



Georgia Department of Education

Richard Woods, Georgia's School Superintendent  
"Educating Georgia's Future"

## Investing in Educational Excellence (IE<sup>2</sup>) System\* Application

DISTRICT NAME

Houston County School District

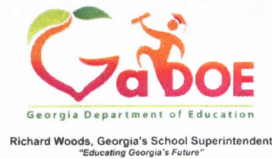
DISTRICT ADDRESS

1100 Main Street  
Perry, GA 31069

Richard Woods  
State School Superintendent

MAY 2015

\*Please note that if HB 502 goes into effect on July 1, 2015, districts that chose the IE<sup>2</sup> flexibility option will henceforth be known as Strategic Waivers School Systems.



## Introduction

Georgia House Bill 1209 provided an option for “Increased Flexibility for Local School Systems” when it was passed in 2008. School districts that choose this option are known as IE<sup>2</sup>, or Investing in Educational Excellence, Systems. Please note that if HB 502 goes into effect on July 1, 2015, districts that chose the IE<sup>2</sup> flexibility option will henceforth be known as Strategic Waivers School Systems.

An IE<sup>2</sup> System is a local school district that operates under the terms of an IE<sup>2</sup> contract between the State Board of Education and the local Board of Education. The system receives flexibility in the form of waivers of certain state laws, rules and guidelines in exchange for greater accountability for increased student performance.

Your IE<sup>2</sup> System Application is a petition to the Georgia State Board of Education asking it to create or renew your IE<sup>2</sup> system. The evaluation of your Application will be led by District Flexibility and Charter Schools Division of the Georgia Department of Education, in partnership with others within the Department (including the Legal Services Division and the Policy Division) and with the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA).

The evaluation of your Application will focus on whether the system’s proposed IE<sup>2</sup> system will leverage the flexibility from elements of Georgia’s education law, rules, and guidelines to improve academic performance. It will also determine whether the proposed IE<sup>2</sup> system would comply with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, policies and procedures (including Article 4 of Title 20, as amended [O.C.G.A. §§ 20-2-80 through 20-2-84.6], State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1-.33, and Department of Education Guidance on Investing in Educational Excellence Partnership (IE2) Contracts); whether your proposed academic plans are viable; and whether the IE<sup>2</sup> system is in the public interest.

Please note that submitting an IE<sup>2</sup> System Application does not guarantee that an IE<sup>2</sup> contract will be granted. It does guarantee, however, that the Georgia Department of Education will work closely with you to improve your chances of State Board of Education approval of your IE<sup>2</sup> system contract.

## DEADLINE AND SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

Your IE<sup>2</sup> System Application must be approved by your local Board of Education in accordance with the rules and regulations of your local board. After local submission, review and approval, and once an IE<sup>2</sup> system application is received at the address below, it will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis.

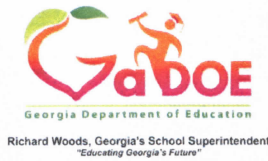
Georgia Department of Education  
District Flexibility and Charter Schools Division  
2053 Twin Towers East  
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive, SE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

## APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST

Your IE<sup>2</sup> System Application Package must comply with the following submission procedures.

- An Application Package includes an original and two copies of the following items:
  - IE<sup>2</sup> SYSTEM APPLICATION COVER SHEET** (Use the form on page 3; the form may not be altered in any way).
  - IE<sup>2</sup> SYSTEM APPLICATION** (Your answers to the questions posed on pages 4-6).
    - The IE<sup>2</sup> System Application is limited to 200 words per answer for questions 1-7 and two pages for question 8 – and all answers must be on double-spaced pages using an 11-point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins with a header showing the school system's name and a footer showing consecutive page numbers.
    - The original must be signed in blue ink. Stamped signatures will not be accepted.
  - ASSURANCES FORM AND SIGNATURE SHEET** (Use the Assurances Form and Signature Sheet below on pages 7-9; the Form and the Sheet may not be altered in any way).
    - The original must be signed in blue ink; stamped signatures will not be accepted.
  - EXHIBITS** (See list of required Exhibits below on page 10).
    - Required Exhibits should be as limited in size as possible (no more than 5 pages per Exhibit). The only exception to this size limitation for Exhibits is your most recent strategic plan (to which you will provide online links).
    - All Exhibits must be tabbed.
- Your Application Package must be bound by a binder clip; do not enclose your Application Package in a notebook, binder, or folder.
- Your Application Package must also include a single CD or USB drive that includes a:
  - Microsoft Word version of your IE<sup>2</sup> System Application Cover Sheet
  - Microsoft Word version of your IE<sup>2</sup> System Application
  - PDF Version of your signed Assurances Form
  - Microsoft Word version of your Exhibits (except for your school plans and strategic plan)
  - PDF version of your school plans
  - PDF version of your most recent strategic plan

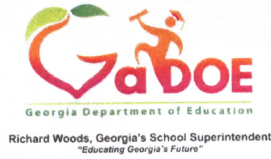
Faxed or emailed copies will not be accepted. Only complete petitions that comply with these guidelines will be evaluated. Applications will not be returned; please keep a copy for your records.



## IE<sup>2</sup> SYSTEM APPLICATION COVER SHEET

Please enter the requested information in the gray boxes following each question. Thank you!

Proposed IE2 System Information			
1. Full Name of Proposed IE2 System <b><u>Houston County School District</u></b>			
2. Please indicate whether this is a: New Petition <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or a Renewal Petition		3. How many schools in total are you proposing to include in your IE2 system? <b><u>36</u></b>	
4. How many of each of the following schools are you proposing to include in your IE2 system?			
Primary School(s) <b><u>3</u></b>		Middle School(s) <b><u>8</u></b>	
Elementary School(s) <b><u>20</u></b>		High school(s) <b><u>5</u></b>	
5. On July 1 of what year do you want your IE2 contract to be effective? <b><u>2016</u></b>			
6. IE2 System Street Address <b><u>1100 Main Street</u></b>	7. City <b><u>Perry</u></b>	8. State <b><u>GA</u></b>	9. Zip <b><u>31069</u></b>
10. Contact Person <b><u>Dr. Mark Scott</u></b>		11. Title <b><u>Superintendent</u></b>	
12. Contact Street Address <b><u>1100 Main Street</u></b>	13. City <b><u>Perry</u></b>	14. State <b><u>GA</u></b>	15. Zip <b><u>31069</u></b>
16. Contact's telephone number <b><u>(478)988-6257</u></b>	17. Contact's fax number <b><u>(478)218-7517</u></b>	18. Contact's E-mail Address <b><u>mark.scott@hcbe.net</u></b>	



## IE<sup>2</sup> SYSTEM APPLICATION

In accordance with the State of Georgia in Article 4, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-84, the Houston County School District intends to operate as an Investing in Education (IE<sup>2</sup>)/Strategic Waivers School System through the development of the IE<sup>2</sup> partnership between our school district and the State Board of Education. The following components consist of the current planning for completing the application and developing the contract necessary to take effect on July 1, 2016.

### THE CASE

#### **Overview of the Houston County School District**

The Houston County School District educates approximately 28,574 PreK through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students on 39 campuses. Houston County is home to Robins Air Force Base and is comprised of several surrounding communities in Perry, Kathleen, Bonaire, Centerville, Elko, and Warner Robins. Houston County has a free/reduced lunch rate of 57.6% with a wide variety of demographics across all schools within the district. Just over 47% of students in Houston County are white, 37% are black, and 2% are Hispanic. The district consists of three primary schools, twenty elementary schools, eight middle schools, five high schools, one alternative school, one charter career academy, and one virtual school program.

Our students have a history of excelling in many areas, from fine arts to winning academic competitions and earning sports championships. Our schools and employees have won numerous state and national awards for outstanding achievements. Over the past five years our district has consistently scored at or above the state average in most performance categories. Even with these successes, we recognize that until all students exceed expectations and graduate college and

career ready, we must continue to strive for further success. This application to establish an IE2/SWSS partnership with the State Board of Education is founded upon our efforts to continue toward the goal of meeting the mission of the Houston County School District—to produce high-achieving students. Only when we work as a collective team will we be able to fulfill our mission and then further our vision of becoming a world class system. Meeting these challenges will be implemented over a five year time period, monitored, and evaluated annually for strengths and weaknesses to adjust for continued improvement.

### **Challenge #1: Meeting the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learner**

The vision for the Houston County School District is that our school district will be world class. This means that we must prepare 21<sup>st</sup> century learners capable of operating in a global community and look forward to the future and career opportunities yet to be created. Students must be prepared to excel in higher education and post-secondary options and must be confident they are college and career ready as a graduate of the Houston County School District. Houston County will ensure we can meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner despite changing accountability measures and decreases in revenue by taking the following steps:

- ***Increasing college and career readiness for all graduates.*** Through increased choice for students in Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE), Advanced Placement, post-secondary opportunities, and additional digital platforms, students will be challenged and engaged in a variety of ways.
- ***Building teacher and leader capacity to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learner.*** Providing an inter-disciplinary approach to content and an emphasis on real-world applications and experiences is necessary to build 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. Placing an

emphasis on Response to Intervention and Intervention Methods also requires streamlining professional learning to meet the needs of all learners. Differentiated professional learning through training and workshops, instructional coaching, and job-embedded approaches will include the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner. In addition, regular examination of the technology infrastructure and personnel resources will ensure up-to-date technology and support systems necessary for 21<sup>st</sup> century success.

### **Challenge #2: Addressing the challenges of a growing school system**

The Houston County School District continues to experience an increase in enrollment and has a current population of 28,571 students. Since 2012, the population has grown an average of 284 students per year, with the most recent increase in enrollment at over 300 additional students from the 2014-15 to 2015-16 school year. The free and reduced rate has increased from 50.42% to 57.64% in this same time period. One additional high school and two elementary schools have been opened, and rezoning has been necessary on three occasions within the five-year span. The success of the school system and commerce of the community continues to attract national and global businesses. The community and school district is projected to continue to grow. Student enrollment growth necessitates a focus on growth for leaders, teachers, and support staff to ensure continued success; however, this growth presents challenges. Houston County will ensure that we address the challenges of a growing school district with increased diversity and a greater student population by taking the following steps:

- ***Implementing a process for conveying a consistent system message.*** The school district values growth and desires to continue utilizing consistent best practices to promote school autonomy that meets the needs of the individual school. Through

development and implementation of streamlined protocols for delivery of information, school practices will be more closely aligned while allowing for school autonomy. The alignment of practice will allow for smoother transition vertically between feeder school patterns, while also allowing schools to implement models that best meet the needs of their individual students.

- ***Increasing diversity awareness among all employees and students.*** Houston County is a global community that has over 34 languages represented by its students. Diversity of the student body continues to increase and change with regards to gifted and talented learners, students with disabilities, and English language learners. In a changing society, we have a duty as a district to promote diversity, teaching respect of differences among employees and students. Houston County will continue to promote professional learning that addresses the needs of various learners while increasing professional learning that is specific to the needs of the population being served. Hiring practices will be monitored to ensure an increased diversity of staff that meets the needs of the individual school.

### **Challenge #3: Utilizing decision making processes that are data-driven and data-specific**

The Houston County School District values the role multiple data systems play in continued district and school improvement processes. In order to press forward with successes, we must use multiple forms of data to ensure a more targeted approach to meeting the needs of individual students. In order to accomplish this goal, Houston County will take the following steps:

- ***Build teacher and leader capacity for data uses.*** To avoid the cliché of being “data rich, but information poor,” Houston County will continue to focus on multiple types



of data and multiple data uses. Collaborative data sessions will be increased both vertically and horizontally. Effective use of data will be implemented to highlight effective classroom practices to support a data culture.

## CONSEQUENCES

In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-84.1, the Houston County School District will employ the following interventions or sanctions at all non-performing schools under the district's management and control. The sanctions and interventions shall include the following:

- A. ***Tier One—Insufficient Progress in One Academic Year:*** If, upon review of the school's performance data, it is decided that a school has not made sufficient progress toward meeting academic goals within the academic year, the school improvement planning process will be reevaluated with the support of assigned district staff for implementation in the next immediate year. The school improvement plan will address the specific areas of weakness and will include targeted plans for improvement. Implementation of the plan will be monitored by assigned district staff and monthly leadership team meetings will be attended by assigned district staff as part of the monitoring process.
- B. ***Tier Two—Insufficient Progress in Two Academic Years:*** If, upon review of subsequent performance data and in the event that a full year of tier one district interventions have been unsuccessful, the Houston County District will require Tier One and Tier Two interventions. Tier Two interventions will include an analysis of the school's plan for Response to Intervention, including the implementation of Extended Learning Time. A plan for Extended Learning Time will be developed jointly by the

school and assigned district staff and may include day-school, after-school, before-school, and summer program interventions for targeted students.

- C. ***Tier Three—Insufficient Progress in Four Academic Years:*** If, upon review of subsequent performance data, and in the event that a full year of Tier One district interventions have been unsuccessful and at least two full years of Tier Two interventions have been unsuccessful, the Houston County District will require Tier One, Tier Two, and Tier Three interventions. Schools that fail to exhibit positive growth in student achievement after completion of Tier One and Tier Two interventions may be subject to further consequences from the district as part of Tier Three Consequences. Such consequences may include, but are not limited to, professional learning plans for teachers and/or leaders, transfers of school staff within the district, or reconstitution of the full school.
- D. ***Tier Four—Insufficient Progress in Five Academic Years:*** If, based upon the GOSA evaluation of the 2020-2021 performance data, a school has not achieved three years of growth in the articulated academic goals, the consequences recommended by GOSA and approved by the State Board of Education will be applied by the Houston County School District in the 2022-2023 school year.

## Assurances Form and Signature sheet

The law requires your school district to provide assurances that it will do certain things and comply with certain laws. This Assurance Form enumerates all of these requirements and, when you submit this signed Signature Sheet with this Assurance Form as part of your IE2 System Application Package, you are providing the legal assurance that your IE2 system understands and will do these things. This form must be signed by a duly authorized representative of the school system.

As the authorized representative of the applicant, I hereby certify that the information submitted in this application for an IE<sup>2</sup> contract for Houston County School District located in Houston County is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; I also certify that if awarded an IE<sup>2</sup> the school system:

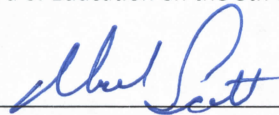
1. Shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations;
2. Shall not discriminate against any student or employee on the basis of race, color, ethnic background, national origin, gender, disability or age;
3. Shall be subject to all federal, state, and local rules, regulations, court orders, and statutes relating to civil rights; insurance; the protection of the physical health and safety of school students, employees, and visitors; conflicting interest transactions; and the prevention of unlawful conduct;
4. Shall be subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1050 requiring a brief period of quiet reflection;
5. Shall ensure that the IE<sup>2</sup> system is subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 et seq. and O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 et seq.;
6. Shall ensure that all teachers will be certified or highly qualified in compliance with No Child Left Behind;
7. Shall comply with the accountability provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-14-30 through § 20-14-41 and federal accountability requirements, and participate in statewide assessments;
8. Shall adhere to all provisions of federal law relating to students with disabilities, including the IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as applicable;
9. Shall provide state and federally mandated services for English Language Learners, as applicable;
10. Shall provide for supplemental educational services as required by federal law and pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.03, and for remediation in required cases pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.01;
11. Shall notify the state of any intent to contract with a for-profit entity for education management services;
12. Shall be subject to the requirement that it shall not charge tuition or fees to its students except as may be authorized by local boards by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-133;
13. Shall comply with federal due process procedures regarding student discipline and dismissal;
14. Shall be subject to all laws relating to unlawful conduct in or near a public school;
15. Shall have a written grievance procedure to resolve student, parent, and teacher complaints;



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16. Shall comply with the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-211.1 relating to fingerprinting and criminal background checks;
17. Shall ensure that if transportation is provided for its students, the system shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws;
18. Shall ensure that if the IE<sup>2</sup> system participates in federal school meals programs, then each participating system IE<sup>2</sup> school shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws;
19. Shall prepare a safety plan in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1185 and submit and obtain approval from the Georgia Emergency Management Agency;
20. Shall comply with the state facility requirements regarding site codes, facility codes, the submission of architectural plans for any new facility that the system may build or occupy during the IE<sup>2</sup> term and all other facility requirements as established by the Department;
21. Shall be subject to all reporting requirements of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-160, subsection (e) of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-161, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-320, and O.C.G.A. § 20-2-740;
22. Shall be subject to an annual financial audit conducted by the state auditor or, if specified in the IE<sup>2</sup> contract, by an independent certified public accountant licensed in this state;
23. Shall acknowledge that all criteria used to calculate QBE funding may not be waived;
24. Shall follow any and all other federal, state, and local laws and regulations that pertain to the applicant or the operation of the IE<sup>2</sup> system; and
25. Shall ensure that all new principals and other school leaders, central office staff, superintendents, and Board of Education members receive a detailed orientation session on their IE<sup>2</sup> system commitments as part of their "on-boarding" process.

This IE<sup>2</sup> System Application, Assurance Form, and attached Exhibits were approved by the Houston County Board of Education on the 8th day of March, 2016.

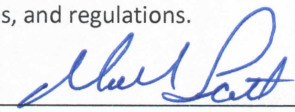
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Local Board of Education

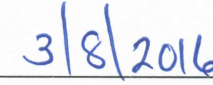
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

If an IE<sup>2</sup> contract is granted, all Petitioners assure that the proposed IE<sup>2</sup> system programs, services, and activities will operate in accordance with the terms of the IE<sup>2</sup> contract and all applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Local Board of Education

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



Georgia Department of Education

Richard Woods, Georgia's School Superintendent  
"Educating Georgia's Future"

## Exhibit 2: Public Notice Regarding Required Hearings



1100 Main Street, Perry, GA 31069 PH: 478.988.6200

**HOUSTON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS

**OUR MISSION**  
*is to produce high-achieving students.*

**OUR VISION**  
*is that our system will be world class.*

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eBOARD  
Employees of the Year  
Employment  
Georgia Report Card  
HCBOE Calendars  
HCBOE eNews  
History of the HCBOE  
Legislative Priorities  
Media Kit  
News / Media  
STEM

**Strategic Waivers School System (SWSS/IE2)**  
Houston County is pursuing the Strategic Waivers School System (SWSS/IE2) Partnership Contract with the Georgia Department of Education and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement. IE2 will provide the district with greater flexibility as a means of increasing achievement. District and school-level student achievement goals will be determined and monitored on an annual basis at the school, local, and state levels.

**Public Hearing**  
**Monday, February 8, 2016**  
6:00 P.M.  
Feagin Mill Middle School  
1200 Feagin Mill Road  
Warner Robins, GA 31088

The Houston County Board of Education will include a public hearing during its monthly work session on **Feb. 8, 2016, at 6:00 p.m.** at Feagin Mill Middle School. The purpose of this hearing is to discuss the submission of an Investing in Educational Excellence (IE2)/Strategic Waiver School System Application to the Georgia Department of Education. The complete draft document of the IE2/SWSS application is available for [review](#). School and community stakeholders are invited to comment on this matter in person at the work session or by contacting the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Dr. Eric Payne, by email at [eric.payne@hcbe.net](mailto:eric.payne@hcbe.net) or by phone at 478-988-6200.

[Click Here to Ask Your Questions](#)



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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS  
DR. MARK SCOTT

**BOARD MEMBERS**

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DR. RICK UNRUH

DAVE CROCKETT  
HOKE MORROW  
BRYAN UPBRAW

**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: FEBRUARY 1, 2016**

(Release

#2015/16 – 164)

Contact: Beth McLaughlin, Director of Community & School Affairs, 478-988-6390, ext. 0, [Beth.McLaughlin@hcbe.net](mailto:Beth.McLaughlin@hcbe.net)  
Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Pinterest](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

**Strategic Waiver School System Application Public Hearing**

Monday, February 8, 2016  
6:00 p.m.  
Feagin Mill Middle School  
1200 Feagin Mill Road  
Warner Robins, GA 31088

HOUSTON COUNTY, GA – The Houston County Board of Education will include a public hearing during its monthly work session on Feb. 8, 2016, at 6:00 p.m. at Feagin Mill Middle School. The purpose of this hearing is to discuss the submission of an Investing in Educational Excellence (IE2)/Strategic Waiver School System Application to the Georgia Department of Education. The complete draft document of the IE2/SWSS application is available for review on the Houston County Board of Education [website](#).

School and community stakeholders are invited to comment on this matter in person at the work session or by contacting the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Dr. Eric Payne, by email at [eric.payne@hcbe.net](mailto:eric.payne@hcbe.net) or by phone at 478-988-6200.

Feagin Mill Middle School is located at 1200 Feagin Mill Road in Warner Robins.

###

P.O. Box 1850 • PERRY, GEORGIA 31069  
(478) 988-6200 • FAX (478) 988-6259  
[WWW.HCBE.NET](http://WWW.HCBE.NET)

### Exhibit 3: Schools to be included in the IE2/Strategic Waivers System

Primary Schools	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
C.B. Watson Primary Lake Joy Primary David Perdue Primary	Bonaire Elementary Centerville Elementary Eagle Springs Elementary Hilltop Elementary Kings Chapel Elementary Lake Joy Elementary Langston Road Elementary Lindsey Elementary Matt Arthur Elementary Miller Elementary Morningside Elementary Northside Elementary Parkwood Elementary Pearl Stephens Elementary David Perdue Elementary Quail Run Elementary Russell Elementary Shirley Hills Elementary Tucker Elementary Westside Elementary	Bonaire Middle Feagin Mill Middle Huntington Middle Mossy Creek Middle Northside Middle Perry Middle Thomson Middle Warner Robins Middle	Houston County High Northside High Perry High Veterans High Warner Robins High
<b>The following schools and programs are NOT included in the IE2/SWSS Contract for accountability purposes</b>			
<b>School/Program</b>		<b>Reason for Exclusion</b>	
Houston County Career Academy		A college/career academy operating under a charter	
Crossroads Center		District alternative school	
Edge Academy		District virtual school program whereby students remain enrolled in their home school	

### Exhibit 4: School Plans Utilizing GaDOE Template (see Exhibits E, F, and G)

## **Exhibit 5: Brief description of the IE2/SWSS System**

The Houston County School District educates approximately 28,570 PreK through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students on 39 campuses. Houston County is home to Robins Air Force Base and is comprised of several surrounding communities in Perry, Kathleen, Bonaire, Centerville, Elko, and Warner Robins. Houston County has a free/reduced lunch rate of 57.6% with a wide variety of demographics across all schools within the district. Just over 47% of students in Houston County are white, 37% are black, and 2% are Hispanic. The district consists of three primary schools, twenty elementary schools, eight middle schools, five high schools, one alternative school, one charter career academy, and one virtual school program. Our students have a history of excelling in many areas, from fine arts to winning academic competitions, and earning sports championships. Our schools and employees have won numerous state and national awards for outstanding achievements. Over the past five years, our district has consistently scored at or above the state average in most performance categories. Even with these successes, we recognize that until all students exceed expectations and graduate college and career ready, we must continue to strive for further success. This application to establish an IE2/SWSS partnership with the State Board of Education is founded upon our efforts to continue toward the goal of meeting the mission of the Houston County School District—to produce high-achieving students. Only when we work as a collective team will we be able to fulfill our mission and then further our vision of becoming a world class system. Meeting these challenges will be implemented over a five year time period, monitored, and evaluated annually for strengths and weaknesses to adjust for continued improvement.

The district's mission is to "produce high-achieving students" and its vision is "to be a world class system." In order to meet our mission and vision, Houston County has invested in doing things "The Houston County Way." To learn more about "The Houston County Way" and to access a brochure about our schools, click on the following link:

[Learn about the Houston County Way](#)



## **Exhibit 6: Brief description of the System's Fiscal History**

Houston County School District maintains a millage rate that is in the bottom 10% of all school systems. The current rate of 13.34 mills ranked 163<sup>rd</sup> of 180 systems for 2014 (FY 2016). The rate has remained unchanged since 2009 and is lower than the rate in 2005.

The budget for FY2016 is ~ \$310 million. Funds for the general maintenance and operation of the District are derived from state (65%), local (34%), and federal (1%) sources. Over the past 5 years, our General Fund's budget has been between \$215.6 to \$236.7 million. The State of Georgia experienced serious financial hardship over the past few years, and as a result, more pressure is being placed on the local school systems to prioritize their instructional programs and to fund them with additional locally generated revenues. In fiscal year 2003, the State enacted Austerity Reductions for the State allotments, resulting in a reduction of state revenues to the School District of approximately \$2 million in 2003 to a high of \$23.8 million in 2010. For fiscal year 2015 the reduction was \$12.2 million. Reductions in other state grants and programs resulted in the total reduction of state funding for 2015 reaching approximately \$29.7 million. For fiscal year 2016, additional austerity reductions of \$8.1 million have already been approved by the state for the School District. Since the austerity reductions were enacted, the reductions total \$152.5 million and the overall reduction of state funding is approximately \$278.3 million.

The District has never operated under a fiscal deficit. The District's policy requires an unassigned fund balance in the General Fund at fiscal year-end of not less than 4% of budgeted expenditures, not to exceed 15% of the total budget of the subsequent year. The unassigned

fund balance and percentage for the subsequent General Fund for the past five fiscal years is as follows:

- 2011 \$18,114,494.81 (8.40%)
- 2012 \$20,391,081.43 (9.39%)
- 2013 \$20,971,468.60 (9.46%)
- 2014 \$18,179,512.64 (7.80%)
- 2015 \$19,469,972.71 (8.22%)

Houston County School District is one of 10 Board of Educations in Georgia that receive the Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) funds. The LOST funds do not increase the District's revenue because there is a mandatory rollback to reduce the property tax millage rates. This LOST shifts some of the tax burden from local property owners to the purchasers of goods. These funds allow Houston County to maintain the lower millage rate that we currently have. During the past 5 fiscal years the District has collected LOST receipts between \$20,921,130.92 and \$22,109,147.51.



Richard Woods, Georgia's School Superintendent  
"Educating Georgia's Future"

**Exhibit 7: Online link to the school system's most recent annual audit**

[Houston County Finance and Business Operations Webpage](#)

**Exhibit 8: Online link to the school system's most recent accreditation report**

[Houston County SACS CASI Accreditation](#)

**Exhibit 9: Online link to the school system's most recent strategic plan**

[Houston County Strategic Plan](#)