

# AIKEN COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS STRATEGIC PLAN



## YEAR THREE UPDATE

### MISSION

The mission of Aiken County Public Schools, the emerging premier school district, is to cultivate future-ready students to serve our evolving community and world through an innovative, literacy-focused school system distinguished by

- ◆ rigorous, personalized learning opportunities;
- ◆ highly effective, service-driven professionals; and
- ◆ mutually-beneficial partnerships.



### BELIEFS

- ◆ the success of our schools and communities is interdependent.
- ◆ family is the primary influence in the lives of individuals.
- ◆ positive, meaningful relationships foster success.
- ◆ high expectations for all are imperative for personal excellence.
- ◆ each person is unique and has inherent value beyond measure.
- ◆ each person's unique genius leads to personal excellence.
- ◆ each person is mind, body, and soul, each requiring attention.
- ◆ each person deserves the opportunity to pursue and fulfill individual purpose.
- ◆ each person has a responsibility to serve.
- ◆ each person desires acceptance and deserves a safe environment in which to live, work, and learn.

### OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Each student will acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to pursue learning throughout life.
- ◆ Each student will complete high school prepared to thrive in college, career, and life.
- ◆ Each student will be a productive citizen while making meaningful contributions to society.
- ◆ Each student will display strength of character and make decisions with integrity and compassion.



## STRATEGIES

- ◆ We will guarantee engaging, rigorous, and authentic learning experiences for all students.
- ◆ We will create secure, flexible, state-of-the-art learning environments for students of diverse needs that ensure their development as world-class citizens proficient with relevant technology.
- ◆ We will recruit and retain innovative quality professionals, ensure their development, support, and recognition, while providing learning opportunities for all stakeholders.
- ◆ We will ensure strategic partnerships that provide symbiotic relationships responsive to school and community needs.
- ◆ We will establish a culture of quality defined by integrity, optimism, unity, and service.



## YEAR THREE PRIORITY

### WE WILL GUARANTEE ENGAGING, RIGOROUS, & AUTHENTIC LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR ALL STUDENTS.

#### STUDENT-CENTERED AND PERSONALIZED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

##### Computer Assisted Instruction:

ACPS District utilizes the Edmentum software as Tier 1 support to differentiate and personalize the learning for all students working above, at, or below grade-level to accelerate growth in reading and/or math. Edmentum identifies and closes skill and concept gaps with a focus on personalizing the learning for each student based on their academic needs. Scheduled and intentional usage on the software gives students opportunities to practice and master new content that will move them forward academically. Edmentum provides explicit instruction, supported practice, independent practice, and ongoing formative assessment for each student.

Other Student centered and personalized learning experiences include our Full-Circle Technology Program, High School Independent Learning Time, and the Aiken County Virtual Academy.







## YEAR THREE PRIORITY

**WE WILL CREATE SECURE, FLEXIBLE, STATE-OF-THE-ART LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR STUDENTS OF DIVERSE NEEDS THAT ENSURE THEIR DEVELOPMENT AS WORLD-CLASS CITIZENS PROFICIENT WITH RELEVANT TECHNOLOGY.**

### **STUDENT AND TEACHER ACCESS TO AND USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS**

Over the past three years, Aiken County school district has maintained the focus of providing high quality educational environments for all children. The construction of a new middle school, multiple phases of two high schools, the start of construction at a third high school, and complete renovations of an elementary school and adult education facility marks the beginning of a comprehensive long term facility building program. This comprehensive facilities program will conclude with 15 construction projects consisting of building additions, renovations, replacements or new facilities over the next 5 to 7 years. In addition to the new construction projects, Aiken County Public School enhanced the five-year cyclic maintenance program making improvements to the learning environments in our existing facilities. The district has conducted new HVAC projects and upgrades at four schools, new flooring and painting at twelve schools, playground enhancements at six schools, along with facility upgrades to all of the nine high school athletic facilities. The district's commitment to providing premier learning environments also includes increased safety and security upgrades. The district installed security cameras in all middle schools and is now in the beginning stages of installing security cameras in all elementary schools.



The past three years have seen an explosion in technology upgrades. The foundation of these upgrades has been an ambitious and future-ready upgrade to infrastructure. The district has upgraded switching and access points at all schools to the latest standard, ensuring compatibility with current and future devices, plus guarding against necessary bandwidth increases as multimedia continues to play a larger and larger role in the classroom. The district's firewall and filtering systems have also been completely upgraded to maximize the safety and speed of the Internet connection.





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Another ambitious—and long overdue—project was the replacement of the separate telephone systems, some of which dated back to 1981, to a modern, unified platform. The district partnered with Microsoft to deploy what was the largest VoIP system of its kind, providing unified communication across all sites for the first time. The district was able to leverage the position of being such an early adopter into providing feedback that directly aided in the development of the entire platform.



Time did not stand still for devices, and the district has been as proactive as possible in replacing desktops, laptops, mobile devices, and multimedia equipment. Thousands of computers and classroom presentation systems have been replaced with modern equipment. This, alongside aggressive software upgrades to ensure our students and staff are never using obsolete programs, ensures that our students are truly prepared for 21st century technology skills.

Finally, the district has utilized cutting-edge computing platforms—sometimes to the degree that they were still pre-production—to provide specialized tools for staff, faculty, and students. These platforms include being among the earliest adopters of individual student cloud-based storage accounts, 3D printers, and professional-grade content creation software. We continue to move toward our goal of ensuring all schools have access to the absolute latest and best materials as needed.



Aiken County Public School District believes that providing high quality educational environments extend beyond the traditional classroom to our lawn maintenance and school buses. With the addition of forty new school buses and seven new activity buses, the school district can ensure a safe and relaxing ride for students on their way to and from school each day. The upgrades to the lawn maintenance program provides a grander level of pride for the students, teachers and community.





## YEAR THREE PRIORITY

**WE WILL RECRUIT INNOVATIVE QUALITY PROFESSIONALS, ENSURE THEIR DEVELOPMENT, SUPPORT & RECOGNITION, WHILE PROVIDING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL.**

### **PURPOSEFUL PROFESSIONAL GROWTH THAT BUILDS INDIVIDUAL AND SYSTEM CAPACITY**



Our Human Resources department works in conjunction with district leaders and building level educators to recruit quality professionals through local, state, and national recruitment events. We also have a close relationship with local higher education partners to ensure placement of graduating seniors in their education department. Our district recruitment events support district needs for support staff and certified personnel.

In order to retain and ensure educator development, our district office provides training throughout the school year and over the summer. We provide individual and group training to enhance and improve instructional skills, effective and efficient use of technology portals, coaching skills, and orientation to the district's mission. In addition, we provide quality conferences to educators annually: New-to-District Days, E2

Conference, and the Leaders in Literacy Conference. These conferences enable us to build cohesive and meaningful collaboration among our educators and opportunities for support staff employees, teachers, administrators, and district leaders to lead purposeful sessions and develop leadership skills. Our summer Leadership Summit targets the growth of administrators district-wide. We begin each school year with an energy-packed, leadership-focused ONE Team event where ALL district employees gather in unison to rally our efforts in providing the best learning environments for the children of our community.







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In order to provide our Induction teachers with the level of support needed for a successful first year of teaching, Aiken County provides each teacher with a CERRA trained mentor and an Induction Program to build their individual capacity and foster the collaborative spirit. This effort provides individual support and encouragement within the schools and additional district-organized professional development created by the ADEPT Coordinator in conjunction with the district mentors. We also provide additional support through our I-Care program where district-level personnel serve as ambassadors to specific induction teachers district-wide.



In order to retain quality professionals, Aiken County Schools realizes the importance of achievement recognition. As a district, we organize and hold annual events to celebrate the growth and service of district educators and support. Our Rising Stars in Education Reception recognizes First Year Teachers of the Year. The Stars in Education Banquet recognizes Teachers of the Year, Support Staff of the Year, and Principals of the Year. This year, teachers, administrators, and district employees came together as the Retention Committee whose purpose is to build employee morale and provide direction to all building level administrators for recognition pathways at all schools.

Aiken County Public Schools continually works to reflect on best practices and refining our strategies to build individual and system capacity. Our hope is to create a culture where all employees understand not only "what they do", but also their "why".







## YEAR THREE PRIORITY

**WE WILL ENSURE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS THAT PROVIDE SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIPS RESPONSIVE TO SCHOOL & COMMUNITY NEEDS.**

### **COLLEGE AND CAREER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS**



Aiken County Career Center introductory cyber courses prepare students for industry experience in network architecture; network operations; network security; network troubleshooting; industry standards, practices, and network theory; and workplace readiness and leadership skills, in addition to the proper care, maintenance, and use of networking software, tools, and equipment. More advanced coursework introduces the core concepts and terminology of cyber security and information assurance, and examines how the concept of security integrates into the importance of user involvement, security training, ethics, trust, and

best practices management. Fundamental cybersecurity skills covered during the program include network security, testing, and validation; compliance and operational security; threats and vulnerabilities; application, data, and host security; access control and identity management; cryptography; and a broad range of other topics.

In a collaboration with Aiken Technical College, twelve seniors from Midland Valley High School were the first Early College students in Aiken County to graduate with associate's degrees.

In addition to the Early College program at Midland Valley High School, another exciting educational partnership is the Aiken Scholars Academy in collaboration with the University of South Carolina Aiken. The first cohort of fifty scholars at the Aiken Scholars Academy began their studies in August on campus at USC Aiken in the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center. These elite scholars will take high school courses during their freshman and sophomore years before matriculating to college coursework at USC Aiken.

Meanwhile, in partnership with the National Math & Science Institute (NMSI), Aiken County's two Advanced Placement Academies at North Augusta High School and South Aiken High School have experienced a combined growth of 55.4 percent in Advanced Placement math and science scores qualifying for college credit.







## YEAR THREE PRIORITY

### HIGH-QUALITY, DISTRICT-WIDE PROCESS AND PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL-BASED MENTORING FOR STUDENTS

### ENHANCED MENTORING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERS WITH SYNERGY AROUND COMMON GOALS

Aiken County Public Schools exists to serve students and families in order to grow and develop well-rounded citizens of our community. As educators, we recognize the need for parental and community involvement in the lives of our students. A committee of counselors, teachers, and administrators meet to determine and discuss the needs of the various schools. Prospective mentors are given the opportunity to choose to serve by level or specific school. Volunteers undergo a complete background check to assure the safety of our students and then receive specific training for the role they are to perform.

While we do not yet have a standard program for mentoring across all schools, we do have schools that have successful mentoring partnerships with parents and community groups. For example, Mossy Creek Elementary School has had success developing a program that was prompted by interaction on social media. Warrenville Elementary School has a "grandparents" program, in which senior citizens read to students and otherwise support them during the school day. Many schools have community members who volunteer to assist students with homework or provide assistance and sponsorship in extracurricular clubs, such as robotics.

As a district, we work to improve support and convey the message that we value community action in our schools. To promote the needs for mentors, the District Hearing Officer meets with civic and religious groups to discuss our needs. The Hearing Officer then presents the impact of mentors on our students and discusses the needs throughout our schools. School counselors or



administrators often request that the Hearing Officer locate a mentor for a specific student. The Hearing Officer then reaches out to community members who have shown an interest and connect the mentor with the student and parent.

It is our goal that every child in Aiken County Public Schools have an adult who acts as an advocate for them. This mentor relationship will improve academic and civic achievements while sparking an interest in a career or higher education.





## YEAR THREE PRIORITY

### DISTRICT-WIDE FRAMEWORK FOR SERVICE LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION

Our organization works to ensure strategic partnerships that provide symbiotic relationships responsive to school and community needs, and in Year Three of our Strategic Plan, our Action Team has been tasked with creating a District-wide framework for Service-Learning implementation.

What is Service Learning? According to the Grable Foundation and the Forbes Funds, Service Learning takes place when “structured service is integrated into organized education to provide a hands-on learning experience for the student that simultaneously benefits the community.”



*Cracey Chafin, a Leavelle McCampbell Middle School student, was one of only 100 students in the country honored with the Prudential Spirit of Community Award.*

Service Learning is meant to be informative and meaningful, engaging and impactful. Our goal as an Action Team is to provide ACPSD teachers with a service-learning framework that incorporates our District’s mission and values in a presentation that is easy to understand and replicate.

Following our most recent Action Team meeting, our next steps have included gathering a cohort of District teachers to design a generic template for the creation of Service Learning Lesson Plans. Our committee has reached out to the ACPSD Department of Instruction Services for assistance, and three members of their team (one director and two content interventionists) have been added to our group in an advisory capacity. We also reached out to ACPSD principals and received lead teacher nominations for each instructional level. Following our annual Spring Break, these teachers will lead our effort to attract additional teachers to participate in the project to develop a template for Service Learning Lesson Plans.

Once the Service Learning Lesson Plan template has been designed and created, we will place it on the District resource page for teachers and create a website or physical location for submitting



new Service Learning Lesson Plans. When the lesson plan template has been released, our Action Team will monitor all submissions and completed projects, with successful projects being highlighted on the District and school websites.

Finally, we will create a survey to determine effectiveness and request feedback from District teachers and evaluate participation data and survey results for possible program enhancements.





## YEAR THREE PRIORITY

WE WILL ESTABLISH A CULTURE OF QUALITY DEFINED BY INTEGRITY, OPTIMISM, UNITY & SERVICE.

DISTRICT-WIDE INITIATIVES FOCUSING ON THE LIFE AND CAREER CHARACTERISTICS OF A SOUTH CAROLINA GRADUATE WITH AN EMPHASIS ON STUDENTS.

### Profile of the South Carolina Graduate



#### World Class Knowledge

- Rigorous standards in language arts and math for career and college readiness
- Multiple languages, science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), arts and social sciences

#### World Class Skills

- Creativity and innovation
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Communication, information, media and technology
- Knowing how to learn

#### Life and Career Characteristics

- Integrity
- Self-direction
- Global perspective
- Perseverance
- Work ethic
- Interpersonal skills

Approved by SCASA Superintendents' Roundtable, SC Chamber of Commerce, and State Board of Education.



### ATTRIBUTES OF PREMIER STUDENTS

- PERSEVERANCE**  
  
 Work very hard, especially when classroom is difficult or challenging. Always strive to do their best.
- INVOLVED**  
  
 Look forward to after school activities as another way to feel connected to their school (and hang out with friends).
- APPLY THEIR KNOWLEDGE**  
  
 Use what they learn in class to learn other things, help in other classes and apply it to everyday problems and new situations outside of school.
- ENGAGED**  
  
 Excited about going to school, raise their hand to learn new things and are eager to talk about what they've learned.
- STUDIOUS**  
  
 Take pride in their schoolwork, review class notes every day and study a lot before tests. Some top students participate in or lead study groups after school.
- DISCIPLINED**  
  
 Follow the Student Code of Conduct and other school rules established to encourage good choices and maximize student success.
- TECH-FOCUSED**  
  
 Enjoy technology because it can make lessons more interesting, exciting and challenging, while deepening learning of content.
- GOAL-ORIENTED**  
  
 Stay motivated by Learning Goals as a way to focus on meeting and exceeding expectations and remain on track for graduation and beyond.
- LIFE-LONG LEARNER**  
  
 Finds ways to learn outside of the classroom, which increases understanding of lessons.



## STRATEGIC PLAN: YEAR THREE UPDATE