

Floyd County Schools Charter System Application

1. What challenges is your school district facing?

The Floyd County school system was one of the early adopters of Charter System in Georgia and as we enter our fifth and final year of the original charter, we understand, for our community to reach its educational goals, the renewal of charter is of paramount importance. The community was the driving force behind the decision to seek charter status for Floyd County Schools College and Career Academy and ultimately for the entire system. With the charter system of governance at the school level now in place, representatives of Local School Governance Teams came together to form a study committee for the renewal process as we once again considered educational direction for the community. Over an eight month period, these individuals evaluated where the school system and community are as participants in charter and how other systems in Georgia are operating under charter. The study committee used this research information to develop the direction for our system and the charter renewal agreement. In the school system's first charter period, the charter process has been a period of adjustment for the community and school system. Floyd County Schools and the community desire to continue to participate in the growth process of charter system for the betterment of our schools and the children we serve.

Our community has experienced a transformation in the past two years that has resulted in one primary challenge coming to the forefront that involves everything we do as a system. This challenge involves all professional educators employed in our school system, every child, every parent and the community. The primary focus of Floyd County Schools is ensuring **every** child in our school system graduates from high school. Destination Graduation – for every child, is our system theme, goal and mission. The moment an eager child with a hunger to learn walks through our doors in the earliest grades, to the last year of high school, everything we do must be designed to help the child reach the life milestone of graduation from high school. The school system and community will no longer accept that one of every four children in our schools will not graduate.

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In order to realize the system priority of Destination Graduation...for every child, and ensure students are prepared to be successful in college and/or the workforce, there are several challenges FCS will need to address moving forward. Over the past 5 years, Floyd County Schools has seen a significant decline in operating revenues. Increased cuts in state QBE funding, coupled with a decline in the tax digest within the county, recently forced the school system to make very difficult budget decisions, in order to ensure revenues exceed expenditures on an annual basis. Maintaining a fiscally sound budget will continue to be a challenge for FCS and an area of focus as we seek to renew system charter status.

The number of economically disadvantaged students enrolled in Floyd County Schools has steadily increased the past five years. The percentage of Floyd County students living in poverty continues to increase as the unemployment rates in Floyd County continue to be higher than the state and national rates.



With these economic obstacles, it is our responsibility to ensure access to a meaningful and viable education for all students in our district. As a charter system, Floyd County Schools has been able to increase the opportunities for students through the flexibility allowed.

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The school system has worked with faculty, staff, Local Governance Teams, parents, business leaders and community groups to identify challenges we will have to address to help all children reach graduation day. We will address those issues and their rank order in question #2.



2. What is the rank order priority of these challenges (from most to least important)?

1. Building relationships with parents, business leaders and the community to support the concept of high school graduation for all children.
2. Ensuring children are meeting grade level standards in all core content.
3. Reducing the impact of retention
4. Making school and courses relevant to children
5. Providing pathways to graduation that are relevant to 21st century learners.

For Floyd County Schools to be successful with these issues, the school system and community must come together in support of the common goal of Destination Graduation –for every child. To reach our goal, the school system will encounter these and other obstacles that will demand moving beyond the traditional methods used in our classrooms and will most certainly require waivers from the norm to make this vision a reality. Charter System status will be vital for this community to reach our goal and impact the dreams of the community’s children.

The system Destination Graduation Committee made up of teachers, school administrators, parents and business leaders facilitated self-reflection and collaboration activities with groups in our school system and community to determine how each person could contribute to help every child reach graduation. The activities challenged the groups with three main questions:

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1. What does each child graduating high school mean to me?
2. What can I do to help each child in our schools graduate?
3. What can we do collectively to help each child graduate from high school?

The committee also analyzed the population of students not finishing school in the last two years to get a clearer picture of the problem faced in Rome and Floyd County. The review of data for the class of 2012 and 2013 cohorts revealed several issues common to the majority of those teens not completing high school. Retention, low academic performance and attendance were recurring problems with those not making it to graduation day.

3. Which of these challenges will your school district be able to address by becoming a charter system?

Charter will be vital in each of the target areas to get our system to the goal of graduation for every child.

Challenges:

1. Build relationships with parents, business leaders and the community to support the concept of high school graduation for all children.

Getting parents and the community involved will be a key to the ultimate success of our school system and the children we serve. We will not have a great need for waivers in this area but the concept of charter and the involvement of community in the process will help us mobilize all groups inside and outside of our classrooms to be a part of the solution.

2. Ensuring children are meeting grade level standards in all core content.

Academic support will be necessary from a variety of sources and delivered in a myriad of methods to get each child to the destination of graduation. One instructional method will not work for every child. To address the needs of all children will require the innovation of charter to mold education to the needs of individual children.

3. Reduce the impact of retention

The flexibility of charter will be needed to bridge students across grade levels to provide the academic support needed to remediate problem areas without the need for retention.

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4. Making school and courses relevant to children

To make school relevant and meaningful, we will not only need to tell students why they are learning a topic but take them on location to show how the information will be used in the “real world.”

Hands on learning experiences, internships, and partnerships with business, industry and post-secondary education will be necessary to make learning come alive and spark the desire to graduate in every child.

5. Provide pathways to graduation that are relevant to 21st century learners.

One of the most important areas where charter will be necessary for success is in providing pathways to graduation for children that meet their needs. We will have the flexibility to adjust pathways to meet the needs of students instead of a student having to adjust their goals and dreams to fit a pathway.

4. What specific actions will your district take to address each of these challenges (listed in #3 above) during its five-year charter term?

1. Build relationships with parents, business leaders and the community to support the concept of high school graduation for all children.

a) The system will utilize the parents, business and community leaders on the Local School Governance Team to spearhead efforts to build these relationships. The role of each LSGT member will be to involve the different constituent groups they represent in the education process.

b) The Greater Rome Chamber of Commerce will play a key role in the success of this challenge. The system will increase its role in chamber committee work and regularly invite the chamber board and committees to meet in our schools and observe education at work for children. We will also utilize the perspective of business to design pathways that will provide opportunities for children and fulfill needs in the community.

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- c) Businesses will be invited to support the effort by placing Destination Graduation support stickers on their business door. The stickers are printed with the new system logo “Destination Graduation for every child is our business”.
 - d) Businesses will be encouraged to take an interest in their teen employees’ progress toward graduation.
 - e) Businesses and schools will also partner to assist parents in becoming active in their child’s education.
2. Ensuring children are meeting grade level standards in all core content.
- a) Destination Graduation has provided a new focus on the primary grade level on the primary and elementary teacher’s role in a child reaching graduation.
 - b) Provide interventions focused on the individual needs of children
 - c) Implementation of research based and innovative practices to meet the instructional needs of all children.
 - d) Investigate emerging technology solutions to assist in reaching every child.
3. Reducing the impact of retention
- a) Innovation using grade retention alternatives
 - b) Implement alternative practices regarding retention.
 - c) Provide innovative opportunities for retained children to rejoin their peer group.
4. Make school and courses relevant to children
- a) Engage and empower children in their learning through technology.
 - b) Provide professional development opportunities to support digital immigrants in the instruction of digital natives.
 - c) Create a deliberate connection between technology and content standards.
 - d) Increase authentic, integrated educational experiences.
 - e) Course creation in middle school and high school incorporating curriculum standards and real-world relevance

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5. Providing the pathways to graduation that will work for a youth population that is becoming more diverse in interests and expectations.
 - a) BYOT and technology integration: BYOT, a program introduced in our schools by a parent on a Local School Governance Team, will be vital in the success of alternate pathways and connecting students of diverse interests and expectations. The system will use technology innovations to support teachers and students in blended learning environments to continuously improve student learning and access to information.
 - b) Expanded use of blended learning with FTE awarded for time spent in a virtual learning environment or alternative learning environment outside of the classroom
 - c) Opportunities for credit-bearing internships and apprenticeships
 - d) Blended learning to allow some students to learn independently
 - e) Expansion of alternative graduation programs
 - f) Mastery of standards in Lieu of seat time as a basis for credit
 - g) Flexibility of class time to allow more time for subjects where student mastery needs are greater
 - h) Alternative schedules and calendars meeting student needs
 - i) Integrated courses covering curriculum standards for multiple subjects

These cannot and should not be the final list of innovations for Floyd County Schools as we seek to renew our charter. To stay stagnant and continue to work on one set of issues for an extended period of time without revising or seeking better methods to serve children and meet their changing needs would be counter intuitive to the charter process. Innovations will surely be identified as each person and each Local School Governance Team identifies new strategies to make the school system, each school and each individual more successful in reaching Destination Graduation – for every child.

- 5. Provide a clear explanation of how each of these specific actions (listed in #4 above) will lead to the specific challenge being addressed.**

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1. Build relationships with parents, business leaders and the community to support the concept of high school graduation for all children.
 - a) The system will utilize the parents, business and community leaders on the Local School Governance Team to spearhead efforts to build these relationships. The role of each LSGT member will be to involve the different constituent groups they represent in the education process: Just making adjustments in curriculum and programs will not be successful in reaching **all** children in danger of not graduating from high school. If the expectation from home is that a student will not graduate from school, but instead should get a full-time job as the child moves to driving age, commitment from educators will not be enough to keep that child on a path to graduation. The business community must also have the expectation that employees be high school graduates.
 - b) The Greater Rome Chamber of Commerce will play a key role in the success of this challenge. The system will increase its role in chamber committee work and regularly invite the chamber board and committees to meet in our schools and observe education at work for children. We will also utilize the perspective of business to design pathways that will provide opportunities for children and fulfill needs in the community: If the business and industry climate is such that students are hired without a high school diploma, the draw to stay in school is diminished. Teens often have a short term vision and do not look past today to see what the future holds for them. If they can make enough money to have a car and spending money, they are often content. For many teens, the importance of high school graduation does not become clear until the responsibilities of life and family place increased demands on their income.
 - c) Businesses will be invited to support the effort by placing Destination Graduation support stickers on their business door. The stickers are printed with the new system logo “Destination Graduation for every child is our business”: A clear united front in the community will be

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exhibited in this effort. Children, parents and educators would all see that the entire community is behind the effort to see all children earn a high school diploma.

- d) Businesses will be encouraged to take an interest in their teen employees' progress toward graduation: This will show young teens in the workforce a united front to help get them to graduation day. The initiative will also provide another check on student progress to help the young teens tackle obstacles in their path toward graduation.
- e) Businesses and schools will also partner to assist parents in becoming active in their child's education: The community partnership will be further enhanced by the solid support between businesses and parents. The united front will be critical in the success of Destination Graduation . . . for every child.

2. Ensuring children are meeting grade level standards in all core content.

- a) Destination Graduation has provided a new focus on the primary grade level on the primary and elementary teacher's role in a child reaching graduation: Teachers in early grades clearly understand their important role in the success of children reaching graduation. The goal becomes much larger than just getting a child to the next grade level. These teachers are now a clear part of the ultimate goal.
- b) Provide interventions focused on the individual needs of children: Getting a solid start on the education journey is critical for a young child to stay on track and reach graduation. These vital skills learned in the primary and elementary grades set the stage for grade level proficiency.
- c) Implementation of research based and innovative practices to meet the instructional needs of all children: Problems with reading instructions and the basics of math compilations are the essential building blocks to provide a foundation for success in academics. Focus on the early years of education will provide a context for academic improvement in our schools to make sure students have the right foundation to build upon to reach the destination of graduation. Class size waiver could be used to reduce the number of students in critical

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needs classes at the middle and high school level and at certain times of the instructional day for elementary classes to best meet the needs of teacher instruction and student learning.

- d) Investigate emerging technology solutions to assist in reaching every child: All resources must be focused on the road to graduation. Technology must be leveraged to help design a program of study that can meet the needs of each individual child.

3. Reducing the impact of retention

- a) Innovation using grade retention alternatives: A study of non-graduates clearly shows a link between retention and a child dropping out of school. Most of the non-graduates from 2013 researched had one or more grade level retentions as a common element of the student's education history. Retaining a child in the early grades may not appear to be problem but it leads to over-age ninth graders without a clear path to graduation. A 17 year-old freshman has a hard time visualizing being in school until 20 or 21 to get a high school diploma.

That certainly does not mean that students should be passed on to the next grade just to keep them from being older students in high school. The teens must also have the skills to do the work at a high school level to stay on track to graduate. The goal will be to have children reach freshman year on schedule with their classmates and prepared to be successful in high school classrooms.

- b) Implement alternative practices regarding retention: Waiting until high school to address problems cannot work. High school teachers and staff work very hard to help these teens reach graduation but these education professionals are fighting an uphill battle. The strategies in place must keep students on grade level performance and on track with their peer group to give each child the best opportunity to graduate.
- c) Provide innovative opportunities for retained children to rejoin their peer group: Once all efforts have been exhausted to not retain a child, procedures will be explored to allow a child to rejoin a peer group once remediation in the problem areas have been addressed.

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This would do away with the practice of “once retained always retained” through the remainder of the child’s school career. The salary schedule waiver could be utilized in this area to make better use of system personnel. The system has many certified teachers employed in paraprofessional positions due to budget cuts across the state. The waiver could allow the system to create a new level of staff to best employ the talents and certification of these individuals. While not a classroom teacher, these talented professionals could assist in many additional areas including remediation of students. Flexibility of charter can help the system to provide extra compensation for these professionals and provide much needed services for children.

4. Make school and courses relevant to children

- a) Engage and empower children in their learning through technology: Technology can help students to open the world of learning and connect curriculum topics to everyday living. The system holds Student Advisory meetings with high school students each year to determine what is working and elements of improvement the system can seek in the future. In this research, students regularly share, “I wish teachers would tell us how we will use what is being taught in our future.” Teens do not learn just to be learning today. They look for a reason why they should learn and retain specific information.
- b) Provide professional development opportunities to support digital immigrants in the instruction of digital natives: Children are also well versed in technology. It has been their way of life since birth. However, teachers are playing catch-up on digital knowledge and having to learn how to navigate digital devices and instruction. Teachers must be provided the professional development to connect technology to learning.
- c) Create a deliberate connection between technology and content standards: Connecting content standards and technology will also make learning more relevant to children. This will unleash the technology devices to be used for educational purposes.

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- d) Increase authentic, integrated educational experiences: Connecting technology, content and real-world application will turn on students to why they need to learn content provided in the classroom and show how it impacts life.
 - e) Course creation in middle school and high school incorporating curriculum standards and real-world relevance: The strategies planned to make school relevant will give teens a vision of how classroom curriculum will help them to be successful in life and strengthen the desire to excel and complete high school.
5. Providing the pathways to graduation that will work for a youth population that is becoming more diverse in interests and expectations.
- a) BYOT and technology integration: BYOT, a program introduced in our schools by a parent on a Local School Governance Team, will be vital in the success of alternate pathways and connecting students of diverse interests and expectations. The system will use technology innovations to support teachers and students in blended learning environments to continuously improve student learning and access to information.
 - b) Expanded use of blended learning with FTE awarded for time spent in a virtual learning environment or alternative learning environment outside of the classroom: Technology will allow students to learn in a variety of environments. The sharing of knowledge is not just relegated to the classroom. Flexibility will also allow the system to provide credit for learning in a variety of settings.
 - c) Opportunities for credit-bearing internships and apprenticeships: Learning in context of practical application will also open pathways for success. Learning on a job and getting course credit will expand pathways.
 - d) Blended learning to allow some students to learn independently: Not only do we have to make learning relevant but we also must provide a pathway that makes sense for a teen. Children learn in different ways and have vastly different preferred ways to participate in the learning process. That will continue to grow more diverse in the next five to ten years. More

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- and more, students and parents are looking for a variety of options in how children participate in learning. Consumers of the education product are looking for pathways and instruction methods that fit with the demands of the family and the learning interests of the child.
- e) Expansion of alternative graduation programs: Just providing the traditional class time in a desk model will not fit all learners in the very near future and does not fit all students today. More alternative pathways must be made available.
 - f) Mastery of standards in Lieu of seat time as a basis for credit: Credits must be predicated on mastery and not how much time is spent in a seat in a traditional classroom. This will provide for enhanced individual learning.
 - g) Flexibility of class time to allow more time for subjects where student mastery needs are greater: Just as some students need less class time to master all subject content, there are those in need of additional time. This would allow students extra time to master content without having to retake an entire class.
 - h) Alternative schedules and calendars meeting student needs: With students studying and learning in alternative environments and times, a calendar to match those criteria will also be required.
 - i) Integrated courses covering curriculum standards for multiple subjects: This will allow for multiple subjects to be taught in the context of a combined class. This could be very valuable at the College and Career Academy where academic topics and technical course may be combined. More options will be sought after by our consumers and the plans students have for their lives, after graduation, will need to drive pathways offered so that the education plan matches the life goals of the students.

6. Although you will be granted a broad flexibility waiver if you are granted a charter, please list the specific Georgia law or State Board rule that must be waived to allow your district to implement each specific action (listed in #4 above).

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Floyd County Schools will request the broadest flexibility from state law as permitted by O.C.G.A. 20-2-2065(a). Specific waivers the system anticipates requiring for needed academic innovations may include:

- a) **Class size**
- b) **Seat-time requirements K-12**
- c) **Expenditure controls**
- d) **State salary schedule**
- e) **Attendance waiver**
- f) **Alternative courses to meet graduation requirements, 8-12**
- g) **Flexibility with EIP funding and delivery models, K-5**
- h) **Flexibility with remedial funding and deliver models, 6-**
- i) **Flexibility with ESOL funding and delivery models, K-12**
- j) **Flexibility with gifted funding and delivery models, K-12**
- k) **Other waivers as identified and needed by working Local School Governance Teams -**

Specific State Board Rules and State Laws are listed in the attached matrix. Just as the system will certainly continue to identify innovations as our Local School Governance Teams diligently work to identify the best methods to serve our children, additional waivers may become evident as our community works together to help all children reach the destination of graduation.

The waivers are not viewed as stand-alone tools of school system operations but rather avenues to help the school system address challenges that hinder our children from reaching their maximum potential. Items that can be of concern for teachers when viewed in isolation such as a class size waiver, salary schedule waiver or concerns regarding due process must be considered within the context of what the community is trying to accomplish academically for children.

Floyd County Schools must have qualified, dedicated and talented classroom teachers working with children each day to meet the goals of the school system and community. With this in mind, Floyd County Schools will continue to use the state salary schedule as the base for teacher

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compensation. This is the most attainable and viable practice to help the system address issues listed as priority challenges in this document. As the economic outlook changes, alternative salary schedules may be considered.

Our class sizes must be conducive to students performing on grade level and making the academic progress that will keep them on track for graduation. Floyd County Schools will utilize the class size waiver within the charter system consistent with efforts to address priority challenges in this document to reach system academic goals. As the economic outlook changes, alternative class size structures may be considered to keep the school system financially sound.

In all instances in which due process is required under either Georgia or federal law, the Floyd County Board of Education will provide the due process that is required.

7. Indicate the timeline for implementation of each specific action (listed in #4 above).

1. Build relationships with parents, business leaders and the community to support the concept of high school graduation for all children.
 - a) Utilize Local School Governance Team to involve their different constituent groups in the education process. (2015)
 - b) Increase role of Greater Rome Chamber. (2015)
 - c) Destination Graduation support stickers. (2015)
 - d) Businesses encourage teen employees' progress toward graduation. (2017)
 - e) Businesses and schools partner with parents. (2017)
2. Ensuring children are meeting grade level standards in all core content.
 - a) New focus on primary grade's role in a child reaching graduation. (2015)
 - b) Providing interventions focused on the individual needs of children (2016)
 - c) Implementation of research based and innovative practices. (2016)
 - d) Investigate emerging technology solutions to reach every child. (2017)
3. Reducing the impact of retention

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- a) Implement alternative practices to minimize student retention. (2018)
 - b) Implement alternative practices regarding retention. (2017)
 - c) Innovative opportunities for retained children to rejoin peer group. (2018)
4. Make school and courses relevant to children
- a) Engage and empower children in their learning through technology. (2016)
 - b) Professional development to support digital immigrants in instruction of digital natives. (2018)
 - c) Create a deliberate connection between technology and content standards. (2016)
 - d) Increase authentic, integrated educational experiences. (2016)
 - e) Course creation incorporating curriculum standards and real-world experience (2018)
5. Providing the pathways to graduation that will work for a youth population that is becoming more diverse in interests and expectations.
- a) BYOT and technology integration (2015)
 - b) Expanded use of Blended learning with FTE awarded for virtual leaning (2018)
 - c) Internships and apprenticeships to earn credit (2015)
 - d) Blended learning to allow for independent learning (2018)
 - e) Expansion of alternative programs (2017)
 - f) Mastery of standards to drive credit rather than seat time (2017)
 - g) Flexibility of class time for subjects where mastery needs are greater (2019)
 - h) Alternative schedules and calendars meeting student need (2016)
 - i) Integrated courses covering standards for multiple subjects (2017)

8. Indicate which of these specific actions (listed in #4 above) represents an innovation for your school district.

- 1. Build relationships with parents, business leaders and the community to support the concept of high school graduation for all children.

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- b) We will utilize the perspective of business to design pathways that will provide opportunities for children and fill needs in the community.
2. Ensuring children are meeting grade level standards in all core content.
 - a) Destination Graduation has provided a new focus on the primary grade level on the primary and elementary teacher's role in a child reaching graduation.
 - b) Provide interventions focused on the individual needs of children
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innovations including, but not limited to, 1-to-1 devices (tablets, laptops, netbooks, iPod, etc.) to support teachers and students in blended learning environments to continuously improve student learning and access to information.

- b) Expanded use of blended learning with FTE awarded for time spent in a virtual learning environment or alternative learning environment outside of the classroom
- c) Opportunities for credit-bearing internships and apprenticeships
- d) Blended learning to allow some students to learn independently
- e) Expansion of alternative graduation programs
- f) Mastery of standards in Lieu of seat time as a basis for credit
- g) Flexibility of class time to allow more time for subjects where student mastery needs are greater
- h) Alternative schedules and calendars meeting student needs
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Performance Expectations

9. What are your school system's specific student performance expectations for your five-year charter term?

Floyd County Schools has a long-standing history of high academic performance. Realizing the system priority of Destination Graduation...for every child, and ensuring students are prepared to be successful in college and the workforce will require both an individualized and collaborative commitment from all stakeholders as we move forward.

Increasing academic achievement for all students, as well as students with disabilities (SWD) and economically disadvantaged (ED) subgroups of students in ELA, reading, and mathematics were identified as goal areas in FCS initial charter application. Over the last four years, an emphasis has been given to improving the achievement of these subgroups of students, as measured by the performance targets in Georgia's Flexibility Waiver, and reported by the College and Career Readiness Performance Indicators (CCRPI).

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As evidenced in the data presented in the Accountability Addendum, the All Students group, as well as SWD and ED subgroups in grades 3 through 8 have shown an increase in achievement each year of the initial charter contract, meeting or exceeding Georgia's performance targets in ELA, reading, and math. Although science and social studies were not identified as goal areas in the initial charter, FCS recognizes these content areas are now included as part of Georgia's CCRPI accountability measure, as well as in teacher and leader evaluations, and have therefore been included in the Accountability Addendum. Although some improvements have been made in these content areas, an analysis of the CCRPI performance flag data indicates science to be an area of needed improvement for students with disabilities. In addition, social studies has been identified as an area for continued improvement for all students and all subgroups of students in grades 3 through 8.

At the high school level, Floyd County students have shown increased academic achievement the last several years in 9th grade literature, American literature, biology, economics, and physical science End of Course Tests (EOCT). With the implementation of Georgia's math EOCT aligned to the rigor of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), student performance on both the Coordinate Algebra and Analytic Geometry EOCT is significantly below expected levels of performance, not only for Floyd County students, but for all high school students across the state. Although system achievement levels are well below the expected performance targets, the growth of FCS students in Coordinate Algebra, as measured by Georgia's Student Growth Model, is considered significant when compared to students in like testing groups across the state. This indicates high levels of learning took place in Coordinate Algebra across Floyd County Schools from the first to second year of implementation. Realizing the continued need for instructional shifts that align with the rigor of Common Core, an emphasis will be placed on continued professional learning for teachers and increased expectations for students in the area of mathematics. In addition, U.S. History has been identified as an area for improvement with all students and all subgroups of students at the high school level.

As is evident in the data reported for Floyd County students in grades 3 through 12, progress has been achieved at all levels, when combining the meets AND exceeds levels of performance. An analysis

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of the data indicates a high percentage of students are meeting the standard; however, FCS students continue to score below the state in the percent of students scoring in the highest level of performance on state assessments. A high percentage of students exceeding the standard is aligned to students' depth of understanding of the prioritized content, and their ability to apply new knowledge to think critically and solve problems. As the state implements the new Georgia Milestones Assessments for the first time in the spring of 2015, an explicit emphasis across Floyd County Schools will need to be placed on differentiated instruction and the implementation of rigorous instructional practices that ensure high levels of learning for all students.

The following performance and organizational goals for Floyd County Schools' charter renewal status have been identified through an in-depth study and analysis of data trends over the last several years. The academic goals will be measured by Georgia's CCRPI accountability measure. Understanding the need for baseline data from Georgia's new assessment in the spring of 2015, an addendum to the charter contract will likely be a need, in order to set targets aligned to baseline data.

Academic Goal #1 - Graduation Rate: During each year of the charter contract term, the system graduation rate will meet or exceed the state performance targets that support Georgia's ESEA Flexibility Waiver. Should improvements well above the current year target be attained, the following year's expectation will be to maintain the graduation rate at the previous year's performance. If the system graduation rate falls below the state target, the following year's goal will be to show improvement from the previous year's rate.

Academic Goal #2 - End of Grade (EOG) Assessments: The "All Students" FAY (full academic year) group, as well as, the ED FAY (Economically Disadvantaged), SWD FAY (Students with Disabilities), and ELL FAY (English Language Learners) subgroups will demonstrate proficiency and improvement by meeting the State Performance Targets that support Georgia's Flexibility Waiver for grades 3 through 8 in the following content areas: English Language Arts, Math,

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Science, and Social Studies, as indicated by the Georgia Milestones EOG Assessments and reported in the CCRPI. State performance targets for all content areas and subgroup categories will be established, pending baseline data on EOG assessments in the spring of 2015.

Academic Goal #3 - End of Course (EOC) Assessments: The “All Students” FAY (full academic year) group, as well as, the ED FAY (Economically Disadvantaged), SWD FAY (Students with Disabilities), and ELL FAY (English Language Learners) subgroups will demonstrate proficiency and improvement by meeting the State Performance Targets that support Georgia’s Flexibility Waiver as indicated by the Georgia Milestones End of Course (EOC) Assessments and reported in the CCRPI. State performance targets for all content areas and subgroup categories will be established pending baseline data on the new EOG assessments.

The performance expectations listed above have been identified as need areas for Floyd County Schools, based on an analysis of research and system data over the last four years. In order to continue this pattern of academic and organizational achievement, as evidenced in the data highlighted from the initial charter contract, it will be of paramount importance that this Charter Renewal Application is approved. As FCS moves into the next phase of the charter system process, there is a renewed sense of momentum throughout the organization. A great deal of time has been invested by all stakeholders, and much hard work has come to fruition as the first charter contract nears its end. However, as a system that has seen many changes in recent years, we know there is much work yet to be done; work that will require a laser-like focus, in order to prepare our students to meet both the academic and lifetime challenges they will face in the future. Remaining an effective Georgia Charter System will be of critical importance as we strive to reach our system priority of *Destination Graduation...for every child!*

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Local School Governance

10. Explain how your system will transition from Local School Advisory Councils to effective and fully functioning decision-making Local School Governance Teams (LSGTs).

a.) Floyd County Schools transitioned to fully functioning Local School Governance Teams during our first five years as a charter system. Each school in the system has a dedicated group of parents, teachers, community leaders and administrators working to improve education at the local school level and across the school system. Training and decision making opportunities transitioned over the first two years of the system's initial charter term. Training was provided related to law and local charter governance, communication, personnel, budget, and team building. LSGT members participating in the re-authorization process expressed interest in more on-demand forms of training to be available to allow members to access training on their schedule. We have found that the reality of charter system time constraints makes it difficult for LSGT members to be active in meetings of the group, active in their school, attend training sessions, keep family commitments and split time between job responsibilities plus LSGT obligations. With new meeting requirements increasing the number and frequency of meetings, this will become even more of a challenge for our volunteers. The school system is exploring the option to provide on-demand online options for ongoing training for members. The system has explored this topic with the Charter System Foundation. We are hopeful that a source may be identified at the state level that may be able to supply training options to local school systems.

Full responsibilities of LSGT groups will be included in the Local School Governance Matrix.

LSGT Meetings:

Local School Governance Teams will meet a minimum of 10 times during each school year.

Local School Coordinating Council: Providing the System Perspective

The system also has the Local School Coordinating Council (LSCC) to help improve communication between LSGT groups and to ensure system coordination. The LSCC is comprised of two members

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from each LSGT. The LSCC members are appointed by the school LSGT. The LSCC meets five times each year to share innovations and activities of each LSGT, to discuss system issues and to serve as the system budget review committee. Among its duties, the group reviews budget issues and plans for new system budgets during each budget cycle.

b.) The system has taken extensive steps to inform stakeholders of the governance structure. Each school has shared information in school meetings (PTO, parent meetings, parent/teacher conferences, school newsletters and automated school calls). Each LSGT also uses eBoard (<https://eboard.eboardsolutions.com/index.aspx?S=4068>) to list all LSGT meetings and minutes. The system has dedicated a section of the website to charter and local governance information <http://www.floydboe.net/charter>.

11. Address the formation of the local School Governing Teams, including how members are selected, the terms of members, and how and why members may be removed.

The LSGT is comprised of a minimum of seven members, the school principal, two staff members, two parents, and two community leaders. Additional members may be added to the Local School Governance Teams by the local LSGT groups but the ratio of employees of the school system to those not employed by the system can't be altered to have more school employees represented on the LSGT.

- a) Principal – the principal of a school shall serve as a voting member on the LSGT for the school as long as the individual retains the title of principal. The principal will also serve as the secretary of the LSGT.

The school principal shall have the following duties pertaining to the LSGT activities:

- 1) Help to organize the LSGT by convening the appropriate bodies to select LSGT members;
- 2) Working with the chair to set the meeting agenda, with participation of the full LSGT; meeting time; and location; and notifying all LSGT members of the same;
- 3) Perform all of the duties required by the charter petition and the bylaws of the

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LSGT;

- 4) Communicate all LSGT requests for information and assistance to the superintendent and inform the LSGT of responses or actions of the superintendent or local board of education;
 - 5) Work with system personnel and the school LSGT to develop the school improvement plan and school operation plan and submit the plans to the LSGT for review and recommendations.
- b) Staff – Two members of staff will serve on the LSGT for two-year staggered terms. The staggered terms were established during the first charter period. At least one of the staff members must be a teacher. The staff representatives must be employed at the school where they serve on the LSGT. Election of the staff representatives will be by a majority vote of staff at the school. Elections may be held at the discretion of the LSGT as long as new members have been installed by election before September of a new school year. In the event that a staff member leaves the school, resigns or is removed by an action of the LSGT, an election will be held to select another staff member to fulfill the unexpired term of the individual. If there are two or less meetings remaining for the year, the LSGT may determine to hold an election at the regular election cycle.
- c) Parents – Two parent members will serve on the LSGT for two-year staggered terms. The staggered terms were established during the first charter period. The parent representatives must have a child enrolled at the school where they serve on the LSGT and retain an enrolled child during the term of election (two years). Election of a parent representative will be by majority vote of parents at the school. Teachers employed at the school who are also parents of children in the school are not eligible to run for a parent seat. Elections may be held at the discretion of the LSGT as long as new members have been installed by election before September of a new school year. In the event that a parent no longer meets qualifications, resigns or is removed by an action of the LSGT, an election will be held to

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select another parent to fulfill the unexpired term. If two or less meetings remain on the LSGT schedule for the year, the LSGT may determine to hold the election during the regular election cycle

- d) Community – Two community members will serve on the LSGT for two-year staggered terms. The staggered terms were established during the first charter period. The community representatives are required to be a community leader with an interest in the school. Every effort will be made to secure candidates for the community position who live within the attendance area of the school. The community position cannot be held by an individual employed in the school system at any level or by an individual retired from the school system for less than five years. Selection of a community representative will be by a majority vote of the members of the LSGT. Selection may be held at the discretion of the LSGT as long as new members have been installed before September of a new school year. In the event that a community representative no longer can or wishes to serve on the LSGT or is removed by an action of the LSGT, the LSGT will select another person to fulfill the unexpired term.
- e) Other members designated to be part of the LSGT by the local school LSGT - If parent members are added to the LSGT, they will be required to meet the same service requirements and be subject to the same election procedures as the identified parent group. The LSGT groups are encouraged to include students in the process of local governance at the middle and high school levels. Schools may elect to have two students serve on the LSGT **or** include regular discussions (at least twice each year) with a student group to include the student perspective in decision making. The type of student participation and the individuals or student groups included will be left to the discretion of the LSGT.

Other Requirements – No more than four members of the minimum seven member LSGT shall be employees of the school system. The same ratio will apply, if additional members are added to the LSGT.

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Removal of an LSGT member – An LSGT member will no longer be a part of the LSGT when the individual no longer meets the requirements listed in the seats requirements. The Board of Education or the LSGT may remove a member for non-participation or for acts against the Code of Conduct signed by each member upon taking a position on the LSGT. The LSGT of each charter system school will be subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1, et seq. (Open and Public Meetings) and O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70, et seq. (Inspection of Public Records).

The LSGT of each charter system school shall consist of a minimum of seven members, of whom a majority shall constitute a quorum. The chairperson of the LSGT shall be determined by a majority vote of the LSGT. Ad Hoc committees may be appointed as deemed appropriate by the LSGT and may include membership outside the LSGT, including high school student representation.

The Code of Ethics for Educators is the standard of conduct to which all LSGT members are held. As such, each member of the LSGT will be asked to execute an agreement to acknowledge understanding of the Code of Ethics and the duties and responsibilities of their office and acceptance of responsibility for performing those duties in a professional manner. The members of the council are accountable to the constituents they serve and shall:

- a. Maintain a school-wide and system-wide perspective on issues;
- b. Regularly participate in LSGT meetings;
- c. Participate in information and training programs;
- d. Act as a link between the LSGT and the community;
- e. Encourage the participation of parents and others within the school community; and
- g. Work to improve student achievement and performance.

Participation in training opportunities is an expectation of LSGT membership and a part of the Code of Ethics for the LSGT members. Failure to adhere to the Code of Ethics and duties and

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responsibilities of the membership of the LSGT, as outlined herein and in the By-Laws, may result in a member being removed by a majority vote of the LSGT or the Board of Education.

- 12. Use the Charter System Application – Local School Governance Matrix found at this link <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Charter-Schools/Pages/Charter-Petition-Application.aspx> to show how the Superintendent will share with Local School Governance Teams his/her authority to develop recommendations to the Board of Education.**

See attached matrix

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

The school system completed the transition from School Coordinating Councils to Local School Governance Teams during our first five years as a charter system. The school system has long included the community and parents in the decision making process, even before the existence of Coordinating Councils. Charter and Local School Governance Teams have provided a structure to collaborate in decision making regarding schools within our community. The attached matrix illustrates the planned manner in which our staff, parents and community are included in the decision making regarding our schools and our pledge to seek destination graduation for every child.

- 14. Describe the governance training to be provided to principals and members of the Local School Governing Teams in order to build the capacity needed to make decisions in the areas included in the spreadsheet.**

The LSGT will attend training and consistently strive to achieve the characteristics of an effective system charter school governance team. Such training will help the LSGT evaluate the efficacy of programs within the school and report the status of said programs to the Board of Education. Such interactions between the LSGT and the Board of Education will help to identify and provide focus to areas of strength and need, as well as and focus attention on the mission and vision of the school and the system.

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A central tenet of an effective LSGT is active involvement of all the members in the school. LSGT members will be highly involved in the governance of the school. Such involvement will empower the LSGT members to find creative ways to solve educational problems and give a strong voice to parents, the staff, and other members of the community. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-85, the Floyd County Board of Education believes that parent and community support is critical to the success of students and schools. In the interest of students, the board recognizes the need for school-based decision-making. Through the LSGT, it is the desire of the FCBOE to bring parents and community members together with local teachers and administrators to make school based decisions and perpetuate school improvement.

While the management and control of the public schools remains the responsibility of the local Board of Education, the schools belong to the community and involvement of the LSGT in decision making will assist in making the community a bigger part of the decision making process. Having effective governance is more about collectively arriving at the best decision for children than it is about who makes the decision. It is further recognized that training and on-going support is a crucial component of the successful operation of a LSGT. In training practices of states with successful and on-going charters that include Local School Governance, the following initial areas of training are common:

Training topics

- a. Legal mandates, state and local policy and rule interpretation and confidentiality
- b. Collaborative Skills and Group Process
- c. Team Skills (Conflict Resolution)
- d. Strategic Planning
- e. Curriculum development
- f. School and community relations
- g. School budgets
- h. Human Resources and personnel responsibilities

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The FCBOE has provided this training during the first term of charter to help LSGTs to take on issues in the system effectively. The Local School Governance Teams have concluded all training during the first term as a charter system and are equipped to make decisions required of the group. Due to time constraints of LSGT members, the group participating in the Charter Renewal Study Committee has requested future training be provided online. The school system is actively looking for such resources for our LSGT members. The first on-demand training module has been provided to LSGT members in the fall of 2014. The session covers the roles and responsibilities of Local Governance Teams and was presented in a Department of Education webinar lead by Martha Greenway of Greenway Strategy Management. Each participant has been asked to respond to five questions related to the training and each LSGT group to discuss the training module at an LSGT meeting. Members are to print their confirmation upon completing the questions for the training and retain the document in the LSGT file at the local school to document training.

15. Provide the name of the provider(s) of local School Governing Team training that you are considering approaching, if known.

1. The school system law firm – board attorneys – legal training
2. The superintendent and board chair – Role of LSGT and Board of Education
3. Community resource – team building training Dr. Jerry Jennings (Berry College)
4. Tim Hensley, assistant to the superintendent of Floyd County Schools – communications training
5. Chris Toles, director of finance for Floyd County Schools – financial training
6. Alison Land, vice president of planning for Floyd Medical Center and Stephen Weed, vice-president of planning for Floyd Medical Center – Strategic Planning
7. Human Resources Dept. of Southeastern Mills – Human Resource training
8. The Charter System Foundation
9. The Georgia Department of Education

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16. Provide the name and contact information of an employee of the charter system that will facilitate communications between the Department and the chairpersons of the Local School Governing Teams in your charter system.

Tim Hensley, assistant to the superintendent of Floyd County Schools.

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706-234-1031 ext. 7121

17. Explain how your system will transition its central office from a Compliance Culture (where success is measured by simply achieving requirements) to an Accountability Culture (where success is measured by achieving high expectations).

Floyd County Schools has been practicing shared governance for longer than charter system has been in existence. The system has involved teachers, staff and community in altering calendar structure, scheduling, starting a College and Career Academy, becoming a charter system, opening a Performance Learning Center, and instituting Bring Your Own Technology in our schools to increase the access of students to information available from the Internet and technology. These changes were instituted in cooperation with our staff, students, parents and community to help the system reach a goal. The accountability culture will continue to evolve as we embark upon our second charter system contract. All actions will revolve around accountability to reach the one major goal of the school system – Destination Graduation for every child.

Superintendent

Date

Chairman, Floyd County Board of Education

Date