



LEON COUNTY SCHOOLS STRATEGIC PLAN 2016—2021



Adopted September 6, 2016

2016-2021 STRATEGIC PLAN

Superintendent
Jackie Pons

School Board Chair
DeeDee Rasmussen

School Board Members
Georgia “Joy” Bowen
Dee Crumpler
Maggie Lewis-Butler
Alva Striplin

Emily Blomeley, *student representative (Chiles H.S.)*

Leon County Schools
Professional & Community Services

2757 West Pensacola Street
Tallahassee, FL 32304-2998
(850) 487-7235

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Message from Superintendent



Dear Friends of Leon County Schools:

These days, *strategic plans* are a familiar concept to most people. A strategic plan's importance is widely recognized as a means of plotting an organization's pathway to success. An institution's goals may remain largely the same year after year, but its strategic plan must be *continually updated* to "fit" the changing environment.

Leon County Schools' previous "blueprint for success," developed in 2010, will no longer get the job done. We continue to aspire to meet the goal of giving our students the best possible education, however the world we live in is significantly changing – and our strategic plan must change with it.

We are well aware of events in recent years that impact the educational process: student testing, evolving social consciousness, family and community dynamics, workplace challenges, and threats to safety and security. The revision of Leon County Schools' Strategic Plan takes these and other factors into account in outlining the District's priorities and strategies for the upcoming five years.

Leon County Schools has done a great job in building community partnerships and securing voter approval of a sales surtax to help fund needed capital projects. This type of support has made it possible for us to secure quality programs and services for *all* our students. And while the education of our students is our *primary objective*, we are equally committed to a safe and secure learning environment for our children, financial oversight and accountability, and the involvement of our community.

As we move forward, we want to build upon our accomplishments and successes as a high-performing school district. In recent years, LCS has become one of the top minority-majority districts in Florida. District-wide, we have significantly increased our graduation rate and improved test scores compared to the state average, but we continue to face the challenge of improving student performance in some of our schools. We cannot rest on our laurels until that gap is closed.

We encourage you to become familiar with this plan – and to help us move forward in our pursuit of educational excellence for all Leon County students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Jackie Pons". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jackie Pons
Superintendent of Schools

Board Chair's Message



Dear Friends:

A successful school system requires collaboration between the elected members of the School Board, the elected School Superintendent and the appointed District and school administrators -- all acting in concert as a leadership team with a shared vision and mission. Our collective vision also depends on a strong reciprocal partnership between the District and the community. The Leon County School System enjoys fervent support from various components of our community: local business partners, three institutions of higher learning, the non-profit sector, citizen-taxpayers, local government and countless volunteers who reinforce our schools with invaluable contributions of time, talent, services and financial investments.

This strategic plan is grounded in our core values, and implements our mission and vision through five key areas under which specific goals and objectives are aligned. These five pillars are:

- Student Achievement
- Safe Environment
- Quality Resources
- Engaged Community
- Fiscal Stewardship and Transparency

Our school system has much to be proud of -- as well as many challenges to face. As a school board, we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing every student the best educational experience possible, helping each one to succeed and accomplish his or her highest potential.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the elements of this plan and for your commitment to helping the Leon County School District continue to grow and improve.

Sincerely,

DeeDee Rasmussen, Chair
Leon County School Board



Executive Summary

Yogi had it right: *“If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll end up someplace else.”*

The irrepressible Yankees legend – a master of the malaprop -- had a way with words that often conveyed deeper meaning than appeared at first glance. In this case, his colorful verbiage emphasized the importance of having a clearly defined goal.

Another wise old sage warned: *“By failing to plan, you are planning to fail.”*

Still another declared: *“A goal without a plan is just a wish.”*

Thus, the stage has been set for the critical importance of this strategic plan as the key for Leon County Schools to accomplish its objective of providing students with the best possible education. The District must clearly enunciate the goals that will signal achievement of educational excellence – and it must carefully develop and implement plans to achieve those goals.

In short, that’s why this plan exists.

Development of LCS’ 2016-2021 strategic plan was a long-term, contemplative process that involved a wide range of stakeholders – from school administrators and classroom teachers, to District leaders and Board members, to parents and the community. It involved rethinking and reaffirming the LCS mission, vision and belief statements, as well as examination of the District’s strengths, weaknesses, goals and strategies. The previous strategic plan, formulated in 2010, was a starting point – but an ever-changing environment necessitated distinct, evolutionary changes in development of the new plan. The overall process embodied a systems-thinking approach and was guided by a thorough assessment of the District’s accreditation priorities and results. Direction for the process came from a strategic plan development committee that included District directors, data analysts, school administrators and teachers.

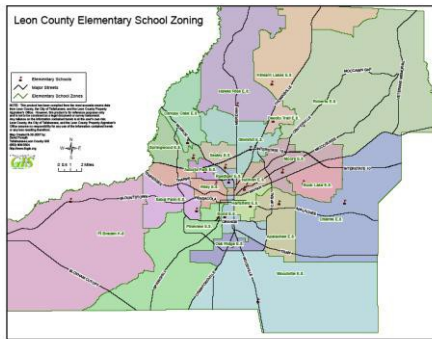
Additional input came from the District and School Advisory Councils, as well as from parents and community leaders expressing the thoughts of the citizens of Leon County.

Over a period of months, following numerous meetings, workshops and planning sessions, the new strategic plan began to emerge, looking similar to – but noticeably different from – its predecessor. The new plan retained the “four-pillar” structure of the 2010 LCS strategic plan, but added a fifth “pillar” addressing the importance of fiscal responsibility and transparency. Specifics of the new plan took into account the breadth and specifics of the District’s ongoing experience, as well as thorough analysis of updated data on student needs, performance and school operations. New “action plans” supporting the pillars were incorporated, as well as updated and revised action plans from the 2010 strategic plan. Subsequent drafts of the new plan were closely scrutinized and tweaked prior to its submission to the Leon County School Board for approval.

The backbone of the 2016-2021 LCS Strategic Plan – embodied by the five pillars – provides the structure, mechanism and impetus for the District to accomplish its mission and achieve its goals. The five pillars are:

- Student Achievement
- Save Environment
- Quality Resources
- Engaged Community
- Fiscal Stewardship and Transparency

Yogi likely would have approved of the plan – but *his names for the pillars* probably would’ve been a bit more *thought-provoking*.



District Profile

The Leon County School District is led by Superintendent Jackie Pons, an elected official currently serving his third term. With only 12 superintendents having served over the past 100 years, there have been long periods of leadership under the same superintendent. Such stability encourages 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. Leon County Schools initially received District-wide accreditation in 2009, with subsequent District-wide accreditation in 2013.

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 Appalachian 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 celebrated in the New World and the sole Southern state 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 2015 population was estimated at 284,000, which represents a 3.1% increase over the previous five years. The median family income is approximately \$68,500 and the unemployment rate is 5.5%, compared to a 6.3% 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 35,000 students at more than 50 school sites. This includes elementary, middle and high schools; charter schools; special-purpose and other schools. Of these students, 45.7% are white; 44.9% are black; 4.7% are

Hispanic; 4.1 % are Asian; and 0.4% are Native American. Approximately 18.6% of students are identified as exceptional education students, and only 1.7% have limited English proficiency. Approximately 32% of students are economically disadvantaged, and less than 1% are considered migrant. Significantly, 23.2% of Leon County residents fall below the poverty level, compared to the state average of 16.3%.

Two major universities -- Florida Agricultural & Mechanical 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, St. Leo University and Keiser University -- as well as vocational training and certification from Leon County Schools' 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/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 2015-2016 school year, 11,511 community members registered with the School Volunteers program and collectively they donated 195,700 hours of volunteer time. Throughout the year, 1,279 citizens were placed as mentors with individual students. Additional human and financial resources were provided to the schools through the Partners for Excellence program, which involved more than 250 private sector and government entities. The value of these community contributions exceeded \$945,000.

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 the 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) for mass notification of 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 22 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 use of the RAPTOR visitor control system.

A summary of student performance across the system

A core objective of Leon County Schools is ensuring that all students graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in college and the workforce. The graduation rate has increased 18.8% over the period from 2010-2011 to 2014-2015. The 2011 graduation rate was 68%, which was lower than the state average of 71%. In 2014-2015, the District graduation rate was 87.2% -- 9% above the state average.

Increases in our graduation rate have resulted from multiple efforts. We have placed emphasis on extending the reach of instruction in Pre-K through grade 5, which has enabled more students to enter middle school with strong foundation skills. Part of this effort includes expanding our mentoring programs as a strategy to help students make important academic transitions and build relationships with teachers and administrators as they progress from elementary through high school. We have increased our summer professional development activities for all teachers, using the results of state assessments shared with us in late May to drive professional development offered for the next school year.

Leon County Schools has developed a core of six steps to follow as we continuously improve our graduation rates:

1. Utilize data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out.
2. Assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out.
3. Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance.
4. Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills.
5. Personalize the learning environment and instructional process.
6. Provide rigorous, relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide them the skills needed to graduate and to serve them after they leave school.

Students are encouraged to participate in advanced and college preparatory coursework. This is evidenced by more than 5,600 students enrolled in advanced placement (AP), international baccalaureate (IB) and dual enrollment (DE) courses. Students took 6,151 AP exams with over 3,000 qualifying scores – a 50% pass rate. IB students had an 81% pass rate on IB exams, and dual-enrolled students earned 1,292 DE credits. Of the 2014-2015 graduating class, 71% took the SAT assessment and 68% took the ACT.

2014-15 Assessments Based on the Florida Standards (FSA)

	Students scoring at or above proficiency				
	FSA-English/ language arts grades 3 – 10	FSA math grades 3 - 8	Algebra 1 EOC	Algebra 2 EOC	Geometry EOC
DISTRICT	57 %	63 %	59 %	49 %	57 %
African-American	37	41	36	23	35
American Indian	58	66	80	100	87
Asian/Pacific Islander	85	91	89	77	93
Hispanic	57	59	47	55	56
Mixed	58	62	61	62	72
White	74	79	74	64	79
Economically Disadvantaged	36	45	36	29	31
English Language Learners	25	42	34	62	36
*Students with Disabilities	22	29	27	24	28

*ESE Curriculum

2014-15 Assessments Based on Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS)

	Students scoring at or above proficiency				
	Science 2.0 grades 5&8	Biology EOC	Civics EOC	U.S. History EOC	% Graduating 2014-2015 **
DISTRICT	55 %	63 %	74 %	71 %	87 %
African-American	29	45	59	51	78
American Indian	38	100	75	100	N/A
Asian/Pacific Islander	78	89	96	88	96
Hispanic	51	74	70	84	97
Mixed	46	83	76	87	87
White	72	85	89	88	92
Economically Disadvantaged	33	41	60	53	73
English Language Learners	32	22	33	39	93
*Students with Disabilities	23	34	40	37	58

*ESE Curriculum

**Most recent graduation statistics available

Since the inception of school grades, Leon County Schools has consistently been a high-performing district even though the Florida Department of Education has made numerous changes yearly in grading criteria.

Leon County School Grades by Year

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15*	2015-16**
DISTRICT	A	A	B	C	B	A	B
A schools	22	18	21	12	16	16	13
B schools	9	13	9	10	7	9	7
C schools	10	9	9	16	16	9	17
D schools	0	0	2	4	5	8	7
F schools	1	0	0	0	0	2	0

* For 2014-15 school year, new district grade formula based on percentage of total points earned. District grade based on percentage of total points earned and only include components for which sufficient data is available. (Learning Gains included beginning in 2015-16.)

** In 2015-16, only three of the state's 67 school districts (4%) received an "A" grade.

District Accreditation

Leon County Schools successfully completed the initial AdvancED District Accreditation Process during the 2008-2009 school year. The District successfully completed the second round of District-wide accreditation during the 2013-2014 school year. The AdvancED district-wide accreditation process represents a powerful systems approach to improving student education. Schools and the District work together systemically and systematically -- thus allowing the entire school system to focus on improving student achievement. As a district, this rigorous process moved Leon County Schools to a model where the system is designed for continuous self-evaluation and improvement. This lengthy, in-depth application process required significant individual and group reflection that critically assessed five areas:

- Purpose and Direction
- Governance and Leadership
- Teaching and Assessing for Learning
- Resources and Support Systems
- Using Results for Continuous Improvement

In addition, AdvancED sent a Quality Assurance Review Team to Leon County Schools for an extended onsite visit. The team used the standards to guide its review of the 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 District's adherence to the standards, the external 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 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 led to the overall commendations and recommendations. Following is a summary of the AdvancED report on Leon County Schools.

Process, Conclusions and Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commended the Leon County School District for the strengths and accomplishments discussed below. While additional strengths were noted in the detailed review of each standard, the team's commendations reflected the strengths that the team believed were most deserving of being highlighted.

In off-site and on-site review sessions, the AdvancED External Review Team examined artifacts and evidence provided by the institution. During the on-site portion of the review, the team reviewed additional artifacts, collected and analyzed data from interviews, and conducted observations.

The review began on Sunday, February 9, 2014, with a team organization session and catered meal. The team concluded its work with an exit report delivered to the School Board and public on Wednesday, February 12, 2014. The internal facilitators prepared the system and schools very well. They also provided outstanding assistance to the team by having all the necessary resources published on ASSIST in a timely manner, and by providing all of the accommodations and logistics necessary to make the team comfortable. Through a great deal of collaboration, the schools and District leadership made every effort to evaluate themselves and their processes fairly and honestly. They provided all the information needed for the review team to make professional and quality recommendations.

The team interviewed 154 stakeholders, including 109 school and District administrators, 31 teachers and support staff, and 21 parents and community leaders. Sixty-seven classrooms were visited by the team at eight schools -- elementary, middle and high. The

Superintendent and his staff gave an orientation presentation on Monday morning, which included a video highlighting the many aspects of Leon County Schools.

Using the evidence collected, the team engaged in dialogue and deliberations concerning the degree to which the institution met the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators.

The District is currently (*at the time of the latest accreditation review*) operating under the umbrella of its 2010 Strategic Plan that is focused on four pillars to achieve its mission. These pillars are: (1) to improve student performance; (2) to provide a safe environment and quality infrastructure; (3) to provide the best resources available; and (4) to build an informed and engaged community. The Strategic Plan is reviewed and updated annually. The District also operates under the 2013-2014 District Improvement and Assistance Plan, as required by the Florida Department of Education. These documents provided the Review Team with a great deal of information to use during its deliberations.

There is significant evidence that the Superintendent and the School Board have a strong positive relationship. All stakeholders interviewed reported a great deal of harmony and collegiality exists between the governing Board and the Superintendent. There was no stronger evidence of this relationship than the re-election of two Board members and the Superintendent, along with the overwhelming passage of a half-cent sales tax on the same ballot this past fall. Administrative and stakeholder interviews indicated a true culture of collaboration is embedded and fostered among leadership and staff at all levels of the system. Multiple groups reported that a "family atmosphere" exists in the District. The *Community Conversations* initiative implemented by the Superintendent to respond to community and parent concerns has served as a powerful vehicle of engagement for stakeholders. An additional initiative by the Superintendent was the formation of a Leadership Academy to proactively groom and nurture a cadre of aspiring leaders for the next generation of leadership.

District and school leadership monitor and adjust curriculum and align professional learning opportunities to provide teachers with an understanding of the standards and training to implement them using research-based best practices. The Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) provide a structure for teachers and administrators to collaborate. The PLCs are designed to review current data and trends, research successful instructional practices, and encourage discussion and reflection. The Professional Development Program has been thoughtfully developed based on Marzano's Framework for Quality Instruction. The program is responsive to system initiatives and individual teacher needs. The District offers opportunities

for professional learning on an ongoing basis. Interviews with teachers and leadership teams indicate the professional development program affords all staff the opportunity to learn about research-based best practices and provides support for the implementation of the strategies.

The number of Powerful Practices identified within the context of Standard 4 is clear evidence of the emphasis the District places on prioritizing its resources to ensure the safety and well-being of all students. It is largely because of these measures that the focus of the entire staff can be on teaching and learning and the improvement of student achievement. From the Security Center that operates 24/7 monitoring school security, the District's own fingerprinting capabilities, perimeter fencing around every elementary school, visitor RAPTOR identification system, and video cameras throughout the schools and buses, it was clear to the team -- as they interviewed stakeholders -- that the schools are deemed safe. Many additional cost-saving and efficiency initiatives were cited. One area that continues to be an issue for the District concerns technology. The passage of the half-cent sales tax referendum, which will generate approximately \$20 million each year, will provide the impetus necessary to resolve this issue.

The District maintains and uses an assessment system (Data Director) that houses data from multiple assessment measures, and assessments are reliable and bias free. The system assesses its systems and processes annually to promote student learning, student learning conditions, and instructional effectiveness. Multiple data sources are used to support continuous improvement, and the District regularly analyzes the effectiveness of those data sources.

During the on-site review, members of the External Review Team evaluated the learning environment by observing classrooms and general operations of the institution. Using data from these observations, the team evaluated the quality of instruction and learning that took place classified around seven constructs or environments: equity, high expectations, support, engagement, progress monitoring and feedback, management, and use of technology.

The External Review Team observed 67 classrooms in eight schools -- four elementary, two middle and two high schools. The eight team members used the Effective Learning Environment Observation Tool (ELEOT) in each observation. The categories of Supportive Learning Environment and the Well-Managed Learning Environment scored at the highest level -- 3.16. The lowest scoring environment was the Digital Environment, with a score of 1.58. The team observed several elementary classes in which technology was used, though it was mostly teacher-centered and in most cases students were not engaged in the use of technology. The most common exception was students using *SuccessMaker*, both in their classrooms and in

the media center. However, there were infrequent instances of students using technology as an integral component of the day's activities. High expectations were observed in many classes, with the students being challenged. Differentiated instruction was most frequently observed at the elementary level; however, there was some collaboration taking place in the high schools. The majority of instruction at the middle and high schools was whole-group with students responding to questions orally or in writing. Students who were asked why they enjoyed school responded it was because of the teachers. Students also reported that their teachers made learning fun and didn't stand up and lecture all the time.

The External Review Team concluded a very successful visit on Wednesday, February 12, 2014, with an open Board meeting before a full audience of virtually every administrator in the District as well as several other stakeholders. Every Board member and the Superintendent expressed their gratitude to the team for its deliberations and conclusions. The report was very well received. The team thanked the Division Director for Teaching and Learning, the Director of Professional Learning, and all the staff members who provided artifacts for the review and who provided all the logistics to facilitate a quality review available to the District.

In the past, accreditation reviews resulted in an accreditation recommendation on status. Labels such as “advised,” “warned,” “probation” or “all clear” were used to describe the status of a school relative to the criteria. Beginning with school year, 2013-14, AdvancED introduced a new framework to describe the result of an accreditation review. Consistent with the modern focus of accreditation on continuous improvement with an emphasis on student success, AdvancED introduced an innovative and state-of-the-art framework for diagnosing and revealing institutional performance called the Index of Education Quality (IEQ). The IEQ is comprised of three domains of performance: (1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; (2) the leadership capacity to govern; and (3) use of resources to support and optimize learning. Therefore, LCS will no longer receive an accreditation status. Instead, the District is accredited with an IEQ score. In the case where an institution is failing to meet established criteria, the accreditation is reviewed, thereby requiring frequent monitoring.

The three domains of performance are derived from the AdvancED Standards and Indicators; the Analysis of Student Performance; and the Engagement and Involvement of Stakeholders. Within each domain institutions are able to connect to the individual performance levels that are applied in support of the AdvancED Standards and evaluative criteria. Within the performance levels are detailed descriptors that can be a valuable source of guidance for continuous improvement. Upon review of the findings in this report, institutional leaders should work with their staff to review and understand the evidence and rationale for each

Required Action as well as the corresponding pathway to improvement described in the performance levels of the selected Indicator.

The IEQ provides a new framework that recognizes and supports the journey of continuous improvement. The District's IEQ is the starting point for continuous improvement. LCS' actions for improvement that have a positive impact are reflected in the District's IEQ scores:

- **IEQ Institutional Score: 310**
- **Teaching and Learning Impact: 300**
(Standards 3 and 5; Student Performance Criteria)
- **Leadership Capacity: 317**
(Standards 1 and 2; Stakeholder Engagement Criteria)
- **Resource Utilization: 325**
(Standard 4)

The External Review Team unanimously recommended to the AdvancED Accreditation Commission that the Leon County School District be granted re-accreditation for five years. The team congratulated the entire school district and all its stakeholders for their outstanding efforts on behalf of continuous improvement of student achievement and wished them even more success in the future.

Process for Development and Adoption of the Strategic Plan

Leon County Schools currently has a District strategic plan that was created in 2010 and developed as a planning document for a five-year cycle. The purpose of the 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 have been 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 process driven and involve many stakeholders. The strategic plan development process was thorough and exhaustive in order to be a realistic expression of LCS' priorities, with strategies to meet each goal. The process was guided by a strategic plan development committee, which included District directors, data analysts, school administrators and teachers.

The process began with a workshop for Board Members to address the vision and mission statements and evaluate whether or not the proposed language accurately reflected their thoughts. Second, Board Members provided long-term goals consistent with the vision and mission. Third, Board Members provided their own individual priorities and then established priorities as a Board.

The committee began by making a thorough assessment of existing District data and the information compiled for the District-wide accreditation process.

The strategic plan development process continued with a series of committee development workshops – meetings with the entire leadership team and a series of smaller activities that involved 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 process was used 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 makes meaningful contributions, it can energize an organization. LCS is fortunate to have a supportive community, as well as dedicated and knowledgeable teachers and staff. The following groups participated in development of the strategic plan to capitalize on these resources:

The Leon County School Board – The LCS Board has 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 support team for the Superintendent and includes top District administrators from every division, including but not limited to Communications; Construction and Facilities; Curriculum; Exceptional Student Education; Finance; Human Resources; Information Technology; Intervention Services; Policy and School Management; Professional Standards; Safety and Security; Testing, Research and Evaluation; Title I Services; and Transportation.

District Advisory Council -- The DAC is a parent and community group representative of every school in the District. 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 the Superintendent, making 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. Its purpose is to provide guidance and oversight on school improvement.

LCS Administrators -- School principals and District staff meet monthly to discuss many issues relevant 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 follows. 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 with fidelity and integrity. The strategic plan is focused on achieving the District's goals and provides a plan based on the defined vision, mission and articulated belief statements. The strategic plan and continuous improvement process are valid because they are data driven. The division of Professional and Community Services is 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, Mission and Belief Statements

Vision

Leon County Schools will provide an engaging, safe and respectful learning environment that fosters effective communication, collaboration and critical thinking while creating productive citizens who value diversity and positively contribute to society.

Mission

The mission of Leon County Schools is to educate, inspire and empower all students to become responsible, respectful and engaged citizens who are equipped with the critical thinking skills needed to thrive in our global society.

Belief Statements

We believe in **excellence**. Leon County Schools pursues the highest standards in academic achievement and organizational efficiency.

We believe in **integrity and ethical responsibility**. Leon County Schools requires the highest level of integrity and personal responsibility for all stakeholders.

We believe in **equity**. Leon County Schools fosters an environment that encourages all stakeholders to close the achievement gap, maximize achievement for every learner and provide equitable opportunities for all.

We believe in **citizenship**. Leon County Schools honors the diversity of our community by working as a team to ensure the educational success of all our students and by living up to our professional responsibility to promote democratic principles.

We believe in **compassion and respect**. Leon County Schools enhances the self-esteem, safety and well-being of all stakeholders through positive relationships built on honesty, respect, compassion and empathy.

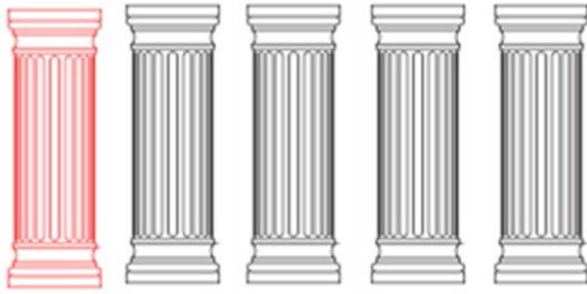
We believe in **perseverance**. Leon County Schools promotes the development of the individual's inner strength so that he or she can remain constant to a purpose, idea or task. This includes dedication, consistency and a positive attitude.



The Strategic Plan

Leon County Schools focuses on five pillars to achieve its mission of educating, inspiring and empowering students to become responsible, respectful and engaged citizens equipped with necessary critical-thinking skills needed to succeed. These pillars are: (1) to improve student performance; (2) to provide a safe environment and quality infrastructure; (3) to provide the best resources available; (4) to build an informed and engaged community; and (5) to accomplish all this through an organization committed to fiscal stewardship and transparency. 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 Achievement

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

Leon County Schools ensures that our vision and mission guide student performance. Provided here is a summary of some of the ways Leon County Schools prioritizes student performance through teaching and assessment.

Goals & Current Status

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

- Improve Student Performance
- 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 methods to track student progress toward meeting the goals of the Student Achievement pillar.

Each school's improvement plan is aligned to the District's vision and expectations for student learning. The District ensures this by reviewing school improvement plans annually. There also is a current policy regarding school improvement. A School Improvement website is used to provide ongoing technical assistance and an archive of previously submitted plans. 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 School Board approves School Improvement Plans on an annual basis. The District Intervention and Assistance Committee provides for additional technical assistance and resources, when needed, to schools in need of improvement. These 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 that included the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, general and special education leaders, 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 methods 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 *aimsweb* assessment, which is administered three times a year in statutorily required grade levels. In addition to this tool, other routine monitoring tools and instruments are specified for reading, math, writing and science as part of the curriculum and instruction. These include classroom and benchmark assessments and ongoing progress monitoring through curriculum-based assessment such as computer software tools like Pearson's *Successmaker*. Our District considers progress monitoring a tool to support differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction ensures success of all students, including those performing above and below grade level. Strategies that differentiate instruction are based on the results of progress monitoring. If a student is not making progress, additional diagnostic testing may 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 to deal directly with the identified deficiency. The diagnostic instrument varies as needed.

Summative Assessment -- Summative assessment instruments are specified for English/ Language Arts and Math and FCAT 2.0 Science as indicated in the LCS Testing Calendar. Summative assessments include Florida Standards Assessment in English/Language Arts and Math and FCAT 2.0 Science tests, as well as PSAT, SAT, ACT, International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement exams.

LCS also recognizes the importance of identifying students at risk of dropping out or falling behind graduation cohorts. 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 suggest possible appropriate interventions available. Differentiated instruction and intensive intervention in classrooms are available at all schools to support student learning. These programs include, but are not limited to:

Before-, during- and after-school tutoring is offered 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 are offered at all secondary schools for students in need of intervention and remediation in those subject areas. Grade and Credit Recovery Programs are offered at secondary schools for students who have previously failed a class.

LCS has implemented several initiatives to address the achievement gap among subgroups across the District:

- The Advancement via Individual Determination (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.
- Various providers facilitate professional development for secondary schools to increase student achievement.
- The District offers multiple mentorship opportunities to identified students at several schools.
- Nationally known and respected speakers have addressed District stakeholders and provided resources proven to be effective in closing achievement gaps.

- Twenty-First Century Learning Centers are offered in low socio-economic neighborhoods and provide homework and other academic tutoring services to students in the District.
- Locally generated reports are developed to help identify and offer interventions to students who may be in danger of school dropout.
- 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 interest. Choices include concentration in performing arts at both the elementary and middle school levels, as well as 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 SAIL (a School for Arts and Innovative 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, 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 originally assigned school. Leon County Schools also supports Department of Juvenile Justice programs such as the AMIKids, Devereaux and PACE School for Girls.
- Five charter schools provide additional choice opportunities for students.
- 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 competitions, District and regional science 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 teachers, students and parents additional assistance

to support a curriculum that challenges and meets the needs of ESE students. Students 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: (1) inclusion, (2) co-teaching, (3) support-facilitation, (4) resource, (5) full-time, and (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. LCS also provides support to immigrants and refugee students.

The District annually evaluates the impact of charter schools, voucher programs and its own choice programs. It continually monitors choice programs throughout the District, the mission of each program and the impact of such programs on demographics and capacity at each school site.

Alignment of All Pillars

Student achievement is dependent upon the second, third, fourth and fifth pillars defined in the strategic plan -- all of which are necessary to achieve high student performance. Students cannot succeed without being in a safe environment, having the best teachers and resources available to them, and receiving 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 our students.

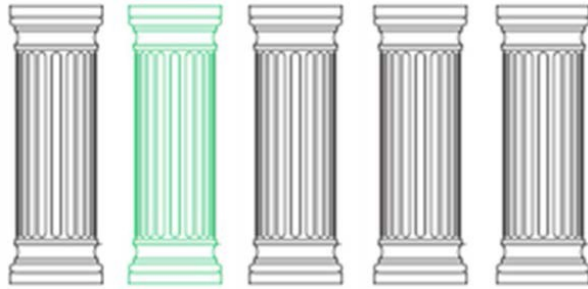
The guidelines for Florida Standards, Florida Next Generation Standards and the AdvancED standards all include various measures of student achievement. In defining the goals and measures of student achievement, each of these standards have been included. The Florida Next Generation Standards include specific goals to strengthen foundation skills, to improve college and career readiness, to expand opportunities for postsecondary education and to improve K-12 education choice. The LCS strategic plan's Student Achievement pillar reflects these goals. Related, more specific, goals can be found in the District improvement plan. Individual school improvement plans include several components of student achievement that are captured within the goals and implementation plan of this pillar, including academic performance of feeder schools, data disaggregation, student retention rates, school grades and state assessment scores.

Goals & Objectives

In order to fulfill our vision and mission, in developing the first pillar of the strategic plan, an assessment of current data, programs and practices determines that Leon County Schools should focus on five primary areas: improving student performance; 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 1:	Improve Individual Student Performance.
Actions:	Assist and guide each school in the development of school improvement plans, including 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 determine which interventions would lead to success.
	Continue the use of instructional assessments to monitor student performance.
	Provide tutoring before, during and after school as appropriate.
Goal 2:	Prepare Students for College or Career.
Actions:	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, dual enrollment 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.
	Continue to provide the Graduation Pathways Program for identified students.
Goal 3:	Close the Achievement Gap Among Subgroups of Students.
Actions:	Identify under-represented students who 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 high-quality training and nationally known 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.
Goal 4:	Provide Educational Choice to Meet the Diverse Needs of Students.
Actions:	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 with economic or medical hardships.
	Provide programs to meet the unique academic and behavioral needs of students in special circumstances, such as the Ghazvini Learning Center, PACE, the 100 Success Academy and SAIL.
	Provide a variety of programs for adult learners to be successful in a changing economy through Adult and Community Education and Lively Technical Center.
	Continue to provide year-round access to the Leon County Virtual School for all LCS students.



Safe Environment

Leon County Schools' mission is to be an engaging, safe and respectful learning community that embraces change and produces successful learners who value diversity, demonstrate empathy and are conscientious contributors to society. It is essential that our District meet the basic needs of our students in order for them to learn and thrive.

Goals & Current Status

Key to a safe environment are students, parents, partners, the community and employees who must feel protected and comfortable while on our premises. This pillar embraces four tenets that serve as the cornerstones to its fruition: (1) provide safe school and work environments; (2) ensure schools and activities are free of weapons and drugs; (3) reduce student suspensions; and (4) be prepared for crises. These are critical elements to maximize student learning.

1. Safe School and Work Environments

The District continues to ensure that it maintains its facilities and provides a safe and healthy environment. 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 (SREF) 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 conduct 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. It also realizes the importance of providing training to employees whose job-related 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-related 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 District buildings, and training and education on 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 ongoing 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.

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/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 District facilities. Information presented has been gathered from manufacturers of equipment and materials, the Florida Department of Education, other school districts and professionals. This handbook is used regularly as a review for experienced personnel and as a training tool for new employees. The Maintenance department conducts periodic inspections of all sites to determine if proper procedures are being followed.

The District's Transportation department has a scheduled preventive maintenance program for all school buses and student transport vans. The preventive maintenance program is designed to ensure safety and to reduce and control costs by scheduling regular maintenance checks 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. The Transportation 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 of the department's ESE drivers go through the same Florida Department of Education School Bus Driver Training units on transporting special needs students. The District's special needs drivers must be certified by FDLRS (<http://www.fdlrs.leon.k12.fl.us>), a coordinated Leon County School Training Center that offers classes, such as student exceptionalities, student misbehavior and student confidentiality. The District's ESE school bus drivers are direct service providers with hands-on responsibility, knowledge to operate special equipment and manage student behavior. They also serve as a seating specialist and assist in securing adaptive and assistive devices for occupants.

The Transportation department's in-house ESE training booklet emphasizes additional information on care for the medically fragile, technology dependent and highly disruptive students who require specific care and intervention. The District provides specialized training for students who need additional care and have specific health issues, as well as 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 the 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 preventive maintenance inspections are performed, in order to ensure consistent, dependable operation.

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

The Bus Stop Review Committee reviews requests from 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.

The LCS Transportation department has implemented a number of new measures to improve safety and operational efficiency:

1. Dispatchers and secretaries have been placed in all three bus compounds.
2. New emergency notification form and procedures are in place.
3. Ninety-six compressed natural gas (CNG) buses, served by new CNG fueling station, have been added to the fleet.
4. New state-of-the-art training facility is now in use.
5. Cellphone-based emergency contact system links all supervisors, who have access to a database of all bus passengers.
6. All drivers receive annual Crisis Prevention and Intervention training.
7. Partnerships with bus manufactures provide quarterly training for mechanics.
8. New student discipline and referral process has been adopted.
9. Inter-agency mock bus crash training is conducted for drivers and staff.
10. Department has developed a bus evacuation video -- presented to all drivers and staff.
11. A "First-Time Rider" sticker is presented to all new passengers.
12. Bus drivers participate in Florida Department of Education's illegal passing survey.
13. Department complies with mandated driver physical requirements established by Florida Department of Transportation.
14. Each compound encourages participation in the LCS Wellness Center to promote a healthy lifestyle.
15. Department has initiated "meet and greet" program with school administrators to enhance communication and build better relationships.
16. District transportation-related procedures are reviewed and updated as needed.

2. Schools and Activities Free of Weapons and Drugs

Leon County Schools is focused on providing a safe learning environment for students and our Safety and Security department has utilized best practices and technology to build a comprehensive safety program. The District has received multiple grants in the area of safety and security, with the most notable being for the creation of the District's 24-hour District Security Center.

The Superintendent and School Board's first priority is school safety. Various types of safety and security training are provided annually for administrators and staff, including incident command, active shooter and critical incident management. Additionally, drills and exercises are coordinated with first responders and community partners. The RAPTOR program -- operational at all schools -- screens visitors who come onto school campuses in compliance with the Jessica Lunsford Act.

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. Multiple school programs provide student education on anti-drug and anti-bullying strategies. These nationally used programs receive positive feedback from parents.

3. Fewer Student Suspensions

A priority for Leon County Schools is to reduce student suspensions and expulsions. Our goal is to identify at risk students as soon as possible, in order to provide guidance and intervention so they can thrive academically in a safe school environment while closing the achievement gap.

In recent years, the District has focused on ways to limit the "school-to-prison pipeline" by providing professional development to administrators that helps them access alternatives to suspension and expulsion. A three-pronged approach is followed: (1) regular review of discipline data; (2) ownership of the School Environmental Safety Incident Reporting (SESIR) data; and (3) making sure school improvement plans identify reasonable, school-level goals and benchmarks that will reduce the number of office referrals.

Two programs, in particular, allow the District to develop an infrastructure that maintains quality checks on our "at risk" population. The first is our electronic Early Warning System that identifies students at risk of dropping out. This program focuses on our third grade through ninth grade population. Data points are student performance in math and language arts, attendance and behavior. This program permits quick identification of our "at promise" population so we can apply the necessary preventions and interventions to alleviate potential dropout.

The second program is the SHARPE Project. This program identifies mentors to work with students who have been recommended for expulsion. It also affords collaboration with community members who serve as role models for students who otherwise would continue in a

negative spiral. The SHARPE Project is geared towards reducing the recidivism rate within the District.

4. Crisis Readiness and Response

The District annually updates its crisis response manuals and quick reference flip charts. An all-hazards approach is the benchmark -- and LCS was one of the first school districts in Florida to be classified as a National Incident Management System (NIMS)-compliant school district.

Schools, classrooms and worksites develop site-specific Crisis Response Manuals to complement District plans. Each School's plan is specific in respect to evacuation, lockdowns and shelters. Aerial photos and expanded information on each campus also is included. In compliance with state statutes, law enforcement and fire officials are provided copies of these plans annually. Each school and work site also assigns key personnel to positions identified in the crisis response plan.

The District has specific threat assessment procedures with information to aid in the investigative process and life safety. Administrators and crisis team members receive FEMA certification related to NIMS, as well as incident command training, which meets Homeland Security requirements. Other activities implemented to ensure preparedness and student safety include:

- *Specific full-scale exercises* involving multiple agencies and the Regional Domestic Security Task Force. Exercises focus on safety plans, after/action reports and are held on non-school days.
- *In-service safety training for school bus drivers.* Supervisors included in FEMA/Crisis Response Plan training.
- *ISafe internet safety training.* Nationally recognized training on internet/network safety provided to targeted employees, instructional and non-instructional employees.
- *Domestic security task force.* Active participation in Region 2 Domestic Security Task Force LCS Chief of Safety, Security and Emergency Management chairs K-20 School Safety Committee.
- *Fingerprint/background check system.* LCS has a three live scan fingerprint machines With direct connection to FDLE/FBI. All employees, vendors, mentors and select volunteers receive Level II checks and their records are maintained.
- *Live scan/Vistrak system.* LCS has tracking database that records all level II screened individuals. System issues professional badges and provides sign-in/sign-out capability based on biometrics (fingerprint).

- *RAPTOR visitor access system.* Every school has RAPTOR control system tied to state and national sex offender/predator databases. System sends alerts to law enforcement and administrators when suspected offenders identified attempting to enter school property.
- *Emergency notification system.* LCS has multi-facet communication system (phone, e-mail & text) that can mass-notify parents and other stakeholders regarding school emergency as well as targeted non-emergency information such as absences, lunch balances etc.
- *Building access control system.* Select facilities have access to system that records user entries. This system also can remotely open, secure and rescind access without use of a common key.
- *SRD program.* LCS has a long-standing professional School Resource Deputy (SRD) Program, presently consisting of 22 deputies and eight safety officers. Officers are assigned to all middle and high schools, and safety officers are assigned to all elementary schools. These officers assist with a number of prevention programs, work at extracurricular activities and serve as role models for students.
- *Comprehensive security camera systems.* All schools covered by 24-hour central monitoring station for dispatch of alarms for Fire, Intrusion and other integral systems.

Alignment of All Pillars

Providing a safe environment is an essential part of meeting the District's vision and mission. It is required for quality student performance and progress. Creating a safe environment is necessary for successful implementation of other pillars in this strategic plan.

Providing a safe environment aligns with our District-wide accreditation plan. It is our School Board's number-one priority, a Florida State standard and is a critical part of each individual site's school improvement plan.

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 1:	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 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 2:	Ensure schools and activities are free of weapons and drugs.
Actions:	Coordinate with the Leon County Sheriff's Office to provide school resource deputies (presently consisting of 22 deputies and eight elementary school safety officers).
	Provide prevention programs and activities related to weapons and drugs, including the safe and drug-free schools grant program.
	Develop projects and coalitions supporting 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 3:	Reduce Student Suspensions and Expulsions.
Actions:	Build partnerships among LCS departments and divisions to implement programs and policies that reduce suspensions without 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 training related to suspension and expulsion with attention to zero tolerance and disproportionate representation of minority groups.
	Provide a mechanism for schools to document and track office referrals to identify students needing support or areas of weakness for the school.
	Facilitate restorative justice training and implement restorative justice programs in schools with a higher rate of suspensions and expulsions.

Goal 4:	Be prepared for crises.
Actions:	Maintain crisis response manuals at each school, worksite and classroom that are National Incident Management System compliant. Training 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 involving 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.



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, along with programs such as our media centers and the availability of technology. Leon County Schools ensures that its 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 two goals that support the pillar to provide quality resources: (1) providing highly qualified teachers, administrators and staff; and (2) providing state-of-the-art educational technology and facilities.

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 development and review of Deliberate Practice Plans (DPPs), attendance at professional conferences, 360° Input for District staff evaluations, District training (focused on specific topics), the Professional Development System Review Report 2008, the Assistant Principal Preparation Program (Level I), the Principal Preparation Program (Level II) 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 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 a variety of funding sources. To ensure teacher participation in planned training, principals are required to work with all instructional staff on the development of Deliberate Practice Plans. This planning process includes addressing school improvement objectives, instructional practice, student achievement targets and 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 DPP conferences. Based on a review of the School Improvement Plans, analysis of District-wide student data, state mandates and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) legislation, District-wide professional development initiatives are planned and implemented annually. Florida and Learning Forward 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 opportunities for professional growth. We then require follow up, evaluation for impact on student learning and evaluation for continuous improvement of programs.

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

Leon County Schools has made a concerted effort to train teachers and administrators on using data to impact student learning, instructional practice 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 adopted by the District support implementation of instructional strategies that incorporate research-based instructional practice. All instructional materials used by Leon County Schools are subject to a review process that examines validity of research-based strategies, best practices and relevancy to the Florida 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 Wonders ELA series, Thinking Math, SIM Content Area Enhancement routines, Pearson *Successmaker* and scientifically based inquiry 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 strategies and practices. Other professional development support includes mentoring and training provided by District curriculum developers. The

District supports technology instruction that is research-based and reflective of best practice -- and these best practices in instructional technology and materials utilization are reviewed and modeled continually. A process for review has been developed for new programs and is facilitated by the Division of Teaching and Learning. An Instructional Technology 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 an evaluation, screening and interview process that establishes high standards and is designed to identify the best possible candidate. This includes the targeted selection process. Employee evaluations follow best practices to encourage ongoing constructive evaluations.

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). The course is divided into classroom training and behind-the-wheel training to enable trainees to acquire the necessary knowledge, and skills to competently perform school bus drivers' duties and responsibilities. The Leon County School Transportation Department continually introduces new and specialized training information and other initiatives to benefit both drivers and transportation staff with the goal of developing the most highly trained, educated and knowledgeable staff to operate our school buses. Monthly school bus safety meetings are held with transportation staff members at each bus compound, in support of the department's commitment to provide safe school bus service in a positive and professional manner.

All schools annually identify the professional development activities 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 funding sources, including the Training and Education Center.

LCS also supports staff through programs like 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 successful half-cent sales tax referendum is supporting instructional technology hardware deployment to schools throughout the District. All schools are networked to the District office, allowing access to the worldwide 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 for previously failed courses. Computer labs with at least part-time instructors are available on most campuses. Pearson *Successmaker* and Accelerated Reader are examples of two widely used programs in the District. Discovery Education and BrainPop are available to all schools through the District media center, providing 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 Comcast cable channel 23 and shares cable channel 22 with Tallahassee Community College.

LCS recognizes that effective communication between school and home is paramount for student success. To that end, the District provides each school with access to a ListServ for the purpose of sending electronic messages to the community. Every school site, District department and teacher have access to post information on the District's webpage management platform, *Schoolwires*. The District also has deployed a mobile app that can push notifications and content directly to users. In an emergency situation, the District has the ability to promptly send voice and text messages to parents and guardians. Student attendance and grades are available to parents at all times through the District's online gradebook.

All segments of the adopted curriculum in Leon County Schools include a digital component to enhance student learning and understanding. These online platforms are always available to students to assist with their coursework. To further enhance the learning environment, LCS is midway through a 10-year plan to ensure that every instructional space is equipped as a 21st Century classroom. The District remains committed to placing devices in the hands of students. Currently, there are four one-to-one pilots taking place – at Sabal Palm Elementary, Fairview and Raa Middle, and Rickards High.

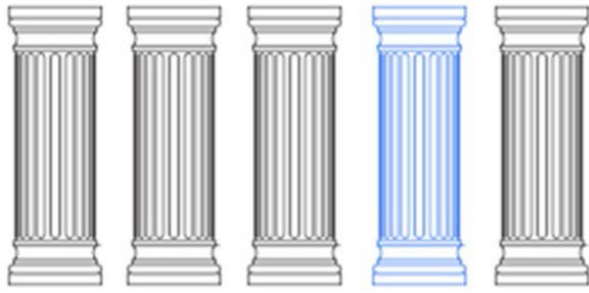
Alignment of All Pillars

Core to our mission, providing quality resources supports all aspects of the goals of the District's strategic plan. It is our mission to educate, inspire and empower all students to become responsible, respectful, engaged citizens equipped with the critical-thinking skills necessary to thrive 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 pillars one, two and four. The fifth pillar – fiscal stewardship and transparency – is critical to making this pillar possible.

Goals & Objectives

Goal 1:	Provide highly qualified teachers, administrators and staff.
Actions:	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 students.
	Teachers and administrators will develop deliberate practice plans based on instructional practice and school data from the previous year that includes 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.
	Evaluate the successful Career Development Initiative for non-instructional staff and determine the most productive way to move forward.
	Provide comprehensive training for school bus operators in the areas of bus safety, driving and for all programs such as ESE, homeless, foster care, CBI, field trips and alternative schools.
	Create customer service award that recognizes individuals and sites providing exemplary service to parents and other visitors. Develop system that will establish expectations, provide training and support, provide reward system, and incorporate customer service into employee evaluations.
Goal 2:	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 provides increased efficiencies, long-term savings and more secure financial practices.
	Conduct long-range planning to accommodate a world-class school district.
	Provide additional student stations to meet District pre-K needs.



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 educate, inspire and empower all students to become responsible, respectful and engaged citizens who are equipped with the critical thinking skills needed to thrive 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 of collaboration with stakeholders, Leon County Schools cultivates collaborative networks of stakeholders in several ways. First and foremost, School Board meetings are public. All Board meetings are publicly noticed, televised and archived for future viewing. Board agenda information is published online one week before the Board meeting so the public can access such information. A student representative serves as a 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 system, all stakeholders can follow the processes of the running of the District, learn of new initiatives and policies, and observe as the Board discusses policy and community issues and as District staff work through all aspects of governance and administration including curriculum and funding.

The District 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 with 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, District Advisory Council, Title I Advisory Council, Transportation Committee, Budget Committee, District Technology Advisory Council and Central Council of Teachers and Administrators all include citizens, parents and business partners 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.

Through the District's media relations program, information and messages are disseminated to stakeholders via the print, broadcast and electronic media. Those messages are monitored and tracked by the District to gauge stakeholder response.

The Title I District Advisory Council will be fully operational during the 2016-2017 school year. This leadership body will operate much like the District Advisory Council, but will have a main focus on our Title I schools. The Title I District Advisory Council will be composed of parents, administrators, citizens and teachers who are all focused on continuing to increase the effectiveness of our Title I schools.

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, Barry University, St. Leo University, 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 the World Class Schools and the A Better Community (ABC Schools) partnerships. 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 that represent District employees by engaging in interest-based bargaining and including union representatives as members on the District Advisory Council, the Central Council and all of the committees previously mentioned.

Each fall, the District hosts a Partner Breakfast to which all active partners and interested business persons are invited – so they can 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 more than 250 school-community partnerships (2015-2016) 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 2015-2016 school year, 11,511 citizens of Leon County registered as school volunteers; 1,279 citizens actively engaged in one-on-one mentoring relationships with at-risk students, and collectively donated more than 195,700 hours of voluntary service – *equivalent to 94 work-week years* -- to our schools and students. Various community support activities included school 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. Additionally, we plan to build upon our emphasis on “Building the Future Together -- All Children Learning.”

Relationships with other elected officials also are 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. Elected members of our School Board serve 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 of the overall Comprehensive Plan and school concurrency.

Parent Portal in the Genesis program provides students’ parents access to grades, attendance, assignments, curriculum guides and resources available to them. Student and teacher web-pages provide additional information. Title I and Twenty-First 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 every aspect of what we do as a school district. Collaborative partnerships build an engaged community that 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 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 / community, business representatives, post-secondary institutions, government entities and other school districts.

Goal 1:	Improve communication and collaboration with all stakeholders in Leon County.
Actions:	Enhance the capacity of technology to expand and streamline online information sharing.
	Expand the production capability and programming of WLCS, cable channel 23.
	Continue the Superintendent's <i>Community Conversations</i> , which bring topics to the community for input and also allow questions and issues to be raised by the 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 2:	Increase community involvement throughout Leon County Schools.
Actions:	Continue to enhance support for District volunteer and mentor initiatives. With more than 11,500 volunteers and more than 250 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.



Fiscal Stewardship & Transparency

The fifth pillar -- Fiscal Stewardship and Transparency -- differs from the other four since it is linked to the District's overall operation, rather than focusing directly on students in providing them the best possible education. Yet this pillar is essential if the District is to accomplish its mission. It not only determines how successfully and efficiently we administer the work of the District, but it also directly impacts our relationship with the community and the taxpayers who support our programs and services.

Goals & Current Status

To be successful in today's fast-moving, ever-changing world, all organizations – including the Leon County School District – must secure and efficiently manage the financial resources required to support and sustain their operation. Since this mantra is common to all organizations destined to succeed, fierce competition for resources is inevitable.

In recent years, debate over state and District school funding has focused on the need to spend increasing amounts for public education. Per-student instructional expenditures have risen sharply. The price tag for needed facilities, technology and support services has likewise increased. With more intense competition for the taxpayer dollar from government and public service entities, the demand for efficient fiscal management and transparency has never been greater.

Amid continuing increases in per-pupil spending and competition for funding, many school districts are facing budget shortfalls. Not only are some districts losing enrollment because of changes in community demographics, but parents are increasingly able to select alternative education options such as cross-district school enrollment, charter schools, private and parochial schools, and home schooling. Fortunately, the impact of such alternatives has been minimal on LCS because of the academic excellence of our schools and the variety of options and tailored programs available to students.

In the current environment, school districts must carefully analyze – and minimize -- *all* operating expenses, especially overheads and non-instructional budgets. Many people feel that non-instructional services, important as they are, cannot become “the tail that wags the dog.” Generally speaking, however, school districts today are offering more busing/transportation services, food services, counseling/social services, innovative technology and staff benefits than

ever before. The resulting trend is for such non-instructional expense pressures to continue to challenge efforts to put more dollars in the classroom where it directly impacts students.

Recognizing the realities of today's educational environment, a recent study in another state resulted in the following admonitions to those who manage school budgets: minimize administrative costs, take advantage of cost savings from outsourcing non-instructional services, effectively manage employee health benefits, effectively structure capital costs, and reform collective bargaining. Leon County Schools continually considers all such opportunities.

Thus, the gauntlet has been thrown down for our District School Board, Superintendent, administrators and budget managers. The challenge is clear – and critical to the future of public education in Leon County.

Alignment of All Pillars

This pillar – Fiscal Stewardship and Transparency – provides the foundation upon which the others rest. Without responsible financial management, as well as public awareness and support for our resource allocations, the Leon County School District would be unable to accomplish the goals set forth in the other four pillars.

Goals & Objectives

Goal 1:	Promote the value and benefits of taxpayer investment in LCS through transparency (<i>Florida Statutes 215.985, 1011.03 and 1011.035</i>).
Actions:	Publish budgeted capital projects online (LCS website) separately by site each fiscal year and include semi-annual updates.
	Publish capital project completions online separately by site each fiscal year.
	Continue to publish entire budget online.
	Publish budget amendments online during the year immediately subsequent to Board approval.
	Continue to publish audited financial reports online.
	Update quarterly the status of planned corrective actions described in the audited financial statements.
	Publish the cost-per-student by function online as evidenced by audit reports and current budgeted year with five years of comparative data.
Goal 2:	Implement a culture of continuous improvement, including the application of best business practices.
Actions:	Earn professional recognition awards, such as ASBO (Association of School Business Officials) Meritorious Budget Award and/or Sterling Awards. Continue to attain the ASBO Meritorious Budget Award yearly and achieve the Sterling Award by fiscal year 2019.

	Establish benchmarking metrics with comparable school districts and/or industry standards to refine current practices in the Finance, Transportation and Human Resources departments to align with best practices. Determine gaps and identify processes to optimize efficiency and effectiveness.
	Using Sterling expertise to complete an assessment of cycle time and cost, establish cost savings and cycle time reduction goals overall for Finance, Transportation and Human Resources departments, which would be achieved through improvement efforts.
	Publish the total operational budget used for classroom instruction and support with the goal of increasing the percentage used for these purposes. (<i>Classroom instruction is defined [in the Florida Department of Education Redbook**] as the function “instruction.” Classroom support is defined within functions as “pupil personnel,” “instructional & curriculum development services,” “instructional staff training,” and “instructional related technology.”</i>)
	Publish the number of hours per year of training within business operations to provide employees job-related continuing professional education with the goal of fewer audit findings and more efficient operations. (<i>This includes training, professional development, continuing education and certifications, if applicable, for the following cost centers: CFO, Human Resources, Transportation, and Technology and Information Services.</i>)
	Reduce the overall number of financial audit comments, prioritizing corrective actions to reduce or eliminate future related findings, as evidenced by the number and severity of comments compared on a year-to-year basis. (Order of severity of findings: 1. Material Weakness; 2. Significant Deficiency; 3. Compliance and Other Matters.)
	Reduce the overall number of Internal Account audit comments, prioritizing corrective actions to reduce or eliminate future related findings, as evidenced by the number and severity of comments compared on a year-to-year basis.
	Convene the LCS Audit Committee at least two times per school year. Ensure the Audit Committee is comprised of credentialed members with sufficient financial, operational and audit expertise. Develop an instrument the Audit Committee can use to provide feedback on District operations for the Superintendent and Board.

** *The Florida Department of Education Redbook defines, describes and mandates the uniform accounting structure that must be used by all public K-12 school districts in Florida for financial reporting.*