Whitfield County Schools

Five-Year **Strategic** Plan

2015–2020

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Introduction

The Whitfield County Schools Vision, Mission, and Beliefs have guided the direction of our school district for nearly a decade. A lot has changed since the document was introduced in fall 2006:

- *Districtwide enrollment has increased from 13,320 to 13,410, or 0.67%.*
- *Participation in the National School Lunch Program, which provides free and reduced prices for school meals, has increased from 56% to 72%, or 28.57%.*
- *State education standards have migrated from the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) to Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) and Georgia Milestones Standards.*
- *The state accountability system that measures student achievement, attendance, and other criteria has changed from Adequate Yearly Progress to the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI).*
- *Since the Northwest Georgia College & Career Academy (then known as the Whitfield County Career Academy) ended its first year in the summer of 2006, the district has added two elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, and rebuilt another middle school.*

With strong support from the community and its Board of Education, the school district's students, staff, families, and facilities have grown through a lot of change. We feel this is a great time to update the Vision, Mission, and Beliefs that have served us so well and provide this ***Whitfield County Schools Five-Year Strategic Plan*** to guide us through the coming years.

Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving." This Strategic Plan outlines six goals in the areas of Instruction & Assessment, Highly Qualified Personnel, Finance, Community Involvement, Operations, and Technology. It defines action steps to fulfill objectives necessary to meet each goal. This Strategic Plan will help us attain our vision to be "a valued and dynamic school district that prepares students for success in a global community."

This ***Five-Year Strategic Plan*** will guide us forward and drive all of us to reach for ever higher levels of success.

Dr. Judy Gilreath
Superintendent

About Whitfield County Schools

When the Whitfield County School System was established in 1872, its primary purpose was to educate children when they were not needed on the family farm. Much has changed since then! The district has grown into the 26th-largest of Georgia's 180 public school districts. More than 13,000 students attend 24 schools that include:

- 13 elementary schools
- 5 middle schools
- 3 comprehensive high schools
- 1 charter high school career academy
- 1 special-purpose high school

We believe the best way to learn about our schools is to see them in action. We encourage you to visit any of our schools for a firsthand experience of the teaching and learning happening in Whitfield County Schools.
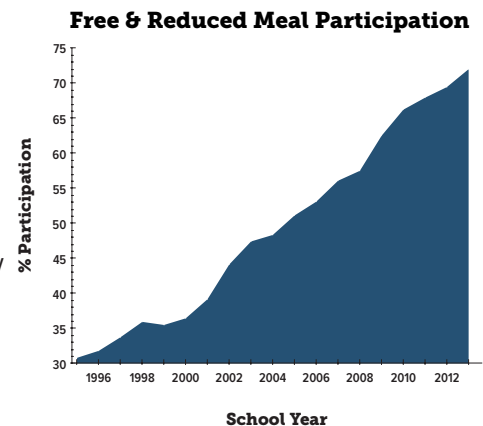
In addition to the public schools, the county supports Dalton State College (DSC) and Georgia Northwestern Technical College (GNTC), units of the University System of Georgia. In a unique educational agreement for the Northwest Georgia region and perhaps the state, Whitfield County School System has agreed to host a facility for GNTC at its Northwest Georgia College and Career Academy (NWGCCA) campus.

Our Students

With a student enrollment of 13,410 in 2014, the Whitfield County School System is currently the twenty-sixth largest of 180 systems in the state of Georgia.

According to the U.S. Census, Whitfield County's population increased from 83,525 residents to 102,599 residents. Whitfield County Schools today serve approximately 13,410 students. The chart below outlines their demographic information.

The number of students participating in the free and reduced meals program has dramatically increased since the 1990s. Thanks to a federal grant, school nutrition staff have been able to provide free breakfasts to all elementary school students since 2013.

Free & Reduced Meal Participation

% Participation (y-axis: 30 to 75)

School Year (x-axis: 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012)

Our Community

Whitfield County is home to four cities served in whole or in part by Whitfield County Schools. The four cities are Cohutta, Dalton, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell. Dalton Public Schools serves students of families who live inside the Dalton city limits.

Enrollment & Demographics
13,410 Students Enrolled in Whitfield County Schools

51.8% Male

Source: Georgia Department of Education, Oct. 7, 2014, Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Gender and Grade Level

48.2% Female

2.9% Two or More Races

1% Asian

53.9% White

0.3% American Indian

1.6% Black

40.3% Hispanic

< 0.1% Pacific Islander
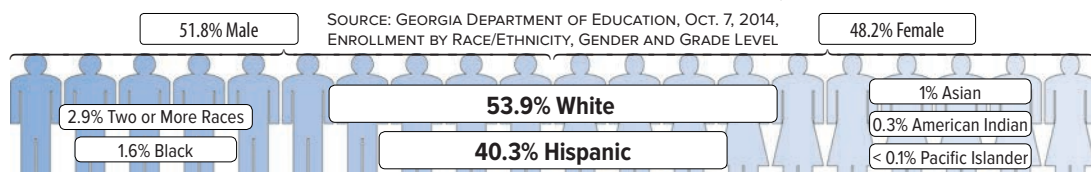
Vision

We envision a valued and dynamic school district that prepares students for success in a global community.

Mission

Our mission is to maximize student learning by providing challenging and engaging educational experiences in a safe and supportive environment.

Beliefs

1. We believe the needs of students, personnel, families, and the community are best met with a unified direction.

2. We believe our purpose is to lead students to success by engaging them in challenging and meaningful work.

3. We believe teachers are leaders who design learning experiences for students.

4. We believe our personnel, families, and community members are vital to the education of our students.

5. We believe in creating and maintaining a safe, inviting, and inclusive learning environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

1 Goal

Instruction & Assessment

Provide the educational foundation and opportunities to accelerate all students to achieve expected or high academic growth.

Objective 1: Increase the rigor of the curriculum presented to our students.

Action Steps:

- Create and implement curriculum maps that are aligned horizontally and vertically for the four core content areas: mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies.
- Review, revise, and implement the system-wide Response to Interventions (RTI) guidelines.
- Increase use of literacy standards across the curriculum.
- Create a common grading policy for the district.
- Increase digital learning opportunities.

Objective 2: Teachers will utilize and implement effective instructional practices.
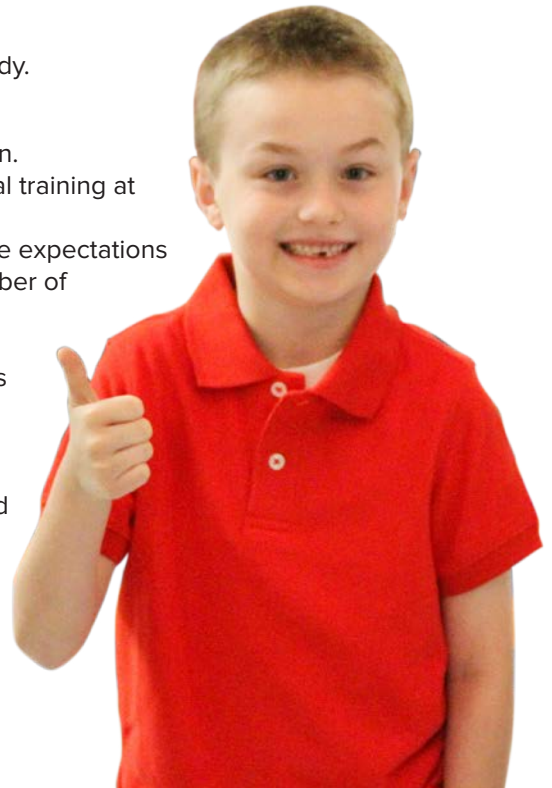
Action Steps:

- Consistently use *Non-Negotiable Practices*.
- Fully implement data teams on each campus and provide training in best practices for data analysis.
- Highlight innovative teaching practices.

Objective 3: Graduates will be college and career ready.

Action Steps:

- All students will complete a pathway by graduation.
- Maximize opportunities for academic and technical training at the NWGCCA.
- Increase the number of students who exceed state expectations on the Georgia Milestones and decrease the number of students who do not meet state standards.
- Raise the graduation rate above 80%.
- Increase the number of advanced content courses offered in elementary and middle schools.
- Increase the number of undergraduate college courses taught in Whitfield County Schools.
- Increase the number of students who have earned college credit by graduation to 400 or more.

Highly Qualified Personnel

Recruit, retain, and develop highly-qualified personnel.

Objective 1: Provide a compensation package that is competitive with other school districts in the region.

Action Steps:

- Restore employee work calendars.
- Restore salary schedules.

Objective 2: Provide ongoing support for new teachers and administrators through a comprehensive induction plan.

Action Steps:

- Collaborate with new teachers and administrators regularly using various platforms to provide support.
- Develop and implement an ongoing leadership support program.
- Develop an effective mentoring program for new administrators.

Objective 3: Recruit and recommend highly skilled and highly qualified applicants to be hired by the Whitfield County Board of Education.

Action Steps:

- Strengthen relationships with accredited teacher education programs.
- Develop criteria to screen student teachers from education programs outside of Georgia.
- Increase the ethnic diversity of our faculty and staff.

Objective 4: Continue to provide effective, research-based, and differentiated professional learning opportunities tied directly to school and district improvement plans.

Action Steps:

- Develop a five-year district professional learning plan and evaluate it annually.
- Assist schools in disaggregating data for use in the school improvement plan on an ongoing basis.
- Work with schools and departments to schedule and facilitate professional development opportunities.

Finance

3 Goal

Ensure fiscal stability and increase reserves through sound financial practices.

Objective 1: Develop and sustain sound financial management practices, stability, and efficiency based on county and state comparisons and best practices.

Action Steps:

- Analyze expenditures for trends and spikes.
- Develop five-year financial and debt plans based on priorities defined by the District Strategic Plan.
- Receive a clean audit management and advisory report.

Objective 2: Develop efficiencies of process to make best use of available resources.

Action Steps:

- Analyze procurement process for efficiencies and develop district standardized procedures.
- Design and implement a district inventory process.
- Develop and maintain an energy conservation program.

Community Involvement

Strengthen school, family, and community partnerships.

Objective 1: Schools and support facilities will be safe and inviting places for families, staff, and the community.

Action Steps:

- Sustain a positive and welcoming environment.
- Ensure staff and students are ready to implement Emergency Operation Plans.
- Monitor safety, cleanliness, and overall appearance of facilities.

Objective 2: Partner with families to strengthen understanding of state standards, student progress, and the importance of teachers and families working together.

Action Steps:

- Provide families with resources to support their child's education.
- Ensure information is clearly communicated to families.
- Use the Internet, social media, and other tools to enhance parent and community partnerships.

Objective 3: Coordinate school and community resources to support student growth and development.

Action Steps:

- Introduce families to resources that assist with physical, social, emotional, and academic needs.
- Strengthen partnerships with institutions of higher education.

Operations

Provide safe and efficient facilities, maintenance, and transportation services.

Objective 1: Develop a proactive facilities maintenance program to maximize efficiency.

Action Steps:

- Develop a five-year maintenance schedule for interior finishes for all schools.
- Establish a preventive maintenance program for HVAC, mechanical, and structural systems.
- Annually evaluate the cost and benefit of contracted services.

Objective 2: Plan facilities construction and renovations based on prioritized needs assessment data.

Action Steps:

- Improve accessibility for all students, staff, and visitors in our facilities.
- Enhance energy efficiency through renovations of HVAC, electrical, lighting, and mechanical systems.
- Renovate athletic venues, administrative buildings, and other facilities with critical needs.
- Maintain and upgrade video surveillance, electronic access control, and radio systems.

Objective 3: Enhance the safety and efficiency of student transportation systems.

Action Steps:

- Adopt a bus replacement schedule to reduce repair costs and improve efficiency.
- Upgrade digital radio and GPS systems to ensure communication during emergencies and daily operations.
- Continue advanced safety training for bus drivers and monitors.
- Maintain effective bus monitoring technology.

Technology

6 Goal

Improve student academic achievement by strengthening technology integration.

Objective 1: Update and maintain equipment and infrastructure to support the integration of curriculum and technology.

Action Steps:

- Upgrade virtual servers, switches, bandwidth, wireless capacity, and storage to meet growing demand.
- Ensure all classrooms meet district technology standards.
- Increase student access to Internet-ready devices.

Objective 2: Provide seamless access to technology tools.

Action Steps:

- Evaluate instructional use of software and technology integration that supports research and evidence-based strategies.
- Expand teacher and administrative use of state and district tools for data-based instructional decision-making and design.
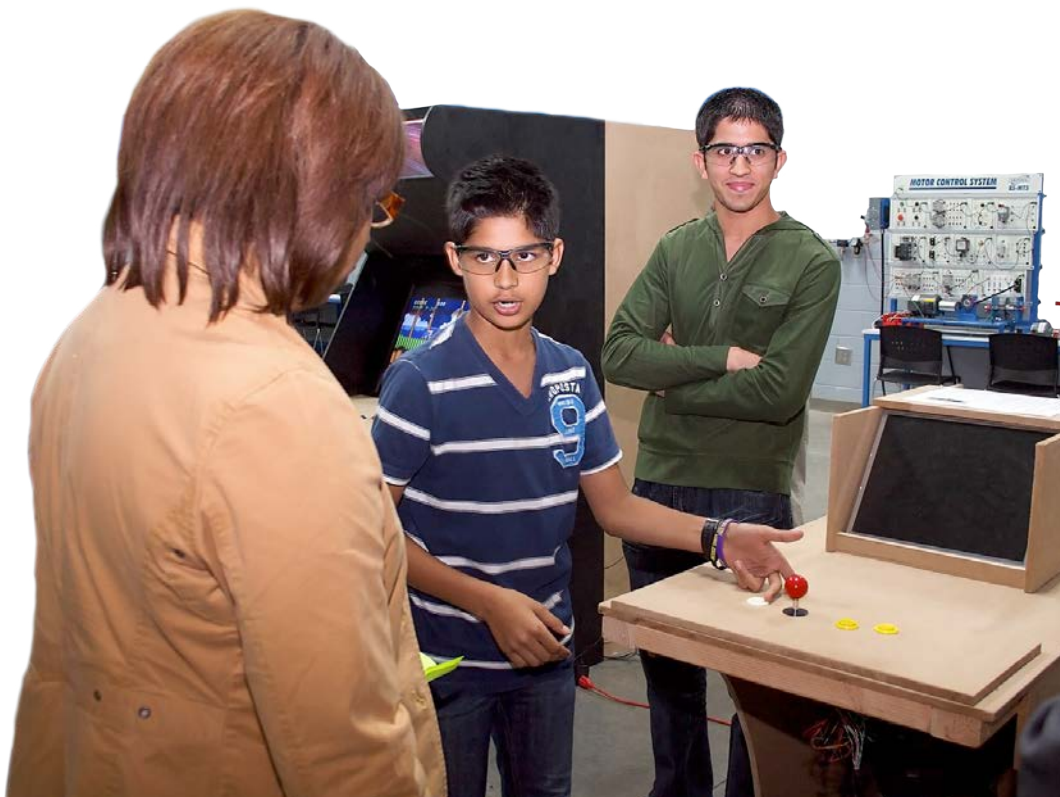
"It takes a village to raise a child."

The strategic planning process began with a community survey released at the beginning of the school year in August 2014.

An editorial in the **Dalton Daily Citizen** called the survey "...a great opportunity offered by the school board for you to tell its members and other school officials the direction the school system needs to go and how it should get there."

The feedback was tremendous! More than 1,100 staff and community members responded to seven questions. Their answers helped principals and district administrators who comprised a 24-member strategic planning committee to prioritize the district's greatest challenges, specify what students need to learn to be successful, and define the evidence that will evaluate the quality of education in Whitfield County Schools.

Team leaders used Robert W. Ewy's book, **Stakeholder-Driven Strategic Planning in Education: A Practical Guide for Developing and Deploying Successful Long-Range Plans**, to guide the process.

The strategic outcome of the stakeholder-driven strategic planning process is to determine what stakeholders require and expect of students and the district.

—ROBERT W. EWY

Strategic Planning Process

1. Publish survey in August 2014.
2. Review survey feedback from more than 1,100 responses from educators, school families, and community members.
3. Define educational and financial priorities based on answers to survey questions.
4. Review and revise the Whitfield County Schools Vision, Mission, and Beliefs to ensure alignment with community feedback.
5. Categorize top priorities into six goals.
6. Outlined objectives to help meet the six goals.
7. Defined action steps to achieve the district's objectives.
8. Established measures to gauge progress toward meeting objectives and goals
9. Determined who will be responsible for recording measurements and documenting success throughout Whitfield County Schools.

Stories · Surveys · Data · Feedback · Observation

Mission, Vision, & Beliefs

Goals

Objectives

Action Steps

Measurements

Responsibilities

Board of Education

The 2015 Whitfield County Board of Education is made up of five members. Four members represent one of four voting districts. A fifth member serves at-large, representing the entire district.

Pictured, from left, are Board of Education members Rodney Lock, Bill Worley, Thomas Barton, Tony Stanley, and Louis Fordham.

Whitfield County Schools

Elementary Schools

Antioch Elementary
1819 Riverbend Road
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 278–7550

Beaverdale Elementary
9196 Highway 2
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 275–4414

Cedar Ridge Elementary
285 Cedar Ridge Road
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 712–8400

Cohutta Elementary
254 Wolfe Street
Cohutta, GA 30710
(706) 694–8812

Dawnville Elementary
1380 Dawnville Road
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 259–3914

Dug Gap Elementary
2032 Dug Gap Road
Dalton, GA 30720
(706) 226–3919

Eastside Elementary
102 Hill Road
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 278–3074

New Hope Elementary
1175 New Hope Road
Dalton, GA 30720
(706) 673–3180

Pleasant Grove Elementary
2725 Cleveland Road
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 259–3920

Tunnel Hill Elementary
203 East School Street
Tunnel Hill, GA 30755
(706) 673–4550

Valley Point Elementary
3798 South Dixie Highway SW
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 277–3259

Varnell Elementary
4421 Highway 2
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 694–3471

Westside Elementary
1815 Utility Road
Rocky Face, GA 30740
(706) 673–6531

Middle Schools

Eastbrook Middle
1382 Eastbrook Drive
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 278–6135

New Hope Middle
1111 New Hope Road
Dalton, GA 30720
(706) 673–2295

North Whitfield Middle
3264 Cleveland Road
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 259–3381

Valley Point Middle
3796 South Dixie Highway
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 277–9662

Westside Middle
580 LaFayette Highway
Rocky Face, GA 30740
(706) 673–2611

High Schools

Coahulla Creek High
3361 Crow Road
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 694–4900

Crossroads Academy
2818 Airport Road
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 271–2495

Northwest Whitfield High
1651 Tunnel Hill-Varnell Road
Tunnel Hill, GA 30755
(706) 673–6533

Northwest Georgia College and Career Academy
2300 Maddox Chapel Road
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 876–3600

Phoenix High School
2300 Maddox Chapel Road
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 260–2206

Southeast Whitfield High
1954 Riverbend Road
Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 876–7000

Whitfield County Schools
Dalton, Georgia
Since 1872

1 Goal — **Instruction & Assessment**
Provide the educational foundation and opportunities to accelerate all students to achieve expected or high academic growth.

2 Goal — **Highly Qualified Personnel**
Recruit, retain, and develop highly-qualified personnel.

3 Goal — **Finance**
Ensure fiscal stability and increase reserves through sound financial practices.

4 Goal — **Community Involvement**
Strengthen school, family, and community partnerships.

5 Goal — **Operations**
Provide safe and efficient facilities, maintenance, and transportation services.

6 Goal — **Technology**
Improve student academic achievement by strengthening technology integration.