Charlottesville City Schools

Strategic Plan 2017–2023

Every Learner. Every Day. Everyone.

www.charlottesvilleschools.org

Our Mission: Every Learner. Every Day. Everyone.

Every Learner

We are all learners: every student, teacher, staff member, administrator, parent, and member of our school community.

We foster a culture of learning promoted by agency and personalized opportunities.

All learners are high achievers with great potential and will excel through equitable opportunities and the removal of barriers.

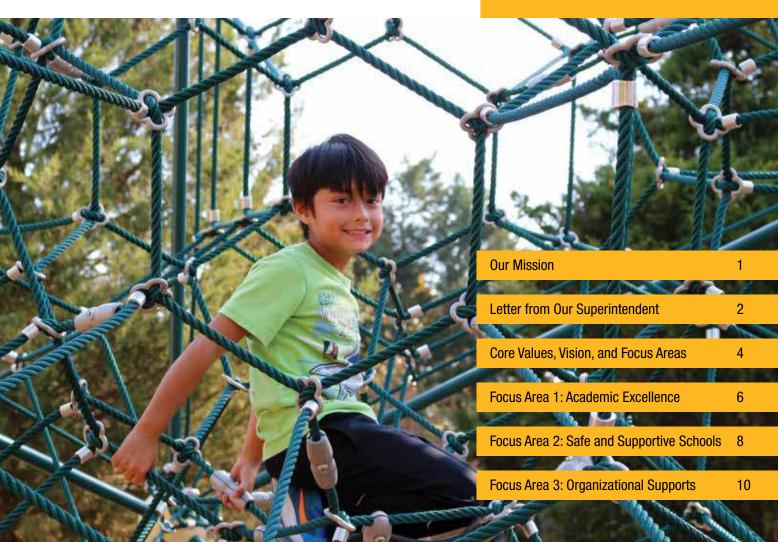Developing a passion for learning requires trust between students, teachers, and families.

Every Day

Learning is continuous and not bound by rigid structures.

Learning meets learners where they are: Anytime and anywhere.

Everyone

We all share responsibility for ALL learners.

CCS is a team. We are interdependent. We have shared goals.
We are mutually accountable for everything that happens in our division.

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August 2017

Dear students, staff, families, and community members,

Thanks to so many of you who have offered your ideas as part of our strategic planning process. We have held nearly 50 meetings and work sessions with stakeholders as young as fourth graders and as experienced as administrators with four decades' worth of service in our schools. Your feedback has been invaluable and remarkably consistent.

What we heard was that you want us to focus on academic excellence, safe and supportive schools, and organizational supports. At the heart of this plan is the idea that we are all learners — not only our students, but teachers, staff members such as bus drivers, and families at home. We are growing and working together for the benefit of our community.

What do we mean by academic excellence? The ultimate goal is life-ready graduates who are equipped with a strong worth ethic, good social skills, capability in communication and creativity, and the ability to think critically and learn independently. This life-readiness comes from collaborating with classmates, addressing real-world problems, serving the community, experiencing workplaces, and more. We want to develop life-readiness in all our students, promoting equity by offering the supports that individuals need and by examining our practices to eliminate barriers to success. A student-centered approach uses face-to-face and online resources to foster the unique talents and interests of our students. It encourages students to "own" their learning by setting goals, making choices, and reflecting on their progress.

Aside from academic excellence, we'll be focusing on safe and supportive schools. Our learning communities will be marked by wellbeing -- emotional, mental, relational, and physical. School culture and the health of our students are foundational to learning. We want to build stronger relationships and communities through a division-wide system of academic and behavioral supports, through mentoring, through more thoroughly embracing a diverse culture, and through building the social-emotional skills sets of everyone in our community. We want to create a culture of physical wellness so that, for instance, nutrition and movement are not limited to health and gym classes, but are a regular part of our daily routines. We want our school buildings to foster both a sense of security and a modern, flexible learning atmosphere.

Our organizational systems should support these first two goals. Our feedback groups consistently reminded us of how much our community appreciates our excellent staff. In the face of projected teacher shortages, we will continue to recruit and support highly qualified employees who are committed to lifetime learning. As students and teachers increasingly rely on technology, we want to make sure that our award-winning IT systems offer robust and innovative supports. We want to make sure our school processes — from the forms our parents and teachers complete to our communications with staff and families — are effective and supportive of our talented students and staff.

At one of the CHS student focus groups, a young man answered the question, "What would make you want to come to school each day?" After thinking for a moment, he replied, "I'd be learning things that matter to me and my future, and the people around me would all be getting along." There are several key ideas in this excellent answer. "I'd be learning" places the emphasis on students as active learners, not passive recipients of teaching. "Things that matter to me and my future" gets at both student-centered practices and our goals for life-readiness. "People … getting along" addresses some of our goals for school culture and wellbeing. Together, let us commit to making this young man's vision a reality for all our learners.

Dr. Rosa S. Atkins

Dr. Rosa S. Atkins
Superintendent

Our Core Values

We believe that defining and achieving at the highest levels is only possible through a value set which is subscribed to without exception and which defines why we pursue our goals.

At Charlottesville City Schools, we value:

Community — Relationships, collaboration, and partnerships among students, staff, families, and community are fundamental to the success of learners.

Creativity — Creative expression through the arts is integral for developing empathy, teamwork, innovation, and problem solving skills.

Diversity — Individuality is a strength—the differences we each possess and the commonalities of the whole are shared assets.

Equity — Every learner can achieve at high levels and graduate as a life-ready individual in schools focused on removing social factors as a predictor of success and through personalized supports.

Excellence — Creating life-long learners depends on the purposeful development of resilience and tenacity in a growth-oriented environment and with a focus on the pursuit of real-world solutions.

Innovation — Promoting imagination to form and pursue creative, flexible, research-backed solutions is essential for continuous improvement and the advancement of equitable opportunities.

Leadership — Opportunity is cultivated through the pursuit of a shared vision, guided by character and stewardship, and governed by a commitment to the mindful use of talents, resources, and time.

Self-Determination — Providing learners with choices promotes equity, develops ownership, and fosters excellence and passion.

Well-being — Learners can only reach their full potential when they are in an environment that is supportive and promotes their health and security.

Our Vision

At Charlottesville City Schools we are committed to personal and academic excellence inspired by a collaborative and innovative learning environment for everyone. Staying true to this vision requires the use of targeted educational strategies, creative interventions, and inspiring programs to address the diverse needs of all learners.

Our Focus Areas

Academic Excellence

Learning will promote life-ready graduates through student-centered and equitable practices

Safe and Supportive Schools

Our learning communities will promote social, emotional, and physical wellness in facilities that are safe and conducive to learning

Organizational Supports

Our systems and processes will enable students, staff, and schools to thrive

Academic Excellence

Learning will promote life-ready graduates through student-centered and equitable practices

Goal AE 1 — CCS will develop life-ready graduates

Strategy AE 1.1 — Develop and offer cross-curricular learning opportunities that emphasize context and real-world application of knowledge

Strategy AE 1.2 — Develop life-ready graduates that have problem-solving, collaboration, communication and career-readiness skills

Strategy AE 1.3 — Promote a mindset of innovation and entrepreneurship

Strategy AE 1.4 — Extend experiences for learners through civic, neighborhood, and workplace opportunities

Strategy AE 1.5 — Develop opportunities for learning about environmental sustainability across all schools

Strategy AE 1.6 — Cultivate college and career awareness for all learners

Goal AE 2 — Learning will be student-centered

Strategy AE 2.1 — Promote personalized ownership of academic growth through developmentally appropriate materials and methods in a learner-centered environment

Strategy AE 2.2 — Develop and implement access to learning that is available anytime and anywhere

Strategy AE 2.3 — Foster a passion for learning through individual pursuits and programmatic offerings

Strategy AE 2.4 — Develop a needs-based, balanced assessment plan in order to promote a growth mindset and maximize instructional time

Goal AE 3 — Learning will be equitable

Strategy AE 3.1 — Promote high expectations for all learners through an inclusive learning environment

Strategy AE 3.2 — Provide equitable access to resources and programs for all learners

Strategy AE 3.3 — Enable all learners to perform at or above grade level

Strategy AE 3.4 — Pursue opportunities to expand early-childhood education offerings

Strategy AE 3.5 — Support and collaborate with families in the education of their children

What it looks like

We've often asked young people, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" Perhaps the better questions are "What problem do you want to solve? And why wait until you're grown up?" By tapping into real-world resources and exploring actual problems, we will allow our students of all ages and backgrounds to integrate the skills and competencies that will prepare them for life. Consider the Burnley-Moran fourth-graders who researched the invasion of the emerald ash borer and presented recommendations to the Charlottesville City Council, who then published the tips in the City's newsletter. And it was Buford engineers who designed, installed, and tweaked an attendance tracker for our annual division-wide art show. Responding to a Virginia Department of Education challenge, CHS students developed a drone with avoidance capabilities using an algorithm that a judge from Jet Propulsion Lab described as "the future of the industry"! From the arts to public policy to technology, our students have the interests and developing skills to make things better. Whether they were born in Uganda or the U.Va. Medical Center, our students can tap into their diverse experiences, work together, and imagine a better future, starting today.

Why this is important

Preparation of life-ready learners is a fundamental purpose of education. CCS pledges to provide an atmosphere of excellence and equity, and to ensure that learners are challenged to stretch their talents and aspirations. The education provided by CCS will respond to each learner's interests, abilities and challenges, and provide the tools needed to excel. We must set expectations for the habits and behaviors that every learner needs to succeed, laying the foundations for exploration and demonstration of essential skills.

Individuals with problem-solving skills are more prepared to face difficult situations and can stretch themselves to respond to challenges more skillfully. All learners are capable of being challenged and motivated to reach beyond perceived limits. A challenging education engages learners and encourages them to reach the highest levels of personal excellence.

Learners must feel connected to the curriculum they study in order to be receptive to challenges and prepared to excel in their academic pursuits. This requires a commitment to cultural competence and an atmosphere of mutual respect everywhere. In addition to a rigorous, relevant, and engaging curriculum, learners must also have access to a range of school and community service opportunities that promote civic engagement.

Photo courtesy of Ryan M. Kelly/The Daily Progress.

Safe and Supportive Schools

Our learning communities will promote social, emotional, and physical wellness in facilities that are safe and conducive to learning

Goal SS 4 — Promote social and emotional well-being

Strategy SS 4.1 — Promote a positive and inclusive culture, conducive to learning in every school and for everyone

Strategy SS 4.2 — Implement a division-wide positive behavior support plan focused on equity for all learners

Strategy SS 4.3 — Embrace school diversity continuously and expand educational and social offerings highlighting the value of diversity

Strategy SS 4.4 — Ensure mental health, social, and family support services are available for students needing them

Strategy SS 4.5 — Encourage strong relationships among and between staff, students, and families through mentoring and other initiatives

Strategy SS 4.6 — Support and collaborate with families in the social and emotional growth of their children

Goal SS 5 — Promote physical health and wellness

Strategy SS 5.1 — Encourage kinesthetic learning, movement, and play

Strategy SS 5.2 — Serve and promote healthy, nutritious and appealing foods and pursue suppliers offering sustainable and locally-sourced options

Strategy SS 5.3 — Maximize use of gardens, and other outdoor/non-traditional learning spaces

Strategy SS 5.4 — Adopt a holistic commitment to integrating and promoting wellness

Goal SS 6 — Ensure facilities are safe and conducive to learning

Strategy SS 6.1 — Expand systems and solutions in division facilities to promote physical safety

Strategy SS 6.2 — Study, plan, and develop 21st-century learning spaces

Strategy SS 6.3 — Research and utilize materials and methods that minimize environmental impact

What it looks like

The three R's receive a lot of attention — reading, writing, 'rithmetic. We want to focus on a fourth R — relationships. A strong sense of community is at the heart of our new division-wide framework for supplying quick, consistent responses to students' academic and behavioral needs. Both Johnson Elementary and our alternative learning center, Lugo-McGinness Academy, have led the way as we implement these new data-driven practices that promote community, encourage good behavior, and deepen relationships. (Learn more at charlottesvilleschools.org/supports.) From school-wide meetings at Venable to Fun Fridays at Clark to the Link Crew mentoring program at Charlottesville High School, each of our schools is cultivating its own sense of identity and community, benefiting both students and staff. Good relationships lead to well-being, which is reinforced by healthy habits in areas such as nutrition and exercise. Our partnerships with groups including City Schoolyard Garden and the Local Food Hub help us bring good nutrition and physical activity out of the lunchroom or gym and into the whole school day. We're guided by our School Health Advisory Board as well as students, such as Walker School's student nutrition committee. This means more time outside, more movement during the day, healthy meals in the lunchroom, and innovative ideas like monthly local produce in the classrooms. We want our students and staff to build healthy habits in an atmosphere of positive relationships.

Why this is important

Achievement in school is not limited to accomplishments related to the academic curriculum, but is also measured by progress made towards physical, mental, and emotional wellness. Individuals who are healthy are better able to learn and attend school. Learners with access to stable and diverse supports which may be family based, but can and in many cases will be non-family based (e.g. relationships with caring non-family adults, an ethos that promotes service to others, and safe environments) are more likely to engage in positive social interactions and exhibit respect, tolerance, and self-discipline. Individuals with knowledge about health and wellness are better equipped able to make healthy decisions and pursue active lifestyles.

High quality, well maintained facilities are fundamental to learning and teaching. The physical environment of school buildings and school grounds is a key factor in the overall health and safety of students, staff members, and visitors. Achievement can be affected positively by the physical environment. Safe and clean environments are conducive to learning and teaching.

Photo courtesy of Ashley Thornton/Scrimmage Play.

Organizational Supports

Our systems and processes will enable students, staff, and schools to thrive

Goal OS 7 — Recruit and retain excellent employees

Strategy OS 7.1 — Recruit and retain highly qualified and excellent staff

Strategy OS 7.2 — Develop innovative strategies for recruitment and retention of diverse and exceptional employees

Goal OS 8 — Support and develop excellent staff members

Strategy OS 8.1 — Foster a culture of continuous learning, shared responsibility, mutual support, trust and respect

Strategy OS 8.2 — Promote the health and wellbeing of all staff

Strategy OS 8.3 — Maintain an aligned performance management process in support of employee effectiveness

Strategy OS 8.4 — Cultivate staff talent and leadership at all levels

Strategy OS 8.5 — Standardize processes for evaluating, selecting, and implementing, maintaining instructional resources

Goal OS 9 — Develop, expand and modernize infrastructure

Strategy OS 9.1 — Promote business system upgrade through consolidation of processes and realization of new features and abilities

Strategy OS 9.2 — Establish timelines for decision-making and development of potential facilities according to capacity projections

Strategy OS 9.3 — Pursue understanding of the latest technology innovations as they relate to our environment and users

Strategy OS 9.4 — Identify and implement technology solutions in support of division staff, students and instructional goals

Strategy OS 9.5 — Build, sustain, and invest in technology infrastructure to streamline data management and create efficiencies

What it looks like

Our teachers routinely receive statewide and national recognition, grants, and fellowships from groups such as NASA, the U.S. State Department, National Geographic, the Virginia Music Educators Association, and more. We are proud of them and the expertise they bring, but we're equally proud of the recognition they receive from appreciative parents and students. Despite an anticipated national teacher shortage, we're committed to attracting, training, and supporting highly qualified teachers and staff members. We recognize that our students are the shared responsibility of families at home, partners across the community, and every single Charlottesville City Schools employee. We want to support the work of these employees through efficient systems, smart processes, and innovative technologies so that less of their time is focused on paperwork and more is focused on students. Just this year, we were nationally honored for our innovative use of technology by the Center for Digital Education. We're proud of such honors but know that there is work to be done, and this work directly supports our larger goals of academic excellence and safe and supportive schools.

Goal OS 10 — Implement knowledge management procedures

Strategy OS 10.1 — Develop and implement a division-wide framework for communication and processes for all schools and offices

Strategy OS 10.2 — Develop and implement a division-wide information library for all schools and offices

Why this is important

CCS employees are resourceful, flexible, and creative. We actively recruit, hire, train, and retain staff using innovative methods and incentives and empower our staff to be leaders. We must be driven by research and constant adaptation in light of evidence. We must seek to reflect in our workforce the diversity of our community and meet the needs of a diverse student body.

A robust infrastructure, including central office supports and an ever-improving technological framework, facilitates learning and high quality teaching to ensure that schools will continue to be a source of pride for students, teachers, and community members.

CCS must be responsible for implementing and maintaining sound business practices. We must implement fiscal and administrative practices that meet and exceed professional standards. We must work to ensure that there are no barriers between the central office and school sites and foster an effective flow of services, support and information. The division must work to identify internal examples of excellence — programs and methods proven to work for learners — and these should be shared, replicated, and made systemic.

Photo courtesy of Ryan M. Kelly/The Daily Progress.

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