

**BOARD POLICY**  
**Instructional Program Philosophy - -**  
**Educational Accountability and School Improvement**

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**Descriptor Code: IA**

The Cherokee County Board of Education herein establishes an educational accountability and school improvement system based upon the performance of its students and staff and the impact of its educational programs. The instructional program accountability system recognizes: the Georgia State Board of Education's Long-Term Strategic Plan; the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), District Improvement Plan (DIP), and Consolidated Local Education Agency Improvement Plan (CLIP) as required annually by the Georgia Department of Education; and is based upon the Mission Beliefs and Priority Areas of the School Board, as contained in the School District's Five-Year Strategic Plan "Blueprint."

In order to address the challenges and fully implement the vision articulated in the School Board's Mission and Beliefs, each school within the School District will undergo a comprehensive school improvement planning and development process. This school improvement process will be completed on an annual basis, through a systematic and comprehensive evaluation of school data and practices.

**I. INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PURPOSE, GOAL AND OBJECTIVES**

- a. The general purpose of the instructional program accountability system is to assess the success of the School District by measuring the individual progress of schools in achieving a broad range of student performance indicators and of the School District in providing services and resources to schools in an effective and efficient manner.
- b. The overall goal of the instructional program accountability system is to promote schools' progress in achieving their educational mission as it relates to the School Board's Priority Areas, the District's Five-Year Strategic Plan "Blueprint" and the Cognia Standards. The objectives of the instructional program accountability system are to: (1) monitor schools' progress by measuring a standardized set of school performance indicators; (2) determine which schools are meeting the School District's objectives and can serve as models for other schools; and (3) determine which schools are failing to meet the School District's objectives and require additional assistance, support and/or intervention.

**II. INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM ASSUMPTIONS**

The following assumptions undergird the instructional program accountability system:

- a. School performance is a product of the combined efforts of the School Board and its governance policies, the Superintendent of Schools, School District administration, Principals, teachers, support staff, students, parents, businesses and the community.
- b. Performance is measured against the same high academic standards for all students. All schools are expected to perform at a level that reflects high expectations for students and staff. Mitigating factors will be taken into account (e.g., extraordinary mobility; critical overcrowding; increasing number in enrollment of students living at

or below the poverty level; increasing enrollment of non-English speaking students, some of whom have little or no experience in a formal education setting) when determining school progress.

- c. School progress is evaluated based on a combination of performance indicators including student achievement, attendance, dropout rates, and additional alternative assessment indicators (e.g., portfolios of student work, post-graduation success, enrollment in and passing of advanced placement classes, proactive approach to safety and discipline, etc.).
- d. Schools are evaluated on annual performance indicators, as well as two-three year trends in accountability documentation.
- e. Schools with a history of inadequate performance are expected to make greater progress in improving student achievement, attendance and dropout rates than schools with higher performance on these measures. It may require unequal resources to meet unequal needs of students/schools.
- f. A school determined by the Superintendent to demonstrate inadequate levels of performance and/or inadequate levels of progress is required to develop and implement a written corrective action or restructuring plan, depending on the length of time the school has not met expectations or the severity of a decline in student achievement in any particular area. This corrective action/restructuring plan will become a part of the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

### **III. INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM INITIATIVES**

As the instructional program accountability system is further developed, additional specific initiatives and guidelines will be formulated to:

- a. Promote continued excellence for all students relative to growth and performance, as measured by a comprehensive set of valid assessments.
- b. Provide accurate and timely information about student performance at the school and School District levels for full public disclosure.
- c. Use a clearly defined set of analyses, including research on effective schools, to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of schools' progress.
- d. Establish incentives for rewarding schools for innovation and significant improvement in student performance outcomes.

#### **IV. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

Each year, the Superintendent will develop for the School Board's review and approval a proposed School District Strategic Plan with short and long-term goals for the School District.

Each school, on an annual basis, will participate in a school improvement process that results in the development and implementation of a comprehensive School Improvement Plan (SIP). The school improvement process and plan will be based upon the District's Five-Year Strategic Plan "Blueprint," the Cognia Standards and indicators of school and student progress. Each SIP will include:

- a. School Mission Beliefs;
- b. Necessary baseline data to identify needs;
- c. Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) Goals with aligned objectives focused on student learning outcomes; and
- d. Strategies, Action Steps, Professional Learning Activities and Time frames for improvement.

#### **V. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SUPPORT TEAMS**

As a part of monitoring initiatives approved through the School District's Strategic Waiver School System (SWSS) contract and in an effort to support schools with school improvement initiatives and school progress, schools will be visited on a recurring basis by a School Improvement Support Team, consisting of School District administration assigned by the Superintendent. The School Improvement Support Team will work collaboratively with the school Principal to provide a comprehensive review of the school's practices that influence student achievement and progress. A report, with commendations and recommendations, of the School Improvement Support Team's school visit and review will be provided to the Superintendent at the conclusion of the Team's review. As a part of the review, the School Improvement Support Team will work with the Principal and staff to:

- a. Review the School Improvement Plan and Process;
- b. Analyze multiple school data resources and trends;
- c. Assess school initiatives and programs;

- d. Observe instructional practices; and
- e. Interview representative groups of school stakeholders (e.g., administration, certified and classified staff, parents and students.)

## **VI. WAIVER REQUESTS**

Based on the School District's agreement with the State under the Strategic Waiver School System contract, the School Board will annually review requests submitted by Principals and recommended by the Superintendent for waivers of School Board policy or State Board Rules for school and/or districtwide improvements in academic achievement.

- a. A Principal wishing to waive a School Board Policy, State Board Rule, designated Georgia law, or provision(s) in federal law must submit a written request to the Superintendent or designee for review.
- b. Principal waiver requests must be directly related to the School Improvement Plan (SIP). They must clearly address laws/policies that create barriers to successful implementation of the SIP's objectives. The request must include: (a) citation of the specific Board policy, rule and/or statute; (b) how the statutory purpose/intent will be met; (c) how granting the waiver will assist the school in improving specific student performance outcomes; and (d) how progress in improving student achievement will be evaluated.
- c. To be recommended by the Superintendent to the School Board, each waiver request must be (a) budget neutral (i.e., able to be funded through normal school budgeting and expenditures) and (b) receive stakeholder input based on the nature of the waiver.
- d. Waivers will be reviewed and approved on an annual basis, but may reflect a multiyear project.
- e. A request for continuation of a previously-approved waiver must include an evaluation (including relevant data), which substantiates that the waiver is resulting in improvement of the projected student performance outcomes.
- f. A process for submission and review of waivers will be established.
- g. The Superintendent or designee will conduct a final review of each waiver request and, if requesting a waiver of any rule not covered in the School District's Strategic Waiver System contract, submit it with a recommendation to the School Board. The Superintendent will only support waivers which reflect support of the school stakeholders, will positively impact school improvement efforts/student achievement and/or which are budget neutral.

- h. The School Board will consider all waiver requests submitted by the Superintendent. The Superintendent may recommend that the School Board request a State waiver if it is required to implement school and/or districtwide improvements.

**VII. ANNUAL REPORTS OF SCHOOL AND DISTRICT PROGRESS AND CUSTOMER SURVEYS**

- a. On an annual basis, an individual Annual Report of School Progress will be distributed to the parents of all pupils in the School District and to other interested community members. A core part of each report will consist of key local, state and national benchmarks/data elements and a report on the status of School Improvement Plan (SIP) objectives.
- b. On an annual basis, an aggregation of all schools' results and progress will be published in an Annual Report of District Progress. The Annual Report of District Progress will highlight student achievement gains and increased school, department and school system effectiveness, as well as districtwide progress on the School Board's Priority Areas.
- c. Customer Surveys will be conducted periodically to provide feedback to schools, the Superintendent and the School Board on the perception of students, parents and members of the community regarding school and School District effectiveness.

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**REVISED: July 16, 2020**

**Cherokee County Board of Education**