



Foothills Strategic Planning Retreat, Jekyll Island, Georgia—Achievements, Recap

It has been just a few short weeks since our annual Foothills Strategic Planning Retreat, held once again on Jekyll Island. For those who got to spend two days with us, here is a good summary of some of the important issues we covered. And for those unable to attend in person, this information should help bring you up to speed as you get ready to start the new school year.

Foothills Superintendent Dr. Sherrie Gibney-Sherman kicked off the event with a great summary of many of our key achievements to date—here are just *some* of the highlights of her presentation:

- 2,920 students served this year (as of June 2022)
- 14,868 students served since Foothills opened its doors seven years ago (and the numbers continue to grow)
- 1,816 graduates to date, with more than 300 this year alone
- 410 graduates from the three correctional sites
- 20 sites offering 8 different areas for career certification – with more to come
- SCSC Comprehensive Performance Framework – exceeded all three standards
- 20% increase in the number of students taking EOCs from FY21 to FY22
- Weighted Content Mastery increases in Algebra (41.3% to 48.5%), Biology (54.1% to 65.8%), and US History (59.6% to 80%). American Literature also remained strong at 59.9%.
- Completed a total revision of the GradPoint curriculum/assessments to align with Georgia Standards
- Deployed Canvas as our Learning Management System and started using it to centralize resources for all employees
- Identified literacy as a critical area of need, adding a reading instructor at each site
- Expanded life skills experiences for students and added corresponding professional development for employees
- Added an Alumni Transition Counselor to meet the increasing needs of Foothills graduates
- Increased enrollment at the Virtual Campus to meet statewide demand
- Partnered with the University of Georgia Fanning Institute for Leadership Development to create a student leadership program
- Established a Family Advisory Council
- Created site-based clinics

Message from the Superintendent

Foothills Team, I am so proud of the work we did together at the recent Strategic Planning Retreat. In the space of short two days, we covered so much important ground, and I don't think that things could have gone any better. After looking at some of our major achievements—we really have done some amazing work, haven't we?—Todd Nickelsen led us through a group activity to review the 30 Cognia Performance Standards that will be guiding our Strategic Plan and our work for the next six years.

On the second day, we turned our focus to site-based school improvement planning. This was an area where we showed major growth as an organization last year, and we expect to continue to develop expectations and procedures to make sure that we are working in a unified and coherent direction and that we are all using the same goals in order to pull together this year. On page 3, you will see the goal areas we are all planning to focus on this year.

—**Sherrie**

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Foothills Strategic Planning Retreat—Cognia/Strategic Plan

Foothills Regional Instructional Specialist, **Todd Nickelsen**, then led the group through a review of the ongoing Cognia Accreditation/Strategic Planning work that we have been involved in for much of the past year, reminding us once again of the importance of aligning our Strategic Plan Review (done every six years), our District Improvement Plan Evaluation (done annually), and our ongoing Monthly Site Improvement Meetings. We also looked at the overarching four Foothills Strategic Plan Pillars (see graphic on right) that will guide our work: College and Career Readiness, Supportive Culture, Organizational Effectiveness, and Community Collaboration.

Nickelsen had us break into smaller groups to review the 30 Cognia Performance Standards, with each group assigned a few of the standards. We worked through the following questions:

1. When considering (this standard), what are things that Foothills does exceptionally well?
2. Provide evidence and indicate why this standard is an area of strength.
3. Still considering (this standard), identify any potential areas for improvement, and explain why.
4. If an area of needs improvement was identified for (this standard), provide existing data or evidence that supports this.

Groups then evaluated the standards assigned to them, using a Level 1-4 scale: 4 = Demonstrating noteworthy systematic and systemic practices (75% of the time or more) producing clear results that positively impact learners; 3 = Engaging in practices (50%-74% of the time) that provide evidence of expected effectiveness that is reflected in the standard; 2 = Developing or improving practices (25%-49% of the time) that provide evidence that effort approaches desired level of effectiveness; 1 = Reflecting areas with insufficient evidence and/or limited activity (less than 25% of the time) leading toward improvement.

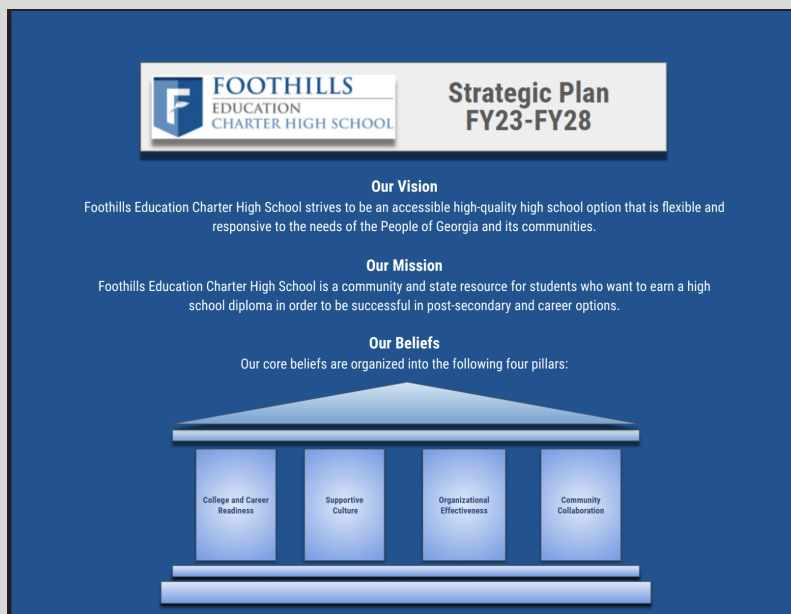
Finally, when we reconvened and culled the responses from all of the smaller groups, two Cognia Performance Standards were identified as areas to guide and focus our planning work this year:

Cognia Performance Standard #18—Learners are immersed in an environment that fosters lifelong skills including creativity, curiosity, risk taking, collaboration, and design thinking.

Conditions within the institution promote learners' lifelong skills. Learners engage in experiences that develop the non-academic skills important for their next steps in learning and for future success. Learning experiences build skills in creativity, curiosity,

Cognia Performance Standard #29—Understanding learners' needs and interests drives the design delivery application, and evaluation of professional learning.

Professional learning is learner-centered, designed around the principles that professional staff members need opportunities to focus on improving pedagogical skills and knowledge to better address learners' needs and interests.



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The Foothills Vision

Foothills Education Charter High School strives to be an accessible, high-quality high school option that is flexible and responsive to the needs of the People of Georgia and its communities.

Foothills Strategic Planning Retreat— Site-Based Improvement Planning

The third leg of our two-day retreat was to turn our focus to site-based school improvement planning, incorporating the Cognia Performance Standards/Strategic Plan and the District Improvement Plan. The goal is to have a straight-line planning focus at all levels, to guide our work in an effective and coherent way. During the past year, we made great progress in developing and following up on consistent standards for monthly school improvement planning across all 20 Foothills sites. Per Todd Nickelson, “We will continue with Site Improvement Planning Meetings again this year AND Foothills Regional Office Staff will be assigned to support those meetings.” (I look forward to continuing to be part of those efforts).

We decided that all sites would work on these two goals—**Graduation Rate and Performance**—see these [samples](#):

GOAL 1: Graduation Rate / Credits Earned

In an effort to improve the Foothills graduation rate, we will increase the average number of credits earned per student from 1.0 to 1.5 by the end of the 2022-2023 school year. ([Compete to Complete Data Sheet](#))

When writing action steps, make sure you can answer “yes” to all of these questions for each action step.

1. Does each action step begin with a verb?
2. Does each action step directly support the attainment of the goal?
3. Are the action steps specific enough so that each person at the site clearly understands what is to be accomplished and their role in accomplishing it?
4. Does the action step align to one of the [strategic plan](#) pillars?
 - College and Career Readiness
 - Supportive Culture
 - Community Collaboration
 - Organizational Effectiveness

GOAL 2: Performance / Weighted Content Mastery

Increase the weighted content mastery percentage for our site from 27.27 % to 40% by the end of the 2022-2023 school year. (minimum of 10 percentage points)

When writing action steps, make sure you can answer “yes” to all of these questions for each action step.

1. Does each action step begin with a verb?
2. Does each action step directly support the attainment of the goal?
3. Are the action steps specific enough so that each person at the site clearly understands what is to be accomplished and their role in accomplishing it?
4. Does the action step align to one of the [strategic plan](#) pillars?
 - College and Career Readiness
 - Supportive Culture
 - Community Collaboration
 - Organizational Effectiveness

Note the directions for each goal, and note also that if sites want to add goals that they believe will improve their performance, they may do so, but all sites are expected to address at least these two.



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