FCS Charter System
Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is a Charter System? How is it different from a charter school?**
   Fulton County Schools became a Charter System in July of 2012. This means that the district and our schools have flexibility from many state education laws. For example, state law dictates how much time students must be in the classroom ("seat time") and the certification requirements for teachers. Now that Fulton County Schools is a Charter System, the district is allowed to set those (and many other) rules for our schools. The district is also working to transition more of these decisions to the school level.

   Charter schools are different from *schools in a Charter System*. Charter schools (otherwise known as "start-up charter schools" or "conversion charter schools") hire their own staff and often have to raise money for a building. The principal in a charter school reports directly to the governing board of the school. All of these stipulations are laid out in a contract between the charter school and the state and/or local board of education. With a Charter System, the *district* has the contract with the state and therefore the responsibilities for management and oversight remain with the elected system-level school board – Fulton County Board of Education, in our case. Thus, Fulton County Board of Education retains the authority for hiring and managing all school staff, maintaining facilities, and a few other key responsibilities, while at the same time pushing a number of responsibilities down to the individual schools.

2. **What are School Governance Councils? What do the School Governance Councils do?**
   The School Governance Councils work with the principal on the long-term vision and strategy for the school. They are responsible for approving the school's strategic plan and the school budget recommendations, as well as developing any requests for flexibility from state law or district policy (see previous question). The School Governance Council is comprised of a mix of stakeholders from both the school and the community:
   - 3 parents (*elected by parents/guardians*)
   - 2 teachers (*elected by school employees*)
   - 2 school employees (*appointed by principal*)
   - 2 community members (*nominated by principal; approved by rest of Council*)
   - Principal (*non-voting member*)
   - 2 students (*non-voting members*; *high school only*)

3. **How are School Governance Councils different from LSACs?**
Local School Advisory Councils (LSACs) provide non-compulsory advice to the school and principal on matters such as school data, school improvement plans and the school budget. As schools join the Charter System, their LSAC will dissolve and be replaced by a School Governance Council (SGC). An SGC has governing responsibilities that include, but are not limited to, approving the strategic plan, approving budget recommendations and requesting flexibility from local and/or state laws and policies.

4. **When will School Governance Councils begin to make decisions for the school?**
School Governance Councils at Cohort 1 and 2 schools have already been making involved in making important decisions for their schools. They have developed and approved their School strategic plans, proposed innovative new programs and strategies for their schools, requested funding from the Seed Fund to support their new programs and strategies, and approved principal budget recommendations aligned the school strategic plan.

The current members of the School Governance Council will serve until June 30, 2015. New School Governance Council members elected in May will begin their two-year term of service on July 1, 2015.

5. **When are School Governance Council elections?**
Elections for the parent/guardian and teacher positions on the School Governance Council will be held May 5 – 7, 2015. Parent/guardian representatives will be elected by the parents/guardians of the school. Teacher representatives will be elected by the school's employees.

All votes will be cast electronically through an online election system within the FCS portal and tallied by an external vendor. All votes are anonymous. Parent/Guardian voters will use their Home Access Center (HAC) usernames and passwords to vote for the parent/guardian representatives on the School Governance Council. School employees will use their employee login information to vote for the teacher representatives on the Council. This system ensures only those eligible to vote are able to vote and that eligible voters cannot vote more than once.

6. **How do I sign up to run for a position on the School Governance Council?**
Candidates who are interested in running for an elected position on the Council must complete a Candidate Declaration Form and return this form to the district. Forms and instructions will be provided once the Candidate Declaration period opens on April 14, 2015. The Candidate Declaration period will be open until April 28, 2015.

7. **What schools are in each Cohort?**
   In order to transition all of Fulton County's schools to the Charter System, schools joined specific cohorts to determine which school-year their transition would begin. The three cohorts are as follows:

Cohort 1 (2012-2013)	Cohort 2 (2013-2014)	Cohort 3 (2014-2015)
Heards Ferry ES	Bear Creek MS	Alpharetta ES
Paul D. West MS	Bethune ES	Alpharetta HS
Riverwood ICHS	Cambridge HS	Banneker HS
Spalding Drive Charter ES	Campbell ES	Barnwell ES
Woodland ES	Chattahoochee HS	Birmingham Falls ES
Abbotts Hill ES	Crabapple MS	Brookview ES
Autrey Mill MS	Dolvin ES	Cliftondale ES
Centennial HS	Dunwoody Springs ES	Cogburn Woods ES
Northview HS	Elkins Pointe MS	Conley Hills ES
Shakerag ES	Evoline C. West ES	Crabapple Crossing ES
Hembree Springs ES	Feldwood ES	Creek View ES
Milton HS	Haynes Bridge MS	Creekside HS
Mountain Park ES	High Point ES	Esther Jackson ES
Roswell North ES	Holcomb Bridge MS	Findley Oaks ES
Camp Creek MS	Ison Springs ES	Gullatt ES
Oakley ES	Johns Creek HS	Hamilton E. Holmes ES
Randolph ES	Lake Forest ES	Hapeville ES
Sandtown MS	Langston Hughes HS	Heritage ES
Stonewall Tell ES	Love T. Nolan ES	Hillside ES
Westlake HS	McNair MS	Hopewell MS
	Medlock Bridge ES	Lake Windward ES
	Mimosa ES	Liberty Point ES
	Northwestern MS	Manning Oaks ES
	Ocee ES	Mount Olive ES
	Palmetto ES	New Prospect ES
	Renaissance ES	Northwood ES
	Renaissance MS	North Springs Charter HS
	River Trail MS	Parklane ES
	Roswell HS	Ridgeview Charter MS
	Sandy Springs Charter MS	River Eves ES
	State Bridge Crossing ES	S. L. Lewis ES
	Summit Hill ES	Seaborn Lee ES
	Sweet Apple ES	Woodland MS
	Taylor Road MS	
	Tri-Cities HS	
	Webb Bridge MS	
	Wilson Creek ES	

8. **Once we're in the Charter System, will our school get to hire our own teachers and principal? Will we get to choose what students come to our school?**
No. Charter System schools will not hire their principal or teachers. All staff are hired and managed by the district. When a principal vacancy occurs, the School Governance Council may *participate* in the hiring process for the *new* principals.

Charter System schools do not choose which students will attend their school. Unlike start-up charter schools and conversion charter schools, Charter System schools cannot set attendance zones, admissions criteria, or lotteries for student enrollment. The Fulton County Board of Education authorizes and maintains attendance zones for Charter System schools.

9. **Can my child go to any school in the district?**
No. The Charter System designation did not change the Fulton County attendance zone boundaries or allow for enrollment lotteries. Students are still geographically assigned to a "home" school with transportation provided only to that school. Students interested in attending a school other than their "home" school should contact the Fulton County Schools Student Assignment Office between January 1 and February 15 during the year prior to enrollment.

10. **Where can I find more information about the Charter System?**

Additional information on the Charter System can also be found on the Fulton County Website. The link is http://www.fultonschools.org/en/about/charter.