



Student Spotlight: Chevas Olson

Before he found his way to Foothills, Chevas Olson had climbed many mountains. He had attended 8 different high schools, lost his father when he was 16, took care of his disabled mother, spent 13 months in a group home, and ended up living in his car with little food and less money. Taking the advice of a friend, who also gave Chevas a place to live, he transferred to Foothills to finish his high school education.

While attending Foothills, Chevas continued to work during the day. His commitment to his education was evident in his willingness to walk to work each day, walk from work to Foothills, and walk home. Chevas said the staff at Clarke Foothills became his “second family.” They motivated and pushed him, and he felt that they respected him because they knew his background and knew how much he wanted to finish school.

Chevas’ hard work and persistence will pay off later this month, as he will finish his coursework in mid-July. He plans to attend the summer graduation ceremony on August 30th, and he has already been accepted to Thomas University in Thomasville, GA. Chevas plans to major in business management, and dreams of one day running a non-profit club for “alternative school” teens who don’t get to compete in extracurricular programs in traditional schools.



When asked what advice he would give to his peers, Chevas said to “stay true to yourself and who you are.” He spoke of “persistence,” pointing out that “persistence will sharpen you . . . make you want it even more.” Chevas, aware of the challenges that he had to overcome, said that success is “all in the mind—if you want it you can get it . . . No matter your last name, where you’re from, or what people say, you can have it.” With pride in his voice, Chevas spoke of his pending graduation: “I did that for my dad; I did that for me.”

Congratulations, Chevas, Class of 2017!

Message from the Superintendent

At a traditional high school, things slow down a little in the summer. Not so at Foothills. Our students are continuing to attend classes four nights each week, and we are continuing to grow and expand as we fulfill our mission of providing a flexible high school option for Georgia’s communities. We will open our Walton site in August, and we will open our newest site at Phillips State Prison in Buford in September. We are also continuing to add graduates to the class of 2017 as students finish their coursework. As of June 15th, the class of 2017 was 141 students strong.

In June, we presented current data to the State Charter School Commission as part of our accountability process. It was a successful review, and some of the data presented is outlined for our stakeholders in this newsletter. The full impact of Foothills cannot be measured with traditional accountability measures. We serve a unique group of students who all find their way to Foothills for a variety of reasons. We continue to measure our impact one student at a time, one graduate at a time, one success story at a time.

*Our mission is our students, and our success is found in them.
Dr. Sherrie Gibney-Sherman, Foothills Superintendent*

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Here We Grow Again: Phillips Site

Foothills Charter High School is pleased to be opening a 10th site at Phillips State Prison in Buford, GA. Modeled after our sites at Burruss and Lee Arrendale State Prisons, the Phillips site will provide an opportunity for the men at Phillips to earn a high school diploma. Our sites at Burruss and Lee Arrendale have more than doubled the number of graduates in the past year, from 30 to 62, and Phillips will add to the success of our corrections sites.

Sarah Alford, the Foothills Regional Coordinator for Corrections and one of the site directors at the Burruss site began scheduling interviews to hire staff for the Phillips site in June. Information on employment opportunities at the Phillips site, as well as other Foothills sites can be found at <https://foothills.tedk12.com/hire/Index.aspx>



Foothills Performance Review for State Charter Schools Commission

June was an important month for Foothills regional staff and superintendent Dr. Sherrie Gibney-Sherman, as they prepared for a performance review by the State Charter Schools Commission (SCSC). When all was said and done, the commission noted the value-added impact that Foothills Charter High School has on its students. In addition, regional staff used this opportunity to reflect on next steps, as we approach our work with an eye toward continuous improvement.

Who is Foothills?

In any presentation of outcomes data, it is important to outline who we are at Foothills. Foothills has grown from 7 to 9 sites (and will add Walton and Phillips this fall). As of June 15th, Foothills had served a total of 2,663 unique students in 2016-17:

approximately 2,100 of them were FTE students (the remainder were either over-age or were attending Foothills for credit recovery). In 2016-17, our students have earned over 2,200 credits and 141 have graduated.



How are we doing?

Traditional high schools are held accountable for standardized test scores, and while Foothills is a very nontraditional model, we are still responsible for how our students perform on End-of-Course (EOC) tests. In 2016-17, we had anywhere from 17 students (GSE Algebra) to 158 students (Economics) take the various EOCs across all sites. We project the [weighted content mastery](#) for each subject to be between 24% and 48% (state averages for 2016 were between 52 and 66 percent).

Because the SCSC understands that charter schools often serve unique populations, they do have a method to control for the impact of our unique population on these outcome measures. The [value-added impact](#), essentially, means that the SCSC looks at who our students are, projects how they likely would have performed, and gives credit to Foothills when they perform better than expected. With the value-added weights added, Foothills scores at or above the state average in all areas.

What are our next steps?

Foothills regional staff and site leaders will have a two-day strategic planning retreat later this month. They will collaboratively work to share best practices for formative assessment and improving EOC scores, as well as increasing attendance. In addition, as we move into the 2017-18 school year, regional staff will schedule "impact checks" at each site to regularly monitor progress on site-specific goals, as well as help sites complete formative "data digs" to monitor their own attendance rates, EOC scores, and course completion rates.

Foothills is committed to continuous improvement, as we strive to improve student achievement and continue to graduate successful students.



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The Foothills Vision

Foothills Education Charter High School strives to be an accessible, high-quality high school option that is flexible and responsive to the needs of the People of Georgia and its communities.