

# 2011



E<sup>2</sup>: ECONOMICS & EDUCATION

## Action Plan for Education & Workforce Development



*Sponsored by the  
Henry County  
Chamber of Commerce  
and the Henry County  
Board of Education*



## Table of Contents

<a href="#">Executive Summary</a> .....	2
<a href="#">Task Force Members</a> .....	5
<a href="#">Goal 1: Increase the High School Graduation Rate</a> .....	6
<a href="#">Goal 2: Improve Academic Rank Among Top Georgia School Systems</a> .....	10
<a href="#">Goal 3: Secure a Technical College / Increase Dual Enrollment</a> .....	15
<a href="#">Goal 4: Become a Certified Work Ready Community</a> .....	20
<a href="#">Goal 5: Improve School Readiness</a> .....	23
<a href="#">Appendix</a> .....	26

## Executive Summary

The Henry County Chamber of Commerce recognizes that the success of local educational institutions, public and private, and pre-K through college, is a significant factor affecting the community's economic and social prosperity. There is a strong correlation between the level of educational attainment and the rate of employment and earning potential. Moreover, communities that support high-quality educational opportunities for their residents are more likely to attract and retain businesses. The cost-benefit analysis of educational investment clearly points to the mutual value of school, family and community partnerships that advance education and workforce development.

With this in mind, participants of the 2010 Henry County Intergovernmental Retreat commissioned a task force to study and develop recommendations that, if embraced by our entire community, would push what is already a good public school system over the top to become a great public school system. The task force, composed of over 100 Henry County community stakeholders, is called E<sup>2</sup>: The Economics & Education Task Force.

The Henry County community understands that our students are our neighbors, family members, and fellow community members, and that they will become our co-workers, employees, and employers in the future. For the continuing economic success of Henry County, it is important that we recognize the need for a strong education system, and that we work together to support our students and our schools.

### Education and Workforce Development Goals

As a result of the 2010 Henry County Intergovernmental Retreat, the following education and workforce development goals were adopted:

1. Increase the High School Graduation Rate
2. Improve Academic Rank Among Top Georgia School Systems
3. Secure a Technical College / Increase Dual Enrollment
4. Become a Certified Work Ready Community
5. Improve School Readiness

### Work Team Organization and Charge

Work teams were organized for the five education and workforce development goals, along with one additional work team for public relations. This provided an opportunity for the community to work together to advance student success through efforts that are outside the direct influence of schools alone. Work teams researched assigned goals and identified specific strategies for the ways in which the *community*, *parents*, and *schools* can help achieve those goals. In addition, the public relations team assisted with identifying potential marketing strategies.

## Measures of Success

Measures & Targets	2011 Baseline	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021
<b>Goal 1: Increase Graduation Rate</b> *Based on current calculation formula	82% (2010)	86%	89%	93%	96%	100%
<b>Goal 2: Improve Academic Rank</b>						
<b>Reading, Grade 3</b> % Meet/Exceed CRCT Standards	95%	97%	98%	99%	100%	100%
<b>Language Arts, Grade 3</b> % Meet/Exceed CRCT Standards	92%	94%	96%	98%	100%	100%
<b>Math, Grade 3</b> % Meet/Exceed CRCT Standards	84%	87%	90%	92%	94%	96%
<b>Math, Grade 8</b> % Meet/Exceed CRCT Standards	80%	84%	88%	92%	96%	100%
<b>SAT</b> District Average (verbal+math+writing)	1417 (2010)	1440	1460	1480	1500	1525
<b>ACT</b> District Average (composite score)	19.7 (2010)	20.0	21.0	22.0	23.0	24.0
<b>Goal 3: Increase Dual Enrollment</b> Participation Rate	2%	5%	10%	20%	30%	45%
<b>Goal 4: Become Work Ready Community</b> # Industries w/ WR Certification	-	15	20	30	40	50
<b>Goal 5: Improve School Readiness</b> % Early Intervention Program-Reading	15%	13%	11%	9%	7%	5%

\*Beginning in 2011-12, Georgia will transition to a new federal formula for calculating graduation rates. As a result, the graduation rate baseline data and performance targets are subject to change.

## Summary of Work Team Recommendations

### Goal 1: Increase the High School Graduation Rate

*Strategy 1: Continue and Support the Graduation Coach Program*

*Strategy 2: Enhance and Expand Mentoring in the Community*

*Strategy 3: Increase Parental Engagement*

### Goal 2: Improve Academic Rank Among Top Georgia School Systems

*Strategy 1: Make Literacy and Reading Proficiency a Priority Focus of Schools, Homes, and the Community*

*Strategy 2: Enhance Community-Based After-School and Summer Learning Opportunities in Reading and Math*

*Strategy 3: Educate Students and Families about Options and Resources that Support Student Performance on ACT and SAT College Entrance Exams*

### Goal 3: Increase Dual Enrollment

*Strategy 1: Promote Greater Awareness and Understanding of Dual Enrollment and Other Opportunities to Earn College Credit While in High School*

*Strategy 2: Survey the Local Business Community to Identify the Technical and Academic Skills and Educational Credentials Needed in the Workplace*

*Strategy 3: Identify and Address Barriers that Limit Access and Participation*

### Goal 4: Become a Certified Work Ready Community

*Strategy 1: Promote Greater Awareness of the Certified Work Ready Program Among Local Companies and Government Agencies*

*Strategy 2: Communicate the Value and Advantages of Earning Certified Work Ready Credentials and of Hiring Certified Work Ready Candidates*

### Goal 5: Improve School Readiness

*Strategy 1: Develop Parent-Friendly, Research-Based Guidelines for School Readiness*

*Strategy 2: Expand Community Access to School Readiness Resources and Supports*

*Strategy 3: Develop Henry County School Readiness Standards for Early Learning/Day Care Providers*

*Strategy 4: Establish Best Practices for Elementary Schools to Support School Readiness*

## Task Force Members

### E<sup>2</sup> Steering Committee

Co-Chairs: Brian Preston & June Wood

Mayor R.W. Coley Mayor Billy Copeland Lindy Farmer Dr. Ethan Hildreth Mayor Lorene Lindsey	Vicki Loper BOC Chairman BJ Mathis Sheriff Keith McBrayer Taylor Rice	Charlie Scott Mayor Lee Stuart Rep. Andy Welch Tony Pickett, Staff Kay Pippin, Staff
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### E<sup>2</sup> Work Teams

Graduation Rate	Academic Rank	Tech College/Dual Enroll
John Fish, Chair Herschel Arant, Staff Greg Benton, Staff Cheryl Carter, Staff Eugene Edwards Bob Kolar Shane Persaud James Radford Adam Stanfield	Taifa Butler, Co-Chair Jennifer Christman, Co-Chair Michael Harris, Staff Karen Waldon, Staff Gabe Cerie Debbie Towson David Mann Jay Dockweiler Anthony Ford Mike Griffin Julie Griffin Daniela Marzahl	Debra Howell, Co-Chair Danny Stone, Co-Chair Bob White, Staff Rodney Bowler, Staff Dan DeWolf, Staff Fred Auletta Anita Richardson Kevin Demmitt Marshall Chambers Tracy Lehrer Jeff Benzon Tommy Kennedy Jeff Mills Susan Heredia Charles Woodroof John Uessler Sharon Bonner Brad Jester Bill Walden Bill Hagans
Work Ready	School Readiness	Public Relations
Kevin Smith, Chair Leah Brown, Staff John Uessler, Staff Sharon Bonner, Staff Erik Wantland Maribeth Ledford Arley Lowe Kathy Gilbert Susan Crumbley Steve Hendrix Jo Simon	Daryl Dotschay, Chair Philip Mellor, Staff Cathy Adams Natisha Evans Beth Healy Dorothy Herzberg Melissa Malcom Joyce Rodgers Lynda Smith Dr. Natasha Griffin Careshia Moore Robin Jones Marlene McKee Dr. Sandra Moore	Donna Braddy, Chair Julie Hoover-Ernst, Staff Valerie Suessmith, Staff Tony Pickett, Staff Laura Turner Desmond Thornton Randy Greene Lisa Kinchen Heather Anglyn April Pair Michelle Nunnally Rodney Christopher Angel Rollins

**GOAL 1: Increase the High School Graduation Rate**

**OVERVIEW**

Statistics demonstrate that education pays in terms of higher earnings and lower unemployment rates. A recent report by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that in 2010:

- College graduates earned 57% more than individuals who did not complete high school.
- High school graduates earned 29% more than their peers who did not graduate.
- The unemployment rate for those with a high school diploma was 10.3%, while the unemployment rate for those without a high school diploma was 14.9%.
- The unemployment rate was 45% higher for those who did not graduate from high school than for those who did.

For the state of Georgia, the economic impact of high school non-completion has been estimated as high as \$18 billion dollars in a single year.

In 2010 the graduation rate for Henry County Schools was 82.3%, and the state average was 80.8%. Both the district and the state have seen steady gains in graduation rates over the past decade. Though the upward trend is encouraging, the fact that 17% of Henry County's youth are not completing high school cannot be overlooked.

Finally, it is important to note that the State of Georgia will transition to a new formula for calculating the graduation rate with the 2011-12 academic year. This transition is mandated by federal "No Child Left Behind" statutes. The primary change in the calculation is related to a requirement for students to graduate within four years of starting the 9<sup>th</sup> grade to be counted as a graduate in the formula. This is a departure from the current calculation that places no time restriction on graduation. Consequently, high school graduation rates are expected to decline. For the 2010-11 academic year, the state will publish graduation rates calculated with both the old and new formulas to allow some understanding of the impact of this transition.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The work team was tasked with identifying recommendations for increasing the graduation rate of Henry County students. Central to this task was the need to understand which students are not graduating and the predominant hurdles to their academic success. With an understanding of these issues, the work team identified three key strategies for removing obstacles that impede student success in school.

**Strategy 1:**  
**Continue and Support the Graduation Coach Program**

The graduation coach is a staff member at each middle and high school who is responsible for working with students at risk of not graduating. These educators work with teachers, counselors, and principals to identify students who are struggling in some aspect of their school experience. Poor grades and low test scores are often the symptoms of a student's needs that can range from basic organizational skills to traumatic family issues. Whatever the need, the graduation coach is the person tasked with developing a plan of support for each student and for monitoring their progress. This is, no doubt, a daunting task but one of vital importance to many students.

Objectives & Tactics

- Obtain input from graduation coaches regarding programmatic and resource needs, and develop a framework of community resources that could enhance the graduation coach program. This should be an ongoing collaboration, not just a one-time event.
- Provide work-based learning opportunities for students. Work-based learning can be an important support strategy for some students.
- Help graduation coaches acquire information about the educational requirements of particular careers, industries, and businesses, as well as the practical application of academic content.
- Encourage community/employer support for both volunteer participation and parental engagement (time away from work) with the graduation coach program.
- Find ways to bring the graduation coach to parents who may be unable to attend meetings due to transportation and/or scheduling issues.

**Strategy 2:**  
**Enhance and Expand Mentoring in the Community**

The Henry County Chamber of Commerce has a mentoring program available to the community. This program is well organized and quite successful, but it needs more mentors to fulfill the needs of the schools in our community (i.e. academic tutoring, social skills, organizational skills, etc.).

Objectives & Tactics

- Renew the focus on recruiting mentors and matching resources to specific needs in each school. The recruiting process must target qualified mentors and also ensure new mentors realize they are making a long-term commitment because unstable mentoring relationships can be detrimental to students.

- Engage long-standing, stable organizations throughout the community to be responsible for recruiting/providing mentors (i.e. Rotary, Kiwanis, churches, businesses, etc.). With adequate resources organizations could be assigned to each school cluster.
- Further study the possible use of youth mentors (high school students to mentor middle school students, recent graduates to mentor high school students). An interview with an individual participating in the Henry Horizons program indicated a willingness to take advice from an older student rather than adults.
- In anticipation of limited mentoring resources, the initial focus of the program should be in the middle schools. Based on a survey of principals, there is an average need of 10 mentors for each middle school (for a total of 110 mentors).
- To further refine priorities, initially deploy mentors in the sixth grade among the school clusters having the lowest graduation rates. This plan should match mentoring resources with schools and students that most need assistance. As resources grow, more schools, grade levels, and students can be included.

### **Strategy 3: Increase Parental Engagement**

There is consensus throughout the education community that more, meaningful involvement of parents in the education process will result in better educated students. There are a number of challenges in engaging parents, including work schedules, transportation, apathy, etc. These issues must be overcome in order to reach the goals of this initiative.

#### Objectives & Tactics

- **Catch them in Kindergarten:** Engage parents when their children are first enrolled in Kindergarten. The concept is based upon the observation by educators that parents are typically very interested in a child's Kindergarten experience, but such interest often wanes as the child progresses through the elementary, middle, and high school years. Simply put, "Catch Them in Kindergarten" is the idea of focusing on parents when they first walk in the door of the elementary school so the school staff can build a strong and lasting partnership to offer long-term support to students.
- **Develop a K-12 roadmap of parental responsibilities to ensure student success:** This roadmap ("how to concepts") would provide practical information for parents to use in support of their children with the K-12 academic experience. Information may include learning objectives and milestones; recommendations for after-school activities (i.e. grade appropriate study habits, parental support roles, etc.); recommendations to avoid student regression during the summer break; and, guidance for other key aspects of the school experience, such as developing organizational skills.

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- **“What Every Parent Wants to Know” Workshops:** These workshops would be led by parents and school administrators. The sessions would be designed to answer common questions, but also to impress upon parents the importance of their role in education. One such example is to provide parents with basic information and skills to ensure an understanding of student progress reports and report cards so they can be effective supporters and advocates for their child’s education.
- **Redefine the common notion of parental engagement:** Parents are sometimes discouraged because they cannot be at school events due to work schedules, transportation issues, or other family needs. The concept of redefining parental engagement is to clearly convey that parents should, first and foremost, be engaged with a child’s education through regular communication with both their child and their child’s teacher(s). Parents need to know that they do not necessarily have to be physically present at the school to be engaged.

## MARKETING

### Objectives & Tactics

- Publicize the economic impact and importance of increased graduation rates, as well as the role and value of graduation coaches.
- Promote the importance of a strong mentoring program. Identify and recruit additional community resources for mentoring students (i.e. Kiwanis, Rotary, religious organizations, recent graduates, etc.). Encourage sharing of mentors by school clusters.
- Develop an advertising campaign to promote the numerous benefits to the student, the employer and the community as a whole. Advertise in the Henry Daily Herald, Henry Times, Henry Neighbor, H Magazine, school newsletters, Henry TV14, SCB-TV and SBN-TV, Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites.
- Re-energize the Chamber-sponsored Executive Partners Program (principal partnered with a local executive).
- Create a parent-friendly "roadmap" of academic milestones and suggested parental responsibilities to help achieve identified milestones.
- Host Parent Universities at HCBOE or at schools and videotape sessions to post to website, YouTube, Facebook and emails for parents to view at a later time. Promote Parent University through news media, school website, and other tools. Use school media classes to produce videos.
- Implement a tracking system for social media usage and video viewership with the intent to increase these numbers.

**GOAL 2: Improve Academic Rank Among Top Georgia School Systems**

**OVERVIEW**

With over 40,000 students enrolled, Henry County Schools is the 7<sup>th</sup> largest school system in Georgia and the 156<sup>th</sup> largest in the nation. The district is generally recognized as being a very good school system that delivers a high level of educational productivity. The system consistently ranks below the state average in expenditures while exceeding the state average in measures of student achievement. However, the shared vision of school and community stakeholders is for Henry County Schools to be recognized as a *GREAT* school system. To fulfill this vision, schools and their partners must pursue even higher levels of performance on critical indicators of academic success.

It should be noted that the goal of improving academic rank among top Georgia school systems is interconnected with the E<sup>2</sup> goals of improving school readiness, increasing dual enrollment, and increasing the graduation rate. A focused and comprehensive approach that starts early and creates a continuum of support for students through high school graduation and beyond, and engages families and the community together, has the best chance of assuring Henry County's place among the best school districts in the state and nation.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Strategy 1:**

**Make Literacy and Reading Proficiency a Priority Focus of Schools, Homes, and the Community**

Reading on grade level is a critical predictor of academic success. Children who don't "learn to read" by third grade may not be able to "read to learn" in fourth grade and beyond. Success in coursework like math, science, and social studies requires proficient reading skills. Poor readers who enter middle school are more likely to fail courses and eventually drop out of school. For children to become strong readers, they need a literacy-rich environment. Ideally, parents and caregivers surround children at an early age with books, use the local library regularly, and read to them daily.

Objectives & Tactics

- Educate families and community partners about the importance of reading proficiency and how they can support efforts to help every child in Henry County read on grade-level by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
  - Host Reading Rallies, Literacy Days, and Reading Fairs in local neighborhoods to promote reading, and provide books, strategies and ideas to keep children reading.

- Promote Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) program throughout the community to encourage literacy and reading by adults and children.
  - Encourage community businesses and agencies to target outreach to schools or clusters with a high number of striving readers.
  - Partner with faith-based organizations to encourage promotion of reading.
  - Publicize importance of reading proficiency on all communications channels (web sites, community cable access stations, local newspaper).
  - Schools share data and information on reading efforts with community, including tips and best practices in improving reading proficiency.
  - Schools continue to provide reading intervention programs and standards-based curricula that will improve student reading skills.
  - Create community literacy teams to support schools that identify needs and request assistance.
  - Establish “Family Reading Nights” and/or “No TV” Nights to promote and encourage reading at home.
- Build a literacy-rich environment in the home, school, and community that encourages and promotes reading, provides greater access to books for every child, and engages the community in efforts to promote reading.

### Target Group: Birth to Age Five

- Get every child from birth to five enrolled in Henry Ferst to receive books at home for their first five years so as to enable parents to begin early the habit of reading to their children.
- Identify the number of children un-served by the Ferst Foundation of Henry County.
- Partner with Reach Out and Read to provide families greater access to books.

### Target Group: Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

- Schools partner with the public library system to facilitate getting library cards to every child in grades K - 3. Organize trips to libraries to build awareness and encourage usage. Provide teacher incentives for increased library card enrollment and access.
- Engage parents in supporting school-based/classroom efforts to improve reading time with children. (For example: reading together at home, volunteering to read in classroom).

Target Group: Community Partners

- Encourage investment in the Henry County Public Library System and its rich, literacy-based programming that is a critical resource in promoting reading proficiency in all students.
- Support the school-based Accelerated Reader (AR) program by providing high-quality/high-end incentives and prizes for students to reach AR reading goals.
- Develop and support “satellite libraries” to increase access to books for students who have barriers to reaching public libraries (churches, apartment complexes, community centers, etc.).
- Encourage Partners-in-Education sponsors to provide books and other reading resources for classrooms, school media center centers, and community libraries.
- Encourage Henry County businesses to sponsor and create “book nooks” to encourage reading for children who come into the workplace.
- Promote school libraries as a place for families to engage in reading activities.

**Strategy 2:**

**Enhance Community-Based After-School and Summer Learning Opportunities in Reading and Math**

Much has been written about the educational benefits of extending the school day and school year. In Georgia, schools operate on a 180 day school year, and funding for extended learning time is limited. Research shows that summer learning loss can be a significant barrier to academic success for students, especially among low-income students. Consequently, there exists a need to develop community-based learning opportunities to maximize student achievement.

Objectives & Tactics

- Develop a community campaign that will influence the culture, climate, and community perception about the importance of reading, math, and extended learning time.
- Partner with the Henry County Parks and Recreation Department and other service providers to incorporate reading and math enrichment in their programming.
- Encourage greater access, exposure, and financial support of Henry County Public Library summer reading programs. Promote access to satellite libraries during out-of-school time, especially the summer break.
- Partner with the school system to ensure that enrichment programs incorporate reading standards and supports.

- Create community-based incentive programs to encourage reading over the summer for Henry students.
- Make school space available for after-school and summer programs that focus on academic enrichment.
- Develop tools and resources to help parents and families improve reading skills during out-of-school time (for example, encourage non-fiction reading).
- Partner with the school system to bring 21st Century Community Learning Centers to Henry County. This program supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours.
- Write grants to seek additional funds to support reading enrichment programming.
- Build partnerships with businesses that have a specific focus on literacy (Dollar General, Target, Wal-Mart).
- Promote the donation of books to classrooms and libraries. Target resources to schools or clusters with the greatest need for assistance.
- Identify ways to support tutoring efforts in schools.

### **Strategy 3:**

#### **Educate Students and Families about Options and Resources that Support Student Performance on ACT and SAT College Entrance Exams**

Georgia's overall performance and rank on the country's two college entrance exams, the ACT and the SAT, has historically been low. In 2010, Georgia ranked 48 out of 50 states and the District of Columbia, with an average score of 1453 on the SAT, seven points down from 2009. Though scores are among the lowest in the 50 states, Georgia had the eighth-highest participation rate - 74%. Henry County Schools also has seen an increase in the number of students taking the test. In 2010, Henry County students scored 1394, well below the state average.

#### Objectives & Tactics

- Begin forums on college and workforce readiness in middle school.
- Increase awareness among students and parents about the differences of the ACT and SAT exams.
- Identify and replicate the best practices of schools that are leaders in ACT/SAT performance.
- Increase community-based programs that support tutoring and test preparation for at-risk students.

## MARKETING

### Objectives & Tactics

- Market the importance of reading and math. Collaborate with the Ferst Foundation, Reach Out and Read, and Summer Library Reading Program, etc. to promote learning opportunities for children in math and reading.
- Market the summer learning opportunities available through Henry County Parks & Recreation, Henry County Library, Mercer College for Kids, and other reading/math programs that are available throughout the county.
- Promote community-wide events targeting reading and math such as Neighborhood Reading Nights or Reading Rallies. Work with city governments to issue official proclamations of “Read Out Loud Day.”
- Develop a communication plan regarding preparation for college entrance exams.
- Develop strategies for maximizing exposure in publications such as the “Top Schools” issue in *Atlanta Magazine*.
- Promote milestones achieved along the way by individual schools and the district.

**GOAL 3: Secure a Technical College / Increase Dual Enrollment**

**OVERVIEW**

The work team for Goal 3 was charged with addressing two related goals: 1) secure approval and initial funding for development of a technical college in Henry County; and, 2) develop strategies for increasing student participation in dual enrollment.

The 2011 Georgia General Assembly allocated funds for the construction of a Henry County campus of Southern Crescent Technical College. Though there is still work to be done in bringing this goal to fruition, the initial task has been achieved. The work team applauds all who have been a part of this strategic initiative! There is no doubt that having Southern Crescent Technical College located next door to Henry County High School will enhance the education and workforce development options for both youth and adults.

Dual enrollment refers to the opportunity for students to enroll in college classes while still in high school. High school students who participate in college level courses engage more quickly in learning at a higher level, develop a greater sense of the relevance of their academic program, and have higher graduation rates than their counterparts.

It should be noted that there are two other methods by which high school students can earn college credits. One such avenue is through participation in Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and the other is through participation in courses containing an "articulation agreement" with a local college. Henry County Schools is committed to using all such methods to address the overarching goal of increasing student participation in college level coursework.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Strategy 1:**

**Promote Greater Awareness and Understanding of Dual Enrollment and Other Opportunities to Earn College Credit While in High School**

There appears to be a communication disconnect on dual enrollment. Parents and students may not be aware of the program and school personnel may be reluctant to push students towards dual enrollment options because of uncertainty over academic requirements, the differences and similarities between dual enrollment and Advanced Placement courses, funding issues, and strategic priorities. By providing a clear message of the benefits and requirements of dual enrollment to parents, students, schools, and the business community, the number of students who participate in dual enrollment will increase.

Objectives & Tactics

- Develop and distribute informational materials regarding the benefits of dual enrollment programs to ensure parents, students, teachers and counselors are well informed.
  - Use state DOE marketing materials as appropriate.
  - Post-secondary representatives and school system staff collaborate to create a design, slogan, and information format for posters.
  - Display posters about dual enrollment in counselors' offices and in school hallways.
  - Compare and contrast dual enrollment and AP programs.
  - Use middle school, high school and district websites to explain dual enrollment.
- Present information about dual enrollment opportunities at fall Open Houses and other parent/student meetings throughout the school year.
  - Dual enrollment programs available for students.
  - Benefits of dual enrollment for students and parents.
  - Funding sources available to parents (HOPE, ACCEL).
  - Emphasize the financial benefit to students and parents.
  - Entrance requirements and preparation.
  - Materials to market dual enrollment to middle school students/parents.
- Make dual enrollment a priority topic in school system internal communications.
  - Discuss in meetings with principals, counselors, and graduation coaches.
  - Discuss funding, BRIDGE Bill requirements, E<sup>2</sup> recommendations, and benefits to students, parents, and the community.
  - Develop a process for identifying students who may benefit and qualify for dual enrollment based on career paths.
  - Review school system policies to ensure there are no barriers to limit student participation.

- Ensure student advisement sessions with school counselors include a review of the opportunities and benefits of dual enrollment, AP, and articulated courses for college credit.
  - Emphasize the need for students to focus on pathway completion.
  - Annually review individual graduation plan to ensure students are on track to graduate college and career ready.
- Develop recognition programs for students who complete dual enrollment courses.
  - Recognition/certificate at school awards programs.
  - Recognition by Chamber of Commerce for dually enrolled students.
  - Dual enrollment students receive a cord to wear at graduation ceremony.
  - Business/Industry recognition of students.
- Advocate for ongoing funding of dual enrollment to ensure sustainability.
  - Contact legislators to advocate for continued funding of the dual enrollment and HOPE programs.

### **Strategy 2:**

#### **Survey the Local Business Community to Identify the Technical and Academic Skills and Educational Credentials Needed in the Workplace**

By identifying the skills and credentials desired by the business community, local schools and colleges will be able to create more real life/relevant learning and work experiences that prepare students to be college and career ready upon graduation. As a result, students will be more likely to recognize a need for postsecondary education related to their career interests, and counselors and mentors will be better prepared to speak about the value of dual enrollment as it relates to specific career paths.

#### Objectives & Tactics

- Generate a survey to be presented to major employers in Henry County.
  - Identify the "must have" technical and academic skills and educational credentials for entry level employment and future advancement.
- Provide survey results to schools, colleges, businesses, and the community.
  - Identify dual enrollment courses that meet the needs of students and business/industry.

- Use information to make appropriate adjustments in high school and college course offerings (including dual enrollment course offerings).
- Use results to strengthen mentoring efforts to promote dual enrollment.

**Strategy 3:  
Identify and Address Barriers that Limit Access and Participation**

The school system and local colleges must continue to work together to develop policies, procedures, and processes that maximize student participation in dual enrollment courses.

Objectives & Tactics

- Develop processes for monitoring student participation and satisfaction with dual enrollment.
- Maximize the availability of on-line dual enrollment course offerings.
- Evaluate the feasibility of on-site dual enrollment course offerings at some or all high schools (in addition to the Academy for Advanced Studies).
- Ensure that policies on college-to-high school grade conversion do not have a negative impact upon student grade point averages and valedictorian/ salutatorian determinations.
- Initiate discussions by school system, college, and business representatives to determine how best to utilize Southern Crescent Technical College to serve students.
- Provide assistance to students in passing college admissions exams.
- Establish metrics for measuring the growth and success of the dual enrollment program.

**MARKETING**

Objectives & Tactics

- Assist Southern Crescent Technical College in promoting the ground-breaking and grand opening of their Henry County campus.
- Develop a comprehensive, unified advertising and public relations campaign to promote dual enrollment programs, including:
  - Advertise in the Henry Daily Herald, Henry Times, Henry Neighbor, 'H' Magazine, school newsletters, Henry TV14, SCB-TV, SBN, and the Atlanta news media.
  - Encourage colleges and technical schools participating in dual enrollment to coordinate media campaigns.

- Establish a website (or pages within the school system and college websites).
- Create posters for display in schools and community.
- Develop brochure to offer to rising high school students, as well as to all 10<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents at orientation.
- Use school video production program to develop a video featuring testimonials from students who have participated in dual enrollment.
- Develop dynamic graphics to use in each of these mediums that display the number of students enrolled in the program, the number of college credits earned, and the corresponding amount of money saved on college education.
- Establish social media site for dually enrolled students to naturally promote the program by posting regularly about their experiences, thereby encouraging a support network of fellow enrolled students.
- Publicly recognize students for their participation in the dual enrollment program.
  - Offer cords to wear at the high school graduation ceremony, specifying a student's dual enrollment status. Identify these students in the graduation program and verbally acknowledge them when calling their name.
  - Establish an event, either separately or as part of the Star Student luncheon, to honor students for their achievements.
  - Create and market "dual enrollment" gear (t-shirts, water bottle, notebooks, etc.).
  - Recognize, in the form of press releases, the school with the largest number of dually enrolled students.
  - Create a Dual Enrollment Day at each of the high schools, where colleges are represented with booths and displays to encourage participation in the program.
  - Encourage partnerships with businesses that have a vested interest in the graduates of the dual enrollment program (i.e. linking hospital with medical programs, etc.).
  - Develop sponsorships with individual businesses by developing a tiered level recognition system (i.e. a 3-Star E<sup>2</sup> partner).

## GOAL 4: Become a Certified Work Ready Community

The primary focus of the “Work Ready Team” has been to ensure Henry County reaches the required number of assessments to be recognized by the state as a Certified Work Ready Community. In addition, the work team established a goal of encouraging at least 50 companies to commit to making "Work Ready" candidates a priority in the hiring process.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Strategy 1:

#### **Promote Greater Awareness of the Certified Work Ready Program Among Local Companies and Government Agencies**

Currently 14 Henry County companies have registered with the State as recognizing and preferring candidates with Work Ready Certificates.

#### Objectives & Tactics

- Continue to inform both small and large private Henry County employers about the benefits of using Work Ready in their hiring process.
- Educate government entities about the benefits of using Work Ready in their hiring process.
- Encourage local government agencies to explore which of their positions can be profiled for Work Ready.
- Add the Work Ready logo to as many communications tools as possible.
- Link government and business web sites to [www.gaworkready.org](http://www.gaworkready.org).
- Include Work Ready brochures in mailings, which may be paid for by a Work Ready Grant once achieving Certified Community status.
- Highlight Work Ready information at Existing Industry, Small Business, and Industry Appreciation events.
- Conduct a Work Ready marketing campaign sending a cover sheet, fact sheet and Work Ready Brochure to companies with more than 100 employees. As appropriate, expand the campaign to employers with 10 to 100 employees.
- Conduct a Work Ready information session at a Small Business/Business Boosters event.

- Promote Work Ready to temporary and staffing companies. They can share Work Ready information with their client companies.
- Once funds are received for achieving Work Ready Community certification, conduct an initial informational direct mail campaign during January-March 2012. Follow up with a phone campaign and a goal of having an informational meeting with a hiring manager. Concurrent with direct mail, conduct a local media blitz targeting employers to consider using Work Ready to “Hire the Best.”
- Train several “Work Ready Ambassadors” to meet with target organizations.
- Encourage E<sup>2</sup> leaders to take the Work Ready Assessment.
- Provide recognition to Work Ready Companies in publications, reports, and websites and by creating a plaque they can display in their lobby or at recruiting events.

**Strategy 2:**

**Communicate the Value and Advantages of Earning Certified Work Ready Credentials and of Hiring Certified Work Ready Candidates**

For Henry County to excel as a Work Ready Community, students and other job seekers with Work Ready Certificates need to see Work Ready’s value in helping them get jobs. Companies may know what Work Ready is, but may be hesitant to change how they hire.

Objectives & Tactics

- Publicly recognize students earning Work Ready certification.
- Solicit testimonials from Work Ready companies on the impact it has made on hiring. Obtain media coverage. Have a Work Ready table at any local Job Fair.
- Provide Work Ready brochures and fact sheets to companies that participate in the school system’s Work-Based Learning program.
- Conduct a personal visit campaign during October, November and December of 2012, following the general information campaign.
- Work Ready Ambassadors bring local company testimonials showing the impact Work Ready has had in Henry County.
- Work Ready Ambassadors explain the profiling process and how to sign up as a Work Ready company.
- Direct employers to the web site about Henry County Work Ready Companies <http://www.gaworkready.org/companies/index/Henry> and encourage them to become Work Ready employers.

## MARKETING

### Objectives & Tactics

- Educate Henry County employers on the function and benefits of integrating Work Ready as part of hiring process.
  - Traditional media outlets – newspaper, radio, TV, direct mail.
  - Train ambassadors to target specific organizations.
  - Niche focused seasonal campaigns (i.e. beginning of school year).
  - Establish a presence at trade shows and industry associations.
  - Annual assessment/update meetings.
- Encourage Henry County employers to participate in enhancing the design and implementation of the Work Ready program.
  - Special recognition for Work Ready employers.
  - Surveys focused on functionality.
  - Identify and market incentives for participation (e.g. possible tax incentive).
  - Work Ready employers engage students at school to establish expectation.
- Increase student/job seeker awareness of Work Ready and its benefits.
  - School counselors – educational session, referral process.
  - Alternative to disciplinary action (students).
  - Special in-school recognition for students who earn Work Ready certification.
  - Distribute information to Department of Labor, Child Support Enforcement, Courts, Jail, and Department of Motor Vehicles.
- Leverage state and county support/involvement in Work Ready program.
  - Market as a prerequisite for business licenses and funding where applicable.
  - Leverage the “celebrity attraction” of the governor at appearance/speeches.
  - Attach to state sponsored events.
  - Profile Henry County Government positions (i.e. Fire, Police).

## GOAL 5: Improve School Readiness

### OVERVIEW

Research shows that early learning experiences influence brain development, which establishes the neural connections that provide the foundation for language, reasoning, problem solving, social skills, behavior, and emotional health. Literacy skills at Kindergarten entry are strong predictors of children's reading abilities throughout their educational careers, and language proficiency is a key predictor of school success. Consequently, there are significant benefits for students who are exposed to high-quality early learning experiences that focus on literacy and language development.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Strategy 1:

#### **Develop Parent-Friendly, Research-Based Guidelines for School Readiness**

Parents in general are unaware of the “school ready” skills their children should have upon entry to Kindergarten. Among those families who choose not to enroll their children in a formal pre-K program, many have a lack of guidelines and materials to help them instruct their own children.

#### Objectives & Tactics

- Create a “School Readiness Educator Collaborative” to engage early learning providers in discussion and professional learning about school readiness.
- Develop a school readiness Community Resource Directory.
- Develop a central website that serves as a source of information and materials on school readiness.
- Create a set of Henry County School Readiness Guidelines and Standards.
- Develop a user-friendly school readiness assessment tool.
- Develop a school readiness tool kit that includes parent activities and materials.
- As appropriate, involve representatives from Bright from the Start, Ferst Foundation, Henry County Library, Henry County Schools Pre-School Diagnostic Team, Kindergarten teachers, and day care providers.

**Strategy 2:**

**Expand Community Access to School Readiness Resources and Supports**

Communication of any initiative is vital. For the task of improving school readiness, it is necessary to identify “intersection” points to target the largest, diverse population of families that can benefit from access to school readiness materials and resources.

Objectives & Tactics

- Target key intersection points of community partners, such as the Health Department, Wal-Mart, pharmacies, churches, apartment complexes, etc., and provide them with school readiness materials and information for distribution to the public.
- Develop a comprehensive marketing plan.
- Engage the assistance of Henry County Schools Title I Parent Involvement Paraprofessionals and Parent Mentors.

**Strategy 3:**

**Develop Henry County School Readiness Standards for Early Learning/Day Care Providers**

Currently there are no identified local standards for defining school readiness.

Objectives & Tactics

- Assemble a panel to develop school readiness standards that represent research-based best practices.
- Create a “School Readiness Seal of Approval” for recognition of early learning providers that implement standards.
- Develop professional learning opportunities for implementation of standards.

**Strategy 4:**

**Establish Best Practices for Elementary Schools to Support School Readiness**

Objectives & Tactics

- Create a set of best practices for the Kindergarten student registration process, including assessment of student readiness and collection of readiness data.
- Provide opportunities for early learning/day care providers to tour schools, observe in Kindergarten classrooms, and collaborate with teachers.

- Host system-wide parent nights that focus on Kindergarten readiness.
- Develop a “Rising K Camp” to promote readiness skills targeting high-need students.

## **MARKETING**

### Objectives & Tactics

- Develop a parent friendly tool kit to include school readiness standards, as well as parent activities, materials, and resources.
- Develop a plan for communication and distribution of the school readiness tool kit.
- Design a marketing plan to promote the school readiness seal of approval.
- Use technological marketing outlets, such as Connect-Ed phone messages, Facebook, and Twitter, to raise awareness about school readiness.

## Appendix

### References

Issue Brief, July 2009, *Seeing is Believing: Promising Practices for How School Districts Promote Family Engagement*, Westmoreland, Rosenberg, Lopez, & Weiss

Issue Brief, January 2011, *Breaking New Ground: Data Systems Transform Family Engagement in Education*, Weiss, Lopez, & Stark

National Policy Forum for Family, School, & Community Engagement  
Beyond Random Acts: Family, School, and Community Engagement as an Integral Part of Education Reform, December 2009, Weiss, Lopez & Rosenberg

### Resources

A Vision for Public Education in Georgia: <http://www.visionforpubliced.org/>

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning: <http://dec.al.ga.gov/>

Communities in Schools of Georgia: <http://www.cisga.org/cisgawpress/>

Georgia Department of Education: <http://www.gadoe.org/>

Governor's Office of Student Achievement: <http://www.gaosa.org/>

Georgia Partnership for Education Excellence: <http://www.gpee.org/>

Georgia Work Ready: <http://gaworkready.org/>

Technical College System of Georgia: <http://www.tcsg.edu/>

University System of Georgia: <http://www.usg.edu/>

*With appreciation to our community partners:*



*For more information, please contact the Office of Superintendent, Henry County Schools (770-957-6601) or President of the Henry County Chamber of Commerce (770-957-5786).*