

U.S. Department of Education
2009 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon Schools Program

Type of School: (Check all that apply) Elementary Middle High K-12 Other
 Charter Title I Magnet Choice

Name of Principal: Dr. Hilda Wilkins, Ed.D.

Official School Name: Hightower Trail Middle School

School Mailing Address:
3905 Post Oak Tritt Rd.
Marietta, GA 30062-5115

County: Cobb State School Code Number*: 0321

Telephone: (770) 578-7225 Fax: (770) 578-7227

Web site/URL: http://www.cobbk12.org/~hightowertrail/index.htm E-mail: Hilda.Wilkins@cobbk12.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent*: Mr. Fred Sanderson,

District Name: Cobb County Schools Tel: (770) 426-3300

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Dr. John Abraham

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Original signed cover sheet only should be mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as USPS Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, NCLB-Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, US Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2008-2009 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2003.
6. The nominated school has not received the No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, or 2008.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
9. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district:
- | | |
|------------|---------------------|
| 70 | Elementary schools |
| 25 | Middle schools |
| 0 | Junior high schools |
| 16 | High schools |
| 7 | Other |
| 118 | TOTAL |

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: 8214

Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: 8428

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

- Urban or large central city
 Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
 Suburban
 Small city or town in a rural area
 Rural

4. 3 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

 If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?

5. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK			0	7	164	161	325
K			0	8	160	192	352
1			0	9			0
2			0	10			0
3			0	11			0
4			0	12			0
5			0	Other			0
6	147	160	307				
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL							984

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- | |
|---|
| 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native |
| 7 % Asian |
| 12 % Black or African American |
| 3 % Hispanic or Latino |
| 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander |
| 74 % White |
| 4 % Two or more races |
| 100 % Total |

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 6 %

This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	33
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	25
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	58
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1.	984
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.059
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	5.894

8. Limited English proficient students in the school: 1 %

Total number limited English proficient 10

Number of languages represented: 5

Specify languages:

Chinese, Korean, Polish, Spanish, Vietnamese

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 10 %

Total number students who qualify: 98

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-price school meals program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 12 %

Total Number of Students Served: 119

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>4</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>1</u> Deafness	<u>24</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>39</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>6</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>14</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>31</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff	
	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>58</u>	<u>3</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>22</u>	<u>1</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>8</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff	<u>22</u>	<u>0</u>
Total number	<u>113</u>	<u>4</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 17 :1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any attendance rates under 95%, teacher turnover rates over 12%, or student dropout rates over 5%.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
Daily teacher attendance	95%	95%	95%	96%	95%
Teacher turnover rate	8%	12%	14%	7%	12%
Student dropout rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Please provide all explanations below.

- Detailed data are not available for daily teacher attendance during the 2003-2004 school year; the number represented above is an estimate based on available data for subsequent years.
- As is often the case when a new principal arrives at a school, teacher turnover during the 2005-2006 school year was slightly higher than normal.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools).

Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2008 are doing as of the Fall 2008.

Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	<u>0</u> %
Enrolled in a community college	<u>0</u> %
Enrolled in vocational training	<u>0</u> %
Found employment	<u>0</u> %
Military service	<u>0</u> %
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	<u>0</u> %
Unknown	<u>0</u> %
Total	<u>100</u> %

PART III - SUMMARY

In the 1800's, an important Cherokee Indian trading trail, the Hightower Trail (pronounced E-tow-ah in Cherokee), included a piece of land in northeast Cobb County, Georgia. A century later, this land was purchased by the school board for a new middle school to be named for its heritage. Hightower Trail Middle School (HTMS) opened August 23, 1993, with 1069 students coming from four different elementary schools. In 2003, the school was recognized as a Georgia School of Excellence. Positioned in a stable community, the school's annual enrollment has fluctuated only slightly over the years with a 2008 enrollment of 986. For the fifth year, Hightower Trail is a NCLB School of Choice, receiving students from schools consistently not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Over the past five years, the number of Choice students has grown from 5 to 75, requiring the staff to find ways to meet all students' diverse academic and social needs.

Hightower Trail has a vision of being a learning community committed to preparing all students to make significant contributions to a global society. Its mission is to join the community in promoting a safe, secure learning environment for children to grow emotionally, socially, intellectually, and physically. With that end in mind, teachers work collaboratively in "data teams" planning units that require students to apply their knowledge of standards through real-world performances in order to become effective contributors to their world. Global economics is stressed by funding students' participation in the competitive Stock Market game. French or Spanish is offered to eighth graders for high school credit. Non-negotiable technology standards for every content and grade level are integrated into the curriculum to strengthen students' competitive edge in the ever-changing field of technology. Advanced content classes are offered in all core areas at every grade level, and students can find support for these classes by attending morning tutorials. Additionally, any student needing homework assistance or skills reinforcement may attend the after-school Instructional Extension program, staffed by highly-qualified teachers.

Students develop socially through participation in the 29 clubs and organizations sponsored by faculty. Approximately 75% of students participate in one of the music programs, band, chorus, and orchestra, and consistently receive "Excellent" and "Superior" ratings at district and state performances. The before-school intramural sports program attracts over 70% of HTMS students and provides them with the experience of playing team sports. Counselors create opportunities for social networking during the day and organize small groups to address student and family issues. Choice students ride busses long distances to attend school; therefore, counselors, teachers, and administrators work in tandem to provide opportunities for students to build friendships and practice social skills within the school day.

Parent involvement is strong at HTMS. Yearly the PTSA receives state honors for their work in creating a conduit for information between school and home. Parent volunteers staff the front office and media information desk, and parents come in large numbers to support school events and conferences. The parent-run School Council meets regularly to discuss school issues, and the newly-formed Husky Foundation works tirelessly to raise funds for needed school resources. Parents receive weekly information through an online newsletter as well as a phone call every Thursday. All teachers update their blogs daily for parents and students to access homework assignments online.

Hightower Trail has maintained a strong academic tradition. Students consistently score high on nationally-normed and criterion-referenced tests. An outstanding content area has traditionally been mathematics with the Math Counts team regularly placing in the top ten at state competitions. State rankings for the 2008 Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), placed Hightower Trail among the top ten schools in Georgia for the highest number of students exceeding standards in every category at every grade level. The school also made AYP with Absolute Bar, and 97% of the students met or exceeded standards.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

Hightower Trail students are assessed each year using the state-mandated Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). The test is administered in the areas of reading, English / language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies and is designed to assess the extent to which students have learned the skills and knowledge outlined in the Georgia Performance Standards (the state curriculum also known as the GPS). When the CRCT was based on the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC), scaled scores for these tests measured student achievement with 300-349 meeting standards. For the GPS curriculum, the scaled scores are reported as 800-849 meeting standards. More detailed information about the state testing program can be found at <http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/index.aspx>.

Because the new state curriculum (GPS) has been implemented in phases, comparing scores across the past five years is difficult. However, analysis of the data does reveal broad trends. When compared with similar schools both in Cobb County and throughout the state, Hightower Trail students have scored at consistently high levels for all areas assessed on the CRCT.

On the reading test, the percentage of students either meeting or exceeding standards for the last five years has ranged from 96% to 100%. A discrepancy appears in seventh grade scores in 2003-2004, when sixth and eighth grade students performed at slightly higher levels than their seventh grade counterparts. This reflected a trend across the system with speculation that it could have been related to the test itself. When the first new GPS test with its scoring procedures was implemented during the 2005-2006 school year, the percentage of students exceeding standards dropped significantly across all grade levels. These scores have been increasing steadily since then with the percentage of sixth grade students exceeding standards increasing from 55% to 68% and the percentage of students in seventh and eighth grades exceeding standards increasing from 34% to 41%, and 37% to 54%, respectively.

Hightower Trail students have also demonstrated high levels of performance in mathematics with over 90% of students either meeting or exceeding standards during the last five years. Although the sixth grade scores show a drop in the number of students who either met or exceeded standards in 2005-2006, that was the first year that the new GPS standards were implemented in math, and sixth graders had not been exposed to the new curriculum standards in elementary school. Scores for this group of students rose in seventh grade when the percentage of students either meeting or exceeding standards went from 92% to 99%, and the percentage of students exceeding standards went from 42% to 65%. Eighth grade scores for this same group of students fell only slightly, with 97% of students either meeting or exceeding standards, and 61% exceeding standards. It is notable that in the first year of eighth grade GPS testing for mathematics, approximately 40% of eighth graders across the state failed the test while 97% of Hightower Trail students passed the test.

Disaggregated data reveal some disparity among subgroups in reading and mathematics. However, CRCT scores for the largest and lowest-performing subgroup, students with disabilities, have steadily increased in reading/language arts over the past five years, from 89% to 94% meeting and exceeding standards. Even with the new rigorous math curriculum, scores for students with disabilities increased from 80% to 82% meeting and exceeding standards, far exceeding most other schools.

As Hightower Trail's scores have continued to increase, the school's demographics have somewhat shifted. The free and reduced lunch population doubled in each grade level in the past five years, and the NCLB Choice population has increased from 5 students to 75.

2. Using Assessment Results:

Hightower Trail looks at all available data when making decisions to impact both student learning and school performance. Teachers review their students' test data to identify those who did not meet standards on the CRCT and those who barely met standards (scores of 820 and below where 800 signifies meeting the standards.) In this way teachers are aware of the extra support students need and can track their progress throughout the year. Additionally, teachers identify students who were close to exceeding standards (840 and above where 850 signifies exceeding the standards.) Particular attention is paid to helping these students achieve at even higher levels. Teachers highlight these students' names in their grade books and use information about both groups to differentiate instruction as necessary.

Lexile scores provided by the state indicate students' reading levels. These scores guide students in their selection of reading materials and teachers in identifying appropriate class materials. To address reading needs, a school-wide reading plan was implemented in 2007, and success of that plan is documented by a comparison of the 2006-2007 to the 2007-2008 reading scores.

Each year student performance data is reviewed for current students as well as for those who will be attending from feeder elementary schools. Key personnel use this information to plan appropriate classes and scaffold support programs for the coming year. Remedial classes are created in reading and mathematics and offered to students in an elective time slot. An extended day program is available for identified students needing assistance with school work, and morning tutoring sessions are offered each week in every grade and subject.

Participation in advanced content (AC) courses is not limited only to gifted identified students, but is also available to high achieving, non-gifted students. Collaborative planning by both AC, on-level, inclusion, and small group teachers helps to further enrich the instruction provided in all settings.

3. Communicating Assessment Results:

In the most recent version of the school improvement plan, Hightower Trail identified improved communication with parents as a school performance priority. To meet this goal, HTMS strives to ensure that stakeholders remain informed about both school and student performance levels. Not only are school scores posted to the Hightower Trail website as soon as they are available, but these data are also communicated to stakeholders at regular meetings of the PTSA, the School Council, and the newly-formed Hightower Husky Foundation. Data are additionally reported as part of the annual school improvement plan, which is posted on both the school and district websites. Since diverse groups use the school conference room, a data wall with charts of school-wide scores on various assessments is maintained in that location, as well as trend data.

Parents of all students receive individual score reports that describe their child's performance on each of the state-mandated tests, including the *CRCT* for all students, the *ITBS*, the *Eighth Grade Writing Test*, and the *Technology Literacy Test* for eighth graders. Teachers and counselors help parents interpret the results as needed. Information about classroom performance is shared through an online grade reporting system. Through iParent, parents and students can register online to see the latest updates of student grades. Students also receive feedback through the use of rubrics used for grading.

The Cobb County School District makes assessment results available to all parents and stakeholders via the district website. System-wide scores are reported by both print and broadcast media. Additionally, scores are made available on two websites maintained by the state of Georgia. The first site, located at <http://www.gaosa.org>, is maintained by the Governor's Office of Student Achievement. The second site is located at <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us>, and is maintained by the State Department of Education.

4. **Sharing Success:**

Faculty and staff have presented on educational topics at the national, state, and district levels. Both teachers and administrators shared best practices for using data teams and performance-based instruction at the last two annual AdvancEd (SACS) conferences. Hightower Trail's Teacher of the Year recently presented performance-based learning at the Math and Science Partnership conference at Kennesaw State University, a conference designed to enhance the teaching of physical science. A social studies teacher regularly shares model lessons with colleagues from three different countries and other Georgia districts as part of her involvement in a three-year *Teaching American History* grant. Additionally, the principal presented at the College Board Southern Regional Forum on *Rigor Without Mortis*, a presentation on how HTMS has opened access to advanced content courses for non-gifted but high-achieving students.

At the state level, social studies teachers participate in several *Linking American History* grants, allowing multiple opportunities to share teaching techniques and activities with peers in surrounding districts. One guidance counselor teaches graduate classes in counseling at a regional university and supervises master's level graduate students. Another counselor recently presented at both the Georgia School Counselors Association Conference and at the Cobb County School District Counselors Conference. These opportunities allow faculty members to share the school's best practices with educators throughout the state.

Hightower Trail teachers are often asked to present and facilitate at local district in-services. Social studies teachers have shared their strategies for success on the CRCT with other district educators, focusing on the development of instructional resources to compensate for the lack of curriculum alignment to the newly-adopted social studies textbook. Science teachers share labs with colleagues in multiple schools, and administrators plan with leadership from feeder schools. Across the district, HTMS teachers and staff are known for their professionalism and concern for student achievement and are always honored and excited to share with others. Receiving Blue Ribbon status would afford even more opportunities for collaboration with other educators.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

Georgia's curriculum has established performance standards as the basis for instruction in reading, language arts, science, social studies, and mathematics. Instruction is planned using the backward design model to ensure that all students meet standards. Student achievement data are reviewed so that students are placed in the most challenging courses. Whether the class is accelerated, on-level, or remedial, teachers use flexible grouping to meet the needs of learners.

Spanish and French are taught in eighth grade to qualifying students. These classes are equivalent to freshman high school courses, and completion gives students high school credit. The district limits enrollment to eighth graders, and approximately 80% of HTMS eighth grade students participate.

Performance expectations for students in reading and language arts are high and focused on the integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Language arts teachers work in tandem with other teachers to integrate curriculum. Since reading is not taught as a separate subject for the general population, teachers created a school-wide reading plan that specifies strategies to be taught in all content areas. At-risk readers are scheduled into support reading classes that use a targeted curriculum to increase reading ability.

Social studies content includes world geography in both the sixth and seventh grades with an emphasis on history, geography, government/civics, and economics. Eighth graders study Georgia history and its connection to world history. Teachers use technology to link students to the latest information and resources.

Science content includes earth science in sixth grade, life science in seventh grade, and physical science in eighth grade. Lab experiences are frequent in every science class, including an annual "Week in the Woods" where seventh graders conduct stream analysis and other nature labs. Parent volunteers are trained to be lab facilitators during this highly-anticipated event. Additionally, a horticulture center allows science students to experience the life cycle of plants.

New state math standards have increased the rigor of math classes with algebra, geometry, data analysis, and probability taught each year. Unique to HTMS is that three levels of math are offered in each grade: on-level, accelerated, and hyper-accelerated. This model has increased the numbers of students prepared for honors math in their first year of high school. Small group math classes provide one-on-one help for special needs students. Seventh grade students who are struggling with on-level curriculum participate in an additional math enrichment class in lieu of one of their electives. Similarly, eighth grade students take an additional math class during the core content. Advanced eighth graders take Accelerated Math I, a freshman course which earns them high school credit.

Hightower Trail students learn valuable life skills in their connections (elective) classes. Computer keyboarding is taught in all grades with a pull-out computer applications class offered to technologically-advanced seventh and eighth graders. Family and Consumer Science class includes cooking, sewing, etiquette, and a "Baby Think it Over" curriculum whereby students experience the responsibilities of caring for an infant. The art curriculum exposes students to a variety of mediums. Artwork is displayed in hallways, and students may enter art competitions. Annually, "Night of the Arts" brings the community in to see students' work and experience hands-on art. Health is required every year by the state; students also take PE. Atypical for middle schools is a weight room for strength training and cardiovascular fitness with equipment donated by the feeder high school. Students taking PE spend two days a week in the weight room and the rest in regular gym activities or outdoor sports. This curriculum addresses the school's wellness plan by targeting adolescent obesity. Orchestra and band are offered at all grade levels, and eighth graders have the option to take music techniques for skill refinement

and the chance to play a second instrument. Other music courses include chorus, general music, keyboarding, and guitar.

2b. (Secondary Schools) English:

The English language curriculum emphasizes written expression. Units are planned in collaborative teams with a focus on students understanding the importance of writing in their daily lives. Teachers develop formative and summative performance tasks for writing experience in real-world contexts. As students learn more about the writing process, they are instructed in the variety of writing styles. Narrative, persuasive, expository, and technical writing skills are taught at every grade level. The state requires all students to read 25 books per year, and English teachers use this reading as a springboard to written expression. Every day students review the mechanics of writing through Daily Grammar Practice (DGP), and all English teachers utilize *Writing Workshop* mini-lessons to increase proficiency. Teachers use a school-wide oral speaking rubric to set parameters for effective presentations. Developing the skill of listening is a focus for the English curriculum, and students have opportunities to evaluate different genres and media formats through writing, speaking, listening.

Students learn reading skills in every class. During the first week of school, all teachers stress technical reading by instructing students on how to read their textbooks. Last year teachers in every content area collaborated on the development of a school-wide reading plan and determined which *CRISS* reading strategy best suited their curriculum. This information was then compiled and placed in an online folder for easy access. On data team planning logs, teachers show how they incorporate these strategies into their units. Students with a reading deficiency receive small group direct instruction with a specialized reading curriculum, *Rewards*, during the non-academic block. Eighth graders who lack grade-level reading skills are scheduled into a phonics-based reading class utilizing a curriculum called *Language!* Students at risk for failing the CRCT may stay three afternoons a week for a program focused on developing skills and assisting with homework. During this time, students who failed the CRCT the previous year are provided a free *Progress Coach* book in their area of deficiency and teacher assistance.

3. Additional Curriculum Area:

The math curriculum targets the school's mission of empowering students to become competent life-long learners through summative performance assessments that allow students to apply their math skills in real-life situations. For example, a seventh grade math unit focuses on extending the conceptual understanding of proportional relationships to include direct variations and inverse relationships. To introduce the unit, teachers develop simple hands-on activities for students to draw conclusions about their discoveries. Throughout the unit, students engage in performances to demonstrate how using proportions can help them solve everyday problems. To encourage students to use different approaches in solving problems, teachers choose performance tasks which require proportional thinking. One such task, "How Fast Can You Go," requires movement and measurement to determine proportional relationships. Tasks such as "Decorating for the Dance" are relevant and require students to apply mathematical concepts. In this task, students determine the impact of changing one variable, the number of people helping to decorate, on a second variable, the time it takes to decorate. In addition, students determine the effect of the number of people attending the dance on the amount of food needed. These tasks require students to describe relationships, create graphs to represent the situation, and answer questions using proportional reasoning.

As students learn the skills and concepts needed to complete summative performance tasks, teachers create formative assessments to check for understanding, such as providing simple problems for students to solve on their white boards. Feedback is provided to help students change their approaches to learning. Teachers adjust instruction as needed, often making connections to science in order to make the abstract concepts more concrete.

Similar performance tasks requiring application of math concepts are used at all grade levels. Teachers use the information from formative assessments to adjust instruction so that all students can use math concepts in solving realistic problems.

4. Instructional Methods:

Differentiation is an expectation in every classroom at Hightower Trail as teachers work to create innovative ways to meet students' needs. Teachers use their data team planning logs to build collaborative units with differentiated strategies included at critical intervals. Teachers create pretests for every unit, which include prerequisite knowledge and skills as well as those to be obtained in the unit. Through this format, teachers can determine the weaknesses and strengths of students before the unit begins and target instruction accordingly. During the first week of school, all teachers review CRCT data and highlight on their rosters students who did not meet standards as well as those who exceeded standards, important information for planning. Throughout the units, teachers administer formative assessments and adjust instruction based on results. They also utilize district benchmark tests and common formative assessments to gauge students' readiness for the final summative performance task. Inclusion classes pair a regular level teacher with a special education teacher to provide on-level instruction with support for special needs students. Small group classes in core content areas taught by highly qualified special education teachers are offered to meet accommodation requirements and provide specialized instruction. Teachers at all levels provide differentiated opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding through use of choice, tiered assignments, alternative response techniques (oral responses, use of assistive technology), and tests accommodated as directed by IEP's.

This year the school was allotted a graduation coach who works with students identified as at-risk for graduating high school. This coach also facilitates the Response to Intervention (RTI) program, which is designed to address quickly the needs of struggling students. Every grade level has an RTI team consisting of teachers, counselors, the school psychologist, and the graduation coach. The team identifies students in need, discusses their strengths and weaknesses, and develops strategies for the classroom

5. Professional Development:

Hightower Trail's professional development program is designed to support the school improvement plan and to train staff on district and state initiatives. The school's student performance goal is for all students to meet standards and more students to exceed standards in all content areas as measured by the CRCT. A strategy for meeting this goal has been to train teachers on all aspects of the backward design model for planning performance-based instruction.

Each week teachers meet in content data teams to plan instruction, analyze data, and create assessments. The majority of district-allocated professional development funds target improving the effectiveness of the data team process. Substitute teachers are hired to provide release time for each data team in half-day training sessions with the area lead teacher. During this time, teachers receive training in creating, evaluating, and collaboratively scoring formative and summative performance tasks.

Other professional learning occurs during monthly instructional clusters, two district professional learning days, and four early release days. Monthly teachers spend their planning periods in instructional clusters where training is provided by the administrative staff or the area lead teacher on topics such as differentiation, student engagement, effective feedback, and student goal-setting. The two district professional learning days afford teachers the opportunity for vertical and horizontal planning to align curriculum and programs, as well as training in co-teaching models.

All early release days focus on an understanding of the Georgia Keys to School Improvement. Georgia School Standards list eight keys to school improvement. Since these keys and standards will be used to guide future school improvement plans, teachers have been trained on them and the use of rubrics to evaluate their own data

teams and the school as a whole in each of the standards. In future sessions, teachers will work in committees, based on these keys and standards, to analyze feedback and recommend actions for improving performance. Information about the keys is available at <http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/index.aspx> under School Improvement Quality and Planning.

6. School Leadership:

School leadership is directed by the principal and her administrative team, the assistant principal and the assistant administrator, in tandem with four critical groups: Subject Coordinators, Action Teams, the Building Leadership Team, and the School Council. The Subject Coordinators are teacher-leaders from every instructional area. They facilitate vertical and horizontal curriculum and work collaboratively with the administrative team and the area lead teacher to frame, monitor, and evaluate the school improvement plan. This School Improvement Team disaggregates student achievement and school climate data, evaluates the effectiveness of improvement efforts, and sets future improvement priorities. When a new initiative, such as student-led conferences, is considered by the school, the team studies the idea, disseminates information to the staff, and gathers the feedback to review before making decisions.

All teachers participate in one of five Action Teams. These teams include Character Education/Anti-Bullying, Student Recognition, Media /Technology, Hospitality/Staff Recognition, and Community Partners. The hard work of these teams fosters a positive school climate, encourages and motivates students academically, and builds collaborative staff and community relationships.

The third critical leadership group is the Building Leadership Team (BLT), which is comprised of the chairpersons of all school Action Teams and the Team Captains that represent each grade level. The BLT meets monthly to hear updates from the Action Teams and the needs of students in each grade level from the Team Captains. One of this group's important tasks is to allocate the yearly instructional budget so that financial resources are best utilized for student achievement.

A final group that provides invaluable leadership to the school is the School Council. The purpose of this group is to bring the school and community together to solve difficult problems, provide support for the school staff, and ensure that parents have a voice in the decision-making process of the school. By state law, the School Council is comprised mostly of parents but includes the principal, teachers, and representatives from the business community.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 6 Test: Criterion-Referenced Competency Test

Edition/Publication Year: 2004/2005/2006/2007/2008 Publisher: Georgia Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Meets + Exceeds	94	93	92	96	96
Exceeds	45	60	42	66	66
Number of students tested	315	330	319	337	287
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Meets + Exceeds	82	73	63	94	92
Exceeds	31	14	13	47	42
Number of students tested	35	29	10	15	12
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Black/Non-Hispanic					
Meets + Exceeds	77	69	82	95	80
Exceeds	31	16	14	45	30
Number of students tested	35	33	28	20	20
3. (specify subgroup): Students With Disabilities					
Meets + Exceeds	95	70	72	86	72
Meets	22	10	15	26	38
Number of students tested	45	48	47	42	32
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

- The curriculum changed with the 2005-2006 school year, and the test began to reflect these changes, as well as the new scoring guidelines,
- Hightower Trail became a receiving school for NCLB Choice students during 2005-2006 school year.

Subject: Reading

Grade: 6

Test: Criterion-Referenced Competency Test

Edition/Publication Year:
2004/2005/2006/2007/2008

Publisher: Georgia Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Meets + Exceeds	99	99	98	99	100
Exceeds	68	57	55	86	86
Number of students tested	315	330	319	337	245
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Meets + Exceeds	94	93	88	93	92
Meets	40	10	19	53	75
Number of students tested	35	29	16	15	12
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Black/Non-Hispanic					
Meets + Exceeds	100	97	97	95	90
Meets	31	25	29	70	80
Number of students tested	35	32	28	20	20
3. (specify subgroup): Students With Disabilities					
Meets + Exceeds	96	92	89	90	93
Exceeds	22	15	21	52	59
Number of students tested	45	48	47	42	32
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

- The curriculum changed with the 2005-2006 school year, and the test began to reflect these changes, as well as the new scoring guidelines.
- Hightower Trail became a receiving school for NCLB Choice students during the 2004-2005 school year.

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 7 Test: Criterion-Referenced Competency Test
Edition/Publication Year: 2004/2005/2006/2007/2008/ Publisher: Georgia Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Meets + Exceeds	98	99	96	97	96
Exceeds	70	65	64	37	56
Number of students tested	342	333	354	289	329
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Meets + Exceeds	84	77	72		81
Exceeds	28	27	11		36
Number of students tested	25	22	18	9	11
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Black/Non-Hispanic					
Meets + Exceeds	91	88	92	91	86
Exceeds	33	33	38	27	24
Number of students tested	33	33	24	22	21
3. (specify subgroup): Students with Disabilities					
Meets + Exceeds	91	77	91	78	83
Exceeds	76	17	15	22	23
Number of students tested	44	48	41	32	43
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

- The curriculum changed with the 2006-2007 school year, and the test began to reflect these changes, as well as the new scoring guidelines.
- Hightower Trail became a receiving school for NCLB Choice students during the 2004-2005 school year.
- No data are available for the Free and Reduced Lunch / Socio-Economically Disadvantaged subgroup during the 2004-2005 school year; too few students were tested in this area.

Subject: Reading

Grade: 7

Test: Criterion-Referenced Competency Test

Edition/Publication Year:

2004/2005/2006/2007/2008

Publisher: Georgia Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Meets + Exceeds	98	97	96	98	98
Exceeds	41	41	34	86	74
Number of students tested	341	333	354	289	329
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Meets + Exceeds	84	86	83		91
Exceeds	16	18	11		27
Number of students tested	25	22	18	9	11
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Black/Non-Hispanic					
Meets + Exceeds	91	91	88	91	95
Exceeds	15	21	21	59	52
Number of students tested	33	33	24	22	21
3. (specify subgroup): Students With Disabilities					
Meets + Exceeds	91	86	73	87	84
Exceeds	11	15	5	59	35
Number of students tested	44	48	41	32	43
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

- The curriculum changed with the 2005-2006 school year, and the test began to reflect these changes, as well as the new scoring guidelines.
- Hightower Trail became a receiving school for NCLB Choice students during the 2004-2005 school year.
- No data are available for the Free and Reduced Lunch / Economically Disadvantaged subgroup during the 2004-2005 school year; too few students were tested in this area.

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 8

Test: Criterion-Referenced Competency Test

Edition/Publication Year:

2004/2005/2006/2007/2008

Publisher: Georgia Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Meets + Exceeds	97	99	99	95	99
Exceeds	61	70	77	67	59
Number of students tested	328	363	294	319	382
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Meets + Exceeds	85	84	81		84
Exceeds	23	16	36		38
Number of students tested	26	19	11	8	13
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Black/Non-Hispanic					
Meets + Exceeds	89	97	88	81	90
Exceeds	25	42	32	31	20
Number of students tested	28	31	25	16	20
3. (specify subgroup): Students With Disabilities					
Meets + Exceeds	81	90	93	74	87
Exceeds	14	26	32	21	32
Number of students tested	43	26	28	34	44
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

- The curriculum changed with the 2007-2008 school year, and the test began to reflect these changes, as well as the new scoring guidelines.
- Hightower Trail became a receiving school for NCLB Choice students during the 2004-2005 school year.
- During the 2003-2004 school year, one student was assessed using the Georgia Alternative Assessment (GAA). According to the state Office of Student Achievement, this assessment is administered to a small number of students with severe disabilities whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams determine that they are unable to participate in the regular assessments even with maximum accommodations.
- No data are available for the Free and Reduced Lunch / Economically Disadvantaged subgroup during the 2004-2005 school year; too few students were tested in this area.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Meets + Exceeds	100	99	98	97	99
Exceeds	54	48	37	87	89
Number of students tested	328	363	294	319	382
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Meets + Exceeds	100	90	91		100
Exceeds	19	11	9		69
Number of students tested	26	19	11	9	13
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Black/Non-Hispanic					
Meets + Exceeds	100	100	96	88	100
Exceeds	29	32	8	75	75
Number of students tested	28	31	25	16	20
3. (specify subgroup): Students With Disabilities					
Meets + Exceeds	100	92	96	96	96
Exceeds	60	13	7	53	57
Number of students tested	43	39	28	34	44
4. (specify subgroup):					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

- The curriculum changed with the 2005-2006 school year, and the test began to reflect these changes, as well as the new scoring guidelines.
- Hightower Trail became a receiving school for NCLB Choice students during the 2004-2005 school year.
- No data are available for the Free and Reduced Lunch / Economically Disadvantaged subgroup during the 2004-2005 school year; too few students were tested in this area.
- During the 2003-2004 school year, one student was assessed using the Georgia Alternative Assessment (GAA). According to the state Office of Student Achievement, this assessment is administered to a small number of students with severe disabilities whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams determine that they are unable to participate in the regular assessments even with maximum accommodations.