
Job Description: Chief Academic Officer

About Guilford County Schools (GCS)

Guilford County Schools (GCS) is the third-largest district in North Carolina, serving nearly 72,000 students across 126 schools in urban, suburban and rural areas. Superintendent Sharon L. Contreras, Ph.D., is leading the district through a pivotal phase in its development, focused on graduating students who are ready to be successful citizens and leaders of the world. GCS's leadership team will play a critical role in helping the district reach its top priorities which focus on student achievement, equity and excellence, talent development, school choice, and organizational effectiveness.

The Board of Education of Guilford County Schools has approved five key goals that focus on academics, career and technical education, and achievement gaps. These goals form the foundation for the strategic plan under development.

1. By 2022, the percentage of students who will read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade will increase to 63 percent (currently 53.4 percent).
2. 75% of incoming 6th grade students will pass NC Math I (Algebra I) with a C or better by the end of 9th grade in 2022 (currently 69.8 percent).
3. By 2022, the percentage of graduating seniors who complete a rigorous career pathway will increase to 35 percent (currently 28.6 percent).
4. By 2022, increase by 50 percent the number of schools that exceed growth (currently 32.5 percent).
5. By 2022, decrease the achievement gap between black and Latino students and their white peers by 7 percentage points.

About the Chief Academic Officer Position

Reporting directly to the Superintendent, the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) sets the strategic vision and direction for the instructional framework and pedagogical approach to GCS's academic programs and is a key lever to accomplish GCS' five key goals (listed above). The CAO is the leader, spokesperson, and resident expert on curriculum, instruction, pedagogy, and learning. This role develops the short and long-term instructional vision for GCS and works to establish a culture of high expectation and shared responsibility for equitable access to high quality and culturally relevant instruction. The CAO works to create authentic partnerships between district offices and schools that ensure closer alignment of district resources with school needs, to implement an instructional plan for the district that ensures effective teaching in every classroom, and to create conditions that ensure systemic improvement of practice over time in every classroom.

Specific Duties and Responsibilities

Equity Leadership and Student Success

- Cultivate a commitment among all district staff to enable all students to achieve high standards.
- Confront preconceptions and model open dialogue around race, culture, class and other issues of difference.
- Operate with a lens of cultural proficiency, sensitivity, and equity to ensure students' needs are met.
- Assess the distribution of academic supports with a clear racial equity lens, ensuring allocations provide the best resources to equitably and effectively meet the needs of all GCS's students, families, and schools.

Instructional Leadership

- Develop, and implement a compelling vision for the district's instructional and curriculum services and set a compelling vision and goals for the Chief Academic Office to ensure rigorous and standards-aligned instruction and instructional supports in every classroom, for every GCS student.
- Direct academic service areas (i.e. instructional improvement, curriculum and instruction, professional development, exceptional children services, gifted services, English as Second Language, etc.) and student support services.
- Assume leadership role on the Superintendent's Cabinet responsible for assisting with long-range strategic planning, developing system-wide budgets, plans, policies and activities.
- Support informed decision-making by the Superintendent, cabinet and senior staff by monitoring and effectively interpreting the latest research, trends and development in all areas of education.

- Deliver written and oral presentations on academic accountability to various stakeholders (i.e. Board of Education, principals, teachers, parents and community groups).
- Apply research and best practices to inform theories of pedagogy and ensure consistent delivery of high-quality instruction aligned with key standards (i.e. classroom-to-classroom, grade-by-grade, school-by-school).
- Serve as the key spokesperson to the Superintendent, Advisory Board and the community regarding all educational issues (i.e. attend regular Board, staff meeting, and other related meetings).

Instructional Management and Coordinated Services

- Collaborate with Assistant Superintendents and Executive Directors in all academic areas to evaluate existing curriculum programs based on observation, and results of Accountability Services testing to determine updates to School Improvement Plans.
- Work collaboratively with cross-departmental teams in Research and Accountability, Student Services, and Teaching and Learning to ensure support of all teachers and the effective delivery of instructional programs and services.
- Collaborate with principals, principal supervisors, and district departments to provide supports for a variety of school settings and build school support systems with the necessary resources.
- Collaborate with school systems, community agencies, local universities, and research laboratories to promote shared learning.

Continuous Improvement for School Support

- Establish direction for school improvement efforts by monitoring the progress of school performance, student achievement objectives and academic excellence indicators to align strategies for school improvement.
- Create the conditions that enable all educators to provide rigorous, authentic, and personalized experiences for all students, particularly historically underserved populations.
- Develop, organize and implement models of technical assistance for schools with low student achievement; and continuous improvement for schools with average-to-high student achievement.
- Collaborate with schools to develop instructional programs and to implement reform models designed to improve achievement of all students; develop a two-way feedback loop from school sites to the Chief Academic Office.
- Create opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practice while engaging in the systemic improvement of practice over time in every classroom.
- Strategically manage and allocate resources (including money, people, time, etc.) aligned to students' needs.

Talent Management and Professional Learning

- Build and lead a highly effective, innovative academic services department that is assessed on the ability to continually improve instructional practices.
- Support staff to develop, implement, and evaluate project plans and strategy to achieve goals and objectives.
- Build the capacity of district teachers and leaders to implement inclusive practices for students with special needs.
- Provide input on professional development activities for GCS by partnering with central office to create district-wide professional development programs, ensuring a robust, systemic approach that meets student needs.
- Ensure that initiatives for school leaders and school teams are coordinated and integrate both academic content and instructional strategies (e.g. Universal Design for Learning, culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy).
- Monitor the coordination of all district professional development efforts and the implementation of new and existing educational programs using Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) as a vehicle to provide staff support.

Key Competencies

The ideal candidate will demonstrate the following:

Vision and Courage to Ensure All Students Achieve

- Demonstrates belief and holds self and others accountable for reaching high academic achievement of all students.
- Secures buy-in for a clear and compelling vision.
- Comfortable addressing matters of equity, race, and bias in decision-making.

Teaching and Learning Knowledge and Expertise

- Demonstrate ability to develop and deliver programming that drives improved academic performance for all students.
- Understand and implement promising, innovative and effective instructional practices and models.
- Demonstrate knowledge of federal and state regulations and compliance related to students with special needs.
- An expert in the field of teaching and learning, can work independently to lead the academic vision for GCS.
- A proven record of effectively planning, organizing and using resources and systems to provide high-quality professional learning and leadership development on teaching and learning.

Influence and Leadership

- Demonstrate leadership presence that gains the confidence of others.
- Comfortable pushing a group's thinking and challenging ideas to enable better decisions.
- Skillfully navigate political structures, relationships, and dynamics to improve results for students.
- Actively listen to others, understands nuance, and effectively interprets motivations/perceptions. Able to integrate feedback from others to achieve better results.
- Communicates effectively, tailoring message for the audience, context, and mode of communication.
- Build positive relationships and coalitions. Maintain visibility and work collaboratively with diverse stakeholders at all levels (i.e. district staff, students, families, communities, advocacy groups, etc.)

Strategic Planning and Effective Execution

- Proactively offer innovative solutions to seemingly intractable problems.
- Demonstrate critical thinking skills and the ability to analyze data, identify trends, and diagnose root causes.
- Exhibit a strong focus on goals and results. Sets clear metrics for success.
- Demonstrates excellent project management skills, including close attention to detail, ability to balance the big picture with detailed steps to reach the end goal, and ability to balance multiple projects under tight deadlines.
- Continuously monitors progress and demonstrate persistence to overcome obstacles to achieve goals.

Effective Change Management

- Ability to develop and execute approaches to preparing and supporting individuals, teams and organization in making systemic improvements district wide.
- Ability to use methods that redirect or redefine the use of resources, processes, budget allocation, or other modes of operation that significantly shift/change an organization.
- Create environments that encourages systemic improvement of practice over time.
- Use structured approach to ensure changes are implemented successfully to support sustainable change at scale .

Team Leadership and Management

- Build and lead effective teams to achieve ambitious goals.
- Assess team and individuals' skills, identifies development needs, and provides feedback and supports to improve practice, build capacity, and maximize talent.
- Promote professional learning and utilize effective adult learning techniques.
- Lead team to collaborate with other departments, teams, and stakeholders.

Minimum Training & Experience

- A clear track record of improving academic outcomes for students and eliminating disparities in achievement, opportunities and services for students.
- Ten years of supervisory/administrative/management experience in school administration, including knowledge of academic and accountability testing, preferably in an urban school district.
- Knowledge of best practices, and current on national trends and research for the instruction of diverse learners.
- Doctoral degree in Education in an area related to academic accountability services preferred.

- Eligible for a NC certificate in Administration or Curriculum at time of hire; Eligible for a North Carolina driver's license at time of hire.

Application Process

Qualified candidates for the above position must submit a completed online application and a resume that clearly demonstrates the above minimum qualifications.

Compensation

Salary for this position is competitive commensurate with prior experience. In addition, a comprehensive benefits package is included.

The Guilford County Board of Education believes in the dignity of all individuals and in the worth of their labors. To this end, the Board will ensure that all applicants for employment and all employees are employed, assigned, supervised, promoted, compensated, and terminated in full compliance with state and federal equal opportunity statutes. No applicant for employment or current employee will experience discrimination based on race, creed, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, physical handicap, sexual orientation or disability.