

LEON COUNTY SCHOOLS  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
2010  
THE LEON COUNTY SCHOOLS



## **2010 STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **Superintendent**

**Jackie Pons**

### **School Board Chair**

**Maggie Lewis-Butler**

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## Message from Superintendent



Dear Friends of Leon County Schools:

Our strategic plan is a blueprint for where our organization wants to go and how it intends to get there. It is an instrument that every taxpayer, Leon County Schools employee, parent and student can use to quickly identify the district's priorities and strategies for the next five years. Most important, the strategic plan creates throughout Leon County a shared understanding of the district's goals and objectives, and an easy-to-use tool to hold your schools – and your Superintendent – accountable.

Accountability is critical to the continued success of the partnership between our community and the school district – a partnership that I'm proud to say has produced a districtwide grade of A for each of the past six years, a graduation rate that has steadily increased since 2001, more than 10,000 individual community volunteers and more than 800 business partners.

We have a great deal to celebrate. Even so, we recognize that many significant challenges persist, ranging from issues related to student achievement, workforce readiness, safety and security, financial oversight, teacher retention and recruitment, parental involvement, and student and employee wellness, to name just a few. Many challenges are even more daunting by the fact that Florida in 2010 is still in the midst of its most difficult economic circumstances in memory. This makes the development of a meaningful, practical strategic plan all the more critical. However difficult the times we're in, we as a school district and as a community should not accept anything less than excellence – from our students and ourselves.

The strategic plan helps us all hold the bar high, not only to maintain excellent performance, but also to strive for excellence in areas where it has yet to be achieved.

Sincerely,  
Jackie Pons  
Superintendent of Schools

## Message from The School Board

As the chair of the Leon County School Board for 2009-2010 and on behalf of the entire School Board, I am pleased to present the board's priorities and objectives to the citizens of our community through this five-year strategic plan.



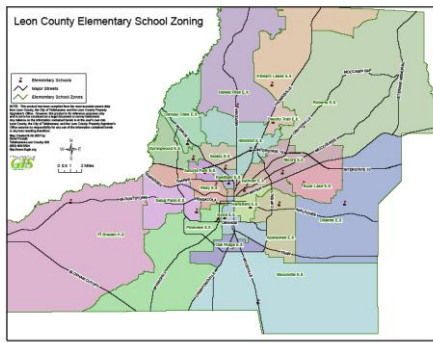
A successful school system depends on the partnership between the district and the community. But it also depends on collaboration between the School Board, which sets policy, and the Superintendent and his staff.

Fortunately, in Leon County our School Board and Superintendent have an excellent record of cooperation. That's because we share a common goal: preparing our young people to be successful learners and productive members of their community. Everything else that we do as a school board is secondary to that.

The strategic plan presents the vision, mission and core values of the school board, and shapes them into goals and objectives. As a result, voters can use the strategic plan to ask board members what they have done to hold the district accountable, and voters in turn can hold board members accountable at election time. That's why this plan is important: It establishes a clear record of responsibility.

Some documents gather dust or are stashed in some electronic archive almost as soon as they're completed. But the district's strategic plan will be dynamic. School Board members expect that this document will be used frequently to remind us all of our agreed upon strategy to provide even greater educational excellence and public service while continuing to give taxpayers the best bang for their buck.

Sincerely,  
Maggie Lewis-Butler  
Chair, Leon County School Board



## District Profile

The Leon County School District is led by Superintendent Jackie Pons, an elected official currently serving his second term. He is the twelfth superintendent to serve since 1917, so there have been long periods of operation under the same leadership. This stability encourages the adherence to a high level of standards. Leon County elementary schools were accredited system-wide by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 1962, making Leon County only the third county in Florida to achieve this status. In 1964, the district earned accreditation for first through twelfth grades and has maintained accreditation at all schools every year since. In 2009, Leon County Schools obtained district-wide accreditation.

Located at the juncture of Florida's panhandle and peninsula, Leon County is nestled amid majestic oaks and stately pines. Inheriting its name from the Spanish conquistador Juan Ponce de Leon, who settled the area in 1513 in search of the Fountain of Youth, Leon County encompasses urbanized Tallahassee, as well as rural towns, sweeping farmlands, dense forests, and numerous lakes, springs, and rivers. Tallahassee, established as Florida's capital in 1824, derived its name from the Apalachian Native American words *talwa* meaning "town" and *ahassee* meaning "old." It has long been recognized as a center of stability—as a ceremonial center for the Apalachee Indians, the site of the first Christmas mass in the New World, and the sole Southern capital to avoid capture during the Civil War.

Although the "old town" has experienced many changes, it has embraced its role as a governmental hub. The 2010 population was estimated at 274,803 which represents a 20.4% increase in the past decade. The median income is approximately \$63,600 and the unemployment rate is 7%, which is 10.5% below the statewide average. The largest major industrial sector is Public Administration (21%), followed by Education Services (12%) and Health Care and Social Assistance (11%). According to the United States Census Bureau, Leon County adults have the distinction of achieving the highest level of education of all of Florida's 67 counties.

Leon County Schools serves a diverse population of over 34,000 students at 52 school sites. Of these students, 49.0% are White; 41.3% are Black; 3.3% are Hispanic; 3.2% are Multi-racial; 3.0% are Asian; and 0.2% is Indian. Approximately 21% of students are identified as exceptional education students, and only 1% is limited English proficiency. Approximately 32% of students are economically disadvantaged, and less than 1% is considered migrant.

Two major universities, Florida A & M University and Florida State University, and one community college, Tallahassee Community College, are within the city limits. Students also have access to certification and four-year degrees through local branches of Flagler College, Barry University, and Keiser University, and Leon County School District's own Lively

Technical Center. In addition to providing postsecondary opportunities for Leon County residents, these institutions partner with the district through numerous programs, including college course credit in our high schools, research opportunities, school-based internships and field experiences, and articulation agreements. By guaranteeing that external stakeholders have meaningful roles, the district promotes a culture of ownership and maximizes local resources. During the 2009-2010 school year, 10,642 community members registered with the School Volunteers program. Throughout the year, 1048 citizens were placed as mentors with individual students. Collectively, volunteers donated more than 354,141 hours to the students in 2009-2010. Additional human and financial resources have been provided to the schools through the Partners for Excellence program, which involved 556 private sector and government entities in 852 individual school-based partnerships.

The district believes that students and staff are entitled to a safe and nurturing environment. By partnering with individual school sites, local law enforcement, and community organizations, Leon County Schools works to create, maintain, and enhance both physical and emotional well-being of students. The district provides an annually updated Crisis Response Manual and employs a comprehensive emergency drill and evacuation plan. Additionally, Leon County Schools utilizes a multifaceted communication system (phone, e-mail, text message) to mass notify parents and guardians regarding school emergencies. Each summer, as well as throughout the school year, district administration is trained on topics such as crisis response, Internet safety, bullying, drug prevention, and sexual harassment. The district has a long-standing, professional School Resource Deputy (SRD) program that deploys 20 deputies into the schools to provide security, deliver prevention programs, serve as role models, and supervise extracurricular activities. Visitors at all school sites must present a state-issued identification card in order to enter campus. This is checked against state and national sex offender/predator databases through the use of the RAPTOR visitor control system.

### **A summary of student performance across the system**

The graduation rate has increased almost 7.5% from 2001 to 2008. The 2008 graduation rate was 81.20%, which is higher than the state average of 75.4%. Increase in graduation can be attributed to several innovative programs that the district has implemented, including the standard seven-period day, high school academies, credit retrieval opportunities, the GED Exit Option, and dedicated graduation coaches at low-performing schools. The 2007-2008 school year ushered in a new wave of measures to ensure that students are prepared for each grade. The district began the utilization of comprehensive progress monitoring for core subjects in both elementary and secondary grades. This program assists in the early identification of students who need remediation. Additionally, the inaugural First Grade Summer Reading Academy, a public/private partnership, was planned and implemented during the summer of 2008. This program provides early intervention for students who are performing below expectations. By 2009-10, Leon County Schools had a complete progress monitoring system in each of the core areas.

Students are encouraged to participate in advanced and college preparatory coursework. This is evidenced in the high percentage (62%) of high school students enrolled in honors-weighted courses. During the 2006-2007 school-year, approximately 4,500 students enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. Of the 2007 graduating class, 60%

took the ACT assessment, which is a substantial increase from 47% in the 2001-2002 school year. Additionally, during those same years, participation in the SAT Reasoning Test increased from 59% to 72%.

Like many districts across the state during the 2008-2009 school year, Leon County did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as defined by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. Students did not show progress in reading or math in the following subgroups: black, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, or students with disabilities. The district did meet 85% of the criteria for proficiency and was the only district in the state that did not receive sanctions for AYP performance. The following chart outlines the performance of Leon County subgroups for 2008-2009 AYP.

	% scoring at or above grade level in Reading	% scoring at or above grade level in Math	Improved performance in Writing by 1%?	Increased Graduation Rate by 1%?
Total	66%	71%	Y	Y
White	80%	84%	Y	Y
Black	47%	52%	Y	Y
Hispanic	66%	74%	Y	N
Asian	85%	91%	Y	Y
American Indian	76%	89%	NA	NA
Economically Disadvantaged	49%	53%	N	Y
English Language Learners	52%	66%	N	NA
Students with Disabilities	42%	45%	N	Y

Since the inception of school grades, Leon County Schools has been ranked an “A” district according to the State of Florida's school accountability system. School grades are based on the combined student achievement of the school as measured by the state's assessments in reading, writing, science, and math. In 2009, approximately 70% of Leon County's schools earned a grade of “A” or “B,” and no school received a failing grade. In addition, seven other schools improved their grade by at least one letter. Twenty-five schools earned a total of \$1,850,000 in state school recognition funds for academic performance.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>District Grade</b>	A	A	A	A	A
<b># of schools earning A</b>	20	25	19	21	22
<b># of schools earning B</b>	11	9	9	6	12
<b># of schools earning C</b>	3	3	7	11	5
<b># of schools earning D</b>	4	2	3	2	2
<b># of schools earning F</b>	0	1	1	0	2

## District Accreditation



During the 2008-09 school year, Leon County Schools successfully underwent the AdvanceEd District Accreditation Process. District-wide accreditation represents a powerful systems approach to improving student education. Schools and the district work together in harmony and the entire school system focuses on improving student learning. As a district, it moved Leon County Schools to a model where the system is designed for continuous self-evaluation and improvement. This lengthy and in-depth application process required much individual and group reflection that critically assessed seven areas:

#### Vision and Purpose

Governance and Leadership

Teaching and Learning

Documenting and Using Results

Resources and Support Systems

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

In addition, AdvancEd sent a Quality Assurance Review Team for an extended onsite visit to Leon County Schools. The team used the standards to guide its review of the school district, looking for adherence to individual standards, and also how the school district and schools function as a whole and embody the practices and characteristics of a quality school district. Through its examination of the school district's adherence to the standards, the Quality Assurance Review Team prepared reports on each standard, highlighting strengths and suggestions for improvement specific to each standard. The Quality Assurance Review Team also examined the effectiveness of the district's methods for quality assurance. The team reviewed the district's practices and methods to monitor and document improvement, provide meaningful feedback and support across the district, ensure that AdvancED standards are met and strengthened, and regularly collect, use, and communicate results. The quality assurance review team's findings identified common themes, significant accomplishments, and pressing needs facing the district; which lead to the overall commendations and recommendations. An excerpt from the AdvancED report is provided below.

#### **Commendations**

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends Leon County School District for the following strengths and accomplishments. While additional strengths are noted in the detailed review of each standard that appears later in this report, the commendations listed below are the strengths that the team believes are most deserving of being highlighted. The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the Leon County School District for:

#### **Providing high quality systemic professional development at the district and school level.**

A 5-year Master In-service Professional Development Plan is in place with numerous opportunities for both instructional and non-instructional staff to partake of training activities that are geared toward enhancing instruction. As a result of data indicating the need for such trainings, Larry Bell was secured to provide staff development on closing the achievement gap and Ruby Payne on teaching children of poverty. Other district-wide training opportunities include reading endorsement classes and gifted endorsement classes. Professional development

at the school level is ongoing and utilized by teachers as needed. The Career Development Initiative provides staff development for non-instructional staff to further their educational goals. This commitment to ongoing professional development ensures that teachers are equipped to meet the educational needs of the diverse population of students within the district.

**Using a wide variety of methods to communicate information about student performance, the school, and the school system with stakeholders.** Teachers, students, and parents who were interviewed consistently stated that principals and district staff, including the superintendent, had open door policies and were very accessible. District leaders and board members pride themselves on the transparency of the communication in the district. The school board even has a student representative at each board meeting to provide a voice for the students of the district. Various advisory councils at the district and school levels also provide a venue for stakeholder input. In addition, the superintendent is committed to listening to stakeholder concerns through Community Conversations. The Parent Portal is being piloted at some schools, and plans are in place to implement it in all schools. This program allows parents to view their child's grades online and provides the capability to email the teacher with questions and concerns. A dedicated television channel and the district website provide venues for disseminating information about the schools and the district. Print material, such as newsletters, newspaper articles, report cards, progress reports, handbooks, and planners, are other means used to convey information to stakeholders without the benefit of technology. Face-to-face opportunities for stakeholders to gather information are evident at each school through parent conferences, open houses, Parent Nights, committee meetings, and the superintendent's community conversations. An effective system of communication has fostered a collaborative relationship with stakeholders and has resulted in stakeholder groups who are well-informed, knowledgeable, and supportive of the district's goals for improvement.

**Implementing a comprehensive assessment system for data collection and analysis, which includes the sharing of results with administrators and school faculties, has been developed.** An abundance of information from standardized and district measures is collected, organized, and communicated. It is used to guide instructional decisions, plan professional development, and allocate resources. A district team visits each school at the beginning of the year to review and help develop a plan of instruction for student achievement. It is also noteworthy that the district produces *The Data Book* for distribution throughout the school system. This data supports decisions regarding remediation, intensive interventions, student placement, and support services.

**Electing a superintendent who is highly visible throughout the schools and community and provides numerous opportunities for dialogue with stakeholders.** As evidenced by statements from stakeholder interviews and the superintendent's community conversations with stakeholders, all stakeholders have an opportunity to ask questions and express opinions. This has resulted in a high level of community support for the school system.

**Recognizing the need to operate a non-traditional high school (SAIL) for students who need this approach to be successful.** A review of documents including the SAIL School Improvement Plan and the district's Data Book, interviews with faculty, community stakeholders, and students of the school finds an award-winning alternative (non-disciplinary)

school of choice that embraces innovative administrative/managerial practices, encourages freedom of individual expression, and employs a combination of traditional and non-traditional pedagogy. Those attributes combined with high academic expectations have created a unique learning environment where students excel academically and socially, become an integral part of the decision-making process, and take pride in being a member of what is characterized as being a “school family.” The school uses an inclusive process where all stakeholder groups have ample representation and input in the selection of faculty and staff. Such a process helps the school ensure that potential staff members possess the knowledge and skills to become highly effective members of the staff and have the professional demeanor that is contributive to the nontraditional nature of the school. The results of such structure and approach have consistently led to test scores that exceed state and district averages, a low dropout rate, high graduation rates, and very involved and supportive cadre of stakeholders.

**Providing a safe and orderly environment throughout the district ensures a climate conducive to learning.** School community stakeholders recognized the district’s commitment to providing a safe and secure environment for all students as evidenced by statements from interviews. The district has implemented a security pass system (Raptor) which processes all visitors to schools. Gates and fencing are being installed at all schools throughout the district. The superintendent has identified school safety and security as a priority. This has resulted in a safe and orderly learning environment for all students and staff members.

## **Recommendations**

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following recommendations for improvement. The team focused its recommendations on those areas that, if addressed, will have the greatest impact on improving student performance and overall effectiveness of the school district. Leon County School District will be held accountable for making progress on each of the recommendations noted in this section. Two years following this review, the school district will be asked to submit a progress report on these recommendations. The district should refer to the detail provided in the standard reports for guidance and greater depth on the recommendations.

**Identify, implement, and monitor additional strategies to close the achievement gap while maintaining high expectations for all students.** Through interviews and a review of *The Data Book*, the team found that Leon County did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2007-08. Not showing progress in reading or math were the following subgroups: African American, economically disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities. However, as the district is addressing the needs of the lowest performing quartile in each school, high expectations must be maintained for all students. Ensuring that students are engaged in active instruction that is targeted to meet individualized learning needs will improve student achievement and close achievement gaps.

**Develop a District Strategic Plan which includes all annual performance goals to be used as the foundation for school improvement plans.** Evidence collected through the review of documents and stakeholder interviews indicates that the district’s 5-year strategic plan is not being used to guide each school’s improvement plan. Rather the district places more emphasis on

the priorities that have been added to the strategic plan for alignment. By creating an effective and updated strategic plan, the district can develop a guide for alignment in all school improvement plans.

**Formalize system-wide curriculum maps, pacing guides, and formalized assessment in core subject areas.** Through interviews with faculty and students and review of curriculum materials, the team noted a lack of system-wide implementation and progress monitoring of core subject areas. By working to formalize curriculum maps, pacing guides and formalized assessments in core subject areas, the schools and district can more effectively evaluate student performance of all sub-groups across the district.

**Review the organizational structure of the district in order to effectively manage the many requirements and processes of the system.** As evidenced in interviews with the board, the superintendent, other district office administrators, principals, and teachers, accountability requirements from state and federal mandates have increased and have begun to put a strain on the current staff that is responsible for monitoring and supporting these requirements. Staff reductions at the district office have been necessary due to recent budget cuts from the state resulting in the present staff wearing many “hats” to accomplish these requirements. A change in the organizational structure may be needed in order to provide all staff with clear job descriptions to foster greater system effectiveness and efficiency.

Our school district has several areas we consider major strengths. The ongoing professional and collegial working relationship between and among the elected superintendent, the elected school board members, our employees and employee unions, our parents, students, and community. That positive environment allows everyone to concentrate on the ongoing issues and challenges facing the school district as well as providing support to schools to address the unique needs of the students they serve.

**The quality of teaching staff.** Currently, 52.8% of teachers have ten or more years of teaching experience, and 42.7% hold an advanced degree. More than 200 instructional staff members are National Board Certified Teachers. Of the approximate 2,300 teachers in the district, all teach in their field of certification except for 25. Approximately 91.5% of the teaching staff is highly qualified according to criteria of the federal No Child Left Behind law. In turn, these teachers lend support to each other through a highly effective staff development program that includes support for beginning teachers, quality mentoring programs, and ongoing in-service activities where teachers share their strengths.

**On-going communications.** Community relations with media, community members, parents, social service agencies, postsecondary education institutions, and local government which resulted in additional resources to support the work of the district. Internal communications are two way, intended to facilitate the day-to-day work of staff, departments and schools.

**Strong stakeholder support for the district.** Community stakeholders have committed to ongoing financial support as well as large amounts of time to work with and in the schools to demonstrate that support. This has provided the ability to maintain safe, secure, technologically-rich learning environments in which effective teaching and learning can occur.

**Pride, ambition, and focus of employees.** Our district staff at all levels takes tremendous pride in its work and constantly strives to improve. The staff invests in training time and constantly looks for new ideas and better ways to work. From curriculum specialists to bus drivers, the focus is always on improved student learning.

A steady and sufficient revenue source to continue the work of the district. This is the greatest need of the district. Since 2007, the Leon County Schools budget has been cut by \$50 million. Up to this point, the district has been able to minimize impact on classrooms by reductions in other areas. In the event of continued declining revenues and increasing student enrollment, classrooms could be impacted.

Providing instructional support by expanding the progress monitoring tools used in core curriculum areas is an ongoing area of emphasis. This, also, could be impacted through further budget constraints, and require an innovative solution.

Continuing to increase student performance for identified subgroups, particularly African-American, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, and students with disabilities remains a target area for schools serving those populations as well as the district.

Revision of evaluation standards and criteria to include student growth measures, principal observation and student, peer and parent input. Also principal evaluations based on student growth and recruiting, retaining and removing teachers and the development of a compensation, promotion, and retention system that uses this.

This strategic plan builds on the identified strengths and weaknesses as well as the commendations and recommendations made by the quality assurance review team.



## **Description of the Process for Development and Adoption of the Strategic Plan**

Leon County Schools (LCS) currently has a district strategic plan that was created in 2004 and developed as a planning document for a five year cycle lasting until 2009. The purpose of this strategic plan is to construct long-term goals with measurable objectives that will provide continuity and focus for all LCS employees and alignment for everyone from the classroom and hallways to the Superintendent and School Board. The revision of the strategic plan was a long-term process that was contemplative and involved many stakeholders in order to constructively develop and communicate the mission and objectives of LCS.

### **Development Model**

The strategic plan was developed using a systems thinking approach and built on the self-assessment results of the district accreditation process. It also utilized the previous strategic plan, vision and mission statements, school board priorities, and the Florida Department of Education strategic areas of focus. Two additional methodologies will be utilized: VMOSA is a model based on the acronym for vision, mission, objectives, strategies and action; and SWOT is a model based on the acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Both describe a strategy of defining an organization's current status, determining the direction for the organization and then developing a strategy to get there. Both are iterative and involve many stakeholders. The strategic plan development process was thorough and exhaustive in order to be a realistic expression of LCS priorities and a strategy to meet each goal. The process was guided by a strategic plan development committee whose membership included district directors, data analysts, school administrators, and teachers.

The process began with a school board workshop for board members to address the vision and mission statements and evaluate whether or not it was an accurate expression of what they want Leon County Schools to represent. Second, board members provided long-term goals consistent with the vision and mission. Third, board members provided their own individual priorities and then built priorities as a board.

The committee began by making a thorough assessment of existing school district data, including the data book, and the information compiled for the district wide accreditation process.

The strategic plan development process continued with a series of committee development workshops. Workshops with the entire leadership team, and a series of smaller workshops that involve representatives from various departments as needed. The purpose of the workshops was to work from the goals and priorities set by the board to define quantifiable objectives and establish assessment methods. This was an iterative process to develop and refine goals, and to establish objectives and evaluation criteria.

### **Stakeholder Involvement**

A strategic plan sets the direction for an organization and must be well conceived and implemented. When everyone is engaged in the process and has meaningful contributions it can

really energize an organization. LCS is fortunate to have a very supportive community; and also dedicated and knowledgeable teachers and staff. In order to capitalize on these resources, the following groups participated in the development of the strategic plan:

The Leon County School Board – LCS has a school board with five elected representatives from single-member districts. The board is also supported by a school board attorney and student representative.

Leadership Team – The LCS Leadership Team serves as an advisory and support team for the Superintendent and includes top district administrators from every division, including Information Technology, Human Resources, Construction and Facilities, Curriculum, Research, Testing and Evaluation Services, Professional Standards, Finance, Safety and Security, Exceptional Student Education, Transportation, Communications, Policy and School Management.

District Advisory Council – The DAC is a parent and community group representative of every school. Members are appointed by each school as well as the Superintendent and each school board member. The DAC is an advisory group to the school board and superintendent and makes recommendations regarding policy, budget and school issues.

Central Council – The Central Council is a small advisory group consisting of school administrators, teachers, district administrators and citizen representatives. Their purpose is to provide guidance and oversight on school improvement.

LCS Administrators – School principals and district staff meet monthly to discuss many issues of relevance to the school sites.

LCS Department Leaders – Department leaders were an integral part of the strategic plan development process and served as subject matter experts.

### **Long-term Implementation Process**

The strength of the strategic plan is in the implementation and continuous improvement that follow. The three critical elements are the description of the goals for improvement, the interventions identified to meet the goals, and the action needed to implement those interventions. The district strategic plan is focused on achieving the district's goals and provides a plan based on the defined vision, mission, profile and articulated goals. The validity of the strategic plan and continuous improvement process is that it is data driven. Professional and Community Services will be responsible for updating the strategic plan annually based on new data, accomplishments, strengths and weaknesses redefined and an evaluation of goals and priorities.

## Leon County Schools Vision and Mission

### Vision

Leon County Schools will be an engaging, safe and respectful learning environment that embraces change and produces successful learners who value diversity and are conscientious contributors to our society.

### Mission

The mission of Leon County Schools is to prepare students to become responsible, respectful independent learners equipped with the critical thinking skills necessary to compete in our global society.

### Core Values

**Excellence** - LCS pursues the highest standards in academic achievement and organizational performance.

**Integrity and Personal Responsibility** – LCS requires the highest level of integrity and personal responsibility for individual actions as a family member, teacher, student and citizen.

**Equity** - LCS fosters an environment that serves all students as we strive to eliminate the achievement gap.

**Citizenship** - LCS honors the diversity of our community by working as a team to ensure the educational success of all our students and recognize that our obligations go beyond our professional responsibilities to promote democratic principles.

**Compassion and Respect** – LCS builds positive relationships through honesty, respect and compassion, which enhance the self-esteem, safety, and well-being of all stakeholders.

**Perseverance** – LCS promotes the inner strength to remain constant to a purpose, idea, or task in the face of obstacles. This includes dedication, consistency and having a positive attitude.





## The Strategic Plan

Leon County Schools is focused on four pillars to achieve our mission to prepare students to become responsible, respectful independent learners equipped with the critical thinking skills necessary to compete in our global society. These pillars are to improve student performance; to provide a safe environment and quality infrastructure; to provide the best resources available; and to build an informed and engaged community. The strategic plan was developed around the pillars and will support and guide everyone within Leon County Schools to reach the mission and vision. Within each pillar are established goals and a status report for that goal.



### Student Performance

Student performance is the ultimate goal of any school district and can be measured in a variety of ways. For Leon County Schools, it is our mission to prepare students to become responsible, respectful independent learners equipped with the critical thinking skills necessary to compete in our global society. Student performance is a necessary tenant in order to accomplish our vision and mission.

Leon County Schools ensures that our vision and mission guide student performance through a communication plan and through ongoing evaluations and assessments developed through the Division of Teaching and Learning to permeate curriculum, instruction, policies and district practice. Provided here is a summary of some of the ways that Leon County Schools prioritizes student performance through monitoring, assessment, and teaching.

#### **Goals & Current Status**

Leon County Schools has defined the following goals related to the pillar, Student Achievement:

- Improve Student Achievement
- Prepare Students for College or Career
- Close the Achievement Gap Among Subgroups of Students
- Provide Educational Choice to Meet the Diverse Needs of Students
- Increase the District Graduation Rate

Currently, Leon County Schools has a variety of methodologies to track student performance and to monitor, strategically plan and meet these goals improve student achievement, prepare students for college or career and to close the achievement gap.

Each school's improvement plan is aligned to the district's vision and expectations for student learning. The district ensures this by maintaining a current policy on school improvement. A School Improvement web site is utilized to provide ongoing technical assistance and an archive of prior activity. The School Board approves School Improvement Plans and results on an annual basis. The School Improvement Central Council is involved in the annual review of Improvement Plans and results. School Improvement training and technical assistance is provided annually and additionally as needed. The District Intervention and Assistance Committee provides for additional technical assistance and resources, when needed, to schools in need of improvement. Targeted schools have implemented Florida's Continuous Improvement Model (FCIM), following the Plan, Do, Check, and Act process which includes decision making based on data and implementation of research based programs. District directors meet each month to monitor the progress of schools. The district also follows the Florida Department of Education differentiated accountability model.

For additional support, the district created a curriculum leadership team, including the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, general and special education leaders, curriculum specialists, curriculum specialists, behavior specialists, student services personnel, human resources and professional development leaders, and specialists of various areas such as assessment, English Language Learners, gifted learners, etc. The ongoing purpose of this team is to develop, support, and facilitate the implementation of policies and procedures that guide school-based teams with direct support systems for each school principal, and to plan for systems of change toward Problem Solving and Response to Instruction/Intervention (RtI) through district-wide consensus building, infrastructure development, and implementation. This team also works with identified schools to ensure that each is fully staffed by the first day of school, including reading coaches, math coaches, and science coaches as appropriate. The team also works with the school's professional learning communities and lesson study groups to analyze data and utilize monitoring tools.

The School Advisory Council assists in the development of the School Improvement Plan, which is implemented by school administrators and faculty. The school advisory council reviews school performance data, determines causes of low performance, and advises the school on its School Improvement Plan. The school completes a mid-year report to analyze progress and identify strategies for student intervention from the baseline to mid-year assessment.

For day-to-day monitoring used in analysis, intervention and planning, Leon County Schools currently uses various methodologies to monitor and assess student performance, including:

Progress Monitoring – Academic progress of all students is monitored on a regular basis using multiple measures. The state's Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN) is used to monitor student achievement in the area of reading based on the results of the *Florida Assessment and Instruction in Reading (FAIR)* assessment, which is administered three times a year. In addition to this tool, other routine monitoring tools and instruments are specified for Reading, Math, Writing and Science. These include classroom and benchmark assessments, and ongoing progress monitoring through curriculum based assessment such as *CELLA* for English Language Learners, *Writes Upon Request*, practice FCAT tests, and computer software tools such as Pearson's *Successmaker* and *Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)*. Our district considers progress monitoring and differentiated instruction as integral to one another. Differentiated

instruction ensures success of all students including those performing above grade-level. Instructional strategies are based on the results of progress monitoring. If a student is not making progress, then diagnostic testing must occur.

Diagnostic Assessment – If a student is not making progress during a planned intervention, a diagnostic assessment is administered to isolate special needs and to plan immediate intensive interventions in order to deal directly with the identified deficiency. The diagnostic instrument used is the FAIR Toolkit (assessment toolkit).

Summative Assessment – Summative assessment instruments are specified for Reading, Math, Writing and Science as indicated in the [LCS Testing Calendar](#). Summative assessments include FCAT reading, writing, math, and science tests as well as PSAT, SAT, ACT, and Advanced Placement exams.

LCS also recognizes the importance of identifying students at risk of dropping out or falling behind their graduation cohort. Closing the achievement gap and increasing the graduation rate are two very important goals. To plan for this, Intervention Assistance Teams, consisting of school and district personnel, meet on a regular basis to review student data and information and to suggest possible appropriate interventions available. Differentiated instruction and intensive intervention in classrooms is available at all schools to support student learning. These programs include, but are not limited to:

Before, during and after school tutoring exists at all schools, both elementary and secondary, to provide interventions for students. Several schools also offer tutoring on Saturdays for students. Reading and math intensive courses offered at all secondary schools for students in need of intervention and remediation in those subject areas. Grade and Credit Recovery Programs offered at secondary schools for students who have previously failed a class

Several initiatives exist in the district to address the achievement gap that exists among subgroups across the district. AVID program identifies under-represented students who have the potential but are not likely to be on a college preparatory track and provides assistance, mentoring and instructional strategies to increase the chances of college attendance. The SREB (Southern Regional Education Board) provides professional development for secondary schools to increase student achievement (as funded by the Florida Department of Education). Programs include High Schools That Work and Middle Schools That Work.

SMARTS report is generated annually and distributed to schools to help identify and offer interventions to students who may be in danger of school dropout.

The Booker T. Washington Achievement Program has been implemented to provide mentoring and academic assistance to identified students at several schools. Nationally known and respected speakers, such as Ruby Payne, Calvin Mackie and Larry Bell have addressed district stakeholders and provided resources proven to be effective in closing achievement gaps. A consultant from The Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education has been hired to assist in analysis of AYP data and offer mentoring as the district attempts to further narrow the achievement gap among subgroups.

21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Centers are offered in low socio-economic neighborhoods and provide homework and other academic tutoring services to students in the district.

Leon County Schools values school choice as a means to provide increased opportunities to all of our students. The School Choice Program provides educational choices with unique opportunities for in-depth experiences and study in specific areas of interests. Choices include concentration in performing arts at both the elementary and middle school levels and math and science concentration at both levels. The district offers multiple educational choices for students to explore application of their learning and investigate new approaches such as S.A.I.L. (School for Applied Individualized Learning), Advanced Placement programs, Dual Enrollment, Career Academies, Florida Virtual School and also offers and supports a GED Exit Option program for eligible students. Career Academies are located throughout the district at several high schools and include culinary arts, informational technology, health sciences, finance and architecture, engineering and construction. Pre-International Baccalaureate and International Baccalaureate programs are offered. The Ghazvini Learning Center offers alternative academic programs for students who have been suspended or expelled from their assigned home school. Leon County Schools also supports Department of Juvenile Justice programs such as the AMIKids, Devereaux and PACE School for Girls.

Leon County Schools also has five charter schools that provide additional choice opportunities.

Gifted students have the opportunity to take advantage of on-campus gifted programs at various sites as well as academic excellence activities such as Brain Bowl, Mu Alpha Theta Math competitions, Mock Trial, District and Regional Science Fair and History Fairs, Tropicana Public Speaking Contest, Scripps Spelling Bee, Kids Voting, Math Counts and Model United Nations.

The Exceptional Student Education Program offers specialized curriculum as well as access to general educational curriculum and intervention programs. District ESE personnel work alongside school-based personnel to provide training and assistance in meeting individual needs of students. The district has provided training and support to teachers for understanding and implementation of the ESE Access Points to the Sunshine State Standards. Program Specialists and ESE curriculum specialists provide additional support to teachers, students and parents to provide and support a curriculum that challenges and meets the needs of ESE students. Students who are identified with a disability have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that meets their needs. The district uses a variety of service-delivery models for students with disabilities, including the following: (1) inclusion (2) co-teaching (3) support-facilitation (4) resource (5) full-time (6) self-contained.

The district's ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Program provides instructional support in language development, academic achievement and cultural assimilation for students with various levels of English proficiency. ESOL services are provided in regular programs as well as at ESOL center schools.

Concerned with the impact of charter schools, voucher programs and also our own choice programs, the district annually evaluates such programs as well as ongoing monitoring of choice programs throughout the district, the mission of each program and the impact of such programs on the demographics and capacity at each school site.

**Alignment of All Pillars**

Student performance is dependent upon the other three pillars defined in the strategic plan, all of which are necessary to achieve high student performance. Students cannot succeed without a safe environment to learn in, the best teachers and resources available to them, and the support of their parents and community. Community engagement both within the school as well as throughout the community reinforces the efforts of the school system and the achievements of all of our students.

The Florida Next Generation Standards, the AdvancEd standards and the Race to the Top guidelines all include various measures of student performance. In defining the goals and measures of student performance all of these standards have been included. The Florida Next Generation Standards include specific goals to strengthen foundation skills, to improve college and career readiness, to expand opportunities for postsecondary and to improve K-12 education choice. All of these goals are reflected in the goals of the LCS strategic plan pillar on student performance. Related, more specific goals can be found in the district improvement plan. The individual school improvement plans include several components of student performance which are captured within the goals and implementation plan of this pillar, including academic performance of feeder schools, data disaggregation, student retention rates, school grades, AYP, and FCAT scores.

**Goals & Objectives**

In developing this first pillar of the strategic plan, an assessment of current data, programs and practices determines that in order to fulfill our vision and mission, Leon County Schools should focus on four primary areas: improving student achievement; preparing students for college or career; closing the achievement gap among subgroups of students; providing educational choices for all students; and increasing the district graduation rate. The following objectives support these goals.

Goal:	<b>Improve Individual Student Performance</b>
Actions:	Assist and guide each school in the development of school improvement plans, including district website for reporting and submission of plans.
	A District Intervention and Assistance Team will provide guidance and support to low-performing schools.
	Expand the use of progress monitoring tools to monitor the individual and aggregate progress of students in every school in the core subject areas.
	Provide diagnostic assessments that can determine student needs and to determine which interventions would lead to success.

	Continue the use of summative assessments to monitor student performance.
	Provide tutoring before, during and after school as appropriate.
	Expand progress monitoring tools that are currently used in core curriculum areas.
<b>Goal:</b>	<b>Prepare Students for College or Career</b>
<b>Actions:</b>	Develop career academies that provide industry certifications for students in high-demand fields.
	Provide guidance counseling that informs students of all options
	Provide opportunities such as honors, advanced placement and international baccalaureate programs and courses.
	Build career, business and vocational opportunities for secondary students.
	Build stronger coalitions with pre-kindergarten through higher education and workforce development leaders locally and throughout Florida to better meet the needs of students who are headed for college and those who are not.
	Improve the district graduation rate, with planning toward the change in types of graduation rate data used by the State.
<b>Goal:</b>	<b>Close the Achievement Gap Among Subgroups of Students</b>
<b>Actions:</b>	Identify under represented students that have the potential but may not be on the college preparatory track and provide assistance, mentoring and instructional strategies.
	Identify students who may be in danger of dropping out and provide effective interventions.
	Support and expand initiatives that identify subgroups in the district that need extra support, mentoring and academic assistance.
	Provide nationally known training and consultants to work with teachers and administrators to identify and close the achievement gap among subgroups of students.
	Evaluate the needs of over-age for grade students and various programs nationally to determine what programs are successful and what more can be done to provide assistance to these students in Leon County Schools.
<b>Goal:</b>	<b>Provide Educational Choice to Meet the Diverse Needs of Students</b>
<b>Actions:</b>	Continue to provide a variety of choice programs at under-utilized schools at every level. LCS offers an arts program and a math and science program at the elementary level; a pre-IB program, a science and technology program, an information technology program, and a performing arts program at the middle school level; and an information technology and an international baccalaureate program at the high school level.
	Conduct annual evaluations of each program considering the quality of instruction offered as well as the number of students enrolled, school capacity and district-wide needs.
	Provide school choice to meet the special needs of families who may have economic or medical hardships.
	Provide programs to meet the needs of students in special circumstances such as the Ghazvini Learning Center; PACE; the 100 Success Academy; and SAIL that meet

	students unique academic and behavioral needs.
	Provide a variety of programs for adult learners to be successful in a changing economy through Adult and Community Education and Lively Technical Center.



## **Provide a Safe Environment**

It is imperative that Leon County Schools meet the fundamental needs of our students in order for them to learn and to achieve. It is the district’s mission to be an engaging, safe and respectful learning environment that embraces change and produces successful learners who value diversity and are conscientious contributors to our society.

### **Goals & Current Status**

Core to this is an environment that is safe, where students feel protected and comfortable. Essential to this pillar are four distinct goals: provide safe school and work environments; ensure schools and activities are free of weapons and drugs; reduce student suspensions; and be prepared for crises. These are the required elements to maximize student learning.

### **Safe School and Work Environment**

The district ensures that it maintains its facilities and provides a safe and healthy environment in numerous ways. The District’s Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) section, under the Maintenance Department, promotes a safe and healthy environment for all of our students and employees. The district ensures that the State Requirements for Educational Facilities are met and that every building on each site within its jurisdiction, whether owned, leased, or lease-purchased, receives an annual comprehensive sanitation and casualty safety inspection conducted by a certified inspector. All reports are kept on file in district offices. In addition, the District and the fire marshal an inspection of each school during the school year.

The District recognizes the importance of providing a safe work environment free from recognized and preventable hazards and the importance of providing training to employees whose job-specific functions have the potential to become hazardous or are known to be hazardous. The objective of safety training is to educate the district community in best practices for recognition of potential work hazards, methods for prevention and/or protection from injury while performing job-specific duties, and responsible environmental stewardship. EH&S maintains applicable training regulations, associated training topics, and required frequency of training. Each of these regulations has unique requirements for development and implementation of procedures, training of employees, and recordkeeping. EH&S assists departments with identifying employees who need initial training as well as intermittent follow-up training. The

Industrial Hygiene area of the EH&S section is primarily concerned with minimizing occupational health and safety hazards. The section assists in compliance with OSHA health and safety regulations, hazard assessment and evaluation, indoor air quality, asbestos management in the districts buildings, and training and education of job-related risks.

The Leon County School District ensures the safety of employees and assures that the workplace and equipment used by employees are kept in compliance in order to prevent injuries, maintain production, and meet environmental compliances by providing on-going training as it relates to OSHA regulations. Training consists of vendor and manufacturer conducted trainings, as well as continuous in-house training and review. Policies and procedures are clearly communicated in the employee handbook that inform and require employees to comply with OSHA regulations.

Leon County School District policies ensure that all employees who use, work around, or are exposed to chemicals have an annual chemical safety training session, which is documented. The department requires that Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) are updated and maintained continuously and that MSDS binders are clearly marked, logically organized, and easily accessible for employees requiring utilization of these resources. The district works with local, state, and federal environmental agencies, including: the DEP and the City of Tallahassee and Leon County Aquifer Protection agency, among others, to conduct site inspections and provide training and training materials for the staff.

The *Handbook for Custodians* is a guide to be used in maintaining the cleanliness of our district's facilities. Information presented within has been gathered from manufacturers of equipment and material, the Florida Department of Education, other school districts and professional custodians. This Handbook is used regularly as a review for experienced personnel and as a training tool for new personnel. The Maintenance Department makes periodic inspections of all sites to determine if proper procedures are being followed.

The Leon County School District has a scheduled preventative maintenance program for all school buses and student transport vans. The Preventative Maintenance program is designed to ensure safety and to reduce and control costs by scheduling regular maintenance in order to minimize the occurrence of more costly unscheduled and emergency repairs. Fleet maintenance software provides a work order system for all repairs and maintenance performed on fleet vehicles. The system also has functions to provide management reports allowing for detailed evaluation in areas of vehicle maintenance and repair, including: evaluating productivity, product reliability, and providing cost benefit analysis in these areas. The work order process also serves as an audit trail for all parts purchased and used employee labor hours, and vehicle repair histories.

All school buses are inspected every 30 school days. Our department inspection cycle is a 28 school day computerized cycle operating 12 months each year that identifies buses to be inspected each day. This provides a robust set of checks and balances to ensure compliance with all regulations at all levels.

All Leon County School Transportation Department, ESE drivers go through the same Florida Department of Education, School Bus Driver Training units on transporting special need



students. The districts special needs drivers must be certified by FDLRS <http://www.fdlrs.leon.k12.fl.us>, a coordinated Leon County School Training Center which offers classes, such as, student exceptionalities, student misbehavior, and student confidentiality. The districts ESE School Bus Drivers are direct service providers with hands-on responsibility, knowledge to operate special equipment, manage student behavior, and serve as a seating specialist and securing adaptive and assistive devices, and occupants.

The Leon County Transportation Departments in-house ESE Training Booklet emphasizes additional information on care for the medically fragile, technology dependent and highly disruptive students that require specific care and intervention. The Leon County School District provides specialized training for those students who need additional care and have specific health issues, and in areas of student management and intervention. The Leon County Transportation Department follows the same special needs curriculum training for behavioral assistants, as mandated for drivers by Florida Department of Education. The Leon County Transportation Handbook provides additional special needs information, such as communication skills and creative strategies for a safe bus environment.

There are digital camera systems in all district owned school buses for the purposes of monitoring and improving student behavior while on the school bus, providing data on crash and other incidents, providing driver performance data, and monitoring activities in and around the bus with the intent of enhancing student and employee safety and security. The digital camera systems installed on each bus are inspected every 28 school days, when preventative maintenance inspections are performed, in order to ensure consistent, dependable operation.

The Leon County Transportation Department has established a Safe Driver Plan to promote and improve bus safety practices, enforce safe driving habits and reduce the number of crashes and costs. It is the department's goal to prevent pain, tragedy and economic loss due to vehicle crashes, as well as other incidents. The department works effectively towards the safety and wellbeing of all students and employees who are passengers in our district vehicles. The Leon County Transportation Department, *Safe Driver Plan Committee* reviews and assesses all preventable vehicle crashes or incidents involving employees driving Leon County School Board owned/leased vehicles in accordance with the guidelines established in the Leon County Schools Transportation Handbook and the Leon School Districts Policy and Procedures - Employee Driver Requirements E-8 <http://www.leon.k12.fl.us/>. Leon County Transportation Department, CDL drivers have their Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicle (MVR) records and Safe Driver Plan Database reviewed on a continual basis.

The Bus Stop Review Committee reviews requests made by parents or guardians to move or add additional bus stops. The committee consists of a district safety officer, a local law enforcement officer, a planning and zoning employee, a district principal, a parent liaison, and a transportation routing supervisor. The Transportation Department gathers information for the committee (onsite evaluations, mileage and photos) in order to determine if a bus stop or route traveled by a student is safe.

## **Provide campus and activities free of drugs and weapons**

For the past several years, Leon County Schools has focused on providing a safe learning environment for students and has been very successful. The district has been awarded a Safe and Drug Free Schools Grant that provides funding to continue to support the superintendent's priority safety and security at all schools; each school has a Safe and Drug Free Schools coordinator for activities and information. Various types of trainings are provided annually for administrators and staff, such as I-Safe training (Internet Security) and general building safety. The Raptor program is operational at all schools and screens all non-employee visitors who come on school campuses. In cooperation with the Leon County Sheriff's Department, the School Resource Deputy program has provided invaluable assistance in the area of safety and security. DARE and GREAT programs at schools provide education for students on Anti-Drug and Anti-Bullying strategies. These programs are in use nationally and feedback from parents and students is positive.

## **Crisis Preparation**

The District has an annually updated Crisis Response Manual and Quick Reference manual that is an all hazards approach and is National Incident Management System (NIMS) compliant. Schools, classrooms and worksites develop specific Crisis Response Manuals. Each School has a specific response plan with respect to evacuation, lockdowns, and shelters. Aerial photos and expanded information on each campus is also included. completed. Law Enforcement and Fire officials are provided copies of these plans. Each site assigns key personnel to positions identified in the Crisis Response Plan. Training is conducted and schools are provided refresher training as needed. The District has specific Bomb Threat Procedures with information to aid in the investigative process and life safety. Administrators and Crisis Team Members receive FEMA Certification related to NIMS and Incident Command training, which meets Homeland Security requirements. Other activities LCS has implemented in the last two years to ensure student safety and preparedness include:

- LCS has conducted school specific full scale exercises including multiple agencies and the Regional Domestic Security Task Force. Exercises include safety plans, after/action reports and are held on non-school days.
- In service safety training for school bus driver is held. Supervisors are included in FEMA/Crisis Response Plan training.
- ISafe internet safety training - Nationally recognized training on internet/network safety is provided to various employees, instructional and non-instructional.
- Domestic security task force -LCS is an active participant in the Region 2 Domestic Security Task Force. LCS Director of Safety, Security and Emergency Management serves as the Chair of the K-20 School Safety Committee.
- Fingerprint/background check system - LCS has a 3 Live Scan fingerprint machines and transmits directly with FDLE/FBI. All employees, vendors, mentors and select volunteers receive Level II checks and their records are maintained.
- Live Scan/Vistrak system - LCS has a tracking database that records all level II screened individuals. Vistrak issues professional badges and has the capability to sign-in sign-out individuals based on biometrics (fingerprint).

- RAPTOR visitor access system -Every school has a Raptor visitor control system that checks against state and national sex offender/predator databases. This system sends alerts to law enforcement and administrators when suspected offenders are identified as attempting to enter school property.
- Emergency notification system -LCS has a multi-facet communication system (phone, e-mail & text msg) that can mass notify parents and other stakeholders regarding school emergency as well as non emergency information such as absences, lunch balances etc.
- Bldg access control system - Select facilities have access control systems recording user entries. This system can also open and secure remotely and rescind access without the use of a common key.
- SRO program - LCS has a long standing professional School Resource Deputy (SRD) Program. 20 deputies and supervisory staff each secondary school and provide a number of prevention programs to the District. Additionally SRDs work extracurricular activities and serve as role models for students.

### **Reduce Student Suspensions**

LCS has made it a priority to reduce student suspensions and disciplinary actions. It is our goal to focus on identifying students at risk or with behavioral problems as soon as possible in order to provide guidance and interventions that will allow all students to be safe and to achieve academically. In recent years the district has focused on two primary approaches. The first is collecting data in order to identify students in need and areas that need improvement on the campus such as extra monitoring in the cafeteria. Integral to this has been ownership by schools of the SESIR reported data and quality checks on this data. Second, LCS has developed an intervention team to review serious behavioral issues that may rise to the level of suspension and determine whether the students needs may best be met with an alternative program and students supports.

### **Alignment of All Pillars**

Providing a safe environment is a central part of meeting the district's vision and mission and is the foundation required for student achievement and progress. It is a necessity to meet all of the other pillars that are part of this strategic plan.

Providing a safe environment is part of the district's past strategic plan, part of the school board's priorities, and has also been a focus in each school improvement plan as well as the Florida state standards.

### **Goals & Objectives**

In developing this second pillar of the strategic plan, an assessment of current data, programs and practices determines that in order to fulfill our vision and mission, Leon County Schools should focus on four primary goals.

Goal:	Provide safe school and work environments
Actions:	Increase school perimeter security. Complete school security perimeter fencing projects with funding from Capital Outlay and Homeland Security Grant Funds.
	Utilize/enhance school security camera systems to increase perimeter security and deter crime.
	Implement a 24-hour school safety center to monitor school security systems and coordinate emergency and security responses.
	Reduce the number of student incidents on school buses.
	Enhance the bus video and audio security cameras to monitor bus routes to control incidents and evaluate driver performance.
	Provide a more energy efficient, safer and cleaner bus inventory. Drawing on the goals of the Department of Environmental Protection, work together to implement a comprehensive Compressed Natural Gas bus system.
Goal:	Ensure schools and activities are free of weapons and drugs
Actions:	Coordinate with the Leon County Sheriff's office to provide school resource deputies (23 deputies and 2.5 supervisors).
	Provide prevention programs and activities related to weapons and drugs, including the safe and drug free schools grant program.
	Develop projects and coalitions to support efforts to maintain weapon and drug free schools.
	Publicize and enforce weapon and drug free school zones.
	Build on current success in pursuing state and federal grant programs for weapon and drug programs for students.
Goal:	Reduce Student Suspensions
Actions:	Build partnerships among departments and divisions of LCS to implement programs and policies that reduce suspensions while not jeopardizing student safety.
	Increase administrative monitoring and ownership of School Environmental Safety Incident Reports (SESIR).
	Report quarterly SRD activity related to alternatives to arrests and suspension.
	Implement DJJ and DOE training related to suspension and expulsion with attention to Zero Tolerance and disproportionate representation.
	Provide a mechanism for schools to document and track student referrals in order to identify students who need support or areas of weakness for the school.
Goal:	Be prepared for crises.
Actions:	Maintain crisis response manuals at each school, worksite and classroom that is national Incident Management System compliant. Trainings will continue to be conducted regularly.
	Administrators and crisis team members receive FEMA certification related to NIMS and incident command training that meets Homeland Security Presidential certifications.

	Conduct full scale exercises including multiple agencies and the Regional Domestic Security Task Force. Such exercises must include safety plans and after reports.
	Maintain active participation in the Region 2 Domestic Security Task Force.



## **Provide Quality Resources**

Providing quality resources is essential to achieving high student performance. This includes our administrators, teachers, support staff, student instructional materials and supporting materials and programs such as our libraries and the availability of technology. Leon County Schools ensures that our vision and mission guide the acquisition, prioritization, and use of resources by focusing on what is required to prepare students to become responsible, respectful independent learners equipped with the critical thinking skills necessary to compete in our global society.

### **Goals & Current Status**

Leon County Schools has defined four goals that support the pillar to provide quality resources: providing highly qualified teachers, administrators and staff; providing state of the art educational technology and facilities; and pursuing external funding.

### **Providing Highly Qualified Teachers, Administrators and Staff**

Probably the single most critical aspect of quality resources is our teaching staff. Leon County Schools actively recruits the best teachers according to their academic performance and accomplishments, experience, success in student learning and highly-qualified status. Retention of the best teachers is very important and is best accomplished by continuing to offer professional development and creating an environment where these teachers are appreciated and valued.

Professional development is key to retention and the district supports attendance at professional conferences, development and evaluation of Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDPs), 360° Input for district staff evaluations, district trainings (focused on specific topics), the Professional Development System Review Report 2008, the Principal Preparation Program and the Beginning Teacher Program. Schools also develop training as part of the school improvement plans aligned with district goals and state standards.

All schools annually identify the professional development which is needed to accomplish School Improvement goals and objectives. Teachers and administrators develop Professional Development Plans based on classroom and school data from the previous year as well as current year student data. These plans focus on goals for student achievement and include professional

development activities and instructional strategies to support attainment of the goals. These school based professional development strategies and initiatives are supported by various district departments and with a variety of fund sources. To ensure teacher participation in planned training, principals are required to work with all instructional staff on the development of Individual Professional Development Plans. This planning process includes addressing school improvement objectives, student achievement targets and the professional development activities necessary for teachers to accomplish their objectives. Teachers provide evidence of their professional development and evidence of accomplishing their objectives in follow up IPDP conferences. Based on a review of the School Improvement Plans, analysis of district-wide student data, state mandates, and NCLB legislation, district-wide professional development initiatives are planned and implemented annually. Florida and National Staff Development Standards are used as the framework for the design and evaluation of both school and district based professional development. The district incorporates adult learning strategies, web-based and face to face follow up, evaluation for impact on student learning and evaluation for continuous improvement of programs.

Instructional staff who successfully complete professional development in accordance with the state standards are awarded in-service credit for educator certificate renewal. Support staff may earn a pay incentive in accordance with contract language and district procedures.

Leon County Schools has made a concentrated effort to train teachers and administrators on using data to impact student instruction and using research based instruction. Coaches and administrators have attended “Digging into Data” trainings sessions to further their knowledge and understanding of available data. Research-based instructional materials have been adopted by the district that supports implementation of instructional strategies that incorporate research-based strategies and activities. All instructional materials used by Leon County Schools are subject to a review process that examines validity of research-based strategies, best practices and relativity to the Sunshine State Standards. Cadres of teachers have been trained to serve as consultants throughout the district to provide professional development and coaching in various subject areas to ensure that instruction and use of the research-based materials and strategies is carried out with fidelity. Cadres for Imagine It! reading series, Thinking Math, SIM Content Area Enhancement routines, GEMS , Pearson Successmaker and Science Probeware are examples of some of the support systems that exist throughout the district. Outside consultants provide expert guidance in the implementation of programs as well. Personnel from local universities and nationally recognized consultants assist in the support of instructional activities and practices. PD360, a technology-based professional development program, has been purchased by the district for use by all Leon County employees. The program offers an extensive array of individualized professional development programs that supports instruction and best practices. Other professional development support includes mentoring and training provided by National Board Certified Teachers. The district supports instruction that is research-based and reflective of best practice, and these best practices in instructional methodology and materials utilization are reviewed and modeled continually. A process for review has been developed for new programs and is facilitated by Program Monitoring and Evaluation. A Technology Review Committee reviews and makes recommendations concerning the use of instructional software programs throughout the district.

To ensure that students and teachers are supported by a strong cast, the district also strives to have quality staff and administrators in place. District policy requires evaluations, screening and interview process that establishes high standards and is designed to determine the best possible candidate. Part of this is the focused interview process. Employee evaluations follow best practices to encourage on-going constructive evaluations. LCS also provides employees with opportunities for training and wellness support. The technology and information services department offers regular training and instruction in various software, including certifications. The transportation department offers the Florida Department of Education, 40 hour School Bus Training Course for school bus transporters, as mandated by Florida Department of Education Administrative Code Chapter 6A-3 found in [www.flrules.org](http://www.flrules.org). The course is divided into classroom training and behind the wheel training to master the necessary knowledge, and skills to prepare and competently carry out the school bus driver's duties and responsibilities. The Leon County School Transportation Department, continually introduces new and specialized training information and other initiatives aimed toward employed drivers and transportation staff to develop the most trained, educated, and knowledgeable staff operating our school buses. Monthly school bus safety meetings are held with transportation staff at each compound, continuing the department's commitment to safe school bus service in a positive and professional manner.

All schools annually identify the professional development which is needed to accomplish School Improvement goals and objectives. These school based professional development strategies and initiatives are supported by various district departments and with a variety of fund sources including Training and Education Center .

LCS also supports staff through programs such as employee wellness. By providing educational programs, team activities and encouragement, staff is supported in healthy initiatives. The district has entered into a partnership with the Leon County Health Department to provide maximum support for maintaining wellness programs for students and staff.

### **Provide State of the Art Educational Technology and Facilities**

The Leon County School District provides a technology-rich learning environment. The district has a five year technology plan that addresses technology standards for all students. A ½ cent sales tax referendum supplied a multitude of instructional technology hardware to schools district wide. All schools are networked to the district office, allowing access to the world-wide-web and many web-based programs used throughout the district. Instructional staff use online lesson plan programs and other online instructional resources. All classrooms in the district have internet access and there is at least one computer lab at each school. Most classrooms in the district have computers for student use, and student technology programs in the district range from ancillary instruction to remediation of identified academic skills. A computerized credit-recovery program is available at the high school level to recover credits that were previously failed. Computer labs with at least part-time instructors are available on most campuses. Pearson Successmaker and FCAT Explorer are examples of two widely used programs in the county. United Streaming is available to all schools through the district media center and provides valuable instructional information for students. Online Resources are purchased by Leon County

Schools as learning and research tools for our students. These resources can be accessed at school or at home. Examples of these resources are Grolier Encyclopedia, Florida Electronic Library, E-Library, and Proquest Historical Newspaper. Leon County Schools operates cable channel 23 and shares cable channel 22 with Tallahassee Community College.

The Project L.I.F.E. grant created three elementary and three middle school technology-rich environments. These learning environments encompassed all third grade classes and sixth grade classes at those schools. During the first semester of the project implementation, the selected classrooms were outfitted with a teacher laptop computer. Then each site received a mobile cart of student laptop computers with a printer and wireless access, digital cameras, and a digital scanner for the classes to share. To continue supporting the classroom teachers, two instructional technology specialists were hired at the district level to provide onsite training and instructional support. Project L.I.F.E. Phase II provided a variety of one-to-one technology mentoring opportunities for teachers involved in the project. The teachers who were involved in the project the previous year were the designated mentor teachers at their schools and were available to assist teachers new to the project. Several four-day summer technology institutes were offered by the Instructional Technology Department and were facilitated by mentor teachers for all sites involved with the initiative.

Nims Middle School, TalTech Alliance, Comcast and other school partners have aligned resources to promote Digital Harmony, a program that provides computers and internet access to students at Nims for academic use. In addition, Informational Technology Academies at Godby High School and Griffin Middle School afford students expanded opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills in the area of technology. A QZAB (Qualified Zone Academy Bond) has been secured that will secure \$20 million for infrastructure, construction, hardware and software for the feeder pattern of Riley Elementary, Griffin Middle School and Godby High School to become model hi-tech programs. In conjunction with a Civics Initiative in Leon County, a grant from the Knight Foundation has been secured to foster interactive education in civics classrooms. Smart classrooms will be funded at each school participating in the Civics Initiative.

Leon County Schools uses an enhanced version of the Heartland Data Systems product, *Genesis*, as our base student information system. Genesis is a full-featured and highly matured student information system. Genesis includes 15 data-collection, archiving, reporting, and data management modules including: attendance, enrollment, grades, FTE, grade reporting, student assessment, ESE/Special Programs, drop-out, and discipline data. Genesis meets all state and federal reporting requirements and is updated by the vendor to include state and federal mandated changes. This system is fully secured and properly authenticates users, restricts and tracks access authorizations, monitors changes and record updates, and meets all state of Florida audit requirements for student information processing and management, including the fully automated student attendance. Leon County Schools has expanded the base Genesis system to include a teacher portal, and a parent/student portal. All state reporting is transmitted directly to the State Department of Education via our student information system.



## Alignment of All Pillars

Core to our mission, providing quality resources supports all aspects of the district’s other three goals. It is our mission to prepare students to become responsible, respectful independent learners equipped with the critical thinking skills necessary to compete in our global society. Quality resources means teachers, administrators, staff, technology, learning materials, and facilities. This pillar is aligned with all others because it reinforces what must be accomplished in every other pillar.

## Goals & Objectives

Goal:	Provide highly qualified teachers, administrators and staff.
Actions:	Provide comprehensive training for school bus operators in the areas of bus safety, driving and for all programs such as ESE, AYP, Homeless, foster care, CBI, field trips and alternative schools.
	Create a customer service award that recognizes individuals and sites that provide exemplary service to our parents and other visitors. Develop a system that will establish expectations, provide training and support, provide a reward system and incorporate customer service into employee evaluations.
	Continue to provide high quality systemic professional development for instructional staff based on the master in-service professional development plan updated annually to meet the changing needs of teachers and their students.
	Evaluate the successful Career Development Initiative for non-instructional staff and determine the most productive way to move forward.
	Teachers and administrators will develop professional development plans based on classroom and school data from the previous year that include professional development activities and instructional strategies focused on student achievement.
	Base all professional development and training for instructional and non-instructional staff on school improvement plans and student performance data as indicators of areas for improvement.
Goal:	Provide state of the art educational technology, materials and facilities.
Actions:	Provide intelligent classrooms throughout the district.
	Ensure student accessibility to technology on campus.
	Increase instructor and classroom use of technology.
	Utilize technology to streamline workflow and reduce paperwork.
	Implement an enterprise resource planning system for district business practices that would provide increased efficiencies, long-term savings, and more secure financial practices.
	Conduct long-range planning to accommodate a world class school district.
	Provide classroom space to meet class size amendment requirements.
	Provide additional students stations to meet district pre-K needs.

Goal:	Maximize resources and pursue external funding.
Actions:	Improve energy efficiency at all sites.
	Continue to evaluate the three-tier transportation system for efficiency and safety.
	Enhance the GPS Edulog system for transportation in order to improve efficient routing, driver efficiency and use of bus services.
	Create a grant office within Leon County Schools that identifies eligible grants and partners with internal departments and external partners to pursue funding. Evaluate other school districts to determine successful models for grant writing that could be replicated in Leon County.



## **Building an Engaged Community**

Leon County Schools and its most important asset, students, belong to the community. The success of the public school system depends on collaboration. We must involve our community – at all levels – to be successful, including our parents, taxpayers, local businesses and other local organizations. Effective communication builds collaboration and success. The mission of LCS is to prepare students to become responsible, respectful, independent learners equipped with the critical thinking skills necessary to compete in our global society. The District fosters community collaboration in support of student learning by creating a climate of understanding and involvement throughout all stakeholder groups.

### **Goals & Current Status**

Using system-wide strategies to listen and communicate with stakeholders is a primary function infused throughout the daily operation of the district. The Superintendent and School Board place great importance on proactively assessing stakeholder perspectives and community climate in their decision making process. The dynamic two-way flow of communication with stakeholders is fostered through numerous strategies. Encouraging students, staff and community members to voice their ideas and concerns to district staff and leadership is an ongoing process.

To establish a vision in collaboration with stakeholders, Leon County Schools cultivates collaborative networks of stakeholders in several ways. First and foremost, school board meetings are public. All school board meetings are publicly noticed and televised. School board agenda information is published online one week before the school board meeting so that the public may access such information. A student representative serves as a school board member providing a voice for all of the students in Leon County Schools.

The district provides transparency into its operations largely through televised School Board meetings, which are broadcast into the homes of all cable subscribers in this area. Through this process, all stakeholders can follow the processes of the running of the District, learn of new initiatives and policies, and observe as the School Board discusses policy and community issues and as district staff work through all aspects of governance and administration including curriculum and funding.

The district superintendent regularly holds *Community Conversations*, where all stakeholders in Leon County are invited to meet the Superintendent and share their views and concerns about the school district to him directly, face-to-face. These events move throughout all sectors of the community to provide equally convenient access to all stakeholders.

The establishment of district councils and committees fosters continuous two-way communication between the District and its stakeholders. The Teacher of the Year Committee, Transportation Committee, Budget Committee, District Technology Advisory Council and Central Council of Teachers and Administrators, all include citizens, parents and business partners in their composition as voting members. This practice assures community stakeholders a voice as well as an opportunity to gain tremendous perspective and to network with other stakeholder groups and with the district for purposes of understanding and collaboration.

The District website encourages stakeholders to submit ideas, as do public forums such as Community Conversations with Superintendent Pons. The District Advisory Council and the Student District Advisory Council, along with their site councils- School Advisory Council, Parent Teacher Organization, and Parent Teacher Association- also offer ideas and suggestions on ways the district can improve its way of work.

The use of media relations allows the District the tools for providing information and messages to stakeholders through the use of print, electronic, and broadcast media. Those messages are monitored and tracked by the District to gauge stakeholder response.

The Superintendent holds regular “community conversations”, which provides citizens the opportunity to meet with the Superintendent and talk about any issue of importance to them. The meetings are held throughout Leon County at various locations in the evenings to be accessible for more people. The district website provides information on the district, schools, events, news information and contact information. WLCS is the district’s public information channel and provides information on district events and happenings and how to become more involved.

Each school has a School Advisory Council, a leadership team composed of parents, employees and community members. Leon County Schools also has a District Advisory Council which is representative of all School Advisory Councils, teachers, citizens and administrators. The Student District Advisory Council is representative of the student government associations at each high school. Both groups serve in an advisory capacity to the Superintendent and School Board and provide valuable perspective on district policies under consideration, and various other issues such as school calendars, school start times and budget issues. Each school also has a student government association that provides student leadership within each school and also serves in an advisory capacity to the school administrators.

Soliciting the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work that takes place in the district is key. Tallahassee is not only home to the State Department of Education, with its highly innovative and credentialed educational experts, but it is also the locale of outstanding institutions of higher learning: TCC, FAMU, FSU, Flagler College, Keiser University and other post-secondary schools. The district's proximity to such rich resources greatly benefits its ability to engage in innovative planning, staff development, research, and professional growth opportunities.

It is very important that Leon County Schools develop and maintain strong relationships with community leaders. LCS is involved in the Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce including World Class Schools and the A Better Community (ABC Schools) partnership. We are fortunate to have strong postsecondary institutions in the community and maintain relationships with them, including quarterly to semi-annual meetings with the presidents of Tallahassee Community College, Florida State University, and Florida A&M University.

Leon County Schools also reaches out to the three unions who represent employees in the district by engaging in interest-based bargaining and including representatives as members on the District Advisory Council, the Central Council, and all of the committees mentioned previously.

Each fall, the district hosts a Partner Breakfast to which all active partners and interested business persons are invited to network and learn how to become involved in applying their expertise to assist the schools and students of Leon County. These breakfasts typically draw 400 or more participants. Many of the district's 808 school-community partnerships (as of October 2008) apply the expertise of their employees to provide training and in-kind services that enhance and improve the work of their public education system. Leon County Schools boasts one of the oldest and most extensive *Partners for Excellence* programs in Florida. During the 2007-2008 school year, 10,809 citizens of Leon County registered as school volunteers; 1,100 citizens actively engaged in one-on-one mentoring relationships with at-risk students, and collectively donated more than 371,000 hours of voluntary service to our schools and students. Volunteers, Mentors, AmeriCorps Members, Business/Community Partners, Educational Partnerships with FSU, FAMU, TCC, and Flagler College, as well as the inclusion of community partners on the District Advisory Council, Capital Improvement Review Team (CIRT) Oversight Committee and Re-Zoning Committee build upon our mission of "Building the Future Together~All Children Learning."

Relationships with other elected officials are also important. Semi-annual meetings are held with the City and County Commissions to consider items of mutual interest to all elected bodies and to plan strategically on future issues. An elected member of our school board serves as a liaison to the City Commission, the County Commission, and the Capital Regional Transportation Planning Agency. Leon County Schools also meets with City and County representatives to plan the Public School Facilities Element and school concurrency.

Parent Portal in the Genesis program provides access to parents of Leon County students to grades, assignments, curriculum guides and resources available to them. Student and teacher web-pages provide additional information. Title I and 21<sup>st</sup> Century grant funds support parental

involvement in low socio-economic schools. This includes Parent Right to Know and the Parent Involvement Resource Center (University of South Florida) information about parenting skills and resources.

**Alignment of all Pillars**

This pillar permeates through every aspect of what we do as a school district. Collaborative partnerships build an engaged community which is a necessary component to our success. Communication is required to achieve student performance, a safe environment, and to guarantee quality resources.

**Goals & Objectives**

In developing this fourth pillar of the strategic plan, an assessment of current data, programs and practices determines that in order to fulfill our vision and mission, Leon County Schools should focus on building collaborative partnerships with six primary entities: Employees, parents and community, business representatives, post-secondary institutions, and other government entities and school districts.

Goal:	Improve communication and collaboration with all stakeholders in Leon County Schools
Actions:	Enhance the capacity of technology to expand and streamline online information sharing.
	Expand the production capability and programming of WLCS, channel 23.
	Continue the Superintendent’s Community Conversations which bring topics to the community for input and also allow questions and issues to be raised by our public.
	Maintain the current practice of holding regular meetings with principals, the DAC, the Student DAC and other stakeholder groups to promote transparency and an “open door” policy.
	Conduct communication training sessions for principals and assistant principals, who, for parents, are the face of Leon County Schools.
Goal:	Increase community involvement throughout Leon County Schools.
Actions:	Enhance support for district volunteer and mentor initiatives. With an estimated 10,000 volunteers and 800 business partners, these programs are a front line in Leon County Schools mission.
	Expand existing partnerships and establish new ones with public and nonprofit social service agencies including faith-based organizations, to communicate more effectively with these organizations and our families.
	Create collaborations with the City of Tallahassee, Leon County and the Tallahassee Area Chamber of Commerce that provide mutual support and increased awareness of Leon County Schools.

	Promote and support the Foundation for Leon County Schools as the primary support mechanism for our teachers and classrooms.