

Social Circle City School System

Investing in Educational Excellence (IE₂) Partnership Contract

Board Approved _____ 2015

Investing in Educational Excellence Partnership Application and Contract

In accordance with the State of Georgia Article 4, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-84, it is the intent of the Social Circle City School System to operate as an Investing in Educational Excellence (IE₂) school system through the development of the IE₂ partnership between our school system and the State Board of Education. The following components consist of the current planning for **completing the application and developing the contract necessary to take effect on _____, 2015.**

Social Circle City School System Overview

The Social Circle City School District is a small city school system located in Walton County, Georgia. The total student enrollment for the district is 1704. The district consists of four schools: Social Circle Primary School (Pre-K through Grade 2), Social Circle Elementary School (Grades 3-5), Social Circle Middle School (Grades 6-8), and Social Circle High School (Grades 9-12). Social Circle City School total number of employees is 234.

Programs and services include: Standards-Based Instruction (K-12), Response to Intervention (K-12), Lottery Pre-Kindergarten, Early Intervention Program, Special Education (Pre-K-12), Schoolwide Title (K-5), ESOL, Career Technical and Agricultural Education (9-12), Gifted Education (1-12), Alternative Education Program (6-12), Dual Enrollment Program with area colleges and universities.

The instructional program for the Social Circle City School District is coordinated through the District Change Leaders. The priority of the system is standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement. The District Change Leaders include the superintendent and directors of federal programs, professional learning, special education, student services, and administrative services which allows central office personnel to collaborate on system initiatives to meet the needs of all students.

In Social Circle, a significant emphasis is placed on job-embedded professional learning. One strategy for quality professional learning is the academic coach program located at Social Circle Primary School and Social Circle Elementary School. Academic coaches are funded at these two schools through the Title I Schoolwide Program. The academic coaches have extensive experience and training in research-based instructional strategies and professional learning best practices. The academic coaches' primary job responsibilities are to assist, coach, mentor, and model best practices for teachers. Academic coaches also facilitate instructional planning, standards implementation, and analysis and utilization of assessment and progress monitoring data. Assistant principals fill this role at Social Circle Middle School and Social Circle High School, which are not Title I schools. A common planning period is used regularly for job-embedded professional learning. Professional learning days and after school planning time are built into the school calendar to allow staff to participate in school-based professional learning which focuses on the specific needs of students and staff at the individual schools. Professional learning is supported through state and federal funds which are dedicated to provide release time, substitutes, materials and trainers for professional learning. Principals provide outstanding instructional leadership at all four schools. The school district addresses the need for early intervention by offering preschool special education services for three- and four- year olds in the community and three state-funded lottery Pre-Kindergarten classrooms serving four-year-old students in the district.

The vision of the Social Circle City School System is ***to ensure the success of each student.*** We believe, as a learning community, we must continuously improve and are committed to long-term, in-depth professional learning for all teachers and leaders to ensure that students receive high quality instruction in a supportive learning environment. We believe, as leaders of learners, we must see students as volunteers in their learning and as a result are committed to engaging our students in learning through higher order thinking processes that integrate technology and the arts to make learning relevant and meaningful for all students. We believe the Social Circle City School System, in partnership with the family and the community, must focus on providing challenging, interesting and satisfying work for students by building partnerships between school, home and the community to engage all stakeholders in the education process. We believe we are responsible for the success of each student and are committed to developing life- long learners who

graduate college and career ready.

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The Social Circle City School System ensures the success of all students by aligning all improvement efforts in a consistent manner. The framework for these continuous efforts is highlighted in the five goal areas of the system strategic plan which correlate directly to the AdvancEd Standards for Quality Schools.

School Climate and Safety: Ensure that all schools and facilities are inviting, orderly, and safe.

Parent/Community Engagement: Engage the community and strengthen partnerships to support student learning.

Student Achievement: Enhance instructional systems and career pathways that maximize achievement for all students.

Technology: Expand access of instructional technology for student learning and efficient/effective system process.

Teacher Quality: Recruit, develop, and retain a highly qualified workforce that continuously sharpens instructional practices and skills.

The goal areas and corresponding performance objectives found within the system strategic plan are aligned directly with the system's individual school level improvement plans. Additionally, measurable performance goals are consistent between the system strategic plan and school improvement plans.

Social Circle City Schools engage in a variety of innovative approaches and pathways to ensure student success by promoting real world application of learning. Initiatives include serving special education students who are served in the least-restrictive environment through the inclusion model of co-teaching, small group instruction, and needs-based intervention segments, along with receiving individual tutoring both during the instructional day and after school.

Other programs that are designed to meet the needs of individual students are the Response to Intervention (RTI) process, Student Support Teams, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Gifted Education, Title I, and the Early Intervention Program (EIP). Programming supports include Career, Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE), Advanced Placement (AP), Fine Arts, and Dual Enrollment. Students' social and emotional needs are addressed through the K-12 guidance and counseling program and through coordination with external services and agencies. Students' physical, health, and safety needs are addressed through the School Nurse Program, School Food Nutrition Department, School Resource Officer, Facilities and Maintenance Department, and the Transportation Department.

In addition to a strong core academic focus, students at the primary and elementary levels are taught foreign language, health and physical education, art, music, and media and technology skills. Connections classes at the middle school offer students the opportunity to participate in foreign language, band, art, technology, physical education, and health. At the high school level, offerings in addition to core classes include CTAE classes in business education, early childhood education, healthcare science, and JROTC. Band, physical education and health, technology, advanced placement, and dual enrollment opportunities are also available for high school students.

"Building the Case" Component

The vision of the Social Circle City School System is to **ensure the success of each student**. This commitment to our students will be further realized through a contract with the State Board of Education to operate in an Investing in Educational Excellence (IE₂) partnership that advances student achievement and ensures sound operational practices as monitored by the Georgia Department of Education and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement.

The Social Circle City School System has identified Title 20 Law and State Board of Education Rules to be waived in exchange for additional measures of accountability designed to improve student achievement. The identification of Title 20 Law and State Board of Education Rules was informed through a multi-year strategic planning process which was divided into two phases focused intensively on stakeholder involvement and data collection. Through the use of surveys, focus groups and public hearings Social Circle City School System identified system strategic goals. The purpose of these efforts was to identify a clear and consistent definition of student success as used within our Vision statement and

develop a strategic plan embracing these goals.

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Phase I focused on defining student success from the perspective of all stakeholders. The Social Circle City School System and its stakeholders held conversations in 2014 to explore long-range goals of school flexibility and define *student success* as it relates to the system's Vision statement. These conversations were conducted through local school meetings as well as focus groups involving approximately 350 parents, teachers, students, business leaders, and other community stakeholders.

The feedback was compiled, and top defining terms were identified. Based on the top defining terms, *student success* includes or must reflect: Engaging Classrooms, Inquiry-Based Learning, Differentiated Instruction, Highly Effective Teachers, Positive School Climate, Goal Setting, Respect, Ownership, and Achievement. While many additional terms were also provided to further define student success, these nine terms captured the essence of responses.

Phase II of this process integrated system strategic planning and the development of Social Circle City School System's 2016-2021 Strategic Plan which also contributed to system-aligned school level improvement plans. As part of our 5-Year Strategic Plan renewal effort and to further define student success, a system Strategic Planning Committee was formed, more detailed stakeholder feedback was obtained and quantitative data sets were analyzed involving the compiled results of stakeholder focus groups, advisory committee meetings, on-line climate surveys for parents, students, and faculties, and system and school leadership meetings.

In February of 2015 students, parents, faculty and staff participated in AdvancED climate surveys regarding school purpose and direction, school leadership, shared values, stakeholder participation, continuous improvement, and academic standards. Following those surveys, in April and May of 2015, the school system conducted monthly focus groups with representative samples of parents, students and faculty members of the system's 4 schools, as well as members of community groups, system administrators and specialists. These sessions involved numerous participants representing, broadly, every school, community stakeholders, with participants asked to generate system goals based on AdvancED standards. The results of these opportunities for active involvement of all stakeholder groups yielded priorities for flexibility from our staff and community. Among these are Financial Stability, Education Programs and Course Design, Assessment and Data, Recruiting and Retaining Staff, and Teaching and Learning.

Over this same period, multiple public hearings, retreats, school planning sessions, and other stakeholder opportunities emphasized both the Social Circle City School System's strategic planning development and the pending decision on school flexibility options. The compilation of contributions collected through these efforts revealed a consistency of many priorities across a broad spectrum of stakeholders setting a clear course for the development of both the system's Strategic Plan and the Social Circle City School System's IE₂ application. The desire of the Social Circle community to advance the learning experience for our children is at the core of the system's strategic direction and is the motivating reason for the waivers requested through the proposed IE₂ contract.

In addition to the role that community input has played in identifying the waivers that are necessary to realize the desired future of Social Circle City schools and the long-term success of our students, there are also serious challenges that the Social Circle City School System faces that are foundational to the impetus for this application. The chart below describes and prioritizes the challenges facing the Social Circle City School System. Along with each waiver, there are details regarding the specific actions the system can take to address each challenge along with a clear explanation of how each of the specific actions will lead to the specific challenge being addressed. Finally, the necessary waivers that are requested through the Social Circle City School System's IE₂ application will alleviate the constraints of state law and state board of education rules in order to foster continued advancement of learning and the improvement of student achievement.