

Fall | 2011

Status and Vision Report

A Report on Birmingham City Schools' Progress
Superintendent Craig Witherspoon

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT	2
INTRODUCTION: BIRMINGHAM CITY SCHOOLS' PROGRESS	4
OVERVIEW OF BIRMINGHAM CITY SCHOOLS.....	5
ASSESSING THE STATUS OF OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM.....	6
OUR CURRENT WORK.....	8
<i>PRIORITY ONE: ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>PRIORITY TWO: FINANCE.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>PRIORITY THREE: HUMAN CAPITAL.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>PRIORITY FOUR: COMMUNICATION/PARTNERSHIP.....</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>PRIORITY FIVE: SAFE AND NURTURING ENVIRONMENT.....</i>	<i>53</i>
LOOKING FORWARD.....	64

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Community Supporter,

Birmingham City Schools is committed to improving the outcomes of all students in our district. It takes everyone – all stakeholders – working together to make this happen. Focused on our core business of teaching and learning at high levels, we will continue on this path. Our students must be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in a global society. Their future and ours depends upon our actions today. It is with this sense of responsibility that we assess our current reality, build our capacity, and embark on a path that provides for these outcomes.

As we move forward, it is not enough to merely experience random acts of improvement; we must come together, as a school system, to maximize our capacity to strategically and systematically improve how we operate in light of a new level of accountability and expectations than currently exists. As a learning organization, we must continue to assess ourselves and our current realities, while striving to build a foundation that supports innovation, creativity and the expectation that everyone contributes significantly to our district. We know that our students are entering a world much different than the past. This is a challenge that we readily accept as well.

We will build upon the many successes that have occurred in the district, while readily accepting challenges and opportunities, with a sense of urgency and a vision of a bright tomorrow for the school system and our community. We will continue to work with the Board of Education, our community partners and our parents to build the school system we all want for our students. Our goals for our students do not occur by accident or haphazardly; rather, they are part of a strategic and systematic change that allows for all stakeholders to collaborate on how to make this happen. The stakeholders of Birmingham City Schools have a timely and unique ability and responsibility to create the best possible conditions for the success of the young people in our community. The students of Birmingham City Schools deserve no less than our very best effort.

Thank you for your support of Birmingham City Schools.

Sincerely,

Craig Witherspoon
Superintendent

INTRODUCTION: BIRMINGHAM CITY SCHOOLS' PROGRESS

Birmingham City Schools' sole focus is now on the success of our students. Every action we take and every initiative that we implement will result in improved outcomes for our children. Through the aligned vision of the district's many committed stakeholders, including the Birmingham City School employees, parents and Board of Education, the Birmingham City Schools is on a path to improvement that is guided by the Board of Education's Strategic Priorities. As we note throughout, this report aligns with the principles articulated in the Yes We Can! Birmingham report, written in 2008. This report overviews the current district initiatives and describes how we are building district-wide foundations for student achievement. We have also included our future plans for strengthening these structures and ensuring success for every student in the Birmingham City School System.

Birmingham City Schools (BCS) has undergone great change over the past decade. Internal and external transformations have rippled throughout the district, and from shifts in leadership to restructuring in funding, no part of the school system has remained unaffected. These times of change provide us with great opportunities – for reflection, redirection, and reassessment. The district now faces a great opportunity to create a better and improved school district. Our administration and staff began this new period by listening to stakeholders and building on what was learned from Yes We Can! Birmingham. We met with numerous parents, community leaders, teachers, and staff, among others, to see the school system through their eyes and to hear what BCS needs to be as successful as possible. The Central Office has been using other stakeholder feedback and assessments to guide their work as well. Informed by these conversations, the Superintendent and BCS staff have embarked upon many initiatives to better the academic experience for our students and the working experience for BCS staff.

The following pages recount not only these assessments but, more importantly, what we at the Birmingham City Schools, the Board of Education, and our partners are doing to improve outcomes for our children. These initiatives, which have been organized according to the Birmingham Board of Education's 2009-2012 Strategic Priorities for the Birmingham City Schools, show the innovation and creativity throughout all district departments. Many initiatives have been completed, while still others are underway.

Change, of course, takes time. We are still working to build a solid framework for the future of the BCS system. These structures are focused on the long view and are not intended to be a quick fix. Our Central Office is working to find the root of many of the district's obstacles and challenges, and finding and correcting certain areas is not always immediate, nor is it always easy. While the initiatives that have been described below may have already improved the system, their true value will only grow with time. Many of these initiatives require patience and a willingness to persevere to bring about lasting change to BCS students, teachers, staff and parents. We are steadfast in our mission and urgent in our quest to improve the district for our students.

BIRMINGHAM CITY SCHOOLS

Mission and Vision of Birmingham City School District

- Mission** The mission of the Birmingham City Schools is to guide all students to achieve excellence in a safe, secure and nurturing environment.
- Vision** Birmingham City Schools will be a recognized leader in public education, meeting the needs of a diverse student population prepared to succeed in a global society.

Birmingham City Schools Board of Education

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Dr. Larry Contri	Area Assistant Superintendent
Mrs. Rosalyn Childress	Area Assistant Superintendent

ASSESSING THE STATUS OF OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM

As a part of the effort to build a framework that supports student achievement, the district has utilized assessments to identify areas of BCS strength and weakness. One area that the Board's Strategic Priorities emphasize is the district's need to build a culture of data and assessment. To fulfill this priority, the Birmingham City Schools is now collecting and using data to drive their efforts. All levels of the district – from the Superintendent to the Board to the BCS teachers – are now using assessments as a standard element of constructing the best educational experience for our students. Below are some of the system-wide assessments that underlie many initiatives described in this report. The district will continue to seek objective evaluation of programs, systems and objectives in its continuous pursuit of student achievement and school improvement.

Conducted in 2007, by the **Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS)**, this high-level review examined the district's administrative structures and whether district resources were allocated to optimize BCS results. District-wide administrative structures and resource allocation were analyzed by former senior executives who had significant national experience in education. The Team conducted a document review, data analysis, benchmarking survey and a site visit.

In 2008, members of **Yes We Can! Birmingham** asked BCS stakeholders to share their hopes for BCS. Between March and September that year, Yes We Can! held more than 127 community conversations in homes, churches, community centers, parks and workplaces across Birmingham City. Six conversations were conducted in Spanish and more than 2,000 people participated in this effort to collect information about stakeholders' visions for BCS. These conversations were compiled and analyzed to guide the Birmingham Board of Education in its initiatives and the formulation of its 2009-2012 Strategic Plan.

The **Birmingham Board of Education Strategic Priorities** were written in 2009 with input from stakeholders committed to the Birmingham City Schools. These stakeholders were interviewed to identify the areas for immediate attention in BCS. From stakeholder interviews and the work of the Board of Education, the Board recognized five priority areas for the Birmingham City Schools. These priorities are: Academic Achievement, Finance, Human Capital, Communication/Partnership and Safe and Nurturing Environment. The development of action plans to implement the priorities and subsequent progress of the plans is addressed as part of this document.

During his first 100 days in office, Superintendent Witherspoon held a number of **stakeholder meetings** throughout the district. These stakeholders included parents, students, employees, corporate and business leaders, community and non-profit representatives, university and college presidents, faith community leaders, professional organizations, employee unions, neighborhood leaders and elected officials. The meetings have helped – and continue to help – inform Superintendent Witherspoon about BCS priorities. The district has been actively using the information gleaned from these meetings to

identify district initiatives such as hiring in-house counsel, implementing a weekly electronic newsletter and implementing a zero-based budgetary system.

Last fall, Birmingham City School leadership commissioned the **2010 BCS Curriculum Audit** to assess BCS's curriculum management system. This audit was conducted by the Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) Curriculum Audit Team. The PDK team compared BCS to industry standards and best practice research for effective school instruction and curricula design and delivery. To evaluate the system, BCS documents, interviews, and on-site visits were examined and reviewed.

A number of these findings have been addressed in subsequent months. Many initiatives have been explained in further detail in this report.

OUR CURRENT WORK

The following section provides a description of the major activities undertaken at BCS as categorized by the Strategic Plan. These activities include those recently completed, those currently underway, and those planned to be implemented within the next three years. Many of these initiatives are responses to the system-wide assessments, while others have been implemented to address additional issues not captured in assessment findings.

“The core business of our district is teaching and learning.”

– Birmingham City Schools Superintendent Craig Witherspoon

PRIORITY ONE: ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

STRATEGIC INTENT	Birmingham City Schools provides academic excellence for all students to reach their personal best by providing qualified teachers who challenge and motivate students and offering curriculum instruction to encourage growth and meet the needs of every student.
GOALS & OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Acknowledge and support the belief that all children can learn– Provide a rich and diverse curriculum that prepares students to excel in a global society– Recruit, retain, and develop highly qualified administrators, teachers, and staff

Birmingham City Schools' Strategic Priority Vision¹

The district aims to make the BCS district a model for student achievement in the state of Alabama. The BCS leadership is also working towards 100% student graduation. Local schools are being strengthened by building capacity at the Central Office and at local schools so that leaders can graduate students who are college and career ready.

The BCS District Academic Team is focusing on improving student achievement through directly addressing areas like professional development, school preparation and readiness, and the empowerment of local school leadership. They have also begun programs to identify students who are struggling or are over-age for their given grade level. By incorporating a greater level of planning, the district office intends to build and support structures for student success.

Goal: Provide a rich and diverse curriculum that prepares students to excel in a global society

The district has expanded the number and type of academic programs that are available to students.

- Expanded Pre-K program from 13 to 20 schools
- Offering Career Academies in 6 of 7 high schools

¹ **Priority One: Academic Achievement** captures the following Yes We Can! Community Agreement themes: 1.2 (world class system); 1.3 (caring and supportive learning environment); 1.5 (college- or career-ready graduates); 1.6 (curricula that include career or technical education); 1.8 (measurements of student achievement); 3.4 (spirit of excellence that includes cultural education and career training); 3.8 (children as first priority in decision-making); 3.9 (increased graduation rates).

- The Academy of Engineering (Carver High School)
- The Academy of Health Science (Carver High School)
- The Academy of Architecture and Design (Huffman High School)
- The Academy of Health Science (Jackson-Olin High School)
- The Academy of Urban Educators (Parker High School)
- The Academy of Hospitality and Tourism (Wenonah High School)
- The Academy of Business and Finance (Woodlawn High School)
- Expanded Advanced Placement enrollment and number of courses offered
- Implemented a Pre-Advanced Placement (AP) program to increase student readiness for AP courses
- Applied for and have been approved for International Baccalaureate candidacy for two schools
- Evaluated and are showing substantial improvement in Special Education Program
- Expanding enrichment and remediation programs to every student in the district
- Established Transition Programs to allow overage students to earn a diploma to facilitate on-time graduation
- Offered a Dropout Recovery Program for students 17-21 years to earn their diploma
- Providing alternative academic opportunities for students at risk of leaving school

The district has assessed all aspects of its curriculum and educational resources and has implemented

Goal: Acknowledge and support the belief that all children can learn

changes to expand the academic opportunities offered to students.

- Conducted rigorous curriculum audit to identify areas for improvement
- Offered summer learning opportunities to students of all levels
- Conducting regular resource needs evaluations to appropriately direct student resource allocations
- Replaced all computers and are currently building interactive classrooms in newly-built or -renovated schools and updating technology in all other schools
- Established literacy partnerships with civic groups

Goal: Recruit, retain, and develop highly qualified administrators, teachers, and staff

The district has created various professional development frameworks and is offering significant support to better all Birmingham City Schools.

- Developing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to enforce student-centered teaching
- Requiring teachers to participate in weekly professional development sessions
- Introduced 16 Teach For America teachers into the BCS system in Fall 2011
- Created the Acceleration Zone program to provide ongoing additional professional development and district support to under-performing schools
- Established Tiered Collaborative Support program to conduct regular district visits to local schools to provide support and direction

Next Steps

The district will continue to expand the curriculum offerings, professional development structures, parental and community involvement opportunities, and forms of assessment.

- Incorporating formative assessments into instruction and building a culture of data collection
- Continuing expansion of an innovative education curriculum
- Developing and Implementing Leadership Academy for future teacher leaders and administrators
- Implementing the Response To Instruction program to address areas of student difficulty
- Creating a position of manage Career Academies, IB, and related advanced studies
- Hiring a person specifically dedicated to increasing BCS Advanced Placement Test scores
- Creating a position of executive director of curriculum and instruction
- Building stakeholder advisory committees for BCS elementary and middle school improvement
- Developing a dashboard to track key indicators

Birmingham City Schools Context and Challenges

BCS has experienced areas of academic success and challenge; for example, Wilkerson Middle School continues to be recognized as a state “Torchbearer School,” demonstrating that diverse student populations can be successful and perform at high levels. In addition, the district has other schools that produce high performance and meet parents’ expectations around curriculum offerings, academic performance, and climate and culture. Challenges include the ability to replicate these efforts by establishing certain non-negotiable relative to expectations, leadership development and focus, professional development, process and procedures, instructional support, and equitable access to resources.

Initiatives and Programs Recently Completed or Currently Underway

GOAL | ACKNOWLEDGE AND SUPPORT THE BELIEF THAT ALL CHILDREN CAN LEARN

A1. Pre-Kindergarten Program Expansion

BCS has expanded the number of pre-kindergarten (pre-K) schools from 13 to 20.

Early education improves outcomes for school readiness. To ensure that incoming students are fully prepared to meet their academic requirements, BCS district leadership assessed its current pre-K programs and elected to open more programs in 7 new schools, bringing the total number of pre-K schools from 13 to 20. The BCS Pre-K programs have been extremely popular and have required a lottery to select students. This popularity has led to this year’s expansion of the program. With 18 to 20 students per class, the 20 pre-K schools are teaching approximately 400 students each year. The Head

Start program is operating in 2 Birmingham City Schools, and 2 additional schools have been funded through a grant from the Office of School Readiness. Pre-K education has been shown to dramatically increase student outcomes in areas such as literacy, numeracy, social conduct, and attendance upon their arrival in kindergarten.

B1. Career Academies

All high school students are able attend a Career Academy specific to their interests and career goals.

In this year of planning, the district is initiating the Career Academies program. Seven Career Academies have been developed, and they are located across six high schools in BCS. District leadership is also considering opening a seventh academy to be called The Academy of Law, Criminal Justice, and Public Policy. These academies will offer courses in specific academic and career areas to make students career and college ready.

District leadership and school-based teams selected the areas of engineering, health sciences, architecture and design, urban education, hospitality and tourism, and business and finance to anticipate demand in the Birmingham and Alabama business markets. In addition to preparing students for future jobs, this initiative also aims to make students feel like there is a purpose in their education; the skills taught in these courses will be easily recognizable as useful in the workplace. Courses will also concentrate on preparing and qualifying students for industry certification in their given field. Students can earn an advanced high school diploma if they fulfill certain requirements for their given area of study.

Students are being assigned to faculty mentors for their four years in the academies. District faculty members will support these students throughout their high school years.

The district has trained administrators and staff about the academies and their purpose. Staff is receiving training on the content in their specific courses.

This initiative came about as a result of the partnership between BCS and the Birmingham Education Foundation. Many companies and organizations throughout Birmingham have offered their support to

Birmingham City Schools Career Academies

The Academy of Engineering
Carver High School

The Academy of Health Science
Carver High School

The Academy of Architecture and
Design
Huffman High School

The Academy of Health Science
Jackson-Olin High School

The Academy of Urban Educators
Parker High School

The Academy of Hospitality and
Tourism
Wenonah High School

The Academy of Business and Finance
Woodlawn High School

training and empowering the students enrolled in the Career Academies. The Birmingham Business Alliance, UAB, Regions Bank, and Alabama Power, among others, have all committed to partnering with BCS on this project.

The district is also exploring themed academies in middle and elementary middle schools to provide parents with additional options when choosing schools for children of this age.

C1. Advanced Placement Curriculum and Enrollment Expansion

BCS has shown an unprecedented increase in the number of students taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

BCS has partnered with A+ College Ready to expand AP programs at all of its high schools. Currently, all 7 BCS high schools offer AP classes, and more courses will soon be offered throughout the district. More students have enrolled in these AP classes; in the past two years, BCS has more than tripled the number of students taking AP courses and plans to continue to increase enrollment. These initiatives are part of the BCS A+ College Ready program.

D1. Pre-Advanced Placement Initiative

BCS is preparing middle and high school students to excel in AP courses.

To increase student readiness for rigorous AP courses, middle school teachers are being trained to provide pre-AP instruction for high school AP courses. BCS Pre-AP Teacher Training has started for middle school teachers in the four core academic subjects of English, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Through a partnership with the Birmingham Education Foundation, grades 6-8 will receive resources to enhance the level of instruction, and subject-specific teams of high school teachers will be formed to prepare all students for the challenging high school AP curricula. Results from this program are expected to be increased evidence of rigorous content and teaching as well as improved general curriculum and instruction in middle school and early high school.

This initiative came about as a result of the partnership between BCS and the Birmingham Education Foundation.

E1. International Baccalaureate (IB) School Implementation

BCS has applied for and been approved for International Baccalaureate candidacy at Phillips Academy and Ramsay High School.

Phillips Academy, a K-8 school, and Ramsay High School have been named candidate schools for the IB program. Phillips has applied for the Primary and Middle Years programs, and Ramsay has applied for the Diploma Program. BCS has sent teams of staff from these schools to receive training on IB program

needs and requirements. The application process takes two years, and if these applications are approved, BCS will be the only district in the Birmingham metropolitan area to offer IB programs from kindergarten through high school.

F1. Special Education Program Evaluation

The district is ensuring that the BCS Special Education program is strong and viable.

The District has recently completed a special education program evaluation that will help improve special education services to students. Additional training, monitoring, and support strategies are being implemented.

G1. Enrichment and Remediation Programs

The BCS culture will embrace enrichment and high quality teaching for all of its students.

BCS wants to offer enrichment programs to every student in the district. By conducting the Response To Instruction baseline assessments and evaluations, the district will identify struggling students and give them the right support to stop performance gap increases. The district is working to build a “best practices” culture in which teachers are constantly working to improve their instruction, and students are constantly encouraged to excel.

“Now, six of seven BCS high schools have a transition program so that overage students can earn their diplomas.”

H1. Transition Programs

Overage students are now placed in an accelerated program to ensure that they can graduate and earn their diplomas.

BCS is dedicated to all students graduating on time and being prepared for what comes next. Now, six out of the seven BCS high schools have a transition program so that overage students can earn their diplomas. Last year and through the summer, about 70 students were enrolled in the program, which lasts all day for 6 weeks. The staff at each high school is aware of the students in the transition program and is available to provide support. Tutors at the schools also monitor transition program student progress.

I1. Dropout Recovery Program

BCS has developed a program that will enable students 17-21 years to earn their high school diplomas.

BCS offers an accelerated program to students between 17-21 years of age who have left the system. This program puts students on an accelerated track so they can earn their diplomas and enter the workplace. Last year, the Dropout Recovery Program graduated 32 students during the year and 39 this summer for a sum of 71 total students. BCS uses the “Grade Results” curriculum, and students are in class four hours each day. BCS offers two classroom shifts for students so they can have flexibility in their schedules; the first shift runs from 8:00am to 12:00pm, and the second shift runs from 1:00pm to 4:00pm.

“Every 9th grade student enters high school with a graduation plan and a list of courses.”

BCS is not using this program as a quick fix for the system. District leadership knows that as the school system continues to improve, graduation rates climb, and student retention increases, this program will soon be unnecessary. The district has already put many of these improvement structures in place. Every 9th grade student enters high school with a graduation plan and a list of courses. Tutors and night school classes are available to assist struggling students before they leave the system. These structures will eventually make the Dropout Recovery Program unnecessary.

J1. Alternative Offerings for At-Risk Students

At-risk students now have a credit recovery program and night school designed to work within their schedules and enable them to graduate from high school.

This ongoing project offers alternative opportunities for BCS students who are at high risk of dropping out of the system. By offering a credit recovery program, night school, mentors, and breakfast clubs, for example, the program is capturing struggling students who may decide to leave BCS rather than graduate. Students in 6 of the 7 high schools participate in credit recovery.

The district is currently writing a grant to the Alabama State Department to ensure that the at-risk program remains available to students.

K1. Altered Bell Schedule

BCS high schools are operating on a 7-period class day this year.

Due to stakeholder feedback, the BCS district will be returning to the 7-period class day. On Wednesdays, district high schools will open at 9:25 for students. Teachers will attend required Professional Learning Communities [see *Human Resources section for further explanation*] professional development training during 8:00-9:25 on these days. Students who arrive to school before the 9:25 start of classes will be given computer time, tutoring from retired teachers, and AP tutoring.

GOAL | PROVIDE A RICH AND DIVERSE CURRICULUM THAT PREPARES STUDENTS TO EXCEL IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY

L1. Curriculum Audit

BCS hired an external organization to conduct a rigorous curriculum audit that can be used as a tool to guide BCS programs.

In December 2010, BCS leadership hired Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) International to conduct an overarching evaluation of the BCS district curriculum and instruction. This audit compared the BCS district to best practices research. The audit, released in April 2011, has offered the district invaluable insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the system and schools. The district is using this audit as a tool to guide BCS programs, initiatives, and activities.

M1. Summer Learning Opportunities Expansion

BCS is offering dynamic summer learning opportunities to students and teachers.

This past summer, BCS offered summer learning opportunities to all students in the district. The program was extremely successful, and the district plans to offer it again next year. This program, held in 6 schools across the district, provided courses of study for students depending on their age and ability level. A total of 603 students were enrolled last summer, and more than 10 different summer programs were offered depending on student age and performance. In one program – the Enrichment Academy for Academic Acceleration - students received academic instruction from 8:00am-12:00pm; from 1:00pm to 3:00pm, these students took fine arts and enrichment courses like chess, photography, or dance. Advanced students were enrolled in a program called the Superintendent’s Academy. Some students partook in a program called “Books, Books, Books,” in which students read books from 8:00am-12:00pm each day. Example books in the program are The Story of Martin Luther King Jr., My Visit to the Dinosaurs, and The Sun is Always Shining Somewhere. Special needs students were offered programs specific to their needs. The Middle School Scholar’s Camp included pre-AP English reading, and the High School Scholar’s Camp involved English AP review, writing, and reading. The BCS summer learning

opportunities were so popular last year that BCS could not enroll all children who wanted to attend, and plans are currently underway to expand the program for next summer.

Learning opportunities were extended to more than 120 teachers as well. The District used this time to enroll teachers in an intensive professional learning experience. In this program, teachers learned grade-specific content and were enrolled in a “coaching cycle,” which meant they learned content, observed the content being taught by another teacher, and then practiced teaching that content to a class. A coach, who was present at all steps of the process, worked with the teacher to improve instruction. The reviews from last summer’s program were very positive; as a result, the district plans to implement this program in the future.

N1. Resource Needs Evaluations

BCS is making sure that all students have the classroom resources they need for success.

The district understands that teachers and students need to have the right classroom resources to provide instruction. To make sure every classroom is equipped, the district regularly assesses whether resources, such as textbooks, are available to students and are aligned with district goals and expectations. Curriculum directors are responsible for assessing which resources are needed and which resources the district already has.

The district has a Textbook Coordinator whose responsibility is monitoring and addressing the BCS textbook supply. The Textbook Coordinator’s major project this past year has been to implement a system to track BCS textbooks. By using the program Destiny, BCS can now track 100% of its textbooks, which will allow the district to keep better records and to locate lost or abandoned books. This program will save the district from having to replenish textbook supplies each year. The textbook-tracking program has been newly implemented for SY 2011-2012.

O1. Computerized Learning Activities

BCS teachers are using technology to reinforce classroom content.

The district uses many computerized learning programs, especially ones that focus on science and math. Teachers reinforce student lessons through engaging activities offered by programs such as Gizmo. To facilitate the use of technology in classrooms, BCS has undergone a technology refresh to modernize all computers in the District and has built interactive classrooms in the newly-renovated or newly-constructed buildings. The district has provided appropriate computer training for teachers and administration at BCS schools, and teachers are encouraged to incorporate technology into their curriculum planning. These programs also enable all students K-12 to increase their technological comfort and skills, which are important qualities in today’s technology-driven times.

P1. 21st Century Classrooms

BCS has modernized all school computers and is building interactive classrooms in newly constructed buildings, newly-renovated buildings, and all other school buildings.

BCS has replaced all of the school desktop computers with state-of-the-art equipment so students become exposed to the highest level of technology. The district has also installed interactive classrooms in all schools. BCS recognizes that offering this updated technology to students will prepare them for success in the collegiate and business world. Technological literacy is increasingly important to being an active, involved, and informed citizen, and the district wants to be sure that all BCS students graduate with these skills.

Q1. Literacy Partnerships

Birmingham organizations are partnering with BCS to improve student reading levels.

This year, BCS partnered with a number of Birmingham organizations so they could offer assistance for K-12 reading instruction. These partnerships will increase the number of students reading at or above grade level and will improve student performance on standardized test scores. Organizations that have partnered with BCS are: Better Basics, the Literacy Council of Birmingham, the Cultural Alliance, the Junior League, the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, and a number of local sororities.

Birmingham City Schools Professional Learning Communities Framework:

GOAL | RECRUIT, RETAIN, AND DEVELOP HIGHLY QUALIFIED ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, AND STAFF

R1. Professional Development – Professional Learning Communities

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are offering teachers and staff a framework for focused improvements to student outcomes.

What skills do we want our students to know?

How do we know students know the skill or content?

What do we do when students don't know the skill or content?

What do we do when students do know the skill or content?

Fully implemented this school year, the PLCs are a professional development initiative that will improve the educational process. PLC encourages data, discussions, staff collaboration, and best practices to guide teacher professional and leadership development. The framework revolves around four questions central to student effectiveness: 1) Content: What skills do we want our students to know?, 2) Assessment: How do we know

students know the skill or content?, 3) Intervention: What do we do when students don't know the skill or content?, and 4) Acceleration: What do we do when students do know the skill or content? By keeping these questions at the front of teachers' and administrators' minds, PLCs keep teacher efforts tied to student achievement.

The PLCs focus on the importance of teaching and learning. If children are not learning, PLCs encourage teachers to be willing to alter their teaching methods to get student results. PLCs also recognize the value of collaboration between teams, teachers, and departments. This collaboration allows teachers to plan and implement the best programs for children. The PLCs focus on proven results and using data to guide teacher and student performance.

This initiative came about as a result of the partnership between BCS and the Birmingham Educational Foundation.

S1. Teach For America

Teach For America (TFA) will be providing 16 teachers in the BCS schools.

The district's inaugural year for Teach for America began this Fall 2011. Over the next 3 years, this program will expand. The district has asked TFA to enter BCS because BCS' guiding principle is student achievement. The data and metrics surrounding TFA establish that it increases performance in urban schools. For instance, TFA students make more progress in math and reading in a given year than would be typically expected. TFA will also help to address the BCS challenge of teacher retention, as the district currently loses between 65-70 teachers per year. TFA is yet another tool to enhance the district's to enhance the teacher corps for high student achievement.

T1. Acceleration Zone Program

BCS provides ongoing support to struggling schools to increase their performance.

An initiative that began in 2010, the Acceleration Zone provides support to the ten most under-performing schools within BCS. The principals from these schools receive additional professional development, and district leadership evaluates the schools' resources to ensure that they are being used in the most efficient and effective way possible. This year, the new TFA teachers were placed in some of these schools to provide additional support. The district is being deliberate and balanced in the allocation of its support; efforts are directed towards students who are struggling as well as students who are excelling. With additional support and guidance, these schools should accelerate achievement levels.

U1. Tiered Collaborative Support Initiative

To continue building capacity at schools, BCS is providing ongoing Tiered Collaborative Support to all schools support.

Initiated for the first time last year, the Tiered Collaborative Support program provided ongoing support to schools through visits from Central Office curriculum management teams. The district provided support to the school leadership teams to improve student achievement and increase instructional leadership. Struggling schools received 2 Central Office visits per month, mid-range schools received 1 visit per month, and high-performing schools received 1 visit every other month.

This school year, the district is using its Tiered Collaborative Support program slightly differently. All schools will be visited 1 time per month, and struggling schools will receive impromptu visits. School visits will be adjusted according to school feedback, school performance, and school resources. Schools will be given the responsibility of facilitating Central Office curriculum management team visits.

Next Steps

V1. Formative Assessment and a Culture of Data Driven Processes

BCS embraces a culture of data driven instructional processes so teachers and staff can know exactly where to target their efforts.

Formative Assessment is a common teaching tool. It uses student assessments throughout the school year to evaluate student learning. These assessments keep teachers and administration constantly informed about student learning. When teachers know their students' understanding of a concept, they can adapt their lessons and teaching strategies accordingly. Formative assessments allow teachers to respond to student weaknesses before the performance gap widens and before high-stakes assessments. This testing enables greater success for students and teachers.

BCS will instill a culture of formative assessment and the use of data so that teachers and administration will remain constantly informed about student achievement. In fact, BCS will work with external entities to develop program evaluation tools and processes that will assist in assessing the effectiveness of BCS academic programs. The district is also investigating evaluation software. By building a culture of data usage, the district will encourage student success because teachers can make informed instructional adjustments.

W1. Expanded Innovative Education Curriculum

BCS is offering more classes to more students, and the district intends to continue expanding academic opportunities for students.

Already underway, the BCS dedication to providing an innovative, engaging educational experience can be seen in its Career Academies, IB candidate schools, and expanded AP offerings. Additional initiatives are ongoing. For instance, the district intends to offer themed middle and elementary schools in the near future. In partnership with the Birmingham Cultural Alliance, 7 elementary schools are participating in a federally-funded arts grant. By providing performance-based learning for its students, the district will offer more innovative learning and development opportunities to its students. BCS is always mindful that children learn in different ways, and teachers strive to provide children the education that will encourage student success.

X1. BCS Leadership Academy

BCS will be implementing a Leadership Academy to cultivate rising leaders within the BCS system.

As part of the new BCS professional development programs, this leadership initiative will identify and encourage aspiring leaders in the BCS system. The Leadership Academy, which is currently being planned, will cultivate aspiring teachers or assistant principals and give them the tools to become principals or to serve in other leadership positions in the district. The Academy will meet on a monthly basis, and members will be able to shadow principals, listen to speakers, and have meaningful dialogue about issues related to education and leadership. This program will increase leadership development and collaboration among teachers, staff, and administration.

Y1. Response To Instruction or RTI

This initiative will improve three areas within BCS: reading, math, and behavior.

This fall, the Response To Instruction or RTI initiative will address how the district plans for and implements high quality instruction for all students. RTI processes are aimed at appropriately implementing support resources to students to facilitate their success. Specific areas of focus are math, reading, and behavior. Students will be given support to encourage their development, learning and understanding. The program intends to reverse challenges in these areas quickly and effectively.

Z1. Career Academy and Advanced Studies Support

The district intends to hire a person designated to manage the Career Academies and other advanced studies.

With this year's Career Academy work in high schools throughout the district, leadership understands that someone will need to coordinate and manage the Academies to make them as viable as possible. This will be a significant task, so the district will create a position designated entirely to managing, expanding, and improving the Career Academies. Additional responsibilities may include ACT

improvement, as well as Advanced Placement (AP) initiatives. The Birmingham Education Fund has generously agreed to fund 49% of this position.

AA1. Committees for Elementary and Middle Schools

BCS will develop committees to direct BCS initiatives for elementary and middle schools.

The district plans to build committees for middle schools and elementary schools to learn about how schools can become more effective. district leadership intends to use surveys, focus groups, and other types of research to gather feedback about how the schools can be improved in order to make decisions that will have the greatest amount of impact on student learning.

BB1. Dashboard

BCS is creating a dashboard of important indicators so that the BCS staff, stakeholders, and public can be kept informed about the district's progress.

The district plans to create a dashboard of indicators for success that all schools across the district can use. The dashboard would enable easy access to the indicators that the district values the most and would facilitate easy understanding of many key metrics across schools. Matrices including dashboards and balanced scorecards will be developed that will track key times and benchmarks for internal monitoring for support. In addition, performance levels will be made available at the district and individual school level.

PRIORITY TWO: FINANCE

STRATEGIC INTENT Birmingham City Schools has sound financial policies and procedures to ensure adequate resources for academic excellence, high quality employees, and state-of-the-art facilities and technology.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Ensure student achievement is the highest funding priority
- Align policies to ensure fiscal accountability, transparency, cost avoidance, and stability across the system
- Advocate for education funding and inform all stakeholders
- Achieve and maintain an adequate fund balance

Birmingham City Schools' Strategic Priority Vision²

The district is overcoming its current financial circumstances through attention to detail, diligence, and community understanding. To protect against additional future proration and economic cuts, the district aims to have a fund balance of at least twice that of monthly BCS expenditures. The Finance Team will also be assessing the cost effectiveness of many programs to ensure that resources are being optimized. Technology will be used to increase efficiency and reduce unnecessary expenses. The district will also make financial data more user-friendly so that the general public can easily access and understand the BCS financial situation.

The BCS District Finance Team has faced significant challenges over the past three years. State-mandated proration, declining student enrollment, and the end of stimulus funding have posed substantial budgetary challenges for the district. In the past four years, BCS has lost over \$50 million in funding. Despite these challenges, BCS has not incurred any long- or short-term debt, and the Finance Team has kept the district within its budget. The district has met its budgetary goals with initiatives like the Retirement Incentive package, school consolidations, and energy management programs. For the district to stay within its budget, BCS leadership has been forced to make difficult decisions for the school system and all the BCS stakeholders. Every decision has been made with student achievement in the forefront of the minds of district leadership. All recovered resources are directed towards the classroom and students, the district's most important stakeholder.

² **Priority Two: Finance** captures the following Yes We Can! Community Agreement themes: 1.4 (equitable distribution of resources); 3.4 (financial accountability).

Goal: Ensure student achievement is the highest funding priority

The district leadership has consolidated schools and improved the efficiency of the Central Office to ensure that resource use is aligned with student achievement.

- Closed or consolidated 5 schools in Fall 2011
- Restructured district's Central Office to eliminate 40 positions
- Hired in-house counsel to address many internal legal matters and to decrease expenses

Goal: Align policies to ensure fiscal accountability, transparency, cost avoidance, and stability across the system

The district has built structures to ensure that all expenditures are evaluated and monitored with an emphasis on cost avoidance.

- Implemented Zero-Based Budgetary system to ensure budget line items are directly related to district goals
- Requiring district departments to regularly review and monitor their own budgets to promote awareness and understanding about financial decisions
- Designed and employed district Energy Management Plan to cut costs

Goal: Advocate for education funding and inform all stakeholders

The district has conducted ongoing advocacy for funding and has continued to inform stakeholders of the district's financial state.

- Continuing to seek funding from education supporters at the local, state, and national levels
- Partnering with Birmingham Education Foundation to implement targeted programs for student achievement
- Reorganizing and recruiting new partners for Partners In Education Program
- Hosted Recognition and Recruitment Reception to thank community supporters and school volunteers
- Offering regular press briefings and media appearances

Goal: Achieve and maintain an adequate fund balance

The district has examined its budget to eliminate all inefficiencies and has implemented various programs to ensure that BCS meets budgetary requirements.

- Closed FY 2011 fiscal gap
- Offered successful Retirement Incentive Package to 329 employees to cut costs and enable the district to forgo a reduction in force
- Provided financial training to school principals and bookkeepers

Next Steps

The district will continue to realign and monitor BCS finances to ensure that student achievement is the highest funding priority.

- Utilizing existing technology to increase efficiency and decrease costs
- Providing a user workshop for district bookkeepers to increase financial training and understanding
- Liquidating surplus properties and consolidating administrative sites
- Explore means of increased funding

Birmingham City Schools Context and Challenges

Fiscal year 2012 will be a very challenging year for the school system. Entering the 2012 fiscal year, we realize the loss of \$22 million in federal stimulus funds and over \$8 million associated with the loss in student population. It is crucial that we all work together to stabilize student population to ensure more stable funding for budgetary planning and program implementation and continuation.

Initiatives and Programs Recently Completed or Currently Underway

GOAL | ENSURE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IS THE HIGHEST FUNDING PRIORITY

A2. 5 Closed or Consolidated Schools

The district has closed or consolidated 5 schools and is using the recaptured resources to provide more equitable learning opportunities and to improve student achievement overall.

With the current financial realities, BCS has consolidated schools so leadership can continue to offer its students diverse and enriched academic opportunities. Although the district would like to provide a neighborhood school in each community, for the present, the district must concentrate on offering every student in Birmingham City Schools the best and most complete curriculum by using resources in the most effective way possible. Because district funding is tied to school enrollment, as BCS loses students, it loses funding. The district is currently facing severely declining enrollment; last school year, 25,798 students enrolled, down from almost 35,000 in 2005. This decline has resulted in a significant funding decrease in recent years. The district is now facing a budget shortage, and to address this problem, the district must continue to right-size the school system and use resources in the most efficient way possible. Consolidating these 5 schools has recaptured around \$1.5 million that can now be used towards providing students resources.

Another benefit of school consolidation is that the district will be able to offer all students the full curriculum. The district prioritizes equity in the allocation of BCS resources. These resources can be optimized in right-sized schools. By right-sizing, BCS can offer more students the resources they need, stabilize the student population, and rebuild. district leadership believes that this will be in the best interest of everyone.

B2. Central Office Restructuring

BCS has eliminated or transferred over 40 positions within Central Office to streamline district leadership.

By eliminating 40 positions from the Central Office and moving staff into local schools, BCS has streamlined the district and reduced over \$2 million in spending. This recaptured money has been used towards placing more resources in the classroom.

C2. In-House Counsel

The in-house counsel helps to address and avoid legal problems while saving the district more than \$600,000 this year alone.

To reduce legal fees, BCS has employed an in-house general counsel. All school systems have legal matters, and the district's current general counsel addresses current legal issues and moderate future ones. The district has many routine legal matters that can be handled internally at a significantly reduced cost, using outside lawyers for those occasions when the district needs their assistance. Previously, BCS spent between \$1 million and \$1.6 million in legal fees. To date, the BCS general counsel has saved the school district more than \$600,000 since September 2010. With the general counsel's continued involvement in the policy writing and implementation, the district's legal fees and needs will decrease. The district has also taken full advantage of the Alabama Risk Management for Schools (ARMS), which offsets some of the district's expense on certain legal matters.

**GOAL | ALIGN POLICIES TO ENSURE FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY, COST AVOIDANCE,
AND STABILITY ACROSS THE SYSTEM**

D2. Zero-based Budget

BCS is using a zero-based budget to ensure that all expenditures are aligned to district goals of student achievement.

Previously, BCS budgetary process had been rollover-based budgeting that did not link resources with established goals and priorities. This year, BCS instituted a zero-based budgetary process, which required every department to justify all proposed expenditures and to link the expenditure to district

goals. For example, no school was permitted to hire more teachers than their student enrollment numbers required. The district scrutinized every line item for effectiveness, eliminating extra programs or initiatives that the district no longer needed or endorsed. Every district expenditure has been linked to the overarching BCS goal of increasing student achievement and success. This successful budgetary process saved the BCS district over \$2 million last year alone and will be used in building the budget for the years to come.

E2. Budgetary Maintenance within Departments

BCS is empowering departments to manage their own expenditures, which will bring more accountability and understanding of BCS expenditures.

The district Finance Team is providing more financial information to departments and giving departments the ability to monitor their own expenditures. Each department can access information about their budget and budget line items, enabling different departments to administer their own finances instead of relying solely on the Central Office. By increasing financial awareness, District leadership intends for staff to become more aware of their expenditures as they relate to the department's budget and to the District's overall budget. The Finance Team intends to extend this capability to all schools and departments within the next year.

F2. Energy Management Plan

To cut costs, BCS is carefully managing its energy and utilities use.

This year, the district has begun to cut costs by more carefully managing energy use and monitoring expenditures. Components of this plan include heightening behavioral awareness so that BCS staff and students are more aware of their energy use and will, for example, be mindful of leaving lights on or doors open. Utility use will also be modified. The district will also be addressing necessary utility repairs and restoring the electrical and mechanical systems to optimize operation. Several obvious energy-efficiency projects are currently underway, including retrofitting sensor lighting in facilities and upgrading HVAC systems. Preliminary estimates on net savings from this project are \$1 million for buildings in operation, with anticipated multi-million-dollar subsequent annual savings.

GOAL | ADVOCATE FOR EDUCATION FUNDING AND INFORM ALL STAKEHOLDERS

G2. Grant and Funding Efforts

BCS has been and will continue to tirelessly seek funding streams at all levels of local, state, and national levels.

While the district's first priority is ensuring the effective and efficient use of available financial resources, BCS must also engage entities to support initiatives and activities that provide a more comprehensive and well-rounded curriculum for students. The district has been building strategic partnerships throughout the city. As a part of its fundraising effort, the District has also encouraged the local legislators to help us in addressing our fiscal challenges, especially given the current economic environment.

H2. Birmingham Education Foundation

BCS has partnered with the Birmingham Education Foundation (BEF) to pursue District initiatives, extend awareness of BCS, and earn funding.

Formed in 2008, the Birmingham Education Foundation is a non-profit organization that supports BCS and keeps citizens engaged in the future of Birmingham's children and school system. The organization began as a result of the 2007 Yes We Can! stakeholder interviews. As a result of the interviews, it became clear that the citizens of Birmingham wanted to be active participants in improving the Birmingham community and the Birmingham City Schools. Since its formation, the BEF has worked to be a voice in the Birmingham community, to establish relationships between the school and business community, and to provide resource support to BCS. Currently, the BEF is undertaking four significant projects to improve BCS:

1. Birmingham Parent University
2. Career Academies
3. Professional development for school leaders
4. Pre-Advanced Placement Initiative

I2. Partners In Education Advisory Board Reorganization

The Partners in Education Advisory Board is being revised, and new members are being invited to join.

The BCS Partners In Education (PIE) program builds sustainable partnerships among students, volunteers, schools, and local organizations to provide BCS students with the necessary tools to improve learning. The PIE program recruits, trains, and places volunteers to work at all grade levels. The PIE Advisory Board works with the district administration to direct the program. The district is currently inviting new members for participation on the Advisory Board, and the district is currently working with Board members and district leadership to make sure that the PIE Advisory Board actions are supportive of District initiatives, goals and priorities and the Strategic Plan.

J2. Reward and Recognition Programs

To acknowledge its strongest employees, BCS intends to build a program that recognizes excellent staff performance.

As people respond well to positive reinforcement, many members of BCS staff deserve to be recognized for their hard work and impressive results. The district intends to build a Reward and Recognition Program that uses data-driven metrics to recognize staff performance. Recognitions will be highly-regarded and well publicized. This recognition will help to keep staff motivated, spark interest, and involve BCS staff. It will also provide an opportunity to celebrate the district and the work it does teaching children.

K2. Regular Press Briefings and Media Appearances

BCS has made significant efforts to appear publicly and to communicate with the press.

BCS continues to provide frequent communication to the media. As the current economy continues to negatively impact media budgets, it is of utmost importance that BCS provide information to the media so that stories about BCS are as accessible as possible. To do this, the district regularly issues press releases and alerts to the media and general public. Superintendent Witherspoon submits op-eds to media sources like the Birmingham News. He has also attended meetings of the Birmingham News and Birmingham Times' editorial boards to build positive relationships with the papers. Superintendent Witherspoon also holds press conferences to promote activities, events, and achievements at BCS. On the first day of school this August, the district disclosed Superintendent Witherspoon's whereabouts to media sources so television stations could follow him as he visited the newly-renovated schools. On the whole, district leadership feels that the news is supportive of Superintendent Witherspoon and his efforts to improve BCS. These appearances encourage stakeholder involvement and discourage misinformation about BCS activities.

GOAL | ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN AN ADEQUATE FUND BALANCE

Actions to meet FY 2011 Fiscal Gap

L2. FY 2011 Fiscal Gap Progressing Towards Closure

BCS has overcome significant financial cutbacks to meet the district budget and to remain out of debt.

State-mandated proration, decreased state funding, and decreased enrollment left BCS facing significant budget decreases this year. The 3% proration enforced by the state eliminated approximately \$4 million from the budget. To make up the difference in the district's

- 1) Hiring in-house counsel
- 2) Central Office reorganization
- 3) Maximizing of state funding flexibility
- 4) Reduction in department budgets

budget, BCS leadership was forced to make difficult decisions [see inset].

These adjustments resulted in roughly \$6.5 million in savings for the district, enabling leadership, at time of print, to nearly meet budgetary obligations without incurring debt. district leadership made all cost-cutting decisions with students in mind, and they protected the classroom from any unnecessary cuts. It is very notable that the school system remained “in the black” throughout this difficult financial year, especially as many districts around the state have had to borrow money to meet budgetary obligations.

M2. Retirement Incentive Package

BCS offered a Retirement Incentive Package to 329 employees to encourage early retirement.

To cut personnel expense, BCS offered an early retirement incentive to 329 employees. This plan enabled BCS to take advantage of personnel who were close to retirement so the district could avoid layoffs as much as possible. Payments to retirees were funded from the sale of district property. The final financial numbers are still under review, but the program has saved the district anywhere from \$1 million to \$3 million.

N2. Financial Training to Principals and Bookkeepers

BCS is providing financial training to local school principals and bookkeepers.

This June, BCS leadership offered a professional development course to principals and bookkeepers that gave an overview of the district’s financial processes. This training increased awareness and understanding of BCS financial procedures, empowering local leadership to make educated financial decisions about expenditures and budgeting. This training will be provided again in the future.

Next Steps

O2. FY 2013 Potential Funding Loss

While facing the current economic challenges, must be mindful of the state and national economic realities that impact the district.

FY 2013 will see the implementation of the State’s “Rolling Reserve” which is designed to reduce the fluctuations in the Education Trust Fund. This process will have a \$10 million impact on the general fund. In addition, continued loss in student population results in decreased state and federal local funds. BCS balanced the FY2012 based on the potential sale of surplus property. This fact coupled with the lack of adequate reserves, remains a factor.

The Finance Team has worked to trim spending off departments and areas that will have the smallest possible negative impact on student achievement and learning. The Team continues to find cost-saving measures that allow the district to give more resources to students while remaining within budget.

FY 2012 District cost-saving initiatives:

- 1) Reductions in non-personnel costs, such as legal fees
- 2) School consolidation
- 3) Retirement Incentive Package
- 4) Sale of surplus property
- 5) Energy Management Program

P2. Utilization of Technology

BCS can utilize technology to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

BCS can still cut costs by using technology more extensively. The district plans to transition to 100% direct deposit for staff payment to eliminate unnecessary and expensive paper use and ensure that staff receive payment on time. Purchase orders will be managed electronically as opposed to paper, which will eliminate confusion and more paper waste. Before these initiatives are entirely rolled out, the district will make sure that BCS software is compatible with these electronic initiatives so they will succeed. The more that the District can save on an operational level, the more resources they can provide to classrooms and students.

Q2. User Workshop with Bookkeepers

BCS intends to provide software training to bookkeepers so they can use the district programs more efficiently.

District leadership intends to provide financial software training to bookkeepers so they will use district programs more efficiently. BCS leadership intends to roll out this initiative this school year.

PRIORITY THREE: HUMAN CAPITAL

STRATEGIC INTENT	Birmingham City Schools recruits, develops, and retains the highest quality employees, who have student success as their highest priority, and are committed to working collaboratively with parents, students, and all stakeholders.
GOALS & OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Develop and support a highly effective core of teachers and principals and ensure they have the resources needed to support high achievement for all students– Build a stable and high performing employee pool– Align employees with the strategic vision for the District

Birmingham City Schools' Strategic Priority Vision³

The district aims to have a world-class district that employs the best possible teachers and staff. To accomplish this goal, the district needs to ensure that the right people are working in the right position. Applying industry standards to department staffing will help to right size the district. BCS leadership also needs to make sure that employees are working to the best of their abilities. Cost-saving procedures such as paperless job applications will ensure that resources are allocated in the most effective way possible.

The BCS district leadership has been striving to identify and develop highly qualified people for BCS jobs at the district and school level. BCS places high priority on the development of its employees, and it is providing meaningful professional development opportunities for potential and current staff. The District is also developing a culture of tracking data, and plans to use it, both internally and externally, to provide ongoing updates to the public about staff training and other activities. This data will also inform district recruiting, hiring, and professional development activities. To offer a more nurturing employee environment, the district is also building relationships with local vendors so employees can access additional benefits and incentives while in their positions.

³ **Priority Three: Human Capital** captures the following Yes We Can! Community Agreement themes: 1.7 (high-quality teachers and counselors); 1.9 (stronger accountability); 3.4 (stable leadership); 3.7 (public involvement); 3.10 (incorporating best teaching practices).

Goal: Develop and support a highly effective core of teachers and principals and ensure they have the resources needed to support high achievement for all students

The district has expanded and implemented various professional development programs to build capacity within the administration and staff, and the district has been examining HR practices so the district can remain a fulfilling place for staff to work.

- Offering Professional Learning Communities as part of new BCS professional development
- Institute BCS Planning Program to further incorporate planning in schools
- Offering Instructional Leadership for principals as part of BCS professional development
- Offered summer learning program to teachers as part of BCS professional development
- Introducing the BCS Pathway Program to build capacity in staff and enable employees to earn qualifications and promotions
- Established a Process Improvement Team to increase HR efficiency
- Conducting exit interviews to learn lessons from departing employees
- Offering a Comprehensive Wellness Program to give employees additional benefits and perks

Goal: Build a stable and high performing employee pool

The district has built foundations for human resource stability, improvement, and fulfillment.

- Implemented comprehensive Human Resources Plan
- Created the Career Academy of Urban Educators at Parker High School
- Offering Certificates of Distinction to acknowledge staff professional development efforts
- Instituting employee cross-functioning to increase understanding of other jobs
- Implemented customer service improvements for staff and applicants

Goal: Align employees with the strategic vision for the district

The district has streamlined the Central Office to ensure that student achievement remains the highest funding priority.

- Restructured District Central Office to eliminate 40 positions

Next Steps

The district will continue to build capacity and stability at all levels of BCS staff while building a culture for data collection at all levels of human resource decisions.

- Requiring professional development plans for all employees
- Implementing a BCS Leadership Academy for teachers leaders and administrators
- Developing a Reward and Recognition Program for high-performing staff
- Offered employee orientation to all new staff
- Expanding and utilizing technology at all levels

- Instilling a culture of data collection and analysis
- Developing an annual scorecard or dashboard to inform stakeholders about significant indicators

Birmingham City Schools Context and Challenges

Changing demographics and decreases in student population results in a certain level of fluctuation in the workforce. This includes certified as well as classified employees. Regardless, professional development and training must be at the forefront as we enhance human capital across the district. A highly trained workforce is able to operate at high levels for an efficient and effective organization. Moreover, high expectations of a workforce must be accompanied by a high level of support. We will use best practices and industry standards relative to instructional strategies, organization and operational tools and processes, including customer service.

Initiatives and Programs Recently Completed or Currently Underway

GOAL | DEVELOP AND SUPPORT A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE CORE OF TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS AND ENSURE THEY HAVE THE RESOURCES NEEDED TO SUPPORT HIGH ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL STUDENTS

A3. Professional Development – Professional Learning Communities

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are offering teachers and staff a framework for focused improvements to student outcomes.

Fully implemented this school year, the PLCs are a professional development initiative that will improve the educational process. PLC encourages data, discussions, staff collaboration, and best practices to guide teacher professional and leadership development. The framework revolves around four questions central to student effectiveness: 1) Content: What skills do we want our students to know?, 2) Assessment: How do we know students know the skill or content?, 3) Intervention: What do we do when students don't know the skill or content?, and 4) Acceleration: What do we do when students do know the skill or content? By keeping these questions at the front of teachers' and administrators' minds, PLCs keep teacher efforts tied to student achievement.

The PLCs focus on the importance of teaching and learning. If children are not learning, PLCs encourage teachers to be willing to alter their teaching methods to get student results. PLCs also recognize the value of collaboration between teams, teachers, and departments. This collaboration allows teachers to plan and implement the best programs for children. The PLCs focus on proven results and using data to guide teacher and student performance.

This initiative came about as a result of the partnership between BCS and the Birmingham Educational Foundation.

B3. Professional Development – Birmingham City Schools Planning Program

BCS is more actively incorporating planning into their teaching processes.

BCS is working extensively with principals on planning for success. Planning is a major focus of the district’s professional development for principals. Good planning by school leaders has a positive impact on student learning. Their professional development focuses on the three components of leadership work: 1) planning, 2) implementation, and 3) reflection. Leadership should use the majority of their time on effective planning. Good planning increases school efficiency by significantly decreasing the implementation time needed for programs. The initial planning process, called “back-mapping,” encourages the principals to ensure that every decision is tied to what students need for success. By basing all Central, local school administration, and teacher actions on student needs, targeted planning for school activities occurs. The principals’ professional development also emphasizes the importance of reflection about district and school activities. Reflection, which is particularly important given the district’s streamlined staff and limited resources, enables leadership to adapt programs appropriately.

The Curriculum and Instruction Division along with representative principals will lead the planning of principals’ professional development program. The district will further these professional development sessions by incorporating collaborative visits, and the Central Office will give local schools ownership over professional development and build capacity at local schools. The Central Office will also encourage professional development by allowing local schools to lead these visits.

This program will be fluidly integrated into the PLC framework. It will be connected with existing plans and vision for BCS.

Birmingham City Schools Professional Learning Communities Framework:

- What skills do we want our students to know?
- How do we know students know the skill or content?
- What do we do when students don’t know the skill or content?
- What do we do when students do know the skill or content?

C3. Professional Development – Instructional Leadership

By offering targeted professional development for principals, the district will improve outcomes for all schools.

The district has also begun implementing professional development that targets the principals of district schools. This initiative educates principals about different ways leadership improves outcomes for the entire school. The program, implemented this year, will partner Central Office staff with principals. The Central Office will train, encourage, and support principals to become instructional leaders for their schools.

D3. Professional Development – Summer Learning Opportunities Expansion

BCS is offering dynamic summer learning opportunities to teachers and students.

Last summer's learning opportunities were extended to more than 120 teachers as well. The district used this time to enroll teachers in an intensive professional learning experience. Teachers were enrolled in a "coaching cycle." At the beginning of this cycle, teachers were taught grade-specific content by district coaches. After mastering this content themselves, the teachers observed "master teachers" teaching the content to a classroom of students. Teachers then taught the same content to students while being assessed for effectiveness by the coaches. The coach, who was present throughout the process, worked with the teacher to improve instructional methods. The reviews from the program were very positive, and the district plans to implement the teacher professional development component of the summer program again next summer and into the future.

E3. BCS Pathway Program

The district will provide opportunities for upward mobility to staff through training and other learning opportunities.

BCS wants to facilitate the development of BCS paraprofessionals into BCS teachers, BCS teachers into BCS administrators, and BCS administrators into district and county leaders. All BCS staff should be developing capacity and moving upwards through the ranks. The Pathway Program will provide advancement structures to BCS staff and teachers. The district also recognizes the value of growing and cultivating existing employees. As part of this Pathway Program, the district aims to establish more partnerships with institutions of higher education and to encourage collaboration between students and staff.

F3. Process Improvement Team

BCS has instituted structures to improve processes, which includes a committee to examine processes.

The HR department has a Process Improvement Team that meets every week to examine HR processes. This team focuses on increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of BCS processes. The district continues to investigate areas for efficient cost-cutting so BCS staff and students can receive optimized resources.

G3. Exit Interviews

Exit interviews with departing staff are providing valuable employee feedback.

Employees can provide invaluable feedback to employers. BCS has begun conducting exit interviews with departing staff to gather insights on BCS improvement, reasons for departure, and future career plans. Leadership is analyzing and interpreting this data and will be using it to develop strategies to improve district operations.

H3. Comprehensive Wellness Program

BCS is partnering with local vendors to offer additional fringe benefits and perks to BCS employees.

BCS appreciates the hard work of all its employees. We are working to building partnerships with insurers and local agencies that meet employees' physical and mental health needs and interests. Leadership will also provide staff resources that support personal health improvement and informed health care decisions. The district will publicize these new benefits and perks on the BCS website. Leadership also expects that this program will reduce absenteeism, increase productivity, minimize health care costs, and reduce costs overall. This initiative has started and will be further developed as this school year progresses.

GOAL | BUILD A STABLE AND HIGH PERFORMING EMPLOYEE POOL

I3. Comprehensive Human Resources Plan

BCS is developing a Human Resources plan to attract and retain the best possible staff for the district.

BCS plans to improve the hiring process and communication so the district can employ the best possible staff for schools. This improvement plan includes placing all hiring policies, job descriptions, and procedures online. The district also plans to revise and write policies that are clear, regularly updated, and aligned with the hiring practices. Best-practices research will inform district leadership about hiring and staffing decisions. By applying industry standards to BCS hiring and staffing, the district can continue to right-size the system. This change will help the District run effectively and efficiently.

J3. Academy of Urban Educators

The Career Academy of Urban Educators will attract, train, and hire BCS students who would like to work in urban education.

This year, BCS now offers Career Academies at six of the district's seven high schools. These academies offer curricula specific to a given career so students will gain pre-employment and pre-college experience and education. One of these academies is the Academy of Urban Educators, which is located in Parker High School. This academy will prepare interested BCS students to enter the education sector by offering students relevant courses and available certifications. The program will help BCS train and employ its own graduates who are familiar with an urban educational environment and the surrounding Birmingham community.

K3. Certificate of Distinction

Certificates of Distinction will be offered to classified employees who fulfill specific professional development requirements.

Designed for classified employees, this initiative aims to increase the number of classified employees who participate in professional development. To encourage staff involvement, BCS will be offering a Certificate of Distinction to qualified employees. This certificate will be earned by those who have participated in a set of core developmental courses. These courses, which are specific to employee career path, include leadership, safety, and conflict resolution training, among others. The district expects the certificate requirements will provide minimum training, enhance career growth, and improve staff performance in the workplace.

L3. Employee Cross-Functioning

BCS has begun moving employees to different jobs within their departments to improve understanding and collaboration between staff.

BCS intends to enhance interdepartmental collaboration and understanding through encouraging employee cross-functioning. This initiative currently allows district employees to shift roles within departments every 6 months and allows employees to experience other staff members' responsibilities. It is currently being undertaken in the BCS Human Resources department with plans to extend into other departments. Cross-functioning would increase understanding and awareness of other people's responsibilities, facilitate collaboration between departments, and provide professional development opportunities.

M3. Customer Service Improvements

Internal and external customer service is a crucial part of any organization.

BCS is working to ensure that current staff and potential hires have the best possible employment experience. To this end, district leadership is exploring initiatives to improve the work environment for BCS employees. One of these changes has been to provide a computer kiosk at the Birmingham Board of Education so that applicants who do not have their own computers can come into the building and apply there. The Human Resources and Professional Development departments are currently looking to partner with a practical customer service program model. After finding the appropriate model, BCS intends to bring in experts to train the Human Resources team.

GOAL | ALIGN EMPLOYEES WITH THE STRATEGIC VISION FOR THE DISTRICT

N3. Central Office Restructuring

BCS has eliminated or moved 40 positions within Central Office to streamline district leadership.

As the Council of Great City Schools noted in 2007, the BCS system had become very burdened in non-teaching positions. This problem developed for a number of reasons and is partially the result of declining enrollment. Like most urban school systems, BCS has been reluctant to make cuts in personnel, but in these times of budget cuts and funding evaporation, BCS no longer has the luxury of funding positions that are not well-aligned with district mission and goals. By eliminating 40 positions from the Central Office and moving staff into local schools, BCS has streamlined the organization and reduced over \$2 million in spending. This recaptured money has been used towards placing more resources in the classroom.

Next Steps

O3. Professional Development Plans

BCS intends to expand its professional development opportunities to include a professional development plan for all employees.

The BCS district places high importance upon professional development, as is evident in the above discussion of current initiatives. BCS plans to expand these efforts by requiring a professional development plan for all employees. As part of this plan, the district will conduct end-of-year interviews with staff to discuss goals set and met that year and to establish goals for the future year. District leadership also aims to capitalize on the flexibility that online training, podcasts, and webinars offer employees. By building a culture of constant improvement and professional development, the district plans to improve staff capacity every day.

P3. BCS Leadership Academy

The Leadership Academy will identify and support the development of rising leaders in the BCS system.

A component of the BCS Pathway Program, this leadership program aims to identify and encourage aspiring leaders in the BCS system. The Leadership Academy, which is currently being developed, would cultivate aspiring teachers or assistant principals and groom them to become principals or other leadership positions within the district. The Academy will meet on a regular basis, and members will be able to shadow principals or department heads, listen to speakers, and have meaningful conversations amongst themselves. This program intends to increase leadership development and collaboration among teachers, staff, and administration throughout the district.

Q3. Reward and Recognition Programs

To acknowledge its strongest employees, BCS intends to build a program that recognizes excellent staff performance.

Many members of BCS staff deserve to be recognized for their hard work and impressive results. As people respond well to positive reinforcement, the district intends to build a Reward and Recognition Program that uses data-driven metrics to recognize staff performance. Recognitions will be highly-regarded and well publicized. This recognition will help to keep staff motivated, spark interest, and involve BCS staff. It will also provide an opportunity to celebrate the district and the work it does teaching children.

R3. Employee Orientation

BCS should offer orientation to all newly hired employees.

BCS plans to begin offering a district-wide orientation for new hires. Implemented by the HR department, the new employee orientation can be an opportunity to convey BCS core messages. Every school should also have a new-hire orientation that includes a checklist of important must-knows for each school. These orientations will help new hires assimilate into the BCS culture more quickly and easily.

S3. Expand and Utilize Technology

Staff will begin to utilize technology more extensively.

BCS intends to encourage staff to fully utilize technology the district already offers. The district also plans to make the Human Resources department entirely paperless and available online. This shift would allow staff and applicants to be more self-sufficient, freeing up HR time and resources for more

pressing issues. Being more self-sufficient will also help develop staff and applicant capacity and skills. Paperless personnel files will also facilitate efficiency and ease of tracking staff. Staff training will be rolled out to educate employees about personnel software systems.

T3. Data Collection and Analysis

BCS is building a culture of data collection and analysis for staff as well as students.

To ensure that staff continues to develop in their positions, the district plans to further instill a culture of data collection and analysis. By tracking data like absence rate for teachers, frequency of substitution use by schools, professional development offerings and attendance, and which colleges and universities send BCS the most effective teachers, the district will be better able to make informed decisions that are in the staff and student's best interest. It should be noted that many data-collection resources are already in place within the district but are not being utilized to capacity. The district plans to encourage staff to use these resources more thoroughly and to offer training on data analysis.

V3. Annual Scorecard

BCS is creating a dashboard of important indicators so that the BCS staff, stakeholders, and public can be kept informed about the district's progress.

Like the Academic Achievement priority, the district plans to publish an annual scorecard to inform stakeholders about progress. As district leadership acknowledges, BCS needs to know its performance on key indicators in order to offer targeted improvement initiatives. Matrices including dashboards and balanced scorecards will be developed that will track key times and benchmarks for internal monitoring for support. In addition, performance at the school and district level will be made readily.

PRIORITY FOUR: COMMUNICATION/PARTNERSHIP

STRATEGIC INTENT	Birmingham City Schools fully engages all stakeholders through effective communication and partnerships.
GOALS & OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Provide ongoing and diverse opportunities for family and community involvement in the education of our students– Engage all stakeholders using a variety of communication vehicles– Make customer service an integral component of how we conduct our business

Birmingham City Schools’ Strategic Priority Vision⁴

The district intends to further utilize technology as a means for communicating with stakeholders. As technology continues to grow in popularity and use, BCS recognizes that this medium will move information to stakeholders more quickly and efficiently. The district is investigating forums such as cell phone applications to push up-to-date information to parents and other stakeholders. district leadership also works to stay informed about technological communication advances that could be incorporated in the BCS communication plan. The District intends to continue tracking partnership data and expanding their data collection process. The district is building established networks of communication that can communicate the BCS message and vision to media, parents, and other stakeholders.

The district continues to push communication to stakeholders. Leadership is working to make access to information as time- and resource-conservative as possible, and the district is trying to use communication media that parents already use. Parents overwhelmingly use the internet and social media sites to communicate, so BCS has revamped its website and begun communicating via social media sites like Facebook and Twitter to reach as many parents as possible. The district is also championing programs aimed at increasing parental and community involvement like the Parent University. Initiatives such as the “I Am” video, which showed notable BCS graduates in various leadership capacities throughout the country, are instilling pride in BCS students, staff, parents, and community members.

⁴ **Priority Four: Communication/Partnership** captures the following Yes We Can! Community Agreement themes: 1.4 (supportive learning environment); 1.10 (open door policy in schools); 1.11 (involved and accountable parents); 1.12 (greater community involvement); 1.13 (improved communication amongst all stakeholders); 3.1 (expanded view and understanding of partnerships); 3.2 (greater Birmingham community accountability for public schools).

Goal: Provide ongoing and diverse opportunities for family and community involvement in the education of our students

The district has expanded family and community involvement programs by making BCS schools more accessible and inviting.

- Established Family Involvement Programs to increase parent involvement in schools
- Partnering with Birmingham Education Foundation to implement targeted programs for student achievement
- Offering District-wide Open Houses at all district schools for all stakeholders
- Opening Birmingham Parent University for BCS parents in Fall 2011
- Building multiple Superintendent Roundtables of different stakeholders in Fall 2011
- Holding Board of Education meetings in BCS facilities across the district and at later times to make meetings more convenient for members of the community
- Hosting school dedication ceremonies at all new or renovated schools
- Reorganizing and recruiting new partners for Partners In Education Program
- Opening a Supply Warehouse to address some student and teacher resource needs
- Implementation of the Parent University

Goal: Engage all stakeholders using a variety of communication vehicles

The district has expanded its use of technology to deliver news to all stakeholders while prioritizing communication with the press and stakeholders.

- Developed a comprehensive Communication and Public Relations Plan
- Restructured BCS website to be more clear, informative, and user-friendly
- Producing a weekly electronic newsletter for all stakeholders to have access to district information
- Utilizing social media to engage with stakeholders, especially parents
- Offering regular press briefings and media appearances to inform stakeholders
- Built and are utilizing the Instructional Broadcast Studio to televise BCS news
- Built a stakeholder email database for easy access to stakeholders
- Providing the *SchoolMessenger* phone service to give parents immediate updates
- Developing a school brochure template
- Developed a number of materials to inform stakeholders about BCS work

Goal: Make customer service an integral component of how we conduct our business

The district has implemented structures for external stakeholder appreciation while ensuring that internal stakeholders are also informed.

- Hosted Recognition and Recruitment Reception for community supporters and Volunteers in Public Schools Awards banquet
- Developed a School Consolidation Manual to give principals guidance on school consolidations

Next Steps

The district will continue to capitalize on technology to reach stakeholders as well as improving its communication with traditional media.

- Expanding social media utilization
- Tracking website traffic data
- Providing media training to principals

Birmingham City Schools Context and Challenges

In the area of communications, one of the major challenges is to ensure that there is on-going communication with internal and external stakeholders. This has to occur in multiple ways -- face-to-face, print, digital, etc. All communications have to begin with a clear, focused message centered on the core business of the district – teaching and learning. We must also be proactive in communications that highlight the vision and mission, as well as acknowledging the opportunities and challenges that may impact progress.

To this end, we must maximize the use of Instructional Broadcast Services (IBS) and other modes of communication. In addition, we need to explore the creation of a dedicated webmaster to maintain a constantly updated web and digital presence. Presently, there is one individual that manages digital, print, and face-to-face communication.

Initiatives and Programs Recently Completed or Currently Underway

GOAL | PROVIDE ONGOING AND DIVERSE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF OUR STUDENTS

A4. Family Involvement Programs

BCS is building structures to increase family involvement in BCS.

The district is running a Family Involvement Program designed to bridge the gap between school and home. This program will also extend the learning process for all children by offering district-wide workshops and conferences for parents, adult family members, and significant others. The district will continue to place value on parental involvement in child learning; research correlates parental involvement in their child's academics with child achievement and success.

B4. Birmingham Education Foundation

BCS has partnered with BEF to pursue district initiatives, extend awareness of BCS, and generate funding.

Formed in 2008, the Birmingham Education Foundation, commonly known as “Ed,” is a non-profit organization that supports BCS and keeps citizens engaged in the future of Birmingham's children and school system. The organization began as a result of the 2007 Yes We Can! stakeholder interviews, when it became clear that the citizens of Birmingham wanted to be active participants in improving the Birmingham community and the Birmingham City Schools. Since its formation, BEF has worked to be a voice of the Birmingham community, to establish relationships between the school and business community, and to provide resource support to BCS. Currently, BEF is undertaking four significant projects to improve BCS:

1. Birmingham Parent University
2. Career Academies
3. Professional development for school leaders
4. Pre-Advanced Placement Initiative

C4. District-Wide Open House

BCS is opening the doors of its schools to all stakeholders and members of the community to see the students' academic environment.

For the second year, district leadership held an Open House Day during which schools were available for visits from all parents, stakeholders and interested members of the community. BCS wants parents to feel comfortable and familiar with their children's academic experiences and environments. By inviting parents into schools, the district wants to make parents feel welcome in their children's schools. Parents may become more involved in their child's academic experience through this initiative. This successful program will be continued next year and for the foreseeable future.

D4. Birmingham Parent University

The BCS Parent University will encourage parents to become more involved in their children's school experiences.

BCS wants parents to be a part of their children's learning experience. BCS will encourage more parent involvement by offering skill and enrichment classes to parents. This type of initiative has been very successful in other urban school settings. The Parent University will focus on five main areas [see inset].

Each of these focus areas will offer lessons on healthy child development. Parents can reach these resources through physical classes, webinars, text messages, conference calls, and online content.

Research shows that parental involvement increases student test scores, graduation rates, attendance rates, and behavior. The ultimate goal of the Parent University is to improve test scores, graduation rates, attendance rates, and student behavior through direct and consistent parental engagement.

The district is currently identifying curriculum and providers, building an Advisory Committee, and developing all program support resources like materials, policies, and systems. This initiative came about as a result of the partnership between BCS and the Birmingham Educational Foundation.

The Parent University with focus on five areas:

1. Parental Growth and Awareness
2. Health and Wellness
3. Learning at Home
4. Volunteer Training
5. Collaborating with the Community

E4. Superintendent Roundtables

Superintendent Witherspoon wants insight from many stakeholders in the city.

The Superintendent Roundtables will engage:

1. Students
2. Teachers & administrators
3. Parents
4. Parents of children in Special Education
5. Community of faith leaders
6. Businesses leaders
7. Legislators

BCS leadership wants to open lines of communication with many of its stakeholders. These relationships can be leveraged to improve the BCS District and will be invaluable for keeping stakeholders supportive of district efforts. These committees will advise district leadership about their concerns, needs, and goals for the district. Superintendent Witherspoon will have meetings multiple times per year with each of these networks to provide up-to-date information. These committees will focus on seven stakeholder groups [see inset].

The district is currently identifying participants and developing meetings schedules for each group. The first of these roundtable meetings, a gathering with the Superintendent and the entire Jefferson County legislative delegation, was held in September, as well as a meeting with the Teacher Advisory Committee.

F4. Off-Site Board of Education Meetings

To make attending Board meetings easier for members of the community, the district has begun hosting Board meetings in various locations throughout the BCS district.

BCS wants to facilitate stakeholder engagement. Last year, the district began to hold Board meetings throughout the community in various BCS facilities, making it easier for community members to attend and participate in Board meetings. Moving the Board meetings in the district and hosting them at a later time provided more convenience for interested stakeholders. District leadership plans to continue this program for the future.

G4. School Opening Ceremonies

BCS has been celebrating the opening of its newly-built or renovated buildings.

This year, the district opened 5 new and 2 significantly renovated schools. To properly celebrate this achievement, district leadership is hosting public ceremonies to dedicate the newly opened facilities. Currently the district is working with Board members to schedule these ceremonies.

H4. Partners In Education Advisory Board Reorganization

The Partners in Education Advisory Board is being revised, and new members are being invited to join.

The BCS PIE program builds sustainable partnerships among students, volunteers, schools, and local organizations to provide BCS students with the necessary tools to improve learning. The PIE program recruits, trains, and places volunteers to work at all grade levels. The PIE Advisory Board works with the district administration to direct the program. The district is currently inviting new members for participation on the Advisory Board, and the district is currently working with Board members and district leadership to make sure that the PIE Advisory Board actions are supportive of district initiatives, goals and priorities, and the Strategic Plan.

I4. Supply Warehouse for Students and Teachers

Students can access extra supplies to supplement their academic experiences.

The generosity to the Birmingham Community and Southeast region has surpassed expectations. This generosity is particularly important during the current economic times when BCS pupil supply money has been decreased significantly. BCS is currently organizing the overflow of donations into a “supply warehouse” for students and families who need access to these supplies. This year alone, Regions Bank supplied 1,000 BCS families with school materials. The district is also considering opening the warehouse to teachers who may need specific supplies for their projects. The specifics of the distribution logistics remain to be decided, but this warehouse provides a great opportunity to provide much-needed supplies to BCS students and to increase community involvement in the BCS student experience.

GOAL | ENGAGE ALL STAKEHOLDERS USING A VARIETY OF COMMUNICATION VEHICLES

J4. Comprehensive Communication and Public Relations Plan

BCS has developed a comprehensive plan to coordinate communications with stakeholders.

The BCS Communication Plan is designed to nurture positive, supportive relationships built on trust with all internal and external stakeholders. These relationships exist to support teaching and learning as students are prepared for the 21st Century. These connections can be built through consistent, honest two-way engagement and communication designed to inform, respond to public query, disseminate information, eliminate and redirect misinformation, and provide forums and activities for direct communication and interaction with district and school personnel.

K4. Restructured BCS Website

BCS has redesigned the district website to be more accessible and user-friendly.

BCS has restructured its website. With this shift to a newly-modified, user-friendly website, BCS intends to enable stakeholders to access information more easily. The website will continue to be improved and expanded, but it already offers links to the BCS weekly electronic newsletter, the contact information for district leadership, and updated district news. The website also offers contact information and links to each school's website.

L4. Weekly Electronic Newsletter

BCS produces a weekly electronic newsletter that informs stakeholders of significant updates in the BCS system.

BCS has begun writing and producing a weekly electronic newsletter. This newsletter is placed on the BCS website and emailed immediately after its publication so that all stakeholders can access it freely. This publication helps to enable timely and easy access to information about the district and local schools to all stakeholders.

M4. Social Media

Communications staff is using social media to communicate readily with parents and other stakeholders.

BCS has greatly expanded its utilization of social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, as a medium for communication to stakeholders. Given the popularity of social media today, BCS has had significant success dispersing messages and notifications to parents this way. This year, during weather emergencies when houses did not have power, BCS found that many parents were still able to access the internet through their cell phones and were able to communicate with BCS via Facebook. The

district will continue to keep its Facebook page updated while expanding to other social media forums. These resources, which are free for both BCS and parents, make direct communication easier and more affordable than ever.

N4. Regular Press Briefings and Media Appearances

BCS has made significant efforts to appear publicly and to communicate with the press.

BCS continues to provide frequent communication to the media. As the current economy continues to drive down media budgets, it is of utmost importance that BCS provide information to the media so that stories about BCS are as easy as possible. To do this, the district regularly issues press releases and alerts to the media and general public. Superintendent Witherspoon submits op-eds to media sources like the Birmingham News. For instance, Superintendent Witherspoon published an op-ed in the Birmingham News this August 14, the Sunday after district schools opened for the year. He has also attended meetings of the Birmingham News and Birmingham Times' editorial boards to build positive relationships with the papers. Superintendent Witherspoon also holds press conferences to promote activities, events, and achievements at BCS. On the first day of school this August, the district disclosed Superintendent Witherspoon's whereabouts to media sources so television stations could follow him as he visited the newly renovated schools. On the whole, district leadership feels that the news media is supportive of Superintendent Witherspoon and his efforts to improve BCS. These appearances encourage stakeholder involvement and discourage misinformation about BCS activities.

O4. Instructional Broadcast Studio

The Instructional Broadcast Studio (IBS) is being used to air various district news throughout the day.

BCS uses the Instructional Broadcast Studio to air educational and public affairs programming through four closed circuit channels and one local cable channel. The district has partnered with Brighthouse Networks to air these programs on local cable channel 634. The Instructional Broadcast shows are used to support the curriculum both inside and outside the classroom setting. It is also used to communicate with internal and external stakeholders and offer information ranging from statements from Superintendent Witherspoon to athletic events.

This year, the district plans to more fully utilize this valuable resource to engage stakeholders. Programs for the year include a monthly public affairs program featuring Superintendent Witherspoon, a monthly news broadcast show featuring students, and a monthly culinary show featuring BCS students.

P4. Stakeholder Email Database

BCS has compiled an email database that the Central Office can use to disseminate specific messages or alerts.

BCS wants to provide stakeholders with information as quickly and easily as possible. They have developed a general stakeholder email database that the district uses to push updates and alerts to members of the BCS community. In many cases, these email contacts are people in leadership positions within the community who can then forward BCS information on to their organizations groups. People in this database include legislators, neighborhood officers, and Birmingham business leaders, among others. These emails allow BCS to reach a large number of stakeholders quickly, and they also help to counter misinformation and provide a uniform BCS district message.

Q4. SchoolMessenger Service

BCS can now deliver alerts to parents directly through an automated telephone call.

BCS recognizes that it must communicate immediately with parents and staff for general notifications as well as during emergencies. To ensure that parents and staff receive critical communication, BCS has acquired and implemented the *SchoolMessenger* service, which automatically calls listed phones to deliver a message.

R4. School Brochure Template

BCS is developing a brochure to provide general district information.

This brochure will provide easily readable, relevant information about school statistics, initiatives, and leadership. District leadership is currently formatting and producing this material.

S4. Collateral Materials

BCS will produce various materials that support the distribution of information to stakeholders.

In an effort to provide information about the district, its goal, priorities and other relevant data, BCS is producing a cache of collateral materials including newsletters, brochures, bookmarks, posters, and downloadable content.

GOAL | MAKE CUSTOMER SERVICE AN INTEGRAL COMPONENT OF HOW WE CONDUCT OUR BUSINESS

T4. Volunteer Recruitment and Recognition Receptions

BCS organizes events to thank supporters of the school system.

BCS places a high priority on thanking its community supporters. In Fall 2010, BCS hosted an event at the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame to thank current district partners and to recruit potential new partners. Around 300 people attended this very successful event. The Family Involvement program also hosted its

finale Volunteers in Public Schools banquet in the Spring of 2011, recognizing hundreds of volunteers who have contributed thousands of hours of service to BCS and its students. Plans for future Recognition and Recruitment Receptions remain uncertain given the current economic situation.

U4. School Consolidation Manual

A School Consolidation Manual provides guidance and checklists to principals during times of significant change.

BCS wants to ensure that with the numerous changes during this time of school consolidation, the local administration and teachers receive all resources they need to open schools and teach students. The district has created a Consolidation Manual, with the help of a designated Stakeholder Committee, to provide a list of everything that needs to be addressed during school consolidations and openings. This manual includes a principal's checklist for exactly what should be done and should be focused on during major moves. This manual aims to smooth the transition process and to ensure that no detail falls through the cracks.

Next Steps

V4. Expanded Social Media

More social media communication opportunities exist for BCS.

BCS is already utilizing Facebook to communicate with parents and other stakeholders. They plan to expand their social media use to other forums like LinkedIn. The district is also investigating a cell phone application that will provide up-to-date information about the district such as weather closings, school menus, or sporting events. By using these already popular media to reach parents, the district intends to provide parents with easy access to district information.

W4. Website Traffic Monitoring

Monitoring BCS website traffic can inform the district about the most effective types of communication.

BCS plans to begin tracking website traffic and utilization. By monitoring these statistics, the district can learn which information and pages are the most popular among stakeholders. The district can then adjust its website to optimize stakeholder use. This type of information is also valuable to track so that the BCS can know how effective and user-friendly the website is.

X4. Media Training for Principals

The district intends to provide media training to all principals so they are prepared to speak to the press.

BCS wants its principals and district administrators to champion the BCS cause, so the district plans to provide media training to administrators in the near future. This training will prepare principals to handle difficult questions from the media and further encourage positive press about BCS leadership, activities, and programs.

PRIORITY FIVE: SAFE AND NURTURING ENVIRONMENT

STRATEGIC INTENT	Birmingham City Schools provides safe learning environments where all students feel secure and valued.
GOALS & OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Support and communicate school system values of health, safety, character, and the environment– Build and maintain premiere educational facilities and efficient transportation systems– Create physical school environments that ensure health and safety of the students and the care of the earth’s natural resources

Birmingham City Schools’ Strategic Priority Vision⁵

The district continues to ensure that the school environment and surrounding departments remain in line with the BCS mission and in compliance with national, state, and local mandates. Improvements to schools must be accomplished within extreme budgetary constraints, and the district never stops looking for ways to increase efficiency and decrease cost. Technology will be important to decrease workload and cost while providing high-quality service and increasing outcomes. Leadership continues to work to build a safe and nurturing environment that will help students and teachers reach the next level in education.

BCS district leadership remains committed to providing students and staff with facilities that enable positive learning and working experiences. The school environment – a term which includes the physical structure of the schools and their safety, nutrition, and support structures – are constantly being reviewed and improved. Initiatives such as the school nutritional information, safety audits, and technology improvements have guided BCS efforts to make the district atmosphere more inviting and positive. These efforts are providing supportive environments conducive to student and staff achievement. BCS’s work in this area adds intangible value to the daily school experience. As Chief Operations Officer Ms. Samuetta Drew notes, “The day begins and ends with us.”

⁵ **Priority Five: Safe & Nurturing Environment** captures the following Yes We Can! Community Agreement themes: 1.1 (safe and drug-free schools); 3.8 (schools as centers of the community).

Goal: Support and communicate school system values of health, safety, and the environment

The district has built structures to ensure healthy child development through improved meal offerings, transportation systems, safety frameworks, and athletics.

- Expanded Child Nutrition menus to include more healthy meal options
- Implemented “My Lunch Money” program to enable parents to manage lunch accounts electronically
- Offered nutritional information for BCS meals so students, staff, and parents can make informed eating decisions
- Utilizing color-coded bus system to increase BCS transportation security for young children
- Conducted an Athletic Program assessment
- Reinstated Athletic Directors at local school level
- Creating the Employee Relations position to conduct primary investigation of staff concerns

Goal: Build and maintain premiere educational facilities and efficient transportation systems

A. The district has been assessing and prioritizing facility rehabilitation and maintenance.

- Implementing BCS Capital Improvement Plan to construct or renovate 30 BCS schools
- Conducted utilities audits in facilities throughout district to identify cost-saving opportunities
- Offering training for Head Custodians that will increase efficiency and communication
- Implemented Technology Refresh and replaced computers throughout District
- Monitoring and charging for building use outside of school

B. The district has improved transportation system efficiency and heightened BCS environmental awareness.

- Established BCS Transportation Committee to capitalize on drivers’ knowledge and ideas
- Utilizing Compressed Natural Gas buses to decrease BCS’s carbon footprint
- Increasing transportation efficiency through utilizing technology
- Utilizing technology to decrease maintenance time and increase fuel efficiency

Goal: Create physical school environments that ensure health and safety of the students and the care of the earth’s natural resources

The district has formed a committee to ensure that BCS health and safety is appropriately monitored and improved.

- Conducted security audit for all facilities
- Partnered with the Birmingham Police Department to further ensure safe and nurturing school environments

Next Steps

The district will continue to provide safe and nurturing environments through increased safety measures, nutritional offerings, efficiency audits, and supportive environments.

- Investigating providing breakfast to BCS students to give them a healthy meal to begin the day
- Reviewing departments for efficient and effective service delivery
- Implementing staff “Smile Campaign” in Child Nutrition and Transportation departments to promote improved customer service

Birmingham City Schools Context and Challenges

Maintaining safe and nurturing environments has to be the foundation on which all other goals are built. We will continue to promote character education, Positive Behavior Support (PBS), and an overall climate and culture that is positive and supportive of all stakeholders.

While we have made great strides in updating and renovating buildings through the capital improvement program, some of our facilities have not been updated or replaced. Additional funds are needed if further updates are to be completed.

We are taking a more proactive stance regarding preventive maintenance of our facilities. Regular maintenance programs will ensure the full life of equipment and well as reducing utility costs in the long run. In addition, we are working to better utilize the work order management system to ensure that work orders are completed within comparable industry timeframes.

With regards to transportation, we are building internal capacity to fully utilize the latest technologies that create the most efficient transportation routes for students while again serving to reduce district costs.

Initiatives and Programs Recently Completed or Currently Underway

GOAL | SUPPORT AND COMMUNICATE SCHOOL SYSTEM VALUES OF HEALTH, SAFETY, CHARACTER, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

A5. Child Nutrition Menu

BCS is offering an expanded lunch menu to offer more healthy eating options.

Last year, the BCS Child Nutrition Program (CNP) contributed \$2 million of its revenue to the BCS general fund. The district CNP wants to appeal to students and staff, so the district has been making changes to the menu. Now, BCS is offering more healthy meal options, such as a salad bar and more

than one meat option per lunch. Meals are being marketed to both students and staff, so BCS is providing meals that appeal to adults as well as to children.

B5. “My Lunch Money” Program

Parents can now manage lunch accounts easily and electronically.

District leadership wants to be sure that parents, students, and staff can easily monitor and replenish their lunch money accounts. Through the program “My Lunch Money,” users can add money to their child’s account electronically, monitor lunch spending and account balance, and receive financial updates. For instance, parents can choose to receive an update when their child’s lunch account balance drops below \$10. This spring, the program was piloted in the district, and leadership plans to implement the program in phases throughout this school year.

C5. Meal Nutritional Values

BCS will soon provide the nutritional facts about each of its meals, and these facts will be available on the lunch menus.

BCS wants to encourage transparency and awareness about BCS lunch nutritional facts. Last school year, the district purchased software that can determine nutritional values and calories of every meal the District offers. To be accurate, the District will enter the information on every recipe they use. Currently, the District has entered more than half of their recipes into the system, with the intention of finalizing the process in the next few months. Once this nutritional information is available for all menu items, the District plans to print the nutritional statistics on all District lunch menus.

D5. Color-coded Buses

For the first three weeks of school, buses are color-coded so young students can easily identify their buses.

To ensure that children come and go safely from their BCS schools, the district has recently implemented a number of initiatives to ensure safety. First, the district has begun color-coding the buses. A brainchild of the BCS Transportation Committee, this system ensures that small children who may not be able to read letters or numbers still board the correct bus and are dropped off in the correct neighborhood. Children may not know numbers or letters, but the vast majority can recognize colors. For the first three weeks of school, all K-3 students wear a wristband whose color matches a piece of paper on their appropriate bus. The bus drivers can then check the children’s wristbands to ensure that children are on the correct bus. This system ensures that children board their correct bus until they are able to learn the pickup location of their bus, the name of their bus driver, and the people who will be on the bus with them. After three weeks, the wristbands are removed. This successful program was initiated last year and will be used again this year.

E5. Athletic Program Assessment

The Athletic Program is currently undergoing an assessment of all the BCS fall and spring sports.

BCS wanted to hear feedback from stakeholders about the district athletic programs and their opportunities for improvement. Last year, the district conducted an assessment of the various fall and spring sports that BCS offers. One of the major takeaways from this assessment is that the athletic program needs to track data aggressively. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have subsequently been designed and are being monitored by district and local school leadership.

The district is also conducting a survey of principals, parents, coaches, and students about the state of the current athletic programs. BCS leadership wants parents and the surrounding community to feel like their opinions matter to the athletic program and that they are connected and welcome there. This survey is focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of BCS athletics, and these findings will be used to guide district initiatives and efforts. In fact, the district athletic director will use these survey findings in his development of a BCS plan for athletic improvement.

F5. Athletic Directors Reinstated

The position of Athletic Director has been reinstated at the district and local school levels.

Five years ago, the BCS Athletic Director (AD) position was dissolved at the local school level. This year, the district has reinstated school level ADs who will have the significant responsibility of increasing continuity between the BCS high school and middle school athletic programs. The local school principals, middle school ADs, and high school ADs will collaborate to ensure that the athletic programs from each school are comparable. The district AD will coordinate the strength and conditioning programs, oversee the nutrition programs, and monitor student eligibility. The district AD will also work to provide promising juniors and seniors with post-high school athletic opportunities by cultivating relationships with college and universities and monitoring student performance. The district is investigating technology that can make district efforts like training more efficient. BCS is placing a renewed emphasis on the recruitment, retention, and professional development of coaches.

GOAL | BUILD AND MAINTAIN PREMIERE EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

H5. Capital Improvement Plan

BCS is currently renovating or constructing around 30 buildings across the district.

In continuation of the work of previous administrations, BCS has almost completed an extensive \$400 million Capital Improvement Program to build and expand around 30 of the district's current schools. Funded by a \$0.01 increase in Jefferson County sales tax, the Capital Improvement Plan promises to create a safer, cleaner, more modern learning environment for our students. This process aims to offer 21st century learning environments in which all students feel secure and valued. As part of this Capital Improvement Program, the district has built interactive classrooms in all of the new and renovated schools so that our children can gain exposure to and experience in the most modern technology. This year, the district has opened 6 newly built and 2 newly-renovated schools [see inset].

This construction is part of the BCS commitment to providing students with learning environments of the highest quality. district leadership intends for these new facilities to provide a positive atmosphere in which students can learn and staff can work. These new buildings should also decrease energy use and reduce costs.

BCS Capital Improvement Plan Newly-Built Schools

*Parker High School
Jones Valley K-8 School
West End Academy
Bush Hills Academy
Henry Jefferson Oliver
Elementary School
Huffman Academy*

BCS Capital Improvement Plan Newly-Renovated Schools

*Ramsay High School
Inglenook K-8 School*

I5. Utilities Audits

Last year, BCS partnered with Energen to assess the district's natural gas use, and this year BCS is partnering with Alabama Power to assess electricity use.

Last year, BCS worked with Energen to identify and address the 15 most costly BCS sites in terms of natural gas use. As a result of this assessment, BCS set temperature points for all buildings and classrooms across the district. The unified temperature settings will help leadership monitor utilities costs and identify more facility inefficiencies. This year, BCS is working with Alabama Power to identify the buildings with the highest power use and to implement appropriate changes to address inefficiencies. District leadership has been replacing out-dated equipment to make the facilities more fuel efficient and inexpensive. Water is also being strictly monitored, but it should be noted that BCS' Child Nutrition Program legitimately uses a significant amount of water.

J5. Head Custodian Training

Head custodians are receiving training on staff management and collaboration with principals.

To ensure that schools are kept clean in a staff- and cost-efficient way, district leadership has been providing training to head custodians in each school. These trainings focus on task delegation, tactics for building consensus among staff, and collaborating with principals. A significant portion of this training teaches custodians how to monitor and anticipate work that needs to be done. Skills within this training focus on making a cleaning plan and conducting an assessment of a school. Head custodians are also encouraged to use environmentally friendly cleaning supplies.

K5. Technology Refresh

BCS has updated all technology systems and computers throughout the district.

As of 3 years ago, BCS district technology had not been updated in 12 years. When the district began its Technology Refresh in 2008, District leadership first conducted a technology assessment. BCS partnered with Dell, which came to the District to assess department strengths and weaknesses. From these findings, the district drafted a Technology Refresh Plan. Phase I of the plan moved BCS to a system-wide print management program that has reduced costs, increased monitoring, and decreased repair time. Phase II, which has been completed, involved a refresh of all computers in the BCS district and a general updating of technological infrastructure. During Phase III, which the district is currently implementing, the district has been placing interactive classrooms in all schools renovated or built through the Capital Improvement project within the past 2 years. The district is currently devising a plan to retrofit those classrooms that have been renovated within the past 2 years with interactive technology.

As part of the ongoing technology update, the district has transitioned to a high-speed fiber, with speeds in excess of 100 MB. This should provide more than appropriate bandwidth for the district's needs. The district has also increased storage space. BCS has virtualized its Information Management System (IMS), which allows more information to be stored on smaller servers. This project has just been completed after a 2-year process. The district has also begun a Disaster Recovery Update, which will be implemented this year. This program will back up all employee information and student data in the event of a catastrophic emergency.

L5. Building Use Outside of School

BCS wants to make sure the district is appropriately compensated when buildings are used outside of school.

BCS facilities offer very attractive meeting and activity venues, and BCS is happy to offer members of the community the opportunity to use these buildings; however, BCS must be mindful of expenses associated with building use. District leadership is now ensuring that people who use the facilities are charged an appropriate amount to capture utility, personnel, and maintenance costs. These prices will be reasonable and available on the website. A new pricing system will be in effect SY 2011-2012.

M5. Transportation Committee

BCS has developed a Transportation Committee to increase collaboration and generate ideas for BCS transportation improvement.

BCS leadership has encouraged the development of a Transportation Committee, which is comprised of transportation staff and the district's Chief of Operations. This committee increases communication between district leadership and the transportation staff, decreasing silos and encouraging collaboration. In this committee, drivers are encouraged to air their concerns and problems. They are also encouraged to develop concepts that will improve the BCS transportation system. This committee has been very well-received, and many successful initiatives have resulted from its formation.

N5. Compressed Natural Gas Buses

To decrease its carbon footprint, BCS is piloting six compressed natural gas (CNG) buses this year.

BCS remains committed to the environment and decreasing its carbon footprint, and this year, the district becomes the first school district in the state of Alabama to use CNG buses. CNG buses offer a more environmentally clean alternative to gasoline or diesel, and in the event of a spill they are also much safer than other forms of fuel. This year, BCS is piloting six buses in the district as drivers and maintenance staff sort through the differences between diesel and CNG. BCS partnered with Lawson State Community College to train all district mechanics in CNG bus repair, and some BCS mechanics will receive inspector training.

O5. Transportation Efficiency

BCS continues to implement initiatives that increase transportation efficiency and decrease cost.

BCS is currently implementing the computerized software system EduLog, which coordinates school system transportation to decrease costs and increase efficiency. This software will be particularly useful when coordinating class field trips and sports trips, and it will ensure that buses are available for trips when needed. Staff will receive training in the software during the first half of this year, and the district will fully shift from the old system, Toms, to EduLog at the beginning of second semester. These efforts will also inform the district on ways to reduce Special Education transportation costs which are currently higher than the state average.

The district has also placed GPS in system buses, which will help monitor the movement of buses and increase the efficiency of their routes. The devices will also help district monitor bus idle time so fuel costs can be decreased.

P5. Technological Advancements

BCS is using technology to increase operational efficiency and reduce costs.

Throughout BCS facilities operations, technology has been incorporated to enhance efficiency and limit costs. For instance, BCS uses computerized software to inventory maintenance problems and generate work orders for custodians so that problems do not go unaddressed. BCS has also placed GPS in each of the more than 100 BCS maintenance vehicles which help to generate the most efficient routes between work orders, limiting fuel costs and man hours. All foremen have been given laptops, because many of the problems that they are called to address require a computer to diagnose and treat the problem.

GOAL | CREATE PHYSICAL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS THAT ENSURE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THE STUDENTS AND THE CARE OF THE EARTH'S NATURAL RESOURCES

Q5. Security Audit for All Facilities

BCS is conducting a safety audit throughout the district that focuses on transportation security, facilities security, and staff security.

Appropriate safety and security measures should be in place for all facilities throughout the BCS district. Last spring, the BCS Safety Review Team began conducting an audit of all facilities, their safety plans and procedures, and a survey of the physical plans and properties to assess compliance with appropriate safety standards. Three teams have been created to assess safety in BCS. These teams are:

1. *Transportation*: This team will assess safety in morning and afternoon pedestrian traffic around the schools, the bus routines and procedures, and the student drop-off and pick-up traffic and procedures
2. *Facilities*: This team will investigate whether each facility has the appropriate number and placement of fire extinguishers and cameras. The team will make sure that cameras cover all parts of the facility. The team will also assess exit patterns in the event of an emergency and will make sure they are compliant with National Incident Management (NIM) regulations.
3. *Security Staff*: This team will ensure that principals and building administrators have taken the mandatory online National Incident Management System (NIMS) course. The team will also conduct another NIMS training course so that people better understand emergency procedures and protocols.

Upon completion of this audit, the district will launch a District-Wide Safety Plan that will include recommendations from the safety audit findings.

R5. Partnership with the Birmingham Police Department

BCS will continue to develop its partnership with the Birmingham Police Department (BPD) to ensure a positive academic environment for all BCS schools.

BCS is continuing to partner and work with BPD to support safe and nurturing school efforts across the school system. One way this partnership will manifest is through BPD professional development that is specifically focused on BCS. The district will continue its collaboration between the BCS Security Department and the BPD before and after school hours as well.

S5. Energy Management

To improve district efficiency, BCS has implemented an energy management program.

BCS has implemented an energy management program that implements industry standards and best practices in facilities management. Efforts include environmental temperature set points, preventative programming HVAC maintenance and utility fee monitoring and analysis. Current efforts to date have resulted in approximately \$300,000 in savings in this current fiscal year.

Next Steps

T5. Efficient Service Delivery

To improve service delivery, BCS plans to review its departments to identify and strengthen areas that are not operating at full efficiency.

BCS wants to ensure that all levels of its service delivery are functioning at the highest capacity possible, so soon the district will be identifying those areas that appear to be operating below capacity. For example, leadership will be monitoring equipment to see if any particular machines break more frequently than others, leading to unnecessary and costly delays in service. The district will also monitor the average time for work order completions to learn whether certain departments need additional training or whether certain equipment needs replacing. By identifying areas of weakness, the district will continue to pursue its goal of becoming proactive about stopping problems before they start, and everyone in the district will benefit from improved service delivery.

U5. Smile Campaign

To make the cafeterias and the buses a more inviting place for students, the district plans to implement a “Smile Campaign” for all relevant staff.

The district is investigating implementation of a “Smile Campaign” for staff in the Child Nutrition and Transportation departments. The day begins and ends with the BCS transportation team. The Smile Campaign for bus drivers to ensure that every child is greeted with a smile when he or she climbs onto the bus in the morning or departs the bus in the afternoon. The District Smile Campaign will encourage a positive dining environment in the lunchrooms so that each student and staff will be served food with a friendly smile. Buses and lunchrooms should be supportive areas for healthy social interaction, and BCS staff can help to make this a reality. By having a generally approachable and positive demeanor with students and staff, Child Nutrition and Transportation staff can further cultivate a nurturing environment throughout BCS. District leadership intends to build staff buy-in for the campaign to ensure its success. This campaign will be a part of the customer service emphasis at the City Schools.

LOOKING FORWARD

Birmingham is a city of extraordinary people. It is a city of scientists, doctors, bankers, skilled trades, inventors, preachers, writers, and performers. We count among our citizens a former Supreme Court Justice and the first African American woman to hold the position of Secretary of State. Our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents built the iron and steel industry that provided the infrastructure for America's Industrial Revolution and supported our troops through two World Wars. Birmingham has been counted among the nation's leading banking and construction centers. Our people are the world's heroes and heroines – sung and unsung – of the Civil Rights Movement that changed not only a nation for the better, but an entire globe. Our citizens are proudly numbered among the legends of sports and jazz. Any class reunion of Birmingham's High Schools –be it at A.H. Parker High School, George Washington Carver High School, Huffman High School, P.D. Jackson-Olin High School, Ramsay High School, Wenonah High School, or Woodlawn High School– draws a wide collection of educated, successful citizens of the world to the place they still call home. We have every reason to believe our children can do anything, because our people already have succeeded at everything.

At Birmingham City Schools – our Board, our Administration, teachers, and staff – this is our creed: *Every child can succeed*. That is our commitment to our students, our parents, and our community. But this can only become the reality we know it can be if we work together in that common purpose.

As demonstrated by this Status and Vision Report, we have begun. The outlines of how we will accomplish our vision are becoming clearer. As we all know, there is hard work ahead to fill in that outline with solid, replicable successes. To do so, we must remain focused on those plans and activities that provide the most opportunity for our students.

Above all, we must work together. That means we must communicate with each other, measure our progress, and hold each other accountable – and we welcome that – knowing that, together, we can develop the extraordinary citizens of tomorrow – our children.