

Connect

...with each other ...with our schools ...and with our vision!

For almost two decades, Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) has remained constant in its strategic direction, pursuing a vision of becoming a system of world-class schools and a mission of pursuing excellence for each student. Great strides have been made over the years, but there is still much to do.

2013–14 is a pivotal year in the district's quest to become a system of world-class schools. Four very important strategic initiatives that are essential to improving student achievement all come together this year. These initiatives are:

- **Gwinnett Teacher Effectiveness System (GTES):** Full implementation of the new teacher evaluation system;
- **AKS:** Continued alignment of our AKS Curriculum with the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards;
- **eCLASS:** The rollout of the next phase of eCLASS—an instructional initiative that combines technology resources, digital content, and powerful analytics that provide information to support student achievement;
- **Leadership Development:** The development of new leaders, and ongoing opportunities for those already in leadership positions.



Strategic Priorities



To learn more about Gwinnett County Public Schools' strategic direction, review the Strategic Priorities for 2010-2020 on the GCPS website (www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us). They outline the qualities and characteristics our employees and other stakeholders believe are desirable for 10 major components of the school district. We think you will see clearly how the four key initiatives connect with the district's Priorities.



The school system and its leaders have planned for and talked about these initiatives individually for some time now. Each one was developed and rolled out on a unique timeline, and each has a specific focus, but all four initiatives are fundamental components of the one “main thing”—our core business of teaching and learning. They are connected! What's more, they are directly linked to the strategic direction outlined in Gwinnett County Public Schools' Strategic Priorities for 2010–2020.

In the coming months, GCPS will continue talking about these initiatives, building upon the connections they have to our students and teachers. As we talk about these connections, we hope to inspire conversations about how we *all* can better connect with each other, our schools, and our vision to become a system of world-class schools.



Stay connected!
Learn more about major district initiatives and the positive impact they have on Gwinnett schools.



The Strategic Priorities for 2010-2020 call for technology to permeate the education of

Gwinnett's learners. eCLASS is a major initiative designed to make this vision a reality. A digital Content, Learning, Assessment, and Support System, eCLASS is providing tools and resources to support teachers and to enhance student engagement and learning.

To date, this multi-year initiative has provided a new electronic gradebook for all teachers, a learning management system that gives teachers access to digital content from numerous sources, and, when fully implemented, will provide easy access to a wealth of data on how well students are learning. In addition, there have been improvements to the parent portal and the introduction of a student portal, both of which increase communication between the home and school. As part of eCLASS, a number of schools are moving to Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) programs that allow students and teachers to use personal technology devices (cell phones, tablets, laptops, e-readers, etc.) in the classroom to support instruction.

Gwinnett Effectiveness Initiative

Since 2009, GCPS has been working to develop a new evaluation system for teachers and leaders—the Gwinnett Teacher and Leader Effectiveness System. The goal is to implement a system that is more than an evaluation tool. It also should increase the effectiveness of our employees by identifying areas of strength as well as growth and individualizing professional development based on specific needs. Beginning this school year, the Gwinnett Teacher Effectiveness System (GTES) will be used systemwide with teachers. GTES uses observation data, growth in student achievement, and student perception surveys to determine a teacher's effectiveness. Implementing the new evaluation system is the first step in moving to a system where employees will be rewarded and recognized for performing at high levels.



Numerous studies show that principals are the major driver of school effectiveness and are second only to teachers in their impact on student achievement. Leading schools with enrollments of 1,000 to 3,000 students, staffs as large as 300 people, sizable budgets, and performance goals to

achieve, principals in Gwinnett are essentially the CEOs of good-sized companies. They must have knowledge, skills, and talent that cannot be acquired in college courses alone. That is why GCPS launched its Quality-Plus Leader Academy (QPLA) in 2007, with the Aspiring Principal Program (APP) addressing the most-immediate need.

Developing the organization's leaders continues to be a priority in 2013–14. In addition to APP, the QPLA includes the Aspiring Leader Program (ALP) which focuses on recruitment, development, and retention of assistant principals; the District Leader Program focused on the development of central office leaders; Certified Quality Leader Training; ongoing leadership seminars for principals and district leaders; and additional leadership support that includes just-in-time training and mentoring for current leaders.



Gwinnett's curriculum is called the Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS). The AKS is aligned

to the state's standards, including the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) in the areas of mathematics (K–10), language arts (K–12), and literacy standards in science, social studies, and technical education for middle and high school students.

The common core standards were developed with the input of teachers, parents, higher education staff, and community leaders. They build on previous knowledge and skills to help ensure that students graduate college- and career-ready. That said, the CCGPS are a natural fit with Gwinnett's rigorous AKS curriculum, which is reviewed each year by GCPS staff, parents, and community members. In fact, Gwinnett teachers have been involved in every step as we have aligned the AKS to the CCGPS... from reviewing standards and selecting instructional materials to developing and delivering training. They have helped to ensure that our local curriculum remains student-centered and focused on developing the knowledge and skills students will need for success in a competitive, global environment. That is important because while the AKS and CCGPS focus on *what* students learn, teachers are the ones who determine *how* students learn.