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Please complete all sections of this application form, save the file and email to tarasi@gsba.com by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, August 30, 2019.

School District: Forsyth County Schools

Governance Team Chair/President: Ms. Kristin Morrissey

Superintendent: Dr. Jeff Bearden

**Person Submitting Application**

Name: Ms. Jennifer Caracciolo

Title: Public Information and Communications Director

Email: jcaracciolo@forsyth.k12.ga.us

Phone: 770.887.2461 ext 203363

___x___ Our district is eligible based on CCRPI score for 2018.

**Governance Teams qualify if they meet the following criteria:**

Minimum of 76.6 or better on 2018 CCRPI score.

Please verify that you meet **ALL additional criteria to be considered for this award**: (place an “x” before each true statement.

X _____ All of our Governance Team members have met the minimum state training requirements for the past three years (FY’16, FY’17 & FY’18).

X _____ Our Governance Team has had no issues with any accrediting agency for the past three years (FY’16, FY’17 & FY’18).

X _____ Our Governance Team approved the application for this award at the Board of Education meeting held on ___ August 20, 2019 _________________.

**Rating criteria:**

Governance Team applications will be rated on rubrics that have been developed to align with the seven components of the Georgia Vision Project plus an additional component on communications and messaging.
Phase One: Application completed by August 30, 2019.

Phase Two: Verification of the accuracy of the application will be confirmed as part of this process.

Phase Three: Rating of the Applications:

Applications that have been verified will be rated and scored by a national team with expertise in school governance. Applications will be rated according to the degree to which there is clarity of the outstanding accomplishments by the district, the correlation of the governance team responsibility with the accomplishments, and quality of the evidence as it relates to the criteria for the category.

The School District selected as GSBA’s Governance Team of the Year will not be permitted to apply for the award for two years following their recognition.

Application Questions

Provide the Governance Team’s response to the three questions below for each of the criteria on the following pages. Responses may not exceed one page (500 words maximum) for each of the criteria areas. Additional pages, including appendices or attachments, will not be read or considered.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Be sure to address all areas listed in the description of the criteria.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Governance Team’s role and/or actions that led to the accomplishment.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

For any questions concerning the Governance Team of the Year, please contact Tony Arasi via email at: tarasi@gsba.com or via phone at 770.962.6841.
Teaching & Learning Resources
I. Teaching and Learning Resources

I1. Comprehensive Data System (5.2 & 5.3): A comprehensive system for collecting, storing and analyzing data is an essential part of the school district’s decision-making process. Relevant and accurate information is utilized for good decision-making. Comprehensive data systems allow school and district staff to track system budgets effectively, support formative and summative student assessment to personalize instruction, and connect student learning and teacher professional development. Relevant and accurate information is an essential part of communication with students and educators inside the school and the stakeholders in the community.

I2. Safety & Security: Systems are in place to provide safe environments for all students, staff and stakeholders (e.g., district/building access, stairs/elevators, fire safety, mechanical systems, custodial supplies and equipment, labs, shops, restrooms, health services, athletic facilities and playgrounds, corridors, interior doors, security and surveillance systems, food service and commons areas), as directed by Governance Team policy. The effectiveness of practices to provide a safe and secure environment and the implementation of an up-to-date crisis/emergency management plan periodically is reviewed by the Governance Team. The Governance Team supports plans that proactively seek improvements in creating a safe and secure environment based upon standards and research. There is evidence of improvements in creating safe environments for all students, staff and stakeholders.

I3. Technology: The district technology plan provides up-to-date technology and adequate infrastructure to effectively support instruction, assessment and district administrative functions and is approved and periodically reviewed by the Governance Team. The Governance Team supports plans that proactively seek ways to improve district technology. There is evidence of improvement in technology and infrastructure to support instruction, assessment and the administrative functions of the district.

On pages 5-7, please respond to the three application questions for Teaching & Learning Resources.
1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

Forsyth County Schools (FCS) launched a new Data Analytics Dashboard at the start of the 2019-20 school year. The intent behind this comprehensive data system is to connect the district departments and schools for good decision-making aligned to the goals in FCS’ Strategic Plan. The first phase of the launch focused on student data to drive personalized instruction for individual students, subgroups, teachers, courses, schools, and the district. Student information was integrated from multiple sources including the Student Information System (SIS), MUNIS, SWIS, and the Georgia Department of Education, which includes:

- CCRPI ratings and breakdown for in-state and in-district comparisons;
- Academic and behavior breakdown by individual students, subgroups, subject areas, specific courses, and discipline areas;
- Teacher demographics and performance data showing grade distributions, average GPAs, while having the ability to filter by college degree level and years of service; and a
- Graduation profile to visualize a student’s full academic snapshot as it relates to college and career readiness.

The second phase this year will integrate additional resources such as the district-developed Response to Intervention (RTI) Desktop and SchoolCity Suite for online and offline formative and summative assessments, as well as rolling out district dashboards, such as budgeting. A public-facing dashboard will also be added for transparency and accountability. The District adheres to requirements in Georgia’s Systems of Continuous Improvement and conducts an annual Comprehensive Needs Assessment and a District Improvement Plan. Based on the Strategic Plan and Continuous Improvement Process, which includes goals for the Governance Team (GT), district departments and schools, the Professional Learning Director facilitates the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the professional learning efforts with input and guidance from an Advisory Council.

2. Describe how specific GT practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

The GT approved the creation of the first public-facing dashboard in 2006 and subsequent revisions, which led to the use of data as a crucial part of all decision-making conversations. In addition to funding the new Data Analytics Dashboard, the GT collaborated on the project’s design and implementation. The GT also provided additional professional development days in the past two school calendars to train staff on using data to design learning experiences that reflect high expectations which result in student engagement.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

Though the new Data Analytic Dashboard has only been available for several weeks at the time of this application, the feedback and impact have been profound. Administrators can:

- Identify at-risk students before beginning the academic school year;
- Analyze teacher performance against other teachers within the school and across the district;
- Determine chronic student areas of discipline, including the time of day and month of the year with the highest incident counts.

Feedback from school administrators has stated that the new dashboard is a “game-changer” and “one of the most significant tools they have seen in education.” This type of positive feedback defines the effectiveness of the system.
12. Safety & Security - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.
FCS utilizes a variety of resources to support the district’s 38 schools and 6 support facilities to provide safe, clean, and healthy environments. Processes and tools are utilized to track the condition and maintenance of facilities. FCS is actively engaged in long-term facilities planning to address current and future student growth. The district works continually to streamline safety protocols and provide the equipment and expertise for effective execution. As a fast-growth district, the Governance Team (GT) has supported investing local funds for increased staff, including licensed nurses at all schools, a close to doubling of School Resource Officers (SRO), additional counselors/Social Emotional Learning (SEL) staff, and safety staff, as well as adding professional development days and offerings, including online learning. Additionally, the GT has championed expanding non-traditional offerings for students with more staff and funding and created the FC Education Foundation to provide outside funding for SEL programs. GT members also serve on a variety of community groups in the areas of mental health, substance abuse, and wellness, and actively engage Local School Councils.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.
The GT completed the district’s fifth Strategic Plan in 2017, which includes three goal areas that tie into safety and security. For 2019-20, the GT also adopted safety as their first of four goals. Using these roadmaps, the GT has invested $9 million in two recent bond referendums to improve school safety and has allocated general operational funds to support needs requests. For two years the district has partnered with the Sheriff’s Office and local public safety agencies on a School Safety Joint Task Force that meets quarterly to complete comprehensive safety assessments of all school campuses/facilities, and review staffing, procedures, building plans and prevention/training. Additionally, annually the district partners with these groups to host large-scale drills and community Ghost-Out events. The GT recognizes that the greatest problem facing schools today is not the safety of our school buildings. The greatest problem we have is that we have students in crisis throughout our nation who believe that harming themselves, or others or both is a viable option. To change that mindset, the GT approved the hiring of additional counselors/SEL staff for all high schools. Additionally, they approved the hiring of Student Advocacy Specialists (SAS) for each vertical team in the county to work with high-risk students, their families, school/district staff, supporting community/law enforcement agencies, and healthcare providers.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.
The GT listens to the safety concerns of all stakeholders and addresses them with policies and funding. Within the past 12 months, the GT approved the construction of new safety vestibules at schools, purchased new video cameras, added additional employee badge access, and provided bus drivers with new radios. Other examples include:
- $9 million from two bonds for safety
- Increase in three non-traditional program offerings; a new building for the programs in the bond
- Additional counselors/SEL staff and new SAS positions; parent and staff surveys to evaluate the SAS positions have been overwhelmingly positive.
- Increase in SROs and additional staff in the school safety department
- Participation in substance abuse and mental health community advisory committees
- Funding for certified school nurses in all schools and district-wide Stop the Bleed Training, which last year, for the first time in the state, saved a child’s life at one of our schools.
1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

Technology was a stand-alone initiative in FCS’ 1995 Strategic Plan, but Vision 2010 integrated it into all aspects of the plan, with a focus on leveraging technology to enhance instruction. Since that time, instructional and administrative technology have been included in all Strategic Plan goal areas. Technology is key to data-driven decisions and achieving the goal of effective personalized instruction and learning across the district. In an ever-evolving technological world, the Governance Team (GT) plans and allocates funds in both the M & O and Bond/SPLOST budgets to provide state-of-the-art equipment, infrastructure, and highly qualified staff to meet the needs of all students and staff. For over a decade, the GT encouraged innovative initiatives, such as BYOT (Bring Your Own Technology), that allows students to enhance their teaching and learning by bringing technology to their classroom. Additionally, FCS was one of the first districts in the United States to pioneer districtwide online learning days for inclement weather/school closures.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

The GT is an integral part of the district strategic planning process. FCS actively gathers stakeholder’s insights by attending Local School Council meetings, legislative updates, economic forecasts, and homeowners’ meetings, and serve on the Chamber of Commerce, community boards, and in State-level offices. The GT approves the technology budget and works diligently to gather support for referendums that enhance the district’s technology plans. Transparency is key to the district’s success, and a wealth of information is on the district website and social media sites. In May 2018, FCS passed a Bond that included $17 million for technology enhancements. Numerous surveys are conducted for input to GT decisions, such as the student calendar, online learning days, redistricting, dual enrollment and foreign language. Recently, based on stakeholder input, the GT approved changing Forsyth Virtual Academy from a school to program to serve more middle and high school students. They funded dedicated teachers for virtual offerings, which have grown to over 2,100 students.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

- The GT submitted a waiver to the GA DOE for the use of cell phones in the classroom enabling BYOT.
- The district organized numerous site visits/tours and conferences for effective use of technology.
- The GT approved building a second redundant data center, and installing wireless access points, placing 10 Chromebooks, and installing 75-inch interactive panel displays in all classrooms.
- A Data Analytic Engine was launched for predictive analytics, identify trends, and forecast academics.
- The district uses online platforms such as itslearning (24/7 access to resources), Infinite Campus, School City, and Classlink to support teaching, learning, and various operational aspects.
- The district launched NetRef, which allows classroom teachers to “referee” internet traffic in the classroom for Chromebook and BYOT devices on the FCS network, to protect instructional time.
- Board emails and phone numbers, agendas, meeting videos, policies, Strategic Plan, goals, and all financial information are online to fulfill our commitment to transparency.
- Received the Most Tech-Savvy Board, National Salute District for Technology, NSBA Digital District awards and made technology presentations at state and national conventions.
- Formed a technology task force to ensure equity and accessibility for all students.
- Partnered with a local doctor to host a golf tournament and 5K run, which earned $70,000 last year for technological equity, such as Wi-Fi and devices for student homes.
Governance, Leadership & Accountability
II. Governance, Leadership and Accountability

II1. Strategic Planning (7.1): Long-term strategic planning occurs every few years. Strategic planning meets state requirements and includes an aligned vision, mission, goals and strategies focused on continuous school improvement as directed by Governance Team policy. The strategic plan includes Governance Team governance goals and strategies. Annual Governance Team review of the implementation of the strategic plan allows for any adjustments needed to provide continuous school improvement and respond to specific critical needs. The Governance Team’s strategic planning and the implementation of the district strategic plan have led to school improvement.

II2. Accountability (7.1 & 7.4): A comprehensive system of district accountability focusing on student performance is established and monitored. Reports on student learning, growth and progress are reviewed and clearly communicated with stakeholders. The Governance Team annually reviews the effectiveness of a comprehensive, student-focused accountability system in reporting, reviewing and communicating student performance data throughout the year. Data-driven decision making has led to measurable school and student improvement.

II3. Governance Team Member Ethics & Ethical Behavior (7.4): Governance Team members engage in ethical behavior as directed by district policy. Collaborative relationships among Governance Team members and between the Governance Team and superintendent facilitate a focus on student learning, district improvement and effective governance.

On pages 10-12, please respond to the three application questions for Governance, Leadership & Accountability.
1. **Strategic Planning** - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

   All stakeholders in Forsyth County Schools (FCS) are unified with a clear purpose and direction. The District’s Strategic Plan supports achieving our vision. “Quality learning and superior performance for all” that is not just for our students, but for our Governance Team (GT), staff and community. This vision was established in 2001 and has been reaffirmed by multiple GTs in subsequent strategic planning processes. To achieve this vision, GT and staff members are committed to furthering our mission, and organizational beliefs are embedded in our culture as daily practices. The district’s fifth Strategic Plan was approved by the Board of Education in 2017. Working in partnership with the Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA) and the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI), the GT and Cabinet members reviewed various data sources, as well as survey and focus group feedback from 7,000+ stakeholders. The process also included recommendations from the AdvancED Accreditation visit in spring 2017.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

   FCS’s primary customer is the individual student; the student is at the center of everything we do. The GT works collaboratively with customers such as staff, parents/families, citizens, and businesses, to support students. To ensure that all students in FCS will graduate equipped with the skills necessary to be college and career ready, we utilize a Learner Profile, our pathway to success. Reviewed as part of FCS Continuous Improvement Process, the Learner Profile serves as our strategic compass or “the what” of the school district. In turn, each school has the flexibility to determine how best to make these priorities a reality for each student (“the how”). The five-year strategic plan has three goal plan areas to reach FCS’ vision: Learning and Growth, Culture and Climate, and Operational Excellence. The GT adopts annual goals, which are aligned to the Learner Profile and Strategic Plan and connected to BOE meeting agenda items.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

   - **1st Plan:**
     - United the growing community around public education in 1995
     - Designed the first district technology plan

   - **2nd Plan:**
     - Defined FCS culture by creating a shared vision and beliefs statements

   - **3rd Plan:**
     - Added a district mission and refined the beliefs to grow the organizational climate
     - Created the district’s Data Dashboard for transparency

   - **4th Plan:**
     - Evolved the Graduate Profile to an all-grades Learner Profile
     - Unified the schools and district office with one district-wide Continuous Improvement process
     - Created the PROPEL initiative for a focus on graduation, and college and career opportunities.

   - **5th Plan:**
     - Tied the GT goals into the Continuous Improvement process for one timeline
     - Created performance objectives and measures, initiatives, action steps, primary person responsible, evidence that indicates an impact, monitoring actions of implementation, and estimated cost, funding source and resources
     - Scheduled plan reviews with GT and staff, and progress communicated to all stakeholders
     - Created the district’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan, and Visual and Performing Arts Plan.
II2. Accountability - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

The Governance Team (GT) encourages the use of multiple platforms and resources to monitor student achievement and growth. A new District Analytics Dashboard was created this year; local, state and national assessment data files are uploaded into the District’s Assessment Engine, and reports are made available and reviewed at the district and school levels. Assessment data is analyzed and shared with school administrators through the District’s Learning Management System. The Accountability Coordinator reviews achievement and growth data with school principals and assistant principals at monthly meetings and collaborates with school leaders to create annual School Improvement Plan goals and strategies.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

In 2017, the GT approved a new timeline for continuous improvement and accountability. We changed from approving our goals in January to aligning to the fiscal year and approving our goals in August. The GT schedules the Assessment and Accountability team to present achievement and growth data from multiple assessments at their monthly meetings, which are open to the public, covered by the media and broadcast on the district’s YouTube channel. The data is used at the district and school levels to inform instructional practices. The “Glows and Grows” component of the Board presentation highlights areas of high achievement and growth and identifies where the potential exists for improvement. The GT’s feedback plays a critical role in guiding the allocation of resources and instructional practices.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

Significantly, student learning results in Forsyth County Schools (FCS) have continued to increase despite dramatic and rapid increases in enrollment (53% increase in student enrollment growth from 2009 to 2019, with 9 new schools opened in 10 years), poverty and diversity, along with growing numbers of English Language Learners (124 countries and 52 languages represented) and Students with Disabilities. Highlights include:

- Results of the district, schools and GT meeting their Improvement Plan goals
- Highest DistrictCCRPI Score Among Metro-Atlanta and Large Districts, GADOE
- School Climate Star Ratings (22 schools scored a 4; 13 schools scored a 5), GADOE
- Georgia Milestones (Top 5 Subject/Grade Rankings), GADOE
- Georgia Scholars (3 out of 260 in GA), GADOE
- Highest Elementary and Middle School Scores in Metro-Atlanta, GADOE
- Highest County Graduation Rate Among Metro-Atlanta and Large Districts, GADOE
- Title 1 Distinguished School Awards, GADOE
- 12 Highest Performing or Greatest Gains School Awards, Governor’s Office of Student Achievement
- Exemplary School Board Award, Georgia School Board Association
- Advanced Placement (AP) District Honor Roll (1 of 373 Districts in the U.S.), College Board
- Highest SAT Score in Georgia, College Board
- Highest ACT Score Among Metro-Atlanta and Large Districts, ACT, Inc.
- National Blue Ribbon Schools (8 in the last 6 years), U.S. Department of Education
- STEM Certified Schools (3), GA Department of Education or AdvancED
- STEM International Certified High School in 2018 (1 of 33 in the Nation), AdvancED
- STEM International Certified School (2), AdvancED
13. Governance Team Member Ethics & Ethical Behavior - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description. As a model for governance effectiveness for over two decades, the Governance Team (GT) has worked collaboratively with the staff, parents, businesses, community organizations, and citizens to build advocacy for the school system. Forsyth County Schools’ (FCS) vision, mission, beliefs, Strategic Plan, and Learner Profile are the foundation for all actions of the GT. The Board has up to 18 years of experience, and they believe that continuity has been key to their success. They have hired only three Superintendents during that span, have a continuity plan in place for Cabinet-level positions, and have worked diligently to build an effective team that focuses on the individual student.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment. The GT recognizes that the authority of the board rests only with the board as a whole and they abide by all board decisions. They announce any potential conflicts of interest before board action and they always refrain from using the board position for personal or partisan gain. The GT are key contributors to the development of the district’s Strategic Plan, modifying the Learner Profile, and enhancing the mission to “Prepare and inspire all learners to lead and succeed.” The word “learners” was intentionally used because the GT recognize that it is not just the students, but also the staff and the board that are included in the mission. The Chairperson is the spokesperson, and they are transparent with all decisions and information. They maintain the confidentiality of matters related to executive session discussions and comply with all policies, rules, regulations, and laws regarding the employment of family members. Board members are responsive to the community but refrain from micromanaging, and delegate authority for the administration of the school system to the Superintendent. They work with the Superintendent to ensure prudent and accountable uses of the system resources. They communicate professionally, regularly attend meetings, and participate in all required training.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.
   - The GT consistently abide by the standards of ethical performance and professional integrity as specified in Board policies BH – Board Code of Ethics, BHA – Board Member Conflict of Interest, and BHB – Nepotism. There have been no instances of misbehavior – alleged or actual - by the GT. Recently, the GT took the initiative to create governance policy AD - School District Organization – in preparation for the redistricting for four new schools over the next three years.
   - The GT has led the staff and community to create a shared vision (Quality Learning and Superior Performance for All) and shared beliefs (TEACH) in 2001, and they have not changed. This is indicative of a board that is willing to work collaboratively, with new board members and new superintendents, to ensure that the vision of the Board, that represents the community, is not compromised.
   - All requirements for annual Board training mandated by the Georgia Board of Education are met every year by the GT individually and collectively.
   - The Board’s transparency is evident by seeking public input via online surveys or through school Local School Councils on key initiatives, in addition to online board agendas, documents, minutes, annual goals, policies, strategic plan, priorities, financial and audit reports, attendance reports, zoning impact requests, and construction updates.
   - Meetings and GT actions are communicated on the district website, social media accounts, monthly newsletters to parents and staff, and in the media.
Human & Organizational Capital
III. **Human and Organizational Capital**

**III1. Recruitment, Hiring & Retention (6.1):** There is evidence of Governance Team policy regarding criteria for employment decisions. Objective measures guide the recruitment, selection and assignment of administrators, teachers and staff and are periodically reviewed and discussed by the Governance Team in collaboration with the superintendent. Multiple recruitment, hiring and retention resources are used to expand the pool of qualified candidates and result in effective employment decisions.

**III2. Growth-Oriented Culture & Professional Growth (6.2, 6.3 & 6.4):** A climate of collaboration and continued learning provides support for all educators. Performance-based evaluations for the superintendent and professional staff ensure educator performance that results in improved district performance, instructional programming, instruction and student performance as directed by Governance Team policy. Governance Team reviews evidence that the implementation of the performance-based evaluation process for the superintendent and professional staff includes on-going, timely, targeted and meaningful feedback and leads to improvement in educator performance, instructional programming and student achievement. There is evidence of improvement in administration, instruction and student performance.

**On pages 15-16, please respond to the three application questions for Human Organizational Capital.**
III1. Recruitment, Hiring & Retention - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

The Governance Team (GT) operates an effective and efficient Human Resources (HR) recruitment, selection, and retention process. They also maintain a comprehensive performance management system. Also, Forsyth County Schools (FCS) has utilized the Teacher (TKES) and Leader (LKES) Keys Effectiveness System to maintain high standards for certified personnel. School Administrators who are TKES evaluators all complete the annual recertification to maintain credentialing and the reliability certification to encourage consistency in rating and maintenance of standards.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

The GT participated in the development and approval of the district’s belief statements including “High-performing leadership makes visions reality.” Board policies are aligned with state law, and also include policies that directly address recruitment and retention. The SWSS/IE2 contract allows principals to use their allotments to fit the needs of their school. When hiring new principals, the Superintendent, a Board member, and an HR representative visit the Local School Council to listen to their recommendations. These are used to match the right person to a pool of qualified candidates that were determined by peer interviews. The Board subsequently approves all contracts after the recommendation from the Superintendent.

To achieve the goals in the prior Strategic Plan, the district partnered with the University of North Georgia to provide professional development for the GT and staff to broaden their understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). In the current Strategic Plan under the culture and climate goal area, there are multiple objectives and initiatives aligned to HR and DEI. To achieve these goals, the GT approved funding for the district to partner with the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISIS) to build a unified five-year DEI plan for the district. Over the past two years, the district has organized a more diverse recruitment team, increased the number of job fairs held for both classified and certified staff, attended more external job fairs, and launched the “Connecting Dreams to Success” for educator recruitment, “Drive Forsyth” for bus driver recruitment, and Featured Job of the Week with web, social media and video marketing tools.

The GT understands the value that recognizing and celebrating accomplishments plays in retaining high quality employees. An “Employee of the Month,” who are chosen by their peers, is recognized at the regular monthly board meetings. Also, Superior Performance segments of the board meeting recognize outstanding programs that teachers and administrators have integrated into school curriculum. To support and adequate compensation and encourage retention, the GT provides a robust benefits plan and has supported step and cost of living raises over the past nine years and have modified administrative salaries to be comparable to like size districts.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

- 95% Teacher Retention Rate; in surveys 32% stay for “support/colleagues” and 28% stay for “support/admin”
- Increase in certified staff diversity over the past three years
- 50% of new hires come from Job Fairs; 100% of teachers are highly qualified
- 89.92% of eligible staff participate in district offered health benefits program
- Named Best Place to Work for the past three years, Forsyth County News
III2. Growth-Oriented Culture & Professional Growth - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

FCS’ vision is “Quality Learning and Superior Performance for all.” The Governance Team (GT) encouraged continuous learning by adding staff development days to the school calendar. Collaboration among schools at each level, as well as vertically, have improved communication and consistency across the district. Resources are shared, innovation is encouraged, and community partnerships have given teachers access to resources that benefit students. The GT evaluates their performance each year and sets annual goals. The Superintendent and staff are annually reviewed with alignment to the Strategic Planning goals. The district was granted the ability to independently provide an alternate teacher certification program; cohort two began this summer.

To encourage shared leadership and professional growth of leaders, FCS provides a systematic framework for guiding and growing leaders through the Leadership Program. Recently expanded with support from the GT, programs include Aspiring Leaders, Aspiring Principals, and Class A Leadership (classified staff), as well as development opportunities for practicing leaders such as New Administrators, Summer Leadership, and Practicing Leaders. New Educator Orientation has continued to evolve and includes a multi-year Teacher Induction cohort to improve the transition, support, and retention. At various schools in the district, the GT has created teaching pathways to “grow our own”, and likewise, has a practice of “growing” FCS substitutes and paraprofessionals for teaching positions. Partnerships with colleges/universities in Georgia for student-teacher programs have been expanded.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

The GT participates in the annual Leadership District Conference that includes the district and school leadership teams. These meetings are all designed to improve teaching in the classroom and to educate district leaders on ways to improve the district. GT members regularly visit Local School Council meetings and attend other events at the schools during the year. Analysis of tests scores and reports on new initiatives, such as Social Emotional Learning and Personalized Learning, are shared monthly at Board meetings. High school principals and the GT visited the Ford Next Generation Conference in Nashville and Tampa. During the conferences, they took time to meet and share ideas for improvement to their schools. GT members also joined the staff on visits to Career Academies and Dual Language classrooms to enhance their understanding of the integration of these programs into our schools. Once a year, the GT, and district staff have breakfast with assistant principals and principals to discuss the culture and climate in their schools. Beginning this year, the GT committed funding to name principals for all levels one-year prior to adequately plan for and staff the opening of newly constructed schools.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

- Change Creates Opportunity is one of our beliefs; over the last two years:
  - 5 new principals appointed (prior assistant principals in the district) and 2 transferred,
  - 15 assistant principals transferred to another school for growth opportunities, and
  - 27 assistant principals newly hired or appointed.
- Georgia Middle School Principal and Assistant Principal of the Year, 2018
- Georgia Runner-up for the Teacher of the Year and Georgia Nurse of the Year, 2019
Teaching, Learning & Assessment
IV. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

IV1. Current comprehensive curriculum (4.3): A current, comprehensive curriculum is externally aligned with Georgia standards approved by the State Governance Team of Education and internally aligned within and across grade levels and all subject areas in every school. Current Governance Team policies support a systematic review, evaluation and revision of curriculum that includes input from all stakeholder groups. The Governance Team periodically reviews the curriculum for its alignment, delivery, improvement and effectiveness. There is evidence of implementation of Governance-Team-approved curriculum in all classrooms.

IV2. Strong instructional leadership and effective instruction (4.1, 4.2 & 4.3): Instructional leadership and instructional practices are based on evidence from a body of high-quality research and high expectations for all students. The Governance Team periodically reviews instructional leadership and instruction for effectiveness and impact on student performance and supports plans that proactively seek improved instructional leadership and effective instruction. There is evidence that improvement in instructional leadership and instruction has led to increased student performance.

IV3. Balanced and comprehensive system of student assessment (4.4): An effective comprehensive assessment system (e.g. formative, benchmark and summative assessments) measure progress toward subject mastery and student goals in all curricular areas. Ongoing formative and benchmark assessments guide instructional practice, including individual remedial and enrichment requirements. Student performance data are communicated in ways that are clear and meaningful for all stakeholders. The Governance Team periodically reviews the effectiveness of the student assessment system and the clarity of the communication of student performance data. The Governance Team supports plans that proactively seek improved assessment practices for instruction and student performance. Assessment practices have led to improvement in instruction and student performance.

On pages 19-21, please respond to the three application questions for Teaching, Learning & Assessment.
IV1. Current comprehensive curriculum - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.
   The Georgia Standards of Excellence are central to curriculum adoption and development; instructional and assessment design; and grading and reporting. Additionally, the standards guide the development and revision of content specific frameworks, pacing guides, matrices, rubrics, and curriculum maps. Written, taught, and assessed curricula reflect the concepts and skills required by the standards.

   Curriculum design and review are continuous and cyclical. Through the process of curriculum design and review, the district and schools examine aspects of practice that lead to student achievement. The goal of the review process is improved student learning experiences and increased student success. Stakeholders (teachers, administration, system-level personnel, students, families, and community members) work with individual schools and the district to (1) articulate strengths, (2) identify learning gaps, (3) identify actions to address gaps, (4) identify specific steps to improve teaching and learning practices, (5) reflect and secure resources and (6) provide evidence of data-driven decisions that lead to improvement.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.
   The Governance Team (GT) is an integral part of developing the district’s 5-year Strategic Plan that guides the work of the school system and the yearly revisions to the Learner Profile, our pathway to growing leaders for success. The GT actively participates in meetings to discuss and plan for curricular areas including all core academic, CTAE, fine arts, world languages, health and PE. New curriculum initiatives are presented to the Board at their monthly meetings. Recently, in support of the district-wide K-12 literacy initiative launched in 2016 and based on input from teachers, the GT approved funding to move ARC (American Reading Company) forward. Additionally, the GT funded and participated in the new Visual and Performing Arts three-year plan, created by students, teachers, and community members. The GT values transparency by encouraging families and community members to be part of the review and design of the curriculum that leads to increased student achievement.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.
   - System processes and procedures that promote curriculum design and review
     - The Data Team Process
     - The FCS Continuous Improvement Process
     - Professional Learning Communities and K-12 Vertical Teams
     - Student-Led Conferencing
     - Academic Parent-Teacher Teams
   - Evidence of classroom implementation of curriculum is gathered through relevant and timely data, observation of sound instruction, continuous focus on critical needs, collaborative work, teacher evaluation and feedback, written documentation such as lesson plans, SST plans or IEPs, digital platforms such as Response to Intervention (RTI) Desktop, job-embedded professional development, alignment of standards and assessments, scheduling, and cultivating a rich learning environment.
IV2. **Strong instructional leadership and effective instruction** - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

   The GT outlined in policy its commitment to high-quality professional learning in alignment with the core values of the District’s vision: “Quality learning and superior performance for all.” To build sustained capacity for strong performance, there is an intentional orchestration of the work of educators that remains focused on collaboratively improving the learning of all students. The ultimate goal of professional development is to improve student learning; however, the immediate goal is improved educator knowledge, skills, and practices.

   In Forsyth County Schools (FCS), professional learning is defined as how All employees acquire, enhance or refine the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to create and support high levels of learning for All students. The district has adopted Learning Forward Standards outlining the characteristics of professional learning that lead to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results. The seven standards include the following: learning communities, leadership, resources, data, learning designs, implementation, and outcomes.

   The GT partnered with the Chamber of Commerce in 2011 to initiate PROPEL (Pathways for Reaching Opportunities in Preparing for Excellence in Life), an initiative to increase the graduation rate and approved Beyond PROPEL in the fall of 2016 to further advance the initiative. Each Board member serves on a Beyond PROPEL Initiative Committee. Five committees were developed (Culture and Climate, Learning and Growing, Resources and Support Systems, Student Services, and Governance and Leadership) and are comprised of one Board member, administrators, teachers, central office staff, parents, community members, current students, alumni, and post-secondary representatives. This work will culminate in action plans created to address priority needs determined by each committee. The final report will be presented to the Board this fall.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

   As one of the fastest-growing school systems in the nation, the GT challenged the Superintendent in 2003 to create a Leadership Academy. Over time that Academy evolved into three separate academies (Aspiring Principals, Aspiring Leaders, and Class A Leadership) to build leadership capacity for administrators, teachers, instructional coaches, and classified staff members. Updates on these Academies will be provided to the Board.

   The partnership between the Board and the Chamber of Commerce is an example of collaboration between the GT and community to promote instructional leadership and effective instruction.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

   - Leadership Academy has developed effective Principals and Assistant Principals
   - Learning Program Standards
   - Board allocation of needed resources for Professional Development
   - Beyond PROPEL- Phase I was completed in winter 2017, and Phase II was completed in spring 2019. Final recommendations will be presented to the BOE in fall 2019.
   - Board has increased personnel to support the initiatives
IV3. Balanced and comprehensive system of student assessment - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

FCS utilizes a five-step data team process at the district and school level. Data teams are a system expectation and district leaders collaborate with school administrators and teacher leaders to facilitate effective data teams. Examples of data used to measure content mastery and growth are benchmark, interim, formative, and summative assessments. Teachers are mindful of the state standards and understand that Georgia formally aligns standards with standardized state tests. Therefore, in preparation for the state assessment teachers tightly align their instruction to their standards. K-12 instructional strategies and classroom assessments reflect the language and intent of the standards. FCS continually reviews data from multiple assessments of student learning to adjust curriculum and instruction at the district level. Careful examination of professional practice through the Teacher and Leader evaluation (TKES and LKES) process, as well as a review of student data to design appropriate professional development, determine effective interventions, select the correct progress monitoring tools, identify content resources, and revise district common assessments, are important elements of this process. The GT approved the purchase of the SchoolCity assessment engine that serves as the system’s platform for analyzing assessment data to inform instruction.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

Many years ago, the GT reviewed instructional practices and approved the change from letter grades to standards-based grades K-3. The decision was very controversial, but the GT felt that it was the best decision for the student. It is currently one of the issues that are being reviewed by the Learning and Growing committee of the Beyond Propel initiative, to ensure that it is an effective way to communicate student assessment. The Assessment and Accountability team presents achievement and growth data from multiple assessments to the GT, and the data is used at the district and school levels to inform instructional practices. The “Glows and Grows” component of the Board presentation highlights areas of high achievement and growth and identifies where the potential exists for improvement. The GT plays the critical role in guiding the allocation of resources.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

- Results of the district, schools and GT meeting their Improvement Plan goals
- Highest District CCRPI Score Among Metro-Atlanta and Large Districts, GADOE
- School Climate Star Ratings (22 schools scored a 4; 13 schools scored a 5), GADOE
- Georgia Milestones (Top 5 Subject/Grade Rankings), GADOE
- Georgia Scholars (3 out of 260 in GA), GADOE
- Highest Elementary and Middle School Scores in Metro-Atlanta, GADOE
- Highest County Graduation Rate Among Metro-Atlanta and Large Districts, GADOE
- Title 1 Distinguished School Awards, GADOE
- 12 Highest Performing or Greatest Gains School Awards, Governor’s Office of Student Achievement
- Exemplary School Board Award, Georgia School Board Association
- Advanced Placement (AP) District Honor Roll (1 of 373 Districts in the U.S.), College Board
- Highest SAT Score in Georgia, College Board
- Highest ACT Score Among Metro-Atlanta and Large Districts, ACT, Inc. National Blue Ribbon Schools (8 in the last 6 years), U.S. Department of Education
- STEM Certified Schools (3), GADOE, and STEM International Certified Schools (3), AdvancED
IV. **Climate, Culture and Stakeholder Engagement**

**V1. Positive School Climate (8.1, 8.2 & 8.4):** A positive school climate is created, shared and implemented among all stakeholders as indicated in Governance Team policies. Ongoing communication with all stakeholders and community involvement informs and supports the implementation of the district vision, mission and goals as outlined in the school district strategic plan. The Governance Team periodically reviews data and feedback on the effectiveness in creating a positive school climate and supports plans that proactively seek improvement of school climate, communication and engagement. There is evidence of a positive school climate, on-going communication and broad participation in school life of all stakeholders.

**V2. Culture of Learning, Culture of Innovation & Collaboration (8.3, 8.5, 8.6 & 8.7):** A culture of learning and innovation supports practices that establish an environment where success and continuous learning for students and staff are expected, identified and implemented. Collaborative relationships among all stakeholders support effectively working and learning together. Data and feedback are periodically reviewed by the Governance Team on the effectiveness of practices to implement a culture of learning; an environment to support continuous learning for students and staff; and collaborative relationships among all stakeholders. The Governance Team supports plans that proactively seek improvements in creating a culture of learning. There is evidence of continuous improvements in the creation of a culture of learning and engagement for all stakeholders.

**V3. Schools as Community Centers:** The Governance Team leads the school district in raising the profile of their schools and the district within the community by developing and maintaining partnerships with organizations with a compatible vision for student success. These partnerships may include, but are not limited to, parent/family organizations, civic groups, business and industry, faith-based organizations, and other groups or organizations in the community. Effective, sustainable partnerships provide benefits to both school/district and partner through reciprocal services and/or resources. The Governance Team promotes regular, open communication between the district and its partners.

**On pages 24-26, please respond to the three applications questions for Climate, Culture and Engagement.**
V1. Positive School Climate - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

   The Governance Team (GT) begins Strategic Planning by reviewing stakeholder input, both online and at focus groups, and reviews a variety of standards (AdvancED and GA Vision Project) and school and district data. They also collect input informally on school and district climate when they attend school events and Local School Council (LSC) meetings.

   For their major projects, such as the school calendar or redistricting, the GT provides opportunities for input both online and face-to-face. GT members attend the annual summer Leadership Retreat with school and district leaders and support the work of vertical teams.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

   Autonomy is not a word often used in a fast-growth large suburban school district. But in Forsyth, this is the norm. In the M & O budget, the GT provides staff allocation funds, but school leaders can decide best how to use the funds based on the needs of their school and community.

   For Social Emotional Learning, the GT has not mandated a one-size-fits all approach, but provided schools the opportunity to find or create programs that are best for their unique students. They often connect schools with external support by simply knowing and sharing the uniqueness of schools with others. This has led to large community donations for Wi-Fi for homes, and devices to not only extend learning, but also support it throughout school breaks.

   At each monthly meeting, the GT recognizes one school for a Superior Spotlight Performance. This is a direct tie to the district’s vision and exposes the work of our schools to a much larger (and televised) audience.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

   Almost 20 years ago, the district had K-12 foreign language. However, just having it in the schools did not mean it was effective. The GT knew that this was important to their community, so they took the time to allow staff to research student best practices. They were honest with the parents, teachers, and students about the process. Because of this trust, which is one of the district’s beliefs, the stakeholders supported the modification to a Dual Language Immersion program. The GT has provided for professional learning and the funding for these positions.

   Other examples include:
   - Participating in the CTAE Advisory, Culinary Arts Advisory, and Title 1 Advisory
   - Annual visits to Local School Councils
   - Hosting a breakfast with school leaders (principals and assistant principals) to ask for suggestions on improving school climate and culture
   - Discussing and receiving input concerning the redistricting process with high school principals
V2. Culture of Learning, Culture of Innovation & Collaboration - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

The FCS District Departments and Schools operated on individual improvement processes before 2013. Currently, the schools and district are unified with one Continuous Improvement Process: Plan, Implement, and Review. Attention to a focused direction and alignment of work promotes high levels of school and systemic achievement. This process, when combined with a clear Governance Team (GT) purpose and direction, leads to greater clarity and engagement that in turn grounds the FCS vision in practice.

FCS hosts three District Collaboration Days (DCD) during the school year where teachers and administrators attend professional learning sessions that relate to their areas of interest. Teachers, district leaders, and educational partners from outside the school system lead sessions. The personalized nature and variety of sessions allow teachers to improve their knowledge and skills in areas they believe are relevant to their instruction. The District created a Personalized Learning Program that included four schools for the 2017-18 school year and the addition of a Personalized Learning Instructional Coach at the District level. Additional coaches have been added to support an increase in schools participating in the program. Continued focus on personalized learning helps to ensure equity and rigor in all educational programs, experiences, and initiatives.

At the summer 2019 Georgia School Board Association (GSBA) conference, after learning more about the challenges rural school districts face, the GT contacted GSBA to be the first suburban district in the state to partner with a rural school district. The first areas of partnership will be professional learning and CTAE/college and career, with plans for further expansion.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

The GT began working with Schlechty Center, after the first strategic plan, to transform our schools into Learning Organizations. We are proud that our core business is to design engaging work for students that lead them to success. As a dynamic learning organization, the GT believes that Principals are Leaders of Leaders and we strive to fulfill our mission of “Preparing and inspiring all learners to lead and succeed” every day. The GT approved District Collaboration Days (DCD), demonstrating their support for a culture of continual learning and collaboration. They also approved a second Personalized Learning Instructional Coach that represents an innovative approach in promoting a culture of learning. The GT and all High School Principals visited Nashville and Clearwater Ford Next Generation Schools and had powerful debriefing conversations about how academies could make our large schools seem smaller and be more effective for all students. Members of the GT serve on the CTAE Advisory, Culinary Arts Advisory, Drug Council, Title One Advisory, Creative Industries, Beyond Propel, and the County Library Board.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

- FCS “Who We Serve” Diagram and FCS Data Dashboard
- Timeline for GT and Superintendent Cabinet strategic planning and continuous improvement
- FCS Continuous Improvement Process for School Improvement and Annual School Improvement Plans, including GT annual goals which are aligned to staff presentations delivered at board meetings.
- GT School Site Visits, Innovative Learning Team’s exhibit, and Diversity Training
V3. Schools as Community Centers - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

Before the creation of the first district Strategic Plan, members of the Governance Team (GT) worked with the Chamber of Commerce to create partnerships with community organizations and businesses. The Partners in Education program moved from the chamber to the school district when the GT approved a part-time staff position in 2002, which has now grown into a full-time position. In the current budget, the GT followed this same staffing model to partner with the chamber on a CTAE/college and career position to liaison with the schools and businesses.

The GT members serve on a variety of community boards and are actively engaged in non-profit fundraising, such as United Way (the district is consistently one of the top contributors). The GT has policies and procedures in place that allow small and large community groups to use district facilities for a variety of community events, including the Forsyth County PTO Council, advanced degree courses with local colleges, and Mountain Education Charter School for evening classes for students within and from surrounding counties.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

The Partners in Education program has grown into over 900 partnerships with 38 schools. The GT expanded partnership opportunities with the creation of the Forsyth County Education Foundation, which has provided $180,000 in funding over three years to support Social Emotional Learning and STEM/STEAM. At monthly board meetings, GT recognizes students and staff achieving state or national recognition, as well as employees of the month. Annually, the district recognizes parent leaders, Teachers of the Year and Partners in Education at a free community luncheon. This event has grown in attendance from 100 to now close to 600 participants. The GT is also involved in the creation of the Principal for a Day program, which has provided new opportunities for reciprocation between businesses and schools and launched the first State of the Schools event this year in partnership with the chamber and local businesses.

In the area of CTAE/college and career, the GT has funded one support position per high school to grow youth apprenticeship opportunities and to have teacher exposure experiences in the business environment. Additionally, in partnership with the Forsyth County Development Authority, the City of Cumming, Forsyth County Government, Lanier Technical College, the University of North Georgia and the Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce, the GT funded and opened last year a college and career high school, as well as a Discovery Center to serve other north Georgia school districts.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

- Participate in the local Drug Council, attend mental health meetings and the Superintendent’s quarterly Parent and Community Advisory meetings
- Work with school vertical teams to deliver back-to-school backpacks to students’ homes.
- Are actively engaged in Creative Industries, a community program for special needs adults
- Attended various diversity trainings with school and district leadership teams
- As a component of the district’s Strategic Plan, are involved in the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Design Team partnership with the Georgia Leadership for School Improvement (GLISI)
- Host community meetings with other local and state elected officials at our schools and attend meetings with religious leaders that are new faiths in the community
V. **School Finance**

**VI1. Budget Alignment (9.3):** The annual budget is aligned with the school district strategic plan, goals and objectives. Budgets are continually reviewed for alignment to the strategic plan and effectiveness in meeting the goals and objectives of the plan. Data is used to track effectiveness of meeting the plan’s goals and objectives and to revise current and future budgets.

**VI2. Resource Management (9.3 & 9.6):** Monitoring of the effectiveness of programs, initiatives and activities guides decisions to continue, enhance or end programs. The Governance Team regularly reviews the cost-effectiveness of programs, initiatives and activities through staff reports including student performance data and analysis of current district progress in achieving the school district strategic plan goals and objectives. There is evidence of improvement in the cost-effectiveness of programs, initiatives, and activities in sustaining and improving the educational function of the district as outlined in the strategic plan.

**VI3. Financial Accountability (9.6):** There is demonstrated accuracy of standard accounting practices, auditing procedures and financial reporting as directed by state and federal regulations as directed by Governance Team policy and reflected in the current version of the Financial Management for Georgia LUAS Manual. A fraud-prevention system and competitive-bidding process are directed by Governance Team policy. There is evidence of reviewing financial reports and future financial forecasting based upon current and prior data from district and audit reports for improved practices.

On pages 29-31, please respond to the three application questions for School Finance.
VI1. Budget Alignment - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

The Forsyth County Schools (FCS) budget is aligned with the Strategic Plan that encompasses our mission, “We prepare and inspire all learners to lead and succeed.” One of the goals is to plan and allocate resources by maintaining at least 65% of expenditures in instruction (FY20 73%) and maintain a 5-star financial rating. FCS utilizes all possible resource and funding streams from Local (48%), State (52%), and Federal (less than .001%) entities to provide the services needed to maintain and promote effective student learning.

The Chief Financial Officer works with all departments to create budgets that ensure student achievement while being fiscally responsible. The school improvement plans are developed, and the information is used to create the district plan that drives the budgeting priorities. The new Data Analytics Dashboard will have future rollouts this fiscal year to connect budget priorities and expenditures across departments and schools for increased alignment and transparency. FCS was one of the first districts in Georgia to adopt the IE2 Contract (Investing in Education Excellence), currently SWSS (Strategic Waivers School Systems), in 2009. This gave the district the flexibility to foster innovation and align our resources to achieve our Learner Profile goals that show our pathway to student success.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

The Governance Team (GT) approves the annual budget and continually monitors it to be sure it is in alignment with the strategic plan. Additionally, they follow policies and revise them as necessary. At monthly Board meetings, updates on the overall budget, the school budgets, and all financial documents are presented. In support of our belief the “Trust among all stakeholders is vital,” all financial information is available on our website.

Annually, the departments use data to evaluate their programs for effectiveness. The GT develops policies and procedures to ensure all financial resources comply. The Board approves the annual budget and the millage rate and conducts budget hearings and millage rate hearings, as mandated by law. Budget information is also posted on the district website and social media accounts. The GT works closely with the community to advocate for capital funding bonds and SPLOST taxes when more funds are needed. The GT actively educates voters on the purpose of each proposal at various community meetings, such as Local School Councils, Homeowners Associations, Rotary Clubs, Optimist Club, and the Retired Teachers Organization.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

- For the past four years, 73% of the budget has been spent on instruction
- Financial Efficiency Rating (5/5 Stars) for four consecutive years, the only district in Georgia to earn
- Lowest millage rate in the Metro-Atlanta area and has remained at 17.3 mills for five years
- Lowest cost per pupil expenditure among the state’s 12 largest school districts for many years, while maintaining the highest CCRPI and the highest graduation rate
- FY20 budget built with 15% fund balance
- The bond for $295 million passed with 66.5% on May 22, 2018
- All bond and SPLOST referendums have passed since 1992
VI2. Resource Management - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

The Governance Team (GT) understands that our community expects Forsyth County Schools (FCS) to use its resources wisely. FCS is the only school district in the state to have consistently received a 5-star Georgia Financial Efficiency Rating for the last four years because funds have been allocated based on FCS’ Strategic Plan and adhered to the budget. This rating indicates that FCS has high academic achievement paired with the lowest per-pupil expenditures among the 12 largest districts in Georgia. Additionally, FCS maintains the lowest operational millage rate in the metro-Atlanta area.

Assessment data, department reports and facilities updates are used to evaluate the alignment of our resources to the Strategic Plan. As new State and Federal standards are issued, and new assessments are required, resources are changed while still maintaining efficiency. As one of the original IE2 Districts (SWSS) the GT has had the flexibility to target resources to achieve the best results.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

The GT encourages the abandonment of initiatives, programs, materials and other resources that do not support district goals. Presentations to the GT ensure that the current programs and initiatives are achieving FCS’ goal of using resources in an efficient and effective manner. For example, the Board voted to put 10 chrome books in each classroom and replaced classroom interactive white boards and projectors that were 10-13 years in age with new touch/interactive boards. Also, there are fewer textbooks needed due to integration of technology and emphasis on the itslearning, the district’s personalized learning platform.

The GT increased staffing in the Finance Department and Purchasing Office. Changes made in these two areas have led to cost savings and improved customer service. Despite opposition from parents, the Board voted to support the Transportation Department’s change to a 3-tiered bus system several years ago. This has relieved traffic around cluster schools, decreased the need for drivers and buses, and saved millions of dollars.

The Board has approved several joint ventures with the county such as a Sheriff’s precinct at one of the high schools, shared turf practice fields, shared park/playground and potentially a library on one of our school sites.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

- Forsyth County students have the highest CCRPI scores in the metro-Atlanta area and the lowest cost per student for the last five years
- System continues to meet Strategic Plan financial goals
- Success of the county partnerships is shown by the continued approval of future ventures
- 28,000 students ride the bus daily; bus pick-up and delivery times, as well as traffic flow have improved
- 73% of the budget was spent on instruction for the past four years (the national average is 65%)
- Lowest millage rate in the metro-Atlanta area and have remained at 17.3 mills for five years
VI3. **Financial Accountability** - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. **Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.**

The Governance Team (GT) believes that “Trust among all stakeholders is vital” and that transparency is paramount in gaining the support of the community. To that end, the Finance Department ensures that the financial data presented to the GT and the public is accurate and timely. The financial reports are compiled in accordance with all rules and regulations required by law and accepted financial practices. They are reviewed by Moody’s, and Standard and Poor’s for bond rating validation every six months. Monthly reports are presented at the board meetings and are available for review on the district website. The reports include the M & O financial statements, capital fund investment information, SPLOST receipts, and school financial reports.

2. **Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.**

The GT has established fiscal management policies including annual operating budget, fund balance, debt limitation, federal funds, financial reports, fraud prevention, and purchasing. They also ensure financial and bond/SPLOST audits are conducted yearly to comply with state and federal regulations. The GT requested individual school financial reports, so parents could understand how local school income was allocated versus the district’s budget. Schools are also audited on a regularly. For the new school year, booster club guidelines and paperwork were updated for internal controls, audits, and federal requirements.

Forsyth County School (FCS) is proud to be one of 17 school districts in the United States to receive the highest possible bond rating, AAA, from both Moody’s and Standard and Poors (S&P). Having the highest possible credit rating is a benefit for taxpayers with lower interest rates on the sale of bonds. S&P currently rates 4,782 school districts with only 86 having a AAA rating, while Moody’s currently rates 13,363 school districts with only 88 having a AAA rating. Earning these prestigious ratings took years of GT fiscal planning and projecting.

The GT has completed GSBA required financial training sessions. They have joined GSBA members in Washington to advocate for better funding and more flexibility. A few years ago, the GT met with the county’s U.S. Representative to ask for relief for the lunchroom program. During the Georgia General Assembly session, GT continues to advocate for better funding. Based on this work, the district was able to adjust the senior exemption, which passed with increased local funding, by working with state legislators. As FCS’ student population continues to grow, the cost of education increases. The GT works closely with local Board of Commissioners (BOC) on zoning requests, roads and sewer infrastructure, and the joint use of facilities and properties. For the first time, the GT worked with the City of Cumming, the BOC, and the Forsyth Public Authority to build the Alliance Academy of Innovation and the Junior Achievement Center.

3. **How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.**

- Strong fund balance at 15% of expenditures
- Financial Efficiency Rating (5/5 Stars) for 4 consecutive years, the only district in the state
- 5 bonds, 3 SPLOSTS, 2 joint bond/SPLOST have passed since 1992
- Clean opinions issued on the financial and bond/SPLOST audits
- Police Precinct at South Forsyth High School
- New turf fields funded by the County Parks Department at our middle schools and new high school
Communications & Messaging
VII. Communications and Messaging

VII1. Communications Planning (District & BOE Plan)

A district communications plan is in place and contains a clear vision, purpose, goals, research and analysis of the community (internal and external audiences), timelines, communications channels, spokespersons, and information to be communicated. An aligned Governance Team communications plan is also in place to support the work of the Governance Team. The Governance Team communications plan includes the following components: identified goals; a designated spokesperson; strategies to ensure a single, unified voice on issues; and procedures for how the Governance Team will communicate with each other and the superintendent. Both communications plans are aligned to the Governance Team’s Goals outlined in the strategic plan. In addition, a Governance Team Advocacy Plan includes a process to advocate for public education to the community, legislators, businesses, parents and all vested stakeholders.

VII2. Messaging, Branding & Story Telling

The Governance Team has an established brand for visual recognition and marketing. The Governance Teams effectively communicates its vision and goals for the district. A plan for communicating the positive stories of the district’s identity, impact and purpose is in place. Advocacy for public education is embedded into the Governance Team’s messaging and storytelling and communicates the Governance Team’s policies, procedures, and the impacts of state law, legislation and the State Governance Team rules.

VII3. Communications Evaluation

Performance measures for the objectives and strategies of the district and Governance Team’s Communications Plans have been established and are annually reviewed for effectiveness and alignment to the district strategic plan. There is clear evidence of effective collaboration among the community leadership (legislators, city councils, county commission, chambers of commerce, etc), the district and the Governance Team.

On pages 34-36, please respond to the three application questions for Communications and Messaging.
VII1. Communications Planning - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

Communications is a strategic priority in Forsyth County Schools (FCS). Two of the district’s beliefs are “trust among all stakeholders is vital” and “a school-community partnership is essential”. With these in mind, the Governance Team (GT) ensures that the budget and resources are in place to manage and implement the district’s communications plan to support clear, consistent and effective communications with all stakeholders. FCS’ communications team, which has grown from one position in 2001 to five based on the recommendation of the GT, collaborates with all district departments and schools, as well as the GT. Areas of planning include internal/external communication, media relations, special purpose print materials, school and district web pages which include the first live-chat customer support feature for a school district, Parent Portal messenger for email, text and voice communication, a mobile app, electronic newsletters, graphic and video production, social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn Instagram, etc.) for the district and all schools, community relations/partnerships and special events.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

Stakeholders are provided multiple opportunities to shape decisions and work collaboratively on system and school improvement efforts. Input and feedback are solicited using a variety of communication tools and techniques. A Superintendent Student Advisory Council, Superintendent Parent and Community Advisory Council, and Superintendent Teacher Advisory Council meet regularly throughout the school year to provide vital information to stakeholders and obtain feedback from leaders of each stakeholder group regarding district initiatives. School board meetings are recorded and broadcast via cable television, the district’s website and YouTube channel. Monthly information on Board meetings are shared with all staff, parents and community members in the Board Briefs e-newsletter. Stakeholder input is also sought with online surveys for school CCRPI climate star ratings, student school calendars, redistricting and proposed/revised Board policies. Annually FCS participates in an annual review of the Comprehensive Local Education Agency Improvement Plan. All stakeholders including district office administrators, school administrators, teachers, families, and community members review the actions, strategies, and initiatives that all federal programs within FCS will implement for the following school year. GT members annually attend Local School Council meetings, New Educator Orientation, and school events, are all actively involved in the community, have strong relationships with our state delegation, and even drive golf carts at Educator Job Fairs to assist with parking and transportation. The GT had a key seat at the table with other community decision-makers for Forward Forsyth, a countywide economic and quality of life initiative.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

Communication is not just one goal in the district’s Strategic Plan; it is woven throughout all goal areas. Once such GT initiative from a prior Strategic Plan was to provide an opportunity for the community to partner with FCS to support innovative teaching and increased student achievement. The GT created the Forsyth County Education Foundation in 2015, which has awarded $180,000 in grants. Other examples include:

- Over the last 20 years, FC voters have supported multiple bond and SPLOST referendums by 63-88%.
- The GT worked with state legislators to modify the senior exemption, which was approved by voters.
- FCS monitors and evaluates communications planning using Asana (online project management) and an analytics tools within Hootsuite (social media), Blackboard (web), Constant Contact (newsletters), and Google Analytics (media monitoring).
VII2. Messaging, Branding & Story Telling - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

Close to 20 years ago, the Governance Team (GT) worked with the Schlechty Center to understand strategic action, future orientation, and direction and focus to connect multi-generational residents and newcomers to the count. By noting and discussing “defining moments” for Forsyth County Schools (FCS) during this process, our roots for messaging, branding and storytelling were created and became part of our culture. FCS’ messaging begins with the Strategic Plan, including vision, mission and beliefs, crafted by the GT and staff using feedback from our stakeholders. FCS’ story is shared with all staff during recruitment, orientation, induction, and ongoing professional development; FCS’ story is their story. It is also shared when working with students, parents and community members, using a variety of communication strategies and tools. The brand of FCS has been refined through the years, but always stayed consistent with GT leadership and actions.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

Messaging, branding and storytelling are around the FCS family. For example, the “all” in the district’s vision of “quality learning and superior performance for all” is intentional on behalf of the GT. As one school district, not a district of schools, we have ingrained into our culture and climate the concept of the FCS family. The GT members are visible and engaged family members; they are on a first names basis with all staff, they know and care about the staff, students and parents. They celebrate the honors and recognitions of our students and staff at monthly meetings, visit leading districts in other states with school leaders to share and learn from them, and work alongside staff during professional learning opportunities. At New Educator Orientation and community events such as the State of the Schools, the GT shares not only the story and history of Forsyth County but also that of the school district, centered around the vision, mission, beliefs and Strategic Plan. FCS also welcomes the opportunity to work with members of the media to increase awareness and build support for public education in Forsyth County. The GT’s relationship with local media is strong and consistent. They are ambassadors for our community in working with state and national elected officials on a variety of topics. Additionally, they have served as unofficial mentors for other GT members in surrounding districts and in the state.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

We know that this has worked because the GT work from two decades ago is infused into the climate and culture of our schools.

- Beliefs are practiced daily, not simply words on a wall.
- The Forsyth County “Family” is evident from the language used by and connections formed our GT to our staff members, students, and their parents. You can’t go into a school without someone mentioning the “Family” belonging and feeling they have or receive.
- FCS is consistently one of the top 15 fastest growing counties in the nation. The number one reason? The schools. We know this “works” because families (including our graduates, which we hired a record number for teaching positions this year) are staying in Forsyth or moving from all over the world to join our family (we have grown 53% in a decade). Though FCS has quickly become the 7th largest district in the state, what we repeatedly hear in surveys from our students, staff, and parents is that even with our growth, we still maintain a small-town feel and form connections that go beyond the walls of our schools – that is family.
VII3. Evaluation - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

The Governance Team (GT) has implemented processes to evaluate decisions and actions to ensure they are in accordance with defined roles and responsibilities. Board members and administrators are required to participate in a systematic, formal professional development process regarding their roles and responsibilities. They comply with all policies, procedures, laws and regulations and function as a cohesive unit for the benefit of effective system operations and student learning.

The GT consistently protects, supports and respects the autonomy of system and school leadership to accomplish goals for achievement and instruction and to manage the day-to-day operations of the system and its schools. They maintain a clear distinction between their roles and responsibilities, and those of system and school leadership. Every Strategic Plan goal area and district initiative have a communications plan, which includes an evaluation process, especially for GT work.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

The GT is responsive to the community’s feedback, and take efforts to build bridges with city council, county commissioners, and the state delegation. With the county’s fast growth, change is an every-day reality in FC. The GT practices the district’s belief that “change creates opportunities.” They have taken the lead in having all stakeholders at the table, especially when communicating between local-state-national leaders.

The GT was a part of the creation of the Graduate Profile and the evolution of it to a Learner Profile. GT members also work with stakeholders on the review of the Learner Profile, which is the work of our school district. It is displayed in every classroom in the district and at the center of all conversations. The Learner Profile lists the attributes we expect all students to possess by the time they graduate from one of our high schools. Over the years, the GT has thoughtfully and intentionally modified their annual goals to ensure alignment with the Learner Profile and Strategic Plan.

The GT reinforces accountability and stewardship messages by communicating activity related to and the oversight of FCS’ Facilities/Building Plan, which includes local and state-funded projects.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

- The GT’s strategic planning evolution to measurable goals, objectives, and initiatives has carried over to others using the same format. Examples include the Forsyth County Education Foundation revising rubrics to be SMART for grant requests and the need for multi-year academic plans in key curriculum areas.
- Communications planning is a cultural habit for GT policies, organizational procedures and practices. FCS uses the formal RACE (research, assessment, communication, and evaluation) communications planning process for the successful rollouts of key district initiatives and programs, the opening of new schools and the alignment of vertical school communities. Feedback and input are gathered through qualitative and quantitative evaluations.
- The creation of a data dashboard in 2006, followed by multiple evaluations and subsequent revisions since then, leading to the new Data Analytics Dashboard rollout and plan for the current school year.
Early Learning & Student Success
VIII. Early Learning and Student Success

1. Collaboration with local childcare providers and preschools. (3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.6) The Governance Team establishes and maintains partnerships with public and private sector groups that serve young children to ensure that children and their families receive the quality and quantity of services necessary to prepare them for success in school and life.

2. Curriculum and Assessment for Early Learners (3.5) The Governance Team ensures that a curriculum exists for Pre-K through 3rd grade that allows for alignment of standards and assessment both within and across these grade levels. The curriculum promotes learning and development in each of the following areas: social, emotional, physical, language and cognitive skills. The Governance Team annually monitors the effectiveness of the curriculum and instruction for early learners.

3. Instruction for Early Learners (3.5) The Governance Team ensures that instruction for children in grades Pre-K through 3rd grade is developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate. The Governance Team annually monitors the effectiveness of the instructional program for early learners.

On pages 39-41, please respond to the three application questions for Early Learning & Student Success.
VIII1. Collaboration with local childcare providers and preschools - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

Forsyth County Schools (FCS) has a Memorandum of Agreement on file with the Ninth District of Head Start’s Social Services organization. Through this partnership, we can provide Georgia Pre-K classes in two of our elementary schools. Additionally, FCS provides parent education classes for the Ninth District. Regarding the district’s Special Education Pre-K program, FCS follows the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) to guide curriculum and thematic units. To supplement the early learning standards and indicators for Cognition, Communication, Social-Emotional, Adaptive and Motor skills, FCS utilizes the Read it Once Again thematic-based units and the lessons from the preschool strand of the Unique Learning System. We also utilize Handwriting Without Tears to address fine motor skills.

All local daycares and preschools are given information on how to contact the Special Needs Preschool Program for assessment and support. We have Special Education personnel who directly support daycares and preschools through the Response to Intervention (RTI) program. In addition to direct classroom supports, the preschool program also offers free developmental screening on the first Friday of each month. A flyer advertising this information, along with the FCS contact information and an RTI packet is sent to each center. Free special education parent sessions are provided throughout the year on a variety of topics and open all residents.

Personnel offers specific free training to daycares and preschools on a variety of topics related to Child Find and identifying and working with students with special needs. FCS has a formal, written agreement with the Ninth District Head Start to provide on-site Special Education services, as well as transportation, if applicable. Our community-based preschool services have increased dramatically over the past several years as the training and collaboration with local centers has increased.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

The Governance Team (GT) approved and signed the Memorandum of Agreement between Forsyth County Schools and the Ninth District of Head Start. Members of the GT have visited Head Start preschool classrooms to serve as guest readers. One GT member also leads collaborative work by serving on the Forsyth County Library Board and is an appointed member of the Georgia Board of Early Care and Learning. The district works with the library to provide all students and staff with library cards.

The GT encourages community partnerships with organizations, such as Babies Can't Wait, an early intervention program that serves children with significant developmental delays, Children First identifies, Down Syndrome Association, and Alpha Hope Counseling that offers a 16-week group therapy seminar for parents with young children.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

- Head Start’s Ninth District has a task force that reviews the student data. Their findings show that students who attend the Pre-K program perform at a higher level on the Kindergarten standard assessments.
- Increase in partnerships and outreach
- Increase in special needs student achievement
VIII2. Curriculum & Assessment for early learners - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

The Georgia Standards of Excellence serve as the foundation for all curriculum and drive instruction in the district. FCS provides core curriculum, professional learning, and monitors best practices in the areas of English Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science. Additionally, the system provides highly effective interventions for students that need additional support.

Schools regularly purchase research-based materials to supplement the district-provided resources. Universal Screening, Progress Monitoring, and Common Assessments evaluate the progress of students and identify individuals who have specific learning needs or gaps in reading and math. Formal and informal classroom assessments provide information on the effectiveness of instruction and student growth.

The Multi-Tiered Systems of Support processes and expectations are clearly articulated to school leaders and teachers. Each elementary school has a well-defined system for intervening and addressing the social-emotional, behavior, and academic needs of all learners.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

In the last Strategic Plan, the GT approved changing the Graduate Profile to the Learner Profile. This was the catalyst in changing stakeholder mindset from looking at year 13 to instead focusing on all grades. The Learner Profile guides the planning and implementation of the School Improvement Plan. The Learner Profile has five categories: Pursue Continuous Learning, Exhibit Strong Personal Qualities, Utilize Creative and Critical Thinking, Engage and Contribute, and Interact Effectively. The GT believes that our mission, “We prepare and inspire all learners to lead and succeed,” applies to all grade-levels, and supports schools embracing Personalized Learning programs that fit the individual needs of their school community.

The GT approved the implementation of the Spanish Dual Language Immersion (DLI) program at three elementary schools beginning in the 2018-19 school year. The programs began with two classrooms in kindergarten and grow by two classrooms in the next grade level the following years. DLI will expand to an additional elementary school for 2020-21 school year. School administration and teachers participate in meetings and professional development to be prepared for implementation at their school.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

- Student achievement continues to improve
- Learner Profile has evolved from hanging in every classroom to become part of the culture and the daily practice of the district and schools
- High number of applications for the DLI program, and interest from other schools
- Improvement on the Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS), a yearlong performance-based assessment
VIII3. Instruction for Early Learners - Please respond to the three application questions that relate to this area.

1. Describe what occurred that is outstanding in the criteria area. Address all areas listed in criteria description.

   Forsyth County Schools (FCS) promotes and participates in collaborative and structured ways to support the improvement of instruction and improved student learning at all levels. In collaboration with the various district-level departments, each school is given the autonomy to implement various supports and resources based on the specific needs of each school’s unique student population. On-going professional development opportunities enable collaborative conversations across all school levels, content areas, and district departments, to effectively use multiple data sources to improve instruction and student outcomes.

   FCS teachers engage students and learning through instructional strategies to ensure achievement of learning expectations. Content teams are used at the district and school level, where teachers work collaboratively to map and plan lessons requiring student collaboration, the use of critical thinking skills, and self-reflection. Teachers personalize their instruction and school personnel use multi-tiered systems of support (response to intervention, relearn/recovery, instructional focus, gifted services, Special Education, ESOL) to address individual needs. Teachers also use content integration to engage students and create real-world connections.

2. Describe how specific Governance Team practices achieved or contributed to the outstanding accomplishment for the criteria area. Describe the Team’s role and/or actions leading to the accomplishment.

   Members of the Governance Team (GT) regularly visit schools to build relationships with teachers and students, and to observe instructional effectiveness. The GT ensures that Human Resources uses allotments to meet student needs. Regarding early learners, the GT has approved a minimum of two counselors in each elementary school in the next budget cycle, to improve student success. The GT encourages collaboration, and the district and school leaders continuously monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices to ensure student success. The results are presented to the board at their monthly meetings. Three district employees serve on the state Federal Programs Committee of Practitioners. In addition, a GT member now serves as an appointed member of the Georgia Board of Early Care and Learning. They realize that the sooner a child is identified as at-risk, the sooner the FCS can provide resources to ensure academic success.

   Based on conversations during the last strategic planning process, the GT and district have begun expanding the “all” in the FCS’ vision and mission to “all” children living in the county before their official registration. This has led to the new collaborative group called “Leap into Literacy,” which is comprised of FCS, Forsyth Public Library, Georgia Highlands Medical Group, and Literacy Forsyth. This group provides engaging academically-focused parent education events for young children and their families. Families are invited through local childcare providers and preschools. This collaborative group was also formed in response to the FCS’s Comprehensive Needs Assessment that identified the growing need of young learners entering kindergarten without the skills required to be successful. Beginning with the 2019-20 school year, the group is working to expand partnerships with local OB/GYN and pediatric offices to educate parents to give birth.

3. How do you know it worked? Describe the evidence that demonstrates the Governance Team’s practices were effective in meeting the criteria area.

   - Increased collaboration between schools, providers and community partnerships
   - Increase in participation in professional development offerings and participation
   - Recognition from the GA DOE for district and Title I schools