Thomas County School System
Thomasville, Georgia

Three-Year Technology Plan
July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2015
Draft Creation Date: February 21, 2012
Approved by the Georgia DOE: June 30, 2012

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Thomas County Schools

System Vision/Mission

Teaching Children, Ensuring Success

- promoting academic excellence in a safe and supportive learning environment,
- understanding the individual emotional, intellectual, physical, and social needs of all children,
- demonstrating a unified commitment to preparing students with skills and strategies needed to successfully adapt in a diverse and ever-changing society,
- remaining sensitive to cultural differences,
- providing state-of-the art facilities,
- utilizing research-based instruction, and
- meeting the professional needs of all staff members.

Technology Vision

The integration of collaboration, computer- assisted instruction, and good teaching can become tools in the service of rich curricula, enhanced pedagogies, more effective organizational structures in schools, stronger links between schools and society and the empowerment of disenfranchised learners. Technology-enhanced instruction, more technology resources, trained teachers, and classroom access to instructional software and Internet resources will allow teachers to more effectively integrate instructional methods that promote inquiry and comprehension as well as oral and written communication skills. Teachers can present information in ways that are most effective in facilitating a deeper understanding of content. The elements of a 21st century educational program will help produce students who are literate in technology as well as all forms of communication skills and who are able to selectively retrieve, analyze, and use material to apply higher order work.

In Thomas County, we know that vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes time. But vision with action can change the world. Thomas County's school improvement process is helping to prepare students to be life-long learners in a 21st century classroom.

Belief Statements

- Student learning is the primary focus of our school system.

- Quality staff is imperative for student achievement.

- High performing schools require collaboration.

- Students achieve best when engaged in challenging, integrated learning experiences.

- School must be a safe and supportive place.

- School must prepare students for the changing future with the support of technology-enhanced instruction and modern technology resources.

- School must communicate and collaborate with the home to promote a partnership that maximizes student achievement.

School Improvement Planning Process

The Thomas County School System is dedicated to meeting the educational needs of all students by continuously improving student academic success and the conditions for learning within our schools. The Thomas County School Improvement Planning Process is driven by research based practices that utilize Marzano's nine high yield strategies that serve as a catalyst for the implementation of systematic changes needed for student success. The Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and the Title I director serve as consultants for the school improvement teams within each school building.

The School Improvement Team collects formal and informal data each spring at each school. Formal data includes norm reference test scores, criterion reference test scores, Georgia High School Graduation Test scores, and SAT scores. Discipline, attendance, and retention data are also collected. All formal data are disaggregated by grade level, gender, and ethnicity to identify specific areas of weakness. Informal data include parent, teacher, and student surveys as well as school focus group input. Previous plans are reviewed throughout the year and updated in the spring when formal and informal data is collected.

After all data are collected and disaggregated, the School Improvement Team does an analysis to identify strengths and weaknesses. The entire faculty at each school participates in the process by meeting in focus groups to review the data and brainstorm research based strategies to improve in weak areas.

After input from the entire faculty, each School Improvement Team writes the plan in a consistent system-wide format. The plan includes the long range goal, the effective school correlate related to that goal, diagnostic data used to identify the need for the goal, indicators or trends in the data, a rationale for the goal, the benchmark objective and the evaluation design. Strategies or activities for meeting the goal are then listed and include resources, budget, funding source, person responsible, target date, and completion evidence.

In the area of technology, the status of student performance, availability of technology, teacher technology proficiency levels and parent perceptions are assessed in the school

improvement process to identify needs. Priorities are established and decisions are made for the area of emphasis to be pursued in the competitive grants. Other funding sources are accessed to meet technology needs identified through the school improvement process and in the system technology plan.

Teachers use instructional methods that promote inquiry and comprehension. Material is presented in ways that are most effective in facilitating a deeper understanding of content. Technology is integrated into lessons correlating with Georgia Performance Standards, which increases the students' ability to understand and apply concepts being presented.

The school system supervises all technology activities and provides commitment, support, and direction. The system technology coordinator oversees purchase and maintenance of hardware and software. The Assistant Superintendent for Instruction coordinates training and support for integrating technology into the curriculum. In addition, area colleges, technical institutes, and public libraries support all system efforts.

Each School Improvement Team serves as an evaluation team of all technology implementation with the entire faculties having input in the evaluation, and each team consists of individuals representing all areas of education: Title I, Migrant Education, Media Specialists, Special Education, parents, teachers, administrators, etc. School administrators evaluate classroom implementation through classroom observations and review of teacher lesson plans.

The System Comprehensive School Improvement Plan is developed from the individual School Improvement Plans. The system vision and beliefs, as well as Marzano's nine high yield strategies serve as the basis for the System Comprehensive School Improvement Plan that is also based on formal and informal data. Representatives from each school team serve on the System Improvement Team.

All school plans, as well as the system plan, are monitored throughout the year by the system and school improvement teams. Strategies and progress achievement of school improvement goals and objectives throughout the year are also monitored in department and/or grade level meetings. Rosters and agendas of meetings are kept to document the planning and monitoring processes. System personnel work closely with school teams and administrators to continuously monitor progress. The school and system improvement plans are "living" documents in Thomas County.

Each School Improvement Team and the System Improvement Team has parents as members of the team. The parents are involved in all of the team training and analysis of data described previously. Community members and businesses serve as resources for some of the strategies identified in the school and system plans. Therefore, they are involved in the development of the plans.

Parents, community members, and businesses are involved in the entire school improvement process from planning to implementing to evaluating. A home-school relation's goal directly targets improving parent participation and communication. The strategies target parent involvement at the school and system level.

Community members and businesses assist in implementing strategies by serving as resources for the schools, volunteering as mentors and sponsoring student incentives.

All shareholders evaluate the strategies and programs identified in system and school improvement plans by completing surveys related to the Correlates of Effective Schools. The School and System Improvement Teams analyze these surveys each spring. All test data is public information and focus groups allow parents, community members, and businesses to review test data and provide input to the School Improvement Team at each school.

Each spring, a Safe and Drug Free Needs Assessment is administered through Southwest Georgia RESA in grades five, eight, and ten. RESA analyzes the data and assists the school system in setting goals.

Parents and community partners are also involved in the Technology Planning as follows:

- Thomas University and Bainbridge College – The colleges provide curriculum articulation.

- Southwest Georgia Technical College – This institution provides technology demonstrations, curriculum articulation, and GED testing.

- Local Chambers of Commerce - These organizations serve in advisory capacities to align school to work standards.

- Thomas County Public and Roddenberry Memorial Libraries – The libraries provide resources for students after school hours.

- School Improvement Teams – Parents are included in the school improvement planning at the schools.

- School Councils – Parents, teachers, and business representatives monitor the progress of the schools and will make recommendations.

Collaborative partners have a positive impact on student achievement in various ways. Human and professional resources are pooled, resulting in a higher quality product and process. Resources shared among collaborative partners extend and enhance school and classroom resources. External evaluators, such as RESA, ensure fidelity of implementation and ensure that the project impacts student achievement. Evaluative feedback garnered from the three systems provides more reliable data. The support that the collaborative partners receive from one another allows the systems to overcome barriers inherent in the process and make more effective revisions. The motivation opportunities and school-community consortium partnerships enhance the effectiveness of the professional development and curriculum integration components and provide powerful on-going networking opportunities.

School Improvement Teams, made up of staff and parents, continue to meet and have input in the implementation of the project. Public libraries, parents, Thomas University, Bainbridge College, Southwest Georgia Technical College, and Rose Net (the local Internet provider) actively participate in the planning and development and continue to be involved in the implementation. Technology, including hardware and software, is made available for use by parents and other adults to support community literacy efforts. Brookwood, a local private school, declined to participate in the project.

School Improvement Teams serve as facilitators for implementing and evaluating the strategies and programs identified in the system and school improvement plans. All grade levels, departments, and staff members serve on a variety of school focus groups that monitor the implementation of the plan throughout the year.

A system advisory council consisting of school curriculum administrators meets periodically with the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction to monitor the school improvement process and plans. The System Improvement Team consists of representatives from each School Improvement Team and system personnel. In addition, the Assistant Superintendent and the Title I Director train and meet with School Improvement Teams on a regular basis.

Current Reality

Data Sources

- Annual technology inventory
- Faculty Surveys
- Annual technology literacy assessment of 8th grade students
- Formal and informal observations
- Needs assessments
- Work order/maintenance requests for software/hardware

Instructional Uses

All elementary schools have at least one computer lab, and most classrooms have one to three computers for student use. The middle school has computer labs for keyboarding courses as well as most classrooms having one to three computers for student use with some classrooms having up to six. Each department at the high school has a lab. Some classrooms at the high school have interactive whiteboards and projectors. Some schools have wireless access points allowing wireless connectivity.

All Thomas County Schools are equipped with a common web-based Media Management system which provides students and teachers easy access to information about all resources available through the Media Center. This system allows students to access information about the resources available in other schools and permits the possible sharing of resources between schools.

All schools in the system are completely networked with fiber connectivity. Network drops are present in all classrooms, computer labs, media centers, offices, conference rooms, auditoriums, cafeterias, and other instructional areas. Classrooms have Internet access along with data and video capabilities through the local area network. All schools have video teleconferencing capabilities with surrounding school systems, universities and colleges, experts all over the country and the world. All of the schools' networks are maintained by the technology department and Internet connectivity is through the City of Thomasville. Thomas County employs four Instructional Technology Coaches that provide academic and instructional support to schools whereas three technicians serve schools on a rotating basis and take care of all trouble-shooting issues through an online system of work orders.

Teachers and students use the Internet on a daily basis for communication, instruction, and a variety of other instructional activities. Schools have access to an assortment of software and subscriptions to online resources that include, but is not limited to, STAR Math, STAR Reading, Accelerated Reader, Accelerated Math, DIBELS, Links to Learning, Learning A-Z, Study Island, Microsoft Office Suite, Brain Pop, Education City, USA Test Prep, Reading Plus, A+, and various others. All schools also use resources provided by the Georgia Department of Education, such as Online Assessment System, United Streaming, and GALILEO.

Administrative Uses

Administrative applications are installed and supported at the district level. These applications are available to all schools and include student information management, food service management, personnel information, employee attendance and applications, district finances, and purchasing.

All teachers and administrators access web-based data through a high speed data connection. All schools connect through a fiber backbone. School personnel are provided email accounts to promote better communication between the schools, staff, and parents. They can also use a web-based program to access information about professional learning units and training opportunities. Communication is also increased through the use of an automatic phone system which administrators can use to send announcements, attendance information, and emergency information to parents. All administrators and maintenance employees also have cell phones provided by the district in order to quickly communicate to resolve any issues that may impede student learning.

The student information system currently used in Thomas County is Infinite Campus. Currently, Infinite Campus is running on a server that is based at the district level. Infinite Campus is a widely used student information system and user-friendly for secretaries and administrators. It is a web-based application that allows access by staff, teachers, and parents from anywhere they have an Internet connection. Currently, all teachers in grades 5 – 12 maintain an electronic grade book through Infinite Campus. Grades in the gradebook, along with attendance and discipline data, are available to parents through a parent portal. Teachers in grades 1 – 4 are expected to maintain an electronic gradebook in Infinite Campus beginning in Fall 2012.

Special education teachers use Infinite Campus to manage data on special education students and electronically generate and document required paperwork such as Individual Education Plans as well as parent contacts. Basic demographic data, including enrollment in special education, is transferred in an overnight upload from the student information system. Our special education teachers are also part of a pilot program of a state Online IEP system offered by the Georgia DOE.

Administrators, teachers, and staff have access to student information such as test scores, attendance, discipline, etc. through Infinite Campus as well as the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) through the Georgia DOE. All administrators have iPads that provide them access to this data while on-the-go. The iPads are also used to complete teacher evaluations. Communication among administrators is also very important, and this is improved with the use of email and cellular phones provided by the school system. In addition, administrators have monthly face-to-face meetings.

Parent/Community Uses

Thomas County Schools utilizes email, websites, social networking, mass call system, and newsletters to promote better communication between schools, staff, parents and community members. Student attendance, demographic information, and grade book files connect to the Parent Portal. Using a secured password, parents and guardians can access the information on their own children. An automated phone calling system allows schools and district administrators to relay school event notices, attendance information, and emergency information to parents.

Gap Analysis

System Readiness

Thomas County Schools makes every attempt to provide its staff and students with the most current technology resources that are relevant to the improvement in student learning. All schools in the system are completely networked with fiber connectivity. Network drops are present in all classrooms, computer labs, media centers, offices, conference rooms, auditoriums, cafeterias, and other instructional areas. Classrooms have Internet access along with data and video capabilities through the local area network. All schools have video teleconferencing capabilities with surrounding school systems, universities and colleges, experts all over the country and the world. All of the schools' networks are maintained by the technology department and Internet connectivity is through the City of Thomasville. Thomas County employs three Instructional Technology Coaches that provide academic and instructional support to schools whereas three technicians serve schools on a rotating basis and take care of all trouble-shooting issues through an online system of work orders. This connectivity is important for staff and students to access the district- and state-provided resources including, but not limited to GA Virtual High School, GA OAS, United Streaming, and many other website resources. Thomas County Schools has many servers throughout the schools. These servers store applications and data, and several of them are more than 5 years old and will need to be replaced very soon. The

technology department anticipates the need for more wireless networking in all schools of the school system.

<u>Instructional</u>

Having operational computers that will run instructional software is vital. After reviewing the annual staff survey and the annual technology inventory, many teachers pointed out that although they have three to five computers in their classroom, they do not use them because they will not run the software without freezing or crashing. Some of these computers located in all schools need a RAM upgrade to at least 2GB or more in order to meet requirements of newer software and operating systems. According to our state technology inventory, 66.45% of our computers are more than five years old.

According to the Georgia Department of Education, "a successful 21st Century learning environment has the potential to engage students in meaningful, relevant learning that will help prepare them for competing in a global society and ultimately increase student success. A true 21st Century learning environment can accelerate change in the types of learning experiences and can be a powerful catalyst for transforming how both students and teachers approach learning. It is rich with job-embedded professional learning, instructional coaching, and technical support for teachers and students to use technology tools effectively. The teacher-focused classroom paradigm transforms into a student-centered, project-based learning environment to stimulate student engagement and develop critical thinking, problem-solving and teamwork skills ultimately accelerating student and school success. These in turn can lead to improving economic competitiveness of the region or state by preparing students for the global workplace.

Equipment in a 21st Century Learning Environment includes:

- Mounted Projector
- Mounted Interactive Whiteboard and Portable Interactive Device w/ installation
- Teacher Laptop
- Student Response System
- Laptop/Tablet charging/storage cart
- Student Laptops/Tablets (minimum of 5 per Classroom – optimal total of 25)
- Digital camera or Digital Video Camera
- Laser printer
- Productivity Software Licenses
- 500 GB Network Attached Storage
- Video editing software
- Podcasting capable MP3 player w/ Microphone + Charge Pack
- Audio enhanced system
- Network Bandwidth infrastructure and adequate access points to support a wireless environment"

The majority of classrooms in Thomas County Schools do not meet this definition of the 21st Century learning environment. These classrooms need to be updated to become 21st Century

classrooms, and teachers and staff need training to be updated on the new trends and technologies.

Administrative

In the administrative areas of schools, the baseline standard was the presence of modern computers. However, even though these computers meet the modern computer requirements as defined by the state, many of them need RAM upgrades for better performance with newer software and operating systems.

The administrative software packages for maintaining student information, special education information, media center management, finance management, and professional learning management have all recently been updated or are in the process of being upgraded. Continued training in the use of all of these packages is needed.

Parent/Community

Although the parent portal and teacher websites are not significant barriers to communication, these are targeted areas of improvement.

At this time, the parent portal allows parents access to grades, attendance, and discipline. The grade information comes from teacher grade books. Teachers need ongoing training and reminders to maintain current grades. Even though this access is available, not all parents utilize this tool. School staff and administrators plan to increase parent participation in the use of the parent portal.

While the system website features upcoming events, recent school news, the school calendar, lunch menus, and special pages with links and information exclusively for parents, students, and community members, as well as interactive teacher-created websites. Ongoing professional learning will be provided for teachers in the design and management of their websites.

Goals and Benchmarks

System Readiness				
GOAL 1: Prepare and maintain a network that is accessible to available resources for staff and students and community stakeholders.				
Strategies	**Benchmarks**	**Evaluation Plan**	**Budget**	**Responsibility List**
Seek eRate funding to provide and maintain LAN/WAN and robust enough to handle streaming video, voice over IP, and distance learning applications.	All classrooms will have high speed access to online resources annually	Awarding of eRate funds on an annual basis for high speed Internet access	Contingent upon 80% eRate funds and 20% local funds annually	Director of Finance
Maintain annual subscriptions for content and spam filtering software, email archiving software, and anti-virus/anti-spyware software	100% use of application for system use	Reports created by applications and weekly updates	Local Funds annually	Technology Implementation Coordinator
Update aged data and application servers	All servers less than 5 years old by 2015	Annual technology inventory	SPLOST	Technology Implementation Coordinator
Increase wireless access	All schools will have wireless coverage for 100% of the facility by FY2014	Annual technology inventory	SPLOST	Technology Implementation Coordinator
Update aged switches and cabling in schools. Maintain network infrastructure.	Switches at all locations should be updated to gigbit switches by FY2015. Cabling at Cross Creek and Garrison-Pilcher should be replaced by FY2015.	Annual technology inventory	SPLOST	Technology Implementation Coordinator

Instructional Goal				
GOAL 2: Increase instructional technology use through equitable access.				
Strategies	**Benchmarks**	**Evaluation Plan**	**Budget**	**Responsibility List**
Increase the number of classrooms that use 21st century tools such as projectors, interactive whiteboards, sound enhancement, tablets, etc.)	100% of classrooms will have equipment by FY2014	Annual technology inventory	SPLOST	Technology Implementation Coordinator
Increase the number of updated, modern computers in the classrooms and other technology devices.	10% increase each year	Annual technology inventory	SPLOST	Technology Implementation Coordinator School Principals
Increase the number of wireless, mobile technology devices such as laptop labs and tablets.	10% increase each year	Annual technology inventory	SPLOST	Technology Implementation Coordinator School Principals
Increase teacher use of webpages to post instructional materials, assignments, blogs, etc.	All teachers will have a webpage by FY2013	Website evaluations	No cost	Director of Instructional Technology School Principals Technology Coaches
Provide access to Georgia Virtual School Online learning environment	Provide 100% access	Annually	State and Local Funds	Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
Provide access for homeschoolers to K-12 online learning program.	Implement for grades K-5 by FY2013 and grades 6-8 by FY2014	Annually renewed	State and Local Funds	Assistant Superintendent of Instruction

GOAL 3: Improve student academic performance through the use and integration of technology utilizing the Georgia Performance Standards.				
Strategies	**Benchmarks**	**Evaluation Plan**	**Budget**	**Responsibility List**
Use of server-based software and online programs to track student improvement and increase CRCT and GHSGT scores. Software includes, but is not limited to, Brain Pop, Study Island, Education City, USATest Prep, Renaissance Learning products, Reading Eggs, GaOAS, etc.	Increase in the number of students passing the GHSGT and CRCT.	Increase in test scores	Annual dues to maintain software paid by federal funds and local funds. Some applications such as OAS are provided by GaDOE	Director of Instructional Technology School Principals Teachers Tech Coaches
Utilize software to disaggregate data for the purpose of differentiating instruction and increasing student achievement. Currently using Achievement Series for benchmark testing, and this will be evaluated to determine effectiveness.	Disaggregated data will be given to teachers for students in their classrooms each year.	Increase in test scores	Title Funds, Local Funds	Directors in charge of assessment School Principals Teachers
Provide teacher training on software and new technology devices	Annual teacher training	School principal will monitor use of software and technology devices	Professional Learning funds	Director of Instructional Technology School Principal Technology Coaches

Administrative Goal

GOAL 4: Increase the application and use of technology to enhance job performance and productivity.

Strategies	Benchmarks	Evaluation Plan	Budget	Responsibility List
Provide training for SIS, finance, and special education software	Annual training on all software for teachers and administrators	Administrators and teachers will utilize the software to maintain students records	Local Funds	Directors of Instructional Technology, Finance, and Special Education
Provide access and training to the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) to all staff	100% access to state website through SIS for school staff	Usage reports from GaDOE	No cost	Director of Instructional Technology School Principals Technology Coaches
Provide and maintain handheld devices for administrative use	100% of administrators will have handheld devices	Monitor usage of handheld applications such as teacher evaluations	SPLOST	Assistant Superintendent for Instruction Technology Implementation Coordinator

Parent/Community Goal				
GOAL 5: Utilize technology to enhance parent/community communication and collaboration in student achievement.				
Strategies	**Benchmarks**	**Evaluation Plan**	**Budget**	**Responsibility List**
Provide continuing access to the parent portal	10% increase in parent participation annually	Reports from software indicating the number of parent users.	No Cost	Principals Counselors Director of Student Services
Provide written instructions and school demonstrations for parent portal access	10% increase in parent participation annually	Reports from software indicating the number of parent users and number of logins	No Cost	Principals Counselors Director of Student Services
Maintain district and school web sites for access by parents and community stakeholders	10% increase in use of websites annually	Records of website visits documented	Local funds for website hosting No cost for training	Director of Instructional Technology School Principals Technology Coaches Teachers
Provide continued communication with parents and staff concerning announcements and attendance through our mass communication system, Facebook, and Twitter	Monthly, all schools send out calls and post announcements online	Monitor call log from calling system software and posts on social networking	Local and title funds for calling system No cost for social networking	Director of Title Programs School Principals

Professional Development

In Thomas County, professional development is the key to keeping staff current with research; to using criteria for decision-making; to providing awareness, modeling, and application of instructional methods; and to maintaining consistency of instructional delivery.

The School Improvement Planning Process is used to identify student achievement needs and other enterprise needs through the formal and informal data collection and disaggregation described previously. This analysis serves as the basis for school improvement goals and staff and professional development needs in each school.

The informal data collection includes a Professional Development Needs Survey given to every staff member annually to submit perceived needs for professional development at each school. Principals serve as the advisory team to the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction to review submitted needs and correlate these needs to School Improvement Plans. Improvement teams and School Councils are also sources for identifying needs for professional development.

Teacher evaluations also serve as a form of data used to identify professional development needs by school and system-wide. Textbook adoptions or changes in curriculum or programs based on formal and informal data also serve as sources to identify staff and professional development needs.

Once needs are identified related to instructional priorities, courses are designed to meet those needs based on research and best practices. Every course offered has a statement of need directly related to school improvement goals, objectives, activities, and an evaluation that is kept on file at the central office. The need is also designated in the system and school improvement plan goals and the funding source and target data are designated. School plans contain specific budget amounts by activity. Activities designating staff development are identified in the System Improvement Plan by having "professional development" at the end of the activity statement. A comprehensive budget is part of the Consolidated Application.

Follow-up is a key component of the professional development plan in Thomas County. Implementation of material learned in professional development classes at the classroom level is the key to improving instruction. Continuous follow-up is conducted at the school and system level to insure classroom implementation. Professional development credit is awarded once mastery verification is documented.

The bodies of research on technology integration should be disaggregated to allow policy makers, school administrators, and classroom teachers access to the most consistent data to make informed decisions. These decisions should revolve around two critical components,
(1)   the type of technology-focused professional development needed for classroom practitioners to integrate technology in a manner that would result in an increase student achievement and
(2)   the type of hardware and software needed to maximize achievement.

The Thomas County School System seeks to provide high-quality professional development programs with follow-up and support that promotes knowledge and enhances skills related to the use of technology for productivity, teaching, and learning. To accomplish these goals, courses, conferences, workshops, site visitations and other related activities are results-driven, standards-based, job-embedded, and aligned with system level goals. Aiding in this endeavor are staff members of RESA. Professional development in the technology area is provided through the RESA, through consultants, and through technology personnel at each school and at the system level. At the system level, experienced trainers facilitate professional development opportunities in the area of technology for all Thomas County personnel. Trainers consider curriculum standards when designing classes that will be offered to the teachers and administrators. These classes are offered on a regular basis. In addition, any school or group (and even an individual) within a school can request specific training on any and all technology applications available within the classroom. Course participants may view course offerings, register, and print transcripts through a web based professional development software system. Professional learning courses are offered that promote current system initiatives, increase skill and productivity in specific applications, provide strategies for using technology to enable or enhance learning, and provide hands-on training of emerging technologies in accordance with the Georgia Performance Standards.

Funding for technology equipment, software, and training comes from a variety of sources including Title program funding, local funds, and SPLOST funds. Using best practices research, curriculum standards, technology plan documentation, and recommendations from technology department members, school personnel make decisions about system-level equipment purchasing that will maximize student achievement. All staff and professional development is submitted to the local Board of Education for approval as a part of the School Improvement Plan. A comprehensive budget is a part of the Consolidated Application.

Through diagnosis, research, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, the Professional Development Plan in Thomas County addresses instructional, curricular, and other enterprise needs that will have a direct impact on student achievement. All professional development reflects system and school priorities related to the improvement of teaching and learning. Learning communities, leadership, and resources; the process for developing and implementing staff development; and quality content for staff development are the basis for professional development in the Thomas County School System.

Training in the technology area is planned as a major focus over the next three years. With the available SPLOST funds, teachers will receive much needed technology devices in their classrooms including, but not limited to, interactive whiteboards, projectors, document cameras, sound amplification systems, and mobile devices such as an iPad. Teachers will also receive training in creating and maintaining class webpages. Technology staff including the Director of Technology, the Technology Implementation Coordinator, Technology Coaches, Media Specialists, and Technicians will all need training to be prepared to train and support teachers as they implement the use of this equipment in their classroom. Training for technology staff may be provided by consultants, by attending technology conferences, or by attending offerings at RESA. Teachers will also be continually refreshed and updated on the latest software and applications such as Brain Pop, Study Island, Renaissance Learning products, Education City,

SLDS, Ga OAS, USA TestPrep, Reading Eggs, etc. District and school administrators will receive ongoing training on the use of mobile handheld devices, such as iPads, and the applications they utilize through the handhelds, such as teacher evaluation software. In addition, administrators will be continually refreshed on how to access and utilize administrative software like the student information management system, special education management system, finance system, and the SLDS in order to gather information needed to make informed decisions concerning student and teacher needs.

Communication and Marketing

The Thomas County School System's Director of Title Programs and Director of Public Relations disseminate information to community stakeholders. Regular press releases, Internet articles, and staff newsletters all combine to keep the community informed about school activities and progress. System, schools, and teacher websites are used extensively to communicate with parents and the community. The websites contain school start and release times, announcements, assignments, course syllabi, and announcements among other information. The system website features upcoming events, recent school news, the school calendar, lunch menus, a message board and special pages with links and information for parents, students, and community members.

The parent portal allows parents and guardians to view academic progress, discipline incidents, and attendance. Test results and progress within schools and the system are also presented on the system website, in the local newspaper and in newsletters sent out monthly. All schools have an automated phone calling system, OneCallNow that can alert parents of emergencies, announcements, changes of schedule, or other important information through a phone line.

Pertinent news articles and announcements are also published in a monthly newsletter from the system level as well as school and class newsletters which are sent home on a regular basis. School related articles regularly appear in the local town newspaper.

Regular and consistent technology planning occurs through collaboration between the Thomas County School System technology department and system-level staff development, curriculum, media, Title I, special education, and ESOL personnel. Monthly meetings allow stakeholders to develop successful strategies to insure that all stakeholders have input into a System-level plan. Thomas County Schools also communicates regularly with other area district personnel to share ideas and best practices through video conferencing, consortia meetings, and e-mail.

Eighth Grade Technology Literacy

Students in Thomas County are exposed to technology throughout all grade levels. Thomas County educators will implement the use of GeorgiaNETS to train administrators, teachers, and students which are the National Educational Technology Standards that were adopted by the Georgia State Board of Education. The NETS were developed by ISTE (the International Society for Technology in Education) and are widely used across the globe.

During the following three years, our goal is to raise the mastery level of 8th grade students on the 21st Century Eighth Grade Technology Literacy assessment to 80 percent by implementing GeorgiaNETS , providing professional development for our teachers as they work to embed technology within their daily lesson plans and to improve access for students.

Evaluation

The evaluation process for the technology program is continuous. Utilization of technology in the classroom can be assessed with documentation of activities through lesson plans, the scheduled use of computer labs, listings of software programs purchased, and Internet usage. Each school principal is responsible for the evaluation of their respective school. The Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and Director of Instructional Technology will be responsible for system evaluation.

Formal and informal surveys, observation, and professional development activities will assist in evaluating the effectiveness of the program. The evaluation tools for improved student achievement will be analyzed according to student scores on the Standard Test of Assessment of Reading, Accelerated Reader, Criterion-Referenced Competency Test, the Georgia High School Graduation Test and Writing Test, End-of-Course Tests, DIBELS, Middle Grades Writing Assessment, and Eighth Grade Technology Literacy. Surveys will document the increased use of computers for instruction as well as the quality of the student's learning experience. Data will be collected and analyzed to determine how technology has improved.

Thomas County Schools
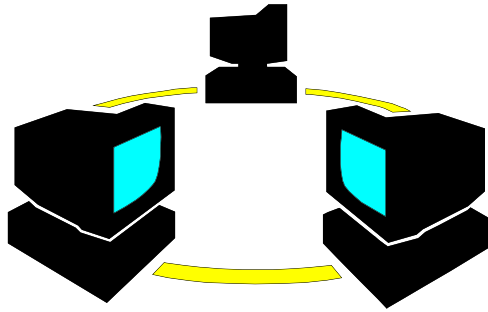
Acceptable Use Policies

THOMAS COUNTY SCHOOLS   Dr.Dusty Kornegay,Superintendent

200 N. Pinetree Blvd., Thomasville, GA 31792   229-225-4380   229-225-5012 Fax

Student Internet Acceptable Use Agreement

User Authorization

I hereby certify that I have read and understand Thomas County Schools' Acceptable Use Policy (Policy IFBG). I understand that this access is for educational purposes only and is restricted to classroom assignments. I further understand that if I violate this policy, my network/Internet access privileges will be revoked and subject to disciplinary action.

Student Name (please print): _____

Student Signature: _____   Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Authorization

As the parent or guardian of the above-named student, I hereby certify that I have read and understand Thomas County Schools' Acceptable Use Policy (Policy IFBG). I understand that this access is designed for educational purposes and it is the responsibility of my child to restrict his/her use to classroom assignments. I understand that Thomas County Schools takes every measure to protect students while using these resources as required and outlined by the Children's Internet Protection Act [Pub. L. No. 106-554 and 47 USC 254(h)]. A technology protection measure is in place to protect students while using these resources by blocking or filtering inappropriate websites at all schools. I further understand that some material accessible to network/Internet users may be offensive, illegal, defamatory, or inaccurate and that although Thomas County Schools has taken reasonable precautions to restrict access to such materials, such exposure may nevertheless occur. I further agree to indemnify and hold harmless Thomas County Schools and its employees and agents from any and all claims arising from or related to my child's use or misuse of the network/Internet and waive any and all claims I have against the system for such use or misuse.

Please check Yes or No.

_____ Yes, I will allow my child to use the Internet at school.

_____ No, I do not want my child to use the Internet at school.

Parent/Guardian Name (please print): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____   Date: _____

Faculty/Staff Internet Acceptable Use Agreement

I hereby certify that I have read and understand Thomas County Schools' Acceptable Use Policy (Policy IFBG). I understand my responsibilities regarding student and staff use of computers, Internet, and network services. I understand that access to the Internet and network is for instructional purposes only. I further understand that if I violate this policy, my network/Internet access privileges may be revoked, and I may be subject to disciplinary action. I understand that Thomas County Schools takes every measure to protect students and school employees while using these resources as required and outlined by the Children's Internet Protection Act [Pub. L. No. 106-554 and 47 USC 254(h)]. A technology protection measure is in place to protect students and school employees while using these resources by blocking or filtering inappropriate websites at all schools. I further understand that some material accessible to network/Internet users may be offensive, illegal, defamatory, or inaccurate and that although Thomas County Schools has taken reasonable precautions to restrict access to such materials, such exposure may nevertheless occur. As an employee of Thomas County Schools, I will abide by the Acceptable Use Policy and monitor students' use of Internet resources. I further agree to indemnify and hold harmless Thomas County Schools and its employees and agents from any and all claims arising from or related to use or misuse of the network/Internet and waive any and all claims I have against the system for such use or misuse.

School Employee Name (please print): _____

School Employee Position and Location: _____

School Employee Signature: _____   Date: _____

The Internet is an electronic communication network that provides vast, diverse, and unique resources. Our goal in providing this service to teachers, staff, and students is to promote educational excellence in the Thomas County Schools by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication.

In the schools, student access to and use of the Internet will be under teacher direction and monitored as any other classroom activity. However, it is impossible to control all materials on a global network and an industrious user may discover inappropriate information. The school system cannot prevent the possibility that some users may access material that is not consistent with the educational mission, goals, and policies of the school system. It is the belief of the board that the Internet's advantages far outweigh its disadvantages. The Thomas County Board of Education views information gathered from the Internet in the same manner as reference materials identified by the schools.   Specifically, the system supports resources that will enhance the learning environment with directed guidance from the faculty and staff. Exploration of resources is encouraged.

As required by the Children's Internet Protection Act, Thomas County Schools has an Internet filtering system in place to protect the students in our schools. The filtering system blocks unacceptable sites that fall into the following categories: violence, pornography, drugs, chat, free email, hate/discrimination, etc.

All students in Thomas County Schools will receive age-appropriate instruction regarding safe and appropriate online behavior including, but not limited to, electronic interactions with others on social networking sites and in chat rooms; behaviors that may constitute cyber bullying; and how to respond when subjected to cyber bullying.

1) **Guidelines for Internet usage:**
   - Internet use must be in support of education and research consistent with classroom curriculum.
   - Use of the Internet must be consistent with the rules appropriate to any network being used or accessed.
   - Unauthorized use of copyrighted material is prohibited.
   - Threatening or obscene materials are prohibited.
   - Distribution of material protected by trade secret is prohibited.
   - Product advertisement and political lobbying are prohibited.
   - Commercial activities are not acceptable.
   - Non-instructional games are prohibited on school computers.
   - Staff and students shall not download software from home or unauthorized programs from the Internet.
   - The use of proxy sites to access Internet sites which are blocked by Thomas County Schools' is prohibited.

- Nothing should be posted on the Internet that would not be appropriate for parents, teachers, students, etc. to read. The Internet is a public forum. Any blog post or social networking post, including photographs, which are posted on the Internet are there permanently. Any post that is deleted may be cached in a search engine, school system server, or Internet archive and cause embarrassment years later.
- Faculty and staff should refrain from the use of personal social networking sites including, but not limited to, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or Tumblr, during working hours.
- Faculty and staff should not post pictures of students or school activities to their personal social networking sites.

2) Privileges
- Access to the Internet is not a right, but a privilege.
- Unacceptable and/or inappropriate usage will result in cancellation of network account.
- Administration will deem what is inappropriate use and the administration's decision is final.
- Administration reserves the right to regulate any particular use of these computing resources.
- An administrator, faculty member, or staff member may request the denial, revocation, or suspension of specific user(s) account(s).

3) Netiquette
- Use of profanity, vulgarities, or other inappropriate language is prohibited.
- Users should not reveal their or anyone else's personal information including, but not limited to, home address, phone number, credit card number, social security number, or student identification number.
- The network should not be used in a way that would disrupt the use of the network by others.
- Users should not be abusive in electronic communications.
- Illegal activities are strictly forbidden.
- The computers should be used in a timely manner, so that others may have an opportunity to utilize computer resources.

4) Security
- Security problems should be reported to the system administrator immediately.
- Account passwords should be kept confidential.
- Users should only use the network via the account assigned to them.
- Users must not interfere with or disrupt network users, services, traffic, or equipment (Disruptions include, but are not limited to, distribution of unsolicited advertising, downloading and/or streaming music or videos that slow the network, propagation of computer viruses, and using a network to make unauthorized entry to any other machine accessible via a network.).

- Attempts to log on as another user will result in cancellation of privileges.
- Any user identified as a security risk or having a history of problems with other computer systems may be denied access.

5) **Vandalism/Harrassment**
- Vandalism is defined as any malicious attempt to harm or destroy data of another user, the Internet or other networks. This includes, but is not limited to, creating and/or uploading computer viruses.
- Vandalism also includes the attempt to harm or destroy computer hardware and unauthorized installation of software.
- Vandalism and/or harassment will result in the cancellation or revocation of the offender's privileges and disciplinary action will result.

6) **Email and Other Electronic Communication**
- Email accounts are provided for employees and may be provided for students.
- Email accounts are provided for professional and academic purposes. Email accounts should not be used for personal gain, personal business activities, or to solicit for non-school system business. Broadcasting of unsolicited messages is prohibited.
- All school-related business should be sent via the email account provided by Thomas County Schools. Personal email accounts should not be used for school-related business.
- All electronic communication created, sent, or received via the Thomas County Schools email system is property of Thomas County Schools. Employees shall not have any expectation of privacy regarding this information. The Board reserves the right, as deemed necessary, to access, read, review, monitor, and copy all messages and files on its computer system without notice. Thomas County Schools reserves the right to disclose text, video, audio, or image files to law enforcement agencies without the employee's consent.
- Student related messages should be guarded and protected in compliance with FERPA in order to protect the privacy of students. Employees must abide by copyright laws, ethics rules, and applicable state and federal laws.
- Email messages should only contain professional and appropriate language. Employees shall not send abusive, harassing, intimidating, threatening, discriminatory, or otherwise offensive messages.
- Thomas County Schools has a SPAM filter in place to prevent inappropriate email messages, viruses, malware, etc. However, this does not guarantee that this type of email messages will not make it through and those who make use of electronic communication will occasionally receive messages that are found offensive or annoying. When this happens, the employee should delete the messages. The Thomas County School System is not responsible for the items employees may view via links to other web pages if the employee chooses to open and read these messages.

- Student email accounts should only be provided for specific educational purposes through a safe email provider such as Gaggle.net. These service providers allow teachers to monitor the students' accounts, as well as control who the students may send/receive email to/from. The email accounts may even be locked as to allow communication with school employees only. Student use of email should be set up through the district level technology office.

7) Electronic or Mobile Devices

- The use of mobile devices will only be allowed in specific areas or classes per the direction of school staff.
- Devices are to be used only for school-related or school-approved activities. Games are not allowed.
- Teachers and staff reserve the right to check devices for inappropriate use or inappropriate material.
- The Thomas County School System is not responsible for lost or damaged devices.
- Cell phones/camera phones are to be turned off and not used during any testing or examination period. During the testing session cell phones/camera phones are to be stored in a case, book bag, knapsack, or purse, and may not be placed on the table, desktop, or individual's lap. Staff members have the right to confiscate devices during testing.
- Students should not use their own 3G or 4G connection to the Internet. Students shall access the Internet via Thomas County Schools' wireless network only while on school grounds in order to insure their Internet connection is filtered through Thomas County Schools' filtering system as required by the Children's Internet Protection Act. Teachers and staff reserve the right to check an electronic or mobile device for proper connection. Students who do not follow this guideline will lose the right to use their own electronic or mobile device while at school.
- Students may only access the Internet during class sessions for instructor authorized, class-related purposes. It should be noted that the school controls the Internet connectivity in classrooms and may elect to "turn-off" the wireless network during class time or restrict student passwords for wireless connections.
- Students with disabilities or exceptional needs may require electronic devices for day-to-day functioning in the academic setting or for testing purposes. The use of devices should be coordinated with the classroom teacher or staff member, and the classroom teacher or staff member will monitor such use.
- Electronic or mobile devices should not be used to video or take pictures of disruptive behavior such as fights or other class/school disruptions. The sharing or posting of such videos or pictures or any other inappropriate videos or pictures is prohibited. This activity is a violation of privacy under FERPA.

8) Penalties

- Any user violating these provisions, applicable state and federal laws, or posted classroom and district rules is subject to the loss of network privileges and other system disciplinary options, including criminal prosecution
- School and system administrators will make the final determination as to what constitutes unacceptable use and their decision is final

Disclaimers

The Thomas County School System makes no warranties of any kind, whether expressed or implied, for the service it is providing. The Thomas County School System will not be responsible for any damages a user may suffer, including loss of data, non-deliveries, misdeliveries, or service interruptions caused by negligence or errors or omissions. The use of any information obtained via the Internet is at your own risk. The system will not be responsible for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through the Internet connection.

Georgia Code	Description
O.C.G.A. 16-09-0090	Georgia Computer Systems Protection Act
O.C.G.A. 16-09-0091	Computer Related Crime
O.C.G.A. 16-09-0092	Definitions
O.C.G.A. 16-09-0093	Computer crimes defined
O.C.G.A. 16-09-0093.1	Misleading transmittal
O.C.G.A. 16-09-0094	Violations
O.C.G.A. 39-05-0003	Immunity
O.C.G.A. 39-05-0002	Subscriber's control of minor's use of internet
O.C.G.A. 39-05-0004	Internet safety report of certain information
O.C.G.A. 16-11-0037.1	Dissemination of information relating to terroristic acts
US Code	**Description**
20 USC 6777	Internet Safety
47 USC 254(h)	Universal Service
15 USC 6501	Children's Online Privacy Protection Act - Definitions
15 USC 6502	Children's Online Privacy Protection Act - Collection and use of personal information from and about children on the Internet
15 USC 6503	Children's Online Privacy Protection Act - Safe harbors
15 USC 6504	Children's Online Privacy Protection Act - Actions by states
15 USC 6505	Children's Online Privacy Protection Act - Administration and Applicability

These references are not intended to be part of the policy itself, nor do they indicate the basis or authority for the board to enact this policy. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.