2024-26 Key Priorities and Action Steps

ELEVATE THE EXCELLENCE

From classroom to classroom, school to school, and throughout every corner of the county, there is a pervasive eagerness for CCSD to be the highest performing district in the state of Georgia where students thrive, families are connected, and the community remains proud.

The following priorities are designed to build on the tradition of excellence for which the Cherokee County School District is widely known; and they are grounded in the insights and perspectives most-commonly shared by teachers, leaders, staff, students, families, and community members.

These priorities will drive our work as an organization over the next 18-months to two years. Progress will be regularly reported to our community through the School Board meetings, and success delivering on these priorities will pave the way to the future development of a long-range strategic plan.

MAY 2025   •   QUARTERLY REPORT #4   •   FINAL

In May of 2024, the Entry Plan Analysis and Key Priorities Report was released and paved the way to improve clarity and alignment throughout the organization for the purpose of advancing student learning and advancing as an employer. The theme, Elevating the Excellence, served to embody the acknowledgement of the many strengths of the district, exceptional professional talent in our schools and district departments, and incredible parent engagement and community support from which we are building; while there is simultaneously a collective craving to get even better for all students across every classroom in the community.

The Key Priorities served to unify our actions, improve efficiency in the use of our resources, and create a laser focus on students and their learning. Attached is the final quarterly report and it represents an account of the progress made as an organization. While the check-marks communicate the status of the work that has been completed, they also represent the development of systems, processes, and structures necessary to continue to improve. The check-marks also represent high levels of coordination and effort among many people who have served to inform the work, develop the work, or execute on the work. The check-marks also represent tireless effort of teachers, leaders, and support staff who participated in focus groups, advisories, and surveys over the course of the year to provide insights and recommendations on how we proceed.

I am incredibly grateful for the gift of input and feedback that so many employees, students, and families were willing to provide. I realize not everything everyone recommended has been addressed, and we still have work to do. Listening and remembering the stories of each person is the most treasured aspect of this work we have woven together.

The School Board's work this past year has been nothing short of phenomenal. The Board established its Core Beliefs, set achievement goals in Math, ELA and Reading for the District, and drafted polices regarding governance, instructional materials, and literacy. The Board's adoption of the final budget was a culminating milestone of the past 12 months to deliver on the priorities of the School Board and the sentiments of our employees, students, and families. Investment improvements include:

- Increase school psychologists
- Invest in K-12 Reading/Writing/ELA and K-12 Mathematics Instructional Resources
- Increase school-based budgets 34% for consumable instructional materials, classroom supplies
- Increase teacher , classified and support staff salaries by 3% in addition to the longevity step increase
- Honor the current salary

schedule (steps) for Administrative Staff on the District Organizational Chart

- Fund the increase in State Health Benefit Plan & TRS for all employees (+$5.2M local expense)
- Shed redundant and/or non-aligned programs and materials
- Continue building fund balance (Reserves) to ensure at least three months of operating expenses
- Maintain the historically lowest millage rate of 17.95 mills

This final report serves as an account of what has been completed and also serves as the launching point of Elevating the Excellence 2.0. After 177 school visits and 93 focus groups this past year— including 41 teacher feedback groups, 21 other employee groups, 20 parent and partner meetings, 11 student groups, as well as two surveys, it is clear that our shared work is to continue to build on Elevating the Excellence together.

We are on a mission to be the highest achieving district in the State of Georgia and our Key Priorities are coupled with a series of action steps that will guide our focus in the 2025-26 school year. It will position us to elevate our work together and achieve even greater results for students in Cherokee.

1 Elevate the Excellence in academics and achievement for all students.

A. Clarify an aligned academic focus grounded in standards, tightly aligned resources, monitoring/assessing student learning, and targeted intervention.

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	**MAY 2025**	
✅	✅	✅	✅	Re-package and customize GADOE Standards into CCSD-specific standards.
✅	✅	✅	✅	Make CCSD standards accessible on district website and to teachers and school.
☐	☐	✅	✅	Build professional development resources to support teacher understanding of the standards and what students need to know and be able to do with the standards.
✅	✅	✅	✅	Roll-out conversion from RTI to MTSS.
☐	☐	✅	✅	Develop standards-aligned checkpoints to monitor student learning.

May 2025 status: This has been postponed to development over 2025-26 school year

B. Unify the current literacy investments into a cohesive K-12 CCSD Literacy Model.

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	**MAY 2025**	
✅	✅	✅	✅	Audit current status of literacy investments. Identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps.
☐	✅	✅	✅	Research district solutions across the U.S.
☐	✅	✅	✅	Prepare for the roll-out of new ELA standards.
☐	✅	✅	✅	Connect the district's investments of the past, the ELA standards, and solutions to fill the gaps in preparation for the 2025-26 school year.

C. Clarify the cohesive literacy model with a focus on highly effective practices for students with disabilities.

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	**MAY 2025**	
☐	✅	✅	✅	Audit current status of literacy investments aligned to meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps.
☐	✅	✅	✅	Research district solutions for advancing reading proficiency for students served in special education across the U.S.
☐	✅	✅	✅	Prepare for the roll-out of new ELA standards with companion guides for students with disabilities.
☐	✅	✅	✅	Connect the district's investments of the past, the ELA standards, and solutions to fill the gaps in preparation for the 2025-26 school year that includes serving students with disabilities.

D. Clarify the cohesive literacy model with a focus on highly effective practices for students with a home language other than English.

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	MAY 2025	
☐	☑	☑	☑	Audit current status of literacy investments for students served in EL. Identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps.
☐	☑	☑	☑	Research district solutions across the US for advancing reading proficiency for students served in EL.
☐	☑	☑	☑	Prepare for the roll-out of new ELA standards.
☐	☑	☑	☑	Connect the district's investments of the past, the ELA standards, and solutions to fill the gaps in preparation for the 2025-26 school year including a high-impact companion literacy approach for EL students.

E. Audit all current teacher resources to determine most effective investments, gaps in investments, and develop a resource management, replacement, and growth plan. (Audit, Assess, Abandon, then Acquire)

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	MAY 2025	
☑	☑	☑	☑	Audit current landscape of resources (print and digital) and in the categories of core resources, supplemental resources, assessment resources, and intervention resources.
☐	☑	☑	☑	Identify Resource gaps and redundancies. Identify what to discontinue and construct a plan to fill the gaps.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Audit current student device landscape.

F. Establish shared student achievement goals that narrow our focus and unify our organization's efforts/resources and grant schools the resources and balanced autonomy to achieve these goals.

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	MAY 2025	
☑	☑	☑	☑	Provide School Board Members with district-wide and school-specific Milestones data notebooks.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Develop district goals for Milestones performance in ELA and Reading Proficiency.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Carry-out School Board-set goals to aligned school goals.

G. Improve the communication of student learning to parents.

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	MAY 2025	
☑	☑	☑	☑	Print report cards in ES and MS.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Distribute Reading Proficiency performance to families three times a year.

2 Elevate the Excellence in effective School Board-Superintendent Governance.

A. Develop a cohesive, high-performing School Board Governance Model based on shared core beliefs, aligned through the superintendent's evaluation, defined by core policies that advance excellence, and focused on clear accountability for student outcomes.

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	MAY 2025	
☑	☑	☑	☑	School Board and Superintendent established norms & protocols to ensure consistency of communication between Superintendent and School Board Members.
☑	☑	☑	☑	School Board and Superintendent/Cabinet participated in three Whole Board Trainings.
☑	☑	☑	☑	School Board Members collectively drafted four core beliefs.
☑	☑	☑	☑	School Board Members collectively drafted 14 student performance goals.
☑	☑	☑	☑	School Board Members and Board Attorney collectively drafted the Superintendent's Evaluation (inclusive of the 14 student performance goals).
☐	☑	☑	☑	School Board Members develop core policies in the areas of accountability, teaching & learning, and literacy.

B. Structure school board meetings to promote meaningful discussion and public transparency around the business of the board (i.e., Finance, Capital Outlay, Academics, & Accountability).

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	MAY 2025	
☑	☑	☑	☑	Introduce a Work Session with standing reports on Academics & Accountability, Finance, and Capital Outlay.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Introduce a Work Session that provides a staff briefing on any item requiring the School Board's action in the evening Board Meeting.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Introduce Agenda Study & Review with each board member with a preview of the board agenda and board materials in advance.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Begin live-streaming of both Work Sessions and Board Meeting.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Begin archiving all videos of Work Sessions and Board Meetings.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Update the district website to include a webpage that houses all materials associated with the School Board Meeting (including archived videos).

3 Elevate the Excellence in the district's coordination and alignment of goals, systems, and processes.

A. Establish performance indicators for district support systems.

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	MAY 2025	
☑	☑	☑	☑	Establish regular Cabinet meetings, Extended Cabinet Meetings, and Instructional Cabinet Meetings.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Establish regular cadence of 1:1s with Division Chiefs.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Establish and monitored first-day readiness metrics.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Develop Key Performance Indicators for each Division's operations. **May 2025 status:** *This will be completed in Summer 2025*
☑	☑	☑	☑	Developing Organizational Work Plans for SY2025-26 (due November 1).

B. Align the organization's district office to ensure resources are as close to the classroom as possible and services/supports amplify the effectiveness and balanced autonomy of schools.

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	MAY 2025	
☑	☑	☑	☑	Re-organization of district's centralized departments and decrease of district allotment count by 4.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Re-define the role of School Leadership & Operations.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Clarify the roles and responsibilities of School Leadership & Operations and Academics & Accountability.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Post full organizational chart on the district website.

C. Develop an Accountability & Performance team that monitors progress toward goals, makes data readily available to school leaders, informs school improvement, and makes school and district performance data readily accessible on the website.

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	MAY 2025	
☑	☑	☑	☑	Institute an Accountability Department in Academics & Accountability.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Develop an accountability website to house comprehensive student performance data.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Provide advanced PowerBI tools to make data readily available to school leaders and inform school improvement.

D. Evaluate the impact of financial investments to overcome future revenue strain and aggressively position CCSD to be a competitive employer so that students continue to have access to the best professionals in public education.

3

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	MAY 2025	
☑	☑	☑	☑	Engage in state-wide work regarding Tax Digest Cap implications.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Evaluate all re-occurring expenditures for redundancies to sunset.
☐	☑	☑	☑	Evaluate efficiencies to gain and evaluate student reporting process for services.

May 2025 status: This work has begun and will formalize as we approach October FTE reporting requirement

4

Elevate the Excellence by embracing a pervasive high-quality school environment defined by high standards, effective supports, and consistent practices.

A. Explore strategies to elevate student course/grade achievement, student skills, and student motivation in middle school.

4

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	MAY 2025	
☑	☑	☑	☑	Introduce clarity and consistency for appropriate use of cell phones.

B. Develop each student's capacity to reach his or her own academic potential and develop a healthy sense of academic ownership.

4

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	MAY 2025	
☑	☑	☑	☑	Introduce clarity and consistency for appropriate student attire and workplace readiness skills.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Introduce clarity and consistency for timely submission of student work.

C. Review facility conditions and maintenance processes.

4

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	MAY 2025	
☑	☑	☑	☑	Complete transition to in-house custodians.
☑	☑	☑	☑	Evaluate current facility incident process for continuous improvement.
☐	☐	☑	☑	Evaluate pro-active facility monitoring and management approach.
☐	☑	☑	☑	Complete a classroom utilization study that encompasses city and county residential development insights into long-range student enrollment estimates.

May 2025 status: This work has begun. It will continue through Fall 2025

4

D. Review furniture and equipment condition (classroom furniture, learning rugs, band equipment).

SEPT 2024	DEC 2024	MAR 2025	MAY 2025	
☐	☑	☑	☑	Evaluate current Basic Equipment list for every academic and operational space in a school setting.
☐	☑	☑	☑	Evaluate current age and condition of all furniture, fixtures, and equipment in every academic and operational space.

Execute on Mission Critical Objectives

- CCSD Kronos – paused in 2024 due to assessment of capabilities; now on target for July 1, 2025. **May 2025 Update: on target for July 1**
- CCSD Employee Benefits – successful launch for 235 new employees; ready for Open Enrollment in Fall of 2024. **May 2025 Update: Complete**
- CCSD Sub-Finder – successful launch with more than 870 subs. The sub fill rate average for November was 94.58%. **May 2025 Update: Complete**
- CCSD Custodian Transition – successful transition with 2.5 allotments remaining on day 1. All equipment and supplies in place and all head custodians trained on equipment. **May 2025 Update: Complete**
- Synergy–

  May 2025 Update:
  - ◊ **Scheduling-** scheduling for the 2025–2026 school year is well underway across elementary, middle, and high schools.
  - ◊ **Job Family Task Review-** The current job family tasks have been reviewed. All updates will be finalized before summer so the Technology team can implement changes ahead of the new school year.