

**CHEROKEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, STUDENT SUPPORT
AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

March 14, 2012

TO: Dr. Frank R. Petruzielo
Superintendent of Schools

FROM: Dr. Carla D. Cohen, Assistant Superintendent
Educational Programs, Student Support and Professional Development

**SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT - - SUPERINTENDENT'S AD HOC CHEROKEE
ACADEMIES STEERING, PLANNING AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

As you know, the Superintendent's Ad Hoc Academy Steering Committee is responsible for coordinating the efforts of the Planning and Advisory Committees to assure complete and timely implementation of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and Fine Arts Academies in Cherokee County, beginning with four STEM Academies and two Fine Arts Academies in fall 2012. The following is a brief status report of the work of these committees to date.

With locations for the initial academies now established, the Committees are now focused on fine-tuning the logistics (student transfer request process, transportation, personnel and school operations), curriculum, professional development and materials that are needed to bring the pilot academies to fruition.

I. Student Transfer Request Process

With consideration given to available space in each of the respective schools and grade levels, the Academies are open to all students who wish to attend. There will be process whereby parents/guardians must complete a transfer request form in order to provide the information necessary to determine staffing, transportation and other operational matters. There will be no entrance exams, auditions or other selection criteria for students to attend an Academy. The transfer request window will be open from April 16 to May 11, 2012. After the window closes, staff will calculate the number of available seats and offer them to students on a first-come, first-served basis. Siblings of accepted students will not be given an advantage in the enrollment process, due to an expected excess demand. If all available Academy seats are filled before all students are placed, the remaining students who requested reassignment will be placed on a wait list.

II. Transportation Plans

Transportation shuttle services will be available to students residing within the general geographic area of each Academy. While transportation services are not typically provided to students opting for a reassignment to another school from the school they are zoned to attend, transportation will be designed to offer shuttle services to students attending Academies (to the extent practicable within the parameters established). This may require that a parent/guardian transport their student to and from a designated school hub (if the student's resident school is not designated as a hub). If the student's resident school is designated as a hub, then the student will

be able to ride the neighborhood bus to/from the resident school and the shuttle to/from the Academy. Below is a current listing of each Academy’s proposed school hubs:

Academies	Proposed Elementary Transportation Hubs
Ball Ground (STEM)	Free Home, Macedonia
Canton (STEM)	Clayton, Hasty, Knox, RM Moore
Clark Creek (STEM)	Bascomb, Boston, Oak Grove
Hasty (Fine Arts)	Canton, Clayton, Knox, RM Moore
Holly Springs (STEM)	Hickory Flat, Indian Knoll, Mtn. Road
Oak Grove (Fine Arts)	Bascomb, Boston, Clark Creek

III. School Personnel

Teachers and staff wishing to work within an Academy must follow established employee transfer procedures and will be interviewed by Academy principals for positions as they become available. All CCSD teachers are considered highly qualified per state and federal guidelines and are able to teach within any school, including Academies.

IV. School Operations

The Academies will follow the same calendar and schedule as other elementary schools. Like all schools, the Academies also have latitude relative to the bell schedule. For example, if it is determined that students participating with a hands-on activity (e.g., robotics lab) for a nine-week period, the principal may decide to combine periods to block enough time on task for that quarter. Principals must work with School Operations and Educational Programs to assure compliance with state and local policies and procedures regarding instructional time.

V. Curriculum

All schools are expected to teach students using the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) and the Academies are no exception. In both the STEM and Fine Arts Academies, the curriculum will use a balance of texts and technological resources to provide an education that is challenging and rewarding, centered on a theme of either STEM or Fine Arts.

- A. **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Academies** in the Cherokee County School District will provide third through fifth grade students a comprehensive, integrated and rigorous academic program that is based on the GPS. Students will master academic goals, critical thinking and problem-solving skills through a blend of creative, hands-on projects and science-based investigations. Through interdisciplinary units of instruction, students will embark on a journey of active learning that provides them with a sense of accomplishment and productivity.

To provide students with a quality STEM education and to enhance traditional academic coursework, two eighteen-week core STEM Explorations courses are being planned and developed for each grade level, grades three through five. Although the courses are organized by subject area, the engineering design process is infused throughout the entire STEM curriculum.

STEM education is a way to expose students to the extensive field of engineering, which is the culmination of science, technology, and mathematics. This field is so extensive that it is extremely difficult to address all concepts in a regular class environment. Through the STEM Exploratory courses, students are exposed to the numerous areas of engineering (environmental, technological, structural, etc.) as they learn the design process. Using the design process, students will solve real-world engineering problems through project-based units of instruction.

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- B. Fine Arts Academies** in the Cherokee County School District will provide kindergarten through the highest grade level at each academy (sixth grade at Hasty ES and fourth grade at Oak Grove ES) a climate of high expectation, discipline and academic rigor. An integrated approach to education through the arts creates a personal connection to learning and adds depth in the classroom through a creative, inquiry-based process of teaching and learning. Based on the CCGPS, the comprehensive Fine Arts program will provide opportunities for students to develop a sense of craftsmanship, quality task performance and goal-setting skills needed to succeed in the classroom and beyond. It will also provide another opportunity for parental, community, and business involvement with each of the schools, including arts and humanities organizations. Every classroom teacher will be involved by providing integrated arts (music, dance, drama, visual arts, etc.) through academic lessons at least one time each week.

VI. Professional Development

Professional development for Academy teachers will include a comprehensive one-week course in summer 2012 that is tailored to the meet the needs of STEM and Fine Arts Academy teachers. STEM Cherokee will begin in June for teachers who will be teaching at the STEM Academy. Teachers will be provided an opportunity for hands-on learning using the materials purchased for STEM units, as they develop the units as well as specific individual lesson plans. The teachers involved in teaching the specific STEM lessons will also be enrolled in a customized Teach 21 program during the year that has been developed especially for Academy teachers.

Professional Development for Fine Arts Academy teachers will be in conjunction with “Arts Now, Teaching and Learning Across the Curriculum”, a non-profit organization that works to build the capacity of teachers with both professional development and resources. Arts Now materials were developed with five primary collaborators: Atlanta Ballet Centre for Dance Education, Emory University Department of Theater Studies, Georgia State University School of Music, the Savannah College of Art & Design/Atlanta and The National Consortium for Music-in-Education. The goal is to equip teachers with the knowledge and strategies to bring creativity and the arts into daily classroom instruction so students succeed academically, socially and artistically. At least 15 teachers from each Fine Arts Academy will begin this summer with a week-long session, Arts Cherokee, and will continue throughout the year.


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