

Hall County School District Annual Report to the Community

Summer, 2009

Board of Education Members

*Richard Higgins, Chairman
Nath Morris, Vice-Chairman
Craig Herrington
Sam Chapman
Brian Sloan*

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A Year to Remember:

Greetings,

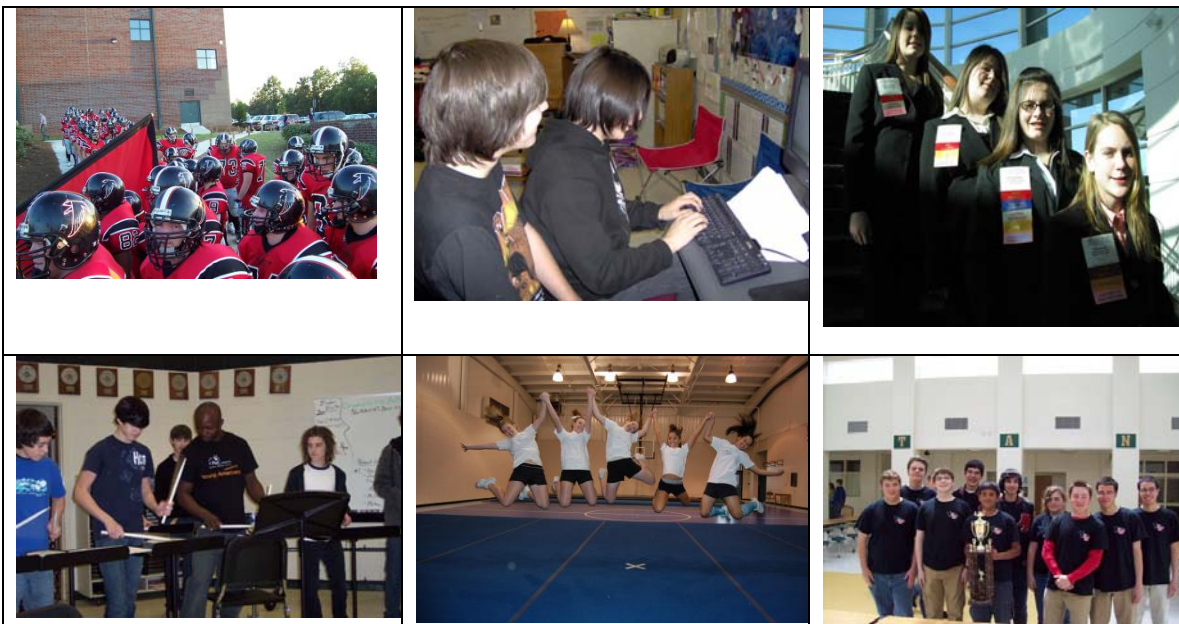
June 30, 2009, represents the end of what could be called the most tumultuous year in the recent history of public education. The economic tremors that shook our nation rippled through our local schools as well. Student enrollment growth ground to a halt, state and local revenue sources dwindled, and our system responded with new models of service delivery and greater utilization of technology. In addition, the system had to reduce staffing and institute pay reductions across the board to meet the challenges of historical reductions in state revenues.

I am proud to say your school district met these times with a “can do” attitude. We finished the year financially in the black and our students performed academically at record levels. Additionally, we offered new programs of choice and experienced the evolution of our first charter schools.

We look to the 2009-2010 school year with great anticipation and commit to provide our boys and girls with even greater opportunities, supporting our local families in preparing our children to prosper in the world that awaits them.

On behalf of your board, I thank you for the confidence you have placed in our team.

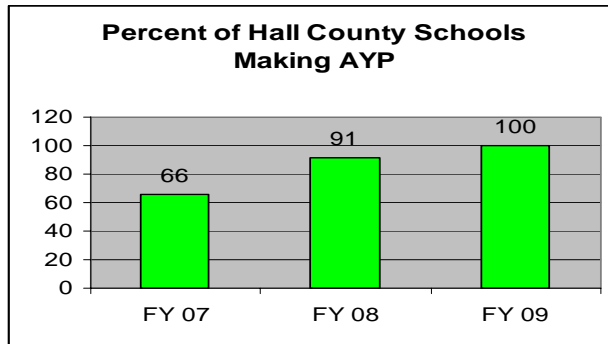
William Schofield, Superintendent



Academic Updates:

2008-2009 Adequate Yearly Progress:

Our preliminary data allows us to predict that ALL 34 schools within our Hall County system will make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) this year! Additionally, four (4) schools will come off the “Needs Improvement” list. We congratulate our students and staff for their hard work and will continue to focus our time and talent pursuing excellence rather than our national mantra of adequacy.



2008-2009 High School Graduation Rates: Our six traditional high schools continued to make substantial gains in their graduation rates this year. We look forward to even greater gains as we continue to expand challenging and authentic experiences such as International Baccalaureate Diploma, Advanced Placement, Honors Mentorship, Habitat High, and Hospitality High. Additionally, we are continually adding other Honors Level courses and expanding the Lanier Charter Career Academy programs:

Graduation Rates

Hall County High School	2007-08	2008-09	Increase
Chestatee	76.9%	80.5%	+3.6%
East Hall	74.2%	76.7%	+2.5%
Flowery Branch	80.5%	85.8%	+5.3%
Johnson	75.2%	79.3%	+4.1%
North Hall	83.1%	88.1%	+5.0%
West Hall	79.6%	85.7%	+6.1

Georgia High School Graduation Test Results The state of Georgia requires students to pass an exit exam to receive a diploma. Results below represent percent of students passing the exam the first time.

	Hall	State	Difference
Math	96	92	4
English	92	90	2
Science	91	86	5
Social Studies	91	86	5
Students Passing All Four Core Areas	85	79	6

Middle School Students Taking High School End-Of-Course Tests: One of our system goals involves accelerating our middle school students with high school Carnegie Unit coursework. In two of these offerings, our students are able to take the high school EOCT:

9th Grade Literature

School	# Tested	% Passed
CMS	87	100
DMS	39	100
EHMS	39	100
NHMS	82	100
SHMS	82	99
WHMS	22	100
State		76

Physical Science

School	# Tested	% Passed
CMS	61	97
DMS	58	100
EHMS	40	100
NHMS	75	100
SHMS	128	95
WHMS	69	100
State		67

Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) Results: The Iowa test is our nationally normed metric with 40 years of national historic data which measures annual growth. Results below represent National Percentile Ranking and show two year gain/loss within our system.

	Reading	Change	Math	Change	Computation	Change
Second	57	+1	47	+4	57	+7
Third	59	+4	69	+7	78	+11
Fourth	58	+1	66	+6	67	+12
Fifth	59	+4	62	+3	58	+1
Sixth	47	+3	57	+5	60	+7
Seventh	46	+2	57	+5	47	+1
Eighth	48	+2	52	0	45	-4

Academic/Fine Arts/Career Tech Milestones:

- World Language Academy at Chestnut Mountain opens as Hall County's first charter school and includes a dual language immersion program (Mandarin Chinese and Spanish) for K-5 learners
- Lanier Charter Career Academy which received a \$2.8 million competitive grant opens in Fall, 2009 with keystone programs in culinary arts, digital media, and medical transcription
- One year six percentage point gain system-wide in the number of students reading at or above grade level by the end of the third grade as measured by the DRA II
- Sardis Elementary converts to charter in Fall, 2009 as the state's first Schoolwide Enrichment Charter School
- Six additional Hall County schools are in the process of pursuing the potential of charter status
- The da Vinci Academy (DVA) at South Hall Middle School will open in Fall, 2009 for one-hundred twenty (120) Hall County sixth and seventh graders. DVA is a program of choice that uses student interest in the arts and/or sciences as the foundation for advanced learning in all content areas. Six multi-talented creative teachers will guide the students in developing deep understanding of subject matter through direct instruction and collaborative exploration and discovery. Adjunct professional scientists, artists and community leaders will join the DVA learning community to work with small groups and individual students.
- In 2009-10, distance learning experiences provided by our expanding virtual classrooms will be the vehicle to deliver instruction to students at EHHS from NHHS in the area of Mandarin Chinese. An arrangement with

Georgia Tech University will enable students at EHHS, WHHS, and CHS to learn Calculus II and Calculus III virtually along with freshmen at the Atlanta campus.

- Two year record number of Governor's Honors Recipients
- Four (4) high schools named by US News and World Report as among the "Best High Schools in America"
- More than one hundred (100) teachers certified with a Gifted Endorsement in the past two years
- More than sixty (60) teachers certified with a Reading Endorsement in the past two years
- Full implementation of Singapore Math at all twenty-one (21) elementary schools in grades K-3, 2009-2010 will include K-5
- 150% increase in the number of middle school students taking Carnegie Unit (high school credit courses) in the past two years
- 29% increase in the number of Advanced Placement courses offered
- Sixty (60) students participating in High School Honors Mentorship Program per semester
- Four (4) additional Career and Technical Programs receiving National Certification
- Advanced Construction classes create "Habitat High" and complete the construction of four houses for Habitat For Humanity
- East Hall JROTC student named "Cadet of the Year" for the state of Georgia
- 15% increase in the number of high school students taking Honors level courses
- Expansion of Mandarin Chinese and Spanish language programs
- Opening of fifteen hundred (1,500) student high school on Spout Springs Road on time and under budget
- Record number of extra-curricular state and national finalists and champions
- Record All State Band and Chorus representation from all six traditional high schools
- State championship in Scholastic Class A competition for East Hall Winterguard
- Several Fine Arts programs represented Hall County on several continents and states as far away as Hawaii
- Multiple Regional, State, and National award winners in several career technical programs
- West Hall Middle School was named the Georgia 2009 School of Character and was recognized nationally for two Promising Practice Awards at the Character Education Partnership in Washington, D.C.
- National Office winners for career technical programs

Athletic Milestones:

- Flowery Branch Boys Cross Country Team Won GHSA AAA State Championship (first state title for school)
- North Hall Boys Cross Country Team Placed Second in GHSA AAA State Championship
- Flowery Branch Boys Cross Country Coach Jimmy Sorrells named “State Coach of the Year” for all classifications
- Flowery Branch Football Teams played for GHSA AAA State Championship, finishing runner-up to Cairo. In making their way to the Georgia Dome for the championship game, the Falcons won 4 consecutive games on the road
- North Hall Football Team advanced to final 16 of GHSA AAA State Play-offs, continuing a string of 6 consecutive home play-off victories
- West Hall Boys Basketball Team won Lanierland Championship, the first for boys program and advances to final 16 in GHSA AAA State Tournament
- East Hall Girls Basketball Team advanced to the final 16 in GHSA AAA State Tournament
- Chestatee varsity girls basketball team advanced to the final 16 in AAA State Tournament
- North Hall Girls Soccer Team played for GHSA AAA State Championship, finishing runner-up to St. Pius
- West Hall Boys Soccer Team played for GHSA AAA State Championship, finishing runner-up to St. Pius
- Flowery Branch Wrestler Danny Bell won GHSA AAA State Championship in 119 lb weight class
- North Hall Track performer Cody Barger won GHSA AAA State Championship in 3200 Meter
- North Hall finished in top 10 (7th) at Boys GHSA AAA State Track Championships
- Flowery Branch Track performer Daniel Drummond won GHSA AAA State Championships in Shot Put and Discus
- Flowery Branch finished in top 10 (6th) at Girls GHSA AAA State Track Championships

Financial Update:

Fiscal year 2009 ends with Hall County now having absorbed approximately \$30 million of Austerity Cuts (state funds withheld from local districts) from the state since 9/11. Throughout the current year, our anticipated \$1.5 million of state cuts grew to \$8.3 million. Additionally, our enrollment growth dramatically came to a halt and local sources of revenue, including real estate transfer taxes and intangible taxes, were off by 80 percent or more. The politically popular trend of geometrically increasing property tax exemptions within our digest continues to stretch our ability to raise needed revenues. As an example, our gross digest again lost two percent this year to new qualifying exemptions.

In what we considered a surprise move, the state also enacted a new formula for calculating "Equalization Funding" for FY 2010. This category of funding is designed to level the playing field for Georgia's poorest school systems by supplementing the lowest wealth 75% of systems in the state with additional state dollars. Hall County is historically among that 75% and has lost approximately \$4 million of state funding in this line item for FY 2010.

The good news is that Mr. Lovett and our team saw these economic trends early and began cutting costs dramatically in September, 2008. We spent approximately \$4 million less than we budgeted this year and anticipate finishing the year with an ending reserve balance of nearly \$6 million. As we look to the future, we are aggressively exploring new models of delivering even better services for a lower unit cost. Our daVinci program at South Hall Middle and our virtual learning experiences are excellent examples of these new delivery models.

In what has been affectionately termed the "South Hall Shift", your Board voted to close a current campus in need of renovation, South Hall Middle School, and fully utilize available space at other campuses for the upcoming two school years. Conservatively, this creative move will save the taxpayers of Hall County \$1 million per year in personnel and operating costs. In a similar move, the system eliminated elementary and middle school "summer school" this year saving an additional \$800,000. Moving our accountability testing to an early window, our team immediately reshuffled students who were at risk of failing, provided remediation and gave our retests the last week of the 180 day school year.

Your Board recognized early the economic difficulties that so many in our community are facing and have made it a priority to pass an FY 2010 budget that did not raise taxes. On June 25, 2009, your Board adopted a budget that approved expenditures which were \$11 million less than FY 09 and set a millage rate that was unchanged at 16.42. Additionally, we eliminated almost one hundred forty (140) positions within our system and implemented across the board pay cuts equal to 2.4% of total salary. It will take these types of bold and innovative approaches to funding to continue to "do more with less" for the boys and girls of Hall County.

Meet Your Board of Education:

Richard Higgins, Chairman:

Richard has served as the at-large school board member since 1998. He is married to a Hall County teacher, Connie, and is the father of three children all of whom graduated from Hall County schools. After graduating from the University of Georgia in 1974, Richard moved back to his hometown and began his career in the transportation industry. He is currently the owner of Carrier Services of Georgia, a trucking logistics company.



Richard has been actively involved in the community throughout his adult life. He participates in community outreach programs in his church as well as with area schools. Richard is a staunch supporter of local control for our schools and believes that we must continue our efforts to incorporate more 21st century technology and ideas into the learning experiences of our children.

Nath Morris, Vice-Chairman:

Nath is in his 10th year serving the North Hall Post of the Board of Education. Mr.



Morris has served as legislative liaison and has a passion for maintaining local control of educational concerns. "Who knows better the educational needs for our students than our teachers, administrators and community?" Nath is a graduate of the University of Georgia and is the US Breeder Sales Manager for Perdue Farms and has been in the poultry industry for 23 years.

Married to Joy, their two children graduated from North Hall High School. Megan is now a senior at the University of Georgia's Terry Business School. Jennifer is a sophomore at Kennesaw State University. Joy serves as a substitute teacher in the North Hall cluster. Mr. Morris is proud of the accomplishments of the Hall County education community. "Our students have an outstanding track record of accomplishments in academic and extracurricular activities. We have outstanding teachers who have been recognized as national and state leaders in their fields. We should all be proud and reach for even higher goals."

Craig Herrington:

Craig is in his 10th year serving as the District 3 Representative of the Board of Education. He also serves as the Board's representative on the Hall County Parks and Leisure Board. Craig is a native of Hall County and a graduate of Johnson High School. He has been employed by Duplicating Products of Gainesville since 1977. Married to his wife, Lisa, for 27 years, they have two children, Heather and Michael; one granddaughter, Mollie and another granddaughter expected in November. Both children are graduates of Hall County schools. Heather is a graduate of Brenau University with a Degree in Early Childhood Education and is teaching kindergarten. Michael is working with his uncle in the remodeling business. Mollie will start pre-K this school year. Lisa has been working in the education field for 21 years and is currently working for Hall County in the Technology Department. Craig finds it such an honor to be associated with the Hall County School System and feels our teachers, administration, and staff are second to none.



Sam Chapman:

Sam is in his third year serving on the board. He is a farmer and has promoted agriculture as executive secretary for Hall County Farm Bureau Board of Directors for the past ten years. He and his wife, Martha, are active members of Air Line Baptist. Sam represents the Hall County Commission as a board member of the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Council and as chairman of the Gainesville/Hall MPO.



Sam, Martha, their sons Mitch and Lee, along with daughters-in-law Karen and Julie, are all graduates of UGA. Mitch, Lee and Karen received their masters degree from Brenau, and both Karen and Julie are school teachers. Martha, Mitch, Lee and grandson Josh are graduates of EHHS. Three other grandchildren, Haley, Payton, and Hayden all attend EHHS.

Sam is a strong supporter of parental involvement in all phases of education. He firmly believes in local control of all educational issues. He believes our school system needs to teach using the most advanced technology available at all times throughout the whole system. He is proud to be a part of a board and administration with Christian values that work in harmony for the betterment of educational opportunities for all students within the school system.

Brian Sloan:



Brian is in his third year serving on the Board of Education. He is a graduate of North Georgia College and State University with a degree in Education. He has served as the Pastor of Worship at Chestnut Mountain Church for the past ten years. His wife, Annette, is a medical administrator in Gainesville with Specialty Clinics of Georgia. Their children include, Brandon, a sophomore at NGCSU, Caitlin, a junior at Johnson High, and Karis, a freshman at Johnson High. Brian believes that Hall County Schools can set the pace in providing families a broader scope of options when choosing a child’s education. He also is a strong advocate for using extra curricular activities for long-term character building. He is confident that Hall County Schools will effectively lead the way into the future. “I am so pleased with the accomplishments of this team of progressive thinkers in our system. I am proud to give my support in any way I can.”

System Facts:

- 34 Schools (21 Elementary, 6 Middle, 6 High, 1 Charter Career Academy)
- Enrollment **26,435**
- Fiscal Year 2010 General Fund Budget **\$211,293,100**
- Fiscal Year 2010 Millage Rate **16.42**
- Percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch **54%**
- Number of English Language Learner Students **5,563**

The Future-Becoming an IE² District:

One of the greatest barriers to genuine school improvement is the adherence to state laws and rules that seek to make all schools alike. The notion that every elementary, middle, or high school student is just like every other student in the school and has the same needs is a concept that is foreign to twenty-first century education. Laws and rules are good to the extent that they seek to make all schools adequate, but when a school system such as Hall County seeks to be much more than adequate, some of the laws and rules are a hindrance. The Georgia Department of Education and the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement have together given Georgia school systems an option to be exempt from some of the most restrictive laws and rules by developing a plan for Investing in Educational Excellence (IE²). An IE² plan allows the school system to waive such rules as class size, expenditure controls, and certification requirements in exchange for assurances that the system will make greater gains in measures such as graduation rates, SAT performance, state standardized test data, and International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement participation.

As seen in this Annual Report, the Hall County School District has made great gains in performance measures in the last three years, and we expect to

continue making these gains in the future. Because of this current momentum, the Hall County School System intends to enter into negotiations for an IE² contract. This contract will assure that Hall County schools will continue to make more than adequate yearly progress (AYP) as measured by the criteria set forth in the contract. The plan requires the system and each of its schools to have a five-year strategic plan which outlines measurable and attainable goals that go beyond mere adequacy. Our expectation is that all of our Hall County schools can meet an even higher standard of excellence!

“Character, Competency, Rigor...for All” is the vision for the Hall County School System. This vision is articulated through the *Balanced Scorecard for Teaching and Learning* which defines indicators for competency, rigor, and internal processes. From this balanced scorecard framework, we develop a System Improvement Plan which becomes the validation source for Title I funding. Each school in the system is required to develop an individual school improvement plan which cascades from the system plan. It is expected that every school’s plan will reflect the goals of the system’s plan; however, each school may have its own self-determined goals. From their school improvement plans, schools develop short-term action plans that are monitored quarterly to assure that progress is being made.

Hall County will be the first system in Georgia to introduce an IE² plan that includes system-generated charter schools. We continue to encourage schools in this system to develop individual niches for the students they serve. Charter schools are developed with five-year plans to accomplish measurable goals. With the IE² plan we envision, every school in Hall County will be able to excel in the attainment of quality goals.

Upcoming Events:

- July 30, 31: New Teacher Orientation
- August 3-7: Pre-Planning
- August 4 (4:00-7:00): 6th Grade Open House
- August 5 (4:00-7:00): 7th/8th Grade Open House
- August 6 (4:00-7:00): Elementary School Open House
- August 27 (4:00-7:00): High School Open House
- August 10: First Day of School
- September 4: Early Release Day
- September 7: Labor Day Holiday



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