LITTLE INDIANS

LEARNING CENTER

Supporting Students. Supporting Staff.
Strengthening Our Community.



Board of Education Work Session
May 14, 2026

WHY THE LITTLE INDIANS LEARNING CENTER?

- Hands-on learning for the students in high-demand career pathways
- Childcare support for SCSS employees
- Financially self-sustaining through employee tuition
- Strengthens our school system and our community



ADDRESSING A GROWING NEED

One of the primary reasons for the timing of this proposal is the recent closure of a major childcare provider here in Toccoa. That closure has significantly impacted childcare availability within our community and has created an immediate challenge for many Stephens County Schools employees who depend on reliable childcare in order to remain in the workforce.

Over the past several weeks, we have heard directly from teachers and staff members who are concerned about their ability to continue working without dependable childcare options. Some employees have shared that without reliable childcare, they may have no choice but to leave the profession they love. In the middle of a nationwide teacher shortage, we know how difficult it would be to replace those experienced, dedicated educators who serve our students every single day.



OUR COMMITMENT

The Stephens County Board of Education remains committed to creating meaningful learning opportunities for students while also addressing the needs of our faculty, staff, and families.

The Little Indians learning center reflects our continued focus on supporting workforce development, strengthening educational experiences, and responding to the evolving needs of our community.



CTAE PATHWAYS:

TEACHING AS A PROFESSION & EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

According to the Georgia Department of Education, Georgia's Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) program addresses high-demand workforce needs by offering specialized pathways, including "Teaching as a Profession" and "Early Childhood Education".

For years, SCSS has offered a successful CTAE Early Childhood Education pathway for students interested in careers in teaching and child development.



HIGH-DEMAND CTAE PATHWAYS IN GEORGIA

Both Teaching as a Profession and Early Childhood Education are High-Demand Career Pathways in Georgia.

High-Demand Means:
These careers are projected to have strong job growth and a continued need for qualified professionals across the state.

What This Means for Students:
Greater job opportunities, career stability, and the chance to make a lasting impact on children's lives.

What This Means for Our Community:
A stronger workforce, more local educators, and a pipeline of future teachers who understand and invest in our community.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION REMAINS IN HIGH DEMAND

Early Childhood Education remains one of Georgia's high-demand career pathways.

The Little Indians Learning Center will serve as an extension of that established program by providing students with a hands-on learning laboratory environment.

Much like cosmetology students utilize a salon lab to gain real-world experience, Early Childhood Education students need authentic opportunities to observe, assist, and develop real-world teaching skills in a supervised setting.



HANDS-ON LEARNING.

REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE.

The Learning Center will provide valuable student internships and Work-Based Learning Opportunities for students interested in pursuing careers in education, childcare, and child development.

These experiences help prepare students for future college and career success while strengthening the future educator pipeline.



SUPPORTING OUR STAFF

STRENGTHENING OUR SCHOOLS

The other daycare closure has significantly impacted childcare availability within our community and has created an immediate challenge for many Stephens County Schools employees who depend on reliable childcare in order to remain in the workforce.

The proposed Learning Center would provide an additional childcare option specifically for Stephens County Schools employees. This supports employee recruitment and retention while helping working families within our district.



OVERVIEW:

- **Location:** Stephens County Middle School
- **Purpose:** Extension of CTAE pathways and childcare for children of Stephens County Schools employees.
- **Eligibility:** Child's legal guardian must be employed by Stephens County Schools
- **Capacity:** up to 45 children (ages 6 weeks–4 years)
- **Operating Hours:** 6:30 AM – 5:00 PM on the 190-day calendar.
- **Facility Costs:** No cost for rent, utilities, or



STAFFING:

The Little Indians Learning Center provides staffing opportunities for

- 2 Full-time classified employees
- Work Based Learning Students
- Part-time employees as needed

This program will also operate as a CTAE pathway with teacher support, where the instructor oversees the Little Indian Center while pathway students earn their internship hours through hands-on experience at the center.



FUNDING:

- The program is designed to be financially self-sustaining through weekly tuition paid by the parents of children enrolled in the center. Tuition rates would align with the current childcare market rates within the Toccoa area.

- Employees will pay a deposit to hold their space for the Fall.

- In addition, because the Learning Center would function as an instructional classroom and laboratory setting for our CTAE Early Childhood Education pathway – which is identified as a high-demand career pathway by the state of Georgia – Stephens County Schools would be eligible to pursue additional funding opportunities through Perkins grants, The Governor's Top State for Talent initiatives, and other workforce development grants specifically designed to support high-demand career training programs.



FUNDING:

As a charter school system, Stephens County Schools also receives additional funding intended to support innovative projects that address the unique needs of our students, schools, employees, and community. Those additional charter funds could be used to support the estimated $60,000 in startup costs associated with launching the Learning Center.

It is also important to note that these charter funds are specifically designated for innovative educational initiatives and do not come from local property taxes.

Programs such as Cosmetology, Welding, Advanced Manufacturing, and Automotive Technology often require substantial startup investments for specialized equipment and ongoing maintenance. In many cases, just a few pieces of equipment for those programs can equal or exceed the estimated startup cost for the Little Indians Learning Center.



IMPORTANT POINTS:

Stephens County Schools would operate the program under the exemption provided in Georgia law for programs owned and operated by a public school system. Additionally, the Learning Center would continue to meet all required fire, health, safety, and zoning regulations.

The program would also be covered under the school system’s existing insurance through the Georgia School Boards Association with no additional insurance cost to the district.



SIMILAR MODELS:

- Lumpkin County Schools
- Jefferson City Schools
- Forsyth County Schools
- Buford City Schools
- Several others across Georgia.

These programs demonstrate that school-based learning centers can successfully support workforce development, expand hands-on student learning opportunities, and provide much-needed childcare support for employees.

By studying these successful models, Stephens County Schools has worked to develop a program that reflects the unique needs of our students, employees, and community while building upon practices already proven effective in other districts.



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