



FCS Charter System - Cohort 2 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”) 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 school and the state). 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 school.

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 community members (*nominated by principal; approved by rest of Council*)
- 2 teachers (*elected by school employees*)
- 2 school employees (*appointed by principal*)
- Principal (*non-voting member*)
- 2 students (*non-voting member; high school only*)

3. How are School Governance Councils different from LSACs?

As schools join the charter system, they will dissolve their Local School Advisory Council (LSAC) as their School Governance Council is established. School Governance Councils have more decision-making responsibilities than LSACs. LSACs are purely advisory, and have responsibilities to review data and school plans, as well as advise the principal. While School Governance Councils will review data and advise the principal just like the LSAC, they also are required to approve the school’s strategic plan and budget recommendations as explained above.

4. When will School Governance Councils begin to make decisions for the school?

For Cohort 2 schools, this year, 2013-2014 is considered a Planning Year. During the Planning Year our school will establish our School Governance Council through elections and appointments, Council representatives will undergo governance training, and the principal will also complete a series of trainings to support the new shared governance structure. This Planning Year runs through June 30th, 2014. Starting July 1, 2014, the School Governance Council at our school will begin their full first year of operation (approving strategic plan, approving budget recommendations, etc.).

5. When are School Governance Council elections?

Elections for the parent/guardian and teacher positions on the School Governance Council will be held in mid-November 2013. 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 Codes 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 September 3, 2013. The Candidate Declaration period will be open until October 15, 2013.

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 that determine in which school-year they will begin their transition. Our school is in Cohort 2, which will be transitioning this school year (2013-2014). Twenty Schools in Cohort 1 transitioned last year (2012-2013) and the remaining schools will transition in the 2014-2015 school year. The 3 cohorts are as follows:

Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3*
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	Cliftdale 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	Harriet Tubman ES
Stonewall Tell ES	Love T. Nolan ES	Heritage ES
Westlake HS	McNair MS	Hillside ES
	Medlock Bridge ES	Hopewell MS
	Mimosa ES	Lake Windward ES
	Northwestern MS	Liberty Point ES
	Ocee ES	Manning Oaks ES
	Palmetto ES	Mount Olive ES
	Renaissance ES	New Prospect ES
	Renaissance MS	Northwood ES
	River Trail MS	North Springs Charter HS
	Roswell HS	Oak Knoll ES
	Sandy Springs Charter MS	Parklane ES
	State Bridge Crossing ES	Ridgeview Charter MS
	Summit Hill ES	River Eves ES
	Sweet Apple ES	S. L. Lewis ES
	Taylor Road MS	Seaborn Lee ES
	Tri-Cities HS	Woodland MS
	Webb Bridge MS	
	Wilson Creek ES	

*These are the presumed Cohort 3 schools. Conversion charters may choose to remain in their conversion charter school contract.

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. The School Governance Council may *participate* in the hiring process for *new* principals, but the hiring decision is made by the school district.

Similarly, charter system schools do not choose which students will attend their school. Any student zoned for the school is allowed to attend. Unlike start-up charter schools and conversion charter schools, charter system schools cannot set attendance zones, admissions criteria, or lotteries for student enrollment.

9. Can my child go to any school in the district?

No. The charter system designation did not change 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 the year prior to enrollment.

10. Where can I find more information about the charter system?

In September, district representatives will hold Community Information Sessions to give you more details on the charter system, the role of School Governance Councils, and School Governance Council elections. These information sessions will be held in each Learning Community. You can attend any of the sessions that are offered. We will provide you with the dates of each Community Information Session as soon as they are released.

Additional information on the charter system can also be found on the Fulton County Website. The link is www.fultonschools.org/CharterSystem.