Cultivating Tomorrow's Future

Strategic Plan for 2019-2024

TCSS
TUSCALOOSA COUNTY
School System

Tuscaloosa County Board of Education

Mr. Don Presley, President

Mr. Charles Orr, Vice-President

Mr. James Barnett

Mr. Joe Calvin

Mr. Bill Copeland

Mrs. Portia Jones

Mr. Randy Smalley

Superintendent of Education

Dr. Walter W. Davie

Deputy Superintendent

Mr. David Patrick

Chief School Financial Officer

Mr. Danny Higdon

Development of the Plan

The 2019-2024 Strategic Plan for the Tuscaloosa County School System was developed over a period of several months. In the fall of 2018, the Board contracted with Burke Enterprises, LLC to conduct community engagement meetings in each of the six high school attendance zones. In addition to these community meetings, an online survey was developed as an additional opportunity for feedback. Attendance at the community meetings was low but the survey instrument yielded better participation (65% parents, 6% community-at-large, 13% students, and 16% employees).

Key areas from the combined analysis of responses are listed below.
- 58% agree or strongly agree that there is strong, effective leadership.
- 31% agree or strongly agree that there are cost efficient operations.
- 65% agree or strongly agree that there is effective communications.
- 64% agree or strongly agree that there are safe and secure schools.
- 51% agree or strongly agree that there are well prepare graduates (22% responded as 'not sure').

While many indicated that they felt there was enough funding, most of the cited areas of need all relate to initiatives or items that may only be provided with additional funding. While these meetings were intentionally developed as one-sided (receiving of information only), when discussions ensued related to funding, there was significant agreement that the Tuscaloosa County School System needs additional revenues.

Cited areas of need or where respondents indicated a desire for more of what is now in place are listed below.
- New and/or renovated schools
- Additional technology
- More career technical education opportunities
- Nurses
- More and improved athletic facilities
- More offerings in the area of the arts

- School Resource Officers
- More advanced placement offerings
- Social Workers
- More PE teachers
- More Pre-K classes
- More clubs and after-school activities at the elementary level

During the summer and fall of 2019, the Board of Education continued a review and analysis of the needs of the school system. Working with the Superintendent and central office staff, plans were put in place to complete the needs assessment and development of an updated strategic plan. Key steps in that process are outlined below.

- Regular work sessions were held by the Board of Education to review feedback, discuss needs, and plan for a future focused school system.
- Data was gathered and reviewed in the areas of student achievement, growth, the State's accountability system, attendance, discipline, finances, facilities, and support areas (nursing, counseling, social services, etc.)

◆ Focus groups composed of a variety of stakeholders (parents, teachers, administrators, support staff, community members, and students from the high school level) were held in each of the schools to gain additional input.
◆ The mission statement and belief statements were reviewed and discussed to assure that they accurately reflected the goals of the school system and adequately addressed a future focused approach.

Focus groups in each school were concluded in early September 2019. There were 34 focus groups conducted composed of 96 parents, 146 faculty/staff, 57 administrators, 25 students, and 22 community members. A synopsis and key findings from those focus groups are summarized below.

There were many positive comments from these groups. Key areas identified as a positive attribute of the system are listed below.

Emphasis on academic achievement	Genuine care and concern for students	Improvements in Career Technical Education
Teacher collaboration	Autonomy provided to schools	Parent communication
System is personable	Establishment of different graduation paths	Professional respect displayed
Availability of online courses, options	Military enlistment respected	High expectations
Community involvement	Updated technology	Partnerships
Striving to be a top-notched school system	Parent feedback taken	Diversity
Academics, hands on, authentic	Cares about students' futures	

Key areas identified where improvement is needed are listed below.

More diverse teaching staff	Attention to social-emotional needs of students	More guidance counselors and social workers
SROs in schools, safer facility design	Efforts to get parents attention on attendance	Reduce class sizes
Improve teacher salaries	Need more music and art programs	Support for English Language Learners
College fairs at elementary level	Middle school divisor help	Foreign languages in middle schools
More middle school electives	Equitable allocation of resources	Tax structure to support schools
Facility improvements, including athletics	Reading programs through high school	Increased parent involvement
Consistent discipline practices	More financial literacy offered	Funding for gifted programs
Incentives to recruit teachers	More pre-k, especially in areas of poverty	Continue to improve public relations

Through final meetings of the Board, the Strategic Plan of the School System for 2019-2024 was finalized and approved on October 7, 2019. From the beginning, there was a concerted effort to develop a plan that was focused, understandable to the general public, and contained a system of metrics where the progress or continued needs of the school system would be clear. It is also recognized that the Strategic Plan is to be a working document and business plan for the school system. As the work of the System progresses, all initiatives and allocation of resources are to be closely aligned with the goals of the Strategic Plan. As a working document, it is also recognized that adjustments and revisions to the plan may be made as the Board deems necessary.

Definitions and Clarifying Phrases

1. **Articulated credit** – a career technical high school course that contains the same content as an equivalent college course and for which a student is eligible for college credit once requirements are met (the student does not have to take the same course in college)

2. **Benchmark assessment** – an assessment that is given periodically (2-3 times) during the school year to determine whether or not the content (math, reading) standards that should have been covered to that point in the year have been mastered by students

3. **Capital Plan** – a plan developed to address facility needs; includes facility description, estimated cost, possible timeline; may be revised at any time as the Board of Education deems appropriate and needs within the school system changes

4. **Chronically Absent** – any student who is absent from school for 18 or more days (excused or unexcused)

5. **Common formative assessment** – team-designed measures where a student's progress or attainment of a skill may be obtained

6. **Credentialing** – a recognized document of completion by a career technical education student in a particular career pathway

7. **Dual Enrollment** – a course offered in high school where a student can receive credit in high school as well as for college

8. **Equitable** – an allocation where everyone receives what is needed to be successful, regardless of background or status

9. **Learning goals** – short term statements that clearly identify what a student is expected to learn

10. **Preparatory program** – sessions or courses that help prepare a student for an assessment or particular higher-level course

11. **Professional Learning Community** (PLC) – when educators work together to analyze student data and decided upon the best instructional strategies to promote high levels of student learning; educators learn from and support each other as an instructional team

12. **Professional Learning Plan** (PLP) – an annual plan that is developed for an educator's professional growth

13. **Professional Learning Unit** (PLU) – the unit of measure by which an administrator receives credit to maintain his or her administrative certification (each administrator must earn a minimum of 5 PLUs every five years)

14. **Ready to Work** – a program or course that prepares students to enter the work force right after graduation from high school

Mission Statement

Our mission is to educate and empower all students to be college and career ready graduates – prepared to make positive contributions to our global society.

Beliefs…we are guided by and committed to these principles.

- *High expectations are necessary to achieve goals and expand opportunities for all.*
- *Education is a shared responsibility that positively impacts the quality of life.*
- *Equity, fairness, accountability, and fiscal responsibility are foundations of our decision-making.*
- *Safe, well-equipped, student-centered schools support student success.*
- *Diversity and individual learning needs are respected, included, and valued.*
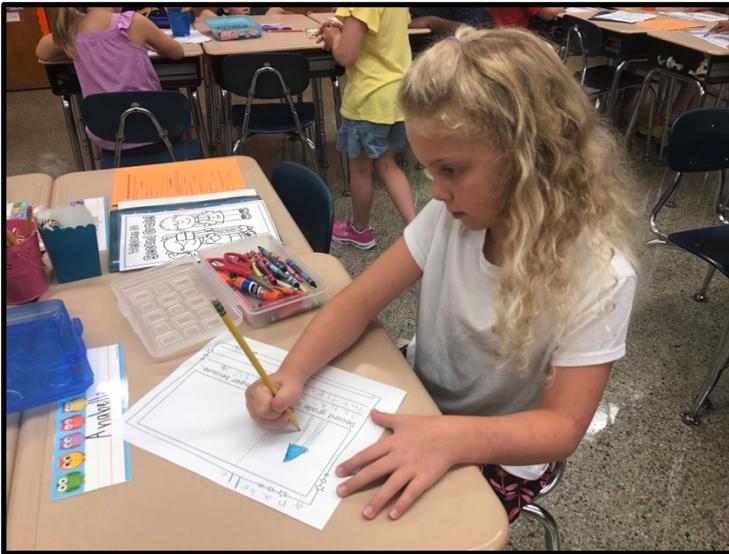
Where Students Learn, Grow, and Achieve!

Focus of the Strategic Work for the Tuscaloosa County School System

| Students	Staff	Resources & Support
Objectives	**Objectives**	**Objectives**
• Show continuous improvement in student academic progress as reported in the annual Alabama State Report Card • Develop prepared graduates ready to enter career fields or the college experience	• Board member annual training requirements met or exceeded • Administrator annual training requirements met or exceeded • Professional Learning Plans (PLPs) for all certified employees • Effective Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in each school	• On-going efforts to provide for safe schools throughout the school system • Increased efforts to reduce or minimize the number of students who are chronically absent • Develop and implement an effective community engagement plan • On-going efforts to provide for the financial needs of the school system • On-going efforts to provide for needed facilities as guided by thorough facility assessments
Critical Initiatives	**Critical Initiatives**	**Critical Initiatives**
• Common formative assessments and benchmark assessments used to adjust instruction and promote higher levels of student learning • Effective intervention and enrichment programs in place in every school • Career technical education programs promoted and enhanced • Dual enrollment, early college, and articulated credit programs promoted and enhanced • Support strategies for student success in Career Technical Education credentialing, ready to work programs, and high achievement levels on the ACT assessment	• Annual planning to assure training requirements are met by Board members and administrators • Professional learning aligned with needs of school system • Professional Learning Communities maintain focus on learning, culture, and results • Professional learning pathways established for each category of employee	• Coordination with local law enforcement in review and training of all personnel on emergency operation plans • Safety facility assessments conducted annually • Strategies in place to provide targeted support for students who are chronically absent and address social-emotional needs. • Speakers' Bureau established and promoted • Community Engagement program conducted • System's financial needs identified and plan developed to meet needs of students on an equitable basis throughout the system. • Capital Plan to reflect needs of school system.
Key Measures	**Key Measures**	**Key Measures**
1. Alabama State Report Card 2. Graduation Rate 3. College & Career Ready Indicators 4. Local School Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs)	1. Alabama Association of School Boards (AASB) records of training for Board members 2. Professional Learning Units (PLUs) record of training for administrators 3. Agendas and sign-in sheets for Professional Learning Communities at each school 4. Professional Learning needs assessment and professional learning evaluations	1. Emergency Operations Plans 2. Record of safe school training events, drills 3. Student attendance data 4. Speakers' Bureau 5. Community Engagement Program 6. School System Budget 7. Capital Plan

Students

Objectives
- Show continuous improvement in student academic progress as reported in the annual Alabama State Report Card.
- Develop prepared graduates ready to enter career fields or the college experience.

Critical Initiatives
- Common formative assessments and benchmark assessments used to adjust instruction and promote higher levels of student learning.
- Effective intervention and enrichment programs in place in every school.
- Enhance special programs (special education, English Language Learners) to reach all leaners.
- Career technical education programs promoted and enhanced.
- Dual enrollment, early college, and articulated credit programs promoted and enhanced.
- Support strategies for student success in Career Technical Education credentialing, ready to work programs, and high achievement levels on the ACT assessment.
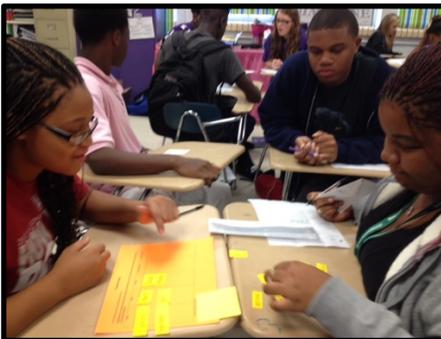
Action Steps/Activities
1. Teachers work collaboratively to break down each content standard into specific and measurable learning goals.
2. Instructional maps are in use that are consistent across the district to assure proper pacing.
3. Fall and winter benchmark assessments are conducted to assure that student academic growth is appropriate.
4. Intervention programs are in place in every school that help to identify students at-risk who are struggling academically and to provide timely assistance to keep them on track.
5. Enrichment programs are in place in every school to challenge those students who demonstrate grade-level proficiency or who exceed grade-level proficiency.
6. Continue to enhance and expand programs to assist special populations, specifically in the areas of special education and English language learners.
7. Data teams are active in each school to monitor student progress and identify academic and behavioral trends and patterns.
8. A progression of career technical programs, at all levels – elementary, middle, and high - is in place that support and promote work place opportunities for students.
9. A collection process is in place to acquire student college and career interests and aptitudes.
10. Promotional plan developed to assure student and parent awareness and access to dual enrollment and articulated credit programs at the post-secondary level.
11. Preparatory programs are conducted in each high school to maximize student success on the ACT assessment.
12. A system is in place in each high school to monitor student progress and to reduce barriers to high school graduation.
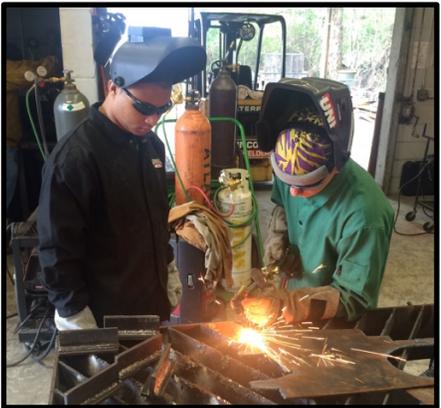
Staff

Objectives
- Board member annual training requirements met or exceeded.
- Administrator annual training requirements met or exceeded.
- Professional Learning Plans (PLPs) for all certified employees.
- Effective Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in each school.

Critical Initiatives
- Annual planning to assure training requirements are met by Board members and administrators.
- Professional learning aligned with needs of school system.
- Professional Learning Communities maintain focus on learning, culture, and results.
- Professional learning pathways established for each category of employee.

Action Steps/Activities
1. Professional learning at all levels will be guided by the objectives and critical initiatives as outlined in the Strategic Plan.
2. Annually, Board members will develop and commit to a training plan that meets or exceeds the requirements as set forth by the Alabama Association of School Boards (AASB) and the School Board Governance Act.
3. A "Whole Board Training" will be conducted each year and documented with AASB.
4. Professional Learning Plans (PLPs) will be developed annually as part of each administrator's evaluation.
5. Administrator training will be documented in the state-mandated reporting system.
6. The school system will provide, as a minimum, an "Administrators' Academy" that will provide a professional learning unit (PLU).
7. A system-wide needs assessment for professional learning will be conducted and kept current to guide the planning for professional learning activities.
8. An aggressive employee recruitment and retention program will be developed so that the school system has highly qualified employees serving students.
9. Every certified employee will be actively engaged in the work of the professional learning communities (PLCs) in their schools.
10. Professional learning pathways that clearly identify the fundamental training that employees must complete will be established for each category of certified (ex: teacher, instructional coach, administrator, etc.) employment.
11. Evaluation of professional learning will include surveys of effectiveness and plans of action based upon the stated objectives for the learning activities.

Resources & Support

Objectives

- On-going efforts to provide for safe schools throughout the school system.
- Increased efforts to reduce or minimize the number of students who are chronically absent.
- Develop and implement an effective community engagement plan.
- On-going efforts to provide for the financial needs of the school system.
- On-going efforts to provide for needed facilities, to include athletic venues, as guided by thorough facility assessments.

Critical Initiatives

- Coordination with local law enforcement in review and training of all personnel on emergency operation plans.
- Safety facility assessments conducted annually.
- Strategies in place to provide targeted support for students who are chronically absent and address social-emotional needs.
- Speakers' Bureau established and promoted.
- Community Engagement program conducted.
- Financial needs are identified and plan developed to meet the needs of students on an equitable basis throughout the system.
- Capital Plan to reflect needs of school system.

Action Steps/Activities
1. By the end of August each year, a review and revision of emergency operations plans for each school and the school system will be completed in coordination with local law enforcement and other first responders.
2. By the end of August each year, training will be held with all staff in the emergency operations plans for each school.
3. A team will conduct annual facility safety assessments and report the results to the Board of Education, no later than the end of October.
4. A system will be utilized to identify, on an on-going basis, those students who are at-risk of being chronically absent.
5. A system of support and intervention will be developed to assist families in reducing or eliminating barriers to attendance.
6. Efforts will be on-going to provide for additional counseling and social services support to students and families identified in need.
7. Professional learning programs will be developed and provided to assist faculty and staff to better understand and meet the needs of students with social-emotional needs.
8. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) will be promoted and available for all school system employees.
9. An active Speakers' Bureau will be engaged in providing accurate and timely information to community groups about the Tuscaloosa County School System.
10. The *Tuscaloosa County School System University* (TCSS U) will be conducted on an annual basis to inform parent and community members about the Tuscaloosa County School System, developing advocates for our schools.
11. The financial status and needs of the school system will be clearly identified and a long-range plan developed to meet the needs of students on an equitable basis.
12. A Capital Plan for school system facilities, based upon annual assessments and prioritized using an agreed-upon set of criteria, will be developed and revised on an "as needed" basis.

Key Measures

Indicators	Domain	Source	*State Baseline	*TCSS Baseline	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Academic Achievement Grades 3-8 & 11	Students	Ala Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP) & ACT Plus Writing	66.38%	64.73%	67.75%	70%	73%	76%	80%
ACT Plus Writing	Students	ACT w/ Writing Plus Composite	18.1	18.0	17.8	18.4	19	19.5	20
Academic Growth Grades 3-8 & 11	Students	Ala Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP) & ACT Plus Writing	91.58%	81.35%	84%	87%	90%	92%	95%
Progress in English Learner Proficiency	Students	ACCESS	42.54%	37.54%	43%	46%	48%	50%	52%
College & Career Ready Indicators	Students	Work Keys Assessment ACT Benchmark Advanced Placement Qualifying Score College Credit Military Enlistment CTE Credential	71.46%	69.2%	70.88%	73%	76%	78%	80%
Board Member Required Training Completion	Staff	AASB Training Records	n/a	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Local School Administrator PLU Completion	Staff	Power School Training Records (Based on 5 year cycle)	n/a	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
**Chronic Absenteeism	Resources & Support	Nine Month Attendance Report	18.28%	15.01%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
Graduation Rate	Resources & Support	State Certification Portal	89%	87%	87%	90%	91%	92%	93%

*Based on 2017-2018 Alabama State Report Card.

**For the Chronic Absenteeism key measure, the lower the percentage indicates fewer students who were chronically absent.

Supporting Documents
1. Alabama State Report Card
2. Alabama Association of School Boards (AASB) Training Records
3. PLU Documentation for Local School Administrators
4. Emergency Operation Plans
5. School System Annual Budget
6. Capital Plan