

# Hart County High School

## Executive Summary

### Mr. Kevin Gaines, Principal

**Describe the school's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school serves?**

Hart County, established in 1920, is located in northeast Georgia, 50 miles northwest of Athens. Hart County was named for Nancy Hart, the Georgian responsible for capturing British soldiers by acting as a spy. Hart County is also the only one of the 159 counties in Georgia to be named after a woman. Today, Hart County is home to almost 27,000 citizens, 1.3% increase over 2019. The eastern side of Hart County is occupied by Lake Hartwell that divides the state of Georgia and South Carolina. The Savannah River starts at Lake Hartwell and travels down the eastern side of the state of Georgia to Savannah.

Hart County High School (HCHS) has a current total enrollment of 1023 students, an increase from the 2019-20 enrollment of 1013. Approximately 62% of the student body is Caucasian/White in ethnicity, 23% African American, 9% Hispanic, 4% Multiracial, and 2% Asian. The ethnic composition of HCHS differs slightly of Hart County itself. Census data from 2020 shows that 77.34% of the county's population was Caucasian/White, 18.45% African American, 4% Hispanic, 2.12% Multiracial, 0.4 American Indian/Alaskan Native and .03% Asian/Pacific Islander. Of the 10,019 households in 2020 in Hart County, 79.2% of the residents are homeowners. The ratio of younger dependents (0-14) to the working population (15-64) is 36.4. Hart County is also home to many senior citizens and retirees, 20.1% of the population, because of their desire to live on Lake Hartwell.

In 2020 the median income for a household in the county was \$41,358. Of the just over 10,000 households, 17.4% of people are living at the poverty level and of those living in poverty, only 1% hold a Bachelor's degree or higher. While overall, data indicated that 15% of the population 25 and older held a bachelor's degree or higher. The poverty level of the community is reflected in the fact that 54% of the students at Hart County High School qualify for free or reduced meals. The unemployment rate is down to 4.9%.

HCHS serves 1023 students in grades 9-12. Of the total population of 1023 students in the fall of 2020, 139 or 13.6% are served by the Special Education Program. Due to community and student growth, HCHS moved into a new academic facility in 2007. In 2018 a new Multi-Purpose Health and Wellness Center and a state-of-the-art College and Career Academy were added. The College and Career Academy has provided a plethora of opportunities for HCHS students to earn college credit, learn trade skills, and complete certifications, all without leaving the HCHS Campus.

All schools in the HCSS face unique challenges brought about by poverty and geographic location. Many of the students who are enrolled are members of economically disadvantaged families. There are many programs in place to combat the issue of student poverty. These programs range from the mentor program to providing access to extra tutoring and technology, now one-to-one for all HCHS students. Also, students may live as far as 15 miles away and transportation to events other than the regular school day can be difficult. Finding ways to incorporate tutoring, parent conferences, extra-curricular activities and other events that normally take place after the school day can be a challenge. This challenge has become more of a hardship as budgets for both families and the school have decreased. One way this need has been addressed is the addition of Bulldog Time, the last 30 minutes of each day. During this period, students are able to get extra tutoring, attend meetings, extend their learning, etc. all during the school day and without the worry of transportation outside the 8am-3pm schedule. Lastly, the universal issue of reduced parental involvement as our students' progress from elementary to middle to high school is amplified due to our unique challenges. We schedule meetings in the evenings and some afternoons and invite all parents. We send letters home, utilize the local newspaper, school website, Remind text messaging, and the Blackboard Connect automated call out system to notify and encourage parents to attend. We continue to make adjustments to our methods and means of communication to do our best to reach out to all of our families. We are constantly looking for ways to improve communication with the HCHS stakeholders.

#### School's Purpose

**Provide the school's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.**

The mission of the HCSS is to "prepare all individuals to meet tomorrow's challenges by providing quality educational opportunities today. There is a diverse student population with many options to meet their needs. Hart County offers numerous special programs including: gifted education, English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), special education, and remedial education. Credit Recovery and extended learning programs are made available to students to assist them with maintaining their academic success. Extracurricular activities range from academics to athletic opportunities. Creating challenging and relevant opportunities is the compass that guides the day-to-day activities and decisions toward accomplishing HCHS's purpose.

In order to support and help direct our efforts, we rely on the direction and knowledge of our School Governance Team. This team consisting of community leaders, high school administration, parents, teachers, and students meets monthly to maintain their "finger on the pulse" of what is going on currently and in the future at HCHS. Based on their individual areas of expertise along with their understanding of the needs and plans of HCHS, these team members are able to provide guidance for HCHS plans currently and for the future. We rely on their input to support and steer all that we do at HCHS. Our School Governance Team was instrumental in a change with made in our mathematics curriculum. Our School Governance wanted to look at other options for a math instead of just funneling every student into Advanced Algebra. Out of decision at our meeting, they presented to the HCSS BOE and the change was made so that our students that might be headed to a technical college or work had other options.

We believe that the purpose of HCHS is to provide the opportunity for each individual to discover his or her own personal strengths and weaknesses and to develop knowledge and skills necessary to be a productive and accountable member of society by providing a myriad of possibilities for success with a huge variety of offerings. We believe that HCHS should seek to prepare each individual to live as a

responsible, fulfilled member of our constantly changing world. Education is not stagnant and should be related to the needs and interests of the student. The educational system should reflect the society of today and prepare students for the future. We recognize the individuality of students and staff at HCHS and believe balance must be achieved and maintained between personal and cultural expectations. This includes providing an integrated curriculum, which will enable individuals to be balanced, tolerant, and well-adjusted citizens in any environment in which they participate. Realizing the comprehensiveness of our philosophy, we actively seek the cooperation of the home, other educational institutions, and our total community in achieving our goals. The HCHS student mission statement is "through excellence in teaching and in partnership with parents and the community, our mission is to provide an educational environment that challenges students to become lifelong learners and responsible, productive members of society" and the HCHS motto is "Finish What You Start with Excellence" which undergirds the HCSS vision statement: "Hart County Schools will be recognized for educational excellence." At HCHS, we strive for success for our students

While after-school tutoring programs are implemented at various times at all levels, it is critical that tutoring services be offered throughout the school day to accommodate all students. Bulldog Time, a 30-minute block at the end of the day, provides that time within the school day so that transportation is not an issue. Students are able to find remediation, enrichment, tutoring, credit recovery, and clubs/organizations offered during this time. We are constantly looking for ways to improve student success. HCHS is on block scheduling, which gives our students more opportunities. Students can earn up to 32 credits while only 28 are required for graduation. This is an efficient method that allows students to take academic support classes or retake failed classes while still graduating on time.

High school students can select from many different pathway options through the Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE), Fine Arts, and Advanced Academic programs. The ACCEL and dual enrollment programs at HCHS have shown significant growth and provide our students with the opportunity to receive college credit in high school. The district is especially proud of its Hart County extracurricular activities. We have seen much success over the years. While SkillsUSA and Technology Student Association (TSA) has competed at the national level for the past two years and won a National title, many other Career and technical Student organizations (CTSOs) have been competitive at both the region and state levels. Other school student organizations include the National FFA Organization, Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), Family, Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), 4-H, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). Finally, HCSS

Strives to maintain a comprehensive and competitive athletic program. Students may become involved in athletics as early as sixth grade and choose from a variety of sports including track, cross-country, volleyball, wrestling, tennis, softball, baseball, soccer, cheerleading, basketball, golf, and football. We believe students who are involved in extracurricular activities are more likely to stay in school and graduate. Our goal is to continue and even enhance the programs we already offer.

#### Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement

**Describe the school's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school is striving to achieve in the next three years.**

One of the most notable recent achievements for HCSS is the 2018-19 high school graduation rates as reported in our CCRPI scores: 95.7% for all students, 93.3% for African American, 96.23% for Caucasian/White, 68.42% for students with disabilities, and 93.07% for economically disadvantaged students. This is significant considering that the statewide graduation rates stood at 82% for all students. One area of continued improvement for HCHS is our EOC scores that are constantly being assessed and reviewed. For 2017-18, the percent of students who met and exceeded were as follows: English-Language Arts (9<sup>th</sup> Grade Lit and American Lit) 78.25%; Math (Coordinate Algebra and Analytic Geometry) 68.35%; Science (Physical Science and Biology) 62.23%; Social Studies (Economics and US History) 82.44%. ELA definitely led the way with flag indicators, coming in with two green starred flags (met 6% improvement target) for economically disadvantaged and students with disabilities, a huge accomplishment. Furthermore, 65.5% of graduating seniors completed a CTAE pathway and 96.6% of students completed a pathway. Many of our students participate in Dual Enrollment opportunities, 53.61% of our population. Another area in which we stand out is attendance as reported by our CCPRI scores; we earned 92.57 which is exemplary for high school.

HCHS strives to provide our students with a quality education, including resources and remediation in order to be successful on state standardized tests. HCHS provides in depth remediation for students throughout the school year through Bulldog Time and after school tutoring, summer school and even on Saturdays through Saturday School.

One thing we are especially proud of is our STEAM program which started in 2014. Our STEAM cohorts have had the opportunity to take what we call “skinny” classes in which two courses with two teachers are combined to become yearlong on our block schedule. This groups are fluid combining curricula as they related to each other, offering fluid student groups, incorporating PBL (Project-based learning) strategies, and so much more. These students get out of the regular classroom and delve into projects and activities that impact the real world in their own lives. These students were and are our top students. While it has evolved over the years, we are delighted at some of the outcomes, one of which was the creation of the LiftEd (Learning Innovatively for Tomorrow Education) in 2018. In an effort to allow more students to participate in PBL-type learning, we added this layer of STEAM for students who are not necessarily at the top of their class but are willing to do what it takes to learn differently and more uniquely than their peers. So now, twice as many students are challenged with innovative teaching and more student-centered learning strategies.

HCHS strives to create an environment where students will feel important and actively participate in their education. One way we do this is by selecting two students each month as the students of the month. The students receive a various coupons and gift cards from business partners in our community. HCHS has taken advantage of the Teachers as Advisors program, in which each teacher is assigned a group of students and serves as their advisor until they graduate. Through this program, students have the opportunity to receive individual attention for their personal graduation plan. We dug even deeper this year creating an at-risk advisement group that meets not only during Bulldog Time but also through advisement. These students are picked specifically based on data that shows they are at high risk for dropping out. Faculty members volunteered to take these groups and with the \$5000 Rural Grant through the GADOE, these students will have opportunities to do industry visits, college visits, and other activities to push them toward graduation and a successful life. Furthermore, the implementation of the Georgia's Best Business Ethics Framework has established a high standard for student behavior and the development

of "soft skills" to help students become successful in school and in the world of work. HCHS has also implemented 7 Mindsets, a program designed to promote self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

HCHS also has an increased focus on standards-based instruction. Along with the implementation of the Teachers Keys Effectiveness System, school leadership makes collaborative planning for academic departments a priority when building the master schedule. Teachers are required to plan with one another and have begun to build a repertoire of common unit plans and assessments. Professional learning works hand-in-hand with collaborative planning as teachers are given opportunities to learn and apply the key components of a standards-based classroom, such as formative assessment and differentiation. Teachers are able to choose from a large variety of PL courses to meet their individual needs and subject areas. Academic Coaches and teachers facilitate most sessions which is very well received and we then have experts in many areas in our buildings rather than having to contact a consultant.

While parental involvement at the elementary school level is high, keeping parents involved as students move through middle and high school continues to be a challenge. HCHS is working to increase parental involvement through communication and outreach efforts through our various communication methods. The school has early release days in which teachers can set up meetings with parents. We also hold registration night each year where teachers are available for conferences both virtually or face-to-face. Parents are contacted and encouraged to meet with their student's teachers in order to discuss courses their child would register for the next school year.

#### Additional Information

**Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.**

HCHS strives to keep stability in leadership positions. Principal Kevin Gaines has been at HCHS since 2012 and continues to lead the school to places it has never been before. No principal has served for more than three years since 1997. He continues to drive us to initiate and implement programs and ideas that enhance the education of all HCHS students. He believes that faculty should have buy-in to what they are doing as it is more motivating when a person has a voice in what they are teaching. He also gives teachers voice in the budgeting process. The system allots us funding and Mr. Gaines divides it among the departments based on the necessities for each department. Given those allotments, departments collaborate to determine what their funds will be used to purchase within the system parameters.

For the 2019 school year, HCHS was able to fill the role of CEO of the Hart College and Career Academy with a leader who came up through the ranks of the school system. With his local connections and his drive to make new ones with Hart County industries, the College and Career Academy is creating opportunities for students like never before. The two assistant principals have been promoted within the school system. We feel that this creates a comfortable and stable environment for community members, students, and teachers.

HCHS is a family that works and strives for success together.

