



## A VISION FOR NORTH SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL A CAPSTONE PROJECT SCHOOL

It is critical that a variety of students, teachers, parents, and community members have an opportunity to be actively educated about the many possibilities that a vision for North Springs High School might include.

**BACKGROUND:** When developing a vision for an organization, one must examine foundational information including what makes the organization unique and what sets it apart. For NSHS, four things stand out.

**1) A Strong Community** - Sandy Springs is home to more businesses from start-ups to Fortune 500 companies than any municipality in the area. We have a strong Chamber of Commerce committed to supporting opportunities for students. Sandy Springs has an accessible city government that supports quality education and local schools. The Sandy Springs Civic Roundtable boasts a plethora of non-profits committed to supporting the community, the environment, and education. The Sandy Springs Education Force supports the local public schools in a variety of ways. Our city is rich in business, civic commitment, volunteers and activism. The question is how do we leverage this strength for our students?

**2) A Diverse Student Body** – NSHS is a diverse school and this was recognized as a strong positive attribute in the FCS visioning survey. Diversity teaches our students how to interact and respect students from different income levels, backgrounds, cultures and world views. NSHS students graduate and attend four-year colleges, or receive some post-secondary education to train for a career, and or directly enter the work force. The question is how do we create a vision that can address our diverse population and position our students for college or career success after high school?

**3) “Find Yourself Here”** – For many years a theme for NSHS has been to “find yourself here”. With the diversity, the dual magnet, Career and Technical Education, and other offerings, students have been able to find something of interest both personally and academically. To build on that, we encourage a vision that includes a pathway for every student.

**4) Fulton County School Curriculum** – Fulton County Schools offers strong curriculum opportunities. In addition to requiring strong core courses to graduate, FCS offers an exceptional number of AP classes, dual enrollment opportunities, Career and Technical Education programs, performing arts education, outstanding electives, and more. How can we better leverage FCS’ offerings and create that “special something” to attract and retain outstanding teachers?

## **BECOMING A CAPSTONE PROJECT SCHOOL**

There has been much discussion in the community about these questions/characteristics. The idea of internships, apprenticeships, work-based learning, licenses and trade certificates should be central to NSHS vision. The wide range of companies in Sandy Springs and nearby communities could support these opportunities.

Recognizing that it would be challenging to create these work-based opportunities for all students, it is more feasible to make North Springs a “Capstone Project” school. Capstone, as applied to education, portrays the experience as the final crowning moment of an educational experience. A Capstone Project is the culmination of a student’s high school experience within their chosen pathway and concentration.

As a Capstone Project school, North Springs would also offer the Capstone AP program/research and certificate for those students wishing to get an early start on college prep. Non-AP research could also be an option. Making NSHS a Capstone Project School could highlight all our strengths and make NSHS a “stand out” school.

**CAPSTONE PROJECTS:** According to the Glossary of Education Reform a capstone project is a multifaceted assignment that serves as a culminating academic and intellectual experience for students at the end of an academic program. Capstone projects may take a wide variety of forms, but most are long-term (one or two semesters) investigative projects that culminate in a final product, presentation, or performance. Capstone projects often encourage students to connect their projects to community issues or problems and to integrate outside-of-school learning experiences including activities such as interviews, scientific observations, internships, apprenticeships, and many others.

All students would be expected to complete a research project, internship, apprenticeship, license or trade certificate as their capstone project; there are no limits on the kinds of projects for students. Projects can be tailored to meet all educational levels, serve all backgrounds, and enhance all future plans after graduation. Whatever the Capstone experience, the student would be expected to create a formal report and make a presentation about the experience and learnings. Options for the Capstone Projects/Experience would include:

- AP Capstone courses (2) which includes a research project
- Non-AP research project
- Internships, apprenticeships, and other work based learning
- Certifications
- Licenses

Examples of Capstone Projects can include:

- Designing and building a product, computer program, or robot to address a specific need, such as assisting the disabled.
- Designing an app to help a non-profit or municipality like a park.
- Doing a semester long internship at local company or non-profit organization to explore a career interest.
- Creating a performance featured in a showcase at the new Sandy Springs Performing

Arts Center.

- Writing, directing, and filming a public-service announcement that will be aired on public-access television.
- Partnering with a local construction company to earn a certificate of training in a skill such as welding, dry walling or plumbing, and utilizing those skills in a project.
- Working with an environmental non-profit to conduct a scientific study over several months or a year to determine the ecological or environmental impact of changes to a local habitat.

**ACADEMIES AS PATHWAYS:** We believe NSHS students would develop and execute their capstone projects through the Academies.

**9<sup>th</sup> Grade Academy:** Based on the success of the program implemented by Principal Hanson, the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Academy should continue to provide the foundational skills and should remain as a requirement for all 9<sup>th</sup> graders. Improving study skills, note taking, learning life skills, going on college tours, etc. are all important activities for new high school students.

Julia Bernath has mentioned FCS is planning to implement YouScience, a program that allows students to analyze their aptitudes and interests to match a best-fit personalized career path. This would be an ideal program for students to use as part of the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Academy.

By the end of 9<sup>th</sup> grade, students will choose an Academy and areas of concentration for 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. They will have mapped out courses for their sophomore, junior, and senior years in their concentration(s) to create a personalized pathway.

Many factors were considered in creating this vision which includes four Academies, each with multiple concentrations to serve the entire student population.

**1. *Technology, Engineering and Design Academy***

- Computer Science and Engineering (including Construction) Concentrations

**2. *Medical and Life Sciences Academy***

- Healthcare, Environmental and Biosciences Concentrations

**3. *Performing and Visual Arts Academy***

- Performing Arts, Visual Arts, and Graphics Concentrations

**4. *Liberal Arts and Business Academy***

- Marketing and Media, Business Skills, Liberal Arts Concentrations

**10<sup>th</sup> Grade:** 10<sup>th</sup> grade students would begin to take courses that support their Academy choice and preferred pathway, and also continue many of the skills learned in the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Academy.

All Concentrations would have access to curriculum to achieve education in the field and support the capstone project/experiences. Each Concentration would have a pathway for all types of students including college bound, some post-secondary education, and those entering the workforce upon graduation. This includes:

- AP courses
- Dual Enrollment
- Move on When Ready
- Specialized Electives
- CTE courses
- Project Based Learning

We envision classes combined with a series of workshops (one class period a month) that teach life and work skills that are either in demand or critical for success. This would include public speaking, resume writing, interviewing, working in teams, and more. In addition, students would work on some projects in groups and possibly across concentrations to practice teamwork skills and learn how to create successful projects.

**11<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Students will identify their capstone project/experience and work towards completion. Subject matter expert teachers and other teachers and staff will serve as advisors to students as they work through their capstone project.

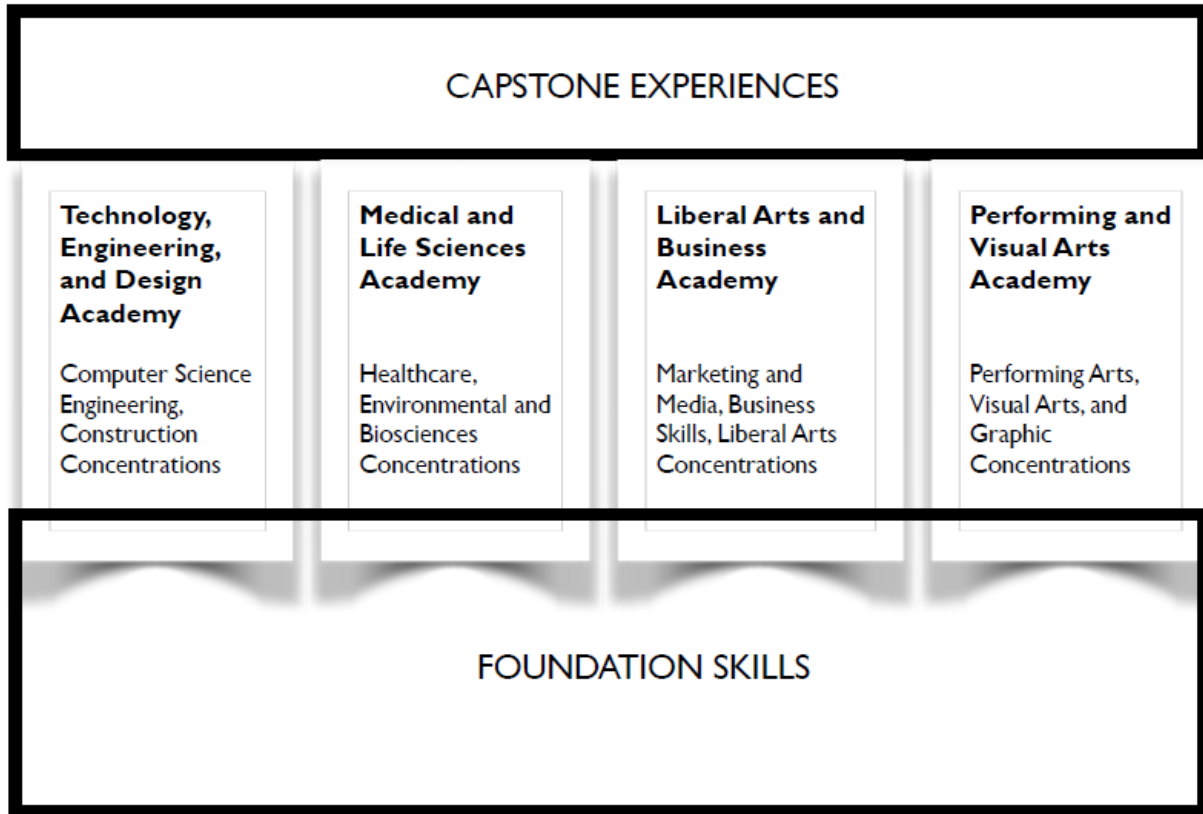
Additionally, there is already an internship program in place at NSHS. Additional resources, both inside and outside the school, will be needed to supplement this program.

**12<sup>th</sup> Grade:** In 12<sup>th</sup> grade, students will complete their capstone project/experience and must present their project/report to Academy faculty and a peer group. For college bound students, it may be a research paper on a topic of interest to them. For a CTE student, it may be presenting the actual certificate and a presentation/report of their experience and future plans.

**FOUNDATION SKILLS:** Each Academy will include the core subjects of ELA, math, science, social studies, etc.

**To illustrate, a diagram of this vision is shown below.**

# Vision For North Springs High School



## **SPACE REQUIREMENTS**

For many of the concentration courses and capstone projects in the Academies, NSHS will need large, flexible spaces such as a big box or warehouse. These areas should be large enough to house equipment, but also have free space for demonstrations, presentations, community gatherings, etc. There should be plenty of storage and the ability to flex the workspace as program needs change. The spaces will need to be accessible by large vehicles for ease of loading and unloading. A few examples that will be needed:

- Students in academies would have classes in one area for their concentrations
- Construction and technology equipment/simulators brought in for training.
- Robotics classes where a robotics lab with an obstacle course could be set up
- A medical training class could be configured to teach a health sciences course.
- Extra space for set construction for a play
- Large scale art creation, installation and display
- Parking to support the large number of students who must drive so they can go to work-based learning locations

The space requirements for the Academies and Concentrations will be provided in a follow-up document very soon. These will be supplemental to the already identified space problems at North Springs.