Many committed individuals and organizations exist within Carroll County focused on child development from birth to kindergarten. The FERST Foundation has a decade of success in providing books to children throughout the community. This year networked relationships with child care providers, early childhood instructors, literacy professionals and educators have been strategically formed to unify efforts to improve early learning. The idea of the 2016 Summit was accelerated through the conversations of this forward thinking group. A collective strategy of awareness, connectedness, reading diagnostics and communication has proven to produce positive results. Individuals from all of our entities recognize and embrace the FERST Foundation’s slogan, “those who read succeed!”

Conversations have occurred among our educational entities to determine the best ways to assess the readiness of our students entering kindergarten. Established support and communication structures are already in place in all of our school entities. Plans are under way to establish networked relationships among the school entities and the appropriate staff. Community outreach efforts have also been initiated with day-care providers and existing Pre-K programs. We envision strategic partnerships among the public and private Pre-K programs as an effective tool for helping more children come to school prepared to learn.

Students who read on or above grade level by the end of 3rd grade have a significant success correlation for completing a post-secondary option. The Governor’s Office of Student Accountability (GOSA) has published lexile score-based reports on all public schools in Georgia. This information combined with our local research provides a measure for our overall 3rd grade literacy rate. For 2015-2016, approximately 52 percent of Carroll County 3rd grade students read on or above grade level. The correlation of 3rd grade literacy to high school completion is one of our strongest predictive indicators. We believe that this “step to success” is one that the entire community can rally behind to contribute focused support.

The transition from the middle school years to high school is a critical period where all of us are needed to support our young people. This year, more than 1,532 Carroll County 8th grade students attended the 8th Grade Career Expo held over two Fridays in March. The event sponsored and led by the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce with partnership from the University of West Georgia, West Georgia Technical College, our public and independent school systems and several community volunteers was a phenomenal success. Our educational entities have effective articulation agreements and processes in place. We believe seamless and transparent transitions from elementary school to middle school and to high school should be made as simple as possible.

Collaborative work among the school systems, the university and the technical college was evidenced this year through the advisement process for students. Record numbers of students participated in dual enrollment programs at both UWG and WGTC. The Agriculture Expo provided hands on experiences for 9th grade students. Leadership development opportunities were provided through the Junior Chamber as well as multiple internship programs at various companies. Conversations are taking place that focus on improving options for students in pathway selection and participation, as well as assessment strategies. Business and educational leaders are exploring efforts to develop effective internship and apprenticeship opportunities for increased numbers of students. Mentoring and tutoring programs exist in all of the entities, but opportunities exist for more coordinated efforts within the community.
High School Graduation
Did our students graduate from high school prepared for college or the career of their choice?

The community and local school systems place high school graduation as a priority. Traditional and innovative strategies are in place to keep students enrolled in school with a variety of programs available. Graduation rates in the county have improved as compared to the state average of 72 percent (Carrollton City at 87 percent and Carroll County at 82 percent) for 2015. 216 students countywide did not graduate at the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year. Rates for the 2015-2016 school year are expected to show an increase of the past year and were being calculated at time of printing.

Employed, Enlisted, or Enrolled
Did our students complete a post-secondary opportunity or enlist in the military or service sector?

A consistent message from the presidents of the Chamber of Commerce, West Georgia Technical College and the University of West Georgia, respectively, was delivered to our 8th grade students at this year’s Expo.

*Increase your choices by exploring options in academics, skills development and service.*

In other words, we are all here to support your exploration and pursuit of multiple pathways. We hope you will challenge and expand your options to truly discover your passions and interests for your future.

The mission of FERST Foundation for Childhood Literacy is to help children arrive at kindergarten ready to learn by providing monthly, age-appropriate books and guidance to parent and caregivers of the young children they serve. Our primary roles are fundraising and registration of children. We are part of a state-wide program where each county is responsible for raising the funds to pay the cost of the books and the materials for parents. We currently serve about 37 percent of the children in Carroll County and have a goal to reach 65 percent by 2020.

KAREN HARTLEY
Chair, Carroll County FERST Foundation for Childhood Literacy

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We look forward to seeing you at the 2017 CCEC Summit
July 20, 2017

Save the date