

July 2015



The Plan

Meeting Gwinnett County Public Schools'
Facility and Technology Needs



Pictured above is the new Discovery High School, which opens in August of 2015. The school anchors the new Discovery Cluster, and provides relief primarily for Berkmar High School and Central Gwinnett High School. In addition to housing the high school, the facility also will be home to the new Junior Achievement Discovery Center at Gwinnett which will provide financial literacy lessons to 6th and 8th graders.

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- Projects and Timeline
- eCLASS Update
- GCPS' Focus on Accountability

Since 1997, the Gwinnett special purpose local option sales tax for education (E-SPLOST) has provided thousands of classrooms and major technology improvements. Gwinnett voters extended the one-penny E-SPLOST in 2001 and 2006 by wide margins. In November of 2011, Gwinnett voters approved another extension which we refer to as SPLOST. Thanks to the original E-SPLOST and the three renewals, GCPS has been able to manage the challenges of dramatic growth in student enrollment, rather than being managed by it. (The school district's student enrollment continues to grow. In 2015, GCPS projects enrollment will surpass the 176,000 mark, growing by approximately 3,000 students over the 2014-15 enrollment.)

The current E-SPLOST (2012-2017) includes the following:

- New schools as well as additions and renovations at schools.
- Air conditioning for all middle and high school gyms and all elementary school activity buildings, along with all kitchens that currently do not have air conditioning.
- Significant technology upgrades for all schools and infrastructure support and digital content to support teaching and learning.
- Other facility improvements and preventive maintenance postponed due to budget cuts (roofing, painting, carpeting, etc.).

In 2008, Gwinnett voters also approved general obligation (GO) bonds to support the school system's building and technology plans. In addition to using funding from the current E-SPLOST, the district's long-range plan for meeting facility and technology needs— called The Plan— calls for several projects to be built and funded with GO bonds. See the update on page 4 for details on how GCPS is managing these bonds to save tax dollars.

GCPS' Strategic Priority on...

facilities and operations

Building a Better Gwinnett

The school system will look beyond today's classroom to provide learning environments for tomorrow's students, including alternative, non-traditional, and specialized academic programs. Schools will be designed, organized, and managed to allow the flexibility need to serve students best. Our facilities will have the infrastructure and technological resources to advance teaching and learning. We will employ best practices in operations management, ensuring that buildings, grounds, and athletic facilities are safe, secure, attractive, energy-efficient, and well-maintained. Additionally, the school system will provide safe, reliable, efficient and cost-effective transportation services. Using state-of-the art design and construction techniques, innovative operational strategies, and conservation principles, we will continually improve our facilities and operations.

SPLOST IV 2012-17: Providing classrooms for a growing Gwinnett

Below are the building projects included in the 2012-17 capital improvement program.

Year	Project Type	Project Name	Address	Status
2013	Replacement	✓ GIVE Center West	(5550 Peachtree Industrial Blvd. in Norcross)	✓ Completed projects
	Relocation	✓ Gwinnett Online Campus	(713 Hi-Hope Rd. in Lawrenceville)	
2014	Addition	✓ Alcova Elementary School		■ Projects opening in 2015
	New	✓ Northbrook Middle School	(1221 Northbrook Pkwy. in Suwanee)	
	Addition	✓ North Gwinnett High School		
2015	Addition	✓ Rockbridge Elementary School	(Opened ahead of schedule in 2014)	■ Projects opening in 2015
	New	✓ Baggett Elementary School	(2136 Old Norcross Rd. in Lawrenceville)	
	New	✓ Graves Elementary School	(1700 Graves Rd. in Norcross)	
	New	✓ Discovery High School	(1335 Old Norcross Rd. in Lawrenceville)	
	New	✓ Jordan Middle School	(355 E. Crogan St. in Lawrenceville)	
2016	Renovation	** Monarch School renovated for a new Duluth Cluster middle school		■ Projects opening in 2015
	Addition	Twin Rivers Middle School		
	Addition	North Gwinnett Middle School		
	Addition	** Camp Creek Elementary School		
2017	Addition	** Peachtree Ridge High School		■ Projects opening in 2015
	Addition	** Meadowcreek High School buildout of 3rd floor		

GO Bond Projects*

2015	Replacement /relocation	✓ Summerour Middle School moves to new building at location that was previously GIVE Center West/Gwinnett Online Campus
2017	New	Old Summerour Middle School facility removed from site and construction underway for new facility to house Norcross Cluster elementary school (Slated to open ahead of schedule in 2016)
2018	New	GIVE Center South (4221 Centerville Hwy. in Snellville)

* To be funded from GO bond proceeds based on current revenue projections.
**Projects partially funded with GO Bond proceeds.

This list is subject to change due to funding and enrollment trends.



Discovery High School



Jordan Middle School



Summerour Middle School Replacement



Baggett Elementary School



Graves Elementary School

These projects and others in The Plan are funded by proceeds from a special purpose local option sales tax to benefit education (e-SPLOST) and general obligation (GO) bonds approved by voters.

eCLASS: Technology enhancements have a positive impact on every school and every child

In addition to facilities, the e-SPLOST extension is addressing technology projects, including the district's eCLASS initiative—our digital content, learning, assessment, and support system. Below are some highlights of our eCLASS progress to date, along with technology improvements that have been made systemwide to support teaching and learning:

- Schools throughout the district are participating in **BYOD (Bring Your Own Device)** to supplement students' access to web-based instructional resources during the school day, using the district's safe, filtered access to the Internet. Use of student-owned devices for learning is becoming a regular part of the classroom experience.
- The **Curriculum and Instruction Tool** was made available to all teachers and all classes in the Fall of 2014, after piloting in select classrooms and schools during the 2013–14 school year. The tool gives teachers and students **online course pages** where they can post and interact with digital materials, websites, closed discussion forums, and other online resources. Another feature allows students to submit work electronically and keep personal files in their "electronic lockers."
- Through the **MyeCLASS Student Portal**, students have easy access to digital textbooks, their online library, and other online materials tied directly to their classroom lessons. They also can keep track of their course grades and grades on individual assignments.
- In addition to an **electronic gradebook**, teachers have access to a broad range of data they can use to support students and their learning.
- Teachers also have access to **online collaboration communities**, where they can share with other teachers across the district. Online communication centers house instructional calendars, model lesson plans, and other curriculum resources. And, Gwinnett educators also have a **growing library of videos** that model the best ways to teach critical concepts and skills.
- The **Professional Development and Evaluation Tool**—launched in 2013—helps teachers get the support they need and provides key information about teacher evaluations, resources that improve instruction and, ultimately, student learning.
- GCPS also is addressing a number of systemwide improvements with e-SPLOST funds. **The district has updated the technology in all Gwinnett middle schools and currently is updating the technology for all elementary schools.** To date, 52 elementary schools have benefited from these technology improvements and the others will be completed by mid-January of 2016. These updates include new computers for the labs, a wireless infrastructure upgrade to support local school BYOD initiatives, and laptops for teachers and administrators. Student laptops and project carts also were part of this technology "refreshment" project, giving teachers and students resources to support collaborative learning on class projects and assignments. *What other "new" technology is found in the updated or "retrofitted" classrooms?* They include document cameras and new ceiling-mounted, high-definition (HD) projectors, and each school received a portable voice conference system that can be used in any teacher's classroom for electronic field trips and distance-learning initiatives.
- The e-SPLOST is funding a **new student information system**. The first phase of this multi-phase transition provided online registration capabilities for the new school year to many Gwinnett parents.
- By December of 2015, GCPS will have completed another project under the current e-SPLOST—**the installation of new video camera systems to enhance security in the school common areas in all schools.**
- **The district also has partnered with the County to make security upgrades on school campuses.** In addition, the county SPLOST is providing emergency-response buttons in all schools and a new visitor management system for all elementary schools.



GCPS' Strategic Priority on...

information management and technology



Technology will permeate the education of Gwinnett's learners. Digital tools will expand the walls of the classroom, fostering collaboration and nurturing creativity and innovation in students and teachers. Appropriate technological tools and resources that are part of students' everyday, media-rich lives will be incorporated into the school day, making learning real and relevant to a student population that has never known a world without sophisticated technology. The district will provide a robust online environment to meet the evolving needs of students and staff and will promote safe, responsible use of technology. Employees will have the technology-based knowledge, skills, training, and tools they need to be effective in their jobs. Innovative technology will facilitate teaching and learning, enhance communication, strengthen the link between school and home, and ensure operational and analytical excellence in the day-to-day operations of the school system.



GCPS' Strategic Priority on...



The school district will be a responsible steward of taxpayers' money while providing the necessary resources to support world-class teaching and learning. We will continue to manage our financial resources through a transparent management system that meets or exceeds the highest standards in accounting and financial reporting. As a result, confidence will be high among citizens, financial institutions, and the agencies that regulate the district's fiscal operations. Budget decisions will be made with a long-term perspective to ensure the district has adequate funds to meet both current and future needs. We will wisely use our limited financial resources while also pursuing additional sources of revenue. The school system will employ proven business practices and procedures at all times to ensure it meets the public's highest standards for accountability, integrity, and trust.

Favorable bond rating reflects GCPS' fiscal accountability, saves tax dollars

Gwinnett citizens have consistently supported critical school funding initiatives, including multiple bond and sales tax referenda. The taxpayers' trust in the school system has been well-placed, based on findings from external audits of GCPS' building programs. In recent audits, MGT of America commended GCPS on the management of its construction program. MGT found GCPS in full compliance in all areas audited, noting that the school system effectively has met its e-SPLOST objectives. GCPS also was commended for implementing processes that resulted in lower construction costs than those in neighboring counties.

In addition, GCPS recently received good news regarding its bond rating. Much like homeowners might refinance a house when a lower interest rate is offered, so has GCPS taken advantage of its favorable bond rating to refinance \$255 million of its outstanding general obligation (GO) bonds, generating a savings to the district of \$21.5 million. These savings will go directly back into the current e-SPLOST building program, providing the funding equivalent to one new elementary school.



Gwinnett County Board of Education: (l-r) Dr. Mary Kay Murphy, 2015 Chair, District III; Dr. Robert McClure, 2015 Vice Chair, District IV; Louise Radloff, District V; Daniel Seckinger, District II; Carole Boyce, District I; and CEO/Superintendent J. Alvin Wilbanks.

As part of the refinancing process, the school district's bond ratings were reaffirmed at the highest level (Aaa) with a stable outlook by both Standard & Poor's (S&P) and Moody's Investors Services. GCPS is the only school district in Georgia and in the Southeastern region of the nation that has attained a "Aaa" bond rating from Moody's and S&P. Only 13 school districts nationwide have earned this fiscal stamp of approval from both bond rating agencies.

GCPS' favorable bond ratings are based on the school district's strong financial management, which has allowed the district to maintain a good financial position despite ongoing growth and budget challenges; and low debt burden, in large part due to the district's ability to fund its ongoing capital needs through the e-SPLOST.

Gwinnett County Board of Education processes that increase communication about the building program, and that provide transparency and ensure projects are completed on time and within budget include the following:

- **A master project list** guides the work in delivering what was promised.
- **A fair and open bidding process** is used for all projects. A standard "design, bid, build" methodology is used by the Facilities and Operations Division to ensure all projects are awarded to the lowest, qualified bidder at a cost-per-square-foot that is consistently below market averages.
- **Board action is required to approve bids on projects.** Meeting agendas are posted each month prior to the Board's business meeting for citizens interested in updates on the SPLOST construction program. The construction report outlines each project, contractor, contract amount, change-order information, as well as any adjustments and comments regarding the projects.
- **The School Board approves land purchases at Board meetings.**
- **A financial report**, including e-SPLOST revenue collections, is part of each monthly School Board meeting.
- **Updates regarding The Plan are posted on the district's website.**



July 2015 Update

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