



Executive Summary

Whitfield County School System

Dr. Judy Gilreath, Superintendent
Post Office Box 2167
Dalton, GA 30722-2167

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Description of the School System.....	2
System's Purpose.....	4
Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement.....	6
Additional Information	9

Introduction

Every school system has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school system makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a school system stays faithful to its vision. Many factors contribute to the overall narrative such as an identification of stakeholders, a description of stakeholder engagement, the trends and issues affecting the school system, and the kinds of programs and services that a school system implements to support student learning.

The purpose of the Executive Summary (ES) is to provide a school system with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the community will have a more complete picture of how the school system perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the school system to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.

Description of the School System

Describe the school system's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school system serves?

Whitfield County is located in northwest Georgia at the southern end of the Appalachian Mountains, about 30 miles south of Chattanooga, Tennessee, and 80 miles north of Atlanta along the I-75 corridor. The county shares a northern border with Tennessee and covers nearly 290 square miles. Most government and industries are in the county seat, Dalton.

As a leading industrial center in the country, Dalton historically proclaims itself the "Carpet Capital of the World." Crown Cotton Mill was the first large-scale manufacturing plant in north Georgia and brought economic growth to Whitfield County in the late 19th century. The Great Depression and the General Textile Strike of 1934 dealt severe blows to Crown Cotton Mill, which managed to stay in operation until 1969. By the end of the twentieth century, 80 percent of the carpet produced in the United States and more than 70 percent of the world's carpet was produced by four companies located in Georgia, three of them--Beaulieu of America, Mohawk, and Shaw Industries--located in Whitfield County. Recently these industries have stumbled during the Great Recession, and Whitfield County now struggles with the highest unemployment rate among metropolitan areas nationwide, as reported in the NY Times (Severson, 2012). The industry still struggles to retool to meet consumer demands by offering a variety of floor coverings which include tile, hardwood, and laminate flooring. This process coupled with automation in the industry has limited the need for unskilled workers while simultaneously increasing demand for skilled labor. Whitfield County still testifies to the strong legacy of the bedspread and carpet industries.

The Whitfield County School System (WCS) was established in 1872, followed by Dalton Public Schools in 1886. The Whitfield County School System began as numerous one-room school houses with the primary purpose of educating children when they were not needed on the family farm. It evolved to the current established system comprised of 13 elementary schools, five middle schools, three traditional high schools, one charter school (Northwest Georgia College and Career Academy), one special purpose high school (Phoenix), and one alternative secondary school (Crossroads). Of the system's 24 schools, 18 are Schoolwide Title I programs, a designation that addresses the educational needs of high poverty populations (72.01 percent). With a student enrollment of 13,301 (per the October 2, 2012 FTE Enrollment), the Whitfield County School System is currently the twenty-sixth largest of 180 systems in the state of Georgia.

According to the 2000 census, Whitfield County had 83,525 residents (80.9 percent white, 3.8 percent black). Persons of Latino and Hispanic origin comprised 22 percent of the population. In 2010, U.S. Census estimates indicate the population in Whitfield County increased to 102,599 (76.6 percent white, 3.8 percent black). Persons of Latino and Hispanic origin comprised 31.7 percent of the population, a substantial 44 percent increase.

In addition to the public schools, the county supports Dalton State College (DSC) and Georgia Northwestern Technical College (GNTC), units of the University System of Georgia. In a unique educational agreement for the Northwest Georgia region and perhaps the state, Whitfield County School System has agreed to host a facility for DSC and GNTC at its Northwest Georgia College and Career Academy campus.

Whitfield County Schools recently launched a community-wide initiative in literacy in order to address the learning needs of students and the community. According to 2010 Census figures, from 2007-2011 only 14.8 percent of those 25 and older living in Whitfield County have a bachelor's degree or higher compared to the state rate of 27.5 percent. Business and community partnerships, including government entities, worked in collaboration with the school system and the local board of education to determine how to significantly increase student

Executive Summary

Whitfield County School System

achievement and improve community literacy. WCS has a high poverty population and a significant population of English Learners (ELs). Considering about two-thirds of ELs come from low income families and these students are at high risk for academic failure, the school system's leadership and community partners recognized the need for a long-term action plan. The baseline data and research from this preliminary venture will at a future date be used as a framework to compare student achievement data prior to the literacy initiative and after its roll out. Literacy Collaborative began in six elementary schools (grades K-1) this year, and it will continue to be added to upper elementary grades and make its way to middle grades in the future.

During the summer of 2013 our Teaching and Learning Team presented to our Board of Education Members the Non-Negotiable Practices for High Student Performance. Karey Williams, our Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, our Teaching and Learning Staff, and Professional Learning Director are committed for our faculty and staff to using effective instructional practices that are non-negotiable in every classroom.

Superintendent, Dr. Judy Gilreath, a proud parent, grandmother, great grandmother, and longtime educator, is in her first year as superintendent of Whitfield County Schools, having been appointed March 2013. She strives to work with community stakeholders to lead the school system and promote student success. Her leadership ensures local, state, and federal guidelines, rules, and laws are followed in our schools and system. Furthermore, Dr. Gilreath encourages innovative thinking, vertical and horizontal collaboration, and the development of teachers as leaders. She also collaborates with community leaders and strives to be a partner with her colleagues in education, government, and business. In addition, she works closely with the Local Board of Education members to expand their knowledge and capacity as proponents for the school system.

Previously, Dr. Gilreath served as assistant superintendent of Student Support Services since 2006. She began her career in education in 1973 teaching science in Chattooga County Schools. A past principal at Pleasant Grove Elementary, her experience includes five years teaching in Walker County Schools and service as an adjunct professor at the University of West Georgia and Dalton State College. The superintendent holds a bachelor of science in secondary education, a master's degree in elementary education, and a doctorate in education in curriculum and instruction.

Along with the Superintendent, a dedicated central office team--Teaching and Learning, Assessment and Accountability, Finance, Human Resources, Operations, Support Services, Technology, and Community/Media Relations--supports staff and students in many different areas. The WCS Vision, Mission, and Beliefs drive the work of this team as they support the initiatives that benefit students and families throughout the system and community.

System's Purpose

Provide the school system's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school system embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.

SYSTEM VISION, MISSION, BELIEFS, AND GOALS

The Whitfield County School System's vision, mission, and beliefs were developed in 2005 by the System Design Team, comprised of a variety of both certified and classified staff members. This team guides the implementation of the teaching and learning framework and maintains system focus and direction. In addition, the team solicits stakeholder input throughout the process of generating the vision and goals. Initially, the superintendent presented a draft to school personnel, requesting their feedback. School board members and school councils also collaborated in this process.

VISION

We envision a responsive school district that is focused on students and that is valued and respected by the community.

MISSION

Our mission is to increase student learning by providing students and staff with meaningful, challenging, and engaging educational experiences in a safe and supportive environment.

BELIEFS

1. We believe in our school district having an innovative unified focus resulting in it being responsive to the needs of students, parents, and the community at large.
2. We believe our core business is providing students with engaging, challenging, and meaningful work.
3. We believe the role of teacher is leader and designer of engaging, challenging and meaningful learning experiences for students.
4. We believe all of our personnel, parents, and other community members are vital to the education of our students whose attention and commitment must be earned.
5. We believe all of our students, personnel, and parents deserve a safe, inviting, non threatening learning environment where they are treated with dignity and respect.

All of our work begins with the WCS Vision, Mission, and Beliefs in mind. To ensure continuity, each school's leadership team uses the Vision, Mission, and Beliefs as a foundation and customizes according to the unique needs of their population. These belief statements are the underpinnings that guide the work of teacher leaders as they design work, implement programs, and establish high expectations for students.

The Vision, Mission, and Beliefs statements are fundamental to all services and programs offered to Whitfield County students. Detailed descriptions of these services are provided in the document titled "Student Programs and Services."

System Goals: Developing a Focus on Students

Throughout the school district there is a clear focus on the quality of the work provided to students. Teachers design work students find interesting, challenging, and satisfying. Schools, parents, and the community share high expectations for student learning.

Executive Summary

Whitfield County School System

Indicators of measurement for system goals described below are provided in the document titled "Indicators of Measurement."

Safe Environment

Students and parents feel that the school as well as each classroom is a physically and psychologically safe place: success is expected and failure is understood as a necessary part of learning, there is mutual respect between and among faculty and students, and the fear of harm or harassment from fellow students and demeaning comments from teachers is negligible.

Content & Substance

Teachers and administrators have a clear, consistent, and shared understanding of what students are expected to know and to be able to do at various grade levels. This understanding is consistent with such official statements of expectations as state standards and standards established by local boards. Teachers and administrators also have a reasonable assessment of student interest in the topics suggested by these expectations and standards.

Student Achievement

Parents, teachers, the principal, and the board of education, as well as others who have a stake in the performance of the schools, are satisfied with the level and type of learning that are occurring.

Patterns of Engagement

Nearly all classes are highly engaged, and when they are not, teachers make every possible effort to redesign the pattern of activity in the classroom so that more students are engaged.

Staff Engagement

Teachers, administrators, and support staff employed by the school district are satisfied with their work and they understand how their roles contribute to the district's direction.

Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement

Describe the school system's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school system is striving to achieve in the next three years.

Student Learning

Student learning is the school system's focus. In the last SACS evaluation, progress monitoring was noted as a need. WCS enhanced existing AIMSweb progress monitoring by implementing Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) in grades K-8 in an effort to longitudinally evaluate and design instruction for students in reading and mathematics. Community and educational leaders identified literacy as a need; therefore, several initiatives were implemented such as Literacy Collaborative, Reading Recovery and Literacy Kits in science. Instructional technology is used to enhance student engagement. By adding new technology to meet the needs of the 21st century learner, several devices are used across the district: iPads, iPods, ActivBoards, tablets, Nooks, and phones. Learning Odyssey is used from K-12 to enhance learning for students and promote credit recovery in high school. Students who require special services receive a high quality education as evidenced by Whitfield County Schools (WCS) English Learners (EL) consistently exceeding in state tests and the district meeting determination for IDEA compliance for the past six years. Project SEARCH assists some students with cognitive disabilities at the high school level to transition to the work force. The O.N. Jonas Foundation offers opportunities in fine arts. High achievement opportunities are offered through Advanced Learning Program for High Achievers (ALPHA), Dual Enrollment, Duke University Talent Identification Program (TIP), Governor's Honors, and Georgia Virtual School.

Professional Learning

WCS supports student learning through strategically planned professional learning opportunities. Teachers continually learn through book studies, collaborative activities, and collegial design sessions. For example, prior to state-mandated CCGPS implementation, WCS addressed the learning needs of its teachers through 21 days of training for content and support teachers at all levels. The experiences supported teachers by embedding professional readings, providing time to design new units and integrate curriculum. To customize instruction and address recommendation from the last SACS evaluation, WCS expanded the number of cohorts within the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model. This model uses a job-embedded coaching format whereby teachers obtain immediate feedback and reflect as they employ new strategies to differentiate for the needs of EL students. In addition, the Special Education Department trains core content teachers in differentiation strategies and inclusion teachers in appropriate co-teaching methodologies with an emphasis on math instruction. The district also provides learning experiences through New Teacher Induction, Leadership Academy, Design Team, Innovators, Inc., and specialized trainings for school counselors and social workers. Further, WCS financially supports its professionals by funding endorsements in gifted and ESOL. On-going coaching support is provided through a team of six district instructional coaches who target areas of curriculum, technology, and SIOP.

Extra-curricular Opportunities

Whitfield County offers extra-curricular opportunities in academics, athletics, and field experiences. Students have the opportunity to participate in various academic extra-curricular activities: Mock Trial, Civic Oration, Young Georgia Authors, Spelling Bee, Special Olympics, Georgia Scholar Program, All State Chorus and Band, Art Contests, U.S. Senate Youth, Literary Meet, Drama, Academic Bowl, Beta Club, Lego League, and Boys and Girls State, as well as others. The Southeast High School drama students placed 4th in state competition. Students have athletic opportunities in the following sports: baseball, basketball, football, wrestling, swimming, softball, volleyball, spirit and

Executive Summary

Whitfield County School System

competition cheerleading, soccer, tennis, golf, cross country, and track and field. Recently, the Northwest High softball team became the 4A state champions and the Southeast High volleyball team played in the state playoffs. Many students are involved in service learning projects and enrichment experiences in the field. Some examples of student service projects include high school students mentoring elementary students, Target Recycling, a watershed program to introduce sturgeon to the Conasauga River, supporting local food banks, and reaching worldwide to support children in Africa. Field learning experiences include visual art trips to New York, government trips to Washington and Atlanta, and regional history trips, among other opportunities.

Community Engagement

As WCS strives to improve the education of students, the partnership with Dalton Public Schools (DPS) is vital to the local community. This partnership is evident through the Literacy Initiative, various professional learning opportunities, special educational services at Northstar and Crossroads programs, and Summer Feeding Program for all local children. WCS shares in the Archway Partnership with DPS which brings together the community to support children in the area of literacy from birth to work. "Schools 2 Go" is a school-based initiative to assist students with homework and test prep in their home communities. In a unique educational agreement for the Northwest Georgia region, WCS has agreed to host a facility for Dalton State College and Georgia Northwestern Technical College at its Northwest Georgia College and Career Academy campus. In 2013, WCS hosted the Region I Georgia Parent Engagement Network Conference in cooperation with the Georgia Department of Education to highlight the work of Parent Involvement Coordinators (PICs). Locally, the district's eight PICs provide parenting, computer literacy, and adult ESOL courses.

High Quality Teachers

In WCS, 100% of all teachers and paraprofessionals are highly qualified as measured by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission and TII-A. WCS believes teachers are learners. This is evidenced by the following statistics: 24.89% hold a bachelor's degree, 41.76% hold a master's degree, 29.37% hold a specialist degree, and 4% hold a doctorate degree.

Financial

Though Whitfield County is in an economic crisis, voters supported schools by approving an Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Task (ESPLOST) and the Local Board of Education raised the millage rate. WCS also uses the following grants to supplement the learning opportunities for students: Georgia Appalachian Center of Higher Education (GACHE) Grant, Elementary School Breakfast Grant, Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Grant, Home Depot Grants, Lowes Grants, Target Grants, and several Whitfield Education Foundation Grants.

Technology Infrastructure

In the last five years, multiple areas of WCS infrastructure for digital technology have expanded and improved to lead our students into the 21st-Century learning environment. Within every building, the wireless capabilities now allow the use of laptops and tablets. Adding to this resource, WCS filtering options at various levels for students, teachers, and administrators are managed from the district level and allow for differentiated access based on grade level. All K-8 academic classrooms are equipped with digital projection systems and electronic white boards to enrich learning. To unify the media center platform, WCS purchased the Destiny operating system and a dedicated server to handle all aspects of this system. Servers operate in each building, allowing teachers and students to store valuable examples of learning and resources. The State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) is accessed through Infinite Campus, a student information system; this tool allows teachers to see an historical view of individual assessment data from Pre-K forward. In addition, teachers can access curriculum standards and resource links to digital resources. WCS has expanded network capabilities and bandwidth to accommodate the number and

Executive Summary

Whitfield County School System

variety of devices as the district moves toward Bring Your Own Device (BYOD). As WCS moves toward the cloud-based instructional model, virtual servers are replacing existing servers, which diminishes cost to the district. As technology evolves, WCS is committed to researching the best avenues to help students reach success in the 21st-Century environment.

Areas of Improvement

Analysis of the initiatives in the system reveals that a critical area needing improvement is monitoring and communication across several areas. Specifically, WCS needs to target the following: develop and implement written protocols for clear and consistent communication, formalize the procedures for analysis of formative and summative assessment data, and establish procedures for accountability in professional learning. Addressing this overarching weakness will enhance student achievement and profound learning throughout the educational enterprises in WCS. In addition, WCS will continue with the Literacy Collaborative framework which addresses the need for consistent research-based literacy instruction throughout the district. Finally, intentional measures to increase the graduation rate in WCS high schools continue to be a priority.

Additional Information

Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.

Awards and Distinctions

National recognition for high-quality instructional program, featured in Schools That Work series in Edutopia as part of the George Lucas Educational Foundation for project-based learning: NWGCCA and NWM, 2011.

Learn Zillion selected one elementary and one middle school teacher from more than 3,000 applicants across the nation to join its Dream Team and design a database of integrated Common Core lessons: NHM and CRE, 2013.

U.S. Department of Education recognized the strong and successful EL programs at DES and PGE as exemplars and selected these schools as research sites, 2012.

National Blue Ribbon School: THE, 2009.

Local high school graduates were highlighted in a video depicting the story spreading across the nation of a fallen soldier from Whitfield County. The video's purpose was to help others who are affected by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; the Armed Forces Foundation, Country Music Television, and comedian Ron White helped bring this together, 2013.

Anti-Defamation League "No Place for Hate" School Award: CRE, 2012.

Student participated in U.S. Army All-American Marching Band: NHS, 2012.

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) Whole Child recognition: NWGCCA, 2011.

One of two GA schools selected as tour site for GA Organics, state and national educational and agricultural officials, to see a working and successful implementation of farm to school program (1 of 17 in state to pilot this program): NHS, 2012.

Distinguished Title I Schools (2012):

8 years: CES, DGE, and NHE

7 years: AES, PGE, THE, VPE, VES, and WES

6 years: WMS

5 years: VPM

3 years: BES, DES, EES, and NHM

WWII book published by 5th-grade students and their teacher from EES; recognized by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, 2012.

GA Chamber of Commerce FOUR for the Future, awarded by UGA and GA Trend to four communities around the state doing progressive things despite the economic climate, 2013.

Executive Summary

Whitfield County School System

GA Hispanic Construction Association State Award: WCS recognized for making a difference in the Hispanic community, 2012.

Andrew Young spoke at GA Historical Marker Dedication at Fort Hill School campus to honor African-American soldiers in combat: CR, 2010.

Recognized by state superintendent for improvements on GHSGT (science, SS, and writing) and EOCT (science): PHS and NWGCCA, 2009.

Successful opening of the 1st new comprehensive high school in 30 years: CCHS, 2011.

Winners of Recycling Competition: 1st Place, DGE; 2nd Place, NHM; 3rd Place, PGE, 2012.

Regional Career Fair: NWGCCA, 2012 and 2013.

Regional technology fair designed and hosted: high schools, 2012 and 2013.

Community Engagement

Literacy Initiative is a collaborative effort involving Whitfield County Schools, Dalton Public Schools, Whitfield County Board of Commissioners, Dalton City Council, DaltonWhitfield Archway Partnership, DaltonWhitfield Chamber of Commerce, GA State University, and Lesley University. This is a longterm commitment to developing lifelong learners in the community, 2012.

James W. Stewart, a civil rights leader who led the first group of young marchers out of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in what became known as the 1963 Birmingham Children's March, came to speak to WCS 7th-graders at Crosspointe Christian Centre, 2013.

Dalton Utilities (H2O in the Know) and GA Power (Learning Power) annually partner with schools to raise awareness about power and water conservation.

Lunch and Learn: an educational summer program designed for children ages 3 - 5 and their parents. Families participate in activities to build essential skills for Pre-K and Kindergarten using everyday objects designed around a featured book which the children will get to take home; a \$2,000 grant was awarded by Rotary Club to purchase books, 2013.

Raider Nation and Student Leadership Academy (annually): SHS, EMS, VPM, AES, CRE, DGE, EES, and VPE.

Sleeping in the Homes of Strangers: book published by SHS teacher based on class discussion, 2012.

Student-Focused Education Series, three held at NWGCCA (Ron Berger, Larry Rosenstock, and George Thompson). Yong Zhao and Ruby Payne spoke at Crosspointe Centre, 2011.

Grants

CTAE/STEM Grant (\$2.6 million), developed pathways in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics for middle school students; renovated facilities to incorporate STEM labs with the goal of exploring career opportunities before moving to high school: NWGCCA, EMS, NHM, NWM, VPM, and WSM, 2011.

Executive Summary

Whitfield County School System

Lowe's Grant (\$100,000) for community literacy lab: SHS, 2011.

Whitfield Education Foundation Grants: \$25,000 awarded annually to fund instructional innovation; WEF has operated locally for 15 years, various schools.

Home Depot Grant (\$20,000) for outdoor reading garden: DES, 2010.

More than \$15,000 in grants for an outdoor classroom, student service group, and sensory garden to teach science to kindergarten special education students: EES, multiple years.

Dollar General Literacy Grant: DES (\$2,000) and VPM (\$3,000), multiple years.

Georgia Appalachian Center for Higher Education (GACHE) Grant: PHS, NWGCCA and SHS, multiple years.

United Way placed five AmeriCorps VISTA members in WCS at DES and EES, SHS, and two workers with Pre-K program, multiple years.

Innovation

Literacy Collaborative (LC) - LC is a comprehensive school literacy model that includes a wide range of individual, small-group and large-group reading, writing, and word study instruction guided by ongoing assessment. This model also involves school literacy teams, a highly qualified literacy coach, and bookrooms to support quality reading instruction, 2012.

Innovators Incubator: Teams work on a challenge needing an innovative approach to move their school or department closer to the district direction. Challenges are reframed to align with one of these three social systems: directional, knowledge development and transmission, and induction and recruitment, 2013.

Industry partners wrote state curriculum for mechatronics, the design process that includes mechanical, electrical, control, and computer engineering, 2013.

NWGCCA campus shared with GA Northwestern Technical College to provide regional access and ease transition from high school to college and career, 2011.

Design Engineering Manufacturing (DEM) Camp: partnerships with entrepreneurs for middle school students to develop skills, 2011.

System Design Team guides implementation of teaching and learning framework while maintaining system focus.

Induction programs for students: Camp Kodiak (NHM) and Viking Camp (EES), multiple years.

Customizing connections classes based on student need and interest: VPM, 2013.

Professional Learning

CCGPS training, various core content trainings, data analysis trainings, fine arts and media workshops, and teacher induction.

Educators invited to present at local, state, and national conferences.

Executive Summary

Whitfield County School System

Service Projects

A federal program enables the WCS School Nutrition Department to provide free breakfast to approximately 6,500 elementary students. The system takes advantage of a "Non-Pricing" option due to the large percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced-priced school meals, 2013.

Saturday Sacks Program provides elementary students a small sack of child-friendly, nutritious food to eat over the weekend. Five schools (AES, CES, DES, PGE, and VPE) are sponsored by churches to provide weekend sacks, multiple years.

Summer Feeding Program provided children 17 and younger a daily average of 314 breakfasts, 3,428 lunches, and 507 snacks at various community locations, 2012.

More than \$19,000 collected for students diagnosed with Leukemia. NHE, PGE, and VPM united to promote a system-wide "orange out" day to support the families, 2012.

School involvement with local and international service projects: Africa Water Project, Blood Assurance drives, Humane Society, Relief for Haiti, Special Olympics, United Way Make a Difference Day, beautification projects, clothes closets, food banks, nursing home visits, and recycling, multiple years.