



IGNITE LEARNING

STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2022

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**2.
Message from
the Superintendent**

**3.
Vision, Mission & Values**

**4.
Equity & Excellence
Theory of Action**

**5.
Our Promise**

**7.
Strategic Priorities**

PRIORITY I: Reimagine Excellent Schools

PRIORITY II: Eradicate Achievement and Preparation Gaps

PRIORITY III: Improve Operational Efficiency

PRIORITY IV: Create Pathways to Prosperity

PRIORITY V: Invest in Our People

**17.
GCS At-a-Glance**



Transforming Learning and Life Outcomes for All Children

In Guilford County Schools (CCS), we believe in listening and learning, first.

During the past year, we embarked on a tour of our schools and communities seeking input and ideas of hundreds of parents, students, school volunteers, educators, business and community leaders, elected officials and national experts.

We conducted surveys, hosted 11 town hall forums, visited schools, read research, analyzed data, met with 56 groups and organizations, engaged a 100-member Transition Team, identified long-standing challenges and inequities and celebrated real successes.

Now, we are blending your voices with the expertise of our staff and technical assistance partners to guide our work and create better schools and better futures for our students and our community.

Our new strategic plan, *Ignite Learning*, represents a more streamlined approach to planning that focuses every person in our school district on our core business of teaching and learning. We have fewer goals, fewer priorities and more accountability.

In addition to guiding our work moving forward, *Ignite Learning* conveys the hope of meaningful change and the promise of better and more equitable learning and life outcomes for all students.

We have aligned our vision, promise, priorities and plan to the Board of Education's mission, core values and goals. We are excited about igniting learning in GCS, and we hope you are, too. Join us, as we create the kind of schools and classrooms each of us wants for the children and families we know and love.

In the interest of all children,

Sharon L. Contreras

Sharon L. Contreras, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools



Our Vision

Transforming learning and life outcomes for all students

Our Mission

Guilford County students will graduate as responsible citizens prepared to succeed in higher education, or in the careers of their choice.

Our Values

Diversity

We believe the different experiences individuals bring to our schools are strengths. Embracing diverse cultures, perspectives and abilities enables students and adults to feel valued and safe, a key prerequisite for learning and growth. We are committed to providing an environment where students and staff from all cultures and backgrounds can succeed.

Empathy

We are committed to developing a culture where our employees identify with and understand the feelings of our students and parents as well as their colleagues.

Integrity

We are committed to creating a school district that acts with honesty and forthrightness, holding ourselves to high academic and ethical standards, and dealing with everyone with respect.

Innovation

We are committed to fostering a work environment where the goal is not to manage innovations, but to become innovative. Problems are identified, ownership of those problems is assumed by the adults in the district and everyone works together as agents of the solution until the problems are solved. We will not stop until obstacles are removed, solutions found, and clear and compelling goals are established.

Equity

We are committed to creating equitable and inclusive schools where adults take ownership for student learning outcomes and make sure students have what they need to succeed in school and in life. We will acknowledge and dismantle systems, processes and mindsets that perpetuate race, poverty, disability and English language status as predictors of achievement. We will align resources to create equitable opportunities for students and employees. We will eradicate achievement gaps.

Equity & Excellence

In GCS, we stand on hallowed ground, where generations have fought and died for the right to freedom, equality and education.

The rich history of our 658-square-mile county reflects both our highest aspirations and achievements as a people, and our greatest challenges.

We have some of the best high schools in the state, one of the most robust menu of choice schools and some of the best instruction available in the nation. We are a North Carolina and National District of Character and our graduates attend some of country's best and most prestigious universities.

We also have more low-performing schools than any other district in our state, and we have significant achievement gaps identifiable by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, gender and English language status. Far too many buildings and infrastructures are decaying and inadequate, and our books, instructional materials and technology are outdated.

We proudly welcome students from all over the world to our doors, yet we still have far too many children and young people in our community who are still waiting for the promise of a high quality public education to ring true.

We can – and we must – do better. Our children deserve no less, and our common destiny demands that we act now, and act boldly. We will rise and fall together. Excellence for some is not an option; we must have excellence for all.

This plan represents only a beginning. We are focusing our limited resources on our core business of teaching and learning, and seeking ways to improve operational efficiencies so we can invest more in our students.

Transforming learning and life outcomes for all children requires our entire community to come together. We hope you will join us as we seek to write a new chapter in the history of Guilford County, one marked by great expectations, opportunities and success for every child.

THEORY OF ACTION

To bridge the gap between our aspirations and our current reality, we have developed a new Theory of Action that will guide how we approach the complex work of educating all children well in GCS.

Research and our best professional judgment tell us that when we:

- foster lives of character, purpose and excellence in all that we do;
- create and model joyful learning environments that inspire curiosity in our students and spark inspiring teaching and leadership;
- collaborate intentionally and transparently with all members of our community;
- acknowledge and dismantle systems, processes and mindsets that perpetuate race, poverty, disability and English language status as predictors of achievement;
- have conversations about race and bias and invest in the development of our people and community to eradicate opportunity gaps, achievement gaps and completion gaps;
- align resources to create equitable opportunities for all students; and,
- grow every child and every employee to become their best selves;

Then we will ensure all students

benefit from a life-changing educational experience that prepares them for college, satisfying work, fulfilling lives, and active participation in our American democracy as citizens and leaders.

Our Promise



Goal I: Reading

By 2022, the percentage of students who will read proficiently by the end of third grade will increase to 63 percent (currently 53.4 percent).

Goal II: Math I

75 percent of incoming sixth grade students will pass NC Math I (Algebra I) with a C or better by the end of their ninth grade year in 2022 (currently 69.8 percent).

Goal III: Career Pathways

By 2022, the percentage of graduating seniors who complete a rigorous career pathway will increase to 35 percent (currently 28.6 percent).

These goals represent our promise to ignite better learning and life outcomes for our students. The goals will guide the district's work and help us align our resources to the most important, impactful levers of improvement.

Goal IV: Exceed Growth

By 2022, increase by 50 percent the number of schools that exceed growth (currently 32.5 percent).

Goal V: Decrease Gaps

By 2022, decrease the achievement gap between black and Latino students and their white peers by 7 percentage points (currently gap ranges from 25-37 percent in reading and math).

Goal VI: Increase Efficiency

By 2022, increase organizational efficiency and effectiveness to better support student learning.



Strategic Priorities

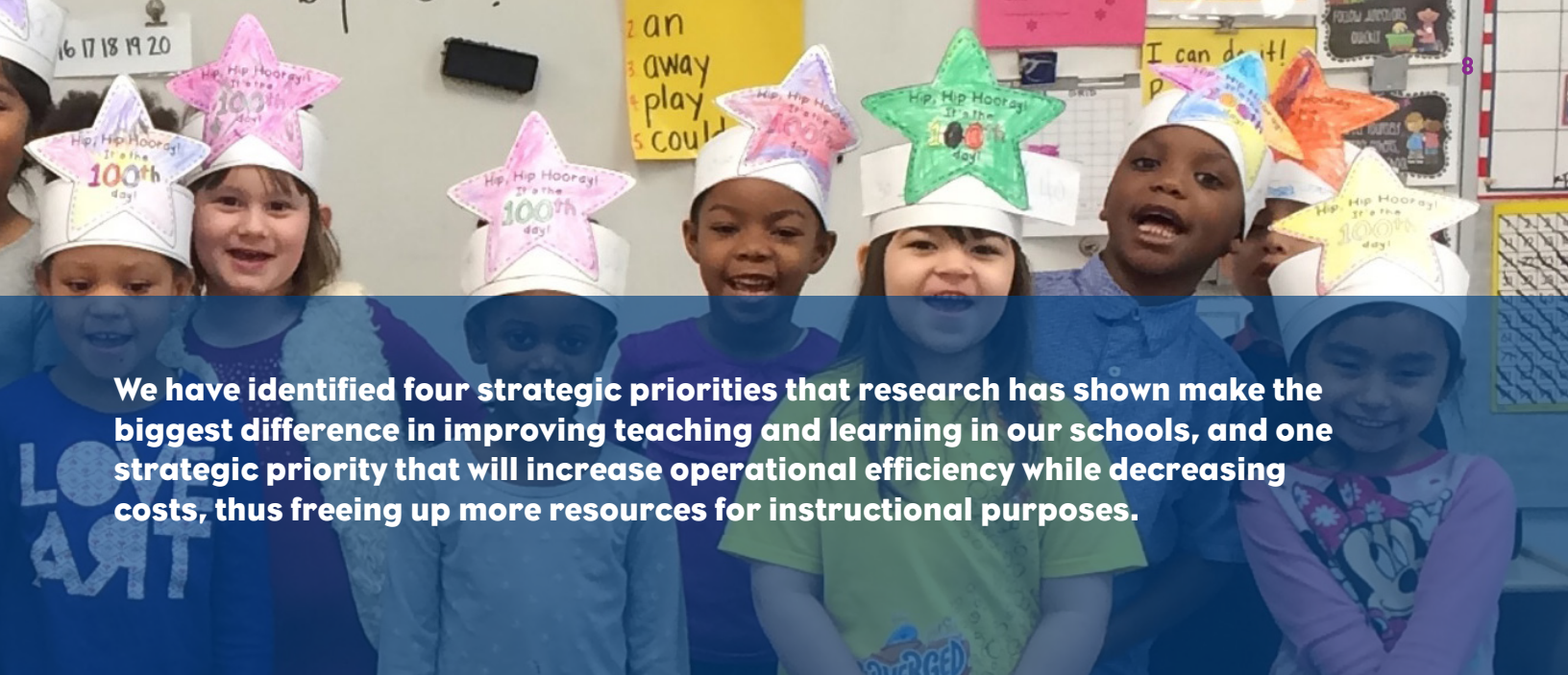
PRIORITY I: Reimagine Excellent Schools

WHY

- Despite rising graduation rates, ACT scores and other data indicate that a preparation gap exists between what GCS students know and can do and what is required for post-secondary success.
- For example, approximately 41 percent of GCS graduates who enrolled in a North Carolina public community college had to take remedial or developmental level courses.
- While GCS has some of the highest performing schools in the state and nation, we also have some of the lowest performing. In 2017, GCS had 38 elementary and middle schools designated as low performing.
- Academic achievement district-wide on state tests has been relatively flat across-the-board, with minor decreases and increases only, since the introduction of the new standards in 2013.
- Parent surveys and focus groups as well as waiting lists for limited seats in choice/option schools and programs indicate greater demand for public school choice.

Each priority addresses multiple goals and provides specific guidance to all stakeholders regarding what we must do in order to accomplish our goals and fulfill our promise.

- GCS operates in a highly competitive choice environment that is continually evolving and requires ongoing innovation, as well as a growing emphasis on student recruitment and enrollment.
- All parents want and deserve excellent schools for their children.



We have identified four strategic priorities that research has shown make the biggest difference in improving teaching and learning in our schools, and one strategic priority that will increase operational efficiency while decreasing costs, thus freeing up more resources for instructional purposes.

How

- Transform schools throughout the county so every child has access to a great school close to home; strengthen and expand innovation and choices in public schooling that align with student interests and industry needs.
- Create the conditions in our classrooms and schools in which students:
 - Have the freedom to pursue their questions, not ours.
 - Act as apprentice learners who work with teachers who are master learners
 - Have the basic skills and knowledge they need to “succeed” in the world that is coming toward them and are deep, powerful, curious, agile learners.
- Have high-engagement school cultures where personal, self-determined learning is at the center of student and teacher work.
- Embrace and emphasize real-world applications and presentations to real audiences by working with local universities and employers to develop performance tasks reflective of an evolving workforce and global economy. Use the performance tasks as assessment for learning to give employers and universities confidence that GCS students are well prepared to succeed in career, college and life.
- Use technology as an amplifier for learning, creating, making, connecting, communicating, collaborating and problem solving.
- Create more public-private partnerships between businesses, universities and school leaders to increase awareness and identify innovative practices across sectors.
- Create a multi-prong campaign to inform and engage public stakeholders in the stories of how schools are changing, including voices from students, parents, teachers, district leaders, and community partners.
- Increase parent engagement opportunities for parents and caregivers through the Guilford Parent Academy and school-based opportunities as well as train and support teachers and school leaders in strategies to support learning at home and in the community.



PRIORITY II: Eradicate Gaps in Access, Preparation and Achievement

WHY

- In many subject areas and grades, race and ethnicity are the strongest predictors of achievement in GCS, more so than socio-economic status/poverty.
- There are persistent gaps in the performance of students of color and those who are economically disadvantaged, English Language Learners and/or who have disabilities.
 - Non-economically disadvantaged black students are under-performing white economically disadvantaged students in reading, math and science.
 - Latino non-economically disadvantaged students are under-performing white economically disadvantaged students in reading and science, but are performing comparably in math.
- Students of color are over-represented in the frequency and serenity of disciplinary action and special education classes, and under-represented in gifted, honors, AP/IB and dual enrollment classes, honor societies and other enrichment opportunities.
- Economists estimate that closing the achievement gap between white students and their black and Latino peers would increase the United States' annual GDP by as much as \$525 billion.
- The “underutilization of human potential as reflected in the achievement gap” imposes the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession that is larger than the Great Recession of 2008. These “avoidable shortfalls in academic achievement impose heavy and often tragic consequences via lower earnings, poorer health and higher and costly rates of incarceration.” (McKinsey and Company, 2009.)

“Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress in every society, in every family.” Kofi Annan



“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.” John Dewey

HOW

- Ground teaching and learning in a set of core beliefs and ongoing professional development that value and promote racial equity and diversity. Re-design all so-called “race-neutral” systems that consistently yield race-based outcomes.
- Align rigorous instructional expectations to core beliefs. Develop coherent and focused curricula across content areas and grades and implement consistently in all schools and classrooms.
- Focus on early literacy to ensure that all students have the foundational skills to be successful. Improve the relevance and value of a high school diploma informed by college and career requirements. Revise course descriptions and requirements to reflect more rigorous requirements for graduation, mapped to career and college readiness standards. Eliminate/restrict student enrollment in foundational and/or low level courses; improve academic rigor in classroom tasks, activities and homework that align with standards.
- Engage students, parents, staff, community members and local elected officials to promote dialogue and learning about why these changes are needed, and what they can do to assist the district in accomplishing its mission, vision and goals.
- Implement a robust assessment system that provides timely data to inform instructional decisions. Communicate data clearly and transparently to students, parents, educators, and business and community members.
- Increase investment in instructional tools and professional learning designed to better meet diverse student needs, close achievement gaps and improve learning and life outcomes for more students.



PRIORITY III: Improve Operational Efficiency

WHY

- GCS and other large school districts operate several behind-the-scenes businesses that have a significant impact on the day-to-day experiences of students and staff.
- The productivity, service quality and cost-effectiveness of these services, which range from school nutrition and transportation to HVAC maintenance and repair, can greatly influence the educational process.
- When operational services operate at peak efficiency, the dollars and time saved can be “spent” on the district’s core business of teaching and learning, thus improving the district’s academic return on investment as well.
- A chronic lack of investment in core operational areas and infrastructure creates higher personnel costs, duplication of efforts and forces staff to use inefficient manual processes.

“It is incumbent upon all of us to build communities with the educational opportunities and support systems in place to help our youth become successful adults.”

Ruben Hinojosa



HOW

- Enhance partnerships with city and county agencies, through joint projects, services, purchasing, and performance contracting. Collaborate with entities that can provide specific, targeted services to help accomplish GCS goals.
- Conduct a comprehensive study and renovate buildings and classrooms for 21st Century learning. Include boundary optimization and school utilization analysis, technology, safety and other related issues.
- Communicate broadly and engage those closest to the issues in the improvement processes and plans.

**“The whole world
opened to me when
I learned to read.”**

Mary Mcleod Bethune

- Systematically address the recommendations from the Council of Great City Schools’ (CGCS) review of transportation programming to realize operational and fiscal efficiencies, and improve service to students and families.
- Invest more strategically, consistently and equitably in technology and critical infrastructure systems in central administration and in schools. Revise policies and protocols to maximize efficiency, equity and service excellence while reducing costs.
- Leverage CGCS membership to improve efficiencies by accessing valid and reliable key performance areas in critical operational areas, and prioritize strategies based on the highest-leverage key performance indicators.
- Train operational leaders in continuous improvement and project management protocols and principles.
- Systematically review, assess and identify school board and district policies, protocols and procedures that are no longer relevant. Use highly credible and experienced outside groups to conduct the analyses where feasible.



PRIORITY IV: Create Pathways to Prosperity

WHY

- Significant discrepancies exist between graduation rates and the percentage of students meeting North Carolina's college/career readiness standards. While almost 90 percent of GCS students graduate on time, only 63 percent of students enroll in two- or four-year colleges.
- Of those graduates enrolled in public two-year programs, 41 percent require remedial or developmental course work.
- Research indicates that 64 percent of all jobs by 2020 will require some post-secondary education or training. Currently, college graduates out-earn high school graduates by 56 percent or more and are less likely to be unemployed.
- The world's most competitive economies attribute much of their success to rigorous career pathway programs for students; our region currently averages about 1,000 jobs annually that remain vacant due to a lack of qualified workers.
- The academic content in CTE courses in GCS lacks the rigor of core instructional areas. However, project-based learning is strong in CTE and is more effective in developing students' non-cognitive skills. Both techniques are needed to maximize

learning, regardless of the career or college pathway chosen.

- CTE students are significantly more likely to report that they developed problem solving, project completion, research, math, college application, work-related, communication, time management and critical thinking skills during high school.

“Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.”

G. K. Chesterton

- GCS lacks Advanced Placement (AP) courses in computer science and informational technologies/systems, and too many career and technical education students are using obsolete equipment and technology to learn.
- As a key economic development and anti-poverty strategy, GCS, in partnership with the business community and colleges/universities, needs to prepare more students for the high-skill, high-wage jobs of the future.



HOW

- Expand and strengthen CTE and choice programming in alignment with student interests and economic development needs. Align CTE to core courses to support application of learning in core content areas.
- Collaborate with business, community and philanthropic leaders to increase student access to advanced manufacturing, apprenticeships and other real-world applications and opportunities for post-graduation jobs.
- Redefine successful career pathways in relation to evolving workforce demands. Invest in infrastructure and technology aligned to workforce demands.
- Ensure that all students have a clearly defined and documented pathway by

“I implore you to see with a child’s eyes, to hear with a child’s ears, and to feel with a child’s heart.”

Antonia Novella

grade nine, which is reviewed annually.

- Ensure students of color have equitable access to the more academically rigorous offerings and career pathways that reflect workforce needs.
- Leverage dual enrollment opportunities for more students and schools, as well as post-secondary scholarship incentives, student planning system, developmental pathways

and student support services through partnerships such as Say Yes Guilford and others.

- Integrate teacher planning and professional development to foster more collaboration between CTE and academic core teachers; use co-teaching models to strengthen academic content in CTE and project-based content in core instructional classes.
- Create a multi-faceted communications campaign to inform and engage students, parents, community and business leaders, and other audiences about CTE and high-wage, high-demand professions.

PRIORITY V: Invest in Our People

WHY

- National research indicates that the effect of teaching on student learning should be greater than student ethnicity or family income, school attributes or class size; however, in GCS, race currently is a stronger predictor of academic success than family income or other attributes in many subject areas and grade levels.
- Students with three consecutive years of highly effective teaching out-perform students with ineffective teachers by 52 percentage points.
- More-effective principals attract and select higher quality teachers, help teachers improve their professional practice more rapidly, retain higher quality teachers and assist or exit less effective teachers.
- Districts can lose the most effective teachers through a lack of strategic attention paid to those teachers who are more effective in meeting students' needs.
- High-performing teachers who benefit from two or more retention strategies, including feedback, development, recognition, responsibility and/or advancement, keep teaching in their schools for nearly twice as long (two to six more years) as teachers who don't.
- Lockstep compensation systems and a lack of career pathways discourage or prevent principals from making smarter retention decisions.



“Educating is a vocation rooted in hopefulness. As teachers we believe that learning is possible, that nothing can keep an open mind from seeking after knowledge and finding a way to know.”

bell hooks



How

- Recruit, develop, reward and retain a diverse and culturally proficient workforce that reflects GCS' student demographic and that dramatically increases the proportion of students who have access to effective classroom teachers and principals.
- Deploy talent based on student needs. All talent decisions should increase equity, matching the most effective staff with the students and schools with the greatest need.
- Develop career pathways and strategies that reflect, retain and expand the reach of excellent teachers and principals and allow them to grow professionally in their current positions and beyond.
- Implement compensation policies and practices that allow the district to attract and retain effective teachers and principals, incorporating higher compensation for those who perform better and lead or teach in high-need schools.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

- Increase resources for sustained, job-embedded professional development of teachers and leaders and align resources to leadership and instructional frameworks.
- Use co-teaching model to strengthen and enhance CTE and core instructional teaching and learning.
- Develop a comprehensive, short- and long-term marketing recruitment and retention strategy using a variety of tactics (microsite, social media, local and national press, video, etc.) and partnerships (with key institutions of higher education) to attract diverse and culturally proficient employees.

GCS

At-A-Glance

GCS is dedicated to igniting the passion and promise of every student in every school. GCS is the second largest school district in North Carolina, the 47th largest of more than 14,000 in the United States, and as the largest employer in Guilford County with 10,027 employees.

Facilities

126 schools

- Elementary - **69**
- Middle - **22**
- High - **28**
- Alternative - **10**

(Including GCS Newcomers School, SCALE and High School Academy). Some campuses, such as Penn-Griffin School for the Arts, house multiple grade levels, like middle and high school.

12,538,725 square feet of facilities

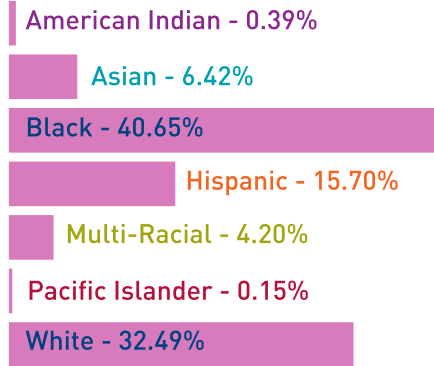
51 years is the average age of district buildings

43 cents per square foot funding for maintenance



Students

- Pre-K-13 - **73,259**
- Languages - **112**
- Economically Disadvantaged students - **65.1%**
- Special Education students - **10,324**
- Advanced Learners - **14,490**



Transportation

- 567 Buses**
- 2,651 Routes**
- 38,400 Stops** per day
- 48,805.34 Miles** traveled daily
- 700+** Bus drivers



School Nutrition

- 5,760,714** Breakfasts served
- 8,010,341** Lunches served
- 618,251** After-school snacks served



Technology

- 26,000** Desktop computers
- 18,000** Tablets
- 5,000** Laptops
- 11,000** Phones
- 1,700** Mounted projectors
- 4,700** TV's



Employees

- 9,008** Full-Time
- 862** Part-Time
- School-Based**
- 7,705** Full-Time
- 790** Part-Time



Budget

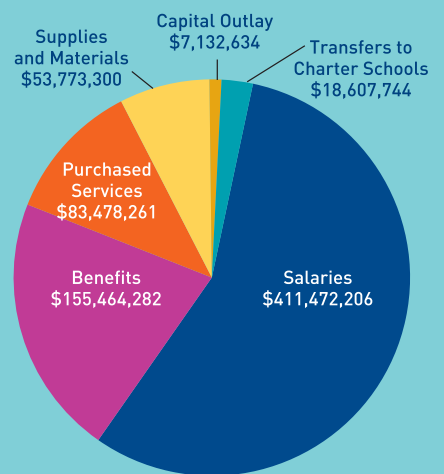
\$729,928,427

(Includes capital outlay, special revenue and enterprise funds)

Where the money comes from:

- State Funds - \$404,135,654
- County Funds - \$195,860,398
- Federal Funds - \$59,496,194
- Other Local Funds - \$4,703,424
- School Food Services - \$41,872,322
- After-School Enrichment Services (ACES) - \$7,203,221
- Local Special Revenue - \$11,657,214
- Capital Outlay - \$5,000,000

How the money is used:





**“Transforming lives is the
only outcome that matters.”**

Sharon L. Contreras, Ph.D.
Superintendent

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STAY CONNECTED

GCS APP | www.gcsnc.com | GCSTV



Moving Forward

**A strategic plan is only as good as its implementation.
We will use this plan to:**

- Develop district initiatives and school improvement plans while aligning all human and financial resources to support these goals and priorities.
- Focus on the instructional competencies that produce the best outcomes.
- Annually report on progress towards achieving our goals and keeping our promises to our students and our community.

We invite you to join us in executing this plan. To access the complete plan, including key performance indicators (KPIs) and strategic priorities, go to www.gcsnc.com and click on the About Our District tab.

To find out how you can help, please contact Community Relations, (336) 370-8353, send an email to feedback@gcsnc.com, or contact Superintendent Sharon L. Contreras, Ph.D. directly at superintendent@gcsnc.com.



In compliance with federal law, Guilford County Schools administers all educational programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination because of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, color, age, military service, disability or gender, except where exemption is appropriate and allowed by law. Refer to the Guilford County Board of Education's Discrimination Free Environment Policy AC for a complete statement. Inquiries or complaints should be directed to the Guilford County Schools Compliance Officer, 120 Franklin Boulevard, Greensboro, NC 27401; 336-370-8154.

All Guilford County Schools facilities, both educational and athletic, are tobacco-free learning environments.

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