the following roles and responsibilities, in compliance with state charter system laws, rules, and regulations:

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- Approve the school Strategic Plan and updates
- Manage the Request for Flexibility process
- Manage Seed Fund requests
- Approve annual budget recommendations and related allocations
- Participate in hiring of the Principal
- Provide annual feedback to the Area Superintendent on Principal's performance.

Upon our transition to a charter system, we completed a central office restructuring to create a Division of Strategy and Innovation designed to support schools and School Governance Councils in their transition to shared leadership and innovative practices. This division was key in helping to usher in the new governance structure for our schools and principals.

As charter system has become our way of life and schools have implemented new initiatives requiring the waiver of laws and policies, we found a stronger alignment between the departments within Strategy and Innovation and the Academics Division. Therefore, to ensure the strongest support for our schools, we restructured to include those departments under the Academics Division. Innovative ideas and strategies are viewed with a lens towards academics first.

- 3. If you have received communications from the State regarding compliance issues and/or the limits of your broad flexibility during the past charter term, please explain what steps were taken to remedy these issues and/or address those limits, and what steps the system took to ensure such situations do not recur in the future.**

Fulton County Schools entered into its charter on July 1, 2012. In 2015, the State Board of Education passed new rules and guidelines related to charter systems and the autonomy levels for School Governance Teams. The new charter language In October of 2016, Fulton was notified by the Georgia Department of Education that we were out of compliance on Section (d)(1) of the principal selection portion of the recently adopted rules, which states:

"Charter systems shall develop processes to meaningfully engage LSGTs in the selection of the principal or school leader. LSGTs shall recommend the principal or school leader to the Superintendent for selection by the LBOE;"

Under our original charter, Fulton County Schools' guidance to School Governance Councils stated that School Governance Councils may have input into the hiring of the school principal in the event of a vacancy. Upon notification of the new charter system policy adopted by the State Board of Education, we amended our practices and procedures to ensure that School Governance Councils meaningfully engage in the selection of the principal. Our current practice requires each School Governance Council to establish a Principal Selection Committee comprised of a diverse group of SGC members. The SGC Principal Selection committee works with the school community to identify traits that they desire in a school leader. The SGC



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Principal Selection Committee then serves on the school-based interview panel and provides a recommendation of preferred candidate to the Area Superintendent, to be shared with the Superintendent.

These changes to our principal selection process insure that our School Governance Councils meaningfully engage in the selection of the principal and that our system remains in compliance with the governance standards set forth by the Georgia Department of Education.

- 4. Please state whether the system's charter was amended via a formal amendment or an administrative clarification during the past charter term. Please explain the reasoning for the changes to the charter contract and how they have benefited the system.**

Fulton County Schools entered its charter on July 1, 2012. On May 10, 2013, our system charter was amended to clarify the language and add locally-approved start-up charter schools and conversion charter schools with separate charters to the list of school excluded from the charter system contract; and section (d) under System Charter Schools, which listed the schools that are not part of the charter system, was deleted.

No other amendments were made to our charter.

PROPOSED CHANGES

- 5. Please briefly describe any substantial changes that your charter system proposes to implement in its next charter term in the areas of academics, governance and operations.**

Included within the answer for Question 7.

- 6. Please provide a brief rationale for any changes planned.**

Included within the answer for Question 7.

- 7. Please briefly describe how your system will implement these proposed changes to serve the needs of its students for the upcoming charter term.**

Fulton recently welcomed a new superintendent on June 1, 2016 and we are currently embarking on the development of a new district strategic plan. Any substantial changes to the charter system will be driven by the outcomes of the needs assessment conducted during the development of the strategic plan. However, there are some changes that we are considering based on lessons learned from our current charter system contract. Those changes, and their rationale, are included below.

- Additional training and/or coaching on shared governance may be needed for principals. During our transition to charter system, we provided training and executive coaching to principals on



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executive leadership skills, such as change management and influencing change. That training proved to be invaluable for leaders during the transition and establishment of School Governance Councils. Four years and several new principals later, we see value in providing trainings and supports to school leaders in the specific areas of shared governance and leading collaboratively with a School Governance Council.

- We may consider expanding School Governance Council membership to increase parent and community involvement. Our current School Governance Council structure requires three parents and two community members. Currently, the community members may or may not be parents of the school. By expanding and or providing parameters around the roles of School Governance Council members, we have the opportunity to work with schools to build their community and business connections, while insuring sufficient parent representation on the Council.
- We seek to gain more focus and alignment of school strategic plans within feeder schools. Our schools currently develop three-year strategic plans based on a needs assessment conducted by the School Governance Council and a data review conducted by the school leadership, in conjunction with the School Governance Council. School strategic plans have a focus on the needs and goals for that particular school, with consideration to district and learning community goals. Now that all schools have developed school strategic plans, we are finding some areas where alignment across feeder schools (ES to MS to HS) is necessary. We intend to revamp our school strategic planning process to allow for alignment of goals and initiatives across feeder schools. This will create a more cohesive learning experience for students as they transition within a school cluster.
- We are considering making some adjustments to our Seed Fund procedures. We use the charter system funding received by the state to support school strategic initiatives identified by our schools and School Governance Councils. Since this funding must be annually appropriated by the state legislature, we distribute it to schools in the form of one-year grants to seed or “jump start” school initiatives. To date, we’ve distributed almost \$14 million to support more than 140 identified in school strategic plans. After three years of the Seed Fund, we have learned some lessons and identified some adjustments that we need to make to insure this resource remains impactful for our students and schools. As stated above, the Seed Fund award is currently a one-year grant for schools and all schools can apply for the grant each year. One of the lessons learned is that it can be difficult for a school to launch a project and spend large sums of additional funding in the course of one fiscal year. We are considering adjusting our rules to award longer-term grants to allow schools the opportunity to implement their initiatives with fidelity, in order to keep the focus on the initiative’s impact on student achievement, instead of funding deadlines.