

EXHIBIT 5: Overview of Crisp County School System

Description of the School System

Crisp County, Georgia is located in south-central Georgia on the I-75 Corridor about 80 miles north of Valdosta and about sixty miles south of Macon. Cordele, which has its origin as a humble railroad hub, serves as the county seat and the largest city in Crisp County. Much of Crisp County, however, is rural farmland, and values and traditions characteristic of the rural South still predominate throughout the county.

Crisp County is home to 23,460 residents, approximately 4,255 of which are school-aged children attending one of the Crisp County School System's six public schools.

Demographically, Crisp County's population is comprised of 51.7% white persons, 43.6% African-American persons, 3.2% Hispanic persons, and 1.5% other, includes bi-racial persons.

According to the most recent Georgia KIDS COUNT data, the annual median household income is \$29,175.00 for those employed in the community, compared to a state median of \$47,125. Below average family incomes and a local unemployment rate higher than the state's unemployment rate results in many of Crisp County's school-aged children living in poverty. According to KIDS COUNT, 51.9% of Crisp County's school age children are living in poverty with 51.7% of those children living more than 150 percent below the federal poverty level. This number is almost twice the Georgia average. Ninety-eight percent of the children in Crisp County qualify for free/reduced lunches. The teen birth rate is 57.6% compared to a state level of 33.6%, a significant challenge to the stability of the community's families. Crisp County ranks 155th out of 159 counties for its percentage of children living in families where no parent is in the labor force, and it ranks 157th out of Georgia's 159 counties for children living in poverty.

Family composition in Crisp County is largely non-traditional with 58.7% of Crisp County's children living in single-parent families.

High unemployment rates, high poverty rates, high teenage pregnancy rates, and a high percentage of non-traditional families create challenges for Crisp County and for its public school system. No matter what the challenges are, the Crisp County School System is committed to excellence, and that commitment is reflected in our students' achievement data.

School System Context

The district is in the second year of a much needed reorganization plan that reduced the number of schools from seven schools to six schools. The Crisp County School System serves approximately 4,255 prekindergarten through grade 12 students in its six schools. Crisp County High School houses all students in grades 9-12. Crisp County Middle School serves students in grades 6-8. Reorganization affected all four elementary schools: J. S. Pate Elementary, Southwestern Elementary, Blackshear Trail Elementary and A. S. Clark Elementary. This restructure allows us to improve efficiency, focus resources, and reduce student transfers that interfere with student achievement. Competition between grade-ban schools will be eliminated and equity will be assured. The reorganization further supports literacy and technology alignment to support each student. We want to catch kids up and engage them to become successful students graduating college and career ready.

The reorganization included moving Crisp County Pre-K Center, currently housing all Pre-K students, from O'Neal Elementary to the J. S. Pate Elementary building. Crisp County Pre-K has been identified as a community strength with 81.7% of our students attending Pre-K. Our system has a longstanding cooperative working relationship with all other day care providers and Head Start in the area. This commitment was strengthened last year with the organization of the

Community Literacy Council. We know that a strong partnership among community members, institutions of higher learning, local businesses, schools, teachers, parents, and students is vital for sustained school improvement.

In addition, reorganization continued with the district primary and elementary schools. Students in grades K-2 housed at J.S. Pate Elementary or Blackshear Trail Elementary are served in the new Crisp County Primary School, which resulted in the closure of Blackshear Trail. Crisp County Primary School includes students in grades 3 previously attending A.S. Clark Elementary School and Southwestern Elementary School. A.S. Clark Elementary has been closed with those students attending school in the former Southwestern Elementary building renamed Crisp County Elementary School.

System's Purpose

The mission and vision for the Crisp County School System are important for the foundation for the strategic plan process and are supported by the commitment from the district level, school level, and stakeholders.

Motto

“Learning Today...Graduating Our Future Leaders Tomorrow”

Our Vision

Our vision is to provide a high quality education to develop future leaders.

Our Mission

The mission of Crisp County Schools is to graduate competitive college and career ready students.

Guiding Principles

1. We believe all students can learn and achieve.

2. We believe in promoting student learning and success by using a variety of teaching strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of students.
3. We take responsibility for learning, not only for our students but also for ourselves.
4. Learning is a shared responsibility - school, home, and community - for which we are all accountable.
5. We believe a safe, secure, and orderly environment is essential for teaching and learning.
6. We believe in providing an environment of high expectations, respect, and dignity.
7. Continuous improvement efforts must be flexible, responsive, and aligned to meet the needs of our students, teachers, and community.
8. We will recruit, employ, develop, and retain a workforce that is committed to the success of all students.
9. Student success is necessary for economic growth and world readiness.
10. Everyone is accountable for excellence.

The vision, mission, and guiding principles provide direction for program offerings, expectations for students and the district strategic plan. A concerted effort ensures that the goals of the strategic plan align to the AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems. These goals and objectives serve as the guidance for the continuous improvement process. The system reviews program offerings to ensure that students are ready for the next level of progression. For graduating students, the focus is on preparing them to be college and career ready. For middle and elementary school students, the emphasis is directed towards growth and preparation for the next level. The curriculum focus continues to be the implementation of the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS). Providing a curriculum that connects the standards,

the instruction and assessments, both formative and summative, is essential for student success.

The system is committed to providing a wide variety of learning opportunities. Some of the programs and initiatives include Advanced Placement, Honors classes, gifted education, English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Title I, CTAE pathways, Special Education, Extended Learning Time(ELT) and the Early Intervention Program(EIP). While these learning opportunities are important for progression, delivering a balanced approach is also essential.