



2025-2026 Phase One: Executive Summary for  
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2025-2026 Phase One: Executive Summary for Districts

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## 2025-2026 Phase One: Executive Summary for Districts

### Description of the District

Describe the district’s size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the district serves?

Gallatin County Schools (GCS) is a small, rural school district located in Northern Kentucky. The district serves the entirety of Gallatin County, with its central administrative offices and schools situated primarily in the county seat, Warsaw, Kentucky. The county is strategically positioned along the Ohio River, nestled within what is often referred to as the "Golden Triangle" formed by the major metropolitan areas of Cincinnati, Ohio; Louisville, Kentucky; and Lexington, Kentucky. This location provides both rural charm and accessibility to larger economic centers.

The district operates four schools, which typically include a Lower Elementary (P-2), Upper Elementary (3-5), Middle School (6-8), and High School (9-12), with some facilities sharing buildings. As of the 2023-2024 school year, the district serves approximately 1,482 students across all grades (PK-12). This size places GCS among the smaller school systems in the Commonwealth, resulting in a close-knit community atmosphere and a strong student-teacher ratio, with approximately 81.5 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) classroom teachers (a student-to-teacher ratio of approximately 18.18:1).

The primary community GCS serves is centered around Warsaw, a historic river town. The broader community is characterized by country vistas, farmland, and a tradition of southern hospitality, actively seeking to grow from a quiet agricultural past into a vibrant community.

### Demographic Information

Students (Latest Available Data: 2023-2024)

GCS serves a student body that is predominantly White, though it experiences growing racial and ethnic diversity, particularly when compared to historical trends:

Race/Ethnicity		Gallatin
County Schools (%)	Kentucky K-12 Students (%)	

White	84.5%	71.4%
Hispanic	11.5%	10.06%

Two or More Races	2.7%	5.25%
Black	0.3%	10.85%
Asian/Other	<1.0%	>2.0%

The total student enrollment has stabilized around the 1,500 mark, with the latest 2023-2024 count at 1,482 students, reflecting small but consistent shifts in the student base. It is also important to note that 77.2% of the student body is economically disadvantaged. The state percentage of economically disadvantaged students is much lower at 61.1% in 2023-2024.

### Staff

As of the 2023-2024 reporting period, GCS employs approximately 81.5 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) classroom teachers. The total staff count, including support roles such as guidance counselors, administrators, and support service personnel, is around 197.

### Community at Large

Gallatin County is home to an estimated total population of approximately 8,750 people. Key community demographics include:

- **Education:** Educational attainment levels are lower than the state average, with only about 13.2% of the population holding a Bachelor's Degree or higher.
- **Income and Property:** The median household income (\$62,247) is below the national average. The median property value (\$169,400) is significantly lower than the national average, and the homeownership rate is relatively high at 73.4%.
- **Language:** The vast majority of the community (over 96%) reports speaking English only at home.

### Academic Performance (2023-2024 Kentucky Summative Assessment Data)

The latest assessment data highlights the significant instructional challenges and the need for continued focus on foundational skills:

School Level	Total Proficient/Distinguished		
	Reading	Math	Key
Context			

Elementary (Grades 3-5)	37% (29% P, 8% D)	28% (21% P, 7% D)	Focus on foundational literacy and numeracy gaps.
Middle School (Grades 6-8)	41% (27% P, 14% D)	25% (20% P, 5% D)	Demonstrated the most significant growth in 2023-2024.
High School (Grades 9-12)	25% (20% P, 5% D)	33% (29% P, 4% D)	Above state average for graduation rate.

### Changes Experienced in the Last Three Years (2021-2024)

The last three years have been marked by strategic reforms and significant academic movement based on state accountability metrics:

1. **Status Improvement at Middle School:** The Middle School showed the most growth on the Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA) across the district and was able to exit the Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) status from the prior year, a major institutional achievement.
2. **High School Graduation Success:** Gallatin County High School achieved a graduation rate above the state average, validating the district's focus on postsecondary readiness programs.
3. **Proficiency Gains for English Language Learners (ELL):** The Elementary Schools reported that English Language Learners showed profound progress on their end-of-year assessments, reflecting the increased need and successful implementation of specialized support for this growing student group.
4. **Curriculum Review and MTSS Implementation:** The district conducted a comprehensive review of the ELA curriculum and began the same process for Math. Furthermore, GCS continues to refine its Multi-tiered Systems and Supports (MTSS) umbrella, targeting academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs.

### Unique Features and Challenges

#### Unique Features

1. **The Ohio River and Golden Triangle Location:** The county's proximity to the Ohio River is a defining geographic feature. Its location near Cincinnati and Louisville means GCS is close to resources, colleges, and job opportunities often unavailable to more isolated rural districts.
2. **The Kentucky Speedway:** Gallatin County has historically been known as the "Racecar Capital of the State" due to the presence of the Kentucky Speedway,

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which remains a regional landmark and potential asset for community engagement and career pathway development.

3. **Oldest Continuously Used Courthouse in Kentucky:** Warsaw is home to the oldest courthouse in Kentucky in continuous use, underscoring the community's rich history and stability.

## Challenges

1. **Economic Base and Commuter Workforce:** Gallatin County lacks a large, central economic driver. A large portion of the workforce consists of residents who commute long distances (average commute time of 28.4 minutes) to surrounding counties for employment. This can strain parental engagement and limit the availability of local, high-skill job shadowing opportunities for students.
2. **Educational Attainment and Workforce Preparedness:** With lower-than-average educational attainment in the adult community, the district faces the challenge of preparing students for a workforce that demands higher levels of post-secondary education or technical training.
3. **Housing and Affordability:** There is a recognized lack of affordable rental options and new, market-rate workforce housing. This can make it difficult to attract and retain new teachers and staff, forcing them to commute from neighboring, more developed counties.
4. **Core Academic Proficiency Gaps:** Despite notable growth (especially at the middle school level), KSA data confirms that core academic proficiency remains a significant district-wide challenge. Math proficiency across all grade bands hovers between 25% and 33%, and Reading proficiency is challenging, especially at the high school level (25% proficient/distinguished). Addressing these fundamental skill gaps requires intensive, targeted instructional intervention.

## District Stakeholders

Identify and describe the district's stakeholder groups. How does the district ensure stakeholder involvement and engagement in the improvement planning process?

For a community-centric district like Gallatin County Schools (GCS), the success of improvement planning hinges on robust, representative stakeholder involvement. Given the district's small size, rural location, and specific demographic trends, we identify five essential groups critical to informing, supporting, and executing our strategic goals:

1. **Students:** As the primary beneficiaries of the educational process, students must be central to improvement efforts. Their perspective is essential for

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evaluating school climate, curriculum relevance, and the effectiveness of social-emotional supports.

2. **Parents and Guardians:** This group represents the critical link between home and school. In GCS, parents are a diverse group that includes a growing population of Hispanic families and a majority of parents who are part of the commuter workforce. This dual reality means that engagement strategies must be flexible and culturally responsive.
3. **Faculty and Staff (FTE Classroom Teachers and Support Personnel):** This group includes classroom teachers, instructional aides, guidance counselors, and administrators. They possess the deepest understanding of classroom challenges (such as the low math and literacy proficiency rates) and are directly responsible for implementing improvement strategies, requiring targeted training and empowerment.
4. **Local Community and Business Leaders:** Given the challenge of a limited local economic base and the decline of major employers like the Kentucky Speedway, engaging local businesses, civic organizations, and industry leaders in the "Golden Triangle" region is vital. Their input informs career pathway development and ensures students are prepared for the jobs they will actually pursue, whether locally or in nearby metropolitan areas.
5. **The Gallatin County Board of Education (BOE):** The elected governing body is responsible for approving, funding, and monitoring the district's comprehensive improvement plan, ensuring fiscal responsibility and alignment with community values.

### Ensuring Stakeholder Involvement and Engagement

The GCS improvement planning process, from goal setting to execution, is built on flexible, multi-platform engagement designed to overcome barriers like long commute times and diverse language needs.

#### 1. Academic Improvement through Staff Empowerment

Given the imperative to raise literacy and math proficiency, the most intense engagement occurs with the Faculty and Staff. The district utilizes:

- **Vertical Alignment Teams:** Teachers across grade levels (P-12) meet regularly to analyze student data (e.g., state test scores indicating academic gaps) and map curriculum, ensuring a cohesive scope and sequence that avoids repetition and addresses learning loss.
- **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):** Staff engage in continuous, job-embedded professional development focused directly on high-leverage instructional strategies to address low proficiency rates. These are structured input sessions where staff provide feedback on the feasibility and effectiveness of new programs before they are formalized in the improvement plan.

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## 2. Accessible Parental and Guardian Engagement

Recognizing that many Parents and Guardians are part of the commuter workforce with rigid schedules, traditional, daytime meetings are supplemented by:

- **Hybrid Communication Platforms:** Utilizing a mix of digital tools (apps, social media) and traditional channels (take-home flyers) to ensure all families, especially those with limited digital access or English proficiency, receive timely updates.
- **Targeted Outreach for ELL Families:** Dedicated staff or resources are focused on providing translated materials and bilingual support for the growing Hispanic population, ensuring this key subgroup feels heard and understood during planning discussions.
- **Flexible Feedback Mechanisms:** Hosting evening events and widely distributing electronic or paper surveys allows parents to provide input on school climate and resource allocation without needing to take time off work or rush home from a long commute.

## 3. Community and Business Alignment

To overcome the challenge of a limited local job market, the district proactively engages the Local Community and Business Leaders through:

- **Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Boards:** These boards include local industry partners, health professionals, and regional business leaders from the "Golden Triangle." They provide direct feedback on the skills graduates need (e.g., soft skills, specific certifications) and help align high school CTE offerings with actual labor market demands.
- **Public Forums on District Goals:** Annual or bi-annual public meetings are held to review progress on the Comprehensive Improvement Plan (CIP) and solicit input on major facility updates or new program proposals, ensuring transparency and buy-in from the community that funds the schools.

## 4. Student Voice and Feedback

Students are engaged through formal and informal means:

- **Student Advisory Councils:** High school and middle school students meet with principals or district leaders to discuss school culture, safety, and academic support programs, providing raw, actionable feedback that shapes the "student supports" section of the CIP.
- **Annual Climate Surveys:** All students participate in standardized surveys that measure engagement, bullying, and teacher support, providing data that directly drives school culture improvement goals.

By employing these layered and flexible strategies, GCS ensures that its improvement planning process is not just a regulatory exercise, but a living document informed by the needs and realities of every key stakeholder group within the Gallatin County community.

### District’s Purpose

Provide the district’s purpose statement and supplementary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs, including the year in which they were last reviewed or revised. Describe how the district embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students and how stakeholders are involved in its development.

Gallatin County Schools (GCS) operates with a clear, focused set of statements that guide all resource allocation, instructional decisions, and community engagement efforts. These statements were formally reviewed and revised in the 2023 school year to ensure their relevance to the district's post-pandemic recovery and its goal of increasing student proficiency and workforce readiness.

### Purpose, Mission, and Core Values

Statement Type    Content

District Purpose	To cultivate a supportive, equitable environment where every child maximizes their intellectual, social, and emotional potential.
Mission Statement	Maximizing Student Learning and Achievement.
Vision Statement	To be a beacon of rural educational excellence, graduating highly proficient, career-ready citizens who are prepared to compete successfully in the regional economy of the "Golden Triangle."

### Core Values (BELIEFS):

1. Equity of Instruction: We believe in providing equal opportunity to high-quality teaching, rigorous curriculum, and necessary resources for every student in every classroom.
2. Foundational Proficiency: We are relentlessly focused on improving foundational literacy and mathematics skills as the cornerstone for all future academic and career success.
3. Future Readiness: We believe in delivering relevant academic and technical pathways that align student interests with regional labor market demands.

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4. **Responsive Community:** We believe in maintaining a welcoming and responsive school culture that engages all families, especially those historically underserved.

### Embodying Purpose through Programs and Expectations

GCS embodies its purpose—Maximizing Student Learning and Achievement—by structuring its program offerings to address the dual challenges of improving foundational academics and preparing students for the regional commuter economy. The expectation for all GCS students is to leave the district demonstrably proficient in core subjects and prepared for a chosen college or career pathway.

#### 1. Focus on Foundational Proficiency and Equity (P-12)

To directly address the low proficiency scores in math and reading, the district places a strong emphasis on core content and targeted intervention:

- **Core Content Curriculum:** A strong, vertically aligned curriculum is implemented in English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies across all grade levels.
- **Tiered Intervention (Rtl):** The district mandates robust Response to Intervention (Rtl) programs, where each school analyzes assessment data to identify students requiring supplementary academic support. This ensures that the commitment to Equity of Instruction translates into individualized plans that close skill gaps.
- **Enrichment Programs:** Programs like Art, Music, Band, Spanish, Business, and Physical Education are maintained not just for creative development but as essential components of a well-rounded education, supporting the social and emotional well-being that underpins academic focus.

#### 2. Preparing for the Regional Workforce (High School)

Given the reality that many students will commute for high-wage jobs in the Cincinnati/Louisville region, GCS ensures high school students meet the Future Readiness value through a diverse portfolio of external and internal programs:

- **Career and Technical Education (CTE):** Students have the crucial opportunity to attend the Area Technology Center, providing hands-on training in high-demand fields like welding, healthcare, and carpentry.
- **Dual Enrollment:** The availability of Dual-Credit Courses allows students to earn college credit while still in high school, reducing post-secondary costs and accelerating their transition to higher education.
- **Advanced Academy Partnerships:** GCS actively supports student participation in prestigious regional programs like the Gatton Academy and the CRAFT Academy, which are essential for those seeking high-level academic pathways.

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This commitment ensures students can compete for selective university admissions.

- **Technology Integration:** Investment in Technology and Agriculture programs ensures students are proficient in skills relevant to modern industry, from coding to agritech.

### Stakeholder Involvement in Development

The district's mission and corresponding goals are living documents, and GCS intentionally leverages its established stakeholder groups to ensure they remain relevant and achievable.

- **Staff Ownership:** The Faculty and Staff are involved directly through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). In 2023, teaching staff utilized data from baseline assessments to provide input on whether the established proficiency targets were rigorous yet realistic, ensuring they had ownership of the mission statement's goal: "Maximizing Student Learning and Achievement."
- **Community Alignment:** The Local Community and Business Leaders, particularly those on the CTE Advisory Boards, validate the Vision Statement's focus on "career-ready citizens." Their feedback ensures the skills taught in CTE and core classes genuinely match the needs of the Golden Triangle workforce, keeping the "Future Readiness" value current.
- **Parental Feedback:** Input from Parents and Guardians via Flexible Feedback Mechanisms (surveys and virtual town halls) is crucial for evaluating the Core Value of Responsive Community. Feedback on communication and support for ELL Families directly informs annual adjustments to family engagement strategies, ensuring the delivery of high-quality, equitable services.

### Notable Achievements

Describe the district's notable achievements in the last three years.

In recent years, Gallatin County Schools has made remarkable strides in enhancing the educational experience for all students, creating an environment that fosters academic success and personal growth. Our comprehensive efforts across all grade levels have led to significant improvements in academic performance, student well-being, and readiness for the future.

### Elementary School Achievements

At the elementary level, our dedicated staff has implemented targeted strategies that have significantly improved student outcomes in reading and mathematics. Through a combination of individualized instruction and engaging curriculum enhancements, we've seen a marked increase in proficiency levels, demonstrating a foundational commitment to academic excellence.

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This commitment is paralleled by a concerted effort to improve the overall school climate and safety. Our initiatives, including anti-bullying programs and community-building activities, have contributed to a nurturing environment where students feel secure and valued. Crucially, students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are experiencing positive trends across all assessed areas. With tailored support and resources, these students are achieving greater academic success, demonstrating that inclusive practices benefit everyone in our learning community.

### Middle School Progress

Transitioning to middle school, our data indicates upward trends in all assessed areas. Teachers are utilizing innovative teaching methods and collaborative learning opportunities to engage students more effectively. As a result, our middle school is on the cusp of reaching the next status level, showcasing the hard work and determination of both students and educators. This upward trajectory not only reflects academic achievement but also highlights our commitment to fostering a supportive and dynamic learning environment.

### High School Gains

At the high school level, we are witnessing significant gains in postsecondary readiness and graduation indicators. Our enhanced career counseling programs, rigorous academic offerings, and partnerships with local colleges have prepared students to navigate their futures with confidence. The increase in graduation rates and readiness for postsecondary opportunities illustrates our focus on equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed beyond high school, aligning directly with our vision of creating career-ready citizens.

### Summary

In summary, the district's comprehensive efforts have led to notable improvements in academic performance, student well-being, and future readiness, validating our mission of "Maximizing Student Learning and Achievement." We remain committed to fostering an environment where every student can thrive and reach their full potential.

### Areas of Improvement

Describe areas for improvement that the district is striving to achieve in the next three years.

#### 1. Accelerating Foundational Proficiency (Elementary & District-Wide)

While the elementary level has seen a marked increase in proficiency levels, the primary area for improvement remains the acceleration of foundational skills, particularly to close existing gaps and meet or exceed state averages in core content.

- Goal: To sustain and accelerate the positive trends in reading and mathematics proficiency, ensuring all students are on track for grade-level

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competency. This involves scaling the individualized instruction that has proven successful to ensure all students are proficient by the end of 5th grade.

- Focus Area: Implementation of high-quality instructional resources and the refinement of the Rtl (Response to Intervention) programs to ensure interventions are precise, monitored for fidelity, and swiftly adjusted based on student data.

## 2. Securing Academic Status Gains (Middle School)

The middle school is currently "on the cusp of reaching the next status level," which presents a clear, immediate institutional goal.

- Goal: To achieve and maintain the next level of academic status through continued upward trends in all assessed areas. This requires consistency in utilizing the innovative teaching methods and collaborative learning opportunities currently in place.
- Focus Area: Developing seamless vertical transitions between the elementary and middle school to prevent academic slippage and ensure students arrive at the middle school ready for advanced content.

## 3. Deepening Postsecondary and Career Readiness (High School)

The high school has seen significant gains in graduation rates and postsecondary readiness, but the focus must shift from readiness indicators to actual high-value attainment for all graduates.

- Goal: To significantly increase student participation and completion rates in high-leverage dual-credit courses, industry certification programs, and advanced academy enrollments. The aim is to ensure a higher percentage of students graduate with college credit or a recognized industry certification in hand.
- Focus Area: Expanding career counseling programs to provide personalized guidance that connects students directly to career pathways identified as high-demand within the regional economy, ensuring the district fully delivers on its Future Readiness vision.

## 4. Enhancing Inclusive Practices and Stakeholder Engagement

The district has achieved success with IEP trends and school climate. The improvement focus is to deepen the Responsive Community core value for all stakeholder groups.

- Goal: To embed inclusive practices more thoroughly across all schools and to ensure engagement strategies are flexible and culturally competent for all families, particularly those with long commute times or diverse language needs.
- Focus Area: Providing enhanced support and professional development for staff to meet the diverse social and emotional needs of the student body, ensuring the nurturing environment and anti-bullying programs remain effective as the student population evolves.

These areas represent the district's commitment to continuous growth, ensuring that the successes of the past three years are used as the foundation for achieving an even higher level of excellence in the future.

## **COMMENTS**

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### Additional Information

Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.

### The Strength of Our Location

Gallatin County Schools are proud to serve a community nestled on the banks of the Ohio River, situated centrally within the vital "Golden Triangle" (Cincinnati, Louisville, and Lexington). While this location presents logistical challenges for our commuting families, it is fundamentally a strength. This proximity to major metropolitan areas allows us to offer students a powerful blend of rural quality of life and unparalleled access to regional opportunities. Our strategic partnerships with industries and educational institutions in this corridor are key to fulfilling our Future Readiness vision, ensuring GCS graduates are not limited by geography.

### Financial Stewardship and Facilities

We are committed to being responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars. In the last three years, GCS has made focused investments in upgrading and maintaining our facilities to ensure a safe, modern, and effective learning environment.

- **Modernizing Learning Spaces:** We are actively updating classroom technology and physical infrastructure to better support innovative teaching methods across all grade levels. This includes enhanced security systems and facility improvements that support energy efficiency and longevity.
- **Targeted Resource Allocation:** Every expenditure is measured against our core value of Equity of Instruction. This means resources are allocated not only to maintain buildings but primarily to support the highest-impact educational programs—from classroom materials for Rtl intervention to specialized equipment for our Area Technology Center pathways.

### Cultivating the Whole Student

While academic proficiency is our mission's focus, we recognize that maximizing student achievement requires cultivating the whole individual. We take great pride in our vibrant co-curricular and extracurricular offerings, which are essential for building a strong, positive school climate.

- **Athletics and Arts:** Our athletic teams, music programs, and visual arts departments serve as crucial rallying points for the community, teaching students teamwork, discipline, and commitment. Participation in these activities is strongly encouraged as it contributes directly to the nurturing environment and upward trends in all assessed areas mentioned in our achievements.
- **Community Pride:** GCS serves as a central hub for Gallatin County. We are proud of the strong community support shown for our students, whether through volunteer hours, fundraising for clubs, or attendance at events. We view our schools as a reflection of the county's identity and its commitment to the next generation.

We invite all community members—business owners, grandparents, and alumni—to partner with us as we continue to build on these successes and work toward our goals for the next three years.

# Attachment Summary

Attachment Name	Description	Associated Item(s)
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