Henry County Schools

Next Generation Systems Application

Submitted to The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

January 30, 2014
### Next Generation Systems Working Team Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>School/Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaryn Schmuhl</td>
<td>Assistant Superintendent, Learning &amp; Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Carolyn Flemister-Bell</td>
<td>Principal, Hampton Middle School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Brian Blanton</td>
<td>Coordinator of Instructional Technology</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scott Pierce</td>
<td>Director of Technology Services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Karen Perry</td>
<td>Next Gen Systems Project Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosetta Riddle</td>
<td>Coordinator of Professional Learning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Steve Thompson</td>
<td>Coordinator of Personalized Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry Smith</td>
<td>Principal, Luella High School</td>
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### Next Generation Systems Advisory Team Members

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Ethan Hildreth</td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>Central Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greg Benton</td>
<td>Executive Officer, Central Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rodney Bowler</td>
<td>Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services</td>
<td>North Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Raymond Bryant</td>
<td>Executive Officer, North Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shane Persaud</td>
<td>Executive Director, Communities in Schools, Henry</td>
<td>South Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phillip Mellor</td>
<td>Executive Officer, South Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valerie Suessmith</td>
<td>Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Cynthia McCray</td>
<td>Principal, Dutchtown Middle School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Donald Warren</td>
<td>Director of Learning and Leadership Services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Debi Keane</td>
<td>Director of Student Support</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jessica Stormer</td>
<td>Coordinator of Administrative Services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tony Townsend</td>
<td>Principal, Locust Grove Middle School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tony Pickett</td>
<td>Assistant to the Superintendent</td>
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### Technical Advisors

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<tr>
<td>Jimmy Sarakatsannis</td>
<td>McKinsey &amp; Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy Wallmeyer</td>
<td>McKinsey &amp; Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen Viruleg</td>
<td>McKinsey &amp; Company</td>
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Henry County Schools Personalized Learning- Executive Summary

**District Context:** Henry County Schools is a large suburban district located approximately 30 miles south of Atlanta. HCS is a diverse district with approximately 53% free and reduced lunch rate and 60% non-white student population, with wide variety of demographics within each of our 50 schools. Over the past decade, student enrollment has doubled to nearly 41,000, as has the percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged, yet student performance has generally held steady over time. District leadership has a strong commitment to create personalized learning opportunities for students in schools and across our district. HCS has been working on progressive school reform, including a focus on creating pockets of innovative learning options over the past five years. While Henry County Schools has taken several bold and concrete steps toward establishing personalized learning as the norm of the district, there is much work yet ahead to make PL sustained and systemic with regard to better preparing students to be college and career ready.

**Henry County Schools Vision for Personalized Learning:** HCS’ vision for personalized learning is comprised of five tenets, described below.

- **Competency Based/Flexible Pacing:**
  - A system of competency-based learning with common standards for all students and schools, wherein time is flexible, but learning is constant

- **21st Century Skills for College and Career Readiness:**
  - District-wide approach to developing and measuring communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking

- **Technology-Enabled Learning:**
  - HCS will develop infrastructure to support tech-enabled learning including wireless, LMS, and data systems. Over the course of their Henry County career, all students will receive a blend of face-to-face and digitally-enabled instruction in order to ensure facility in both.

- **Project Based Learning/Authentic Assessment:**
  - Real and relevant learning experiences (e.g. service learning and internships) that promote greater student engagement, voice and agency in order to make learning more relevant to students

- **Learner Profiles/Personalized Learning Plans:**
  - A student-centered culture built around individual learning plans co-created by students, parents and teachers

**High-Level Implementation Plan and Philosophy:** Honoring the longstanding culture of school autonomy in HCS is integral to this work. The district views its role as one of supporting the schools through the redesign process, while providing the guardrails within which each school will operate, framed by the five PL tenets above. In short, the district will not prescribe which models of PL our schools adopt. Rather, the school redesign process will be grassroots, driven by the schools, supported by the district. It is our hope that PL will look different in each of our schools, as determined by the individual school communities. Our PL implementation plan consists of a three-layered approach:

- **Launch** a cohort of 4-6 high-capacity schools who will serve as models of PL throughout the district and

- **Develop** capacity to enable remaining schools to implement PL in future cohorts and

- **Build** awareness and support of PL among community at large through stakeholder engagement with families, businesses, higher ed, and various state-level entities.
**Needs Assessment, Challenges and Successes:** Our biggest challenge is changing hearts and minds (and practices) of school leaders and teachers in our largely traditional district, and we have done so by intentionally exposing all middle and high school principals to successful models of PL in order to plant seeds of innovation. This grant process has been a catalyst for a discussion that was already underway in our district, and has provided momentum and the strategic planning process we need to make PL systemic, not isolated in certain schools. Additionally, the establishment of a system design team has helped us to put clear language to the vision that will enable our schools to take our early success stories and work to scale. Over the past several months, we have seen enthusiasm for PL grow and principals and teachers are now excited about the possibilities of this work for our students.

**Budget:** In Phase II, HCS will use the additional support from Gates to engage in the redesign and planning of 4-6 schools over the next year. The Cohort 2015 schools chosen through the competitive selection process will divide $210,000 to support their planning work. Schools will be given full autonomy to spend those funds, but the district anticipates expenditures for release time, travel to see PL best practices around the country, and site-based professional development. An additional $90,000 would be used at the district level to directly support the schools’ redesign process and professional development that will both directly support launch schools and develop capacity to PL for all district schools, totaling $300,000 for our request.

**Defining Characteristics of HCS:** HCS is excited about the work ahead, and views personalizing learning as the means to achieve our district mission, “Ensuring Success for Each Student.” Personalizing learning gives a framework to the conversation in our district regarding the need to change the structure of schooling in order to better prepare our students for post-high school endeavors. Our current operating conditions provide fertile ground that enables us to fully implement personalized learning, based on several key factors:

- Personalized learning is integral to the district's overall strategic plan. Future scale-up will build on recent successes in offering varied learning options for students, including an established full-time virtual middle and high school, a blended learning middle school, a college and career academy which serves all district high schools, and work-based learning opportunities for students, among others.

- Demonstrated ability to turn around low-performing schools. Specifically, Henry County High School used SIG funds to reverse a school culture of underperformance and now serves as a model for school reform in the state of Georgia. Since the SIG began, HCHS has improved their graduation rate 10% and improved performance on every subject area state End-of-Course Test.

- Capacity of core working team, led by Assistant Superintendent of Learning and Leadership, Aaryn Schmuhl, who is supported by a dedicated team of leaders who are passionate about PL and have the collective drive and skill to bring this vision to fruition.

- Organizational culture is nimble and flexible, based on an historical foundation of school autonomy. Because PL is the vision of the superintendent, endorsed by the school board, and supported by senior staff, the allocation of resources to support PL will allow HCS to scale and sustain this work. We have been able to maintain the vision with the recent hiring of a new superintendent. Additionally, Georgia is a right-to-work state, so decision-making is not constrained by collective bargaining agreements.

- Pending District Charter status. HCS is pursuing an application to become a charter district, which will mitigate or remove many of the barriers to operationalizing PL, including seat time requirements. Georgia’s state-level government is reform-minded, and encourages innovation. HCS is prepared to lead the state as a personalized learning-focused district, and we have the flexibility needed to do so. Henry County Schools has benefitted greatly from participation in this grant. This process has brought resources, expertise, common language, and a framework to the discussion that HCS needed to move forward in an intentional and strategic way to best equip our students with the 21st century skills needed to be successful in college and career pursuits. Henry County Schools has made the shift to personalized learning the vision and work of the district for the next decade. For us, this process has been, and will continue to be, personal.
January 24, 2014

RE: Henry County Schools

Dear Next Generation Selection Committee Members:

It is an exciting time in Henry County as the Board of Education embarks on a new direction for our schools, specifically, the opening of a personalized learning school (Hampton High School.) Throughout my twenty-three years in the county, it has been my goal that our students would have the opportunity to thrive in a personalized setting. This major step towards school reform will take our school system from good to great!

During the last four months a core team of leaders has immersed itself in the study of personalized learning. They have researched the subject extensively, sought the advice of those who have experienced success, and, along with many school leaders, attended conferences and visited personalized learning schools across the country. The team has culled the findings to craft a plan for Henry County’s students based upon proven best practices. Learning environments will be established where students will be given freedom to direct their own academic path, and the school experience will be redesigned to ensure all students will be ready for college and career upon graduation.

This application for Phase II funding of the NextGen Grant reflects a collective effort to make the academic needs of our students a top priority. The authors of this document have worked tirelessly to present a concise, accurate picture of the direction we will take the school system. As the ideas unfold, adjustments will be made as needed to ensure teachers and students are experiencing success.

I am grateful for the support the NextGen Grant provided for this team to do its work. The process enabled us to have valuable conversations about the status of our students and schools and to take a critical look at necessary changes. When we started this work, we knew that the school system had come to a critical juncture. Forward thinking ideas, not the status quo, would be necessary to meet the needs of our changing student population. I am hopeful that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation support will continue with NextGen Phase II funding as we move toward implementation.

As the current superintendent, I wholeheartedly support the direction the Henry County School System is taking in pursuing the full implementation of personalized learning during the next decade. I am confident in speaking on behalf of my successor, Rodney Bowler, that he will also support and lead the district in fulfilling its vision for school reform.

Sincerely,

Ethan Hildreth
Superintendent
January 13, 2014

Next Generation Systems Selection Committee:

The 21st century brought massive growth to Henry County that required a focus on accommodating the influx of young people. Portable classrooms filled school parking lots and new schools had to be built. The sudden population explosion permanently changed the once tranquil, agrarian community to a bustling, thriving bedroom community of Atlanta. Families from across the country and around the world flocked to the area, bringing with them high expectations for the school system. Henry County’s culture and climate have changed dramatically since the early years. The school system must adjust to those changes ensuring students are college and career-ready upon graduation.

Accommodating growth during the first ten years of the century was the priority, not researching and implementing impressive best practices that would change the face of Henry County education. Now, however, as growth has slowed and school populations remain relatively stable, the time has come to place our primary focus on the success of all students. The status quo is no longer acceptable.

During the last four months we have enthusiastically embraced the proposed changes that evolved from the NextGen Phase I research on personalized learning. We accept that a great deal of work lies ahead with Phase II, but we have confidence that the changes that are forthcoming will positively influence all of our students. By providing learning environments that are focused and demanding, yet flexible, we believe that students and parents will be excited about managing the students’ educational destinies. Student performance can only improve.

Education reform is critical to student success in the 21st century. We fully endorse and support the application for Phase II funding of the NextGen Grant and the subsequent implementation of personalized learning at Hampton High School, and eventually system wide.

Sincerely,

Dr. Pam Nutt  
School Board Chair  
District 1

Ryan Davis  
School Board Vice-Chair  
District 2

Josh Hinton  
School Board Member  
District 2

Mike Griffin  
School Board Member  
District 3

Erik Charles  
School Board Member  
District 4

33 N. Zack Hinton Parkway  
McDonough, Georgia 30253  
Phone: 770-957-6601 • Fax: 770-898-7912

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IV. Henry County Schools Introduction

A. Henry County Context

Significantly impacted by the economic throes of the 2000’s, Henry County once enjoyed a major boom as one of Atlanta’s fastest growing “bedroom communities.” New student enrollment necessitated building twenty-five schools over a ten-year period. During the economic and enrollment boom, Henry County Schools’ leadership frantically focused on building these much-needed physical school facilities in order to house the new students. Out of necessity, leadership also focused on recruiting, hiring, and retaining teachers to staff both existing and newly built schools. Maintaining and expanding a school system to provide student seats took practical precedence over other areas of administration: curriculum planning, development, and revision; professional learning and evaluation; innovative programming and stakeholder involvement; and cutting-edge technological advances, though direly needed. Time constraints and financial prudence relegated these areas of instructional need to lesser priority. During the boom period, Henry County Schools maintained a solid level of instruction while meeting the challenge of supplying facilities for the 1200 new students enrolling annually.

Educationally, however, there were few changes in the areas of curriculum, instructional delivery, professional learning opportunities, unique student learning opportunities, or flexible learning environments. Instruction was traditionally designed and, as shown by some measurements, effective. Although we were able to maintain academic achievement at foundational levels, we know that the level of learning of our students is not sufficient for college and career readiness. We are committed to ramping up expectations and outcomes for student learning. This is exemplified by our ACT scores over the past decade. Although they have held steady as a composite score between 19 and 20, this level of performance is below state and national averages and significantly below the 23 composite necessary for college readiness. It is time to raise the bar of learning expectations and teaching practice. In short, being “good” is not good enough.
B. Distinguishing Characteristics of HCS

1. Recent Success in Offering Varied School Options for Students

Henry County Schools has a proven track record of implementing district-wide initiatives that support providing students with multiple options. Over the past three years, the district has worked to put in place several learning options for students. Our first traditional school to offer a station/rotation blended learning model, Locust Grove Middle School, combines a robust learning management system with seminar time for synthesis, application, and direct instruction in small groups. From our unique virtual school, Impact Academy, that allows students to participate in their home school extra- and co-curricular activities, to the Academy for Advanced Studies, where students from all nine traditional high schools have transportation to be able to participate in this innovative College and Career Academy part- or full-time, HCS has shown a commitment to putting resources behind ideas focused on student needs. Additionally, students already have access to work-based learning, dual enrollment and internship opportunities.

2. Demonstrated Success Turning Around Low-Performing Schools

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<th>Standardized Test</th>
<th>2009-2010</th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
<th>Increase</th>
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<tr>
<td>9th Grade Literature</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Literature</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math II</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Biology</td>
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<td>Economics</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>GH SWT</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Rate</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>79%</td>
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Over the past four years, Henry County Schools successfully implemented a school turnaround model through a federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) for our lowest-performing high school, Henry County High School. HCHS is seen as a model across the State of Georgia because of changing mindsets and drastically improving instructional practice as well as school culture. HCHS has demonstrated marked improvement in graduation rates and other student achievement metrics, increasing the graduation rate 10 percentage points from 2010 to 2013, and improving performance on all state standardized tests, as seen on the inset graph. The SIG experience at HCHS has shown that strong professional learning, focus on student needs, and a loose/tight district partnership are keys to successful school turnaround in this district.

3. Capacity of Core Team

Henry County Schools has a dedicated core working group with a strong PL vision, decision-making authority, and the support of senior staff, the superintendent, and the school board. The core team, led by the Assistant Superintendent of Learning and Leadership Services, Aaryn Schmuhl, has the requisite vision, skillset and dedicated time to support schools through the redesign process and to build capacity across the district to operationalize PL.

4. Culture of Flexibility and School Autonomy

Henry County Schools has lean and nimble district governance. We are able to make programmatic, staffing and instructional decisions for students in a timely and meaningful fashion. We have had a vision for personalizing learning for three years, and have used the language and resources we have gained from the grant process to date into both practice and district strategic planning. Historically, the culture of our district has been one in which schools have a great deal of autonomy. We have leveraged
this autonomy recently by encouraging innovation at individual schools because it is the belief of the
district that local school communities are best suited to meet the needs of their students. The district’s
role is to provide high-level vision, guardrails, support and accountability within a framework that
balances school autonomies with district-level supports and oversight.

5. Commitment from Community to the HCS Vision
Henry County Schools sees personalized learning as the work of our district for the next decade. We
have designed our plan to fit into a model that is sustainable and scalable with district resources.
Through our work with this grant, we have utilized the connections, networking opportunities and funds
provided to date to accelerate our ability to build capacity in our leaders by exposing them to success
stories across the country. We have been intentional with regard to sending every middle and high
school principal as well as other district staff to see schools where personalized learning is operational.
This has created a change in the hearts and minds of the district- and school-level administrators in our
system, so they can begin to own the shift to personalized learning as a district initiative that is
implemented at the schoolhouse level, with significant and meaningful autonomy. Additionally, we have
held multiple open meetings related to PL for teachers and staff to provide input and learn more about
the vision and plan. Our application and plan reflect the significant collaboration of principals, central
office staff, teachers, counselors and parents. This plan is truly the start of a journey that stakeholders
in Henry County Schools have already signed up for.

6. Charter District Status
The state of Georgia has mandated that every school district must make a determination by the 2015
school year on whether they will apply for charter district status with associated flexibilities granted
therein, or if they will maintain “Status Quo” status. Henry County Schools will be applying for Charter
District Status and has already engaged in significant work to draft the charter application and move
forward. Our school board voted to send a letter of intent to apply during the Fall 2013 as required by
statute. Charter district status provides broad flexibility from state requirements (e.g., seat time, class
size, certification, salary schedule) to all schools in the district while adding specific accountability
expectations and clarity around engaging parents through school governance councils. District charter
status will provide Henry County the conditions to make quick, nimble decisions in the best interest of
personalizing learning for each student. It also shows that the political culture in the state of Georgia
lends itself to creating autonomies for schools and districts to be responsive to the needs of students.
V. Vision

A. District Vision

Henry County Schools ensures educational success for each student by inspiring a culture of creators and achievers. We believe all learners will excel in an environment where:

- achievement reflects mastery of rigorous standards
- learning experiences are relevant and engaging
- relationships are supportive and nurturing

Our work to create learning environments that exemplify these principles are organized around three areas, all of which stand to benefit from the adoption of personalized learning: student achievement, culture/climate/community, and quality assurance (i.e. effective leading and teaching).

Student achievement will benefit most directly from personalized learning practices, which will focus student energies on areas where they are most required, ensure mastery of curricular content before advancement, increase the diversity of courses offered, and help students develop the skills they will need to be self-directed lifelong learners. The chart below shows our district strategic plan’s goals for the 2014 school year. Within our annual ARC (Achieving Results for Children) Success Report (Appendix A.), we articulate forecasted goals and improvement in the key areas below for the coming five years. These academic targets are focused on those pivotal times in K-12.
Culture, climate, and community will be enhanced through personalized learning by increased student engagement. This will lead to both reductions in disciplinary incidents and improvements in the timeliness and relevance of student performance data shared with parents and guardians.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Focus Area 2: Culture/Climate/Community</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 1</strong>: The district and schools will maintain a safe, orderly and supportive learning environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Survey: % Agree Positive Learning Environment</td>
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<td><strong>Goal 2</strong>: The district and schools will communicate effectively with students, parents, employees and the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent Survey: % Agree Effective Communication (student progress)</td>
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Quality Assurance will benefit from the application of personalized learning principles to teacher and principal professional development activities, which will increase their relevance and efficacy.

(For additional detail, refer to Appendix B: Henry County Schools 2014 Strategic Plan.)

Additionally, the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI), the state of Georgia’s accountability framework encourages innovative models focused on student success.

**B. Vision for Personalized Learning**

For the past several years, HCS has worked to personalize the learning of its students by creating additional school options for them. The adoption of personalized learning-intensive instructional models is the next step in this multi-year effort to increase the number of educational options available to students. Whereas recent work has focused on giving students access to new schools and programs, HCS' PL initiatives will focus on dramatically increasing the options open to students within its existing school portfolio.

**Five tenets define Henry County's vision for Personalized Learning; schools will receive both great autonomy and significant support**

1. **Learn Profiler**
2. **Competency-Based Pedagogy**
3. **Authentic Project-Based Learning**
4. **21st Century Skills**
5. **Technology-Enabled**

**School Autonomy**

**District Support**
Ultimately, the goal is to better prepare all HCS students for college and career success. The district’s Personalized Learning initiatives will do this by:

- Establishing a learning environment in which students chart their own academic path with flexibility in place, time and pace, based upon mastery of core competencies.
- Adopting a broader definition of “college and career readiness,” inclusive of both academic and behavioral skills that increase student engagement, ensure all students are challenged and supported within a rigorous framework, and require students to take ownership of their learning. To that end, the district will focus on and measure the 21st Century skills of communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking as overarching areas of competencies for all students.
- Inspiring a culture of creators and achievers who synthesize information from many sources while engaging in real-world problem-solving through project-based learning.
- Preparing students to be self-regulated, lifelong learners by giving them more freedom to chart their own academic path as they progress toward post-secondary goals.
- Charging school and district staff to redesign the school experience and the day-to-day practices of a school system to better meet the diverse needs of our students by maximizing the impact of our teachers. Schools will offer flexibility for students to progress based on mastery, not master schedules bound by seat time and calendar days.

Realizing this vision will require change on the part of all Henry County stakeholders. For a description of the mindsets and behaviors that are central to this vision, refer to Appendix C: Desired Stakeholder Mindsets and Behaviors.

Elements of Personalized Learning

In practice, the adoption of Personalized Learning will require many changes from the way Henry County currently operates. The following points describe what “personalized learning” will look like in Henry County once it has been fully implemented by the 2024-25 school year, organized along four dimensions the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation uses to define personalized learning: Learner Profiles, Personal Learning Plans, Individual Mastery, and Flexible Environments.

Learner profiles

- The primary purposes of the Learner Profile is to help chart individual students’ personal learning pathways, and to measure progress along that path
- Every student throughout the district will have a Learner Profile uniting data related to...
  - Formative and summative assessments (e.g., district, state, ACT, etc.)
  - “Learning path” to the present (e.g., course enrollments and grades)
  - 21st Century skill assessment (e.g., communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking)
  - Behavior record (e.g., attendance, disciplinary actions)
- College-going behaviors (e.g., application, completion of FAFSA, etc.)
- Personal interests and goals (both academic and non-academic)
- Personal learning style (e.g., preferred learning style(s), disabilities, etc.)

- Everyone involved in a student’s academic life will have access to their Learner Profile, including teachers, parents/guardians, school counselors and administrators, and, most importantly, the student themselves. In principle, the Learner Profiles will be as transparent as possible, though not everyone will have access to all types of data.
- We envision learner profiles as the tool that connects the team of people who support students through their educational experience, as well as the guiding tool in decision-making for students, parents and educators.

**Personal Learning Plans**

- As part of their Learner Profile, every student will have a Personal Learning Plan, co-created by students, their families, and HCS staff; that includes long-term learning goals, an anticipated route to reach those goals, and a record of the paths the student has taken on their learning journey thus far.
- Students will have the autonomy to define their learning plan at multiple levels:
  - Students will have the option of enrolling in their assigned community school, a district-run virtual school (Impact Academy), a centralized career academy (Academy of Advanced Studies), or any combination of the three.
  - Within their chosen school, students will have the ability to set their own “Learning Path” by choosing their program (e.g., academy), courses, and routes within courses to accomplish specific competencies.
- Learning pathways will have “competency checkpoints” that assess mastery of competencies. Many checkpoints are unique to specific courses, but some – such as those around communication, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking – will be universal, and required of all Henry County Schools students.

**Individual Mastery**

- Administratively, the “course” will remain the fundamental unit of academic study and credit, though courses will be redefined as collections of competencies. This definition will change over the next five years. Course credit will be awarded once a student has demonstrated mastery of all of the course’s competencies.
- Assessments will correspond to specific competencies and will be performance-based. Competencies and related assessment rubrics will be standardized throughout the district, designed by teacher leaders, with input from central district administration. Evidence of competency will be judged against a common rubric.
- Students will be able to choose from multiple types of assessment for most competencies, though some competencies may allow for only a single assessment type. Collectively, the
district’s teacher leaders will determine what assessment forms are acceptable for a given competency. Students should be allowed multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery using varying forms of assessment. Courses will have pacing guidelines, but students may proceed at their own pace, taking assessments when they are prepared to, and advancing only once they have demonstrated mastery.

Flexible Environments

- Over the course of their Henry County career, all students will receive a mix of face-to-face and digitally-enabled instruction. While the proportion of each will vary from student to student, all students will receive a minimum amount of instruction in each mode to ensure facility in both.
- Henry County Schools will create an infrastructure and framework of credit to support anywhere, anytime learning for its students and employees.
- Course pacing will be flexible, and may be completed in less or more than a given school year, but students will be counseled towards timely graduation. Students who are not making sufficient progress toward graduation will receive required intervention and support.
- Henry County Schools will establish a framework wherein student progress is based upon mastery of content, not by time and place.

Our vision of personalized learning maximizes the best instructional practices teachers currently employ and marries them with innovative structures for time on task, curriculum delivery models, with a focus on 21st century skills. These transitions mean we move away from a focus on standardized multiple-choice testing as primary measures of progress and towards authentic performance assessments as measures of competency and mastery, which represents a significant change from current practice in Henry County Schools. In developing its PL implementation plan, HCS assessed its readiness on several dimensions to identify areas with the greatest difference between current and desired practice. The following section discusses the findings of that assessment in detail.
VI. Current State Assessment

Henry County Schools is well positioned to design and implement PL-intensive school models. Previous initiatives have laid the groundwork for broader adoption of PL strategies: the district has relatively few policy or staffing restrictions; its enrollment is stable-to-growing; and its financial position is sound. However, the district also faces several potential barriers to widespread and long-lasting PL adoption that it is actively working to overcome.

To help determine where to focus its PL development efforts, the district completed a comprehensive needs assessment that looked at school performance and enrollment, IT infrastructure, data systems, and teacher and principal attitudes towards PL.

A summary of assessment findings can be found in Appendix D – Needs Assessment Summary; at a high level it identified the following:

Strengths
- Strong commitment of district leadership to Personalized Learning
- Recent school innovations utilizing PL elements, laying the groundwork for broader PL roll-out by demonstrating success on a small scale and providing an opportunity to refine approaches to Personalized Learning. Response to the district vision and early PL efforts has been overwhelmingly positive, based on feedback received from many stakeholders, solicited throughout Phase 1.
- Reform-minded state legislature and union-free environment enable great flexibility in policy

Challenges
- Central office administration is lean, forcing district staff to wear many hats, limiting capacity to support PL initiatives.
- PL talent pipeline is limited; most teachers and principals are unfamiliar with the core tenets
- Henry County, like other districts, has limited financial resources to expend on needed technology to enable greater personalization of learning

The next section considers the needs assessment in greater detail.

A. Strengths

Strong commitment of district leadership to personalized learning. With the full support of Superintendent Dr. Ethan Hildreth, Assistant Superintendent of Learning & Leadership Aaryn Schmuhl has made the advancement of personalized learning core to the district’s instructional priorities. In recent years, this support has manifested itself in the dedication of resources to launch a virtual school, redesign a traditional middle school into a blended-learning model, and accelerate the roll-out of Wi-Fi and bring-your-own-device support to every school in the district. Most recently, personalized learning was incorporated into the district’s 2014 strategic plan as one of the primary instructional strategies that will be used to meet its student achievement goals, which focus on college and career readiness.
Though Superintendent Hildreth will be retiring at the end of the 2013-14 school year, his successor, Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services Rodney Bowler, has been an active member of the PL Advisory Group, will be representing HCS at the NGS January convening in Houston, and will continue Hildreth’s support for personalized learning initiatives. Additionally, nearly all members of the senior staff serve on the larger working and advisory teams and have endorsed the vision and PL plan both in word and deed by contributing to the work.

Support for personalized learning also extends to the school board, which first brought the PL grant to staff’s attention. The body has been presented with the district’s personalized learning vision and strategy and formally endorsed that strategy with the adoption of the proposed 2014 strategic plan in January 2014, as well as specifically endorsing the NGS grant application via a letter of support.

Previous initiatives have laid the groundwork for broader PL rollout, generating support and excitement among HCS staff for personalized learning. Henry County Schools has already taken several steps to prepare for district-wide implementation of Personalized Learning. In the process, it has generated interest and excitement in its staff. The working group has held several open meetings for teachers and staff in the district to seek feedback and input, facilitated several visioning exercises with senior staff as well as school leaders, and engaged in frequent dialogue with school and district staff related to PL. Additionally, the working group has updated the school board regarding the progress of the vision and strategic plan on several occasions, and the response has been one of enthusiastic support.

A detailed description of each school and how experiences there have contributed to HCS’ PL conversation can be found in Appendix E.

- The launch of a new virtual middle and high school, Impact Academy, established operating norms for the scheduling and advising of students who are not at a physical school full time, provided examples of rigorous online instruction, and informed the selection of Edgenuity as the district’s preferred LMS and digital content provider.
- Establishment of a station/rotation blended-learning academy at Locust Grove Middle School gave HCS educators a local example of what a blended-learning model could look like in practice and provided early data (in line with research results on blended learning) that suggest the blended model has improved both school culture and student learning outcomes.
- The creation of Academy for Advanced Studies, a centralized college and career academy with occupationally focused learning labs as well as dual enrollment courses in conjunction with local universities, has shown the benefits of project-based learning and tight coordination with higher education institutions and business leaders.
- The upcoming launch of a new school community, Hampton High School, built around a PL-intensive instructional model, has brought a new PL-experienced principal into the district and generated excitement among teachers interested in helping open the school. The district was intentional in conducting a nation-wide search for a principal with capacity specific to personalized learning, and he will begin that work in February.

A Fall 2013 survey asked teachers to rate their interest in implementing personalized learning. More than 60% expressed interest, with 21% saying they were “Extremely interested”. Similarly, 65% of teachers felt their school leader was interested in implementing PL and 67% thought their school leader was capable of doing so.
Reform-minded state legislature and lack of collective bargaining by teachers and principals enable great operational flexibility. Over the past decade, the State of Georgia has adopted several policies to give school districts greater flexibility in how they operate while increasing oversight and accountability. Collectively, these reforms have helped set the stage for personalized learning by allowing for innovative school models and creating common measures of student learning that can be used at a local level to evaluate the efficacy of PL-intensive models.

State policies that support personalized learning include:
- Allowing seat-time requirements to be waived
- Building a statewide longitudinal data system to link student data across institutions and grade levels
- Establishing statewide student growth metrics
- Requiring districts to define Student Learning Objectives for all courses not subject to a statewide standardized test
- Requiring all districts to offer online learning options
- Allowing districts to apply for “charter system” status, which frees them from multiple state and local requirements

B. Challenges

Central office administration is lean, forcing district staff to wear many hats, limiting capacity to support PL initiatives. In 2011, the Center for American Progress named HCS as one of the highest Return On Investment schools, based on administrative costs versus student achievement. HCS spends an average of $193 per student in administrative costs, compared with the state average of $473 per student. While that level of efficiency represents a commendable stewardship of resources, it creates potentially worrisome capacity constraints in four areas: PL project management, professional development, data management and analysis, and IT support.

PL project management. Officially, HCS’ personalized learning staff consists of a small team dedicated to this work at the central office level. Aaryn Schmuhl, Assistant Superintendent of Learning and Leadership, leads this initiative. Personalized Learning Coordinator Steve Thompson, Instructional Technology Coordinator Brian Blanton, and Next Generation Systems Project Manager Karen Perry support the development, implementation, and evaluation of PL-intensive models at each of HCS’ 50 schools. The team reports directly to Aaryn Schmuhl, who reports directly to the superintendent.

Professional development. The task of coordinating the professional development activities of Henry County Schools’ approximately 2,300 teachers and 180 administrators on paper falls to a single person: Professional Development Coordinator Rosetta Riddle. However, significant professional development is provided by content coordinators, the local regional education support agency (RESA), and leadership services personnel. Additional support will be required to develop and roll out PL-focused PD, and to incorporate PL principles in the district’s professional development offerings (e.g., by differentiating PD offerings based on the needs and interests of individual staff members, and enabling anywhere, anytime delivery of PD content).

Data management and analysis. Henry County Schools’ data team currently consists of three individuals: a System Testing Specialist, one Assessment & Data Response Facilitator who sits in the Office of
Learning and Leadership, and a Data Management Coordinator who is housed in the Technology Services department. Presently, most assessment staff capacity is spent administering assessments and fulfilling state and federal reporting requirements. HCS’ plans to track additional career and college readiness metrics and to continuously evaluate the performance of new PL-intensive models would require additional resources for data management and analysis.

**IT support.** HCS’ current IT support staff consists of 10 full-time and 8 part-time staff members, who support 17,000 computers, most of which are Lenovos running Windows. Director of Technology Services Scott Pierce believes any significant increase in the number of devices supported or the diversity of those devices would require an investment in additional IT support staff, particularly if the aim is to offer students and teachers real-time support in their schools.

**PL talent pipeline is limited; most teachers and principals are unfamiliar with the core tenets of PL.** While Henry County Schools include pockets of personalized learning, most teachers and administrators still have had little exposure to or understanding of fundamental PL concepts.

Results of HCS staff surveys conducted in October and November suggest limited PL implementation throughout the district, and limited understanding of what PL is. When asked if their school has implemented a blended and/or personalized learning strategy, 39% of teachers responded “yes,” 21% responded “no,” and a full 40% responded “I don’t know.” Questions asked during a Nov. 20 open teachers meeting are further evidence that many HCS teachers still have little concept of what PL is, let alone how to deliver it.

Principal survey data suggest that in most schools that have implemented elements of PL and/or blended learning, implementation is limited to a handful of classrooms. Half of those who said their school had implemented PL said it had been implemented in less than 25% of classrooms. Another 16% said PL had been implemented in 26-50% of classrooms. A summary of survey feedback is found in Appendix F.

Furthermore, HCS’ Next Gen working group members suspect these survey results overstate the true level of PL implementation throughout the district. Anecdotally, they recount multiple instances in which HCS staff have equated basic differentiated instruction practices with personalized learning, or labeled any form of technology-enabled instruction “blended learning.” This speaks to the need to establish a common understanding of PL terminology and methodology throughout the district.

**Lack of student computing devices.** Henry County’s student-to-device ratio currently sits between 4:1 and 3:1, and IT staff estimate up to 50% of those devices are due or overdue for replacement. While device requirements will depend on the PL models developed by the School Design Teams, it is likely that the district and/or participating schools will have to invest in additional student computing devices to facilitate the technology-enabled personalized learning called for in the district’s PL vision.

**Limited financial resources.** Though Henry County is not in financial crisis, its financial resources are tightly constrained at both the state and local level, which together provide nearly 90% of HCS’ revenue. As a state, Georgia ranks 33 in the nation in public school revenue per student, at $10,748, down 12.5% from the prior year. At the same time, Henry County has hit the state cap on its millage rate, limiting HCS’ ability to raise local taxes. As a result, HCS’ spending per student is unlikely to increase from its current level of $7,893.
C. Plans to Address Challenges

In addition to the broader plans for implementing personalized learning in HCS, we will undertake the following actions to address the very specific challenges described above.

Central office administration is lean, forcing district staff to wear many hats, limiting capacity to support PL initiatives with project management, PD, in-depth data analysis, and IT support.

- Project management: Move Karen Perry into a full-time PL position focused exclusively on helping existing HCS schools manage the transition to PL. PM job description is in Appendix G.
- Professional development: Develop and acquire PL-focused PD; emphasize blended delivery model that makes extensive use of online instructional modules and models that build PL coaching capacity within the district, while building capacity to maximize PLCs and job-embedded PD.
- Data management and analysis: Increase the size of the HCS data team with the addition of one more data response facilitator, focused on building data-analysis capacity at schools and the other of whom has evaluation of PL-intensive models as one of their primary responsibilities. Additionally, create a District Data Response Focus Team that capitalizes on and re-focuses current staff capacity.
- IT support: School Design Teams will be required to address their specific IT support challenges in Phase II. This school-based approach will tailor the solutions to the plans schools seek to follow.

PL talent pipeline is limited; most teachers and principals are unfamiliar with the core tenets of PL.

- HCS will develop and offer multiple online PD modules focused on PL; the district’s expectation is that all PL school teachers will be required to be credentialed in PL via successful completion of these modules, but they’ll also be made available to all HCS teachers. Contract with Personalize Learning LLC is located in Appendix H.
- The district will also facilitate the formation of PLCs and networks to provide ongoing exchange of best practices and communities of problem-solving for teachers, supported by trained personalized learning coaches.
- PL schools are expected to use some portion of their Phase II funding to bring expert PL coaches into their schools to work directly with teachers and administrators there.
- HCS will add five additional PD days into the district calendar. At PL schools, these days will be exclusively for PL professional development, both district-provided and site-based. The proposed 2014-15 calendar is located in Appendix I.
- Incorporation of PL concepts into district-wide PD programming.
- Inside of HCS’ leadership academy PD program, dedicate year-long LEAD associate principal internships to placing promising AP’s into successful PL-intensive schools, to create a candidate pool of future PL-knowledgeable principal candidates.
- HCS will create a local webpage/knowledge repository containing vetted and appropriate PL resources for teachers.
Lack of student computing devices.

- The long-term plan is to dedicate the 2019-24 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) to district technology upgrades. (Assumes voter support for SPLOST in 2018, because past SPLOST requests were supported.)
- Henry County Schools will provide schools with funds to purchase computing devices as part of its annual IT budgeting process. The amount received by each school will vary from year to year, increasing substantially in years when schools are slated to “refresh” their instructional technology. Schools have the ability to augment district allocations with building-level funds as they see fit.
- In the near term, HCS will provide schools with sufficient funds to maintain their current student-to-device ratios. While the district’s current student-to-device ratio is greater than 4:1, the expectation is that district funds will support progressively lower ratios as hardware prices fall and funds are re-allocated from other instructional supports (e.g., printed instructional materials). District policies currently allow for BYOD practices, which most schools are employing, but to varying degrees. The school board’s decision to accelerate the implementation of a robust wireless network in all Henry County schools by Fall 2014 will dramatically increase the number and efficacy of schools implementing BYOD environments. (original five year roll out of wireless was compressed into two years)

Limited financial resources.

- HCS will not adopt financially unsustainable models that represent a significant increase over current per-pupil expenditures. In other words, HCS views PL as a replacement cost, not a new cost. It’s about prioritizing upcoming expenditures on PL, and over time shifting funds from other things to cover increased PL expense.
- Wherever possible, HCS will outsource and/or leverage the work of others to advance the cause of PL here. (e.g., adapting competency maps from New Hampshire)
- Implementation costs will fall as successive waves of School Design Teams have a larger set of examples and shared resources to draw upon, and technology costs continue to fall.
- When and where additional support is required, HCS will appeal to the community (e.g., via SPLOST) and/or private philanthropies for additional financial support. Requests will be supported with tangible evidence of expected student performance gain.
VII. Personalized Learning Implementation Plan Overview

Henry County Schools’ plan to realize its vision for personalized learning consists of three interrelated initiatives:

1. **Launch** individual schools that are ready, willing, and able to implement PL in a school-led two-year instructional model design and implementation process, starting with secondary schools.
2. **Develop** district-level supports that enable or ease school-level PL implementation at schools that have not yet adopted PL-intensive instructional models.
3. **Build** community awareness, demand and readiness for PL among the broader HCS community.

Each initiative is discussed in detail in the following three sections of this document. Taken together, they balance Henry County Schools’ commitment to personalized learning with its longstanding culture of allowing a great degree of school autonomy within broad parameters, locally referred to as loose/tight defined autonomies.

The district’s role in this transformation is to provide appropriate guardrails for that autonomy, targeted resources that are most cost efficient at scale, and access to support and technical guidance to design and implement a meaningful plan to fundamentally change the mindset around the purpose and core actions of school. In short, school design will not be prescribed by the district; rather schools will be guided and supported by the district in their redesign process.

The overall PL implementation process is expected to last 10 years, with successive waves of 4-6 schools starting their two-year design and implementation process each year, beginning with the 2014-15 school year. Secondary schools will lead the way, building on the district’s early PL efforts; elementary schools will implement components of PL but will fully implement once the district has better defined and identified an elementary-level digital learning platform. By the start of the 2024-25 school year, every HCS school will be using an instructional model that exemplifies the district’s Personalized Learning vision. Engaging and leveraging community stakeholders and resources is an integral part of all phases of the HCS PL implementation plan. HCS has already laid groundwork with local businesses, post-secondary education institutions, state-level entities, and the community at large to open the dialog about PL and enable the operationalization of PL in HCS.
To jump-start the process, HCS is asking the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to partially support its initial cohort of design schools. (Refer to Section XI. Budget for detail.) As the number of schools that have implemented PL grows, the expense and effort required by the design process is expected to fall, enabling the district to cover the cost through a combination of internal resource reallocation and additional financial support from the Henry County community.

The core of Henry County Schools’ Personalized Learning transformation process is the two-year individual school design processes each of its 51 school communities will undertake within the coming decade, which aims to overcome the pull of centuries-old educational habits by including purposeful professional learning, granting meaningful autonomy to make design decisions, and producing distinct school-wide visions for what success looks like.

Those school design processes will be led by School Design Teams (SDTs) consisting of 6-12 administrators, teachers, students and other community members. SDTs will engage whole school communities to develop a school-level vision for personalized learning that is uniquely tailored to the needs of their students and the characteristics of their community. Throughout the process, they will periodically gather with other SDTs in the district to learn, challenge each other’s thinking, and share best practices as a professional learning community.

Though each cohort’s School Design Teams will benefit from collaboratively engaging in the productive struggle, excitement, and ultimate success of the design process together, the expectation is that their focus on developing a model that works for their particular staff, community, and students will create a diverse set of PL-intensive school models within the district.

A high-level overview of school design process activities can be found below:
A. **Competitive School Selection Process**

To maximize the likelihood that early-wave School Design Teams will produce successful models, Henry County Schools’ school recruitment and selection process focuses on identifying the schools that are the most ready, willing, and able to implement Personalized Learning. At the same time leading schools are completing their PL design process, their unselected peers will be increasing their capacity and enthusiasm for all of the components of PL. (For detail on that process, refer to Section IX: Developing District-Level Supports.)

Each spring, HCS will run a competitive selection process that invites teams of principals and teachers to submit their high-level vision for PL in their school. Applications have been encouraged via presentations and discussions with principals, that explain the benefits of participation (increased autonomy, PD, etc.) and outline application requirements. Applications will be evaluated by a school selection committee made up of senior district leaders who are not affiliated with any individual school. The school selection committee will recommend a slate of schools to the superintendent, who will name the selected schools by April 4.

Though future application evaluation criteria may vary, Cohort 2015 applications will be evaluated on three broad criteria groups: Enthusiasm/support for PL, capacity to implement, and PL vision/design plan quality. (Refer to Appendix J for the Cohort 2015 application and a detailed evaluation rubric.)

The timeline for the Cohort 2015 selection process follows:
- December 2013-January 2014: Formal presentations and informal discussions with district and school leaders regarding the school selection process
- January 17: Distribute application and rubric to schools, solicit questions and feedback from schools
- February 11, 2014: Webinar to advise schools of the application process, ask schools to submit an intent to apply
- February 2014-March 2014: Answer questions from individual school design teams and syndicate the answers to all teams.
- March 26, 2014: Applications due
- April 4, 2014: Schools notified of selection

One notable exception to the competitive selection process and timeline will be Hampton High School, a new school opening in August 2014 as the 10th high school in the district. HCS has committed to opening Hampton High School as a personalized learning high school, and as such, has been pre-selected to participate in the design process. HCS conducted a nation-wide search for a principal with the skillset, vision, and capacity to rally the community and lead this new school through the journey of establishing a PL-focused high school. In order to enable the launch of HHS as a PL high school, the district has taken some unprecedented steps to support this work, including altering the typical hiring practices for a new

### School Selection Criteria

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Criteria group</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capacity to Implement</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm/Support for PL</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan Quality</td>
<td>30%</td>
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school and supplying the school with a 1:1 ratio of devices. Principal Todd Finn will have the opportunity to hand-pick his staff based on capacity to launch a PL-focused school, choose furniture and other resources to enable PL, and proactively communicate with the school community about the vision and expectations of the school. Mr. Finn has been part of this grant process since his official hire and a letter in support of the grant may be found in Appendix K.

A. **School Design Teams**

School Design Teams will undertake the work of redesigning the school structure to personalize learning. The focus of any school design team is improvement, but specific to this school reform effort, design teams will focus on transforming the school culture and environment to personalize learning.

School Design Teams have seven core functions:

1) articulating a vision for personalized learning and goals that are specific to the needs of their school community
2) being a learning community to share common reading, thinking, and discussion related to PL
3) assessing current state, including school performance, IT infrastructure, data systems, dispositions toward and aptitude for implementing PL, and identifying barriers that may deter PL
4) designing transformative school redesign structures that enables personalized learning, with input from all members of the school community
5) designing engaging personalized, job-embedded professional learning for teachers focused on school transformation and personalizing learning for students, including but not limited to:
   a. Competency assessment in a flexible environment
   b. Guiding students through personalized pathways
c. Fostering and measuring 21st century skills of communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking
d. Using digital resources to support personalized learning
e. Creating a culture of authentic learners through project-based and real-world learning experiences

6) monitoring progress using the school goals and student outcomes.
7) reporting progress of the school reform to stakeholders and other schools

Each SDT will be required to develop an implementation plan that establishes an advisory group that includes teachers not on the SDT, parents and community partners who advise the plan before, during and after implementation. This School Advisory Group must include, at a minimum, the members of the local School Council and/or School Governance Team (after district charter status approved). The School Advisory Group should be convened at least once per quarter to provide guidance, insight, evaluation, and support to the work of the School Design Team.

School Design Team Activities

School Design Teams will be given wide latitude to determine the process by which they develop and implement their PL instructional models, but they will be required to work on a timeline established by the district, and to participate in periodic events with other School Design Teams.

The Cohort 2015 application asks School Design Teams to describe at a high level their proposed planning phase activities, but the below chart lays out a high-level district timeline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Phase II Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 2014</td>
<td>SDTs are formed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>SDTs participate in the School Design Convening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July-August 2014</td>
<td>SDTs will research and seek out promising practice of the tenets of personalized learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2014</td>
<td>o SDTs will communicate research and practice to stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Get feedback from stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Develop capacity with staff by exposing them to promising practice and research through school visits and case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Develop a vision for personalized learning that is specific to the school culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Take inventory of human and technical resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Create a needs assessment based on resources and barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Participate in “Critical Friends” (comprised of district and outside experts) session about establishing a vision for personalized learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2014</td>
<td>o Identify school redesign model(s) that the school will use to personalize</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
learning
  o Identify opportunities and barriers for the model
  o Develop PD opportunities for teachers to engage in topics listed above

November 2014
  o Participate in “Critical Friends” Sessions where the SDT will share their progress and wonderings about the model.
  o Adapt the redesign proposal based on feedback
  o Monitor PD effectiveness in surveying attitudes and the movement of hearts and minds

December 2014
  o Complete the school application
  o Present their application to the district working and advisory teams

B. **School vs. District Responsibilities**

Schools participating in the PL design process will receive increased autonomy and exemption from some district policies in exchange for agreeing to follow a common design process, develop an instructional model consistent with the district’s PL vision, and provide the district with additional data and regular progress updates.

In addition to coordinating the school design process, the district will independently work to develop a set of PL resources and policies for all schools to use, including those that have not yet embarked on an PL design process.

School and district responsibilities are defined in detail in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) participating schools will be required to sign. A draft of that document can be found in Appendix L, but the key responsibilities it outlines are summarized below:

**School autonomies**

PL schools will...
  • Not have to create traditional Continuous School Improvement Plans, as their PL implementation plans will serve the same purpose
  • Have increased staffing flexibility, including the ability to transfer staff who are unwilling or unable to implement PL
  • Be exempted from seat-time requirements
  • Be able to adopt alternate bell schedules and/or school days
  • Be able to adopt alternate student progress reporting tools and processes (e.g., report cards)

**School process expectations**

PL schools are expected to...
  • Allocate at least .25 FTE to serve as School Design Team project manager
  • Participate in district-coordinated design process (e.g., attend convenings, etc.)
  • Ensure that all staff receive PL-related PD
  • Create an academic experience designed around the five core tenets of the HSC vision for PL
  • Collect data on additional college- and career-readiness indicators (e.g., college applications, FAFSA completion)
• Participate in district-led PL program evaluation process

District supports

Through all of this, the district will provide:

• Dedicated project management staff, including but not limited to: coordination of district-level convenings, sharing of best practices, facilitation of “critical friends” groups, coordinating observations across schools.
• PL-focused professional development, including instructional coaching (though school design teams are also expected to make independent PD investments)
• Common definition of core Personalized Learning components
  o Competency maps
  o Learner profile design
• Technical systems to support PL (e.g., LMS, SIS upgrades)
  o Learning Management System (Edgenuity)
  o Upgraded Student Information System (SchoolNet)
  o Online repository of personalized learning tools, etc.
  o Learner profile dashboard

For more detail on district-level supports, please refer to Section IX of this document.

C. Evaluation

Henry County Schools utilizes a system of evaluation and accountability developed by the Georgia Department of Education through its Race to the Top (RT3) application and ESEA Waiver. Henry County Schools has served as one of the 26 RT3 districts in Georgia and has benefitted greatly from being a pilot district for these tools and processes. Our ability to help craft, refine, and define components of these tools as one of the pilot districts mean that the majority of these tools fit not only the long term GaDOE vision, but also align with the work we are doing as a district.

As HCS defines success and evaluates the progress of our district and schools towards scalable implementation of personalized learning, we want to ensure to capitalize on relevant work already done in the district. This honors the hard work of teachers and leaders over the past three years to understand and implement new evaluation and accountability models, while acknowledging that the shift to personalized learning models builds on previous successes. This strategy also allows us to have longitudinal data over time within schools and comparison data between schools in the district and across the state. The current evaluation tools for teachers, leaders, and schools measure student achievement, growth over time, and several various elements of a school program and are differentiated by grade band. Four primary components/systems will serve as the foundations of our evaluation of schools implementing personalized learning. Teacher Keys serves as our teacher evaluation instrument, Leader Keys serves as our principal and assistant principal evaluation instrument, and the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) serves as the accountability measure for our schools and school district. In addition, we use and will use the School Keys/GAPSS process on a two year rotation to provide us with a holistic view of school processes and improvement.
These four tools also allow us economy of scale in manpower and finances because the data is already collected and reported for the district, with the exception of the School Keys that we implement through local processes. However, all of these tools are measures of lagging data points and do not sufficiently capture all of the components of college and career readiness that are important to the HCS personalized learning framework. Additionally, we know that we need formative assessment points where we can provide feedback and engage in continuous monitoring of implementation. To that end, HCS will utilize our already-established quarterly reporting cycle for PL schools to self-report on each of the four priority components of PL articulated in our vision statement. As a part of their Phase II Implementation plan, each school will need to identify quarterly benchmarks/goals for their own processes and transformation and these will be reported on in the quarterly cycles. Each of these reports will be both through a brief presentation/dialogue with the working group and Executive Officers and through collected artifacts.

At the end of the first year of implementation, we will be assessing/evaluating process goals that demonstrate the level of implementation and school wide utilization of PL strategies. Although student achievement and other CCRPI indicators will be examined, we do not anticipate significant shifts in most categories after only one year of implementation. We believe that the shift to PL is a long term, foundational change in the design, delivery, and business of school and that the benefits of these shifts
will be apparent in the first year on individual students, but may not have an aggregate effect on CCRPI scores until year 2 and 3. Each school in Phase II will be held accountable according to the chart below.

**Feedback, Annual Evaluation, and Program Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Year</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GAPSS VISIT</td>
<td>Quarterly Feedback Instructional Rounds</td>
<td>Quarterly Feedback Instructional Rounds</td>
<td>GAPSS VISIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan Evaluation</td>
<td>Annual Evaluation</td>
<td>Annual Evaluation</td>
<td>Program Evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each school will develop annual process goals that will serve as measurable objective of adult behaviors with relation to personalizing learning. Although it is essential to tie student achievement to school reform initiatives, we believe that meaningful implementation of personalized learning requires school cultures to change at the adult level before long-lasting improvements in learning on traditional indicators can be realized. These annual process goals will be SMART goals that demonstrate the adult actions that exemplify the operationalization of the tenets of personalized learning in our plan.

Finally, we will evaluate each school on their progress with individual students through tracking of the personal learning plans and subsequent attainment of competencies to be determined by the school district. Although current accountability measures are necessary, they are not sufficient in ensuring students are successful in college and career. We believe that the competency maps and assessments we are developing and subsequent measures of students attaining those competencies will serve as additional evidence of the success and necessity of the personalized learning framework for all Henry County students.
IX. PL Implementation Plan: Develop District Supports to Enable PL District-Wide

The second component of Henry County Schools’ three-pronged PL implementation strategy is the development of district-wide systems and structures that lay the foundation for all schools to realize HCS’ vision of Personalized Learning.

School Design Teams will have great freedom to determine what Personalized Learning will look like in their building, but some academic and technical supports will be developed at the district level to ensure consistency and/or the efficient use limited human and financial resources.

In addition to enabling adoption at PL design schools, these supports will be immediately available to all HCS schools, giving educators throughout the district an opportunity to experiment and become familiar with PL tools prior to their school’s participation in the design process. This availability builds capacity over time to achieve broad transformation to scale within a decade.

Foundational supports provided by the district include:

- **District Supports**
  - Learner Profile design
  - Personal Learning Plan design
  - Definition of “competencies” that define student mastery
    - Course-specific (e.g., learning objectives)
    - Overarching - 21st Century Skills
  - Professional development and PL credentialing
  - Curated digital PL resource repository
  - Assistant principal internships in PL schools

- **Technological supports**
  - Network infrastructure (e.g., Internet access, Wi-Fi)
  - Hardware (e.g., student computing devices)
  - Software
    - Learning Management System (i.e. Edgenuity)
    - Student Information System (i.e., SchoolNet)
    - Student progress “dashboard”
  - Centralized technical support staff

A more detailed discussion of each support follows, but a summary of the goals and timeline of the initiative can be found below.
## Laying the foundation for district-wide PL implementation (1/3)

### Primary Objectives
- Create the common systems and structures required for district-wide PL implementation
- Develop a set of resources that make it progressively easier each year for schools to implement PL-intensive instructional models
- Generate excitement and "pull" for PL model adoption among HCS staff
- Help HCS staff gain the skills they need to implement PL
- Allow educators to experiment with PL tools before their school launches its PL design process

### Activities
- Form working groups to define and develop district-wide academic supports for Personalized Learning
  - Learner Profile design
  - Personal Learning Plan design
  - "Competencies" that define student mastery
    - Course-specific (i.e., learning objectives)
    - General (i.e., 21st Century skills)
  - Curated digital PL resource repository, with PD
- Build the technological infrastructure needed to support tech-enabled, personalized, anywhere/anytime learning
  - Network infrastructure (e.g., WiFi in all schools)
  - Support school-level hardware purchases
    - Short-term: continue annual IT budget allocations
    - Long-term: seek voter support for added IT funds
  - Upgrade core software (LMS, SIS, "dashboard")
  - Reallocate IT support staff based on school need

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## Laying the foundation for district-wide PL implementation (2/3)

### Primary Objectives
- Create the common systems and structures required for district-wide PL implementation
- Develop a set of resources that make it progressively easier each year for schools to implement PL-intensive instructional models
- Generate excitement and "pull" for PL model adoption among HCS staff
- Help HCS staff gain the skills they need to implement PL
- Allow educators to experiment with PL tools before their school launches its PL design process

### Activities (continued)
- Expose HCS staff to multiple PL-intensive models
  - Visits to national PL exemplars (building leaders)
  - Tours of PL schools in HCS (anyone)
- Incorporate PL into district professional development
  - Mandatory PD introducing PL concepts
    - Online modules
    - Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
  - Free access to more advanced PL-focused PD
  - Model PL best practices in district approach to PD
- Offer HCS assistant principals 1-year fellowships in PL-intensive schools to develop PL talent pipeline
A. District Supports

**Learner Profiles**: At the conclusion of HCS’ PL implementation, every student in the district will have a Learner Profile that includes information on their interests, aptitudes, goals, mastery of both course-level and general competencies, and intended academic path (i.e., Personal Learning Plan). Though the ways and extent to which different schools use Learner Profiles may vary, the format of the profiles will be standardized across the district.

Because the profiles will ultimately be used by all HCS schools, the district will form a working group that includes central district staff and representatives from a wide range of HCS schools (not just Cohort 2015 PL design schools). This group will form in early 2014 and be tasked with developing by July 31, 2014, a list of requirements and design features to guide the software developers who will ultimately create the profiles and integrate them with the various data platforms in the district. (Infinite Campus, Schoolnet, Edgenuity, etc.)

[For a more detailed description of Learner Profiles, refer to the “Elements of Personalized Learning” portion of Section V: Vision.]

**Personal Learning Plans**: As part of their Learner Profile, every student will have a Personal Learning Plan that includes long-term learning goals; an anticipated route to reach those goals that is co-created by students, their families, and HCS staff; and a record of the paths the student has taken on their learning journey thus far.

All HCS students will eventually have Personal Learning Plans, thus the district will form a working group to develop a common approach to their development and communication that will be used by all schools. The working group will include central district staff and representatives from a wide range of...
HCS schools (not just Cohort 2015 PL design schools), particularly school counselors and graduation coaches. This group will form in early 2014 and be tasked with developing by July 31, 2014, an outline of what Personal Learning Plans will look like for students in each grade band and the roles students, families, counselors, coaches, and teachers will play in their development. [For a more detailed description of Personal Learning Plans, refer to the “Elements of Personalized Learning” portion of Section II: Vision.]

**Student competencies:** Before HCS can implement mastery-based progression, it must first define the knowledge and skills, or competencies, students will be expected to master. Defining those competencies at the district level enables academic resources – such as teacher-developed assessments and third-party digital content – to be used by multiple teachers and schools, and fosters equity by holding all HCS students to a common set of standards.

As part of the effort to broaden the district definition of college and career readiness, HCS will develop overarching competencies which will define what the district believes students should know and be able to do, covering both course-specific academic content and the more generalizable 21st century skills necessary for college and career success. In core subject areas, HCS competencies will align with the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS), though they will be defined at a higher level, such that a single HCS competency might encompass multiple CCGPS standards.

Course-level competencies will be defined over a period of three years by working groups of HCS teachers and curriculum specialists, starting at the high school level and working down to elementary grades. In core subject areas, development of the competencies will draw heavily on the CCGPS; in non-core subject areas, work groups may choose to start from HCS’ existing Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). We will leverage competency work already done in New Hampshire, Colorado, Vermont and other PL systems to accelerate and inform our work.

**Timeline for high school course-level competency development:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Awareness training; District leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Awareness training; School leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Workshops for School Design Teams at the School Design Collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competency dvmt. (2-day workshop); 21st Century/4C’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competency dvmt. (2-day workshop); Cohort 1 Core Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Competency dvmt. (2-day workshop); Cohort 2 Core Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Competency dvmt. (2-day workshop); Cohort 3 Core Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Competency dvmt. (2-day workshop); Cohort 4 Career Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Competency dvmt. (2-day workshop); Cohort 5 Fine Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Development (1 day Workshop); HS Cohort 6 World Languages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generalizable competencies – including the 21st century skills of collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity – will be developed in 2014 by a task force that includes representatives from a wide range of HCS stakeholders: parents, students, teachers, administrators, community members, industry leaders, and higher education staff.
Starting in February 2014, the 21st Century Skills Task Force will convene to define leveled competencies in these critical skills. By May 2014, draft competencies will be communicated to all stakeholders for feedback. These competencies will then be shared with all district staff and submitted for approval by the superintendent and adoption by the school board. HCS staff will work to develop rubrics for assessment of those competencies over the course of the 2014-15 school year, with input from many subject- and grade-level leaders. Teachers and administrators will receive professional development on the general competencies during summer 2015 or the 2015-16 school year.

[For a more detailed description of competencies and how they will be used, refer to the “Individual Mastery” portion of Section V: Vision, and to Appendix M.

Professional Development and PL Credentialing: Henry County Schools’ vision for personalized learning calls for 100% of district schools to implement PL-intensive instructional models by 2024, but district leaders readily acknowledge that HCS staff members and school communities vary widely in their willingness and readiness to embrace personalized learning. In an effort to gradually move hesitant staff and schools to a place where they are prepared to implement PL, HCS will use eight tactics to increase familiarity and comfort with PL tenets:

- Introduce Personalized Learning concepts in district-wide PD delivered in blended learning formats
- Model PL best practices in the district’s overall approach PD (on all topics)
- Whenever possible, give all staff access to PL-focused PD offered to School Design Teams, so that those who are interested are able to independently explore PL more deeply
- Give all staff access to a district-wide digital repository of PL resources
- Offer regular tours of HCS schools with PL-intensive models
- Send HCS staff members to tour PL-intensive schools elsewhere
- Closely track and publicly report results of early PL implementations
- Create professional learning communities within each successive cohort of launch schools

In many ways, HCS’ professional development strategy mirrors its broader approach to PL: adopt common learning objectives, allow individual learners to create their own learning plan, and provide learners with the resources they want and the supports they need while allowing them to progress at their own pace.

A brief description of each professional development tool follows:

**Introduce Personalized Learning concepts in district-wide PD.** In recognition of the fact that 100% of HCS schools will implement personalized learning within the next 10 years, PL topics will be included in district-wide PD activities starting with the 2014-15 school year. Partly to facilitate this additional professional learning, HCS will add five additional in-service days to its annual calendar next year, all of which will be dedicated to PD.

**Model PL Best Practices in the District’s Overall Approach to PD (on all topics).** In addition to offering PD on Personalized Learning, Henry County Schools will model PL in its approach to professional learning. Practically speaking, this means teachers will be given more choices in the kinds of PD they receive and the manner in which it is delivered; progression will be based on mastery of material, not time spent studying it; increasing focus will be placed on ensuring the real-world relevance of PD received – exemplified by job-embedded PD; and digital tools will allow access to PD content anywhere
and at any time. Henry County Schools has created a PD model built around a credentialing process that allows teachers to move through PD as they demonstrate mastery and earn PL credentials that reflect professional experience and knowledge. The PD model mirrors the expectations we have for student learning in a competency based system.

**Give All Staff Access to PL-Focused PD Offered to School Design Teams.** To the greatest extent possible, PD resources made available to School Design Teams over the course of their design year also will be made available to all HCS staff members. Henry County Schools has contracted with Personalize Learning LLC to host a series of three blended learning modules that will be the foundational awareness activity for all employees. The courses will allow us to create a common understanding of the language and tenets of PL in Henry County Schools with consistency of message, but still tailored to the experiences and needs of the students. The first class will begin in March 2014 with 45 participants including central office staff and a representative from every secondary school in the district. After training a cadre of district- and site-based personalized learning coaches, Personalize Learning LLC will license the course to us for future use in order to scale the work. In future years, we envision using the percentage of a school’s staff that has voluntarily completed HCS PL training in the school selection process as one measure of a school community’s enthusiasm and capacity for PL. Additionally, HCS has partnered with the National Youth Leadership Council to provide training and support in the development of service learning sites. Authentic, project based learning is epitomized by fully operational service learning sites in the NYLC model and their partnership with State Farm and HCS provides funding and training that will continue to build capacity in this tenet of the HCS Vision for PL.

**Give All Staff Access to a District-Wide and Curated Digital Repository of PL Resources.** All HCS staff and the community will receive access to the district’s digital repository of PL resources, to give them an opportunity to explore, experiment with, and incorporate PL tools into their work even before their school enters the PL design process. The repository of resources is housed at [www.henry.k12.ga.us/personalizedlearning](http://www.henry.k12.ga.us/personalizedlearning) (Refer to section “IX. A. District Supports” for additional detail.)

**Offer Regular Tours of HCS Schools with PL-Intensive Models.** To date, the most effective local step that has done the most to create comfort with and excitement about the tenets of personalized learning among HCS staff has been the establishment of a blended learning academy at Locust Grove Middle School (LGMS). A significant part of that influence has been the weekly tours LGMS staff and students give to visitors from both inside and outside of HCS, which offer not only a chance to see the Carpe Diem-inspired rotation model in action, but to ask students about their experiences in it. In the hopes of spawning similar conversations and exposing HCS staff to a range of PL-intensive models, the district will require schools that have completed the PL design process to offer regular tours to both HCS staff and others. This expectation not only builds capacity amongst visitors, but creates both a layer of accountability as each school has to tell its story effectively and an impetus for continuous improvement and development as visitors ask probing questions of the school and its models. An example with the LGMS tours to date has been the desire to effectively track indicators of success around attendance, discipline, and academic achievement so that they can show tangible measures of success of the model as well as anecdotal experience. These measures have more meaning and power when the impetus for collection and analysis is internal instead of an external district expectation.

**Send select HCS staff members to tour PL-intensive schools elsewhere.** In an effort to educate and inspire the building leaders who will be asked to lead this change in their schools, HCS dedicated a
significant portion of its Phase I funding to send every middle and high school principal in the district to visit schools around the country that have implemented some element(s) of personalized learning. These trips have transformed the thinking of our school leaders and jump-started a district-wide conversation about how best to redesign the school experience, generating excitement that extends well beyond the initial travelers. A sample of some of the principals’ responses is in Appendix N.

**B. Technological supports**

**Network infrastructure:** Network and wireless infrastructure support will be provided by the district to enable blended learning opportunities and the effective use of technology for both instructional and administrative purposes. Schools will have the ability to make additional investments in network infrastructure if they choose, but the expectation is that the district will provide sufficient bandwidth and network connections to allow every student in the building access to online learning resources. By the start of the 2014-15 school year, every Henry County Schools building will have a Wi-Fi network capable of supporting both district-owned and student-owned devices.

**Hardware:** Henry County Schools will provide schools with funds to purchase computing devices as part of its annual IT budgeting process. The amount received by each school will vary from year to year, increasing substantially in years when schools are slated to “refresh” their instructional technology. Schools have the ability to augment district allocations with building-level funds as they see fit.

In the near term, HCS will provide schools with sufficient funds to maintain their current student-to-device ratios. While the district’s current student-to-device ratio is greater than 4:1, the expectation is that district funds will support progressively lower ratios as hardware prices fall and funds are re-allocated from other instructional supports (e.g., printed instructional materials).

In the long term, HCS plans to secure additional funding for instructional technology from the community through its next Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), which historical precedent suggests will go to voters in 2018 and impact 2019-24 budgets.

**Software:** Henry County Schools will provide and maintain core educational software systems – the most important of which are its Student Information System (SIS), Instructional Management System (IMS) and Learning Management System (LMS) – and provide staff with training on the use of those systems. HCS currently uses Infinite Campus as its SIS, Pearson’s SchoolNet at its IMS, and Edgenuity as its primary LMS. Schools are free to augment those digital learning tools with additional software purchased with school funds, in consultation with district IT staff.

**Centralized IT support:** Henry County Schools will continue to provide schools with centralized IT support, and will work with School Design Teams to determine the most effective way to meet their future needs. It is assumed IT support will need to increase along with the number and instructional importance of student computing devices, and the district will work with the School Design Teams to determine the specific needs of each school as they implement. Some schools may need more direct support from IT with regard to troubleshooting with devices and others may need more instructional technology support.
X. PL Implementation Plan: Building Broader Awareness, Demand and Readiness

A. Community Awareness
The third and final component of Henry County Schools’ personalized learning implementation plan is an effort to build awareness of, demand for, and readiness for PL among the community at large. For the community at large, the goal is to explain how personalized learning will better prepare HCS students for college and career success, and to help prepare families for the changes they will see when their children’s schools transition to PL-intensive instructional models. Additionally, we believe that strong partnerships with community stakeholders are essential to creating a personalized learning experience for students. From work-based learning internships, to collaboratively developing curriculum with business and industries that allows students to engage in training and knowledge work that prepares them for careers after graduation, it is essential to build capacity within the broader community.

Engagement strategies for Henry County community members will be discussed briefly in the following sections; a high-level overview can be found below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Objectives</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help prepare families for changes they will see in their children’s school experience</td>
<td>Create materials introducing PL to HCS families and the general public (e.g., website, video, brochure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain to the community at large how PL will better prepare students for college and career success</td>
<td>Provide schools with materials to lead PL discussions with their school communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build a PL talent pipeline through the university system</td>
<td>Engage the local business community to...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage community businesses in providing authentic learning experiences for students</td>
<td>— Help define “21st Century skills”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Develop internships and authentic learning experiences for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engage higher education to...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Help define K-12 student learning objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Establish competency-based admissions criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Ensure regional teacher training programs produce PL-capable educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Petition state for needed flexibility to enable PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-develop PL endorsement for certification from Professional Standards Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Publicly discuss performance of PL school models</td>
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</table>
Henry County Community at Large Personalized Learning implementation represents a significant change from current educational practice. Enacting that change will require the support of not only Henry County Schools’ staff, but also HCS families, community members, and regional institutions of higher education. School transformations will be dead on arrival if HCS families do not support them, and less effective than desired if they are unprepared to help their students through them. The district’s long-term financial plan could be at risk if Henry County voters do not understand how HCS’ personalized learning implementation better prepares students for college and career success, and in the process improves the community’s long-range prospects. And HCS will have a hard time finding the teachers it needs if regional post-secondary education programs do not prepare their students to teach in PL-intensive environments.

Henry County Schools’ broader community engagement plan consists of five tactics:

- Engage HCS families to explain PL and the changes they will likely see
- Engage the business community to help define learning objectives and internship opportunities
- Engage higher education to...
  - Help define learning objectives
  - Prepare admissions offices to evaluate competency-based transcripts
  - Ensure training programs to prepare new and experienced teachers to lead PL classrooms
- Develop and curate resources on the district website explaining PL
- Engage with state-level officials regarding policies that enable PL

Engage HCS families. One of the largest potential barriers to PL adoption is the instinctive resistance many parents and guardians have to educational models that vary significantly from those that they
experienced as children. HCS plans to mitigate this risk by clearly communicating to all HCS parents – not just those with children in PL design schools – the motivations and justifications driving the district’s embrace of Personalized Learning. Our belief is that once parents understand why we so strongly believe that PL will help us better serve their students, the vast majority will be enthusiastic supporters.

We also believe that engaging families early in the process is crucial, to prevent them from feeling surprised with their children’s schools embark on the PL design process. HCS plans to engage its families through a variety of means, including but not limited to presentations at parent association meetings, e-mail announcements, district newsletters, school board meetings, all-district PL info sessions, media reports, and a well-maintained PL page on the district website.

**Engage the business community.** Henry County Schools will engage with our business community by leveraging our current relationship with the Chamber of Commerce and by maximizing the support we have from the local Economics and Education (E2) Initiative in Henry County. Currently, the business community works with the school district to provide work based learning internships for over 300 students in the district that are based on developing work-ready skills and behaviors. These credit-bearing work experiences are coordinated through the Career, Technical, Agricultural and Engineering department personnel at every district high school. We believe that personalized learning creates an opportunity for the business community to broaden their connection to and impact on student learning. It will be essential to build on our already-strong partnerships to expand how and when students engage in academic learning within authentic experiences. The district office will take an active role in both seeking out new partners and refining current partnerships to focus on academic and authentic learning experiences with the broader community as we strive to make student college and career ready.

An example of this partnership is the district’s work to pilot a pathway curriculum in conjunction with the Lieutenant Governor’s office and Usher’s New Look Foundation that connects the music and marketing career pathway with student classroom experience. This unique partnership is one of many the district will develop to provide students more real life, personalized learning experiences in high school.

Originally, Henry County Schools had included Communities in Schools – Henry (CIS-Henry) as a partner organization in this grant. Our partnership with CIS-Henry focused on providing wrap-around services and additional supports for students and families as the traditional model of schooling changed under personalized learning. Additionally, we wanted to leverage their experience with personal learning centers to help engage in the school design process. Although our relationship with CIS-Henry will continue, the organization has had a significant change in leadership and capacity in the last six months and has chosen to withdraw as a primary participant in the grant work. We will continue to work with CIS-Henry with three of our schools and expand our relationship as their organizational capacity grows.

**Engage higher education.** Finally, HCS believes it is essential to have open dialogue and connection with the University System of Georgia (USG) as well as the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG). Personalized learning will impact the USG/TCSG with regard to:
a. students leaving HCS under a competency-based model and its impact on their matriculation at universities in Georgia and
b. our expectations of pre-service programs preparing new teachers to work in HCS.

We have begun discussions with the Colleges of Education at Clayton State University, Georgia State University, and University of Georgia and had them provide insight on our work to date and the future. Faculty members from Georgia State and University of Georgia have reviewed drafts of this application and contributed valuable feedback over the course of the past few months related to professional development, best practices related to the integration of technology, and pre-service teacher training. Additionally, our close partnership with Southern Crescent Technical College through the Academy for Advanced Studies has allowed us to open numerous opportunities for students to enroll in post-secondary training/coursework that makes them work force ready. These conversations are the beginning of an ongoing PL-focused dialog and deepening of the existing relationships we have with USG/TSCG.

Create a webpage explaining PL. The district has the responsibility to provide broad definitions related to PL and visioning for the general community, board members, and faculty members. The district will continue to host open meetings, establish and maintain a webpage on personalized learning on the HCS website, and provide technical assistance for a local school community engagement plan. It is our expectation that each school will play the primary and significant role of engaging their staff, faculty, and parents in the development and implementation of the school level personalized learning plan. A key component of each school’s implementation plan will be well designed and articulated community engagement plan. The website may be viewed here: [www.henry.k12.ga.us/personalizedlearning](http://www.henry.k12.ga.us/personalizedlearning)

Engage with state-level entities regarding policies that enable PL. Governor Deal recently assembled a task force to examine using digital resources to improve student achievement and equip students with 21st century skills for college and career readiness. Recommendations from that task force, released in mid-December 2013, support all of the core tenets of HCS’ vision for personalized learning, including the following:

- Expand access to digital resources in classrooms across the state of Georgia through improving infrastructure
- Provide blended and competency-based learning opportunities, so that PK-12 and postsecondary students are able to broaden, accelerate, or otherwise pace their learning appropriately and ensure mastery before progressing.
- Define competency-based learning as applied learning to mastery that may be demonstrated in multiple formats, with multiple opportunities, and through multiple pathways where students advance based on the demonstration of such mastery.
- Design a funding mechanism that provides flexibility to foster blended and competency-based learning while balancing the operational needs of districts.
- Consider how existing parameters and requirements in state policy and procedure may adversely impact blended and competency-based learning as well as course choice in Georgia. Revisit and refine the related laws or policies in the state to maximize opportunities for dual credit, blended, and competency-based learning.
- Find ways to incentivize the blended learning and competency-based courses, programs, and opportunities that expand and extend learning opportunities for students. Use the Innovation
Fund, housed at the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), to support pilots and identify scalable models.

- To promote 21st century learning, schools and districts must consider how traditional classroom structures and furniture inhibit teachers from the differentiation needed for effective blended learning. Everything in a learning space should have purposeful thought that promotes learning.

Henry County Schools was represented on the task force by a teacher at Stockbridge High School who is also on the Impact Academy faculty, Mr. Gerard Petty. Additionally, the working team met with the Deputy Director of the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, Sam Rauschenberg, who coordinated the task force, to discuss the implications of the recommendations and establish a closer working relationship with GOSA. The open dialog between the district and GOSA will continue to inform district and state decision-making with regard to policies impacting personalizing learning.

A link to the report in its entirety may be found in Appendix O.

Additionally, HCS is pursuing the development of a Personalized Learning Licensure endorsement for Georgia teachers through the Professional Standards Commission (PSC). The two-year process will allow HCS to offer a credentialed endorsement in Personalized Learning to teachers’ licensure. In Spring 2014, HCS will assemble a team of district and school-level personnel to begin the work of offering an in-district path for teachers to earn PL certification endorsement. The first year is dedicated to the development and implementation of the endorsement rule and the second year for Henry County Schools to complete the unit report, develop all support materials, create the courses, and receive PSC approval to offer the PL Endorsement Program. Based on previous successful experience obtaining permission to offer an in-county program offering Gifted endorsement, HCS is experienced in navigating this process and expects to be successful in this effort as well.
## B. Stakeholder Engagement Plan

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Additional Action Steps</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Competitive Selection Webinar</td>
<td>Technical expectations for applications/Q&amp;A</td>
<td>Karen Perry / Working Group</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Coordinators</td>
<td>Competencies and PL Definitions</td>
<td>Competency Framework Developed</td>
<td>Steve Thompson / Aaryn Schmuhl</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parent Awareness Meeting</td>
<td>Timeline, purpose, Definitions</td>
<td>District Personalized Learning Video</td>
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<td>Professional Standards Commission</td>
<td>PL endorsement application</td>
<td>Initiate process steps for PL endorsement</td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
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<td>Schools</td>
<td>Competitive Selection Webinar</td>
<td>Technical Advice on applications/Q and A</td>
<td>Karen Perry / Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community, Schools, Teachers, Parents, and students</td>
<td>Vision Personalized Learning in Schools</td>
<td>Animated Script Describing Personalized Learning</td>
<td>Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Announcement of Pilot Schools in Henry Herald and Website</td>
<td>Phase II expectations</td>
<td>Webinar for Cohort 2015 schools</td>
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<td>Parent Meeting</td>
<td>Phase II expectations and timeline</td>
<td>School Design Team Initial Training</td>
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<td>May</td>
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<td>SDT Convening on Implementation Planning/Training</td>
<td>Summer PD/Pre-planning/working time.</td>
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<td>Working Group</td>
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<td>Parents/Faculty Meetings/Open Houses</td>
<td>School Level Plan for training and implementation</td>
<td>Support visits to training/planning days</td>
<td>SDTs / Working Group</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
XI. Budgets

Henry County has greatly benefitted from participation in the Phase I planning process. Our continued relationship with the Gates Foundation will allow us to operationalize personalized learning:

a) **better** (by connecting us with more and varied external resources),
b) **faster** (by giving us resources to help jump-start the process), and
c) **with greater impact** (by increasing others' exposure to post-PL HCS).

Most importantly, it will allow us do several things at once, instead of having to cobble things together over years of steady-but-modest investment. The biggest benefit of the catalyst approach -- where BMGF support would make the biggest difference -- is in the development and delivery of Personalized Learning professional development to a critical mass of HCS educators. Solid and well-informed district-wide professional learning communities about PL require teachers to have a common lexicon and initial understandings. PL support will accelerate our ability to establish professional development discussion that will be the difference between small pockets of reform and scalable district-wide implementation. The professional development goes beyond simple training, and is focused on creating communities of practice that will be self-perpetuating over time. Itemized budgets may be found in Appendix P, but a high-level description of each follows.

A. Phase II

Henry County Schools is asking for $300,000 for planning grants to support the six first-round schools to operationalize personalized learning in August 2015. We plan to maximize the amount of money going to the schools while balancing that with district supports of tools/resources that advance personalized learning work in all schools across the district over time. The district will use $40,000 to supplement a district-level project manager to directly support the first-round schools and serve as a liaison between the schools and service providers, vendors, as well as coordinate webinars, convenings, and guide schools through the planning process. Those funds will be matched by the district, and the district will fund all other positions related to supporting this work, including the Coordinator of Personalized Learning, who will devote 50% of his time to this work, and the Coordinator of Instructional Technology and two Data Response Facilitators, who will also each devote approximately 25% of their time to this work. Additionally, the Assistant Superintendent of Learning and Leadership Services will devote a significant portion of his time to the planning and implementation of PL throughout the district, as will other district-level staff. By making PL a core part of the district strategic plan, we have enabled the resources of the central office to be focused on supporting school level implementation.

All other funds requested for use at the district level will be allocated for professional development in order to build capacity to operationalize PL. $5,000 will be allocated as stipends for teachers to serve as PL coaches, facilitating staff through PL modules, co-designed between HCS and Personalize Learning LLC. Because moving to a competency-based grading system will require significant training for teachers and support staff, the largest portion of requested funds, $24,500, will be designated for the
development of competencies and support training for instruction. An additional $14,000 will be allocated for PD related to best practices in blended learning and authentic learning experiences. We are aware that district-wide PD for these tents require ongoing support for teachers and staff, and the district is prepared not only to facilitate that work, but also to incur entry-level expenses related to it.

The district views its role in the school design process as a support to that school level work. We anticipate that all schools will have additional school-specific professional development needs centering on competency work, as well as training for teachers in best practices in blended learning, designing authentic, project-based and capstone projects, and effective use and design of the learner profiles. To that end, the district will take primary responsibility for designing entry-level professional development modules through vendors and coordinating PLCs to scale and support PD for PL. The professional development modules will be used to support a credentialing process for all schools in the district, beginning with the first six grantees, but extending throughout the district. Schools will also have additional and specific professional development needs, and the district sees its role as a resource in helping schools connect with the best provider for their needs (i.e. master scheduling, flexible use of human resources, blended rotation models, etc.).

The district has already provided for wireless access in every school building by the August 2014 and has a refresh plan for technology that will provide for 3:1 device ratio as schools complete the refresh process, so schools will not have to incur any additional costs related to IT infrastructure. The board of education obligated an additional $15 million in SPLOST debt in November to accelerate the implementation of wireless access in all schools from a five year to a two year roll out. This commitment of additional funding from the board is a tangible investment in personalized learning.

Each of the six schools will receive $35,000 for planning grant purposes, totaling $210,000. This money may be used at the schools’ discretion but the district would recommend the funds be used for the purposes of travel to expose school design teams to best practices related to PL, school-specific professional development expertise from consultants beyond that which is provided by the district, and stipends for teachers working to develop school plans.

**B. Phase III**

For Phase III funding, HCS is asking for $1.5 million to support the launch of four to six Cohort 2015 schools, and also to help lay the foundation for PL for the remaining 45 schools in the district. HCS asks that 10% of those funds be designated for district-level expenses, including project management to support this work, and professional development resources that support the design schools as well as the other schools in the district.

The four-six Cohort 2015 redesign schools will have autonomy to spend the remaining 90% of funds, divided on a per-pupil basis. HCS anticipates schools will spend the funds in the following categories: personnel (both project management and site-based PL coaches); travel and conferences to study best practices; ongoing professional development for all staff; and the purchase of devices.

- District asks for 10% of funds to pay for district personnel to support this work
Schools may spend money in the following categories:

- **Personnel**
  - School-based personnel to support this work (project manager)
  - Personalized Learning Coach

- **Travel/Conferences**
  - School visits to study best practices
  - iNACOL, GaETC, ISTE, NYLC

- **Ongoing professional development**
  - Personalize Learning Coursework
  - Service Learning training from NYLC and/or PBL training from the Buck Institute
  - Summer training time for school level staff members
  - Development of Best Practices Training in PL for all of HCS

Consistent with our model of School Design Teams having autonomy over school structure in a PL environment, we believe that ultimate authority for the majority of expenditures associated with Phase III dollars should be a school based decision. The district will help to organize district wide PL PLCs and encourage Cohort 2015 schools to pool their resources for maximum efficiency and effectiveness of expenditures. In addition to building capacity in their own staff and faculty, Cohort 2015 schools have an obligation to develop professional development modules that will aid in the future roll out of PL to all of Henry County Schools. The investment of Phase III dollars will have a lasting and sustainable impact on the district through Cohort 2015’s expertise being shared with future schools implementing PL.

**C. Phase IV and Beyond**

Moving forward into Phase IV and beyond, Henry County Schools will engage all of our schools in a cycle of planning and development built around professional learning and innovative models of instruction and school design. The district will continue to fund and offer initial PL PD for all schools and provide the same levels of support during the planning cycle. The addition of SPLOST V dollars will allow the district to fund devices and technology support in the future. The district has already and will continue to allocate operating expenses to support the critical tools necessary for school redesign and implementation of PL. From the development and maintenance of Learner Profiles, technology enabled instruction, and competency maps to local professional development on PL tenets of PBL and formative assessment, we are poised to not only implement but sustain personalized learning within our current operating budget.

Cohort 2015 schools will serve as a free, local resource for principals and school design teams starting in Cohort 2016 and beyond. The power of the vision for personalized learning in Henry County Schools is that after initial kick off and implementation, we believe that future operating dollars are sufficient to support implementation to scale. By allowing schools to have autonomy over design and implementation of the tenets, while maximizing economies of scale around the specific technology tools and infrastructure that schools need, HCS is poised to ensure the success of each student.