



## **Executive Summary**

# District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties

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### Introduction

Every school system has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school system makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a school system stays faithful to its vision. Many factors contribute to the overall narrative such as an identification of stakeholders, a description of stakeholder engagement, the trends and issues affecting the school system, and the kinds of programs and services that a school system implements to support student learning.

The purpose of the Executive Summary (ES) is to provide a school system with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the community will have a more complete picture of how the school system perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the school system to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.

## **Description of the School System**

**Describe the school system's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school system serves?**

School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties is commonly referred to as District Five. The school district was organized by action of the Lexington County Board of Education in 1951 and the Richland County Board of Education in 1952. The action of the Boards of Education consolidated several smaller school districts in the Counties. In addition to the District Five, there are four other school districts in Lexington County and two other school districts in Richland County. District Five, as well as the other school districts in Lexington County and Richland County, are fiscally independent.

District Five encompasses a land area of approximately 196 square miles that consists of the northern portion of Lexington County lying north of Lake Murray and the Saluda River and the northwestern portion of Richland County lying south of the Broad River. District Five is primarily a residential suburb and includes three attendance areas: Chapin, Dutch Fork, and Irmo. There are a total of 12 elementary schools, four middle schools, four high schools, a Center for Advanced Technical Studies (The Center) and an alternative academy in the district. Nine of our schools have been named National Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence and last year, sixteen schools earned Palmetto Gold and Silver awards for academic performance and closing the achievement gap. In its second year of operation, The Center earned the prestigious "High Schools That Work" Platinum Award. Six of the twelve elementary schools are Title I schools, five of which are identified as Title I Reward Schools for demonstrating substantial progress in academic achievement. The district serves 16,420 K-12 students and over 500 additional students in preK and special programs. The District has 2,562 employees (not including substitutes or temporary employees).

The Board of Trustees, consisting of seven members, governs District Five. All members of the Board of Trustees are required to be residents of the school district. Four members represent the portion of the school district located within Lexington County. They are required to be residents of the Lexington portion of the District and are elected by the registered voters therein. Three of the trustees are required to be residents of the portion of the school district located within Richland County, and they are elected by the registered voters therein. Each trustee is elected to serve a four-year term. The terms alternate with three or four board seats up for election every two years. The Board conducts yearly elections during November to elect a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary.

The District Five Board of Trustees is the District's official policy-making entity. The Board formulates policies to enhance educational opportunities in the District by interpreting the needs and goals of the community. The Board also seeks to develop and maintain communication among the various constituencies served by the schools.

District Five is recognized for its excellence in attracting and retaining high quality teachers. Approximately 70% of teachers hold advanced degrees and 24% are Nationally Board Certified. The school district maintains a 92% teacher retention rate and 86% of teachers are on a continuing contract. District Five is fortunate to draw upon the many highly educated individuals who have retired in the District area as substitutes, volunteers, and mentors. Currently, the district has more than 3,200 adult volunteers.

Lexington and Richland Counties boast a diverse business and educational community. Retail, healthcare, construction, and professional/scientific/technical services are the key employment sectors, as well as state and federal government. The region is home to South Carolina's flagship university, Midlands Technical College and smaller colleges including two historically black colleges and one women's college.

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The District Five community is a vibrant and growing part of Lexington and Richland Counties. The area is home to the Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission which operates Saluda Shoals Park, Seven Oaks Park, and Crooked Creek Park. The area features one of the region's most vibrant shopping corridors on Harbison Boulevard and state-of-the-art health facilities including multiple satellite locations for Lexington Medical Center and the newly opened Palmetto Health Parkridge Hospital. The community also boasts many activities and events that take place on Lake Murray. The region benefits from vast recreational opportunities including the Riverbanks Zoo and Gardens, Lake Murray, and the Dreher Island and Harbison State Parks. These resources have enhanced District Five's position as a leader in environmental education and stewardship by providing additional educational opportunities for our students.

District Five serves a very diverse community that ranges from highly affluent areas to both rural and suburban neighborhoods with isolated poverty. Among the District's attendance areas, the median incomes reflect this diversity: Chapin \$45,771, Dutch Fork \$51,898, and Irmo \$55,475. The Lake Murray Community which feeds into both the Chapin and Irmo attendance areas has a median income of \$101,855. The demographics between these attendance areas are just as distinct. Chapin's population is 80% White, 11% Black, 5% Hispanic, and 1% Asian; Dutch Fork's population is 59% White, 36% Black, 2% Hispanic, and 2% Asian; Irmo's population is 63% White, 30% Black, 3% Hispanic, and 2% Asian; while the Lake Murray Community is 95% White, 1% Black, 2% Hispanic, and 1% Asian.

This diversity is reflected in the demographics of our total student population: 62% White, 28% Black, 3% Hispanic, 6% identified as Asian or multi-racial. Additionally 34% of students are eligible for free and/or reduced lunch. Among District Five's student body, 29.8% of the district's students are state-identified gifted and talented and 12.5% receive special education services. District Five's graduation rate is 87.7% and the dropout rate is 1.1%. The percent of students pursuing post-secondary education is more than 91% - among the highest statewide.

District Five has addressed this diversity with high quality educational programs, student services, and support to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students. This balance has been achieved through the community's expectation of excellence. District Five is extremely fortunate to have strong partnerships and support by its community which sets high expectations for its schools while providing the support and encouragement to achieve those expectations. The community encourages calculated risks focused on improving student success. Many of the state-of-the-art educational initiatives implemented in District Five and encouraged by the community have been recognized locally, statewide, and nationally.

While District Five has a legacy of excellence, it also must continue to adapt to an ever-changing world to ensure its students are graduating with the skills and abilities to succeed in a career and in life. This is a never-ending challenge. It is not good enough to graduate a student who has rote knowledge. Graduates must be able to apply the knowledge gained in ways that will assure their future success while helping solve problems in the community and world. Keeping up with a dynamic world and evolving workforce requirements will continue to be a challenge for District Five.

Of course, maintaining the edge for future success will depend on the appropriate and embedded use of technology. Today, every high school student is issued an iPad mini and every middle school student is issued a Chromebook tablet. Decisions are underway as part of the Elementary School Technology Task Force concerning the saturation of technology devices and the classroom of the future in elementary schools. The District will continue to infuse instructional technology in the classroom for the purpose of improving teaching and learning. Over the next three years, the District will transition to a Device Adaptable Technology System that will provide the infrastructure and support for a variety of devices. District Five is committed to being a school system that has a robust technology infrastructure, where all teachers have the tools they need to provide the very best instruction and all students have the tools they need to maximize their learning. This commitment provides significant challenges for resources, professional development, and infrastructure.

The challenge for adequate financial support extends far beyond technology. While the Board of Trustees has the responsibility for setting

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the operational millage, in 2006, the State Legislature passed Act 388 which severely limited local School Boards' ability to raise millage. Funding at the state level for District Five is stagnant and proposed new funding formulas would further reduce support from the state. While revenue is flat or decreasing, expenses continue to climb. Unless new funding streams are found, District Five and other districts across South Carolina will be facing tough decisions in the coming years.

Another significant challenge facing the District is how best to respond to the increasing diversity of the community and students. The District has responded well to shifting diversity. However, this is an on-going issue which must be constantly reviewed and addressed.

## **System's Purpose**

**Provide the school system's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school system embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.**

District Five leadership is committed to an inclusive process which sets the direction and focus of the school district. Establishing the District's mission, vision, values and beliefs is not a perfunctory drill done in isolation. It is truly a collaborative process that includes stakeholders from across the District and community. The School Board is actively engaged in the community and in the visioning process. The Superintendent hosts numerous advisory committees that meet on a routine basis and represent a broad swath of the community. These include the business, ministerial, realtor, senior citizen, faculty, parent, and student advisory committees.

By including many people and constituents at the onset of the visioning process the result is a community that has buy-in and supports the direction and goals of the District. The following are the current Mission, Vision, and District motto.

### **Mission**

The mission of School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties, in partnership with the community, is to provide challenging curricula with high expectations for learning that develop productive citizens who can solve problems and contribute to a global society.

### **Vision**

School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties will empower all students to meet or exceed expectations for academic, social, and emotional growth and success. We will provide opportunities for students to develop creative and critical problem-solving skills, as innovative learners, to meet dynamic global changes. We will maximize our use of resources through collaborative partnerships with our community, our business and education partners. District Five's students will be prepared to pursue excellence for tomorrow's challenges.

### **Motto**

**Pursuing Excellence for Tomorrow's Challenges**

District Five offers an educational program that challenges and stimulates thinking and problem solving and fosters superior achievement. Our comprehensive educational program focuses on both academic and personal success for all students from early childhood education through grade 12 and including adult and community education programs. A variety of programs are offered to meet the diverse needs of our students to prepare them for the 21st century.

At District Five, we believe that all students can learn, but not every student learns in the same way. Diversity of talents, interests, learning styles and backgrounds is what makes us a great community of thinkers and problems solvers. District Five has long placed a priority on growing our academic programs through magnet and other offerings. It is a conscious decision to provide our families with the choices they need to make their students successful in school and in future careers. "CHOICE" is the term used to describe the opportunities provided to our students. CHOICE includes the option to select any school in the district that has space available to accommodate additional students or to select a magnet school or magnet program. For many years, District Five has given students and parents the option to request a school outside their attendance zone provided that school has the capacity to accept additional students. This option continues to be available.

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In addition to the motto, the District recently adopted a catch phrase associated with our choice and magnet offerings: "District Five - Where Every Choice is a Great Choice." This phrase captures our desire that every school in District Five offers a rich educational experience that prepares students for success in school and in life. Our students and parents must feel confident that no matter the school they choose, they will be offered a great educational experience.

District Five offers the following magnet programs:

- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) program at Dutch Fork High
- IB (International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme) at Irmo High
- Escolares Academy (State-Identified Gifted and Talented) at Harbison West Elementary
- LEAP (Leaphart Engineering Arts Program) at Leaphart Elementary
- The Leader in Me program at H.E. Corley Elementary

In 2013, District Five was awarded a \$10 million Magnet School of America Program grant to implement Project ACCESS (Academics + Choice + Careers + Environment = Student Success). Project ACCESS has expanded magnet CHOICE offerings across the district with the following options:

- Dutch Fork Elementary School Academy of Environmental Sciences
- Seven Oaks Elementary School MEDIA (Mass Communications, Engagement, Digital Media, Interactive Learning, Academics) Magnet
- Irmo Middle School International Academic Magnet (iAM)
- Irmo High School International School for the Arts
- Spring Hill High School, an ALL magnet school with 5 Focus Academies:
  - Entrepreneurial Academy
  - Engineering Academy
  - Entertainment Academy
  - Environmental Studies Academy
  - Exercise Science Academy

The link between District Five's program offerings and student expectations and performance is strong. District Five is consistently recognized as a top performing district in South Carolina and recently received an "A" rating under the federal accountability system and an "excellent" rating on our state report card. In 2014, U.S. News & World Report ranked District Five as best school district in South Carolina for preparing students for college, and Niche.com ranked District Five as the top school district in South Carolina. SAT and ACT scores consistently beat the national average and are among the best in the state. District Five retains one of the lowest dropout rates and highest graduation rates in South Carolina and our high school students lead the Midlands in end-of-course examination results. Last year, more than 200 students were honored as Junior Scholars and our graduating seniors earned more than \$120 million in college scholarships.

## **Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement**

**Describe the school system's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school system is striving to achieve in the next three years.**

District Five has exemplified notable achievements in three broad areas over the last three years.

### **Governance and Leadership:**

District Five maintains a strong, clear purpose and direction that is recognized across all levels of the community and stakeholders. Shared values and high expectations are established by the Board, in partnership with the Superintendent, and exemplified throughout the entire system. Without this strong governance and leadership, District Five (schools, leadership, teachers, and students) would not continue to excel on state and national levels.

In 2014, District Five was recognized as the top school district in South Carolina according to Niche.com. The site, which blends community reviews with academic data to rank schools nationally, listed six of District Five's elementary schools and all four of the district's middle schools in the top ten statewide. All the district's high schools are ranked in the top 25. Niche, formerly the better-known College Prowler ranking site, based its new list on eight categories, including: academics, extracurricular activities, health and safety, and facilities among other measures. Parent and student surveys make up around 10 percent of the site's ranking methodology and include more than 300,000 opinions collected nationwide.

### **Teaching and Learning:**

District Five's focus on CHOICE programs received a boost with a transformational \$10 million Magnet Schools of America Program grant (MSAP) in 2013.

District Five's professional development program was completely overhauled in 2013 for implementation in the 2014-15 school year and is commonly referred to as LeaD5. This new model provides sustained study through a 3-year Professional Development Continuum that allows teachers to delve deeper into a topic of choice, designed around District Instructional Initiatives.

In 2011 District Five adopted Doug Reeve's five-step Data Teams model as a way to strengthen instructional practices and student performance. This research-based model creates small, grade-level department, course, or content teams that collaboratively analyze data and select instructional strategies in order to drive instruction and improve professional practice. Data Teams have been instrumental for District Five to create professional teams of educators who continuously reflect on and improve their practice through the use of data from multiple sources. Each team has a facilitator, who along with teachers and administrators receives training by external consultants.

### **Resources:**

District Five has made significant progress in facilities improvement made possible by a community bond referendum passed in 2008. In the past three years, the District opened two new high schools: a state-of-the-art Center for Advanced Technical Studies and Spring Hill High School - an all school magnet. Additionally, renovations have been completed at four elementary schools and one high school. Construction of a new middle school and renovation of a high school are underway and expected to be completed in 2015. District Five's Capital Facilities Improvement Plan will continue to be monitored and updated to meet the district's evolving needs and priorities.

District Five is in year three of implementation of the i5 Technology Initiative, which is transforming learning opportunities that prepare our

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students for success in the 21st century by using technology to strengthen the growth of our curriculum and student competencies for work, citizenship, and life-long learning. This initiative has provided all middle and high school students and teachers access to one-to-one computing devices to enhance instruction and learning. Instructional technology teachers are provided on-site at each school (including elementary) to provide site-based resources and support to incorporate technology into the classroom curriculum.

The following areas have been identified as opportunities for improvement over the next three years:

### Governance and Leadership:

District Five is fortunate for the parents, business leaders and community members who are deeply involved in the district's schools and who demand excellence and expect to be informed of the significant activities in our district and schools. There are also detractors in our community who focus negatively on the district and misrepresent the truth. It is critical that the district control its message to the public. The Superintendent, in his Vision 2015 presentation, underscored the importance that we need more dialogue related to improving teaching and learning for students and less dialogue related to mediating disagreements among adults. By remaining diligent in our focus and dialogue, District Five then can refocus full attention to providing challenging curricula with high expectations for learning that develop productive citizens who can solve problems and contribute to a global society.

### Teaching and Learning:

It has become evident through the AdvancED self-assessment process that district staff (both instructional and non-instructional) need increased training in data literacy. While there is agreement that data is prevalent system wide and Data Teams have provided a solid foundation in which to analyze data, there remains a growing awareness that deepening our understanding of how to interpret data from multiple sources is needed. This will be a major focus of strategic improvement that will involve all levels and departments of the system.

Vertical and horizontal alignment regarding grading policies and practice is another area that will be addressed. While policies are in place, there remains a need for increased communication and practice across grade levels and schools.

### Resources:

District Five has a strong student services department that supports the physical, social, and emotional needs of the system's 16,420 students. Many existing structures are in place to identify and address these needs; however, there lacks a clearly delineated structure for ensuring that each student is well known by at least one adult advocate. District leadership will assess current programs and processes to determine the best approach for creating a system wide change (similar to the process of transforming Professional Development and implementing the Data Teams model, both of which have proven extremely successful).

The District's technology infrastructure will continue to be a priority. Keeping up with the speed of technological innovations is a challenge financially and instructionally. This challenge played out in the District last fall. The District added more than 12,500 devices to its technology network in less than three years. The infusion of devices and increased use of technology in the classroom stretched the technology infrastructure and resulted in some lost teaching opportunities. This event provided a valuable lesson for the District as it moves forward with technology initiatives. Immediate action was taken to strengthen the technology infrastructure and a plan was put in place to ensure the technology backbone has the capacity to handle future demands. However, this is an ongoing process that requires constant vigilance and cooperation between the instructional and technology teams.

## **Additional Information**

**Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.**

District Five leadership is excited to use the results of the AdvancED reaccreditation process to make our schools and district even better. Each year the State Department of Education requires all schools and districts to update their School Renewal Plan (SRP) and District Strategic Plan (DSP). Every five years those plans must be completely revised and resubmitted to the Department. The District Five cycle for submitting new SRPs and DSPs coincided with the AdvancED visit. After careful consideration, the District requested and was granted permission from the Department to delay the submission of SRPs and a DSP for one year.

This request was made so that we could coordinate and integrate the AdvancED and strategic planning process. It would have been a flawed process to write and submit new plans without the benefit of the feedback from the AdvancED process. Once we have completed the AdvancED process and have our results in hand, we will begin working on a new DSP which addresses how we can sustain the strengths and improve on the weaknesses found through AdvancED. Once the DSP is complete it will be shared with all School Improvement Councils (SICs) so that they can begin the SRP process. This process ensures that the district's plan is addressing specific issues found in the AdvancED process and that the SRPs are nested in the DSP.

District Five is recognized for its innovation in two additional areas not addressed in the previous sections.

(1) The Center for Advanced Technical Studies (The Center)

The Center opened in 2012 as a standalone facility for students to build technical skills, gain certifications, and earn college credits. The Center is a CHOICE program that provides students the opportunity to remain enrolled in their high school and take their major program of study at the Center by attending every other day in the morning or afternoon. The design of the programs of study enables students to be innovative and creative learners with a goal to become problem solvers and critical thinkers for the future.

Students complete a capstone project as required for program completion, and the learning environment expects teachers and students to use their imagination, creation, and innovation abilities to develop potential solutions to problems in all programs as part of completing the program of study. The core belief of the Center is students will become the critical thinkers and problem solvers of the future. At the center of the instructional model is teachers will become facilitators of learning, guiding the students to learn through discovery while embracing failure as a means to solving a problem with multiple options being considered.

The Center for Advanced Technical Studies offers courses in 17 different program areas. Students may choose to pursue coursework in any of the following areas:

- Aerospace Engineering
- Alternative Energy and Engineering Systems
- Automotive Service and Maintenance Technology
- Biomedical Sciences and Nanotechnology
- Biosystems Engineering Technology
- Building Construction Technology and Integrated Systems
- Culinary Arts
- Cyber Security Technology

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- Electrical Design and Integrated Systems
- Emergency and Fire Management Services
- Law Enforcement
- Machine Tool Technology
- Mechatronics Systems Technology
- Media Technology and Visual Arts
- Veterinary Science and Technology
- Visual and Digital Graphic Communication
- Welding Technology

### (2) The District Five Foundation for Educational Excellence

The District Five Foundation is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that exists to foster unity and support teachers and students in District Five. The Foundation is charged with raising money which is then invested directly into the unmet needs of children, teachers, and staff across four key areas:

#### Learning Readiness

Every student should be able to come to school healthy and ready to learn. We support a number of programs that help give at-risk students the opportunity to enter the classroom with an equal opportunity to learn.

#### Arts and Cultural Experiences

Engaging students in the arts is a well-documented factor for success, impacting classroom performance, building confidence, and fostering positive relationships with others. We seek to bring the arts to all.

#### Science and Technology

Science, technology, engineering, and math are the DNA of tomorrow's workforce. We fund distinctive learning experiences in and out of the classroom to build enthusiasm for the sciences to students of every age.

#### Leadership Development

Effective leadership is essential to learning: from teachers who inspire and students who reach beyond ordinary expectations. We ensure both groups have the opportunity to refine the human skills that will make them effective in the workplace, and in life.