



*Cumberland Academy*  
of G E O R G I A

**“An Exceptional School for Exceptional Students”**

# **Strategic Plan**

(Revised January 2015)



# *Cumberland Academy* of GEORGIA

**“An Exceptional School for Exceptional Students”**

## **Overview:**

Cumberland Academy of Georgia received accreditation from GAC (Georgia Accreditation Commission) in 2007 and received its accreditation from SACS/CASI (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) in June 2010. We are current members and in good standing with AAIS (Atlanta Area Association of Independent Schools.), GISA (Georgia Independent School Association), GAPSEC (Georgia Association of Private Schools for Exceptional Children), AAC (Atlanta Athletic Conference) and APAC (Atlanta Private Athletic Conference). Cumberland Academy of Georgia offers a full curriculum for students in 4<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades and a Post Graduate program, for students who have specific educational needs where a smaller learning environment creates a positive learning experience. We offer a low student to teacher ratio and are able to ability teach to each student’s unique ability to learn. We specialize in children who have been diagnosed with Asperger’s, LD, ADD and ADHD.

## **History:**

Cumberland Academy of Georgia was founded by Matthew & Debbi Scarborough and inspired by their son, Steven in 2007. After months of searching for the right school, they decided the only choice was to open a school that catered to children who not only needed a smaller classroom size to academically challenge them, but a place where life/social skills are part of the daily curriculum. After opening with 1 student 7 short years ago, they have now grown to over 100 students and continue to have amazing growth. The students who attend Cumberland Academy of Georgia need structure and a strong academic curriculum, but also the opportunity to learn social and life skills and to prepare for the college experience.

In May 2013, Cumberland Academy of Georgia purchased the building they had been leasing from Sandy Springs First Baptist Church. This gives Cumberland a permanent home for years to come. Cumberland Academy of Georgia has already been recognized by professionals, educators and parents as a leading innovator in the field of helping this population. We want to continue to challenge and prepare our students for future independence and success.

## **Program:**

The enriched curriculum offers many opportunities to explore uncharted territory. We offer a challenging curriculum to include Saxon Math, Spire Reading Program, Pearson's Interactive Science Curriculum, Foreign Languages, Social Studies and courses through BYU and Georgia Virtual School, so that we are able to extend our teaching arm to other experts in the field and offer a vast array of curriculum options. We also partner with Georgia Perimeter College to provide dual enrollment college level courses to our junior and senior students.

In addition to following the common core/Georgia Performance Standards, each student participates in our physical education programs. Some of our exciting outdoor programs include: high rope courses, team building, whitewater rafting down the Nantahala River, and three overnight fieldtrip adventures. These programs help develop self-confidence and coordination along with problem solving skills. These problem solving skills elicit the appropriate social interactions necessary for success in today's society and enable our students to become more independent.

Life/Social Skills education represents an important part of the Cumberland Program. Every Cumberland student takes part in a Life/Social Skills class each week that is taught by trained professionals. These professionals assess Cumberland students twice a year to evaluate their progress in social skills. In addition, the entire faculty of Cumberland actively educates and re-directs students in appropriate social interactions through the school day. A life skills/college and career preparation program has been implemented for high school students. Our program includes monthly visits to a college and career visits such as Kennesaw State University, the Gap, Cellairis, and SunTrust Bank.

Cumberland also employs trained counselors who work with our students on issues relating to self-control, conflict resolution, and appropriate social behaviors. Cumberland students also enjoy special experiences at area restaurants and Young Chefs Academy which teach them proper etiquette, teamwork and help them to expand their food choices.

Our technology has been an extremely useful teaching tool. Cumberland students utilize Neo 2's in grades four to eight and Google Chromebooks in grades nine to twelve for keyboarding, essays, quizzes and other uses in the classrooms. This enables a student who struggles with handwriting to demonstrate greater independence when completing written expression assignments. We also offer courses in computer modeling which teaches the child how to create images, games, animation and voiceovers. We teach them how to use computers in a productive way. Promethean Boards are utilized in every classroom. BrainPOP and PowerPoint presentations are also a part of our curriculum, these teach our students organization, public speaking and build self-esteem. Cumberland is one of the few Special Education schools that is a Google Apps for Education School.

Here at Cumberland Academy of Georgia, our students have a safe, nurturing environment where they can take pride in themselves and build a solid foundation for future endeavors.



# *Cumberland Academy* of GEORGIA

**“An Exceptional School for Exceptional Students”**

## Mission Statement

Cumberland Academy of Georgia specializes in the needs of children with high functioning Autism, Asperger’s, LD, ADD and ADHD. The mission of the academy is to provide a safe, supportive, educational environment in partnership with faculty, staff, students and parents. The Cumberland family embraces the uniqueness of every child by challenging and inspiring them to reach their full potential. Our academic and social curriculum encourages the development of life skills essential in becoming independent and self-sufficient adults.

## Philosophy

Cumberland Academy of Georgia is dedicated to the belief that faculty, staff, students, and parents are all involved in our children’s education in a responsible, nurturing, and supportive way. Each student is entitled to a safe, secure, and healthy academic environment. We strive to create a warm and inviting atmosphere, and to instill in our students a sense of self-worth. We teach beneficial life skills so that our students grow into confident, cooperative, and productive members of society.

Cumberland Academy of Georgia has developed and will continue to improve an exciting and challenging curriculum that recognizes the educational needs of each student. We respect the learning diversity of each student. This is done through cooperative learning and active hands-on techniques that are integrated into all subject areas along with co-curricular activities. This best practices curriculum infuses the creative arts as well as problem solving, social skills, critical thinking, and decision making skills. The curriculum aims to develop and enhance abilities, giving appropriate guidance with realistic expectations. The curriculum promotes helping students develop strategies to cope with anger, stress and anxiety along with motivating them to assert themselves in a positive way while respecting others. Lastly, the curriculum aims to promote awareness of self and others by developing relationship-building and communication skills.

Our faculty and staff believe that each child has strengths to develop throughout their school lives. Faculty and staff continually learn from each other; and therefore, bring to our students a model for teaching respect and acceptance of others. Faculty members model the importance of lifelong learning.

Finally, Cumberland Academy of Georgia encourages and solicits parents and community involvement through many different ways as we recognize that our students are our most valuable resource. Cumberland Academy of Georgia is committed to guiding our students to develop into the best individuals they can be.

## Structure of Planning

In order to revise our dynamic strategic plan, we have implemented the following structure:

✓ **Formation of Committee:**

The committee was determined by expertise in their fields of experience and an understanding of our school, and its unique population. We developed subcommittees that reviewed our existing plan and worked as a team to make revisions based on stakeholder surveys, Brown Bag meetings and overall growth of the school. We then sent to the entire committee for review and input, and made any revisions. As school began, we reviewed with our teachers, gave parents a copy of the plan for review and posted on our web page for general feedback.

✓ **Parental/Stakeholder Review:**

Our parents and stakeholders are invited to our “Brown Bag” series which is conducted twice a year by the Headmaster and Principal to review our strategic plan and have a question and answer session. Parental annual surveys are also reviewed for considerations for revisions. Parental surveys go out to families in May of each year to determine how to improve practices.

✓ **Administration/Staff Review:**

During teacher planning week, we reviewed the draft of the strategic plan and made any revisions based on discussion.

✓ **Transparency:**

Our strategic plan is posted on our website. Our staff members are given copies at the beginning of the year and when revisions are made. A staff meeting is held to review and discuss revisions. Board members are also emailed a copy of revisions when they occur and prior to Board meetings. Revisions will be discussed and reviewed during those meetings. Monthly newsletters also capture revisions and will lead all stakeholders to our link on our website to review our plan.

This process has enabled our school to remain current and expose all stakeholders of our intentions. Our strategic plan is a “Dynamic” plan rather than a static project.



*Cumberland Academy*  
of G E O R G I A

**“An Exceptional School for Exceptional Students”**

## **Strategic Planning Committee**

1. Terri Brooks
2. Nina King
3. Floyd Bushey
4. Don Sasso
5. Valerie Siciliano Laura
6. Debbi Scarborough
7. Matthew Scarborough
8. Laurie Thurmond
9. Shari Wright
10. Staci Gelbaum

## **GOAL 1: MARKETING AND BRAND AWARENESS**

**Strategies:** Continue to increase awareness of our school's position in serving a unique population, through enhanced marketing supported by our clear mission.

**Objectives:** Cultivate what differentiates Cumberland Academy of Georgia from other special needs schools in our marketplace to ultimately increase enrollment and generate funds.

### **Action items:**

- Update our user friendly website by finalizing basic information and photos on our newly launched website; monitor and update our new site regularly; review data from optimization to maintain high rankings.
  - Timeline: May 2015 to update any changes; ongoing
- Increase social marketing presence (currently Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) with information useful to current families and to reach potential families. Monitor number of views as an indicator of success with a goal of 30% increase; keep current on new social marketing tools; work with Hughes Media, Inc. to review analytics and capture inquiries.
  - Timeline: Ongoing
- Regularly review branding and material development and improve look and quality of materials; become more uniform in color and logo use for branding purposes; continue to promote newly produced video; development of annual report to be added to the web; create a committee and/or work with a consulting firm to review branding strategies.
  - Timeline: Ongoing; annual report for August 2015
- Review Capital Campaign and determine how we want to relaunch the Campaign; interview consultants/professionals to help with that process; develop materials that are compatible with school materials and consistent in usage of Capital Campaign logo and look; regular messaging through Social Media, web page and media outreach to communicate and suggest needs to supporters.
  - Timeline: Look to relaunch Capital Campaign in July 2015, ongoing
- Establish a year-round marketing/advertising plan by creating a marketing plan for the school that is reviewed by our marketing experts; review advertising budget and set new budget based on success and realistic expenditures from previous years and current year funds available.
  - Timeline: Annually by September 1 for plan; annually by July 1 for budget

## **Goal 2: EDUCATIONAL ENHANCEMENT**

**Strategies:** Ensure that the existing academic and co-curricular programs meet the needs of our student population and that students are growing in their mastery of curricular content.

**Objectives:** Continue to reflect the common core/Georgia Performance Standards throughout our curriculum and continue to expand curricular and co-curricular offerings as the school continues to grow.

### **Action Items:**

- Teachers assess students new to Cumberland at the beginning and all students at the end of each school year in order to measure student progress in curricular content, particularly in Mathematics, Reading Comprehension and Language Arts skills. Implemented Pearson GMADE/GRADE assessments for 2014.
  - Timeline: Fall and Spring of each academic year
  - Continually evaluated assessment means to determine success; ongoing
- Team Leaders formalize a Curriculum Committee to meet regularly to address academic needs and enhancements based on assessments and ongoing classroom results.
  - Timeline: Ongoing
- Implement a needs based professional plan for the staff at Cumberland Academy of Georgia with professional development needs identified at two levels i.e. by the school and also by individual staff members; survey each development opportunity and determine in an open forum at faculty meetings about implementation; collect data on success of development.
  - Timeline: Ongoing
- Implement a Post-Graduate Program for those students who will require additional remediation and/or college and career preparation.
  - Timeline: As needed and Ongoing
- Implement a refined Life Skills Curriculum with special emphasis on Grades 9 -12; High School coordinates to collect data of students needs with parents and students to determine individualized transition needs; survey and develop curriculum based on data.
  - Timeline: Summer of 2015 and Ongoing
- Continue to assess co-curricular offerings e.g. Robotics, Chess Club, Computer Game Design in order to complement and enhance subject matter and skills implemented in the regular curriculum; survey parents and students to help determine interest.
  - Timeline: Ongoing

### **GOAL 3: PROFESSIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

**Strategies:** Provide for school initiated needs-based professional development opportunities and encourage and support individual needs-based professional development experiences for the Cumberland Academy of Georgia faculty.

**Objectives:** Maintain a professional environment whereby faculty continues to stay abreast of current best practices in the educational field, especially as they pertain to working with Cumberland's special student population.

#### **Action Items:**

- Determine needs of individual Faculty and Staff based on presented opportunity and individualize experience.
  - o Timeline: Ongoing during reviews and contract renewals
- The administration will annually document the staff development experiences completed by the faculty; faculty will document experiences and implementation process of new experiences and assess results.
  - o Timeline: Ongoing.
- Survey the faculty as to the professional development topics on which they would like to be in-serviced.
  - o Timeline: Ongoing and as opportunities are presented
- Continue to pursue outside funding sources e.g. Fulton County administered federal funds to assist in the cost of professional development activities.
  - o Timeline:Ongoing

#### **Goal 4: ADMISSIONS AND COMMUNICATION**

**Strategies:** Increase student population annually and increase retention rate for students.  
Gradual growth of student population with a maximum at the facility of 200 students.

**Objectives:** Continue to educate the community about our unique school through direct mail, internet and advertising. Continue to establish our clear identity in the special needs market place.

#### **Action Items:**

- Maintain and update current database of all prospective families, therapists and professionals. Ongoing communication with this population through monthly newsletter.
  - Timeline: Monthly and ongoing
- Expose our population to the community by getting career training by our community partners.
  - Timeline: Monthly visits
- Offer our school for meetings for GISA and AAAIS to expose our campus and philosophy to other schools.
  - Timeline: Ongoing
- In order to have a quick response to prospective families, continue to streamline the admissions process. Expand student ambassador programs for school tours and for student shadow days.
  - Timeline: Ongoing
- Conduct Professional breakfasts, Individual Tours and “Brown Bag” speaker series to educate professionals, prospective families and current families about our school mission and philosophy as well as other important topics helpful for their everyday strategies.
  - Timeline: Monthly “Brown Bag” series, Bi-annual professional breakfasts, Individual appointments
- Research other software options for optimum communication with stakeholders and prospective families. Review survey data to increase student retention.
  - Timeline: Yearly at orientation and ongoing
- Communicate with parents and prospective families on school academic and social successes among student population. Educate parents on utilization of Jupiter Grades for optimum communication of grades, attendance, homework, and school events.
  - Timeline: Yearly at orientation and ongoing via monthly newsletter

## **Goal 5: FACILITY IMPROVEMENT**

**Strategies:** Maintaining school facilities and grounds that provide a safe and productive learning environment in addition to contributing to the financial well-being of Cumberland Academy of Georgia.

**Objectives:** Regularly access and improve facilities to provide best setting for education opportunities for students.

### **Action Items:**

- Conduct Facility Audit in order to maintain appropriate inventory levels on all technology, equipment and supplies
  - Timeline: Annually in late summer
- Develop priorities list for school improvements and needs by using the Facility Condition Assessment (FCA) provided by Budova and general improvement needs list. List to include cycle for wear & tear associated with technology and equipment used more consistently.
  - Timeline: 3 year plan for improvements funded through capital campaign
- Director of Operations to maintain opening and closing facility procedures to share with appropriate staff
  - Timeline: Ongoing; evaluate annually
- Conduct Energy Audit for gym (and potentially other areas) to provide details for improvement needs.
  - Timeline: Ongoing, During Capital Campaign
- Instructional Technology teacher to provide students and staff with updated Google training, web resources, and training to improve technology usages to support students and parents; work with Google Apps for education on latest technology; provide Promethean training
  - Timeline: Preplanning and ongoing
- Conduct regular Fire and Safety drills to identify and implement specific strategies to make Cumberland Academy of Georgia safer and reduce potential risks; continue reviewing emergency crisis planning; ongoing relationships with local fire and police departments on emergency and crisis preparedness to ensure that school is current with safety procedures.
  - Timeline: Annually and ongoing.

## **Goal 6: HUMAN RESOURCES**

**Strategies:** Maintain a superior faculty to successfully implement academic programs and support each student's learning process.

**Objectives:** Develop a process for recruitment and retention of faculty and administration.

### **Action Items:**

- The Headmaster along with the Principal to review parent survey responses, review student input, review teacher observation forms, and employee annual performance assessments, to help assess and determine human resource needed.
  - Timeline: Annually and needs based
- Expand interview process to include, Headmaster, Principal and Lead Teacher. Collaborate with other schools and organizations to review other schools organizational structure and utilize resources for recruiting staff.
  - Timeline: Ongoing, needs based and annually when contacts renew
- Review employee satisfaction based on annual performance review comments to help retention rate for high quality personnel. Encourage staff to attend external staff development opportunities
  - Timeline: Annually/ongoing
- Assess recruiting needs and attend organizational job fairs, post openings and seek out referrals to improve the process to find high quality personnel.
  - Timeline: Annually/ongoing

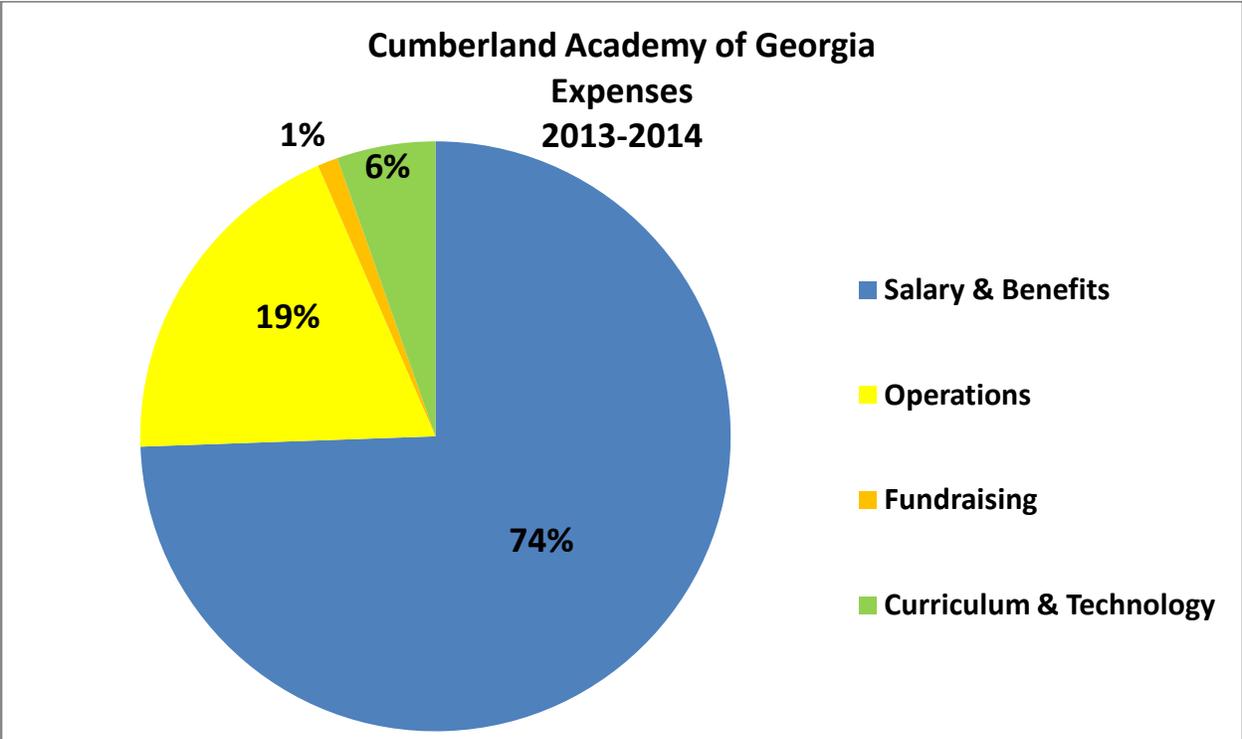
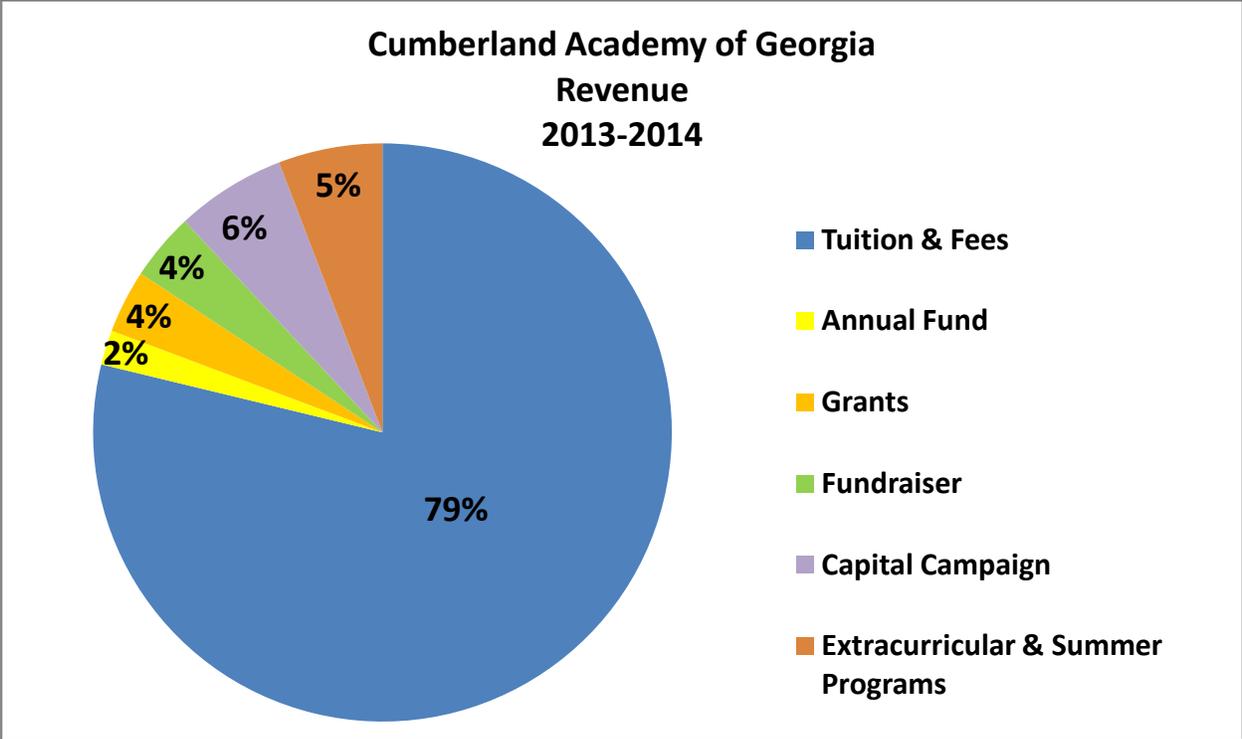
## **Goal 7: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

**Strategies:** Ensure that there are sufficient financial resources to fund the mission of the school and utilize funds raised through the capital campaign *Our Home Their Future* to support improvements.

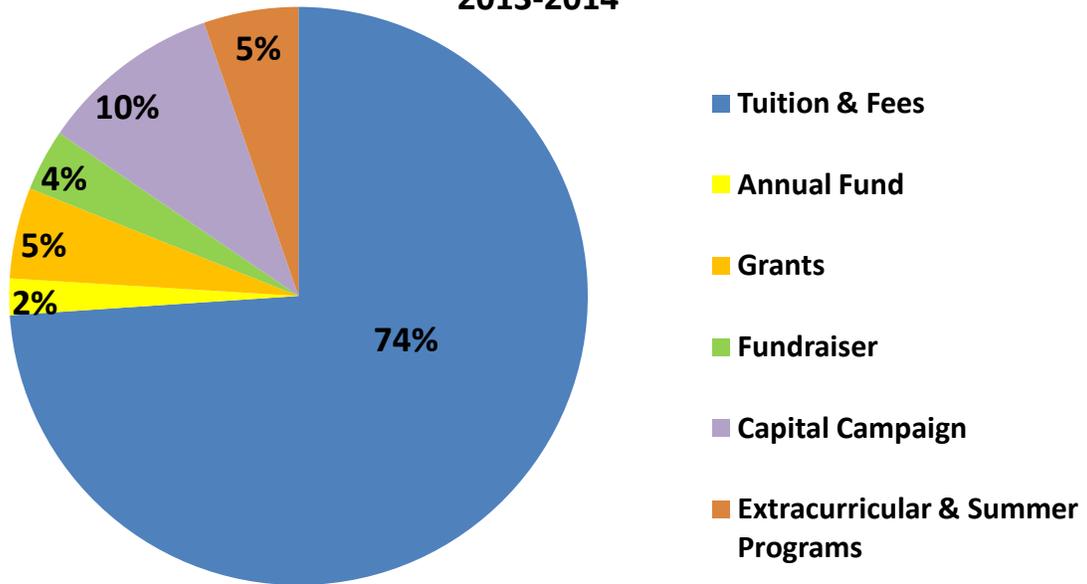
**Objectives:** Continue to increase revenue through different channels and raise \$2.5 million for the capital campaign *Our Home Their Future*.

### **Action Items:**

- Relaunch Capital Campaign; research appropriate grants and work within their deadline requirements; work with consulting firms to help campaign Board relationships with upcoming grants; involve Board with campaign
  - Timeline: April 2015/Until \$2.5 million is reached
- Increase revenue outside of tuition year over year by evaluating all revenue opportunities: extracurricular activities, summer camps, etc.
  - Timeline: Ongoing
- Maximize community partner opportunities such as Kroger, Target Red Card, Publix and BoxTops to increase revenue
  - Timeline: Ongoing
- Further develop annual fund to generate consistent outside revenue to support school.
  - Timeline: Ongoing
- Ensure accurate accounting records by continuing annualized audit to maintain proper exempt status.
  - Timeline: Every year at the end of the fiscal year (July)
- Continue to grow SSO/GOAL and educate companies and families on how that will benefit our school to increase scholarship fund opportunities for need based families; continue to encourage staff to participate to maintain 100% participation; increase annual commitments by 25%; development to work with admissions on new enrollment commitments
  - Timeline: Ongoing



**Cumberland Academy of Georgia  
Revenue  
2013-2014**



**Cumberland Academy of Georgia  
Expenses  
2013-2014**

