



Charter System Application

DISTRICT NAME

Commerce City School System

DISTRICT ADDRESS

270 Lakeview Drive
Commerce, GA 30529

Dr. John D. Barge
State School Superintendent

DECEMBER 2013

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 decisionmaking.

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

The evaluation of your Application will focus on whether implementing the charter system proposed in your Application will lead to the improved academic 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.

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

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
 - 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.

CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION COVER SHEET

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

Proposed Charter System Information			
1. Full Name of Proposed Charter System Commerce City Schools			
2. Please indicate whether this is a: New Petition <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or a Renewal Petition	3. How many schools in total are you proposing to include in your charter system? 4		
4. How many of each of the following schools are you proposing to include in your charter system? <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> Primary School(s) 1 Middle School(s) 1 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> Elementary School(s) 1 High school(s) 1 </div>			
5. On July 1 of what year do you want your charter contract to be effective? 2014			
6. How many years are you proposing for the term of your charter contract? (Note that an initial charter cannot exceed five years) 5			
7. Charter System Street Address 270 Lakeview Drive	8. City Commerce	9. State Georgia	10. Zip 30529
11. Contact Person Joy Tolbert		12. Title Superintendent	
13. Contact Street Address 270 Lakeview Drive	14. City Commerce	15. State GA	16. Zip 30529
17. Contact's telephone number 706-335-5500	18. Contact's fax number 706-335-5214	19. Contact's E-mail Address jtolbert@commerce-city.k12.ga.us	

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?

Charter system status offers Commerce City Schools the opportunity to reevaluate the current mission statement, curricula, and definition of student success. Through the application process, it is clear that the current school structures and processes are not meeting the needs of all students. In understanding the flexibility and autonomy provided through a charter, the community is in support of the school system’s conversion to a charter system. The school and the community recognize that the increased flexibility from state regulations will allow the school to develop an educational plan that is most responsive to the needs of a unique body of students. Additionally, the school will have the flexibility to develop programs that reflect community-identified goals. The projected areas of flexibility that will be utilized in the Commerce City School System include: class size, seat-time, school year requirement, course development, certification, textbook, media center, graduation requirements, and EIP and REP identification and placement. As the school governing boards mature and grow to better understand the potential of students and the schooling process, it is anticipated that additional waivers will be requested. The greatest power of the charter is the accountability of the school system to the public. Accountability measures will be developed, articulated, and communicated. Accountability will reach beyond test scores and include job preparedness and post-high school measures.

Commerce City School’s motivation for applying for a charter system is driven by community and school leadership. Commerce is looking for innovative ways to serve students who are falling behind and means to serve students that need more aggressive acceleration. As many students leave high school

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for careers or post-secondary education, they are not prepared to be successful. With a challenging economy and competitive job market, students must be fully prepared to enter adulthood as independent and productive citizens. Changes must be made within the Commerce City School System. With these innovations, the school will be able to guide students in identifying their unique educational and career-readiness needs and provide appropriately challenging and relevant curricula that enable students to meet their personal, academic, and professional post-secondary goals.

Educational innovations will allow Commerce City Schools to graduate students that are well-prepared for careers and post-secondary education. The autonomy and flexibility provided with charter status allows the innovations that are unique to Commerce City Schools to be developed. In the primary grades, the innovations will include the development and implementation of a student leadership program, a school-developed pre-first grade classroom, a fine arts program to include world language and music, and a before- and after-school tutoring program. The elementary grades will develop 21st Century classrooms and a one-to-one technology initiative. Providing continuity for the students, the primary and elementary schools will implement the Positive Behavior Intervention System and the primary through middle grades will develop a foreign language program. The middle and high schools will implement flexible scheduling and expanded technology resources. Additional high school innovations will include a freshman transition program; college and career readiness programs of study; and the development of new courses. All schools will engage teachers in professional development activities designed to prepare them with the knowledge and skills necessary to efficiently and effectively implement the innovations.

The charter provides Commerce City Schools and the Community of Commerce an opportunity to become a true school community. Although the system has always been a small school within a small community, the charter will allow our school to be governed with input from an autonomous non-profit board of directors. From the creation of our charter petition, parents, community members, and other interested parties have been invited to participate in the conversion process. Initially, the parents, community members, and other interested parties attended an orientation session with Morgan Felts

during the summer of 2013. The orientation provided an overview of the process and responded to concerns from the community group. The process of becoming a charter school has provided system and school leaders with valuable insight from the community regarding their feelings, beliefs, and ideas about education and the state of the local school community. The newly designed governance structure will hold the system accountable to the community *and* allow the system to capitalize on community involvement.

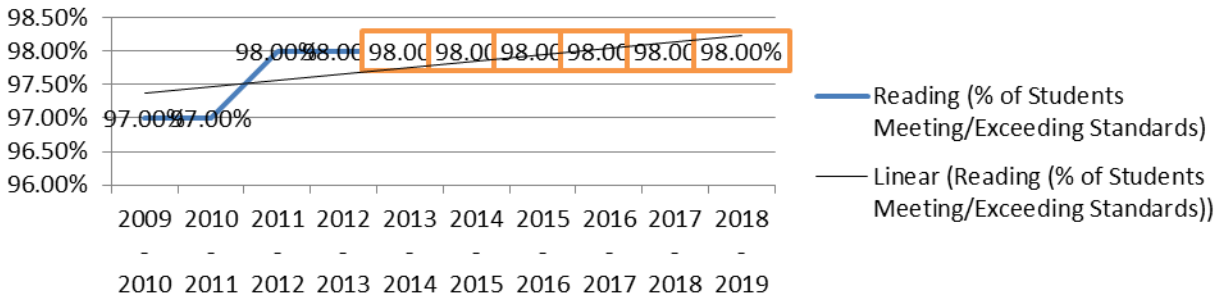
ACADEMIC OBJECTIVES, PLANS, AND WAIVERS

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

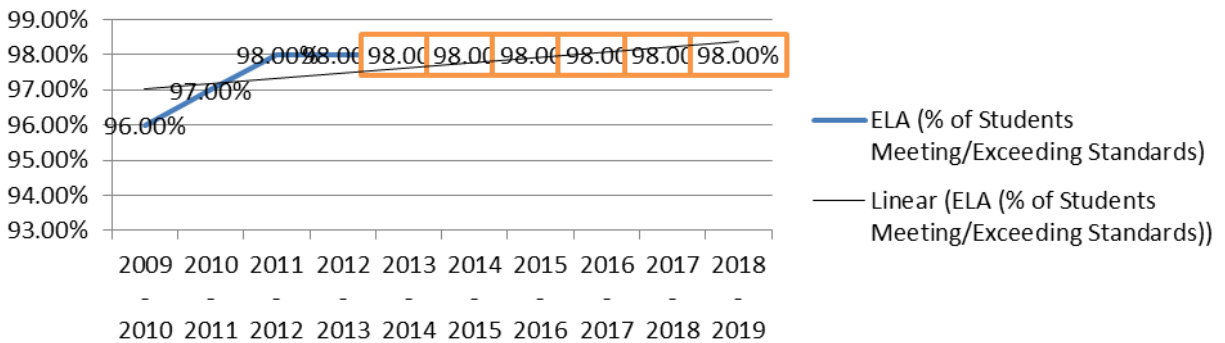
Commerce City has developed SMART goals in the areas of student achievement. The achievement goals represent compliance with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and State Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs). The district achievement goals and graphs are shown below. For the purpose of this petition, goals are extended for 5 years and performance is shown for previous years in the performance graphs. Commerce City Schools will include cohort measures to show progress over time of a single cohort of students. As our charter goals extend for five years, some state performance goals are not currently available and are identified as TBD (To Be Determined). Due to extension of 5 years, some performance goals are shown as TBD since they are not available. Commerce City Schools will maintain or exceed the expected rate of student performance each year of the charter.

Student Performance Goal 1: The percentage of third through eighth grade students meeting or exceeding state standards on the CRCT or other state assessments in Reading, English/Language Arts and Mathematics will remain at the current level or show improvement by the 2018-2019 school year.

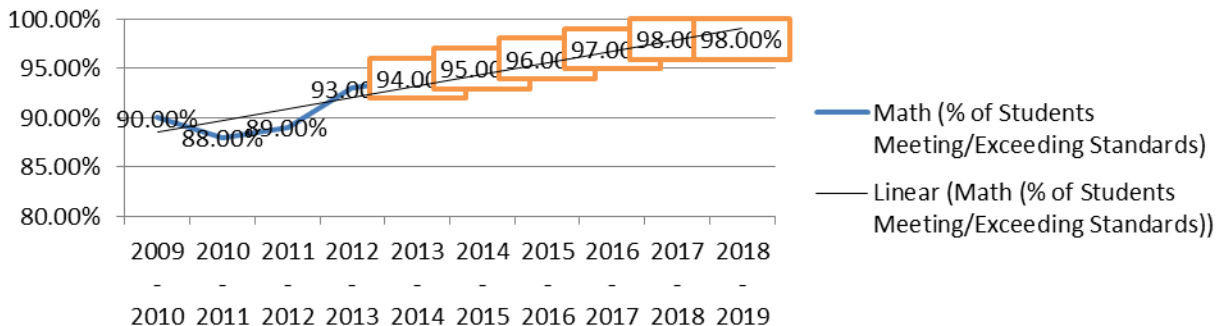
Reading (% of Students Meeting/Exceeding Standards)



ELA (% of Students Meeting/Exceeding Standards)

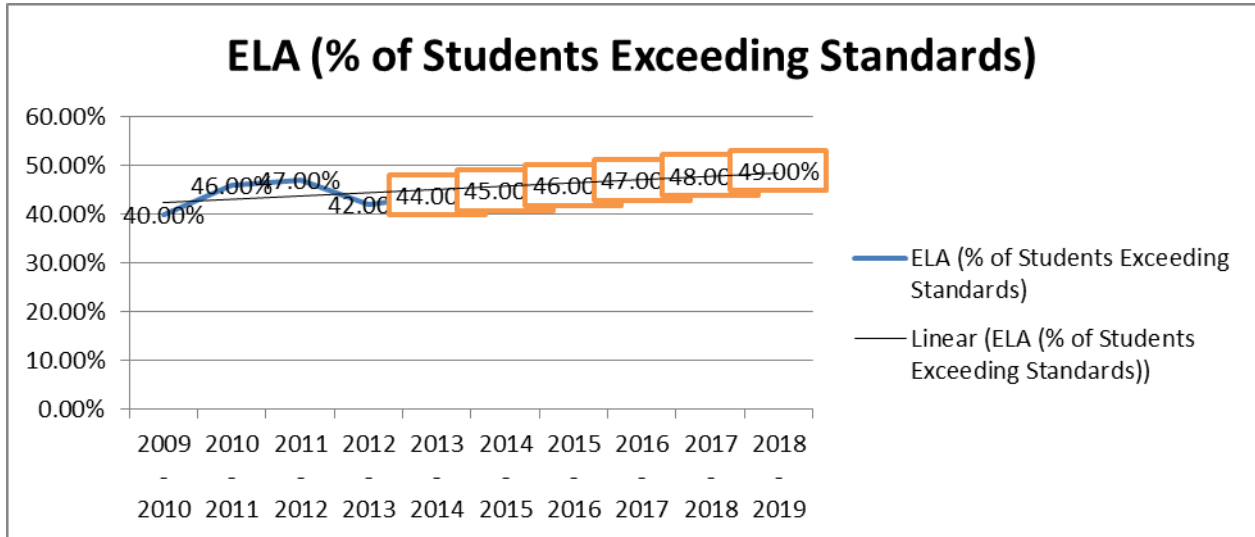
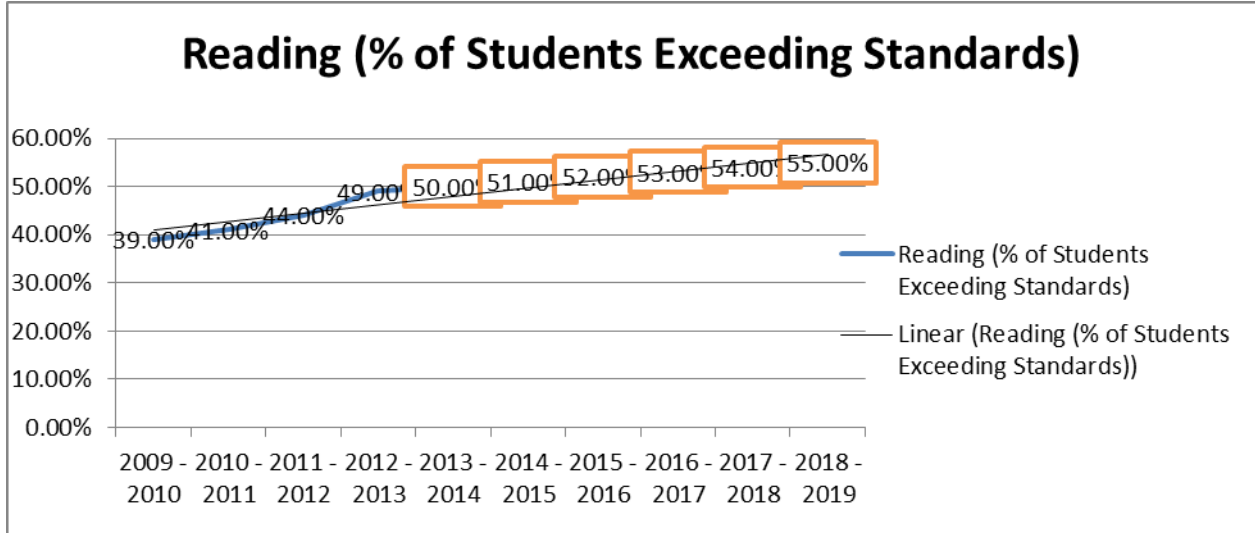


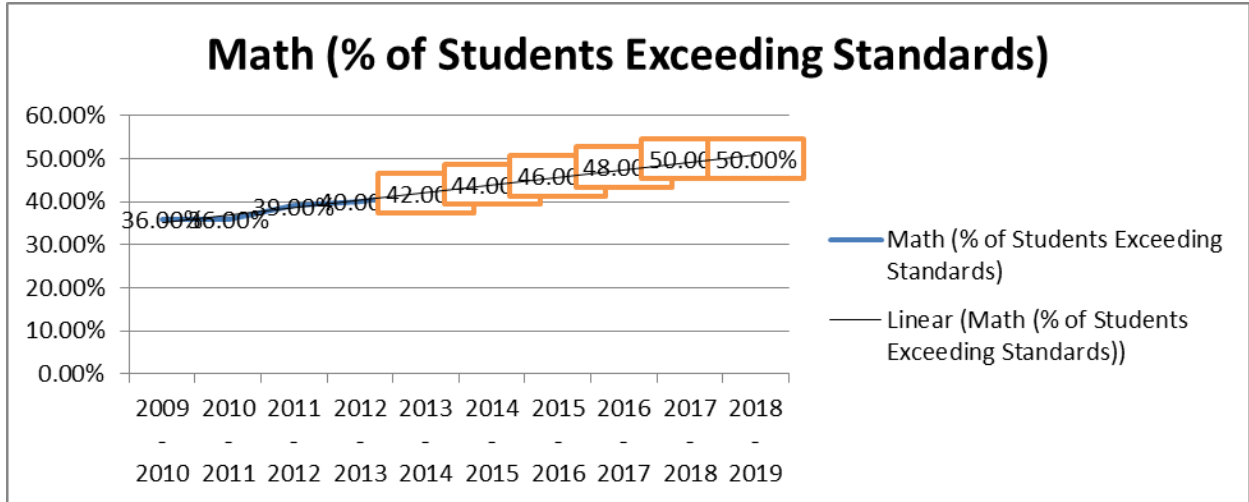
Math (% of Students Meeting/Exceeding Standards)



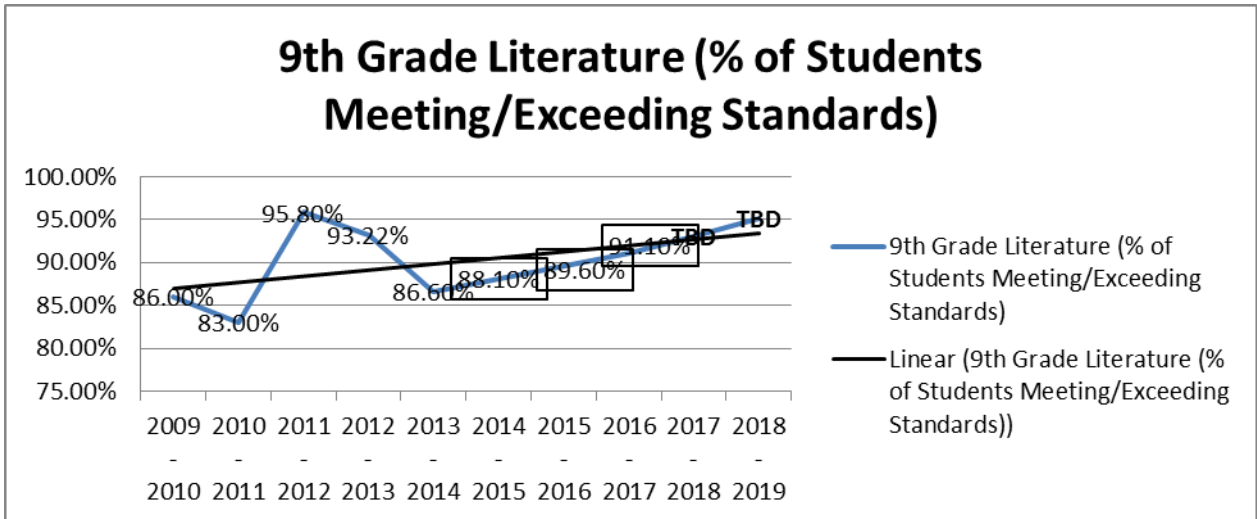
Commerce City School System

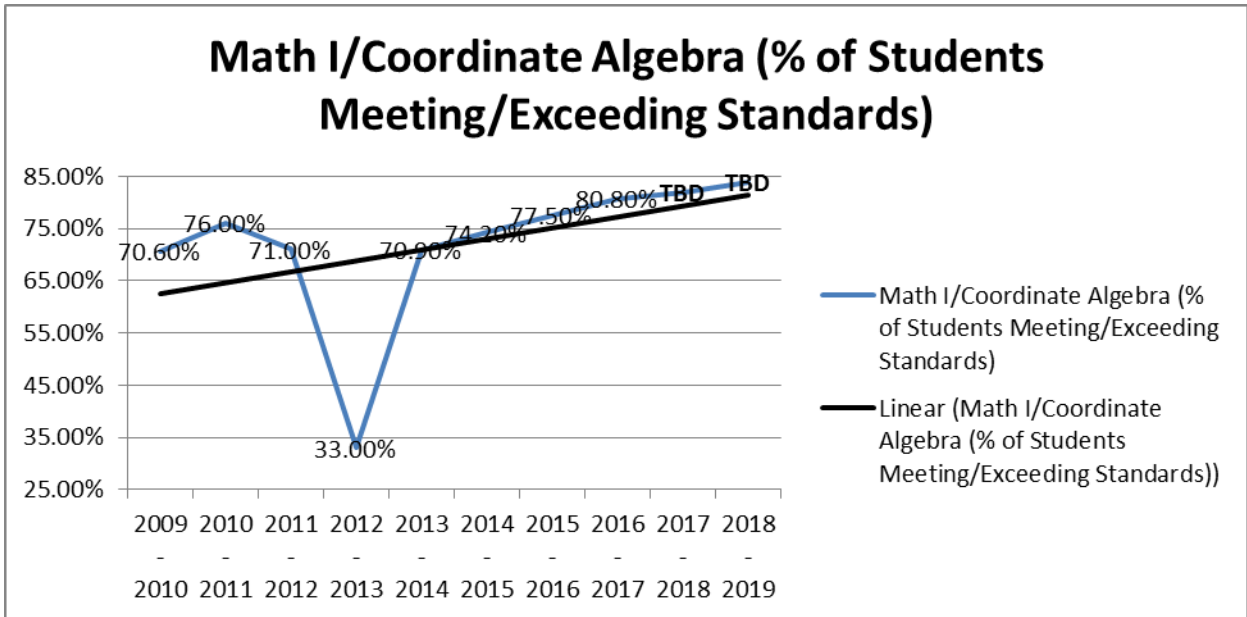
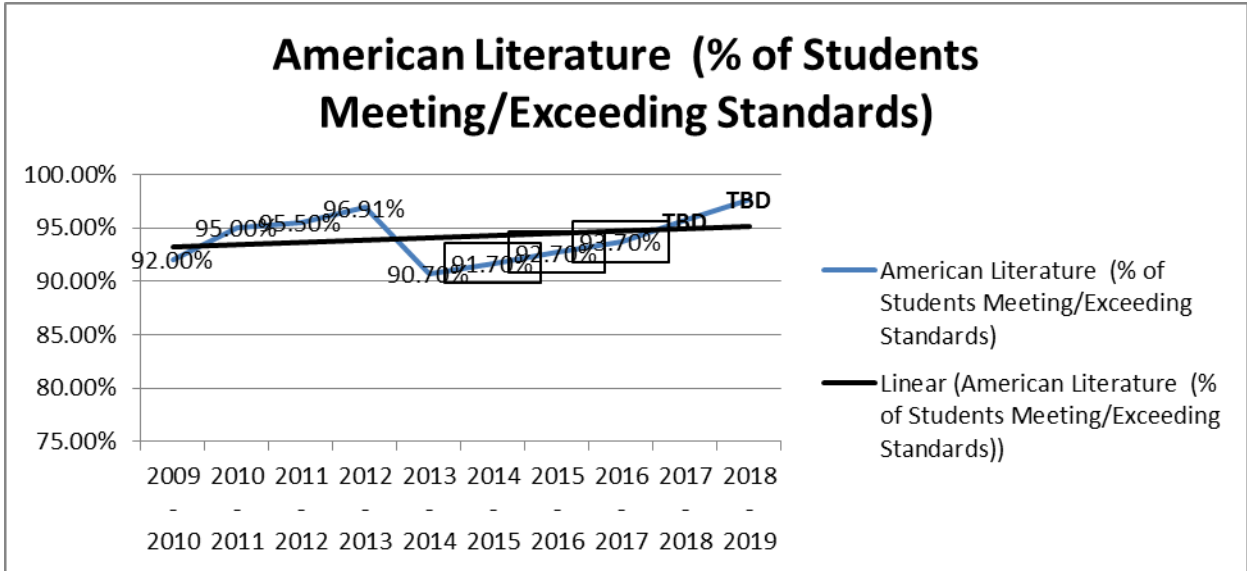
Student Performance Goal 2: The percentage of third through eighth grade students exceeding state standards on the CRCT or other state assessments in Reading, English/Language Arts and Mathematics will remain at the current level or show improvement by the 2018-2019 school year.



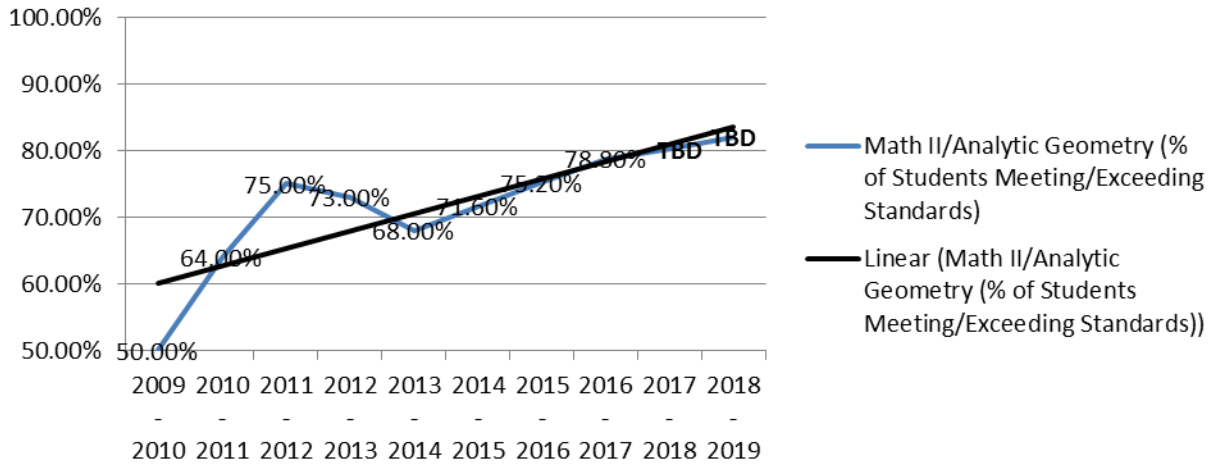


Student Performance Goal 3: The percentage of high school students meeting or exceeding state standards on each EOCT (9th Grade Literature, American Literature, Math I/Coordinate Algebra, Math II/Analytic Geometry, Physical Science, Biology, US History, and Economics) will remain at the current level or show improvement by the 2018 – 2019 school year.

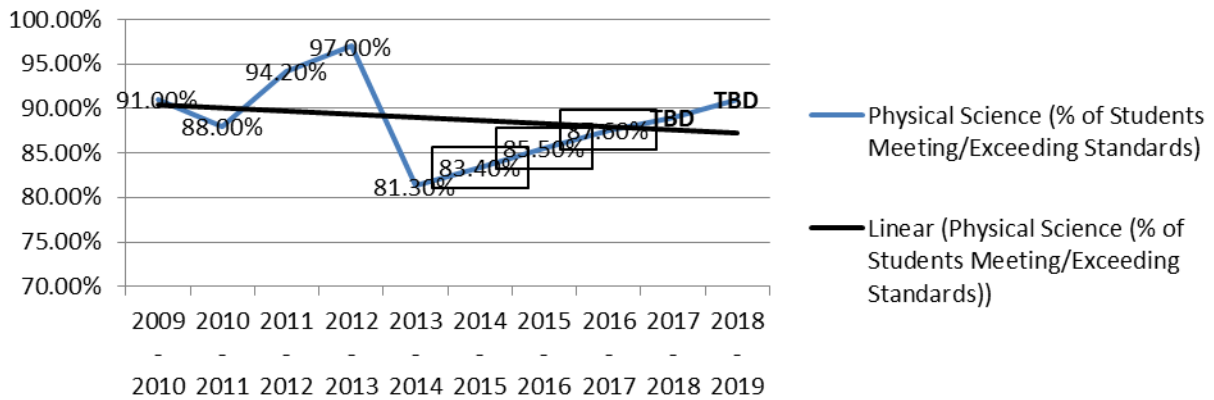




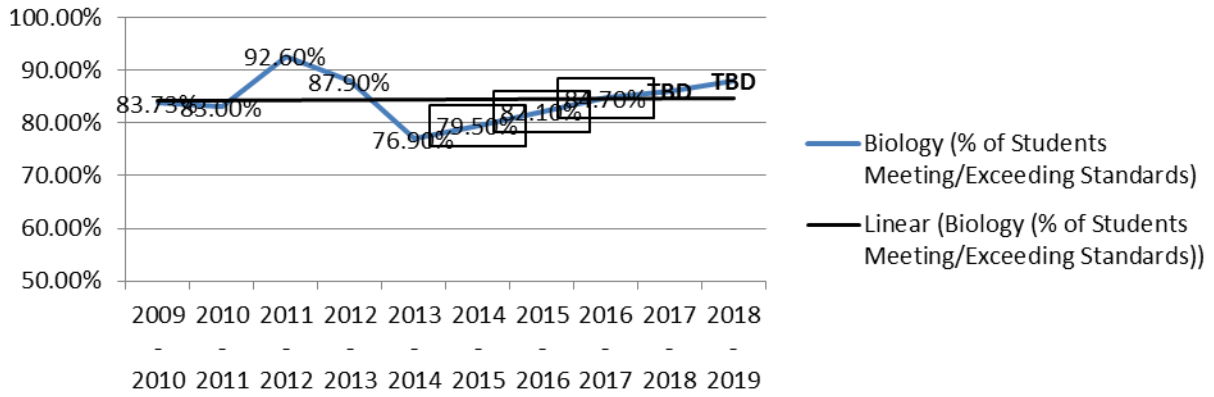
Math II/Analytic Geometry (% of Students Meeting/Exceeding Standards)



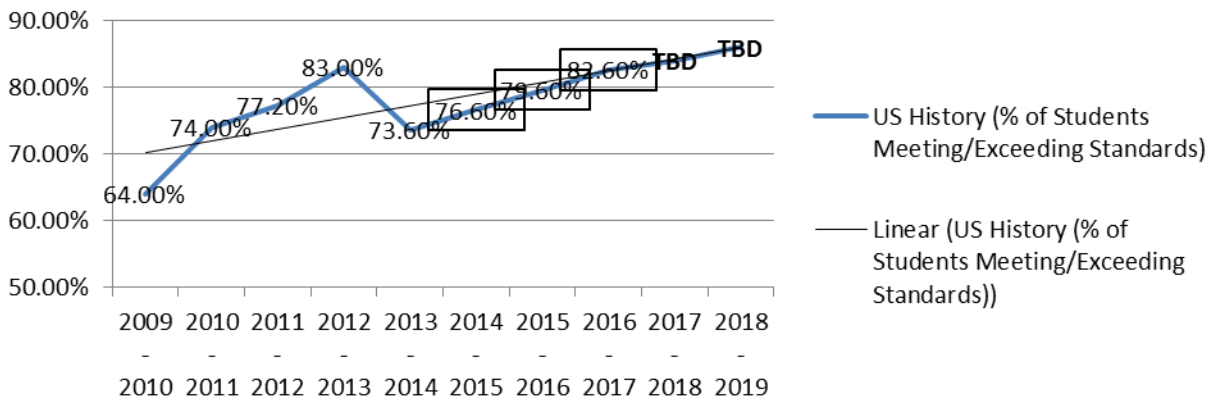
Physical Science (% of Students Meeting/Exceeding Standards)



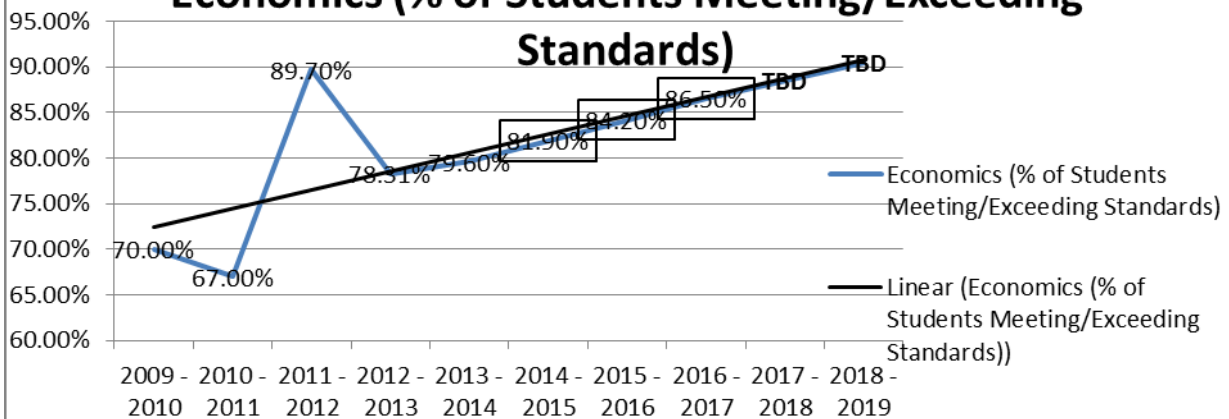
Biology (% of Students Meeting/Exceeding Standards)



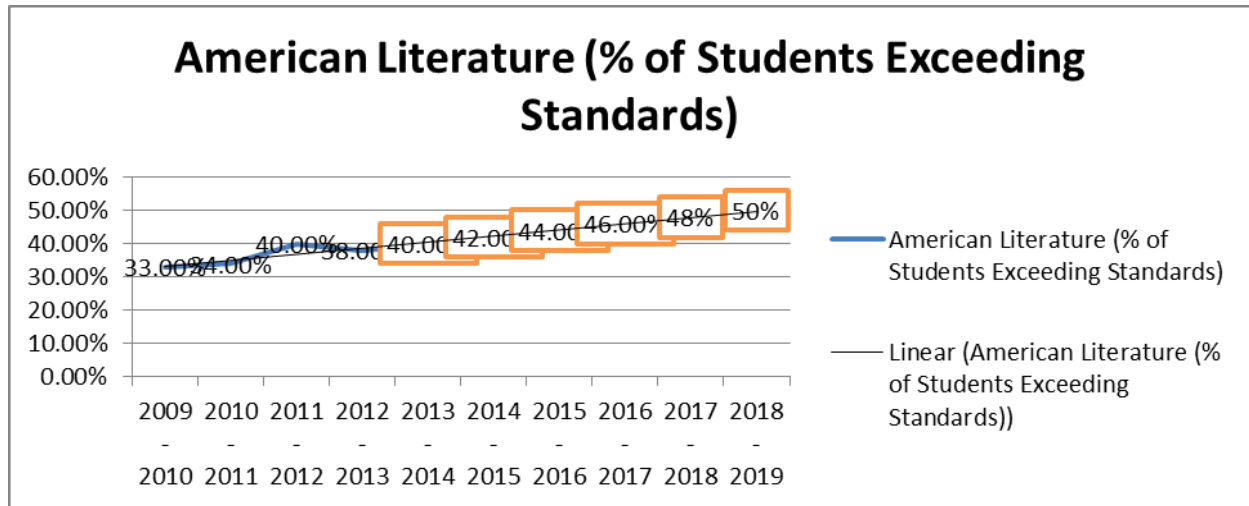
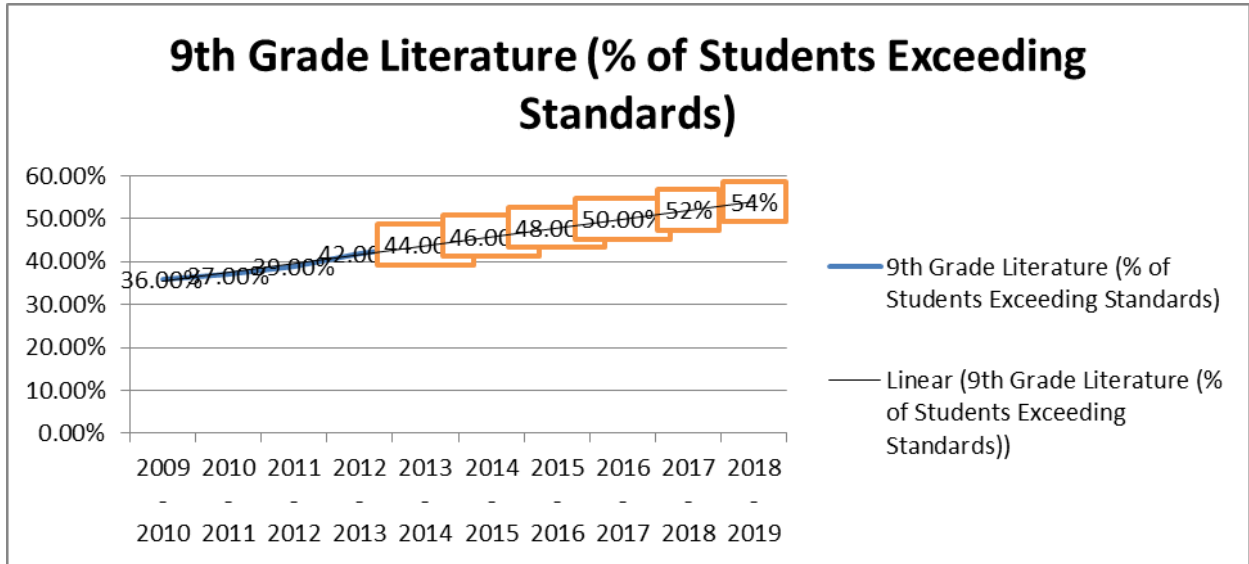
US History (% of Students Meeting/Exceeding Standards)



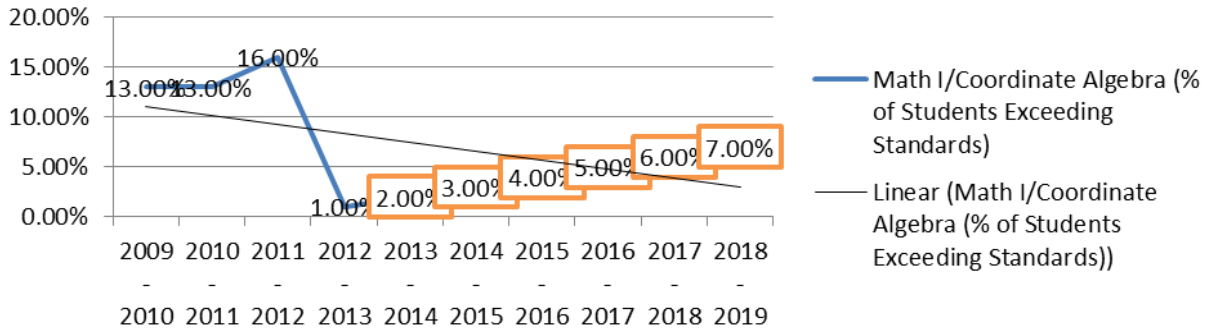
Economics (% of Students Meeting/Exceeding Standards)



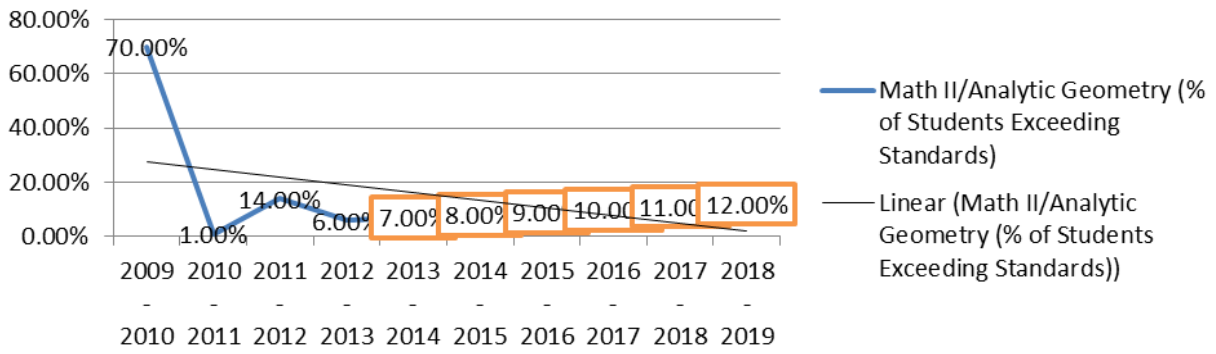
Student Performance Goal 4: The percentage of high school students meeting or exceeding state standards on each EOCT (9th Grade Literature, American Literature, Math I/Coordinate Algebra, Math II/Analytic Geometry, Physical Science, Biology, US History, and Economics) will remain at the current level or show improvement by the 2018 – 2019 school year.



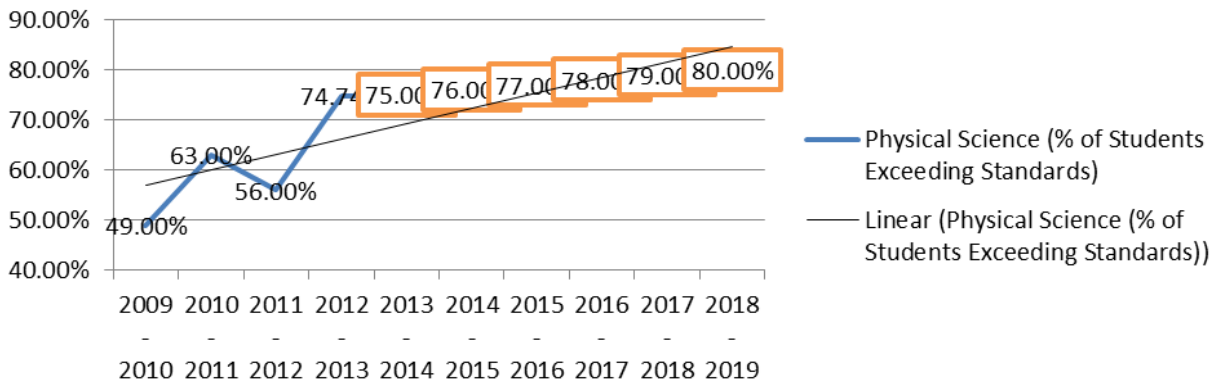
Math I/Coordinate Algebra (% of Students Exceeding Standards)

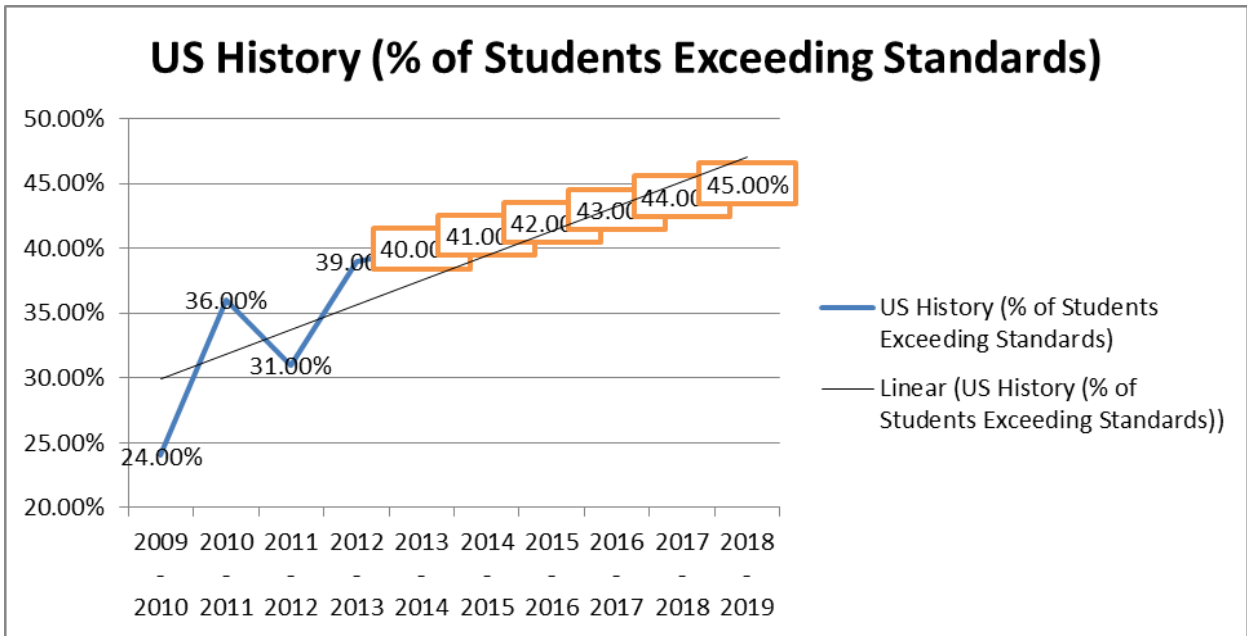
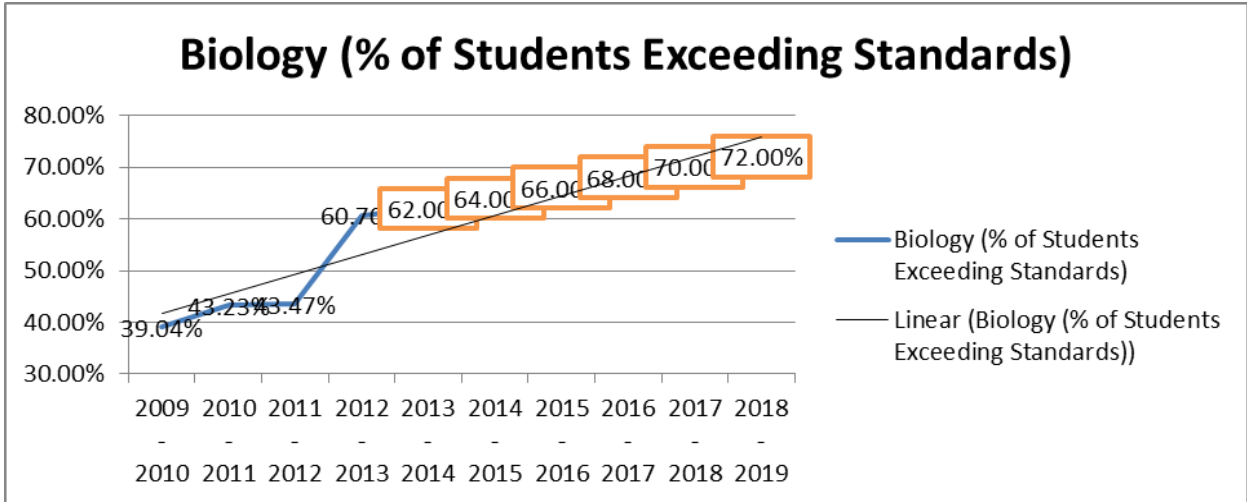


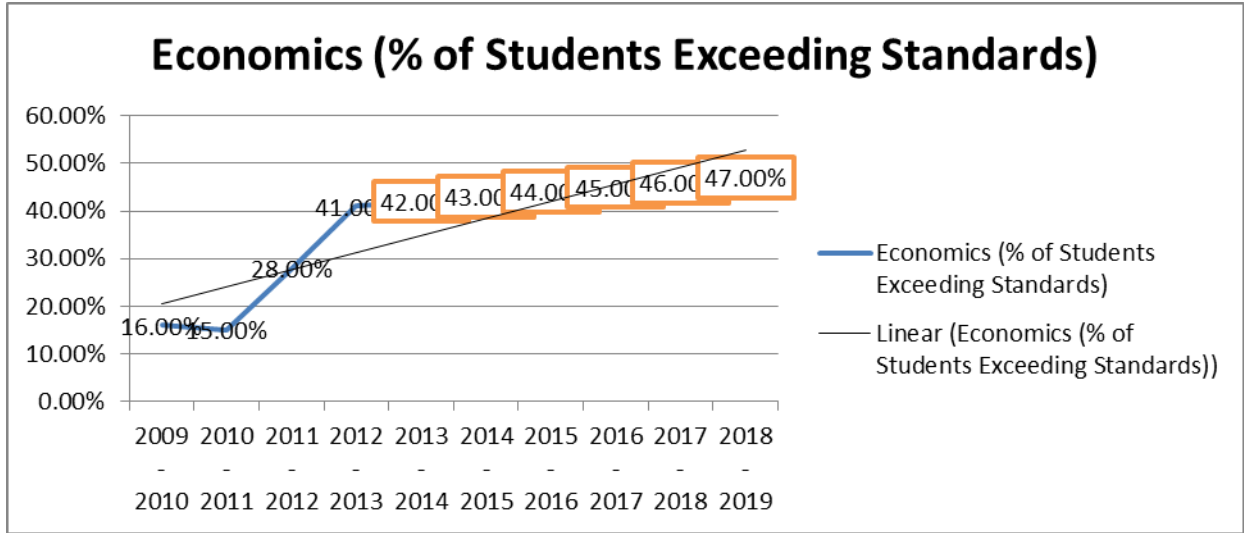
Math II/Analytic Geometry (% of Students Exceeding Standards)



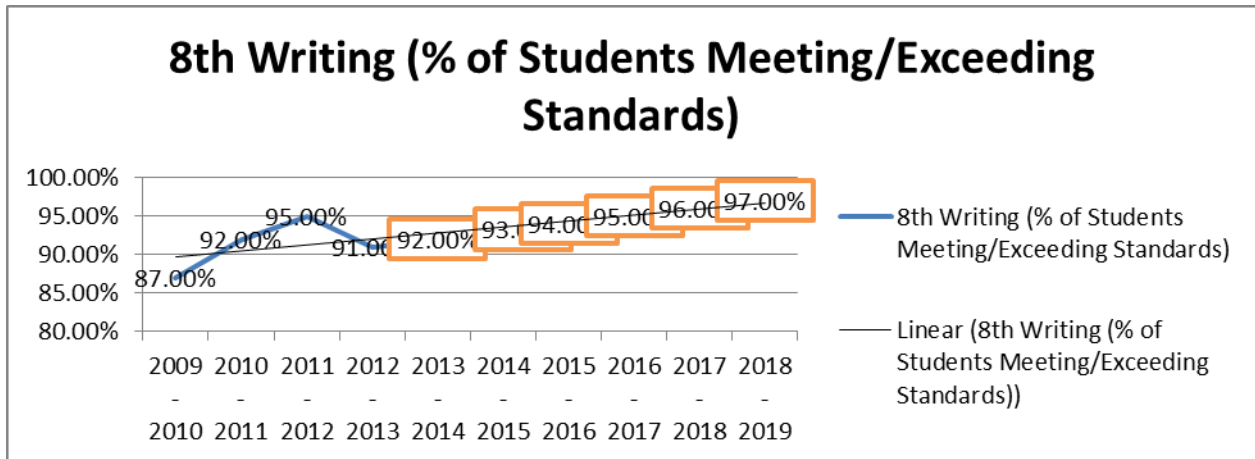
Physical Science (% of Students Exceeding Standards)

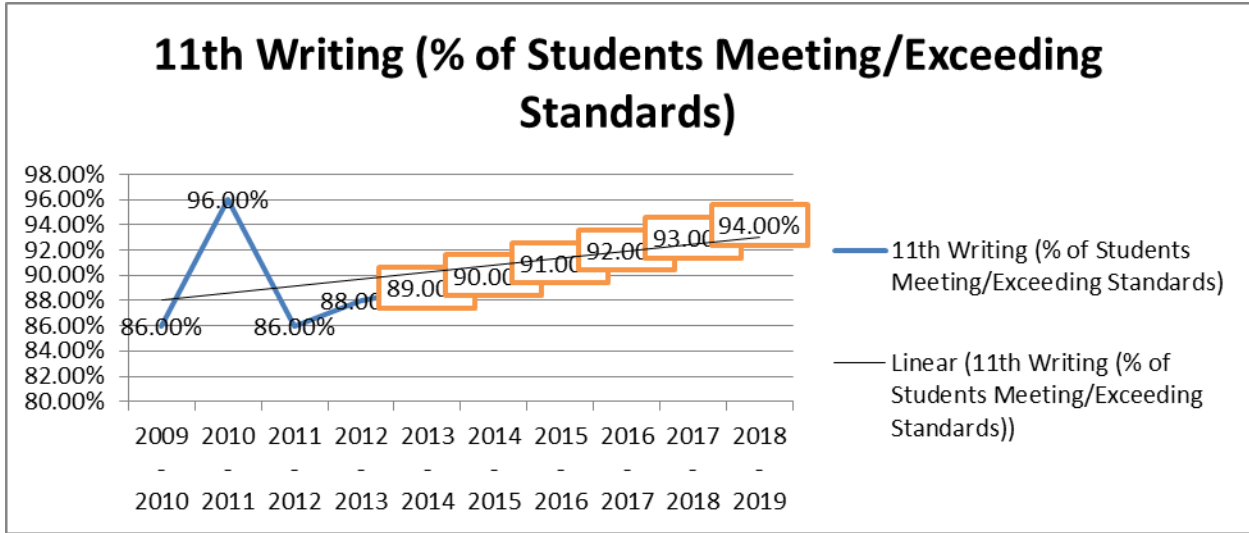




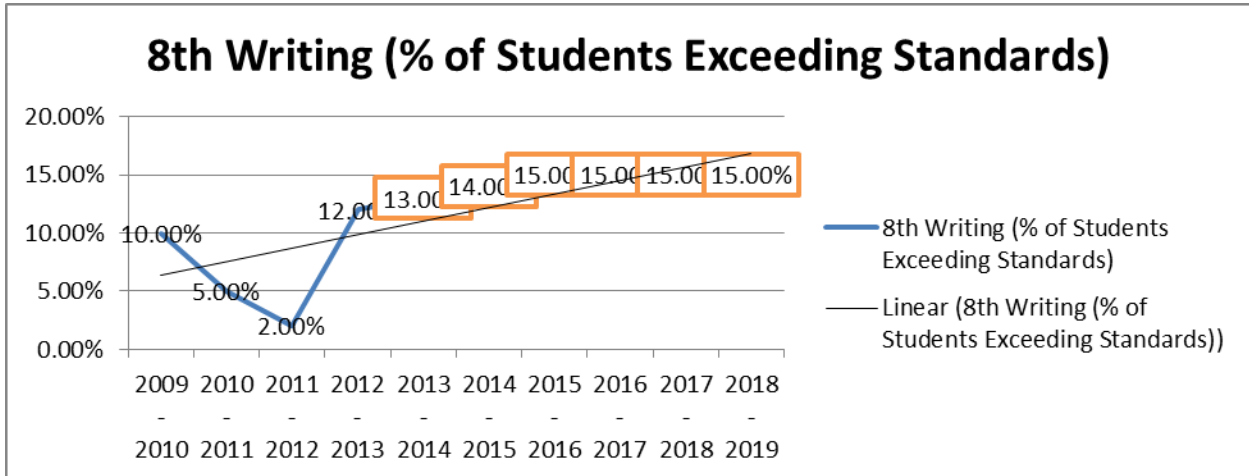


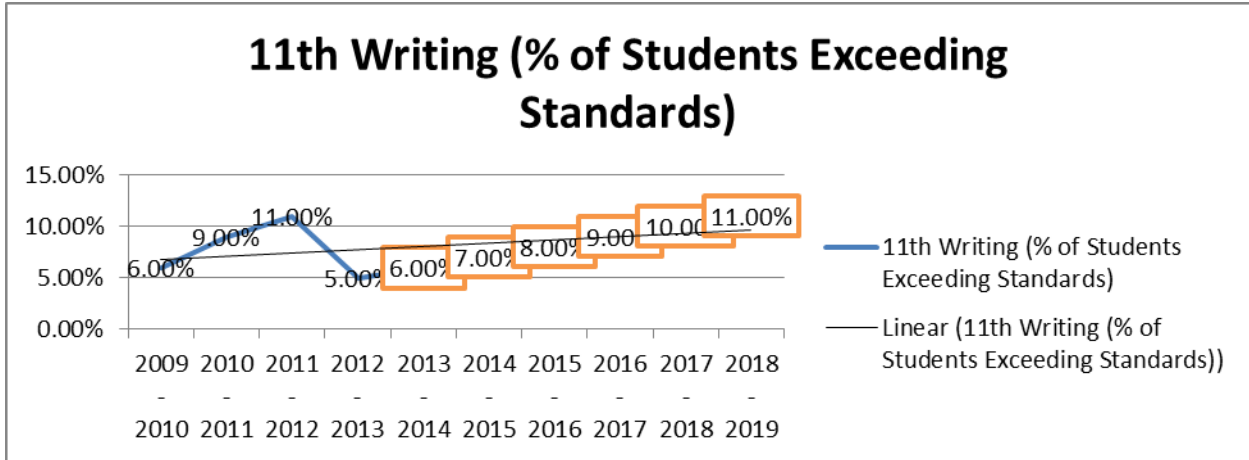
Student Performance Goal 5: The percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards on the eighth and eleventh grade Writing Tests will increase to the State Performance Targets or better by the 2018-2019 school year.



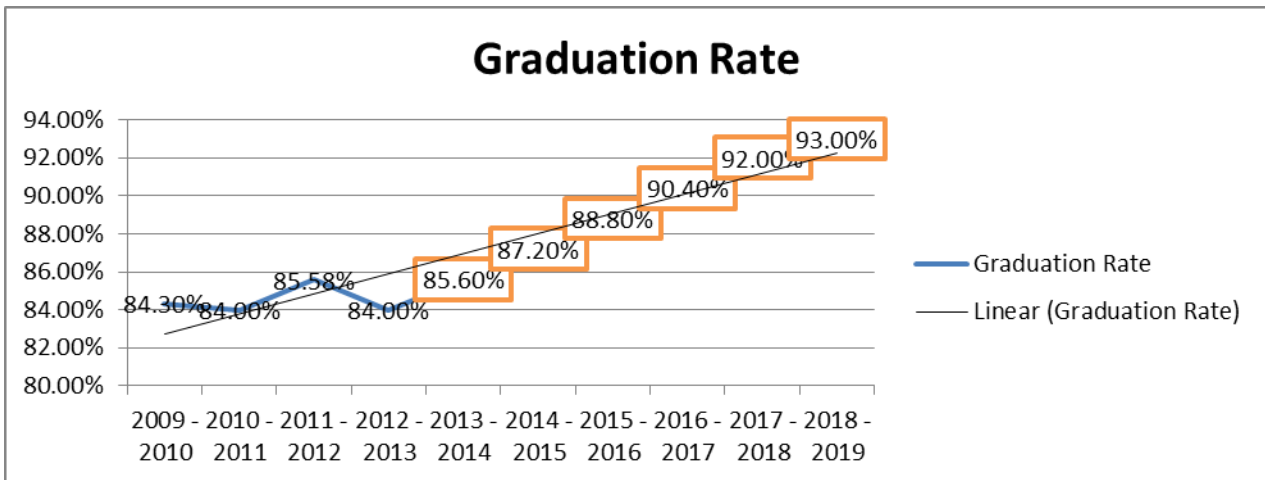


Student Performance Goal 6: The percentage of students exceeding standards on the eighth and eleventh grade Writing Tests will increase to the State Performance Targets or better by the 2018-2019 school year.





Student Performance Goal 7: The Commerce City Schools graduation rate will increase from 87.20% to 90.40% or better in 2019.



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

The Commerce City School System has research-based programs and interventions in place to support standards-based instruction. Using the flexibility of the charter school system, these programs will be improved and expanded to more closely meet the needs of students and staff. The restrictions of state program regulations will be lifted so that resources and support will be targeted where needed. Each

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of the following innovations allows the school system to identify and meet the individual needs of the students. These innovations are in the introductory stages and will be implemented when a complete plan and timeline is approved by the governance teams. Additionally, an evaluation system will be implemented to determine the effectiveness of each innovation. Because the school system is small, personnel are limited, and resources are few, these innovations will provide the students with opportunities that would otherwise not be possible. The Commerce City School System has been developing the Charter School petitions since spring of 2013. During 2012-2013, the community was surveyed to determine the needs of the community and students. The innovations addressed in the petition reflect the needs and desire of the community and staff.

Flexible Scheduling (CPS, CES, CMS, CHS)

Flexible scheduling will be utilized in grades K-12 in order to implement remediation and acceleration opportunities based on student performance and progress. The interventions used to meet the needs of the students will be continually changing, as will the constitution of the student groups and the amount of instructional time using the particular interventions. The specific flexible schedule that will best meet the needs of students is still being researched and will be decided with input from stakeholders. To achieve this innovation, various waivers will be necessary. These waivers include class size, seat time, certification requirements, EIP identification, EIP placement, REP identification, REP placement, and media center.

Professional Development (CPS, CES, CMS, CHS)

Differentiated instruction, data review, assessment, and mastery learning through technology in the 21st century classroom will be the emphasis of professional learning. In order to focus on these areas of professional development and to implement specific strategies, the flexible scheduling model and the related class size and certification waivers will be utilized. Additionally, the school year requirement may need to be waived to allow for an increase, decrease, or exchange in the number of required student and staff days of attendance for collaborative planning and instructional coordination.

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As our digital capacity expands and technology becomes more readily available for incorporation within instructional activities, it is vital that teachers are provided the resources necessary to fully utilize the technology that is available. With charter QBE funding, professional development on the use of new technology will be provided to the faculty and staff. Professional development activities will be structured to support teachers in developing technology –based instructional activities that best meet the needs and interests of students. This professional development will allow our staff to be able to instruct and monitor student learning via virtual classrooms and thus allowing more time to interact with students and provide feedback for learning. Through this process, teachers will understand that they will transition from teaching students to learning with students and even to learning from students. The technology professional development goals will be S.M.A.R.T. goals (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely).

Foreign Language (CES, CMS)

Implementation of a Foreign Language will be phased in at grades three through eight. While no waiver is necessary for this particular innovation, it is a new proposed academic endeavor that will enhance the education of students. To achieve this innovation, various waivers will be necessary including class size, seat time, certification requirements, EIP identification, EIP placement, REP identification, and REP placement.

Fine Arts Program (CPS)

The implementation of a fine arts program will extend student talents in the areas of world language, music, and art. Multiple sources of research show the intellectual benefits of immersing students in foreign language, music and art experiences at a young age. The fine arts program will allow students to explore their creative potential.

21st Century Classrooms (CES, CMS)

Twenty-first Century learning environments will be expanded to include such instructional devices as mobile labs, classroom response devices, interactive boards/projectors, upgrade of network configuration to support wireless access for BYOT capabilities and any other new technological areas that

have the potential to advance instruction and learning. Development of 21st Century classrooms will assist in preparing our students to be life-long learners by increasing student motivation, engagement, interest, organization, and self-directed learning. In order for student performance to match student potential, Commerce City Schools will provide students with a constantly evolving array of technological tools and activities that demand problem-solving, decision-making, teamwork, and innovation.

One-to-One Technology (CES)

Implementation of a one-to-one technology initiative will put technology into the hands of students for more progressive technology use. Commerce Elementary School students will have the opportunity to learn in a global classroom. In this setting, educators can leverage technology to create an engaging and personalized environment to meet the emerging educational needs of our current generation. No longer does learning have to be one-size-fits-all or confined to the classroom.

Leadership Program (CPS)

The implementation of a leadership program will enable students to take responsibility for setting and accomplishing academic and personal goals. Through the implementation of data notebooks, the students will take a proactive role in establishing, monitoring, and celebrating goal achievements. These practices will encourage the development of a self-motivated, responsible, and passionate student who is prepared for a rigorous curriculum. Through the inception of the leadership program, students will gain an understanding for the importance of recognizing their strengths while also setting goals for areas requiring growth. The ultimate goal is to create a learning environment that will help every child reach his or her maximum potential as they become productive and contributing citizens of the 21st century.

Pre-first Grade Program (CPS)

With the implementation of a pre-first grade program, students will be given the opportunity to develop the behavioral, social, organizational, and academic-readiness skills needed to succeed in future academic endeavors. A pre-first program will also provide the tools and time needed for students to become leaders. The teacher will have the insight, proficiency and flexibility to develop a curriculum that meets state standard requirements as well as individual student needs. This will allow the teacher to take a

child as far as he or she is ready to go academically, without the pressures and pace of a structured first-grade curriculum. This will in turn help to facilitate an improved attitude toward school by giving the child more opportunities for success.

Tiger Time (CPS)

Commerce Primary School will implement Tiger Time. Tiger Time will be a school tutoring program designed to pro-actively address areas of deficiency. Students will be served before and after school with small group remediation, targeting the needs of the students. This program will help students reach academic and personal goals to become successful, life-long learners through differentiated instruction.

Distance Learning (CMS)

Distance learning opportunities will be available for students who are interested in completing elective coursework not currently offered at Commerce Middle School. Currently, the school is not offering virtual learning opportunities. Under the operation of the charter school status, with the utilization of the flexible scheduling model which requires a class size waiver, seat time waiver, and certification requirements waiver, students will have additional opportunities to take virtual learning classes.

Freshman Transition Program (CHS)

At present, Commerce High School offers only minimal programs to support the transition of eighth grade students into the ninth grade. Many ninth grade students struggle to meet the academic rigor of the high school curriculum and they often underestimate the importance of the first year in developing the skills and knowledge that will be essential throughout the remainder of high school. The freshman transition program will provide freshmen with a highly structured program that physically separates them from sophomores, juniors and seniors. They will benefit from a team of academic teachers who will use interdisciplinary instruction. With common planning time, the academic teachers will be able to plan regarding the unique educational needs of individual students and provide tailored remediation during extended learning time.

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The freshman transition program is designed to divide the freshman class into 5 rotating groups. In the first, second, and third blocks of both semesters, the ninth graders will take the four required academic courses; the shared required elective of physical education/health; and the CTAE exploratory course. Fourth block during both semesters is designated for an elective of the student's choice, including art, band, drama, and physical education.

The freshman transition program is expected to increase the number of ninth grade students earning four Carnegie unit credits in the four core content areas of English/Language Arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The freshman transition program will also contribute to a personalized school climate in which each student can develop a relationship with a trusted adult serving on the freshman transition team.

College and Career Readiness Programs of Study (CHS)

Three College and Career Readiness Programs of Study have been developed to provide structured guidance regarding the sequence of courses for students with three avenues of post-secondary objectives: Advanced Academic Program of Study; Post-Secondary School Program of Study; and Career-Readiness Program of Study. The curricula offered will be differentiated to meet the unique needs of students in each of the three programs of study. By offering curricula tailored to these programs of study, the relevancy of school to an individual student's personal, academic, and professional goals is enhanced. Relevance to a student's goals is crucial in developing student interest, participation, and achievement.

Regardless of the program of study, 28 units of credit are required for graduation from Commerce High School; this graduation requirement exceeds the 23 units of credit required by the State of Georgia. The Charter offers the flexibility to differentiate the type of course (not the number of courses) within the core subject areas of math, science, English, and social studies.

Differentiated Courses (CHS)

In order to fully meet the needs of the students on each program of study, the academic courses offered for each program of study must be differentiated. Commerce High School will use the course development waiver to offer courses most appropriate for each pathway. Courses traditionally considered

academic electives by the state may be credited as core academic courses as needed. By offering programs of study and curriculum tailored to these programs of study, the relevancy of school to an individual student's personal, academic, and post-secondary professional goals is enhanced.

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

Class Size Waiver (CPS, CES, CMS, CHS)

This waiver will allow for an increase in the number of students in some classes creating financial opportunities to have smaller class sizes where more appropriate for the students of Commerce City. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-161(b); SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.08; O.C.G.A. § 20-2-182(i)).

School Year Waiver (CPS, CES, CMS, CHS)

The school year requirement waiver will allow for an increase, decrease or exchange in the number of required student and staff days of attendance for collaborative planning, instructional coordination, professional learning, and data review (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-151, 20-2-160, 20-2-161.1, 20-2-165, 20-2-168, 20-2-168(c), 20-2-240, SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.02). It is currently unclear how best to utilize this school waiver. The school system will solicit further community input and utilize the governance teams to determine school calendar options based on meeting the needs of the student population.

Certification Requirements Waiver (CPS, CES, CMS, CHS)

Waiving certification requirements for personnel 505-2.40 will maximize all certified professionals to reduce teacher to student ratio during a flexible scheduling block during which students receive remediation and enhancement instruction (grades k-12).

Remedial Identification and Placement Waiver (CPS, CES, CMS, CHS)

Waiving remedial identification and placement regulations will allow for utilization of flexible scheduling during which students receive remediation and enhancement instruction. Students will receive instruction based on specific needs related to specific skills in targeted, instructional environments ((EIP

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identification and placement waiver (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-153, SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.17); and REP identification and placement waiver (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-154, SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.01)).

Media Center Waiver (CPS, CES)

Commerce City Schools will determine the most effective use of our media center resources and make recommendations about the role and responsibility of the media specialist per § SBOE 160-4-4-.01. This flexibility would enable the media specialists to help fully integrate the vital skills necessary to locate, analyze, evaluate, interpret, and communicate information and ideas into the early grade educational and leadership programs. In turn, we expect to see gains in students' critical thinking abilities.

Textbook Waiver (CES)

Commerce City Schools may require use of textbooks other than those prescribed by the State and Board per § 20-2-1010. The technological theme must be evident throughout all texts used in order to infuse this method of teaching, and customary textbooks are not always focused on technology.

Seat Time Waiver (CMS, CHS)

This waiver will allow for flexible scheduling on minutes required and time for remediation/acceleration, distance learning, and collaboration with Commerce High School, colleges (including technical colleges), and credit-recovery during the school year. Students who meet defined criteria may course credit if they are able to demonstrate competency in specific course. This waiver will be utilized only when specific criteria establishing competence are determined and validated (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.4). Upon the charter school status approval, the governance teams will assist in identifying the criteria for these competencies.

Course Development Waiver (CMS, CHS)

Courses specific to the needs and interests of Commerce students will have to be developed. These types of courses may include job preparedness, study skills, personal finance, and others deemed necessary and interesting to meet the mission of the charter. The courses crafted would help to ease the transition to high school, decrease the dropout rate, and increase the graduation rate (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-

161.3, SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.03). The governance teams will assist in developing these courses that will best meet the needs of the student population.

GOVERNANCE

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

Presently, the local board of education and superintendent assume total responsibility of all schools within the school system. The five member board is elected and service is for a four year term with staggered elections. The school board serves to create and adopt policy and all other services and decisions are based on the recommendation of the school superintendent. Decision making at the school level is restricted; the members of the school council have limited, if any, decision making power. Presently, there is no formal or consistent method of acquiring input from community members for recommendations regarding the operations of the schools. The suggested change in governance as presented in this section will be a paradigm shift for the community, the board members, administration, and staff. These changes will not occur until the Charter is approved by the State, training is provided, roles are established and written by-laws are adopted. The school will begin implementation of charter status with the formation of the local school governance boards in the first year. The focus will be on the election of qualified representatives to lead the local team and the training needed to help the members fulfill their mission.

The governing team for the school will be the body entrusted with the responsibility of providing input, making recommendations, and rendering decisions regarding various aspects of the instructional program of the school and the school's operational framework. The school governing team's role in upholding the school's mission and vision will be ensured by an emphasis on the governing group functioning as a unit, rather than a collection of individuals with individual agendas. Stakeholders will be elected to the school governing team. Numerous opportunities are available for parent and community

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members to be involved. The purpose of this participation is to encourage a variety of ideas and/or recommendations to consider before policy and procedures are established and implemented.

The school will have a governing team under the direction of the school principal. The governing team shall operate with the intent and purpose of maximizing school level decision making, upholding the charter's mission and vision, setting policy for the school, ensuring effective organizational planning, assisting in analyzing results and deciding on recommendations based on research, and ensuring the performance-based goals and measurable objectives set forth in the application are met. The governing team may be responsible for complying with and carrying out the provisions of the charter, including compliance with all applicable laws. The governing team's scheduled meetings will be subject to the Open Meetings Act. The school governing team shall comply with the Open Records Act.

The school system's financial director will conduct monthly audits of all schools in the system of charter schools. This information will then be presented at the monthly Board of Education meetings. The financial director will conduct training sessions with all school bookkeepers, including the Commerce High School bookkeeper, four times per year. The financial director will meet upon request with all school governing boards to explain financial reports for specific schools and the Commerce City School System. A financial report will be generated for the school's governing team meetings throughout the year. Each school, as part of Commerce City School System, will participate in an annual state financial audit. The findings will be shared with the superintendent and Board of Education and responses to corrective actions will be addressed within a five-day time frame.

Composition of the School Governing Team

The school's governing team will consist of a maximum of six members, including the principal. The principal will serve as a permanent member and chairperson. Of the five remaining members, two will consist of building level employees and three will consist of parents, community members, and/or post-secondary education administrators. The building level employees can consist of any certified teacher, excluding any personnel employed in administrative positions. The electing body of teacher members is comprised of all certified personnel and classified instructors.

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The make-up of the non-building level employees will consist of a combination of parents of students enrolled at Commerce High School, Commerce residents, employees/owners of businesses located within the city limits, and administrators from post-secondary schools fed by Commerce High School. Parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school are eligible to serve as parent members of the governing team. Parents of students in the school who are employees of the school system are excluded if they work in that school. An employee of the school system may serve as a parent representative on the governing team of a school in which his/her child is enrolled if the employee works at a different location than the school. Only parents who are eligible to be elected are eligible to vote on the parent members of the governing board. Acting members of the governing board will appoint employees/owners of businesses located within the city limits and administrators from post-secondary schools fed by system. Upon approval of the charter, policies and procedures will be developed regarding conflicts of interest.

Election Process

The principal will serve as a permanent member of the governing board. Parents who are eligible to be elected to serve on the governing board are eligible to vote on the parent members of the governing board. Acting members of the governing board will appoint employees/owners of businesses located within the city limits and administrators from post-secondary schools fed by system. The principal will be responsible for presenting a slate of candidates to the stakeholders at an open meeting. Elections will take place during the month of May or September of each school year. An exception given the first year of the charter will allow the principal to appoint the parent and community members.

Terms

Except for the facilitator of each body, the members of the school governing team will serve four year terms on a rotating basis. For the first election of the governing board, one teacher representative will serve a four year term; the second teacher representative will serve a three year term. For the first election of the governing board, one parent/community representative will serve a three year term and the

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second parent/community representative will serve a two year term. New representatives from the respective subgroups will be elected as the terms of these individuals expire.

Removal of Members

The governing body at each school may, by majority vote, determine a position vacant if they find a member is no longer active. Inactivity will be defined as failure to attend 50% of the meetings (excluding emergencies) and not fulfilling duties and responsibilities as necessary to conduct business. If an individual is appointed to fill the position of a vacated office, he/she will finish the term of the vacated office. The principal will appoint an individual to fill the position of the removed member.

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

The Commerce City Board of Education will continue as the legal entity and will have the final decision making authority to review, revoke, approve, and/or deny any and all decisions they feel negatively impact school or school district operations made but not limited to personnel decisions, including hiring school principals and teachers; financial decisions, including autonomy of budget and expenditures; curriculum and instruction; resource allocation at the school level; establishing and monitoring the achievement of school improvement goals; and other school operations. A chart depicting the responsibilities of the school governance team, principal, superintendent, and board of education is provided below. The accountability grid also provides information regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Education and the individual school governing boards.

Charter School Governance

Area of Responsibility	School Governance Team	Principal	Superintendent	Board of Education
Budget	Set budget priorities based on the school improvement plan Approval of Federal Title I and Title II spending	Recommend to Superintendent	Recommend to BOE	Approve

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Resource Allocation	<p>Authority to determine Charter System QBE funds spending</p> <p>Select vendors</p>	Recommend to Superintendent	Recommend to BOE	Approve
Personnel	<p>Recommend principal finalists to superintendent</p> <p>At will employment</p> <p>Positions (type, qualifications, certification)</p> <p>Establish work schedule</p> <p>Substitute requirements</p>	Recommend to Superintendent	Recommend to BOE	Approve
School Improvement Plan	<p>Member of planning team (review data, plan, results)</p>	Recommend to Superintendent	Recommend to BOE	Approve
Curriculum	<p>Selection of curriculum, textbooks, etc.</p> <p>Instructional delivery models</p> <p>Graduation requirements</p> <p>Course developments</p>	Recommend to Superintendent	Recommend to BOE	Approve
Other School Operations	<p>Determine use of school facility</p> <p>Establish PIE</p> <p>Flexible calendars and scheduling for school specific activities</p> <p>Establish school level student handbook</p> <p>Co-curricular activities</p> <p>Remediation/Acceleration</p>	Recommend to Superintendent	Recommend to BOE	Approve

Governing Board Training

The creation and implementation of the Governance Structure will allow for more direct involvement by stakeholders in the decision-making process. This organizational change will elicit more parental and community involvement leading to a stronger organization, smoother operations, and a stronger commitment from all parties to school success. As stronger ownership is established more solutions/innovations and support for those solutions will develop. Training for the governance team will be specific and delivered on topics such as school operations, budget, maintenance, and safety. Targeted training will be provided to all layers of the governance structure so that decisions or recommendations are made with the necessary background information. Training for the governance teams will begin immediately upon the approval of the Charter; GSBA will conduct the relative trainings. The training sessions may be provided by GSBA, Georgia Department of Education Staff, local school faculty and staff, and contracted services.

The local school governance training timeline is provided:

September-October 2014

Purpose: Orientation of newly appointed governance board members to ensure that all team members have a clear understanding of their role on the governing board

Person Responsible: GSBA, DOE staff, local school faculty and staff, and/or contracted services

October-November 2014

Purpose: Develop draft governance team by-laws

Person Responsible: GSBA, DOE staff, local school faculty and staff, and/or contracted services

December 2014

Purpose: Orient governing board members to the issues listed below.

Person Responsible: GSBA, DOE staff, local school faculty and staff, and/or contracted services

1. What is the charter school governance structure for Commerce Charter Schools?
2. What are the roles and responsibilities for the different governance team, BOE, etc.?
3. How do you conduct a governance team meeting?
 - a. Agenda
 - b. Open Meetings Act
 - c. Minutes
 - d. School-wide perspective
 - e. Parliamentary procedures
4. What are the governance team training topics for 2014-2015?
5. How do the school governance teams get started?

Based on the needs, each school will specify the topics for training. However, the initial focus of training will be on gaining a shared understanding of the operation of the school as a charter school and the purpose of the governing team.

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January 2015	Mission/Vision
February 2015	Flexible Scheduling/Seat Time/Class Size
March 2015	CCRPI/Data Teams
April 2015	SACS planning/School Calendar
May 2015	Personnel
June 2015	State Board Rules and Waivers
July 2015	Finance/Resource Allocation
August 2015	Career Guidance
September 2015	Technology in the Classroom
October 2015	Curriculum Updates
November 2015	Assessment
December 2015	Needs Assessment
January 2016	School Improvement Planning Process
February 2016	Differentiation (RTI, Gifted, EIP)
March 2016	Future Direction of Schools and Systems

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.*
- *Funds granted must be used in accordance with recommendations of the school governance teams or to advance student achievement goals and school level governance training.*
- *Provide an itemization of initiatives being supported with the additional funding received and how those funds will promote school level governance or improved student achievement.*

School governance teams will have autonomy to spend QBE charter system funds to support School Improvement Plan Initiatives. Spending will be more flexible for the schools under the operation of the charter. However, expenditures will support instructional and operational goals. Training for governance teams will be held in order to provide a comprehensive overview of school finance and the teams' responsibilities. The input from the governance teams will help to foster greater financial stability and transparency throughout the community.

