

Forsyth County School System

2015-2022 Proposed IE² Partnership Contract

Q & A

General Questions:

What is an IE² Partnership Contract?

Investing in Education Excellence (IE²) is a result of House Bill 1209, which was signed into law during the 2008 Georgia Legislative Session. The IE² Partnership Contract is between a local school district and the State Board of Education (SBOE). The IE² Partnership Contract will be based upon a term of five years of performance accountability allowing seven years of district flexibility for the purpose of setting school performance targets initially and finalizing performance results at the end.

I thought the Forsyth County School System (FCSS) was already operating under an IE² Partnership Contract with the SBOE?

FCSS entered into an initial IE² Partnership Contract with the SBOE in August of 2009. The contract was extended to June 30, 2015 in order to allow time for review of the fifth and final year of student achievement data. If approved, the new contract shall become effective on July 1, 2015 and, unless extended or renewed, will end on June 30, 2022.

What does the FCSS hope to achieve through the IE² Partnership Contract?

The primary goal is to attain the flexibility to think innovatively about services to students in order to maximize student achievement and meet strategic plan goals. The IE² Partnership Contract provides the opportunity for schools to deliver the instructional programs they believe will best ensure success of their students. Additionally, freedom from unfunded or under-funded state mandates that divert limited money and resources from where they can be used most effectively will be most beneficial.

What budget implications will the IE² Partnership Contract have on The Forsyth County School System?

The IE² Partnership Contract is revenue neutral and does not add any additional funding. The IE² Partnership Contract does allow the district to use its current resources (both financial and human) more efficiently.

Are all schools in The Forsyth County School System included in the IE² Partnership Contract?

No. The IE² Partnership Contract does not include the district's non-traditional virtual academy, iAchieve, or the alternative education program, Gateway Academy.

How will new schools be brought into the IE² Partnership Contract?

New schools will have the same flexibility as existing schools beginning their first year. Baseline data for performance targets will be based on their first year of student achievement data. Each new school will develop a school improvement plan aligned to the system goals and accountability measures.

Will the IE² Partnership Contract have an impact on the district's accreditation status with SACS/CASI?

The Forsyth County School System was awarded District Accreditation in 2012 through SACS/CASI. The IE² Partnership Contract will not affect the district's accreditation renewal process. All schools, as well as the district, will continue to follow SACS/CASI standards for accreditation purposes.

Will the district still be held to the federal accountability requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) / Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and IDEA?

The IE² Partnership Contract grants flexibility from Georgia Law and State Board of Education Rule and is in addition to federal requirements. Beginning on March 30, 2012, Georgia was granted flexibility from some federal accountability requirements of NCLB by the U.S. Department of Education. The new statewide accountability system, College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI), now serves in the place of AYP as the accountability for schools and districts in Georgia. More information regarding this waiver can be found on The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) website (www.gosa.georgia.gov). In terms of service to Special Education students, the district will continue to develop and implement Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that meet students' needs and comply with IDEA.

Greater Accountability:

What are the accountability measures in the IE² Partnership Contract that go above and beyond NCLB?

Schools will annually develop and execute a school strategic plan designed to demonstrate proficiency and/or improvement on the CCRPI.

What do the school plans in the IE² Partnership Contract include? Where can I find them?

Each school's plan includes demographic information and a historical CCRPI summary. Annual performance targets will be established during the 2015-2016 baseline year. All school plans will be updated with performance targets once approved by the Georgia Departments of Education (GADOE) and GOSA. All plans are posted and can be found online on the IE² Partnership Contract website (www.forsyth.k12.ga.us).

Will students still have to meet state promotion and graduation requirements?

Yes. The Forsyth County School System will continue to hold students to high standards of achievement, and all requirements for promotion and graduation will remain in effect.

How will these new accountability measures impact the district's school improvement process?

The Forsyth County School System will continue to use the already established School Improvement Process. The IE² performance targets were designed to enhance the current goals of the schools and will be integrated into school improvement planning over the life of the IE² Partnership Contract.

Will school plans change during the five-year period to address changes in the schools' population?

The IE² Partnership Contract will allow for a renegotiation of baseline and annual performance targets for new schools or existing schools that experience significant shifts in demographics due to redistricting or other factors.

How were performance targets determined?

School performance targets will be set so that for each year during the five-year contract, an individual school shall increase its CCRPI score, before challenge points, by 3% of the gap between the 2015-2016 CCRPI baseline score and 100.

Why do some of the schools' annual performance targets remain the same over the five-year period while some increase?

For each year during the five-year contract, an individual school with an initial CCRPI score, before challenge points, performing in the top quartile of the state shall remain at or above the top quartile threshold established in the 2015-2016 CCRPI baseline year. Therefore, their performance targets will remain constant at the top quartile. Schools not performing in the top quartile will have annually increasing performance targets in accordance with the answer to the previous question.

What are the implications for not meeting annual CCRPI performance targets?

If a school fails to meet its annual CCRPI performance target, then the school will be subject to a "beating the odds" second look opportunity. The school will be deemed as meeting its annual performance target if the school is determined to be "beating the odds" through an analysis that compares the school's CCRPI to its expected baseline performance as determined by comparison schools statewide having similar characteristics (i.e. ED, ELL, SWD, school size, teacher-to-pupil ratio, etc...).

What are the implications for not meeting annual CCRPI performance targets over multiple years?

If a school has not achieved three years of growth during the five-year contract, the Forsyth County School System will apply direct school management support and intensive teacher development support as outlined in the jointly developed school improvement plan between the school leadership and district leadership staff. Implementation of the school improvement plan will be jointly approved and monitored by the school system and GADOE.

Flexibility for Innovation:

Why is FCSS seeking to continue the flexibility outlined in the IE² Partnership Contract?

Flexibility is needed to continue to foster innovation and best practice as it relates to the educational program and organizational effectiveness. Additionally, the flexibility provides school leaders and teachers with an unprecedented opportunity to continue to do what they believe is best for their students.

What are the areas of flexibility being requested?

There are sixteen areas of flexibility being requested in the proposed Partnership Contract. The complete list of flexibilities and examples of how schools may use them are provided on the IE² Partnership Contract website (www.forsyth.k12.ga.us).

How will schools use the flexibility?

FCSS has a non-negotiable goal of improving student achievement; however, each school will have autonomy to pursue one or more flexibility options to meet the needs of their students. Schools will use research, along with district guidelines, to determine how to implement flexibility as part of their school plan.

What will be the effect of flexibility in class size for students and schools?

FCSS recognizes class size is a variable in student achievement and our instructional program will determine class size. FCSS will not impose a class size maximum; however, schools will be making sound programmatic decisions that will benefit students. Classroom space and working conditions for teachers and students will be considered in every instance. Schools will only utilize the classroom flexibility when it is in the best interest of the students or the educational program. Class size will continue to be monitored at the district level.

How will flexibility impact instructional delivery for Gifted students?

The instructional program for gifted education will only be changed to increase services and academic opportunities for students. Each school will determine the delivery model by reviewing the gifted eligible students they serve and deciding how to maximize their teaching staff. Eligibility will remain the same for gifted education.

Will flexibility impact instruction for EL (English Learner) students?

FCSS believes that EL students should be served based on their level of language proficiency. Flexibility offers the opportunity for schools to design instructional delivery based on student need. For example, students with Level 1 or 2 Language Proficiency would be targeted for additional segments of instruction to boost their language skills.

Transparency of Results:**How will stakeholders be informed of annual progress under the IE² Partnership Contract?**

There is an Annual Report required by the IE² Partnership Contract that will be published once results are available. Additionally, FCSS will utilize the R4 Dashboard to communicate performance to stakeholders. Approved accountability measures will be added to the R4 Dashboard and will report system and school performance each year.