



## FCS Charter System Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is a charter system? How is it different from a charter school?

Fulton County Schools became a charter system in July of 2012. This means that the district and our schools (charter system schools) have flexibility from many state education laws. For example, state law dictates how much time students must be in the classroom (“seat time”) and the certification requirements for teachers. Now that Fulton County Schools is a charter system, the district is allowed to waive those (and many other) rules for our schools. The district is also working to transition more of these decisions to the school level.

Charter schools are different from *schools in a charter system*. Charter schools (otherwise known as “start-up charter schools”) hire their own staff and often have to raise money for a building. The principal in a charter school reports directly to the governing board of the school. All of these stipulations are laid out in a contract between the school and the state). With a charter system, the district has the contract with the state and therefore the responsibilities for management and oversight remain with the elected system-level school board – Fulton County Board of Education, in our case. Thus, Fulton County Board of Education retains the authority for hiring and managing all school staff, maintaining facilities, and a few other key responsibilities, while at the same time releasing a number of responsibilities to the individual school.

### 2. What are School Governance Councils? What do the School Governance Councils do?

The School Governance Councils work with the principal on the long-term vision and strategy for the school. They are responsible for approving the school’s strategic plan and the school budget recommendations, as well as developing any Requests for Flexibility from state law or district policy (see previous question). The School Governance Council is comprised of a mix of stakeholders from both the school and the community:

- 3 parents (*elected by parents/guardians*)
- 2 community members (*nominated by principal; approved by rest of Council*)
- 2 teachers (*elected by school employees*)
- 2 school employees (*appointed by principal*)
- Principal (*non-voting member*)
- 2 students (*non-voting member; high school only*)

### 3. How are School Governance Councils different from LSACs?

As schools join the charter system, they will dissolve their Local School Advisory Council (LSAC) as their School Governance Council is established. School Governance Councils have more decision-making responsibilities than LSACs. LSACs are purely advisory, and have responsibilities to review data and school plans, as well as advise the principal. While School Governance Councils will review data and advise the principal just like the LSAC, they also are required to approve the school’s strategic plan and budget recommendations as explained above.

**4. What schools are in Cohort 1?**

In order to transition all of Fulton County’s schools to the charter system, schools joined specific cohorts that determine in which school-year they will begin their transition. Twenty Schools in Cohort 1 transitioned last year (2012-2013) and are now ready to elect new members to their School Governance Council. Only Cohort 1 schools are participating in the election in May. The twenty schools in Cohort 1 are:

Northwest	Central	Northeast	South
Hembree Springs ES	Heards Ferry ES	Abbotts Hill ES	Camp Creek MS
Milton HS	Paul D. West MS	Autrey Mill MS	Oakley ES
Mountain Park ES	Riverwood ICHS	Centennial HS	Randolph ES
Roswell North ES	Spalding Drive Charter ES	Northview HS	Sandtown MS
	Woodland ES	Shakerag ES	Stonewall Tell ES
			Westlake HS

**5. What decisions do School Governance Councils make for the school?**

School Governance Councils are responsible for:

- Approving the school strategic plan and updates
- Approving annual budget recommendations
- Managing the Request for Flexibility process
- Participating in the hiring of the principal (in the case of a vacancy)
- Providing annual feedback on the principal’s performance
- Interfacing with the school’s Title I Committee (if applicable)

Cohort 1 schools have worked diligently over the past year to make the best decisions on behalf of their school communities. In addition, many Cohort 1 schools submitted Requests for Flexibility to implement new programs and strategies to meet the needs of their students. (Requests for Flexibility waivers are only applicable to the school that made the request and received approval)

Some of the new programs and strategies that will go into effect for those specific schools are

- A new graphics arts design program at an elementary school
- An online peer leadership course at a high school
- Restructuring the TAG model and incorporating project-based learning at an elementary school
- Increasing the number of students eligible to take credit-bearing internships at a high school

Go to <http://www.fultonschools.org/en/about/charter/Pages/Approved-RFFs.aspx> to find out more about the Cohort 1 schools’ approved Requests for Flexibility.

**6. When are School Governance Council elections?**

Elections for the parent/guardian and teacher positions on the School Governance Council will be held May 13<sup>th</sup> – May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Parent/guardian representatives will be elected by the parents/guardians of the school. Teacher representatives will be elected by the school's employees.

All votes will be cast electronically through an online election system within the FCS portal and tallied by an external vendor. All votes are anonymous. Parent/Guardian voters will use their Home Access Codes to vote for the parent/guardian representative on the School Governance Council. School employees will use their employee login information to vote for the teacher representative on the Council. This system ensures only those eligible to vote are able to vote and that eligible voters cannot vote more than once.

**7. Am I eligible to run for a parent/guardian position on the Council?**

If you are the parent or legal guardian of a student(s) who will be attending a Cohort 1 school during both the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years, you are eligible to run for the parent/guardian position on the School Governance Council. School employees may not run for the elected parent/guardian position.

**8. Am I eligible to run for a teacher position on the Council?**

If you are a school-based employee with a "home school" and paid from the teacher salary schedule, you are eligible to run for a teacher position on the Council. A list of teacher positions eligible to serve as a teacher representative can be found in Appendix A of the SGC Candidate Guide (pg. 9), located on the school or district website (see link below – Question 10).

Candidates for the teacher position cannot have a child who attends the school.

**9. How do I sign up to run for a position on the School Governance Council?**

Candidates who are interested in running for an elected position on the Council must complete a Candidate Declaration Form and return this form to the district. Forms and instructions are available on both the school and district website (see link below – Question 10), as well as in hard copy at the school. Candidate Declaration Forms are due by Friday, April 25, 2014.

**10. Where can I find more information about the charter system and SGC Elections?**

Additional information on the charter system can be found on the Fulton County website at [www.fultonschools.org/CharterSystem](http://www.fultonschools.org/CharterSystem).

Additional information on SGC elections is available at <http://www.fultonschools.org/en/about/charter/Pages/SGC-Spring-Elections.aspx>