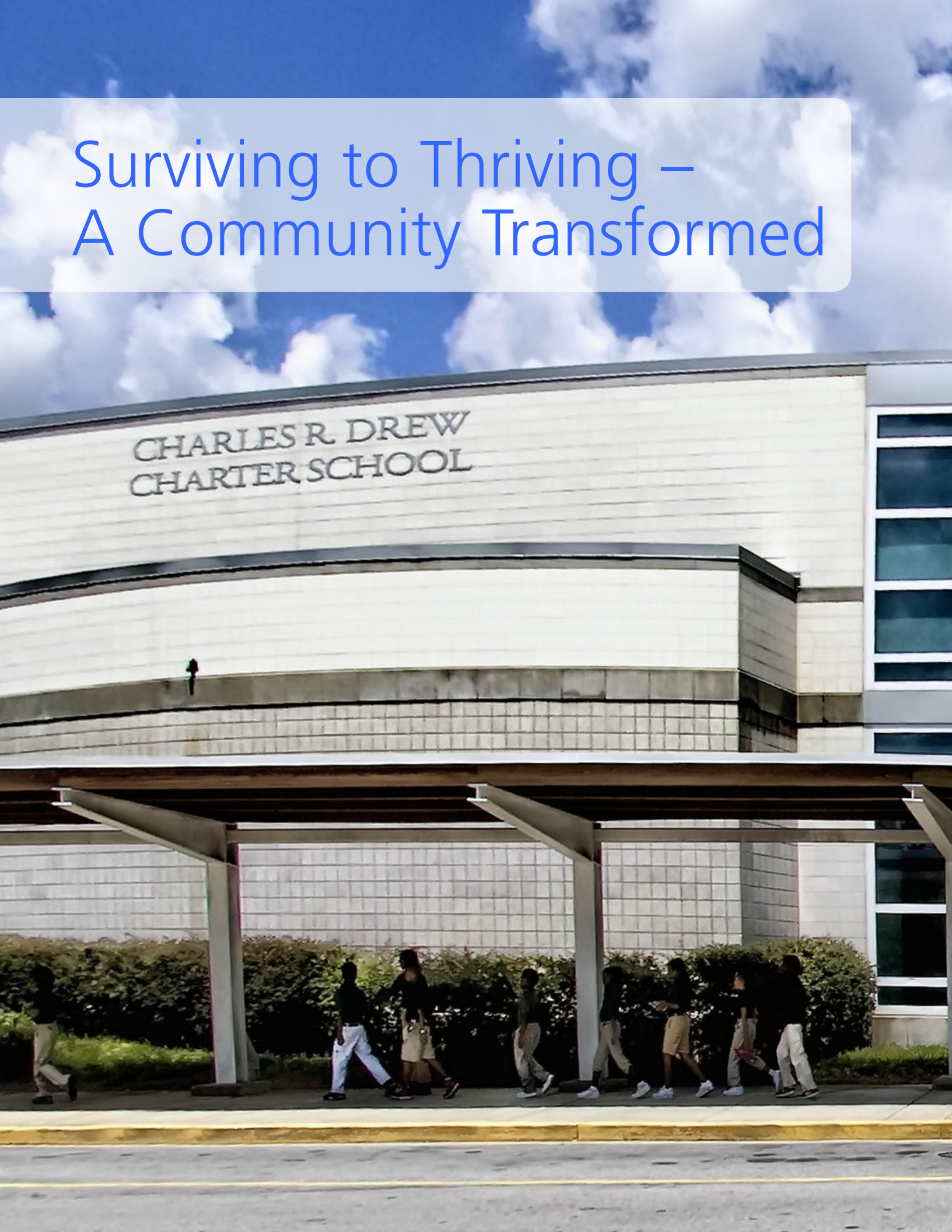


Surviving to Thriving – A Community Transformed

CHARLES R. DREW
CHARTER SCHOOL

The image shows the exterior of Charles R. Drew Charter School. The building is a modern, multi-story structure with a curved facade and a light-colored, textured exterior. The school's name is prominently displayed on the upper part of the building. In the foreground, a group of students is walking along a sidewalk under a covered walkway. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

SMART SHOWCASE SCHOOL PROFILE

By Stacy Kindopp

In 1995, the East Lake neighborhood in Atlanta, Georgia was home to a rundown public housing complex and had a crime rate that was 18 times higher than the national average. Seventy percent of students were failing to meet state standards for reading and math.

Thanks to the [East Lake Foundation](#) and donations from local philanthropist Tom Cousins, a holistic community revitalization project began that transformed East Lake into a thriving community. Violent crime is down 95 percent, property values have significantly increased and students are meeting and exceeding state standards.

The East Lake Foundation knew that a high-quality school would be an important centerpiece to the revitalization effort. The drab, windowless elementary school that had previously served the community was replaced by the newly built [Charles R. Drew Charter School](#), which features high ceilings, walls of blue glass and beautiful landscaping.

Drew Charter opened its doors in 2000. In 2010 they adopted a focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) with a foundation in literacy. The school integrates technology throughout the curriculum and became a [SMART Showcase School](#) in 2011.

Every classroom has a [SMART Board interactive whiteboard](#) and teachers create and deliver lessons using [SMART Notebook collaborative learning software](#). Teachers also use the [SMART Response interactive response system](#), [SMART Document Camera™](#), [SMART Slate™ wireless slate](#) and [SMART Sync™ classroom management software](#).





“Drew Charter has been open for 12 years and we’ve gone from 70 percent of students failing to nearly 100 percent of our students meeting or exceeding state standards in every subject area,” says Donya Kemp, Instructional Technology Specialist at Drew Charter.

Drew Charter hosts approximately 1,800 visitors annually who want to learn about and replicate the revitalization that has happened in the East Lake community and school. “One of the main things that visitors notice in our school is how technology is being used by teachers and students. The SMART Boards are being used at all times,” says Kemp.

“There is a direct correlation between student achievement and technology,” says Taiwana Lo, a fifth-grade math teacher at Drew Charter. Lo says that with SMART products in her classroom, she is able to engage the learning styles of every student in her classroom.

“When I develop a lesson in SMART Notebook software, I’m always thinking about the auditory learner, visual learner and tactile learner,” she explains.

Lo likes to use “hooks” to get the attention of her students. “For example, when we talk about circumference, I start the lesson with a song. When we are learning division, I have a talking avatar explain the different steps. These hooks get their attention and increases their engagement – when they’re engaged they process the information better,” says Lo.

Students enjoy learning math through games and Lo will often use the SMART Board interactive whiteboard as a rotating center, giving students more time to visually understand concepts. “I really like to create my own games in SMART Notebook software. I also find games and activities in the Gallery and on the Web,” says Lo.

Lo uses SMART Response interactive response system throughout her lessons to gauge student understanding. “Many students are uncomfortable answering questions aloud. With SMART Response I can check throughout the lesson to see how each student is doing,” explains Lo.

Building on the strengths of struggling learners

Bethany Paquette and Dawn Stephen co-teach a third- and fourth-grade intervention classroom. “We create lessons based on the grade level standards, and we add visual cues, constant repetition and a variety of methods to show concepts, such as pictures, vocabulary, embedded videos and website links,” says Paquette.

“Our class is full of struggling learners, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that we need to slow down the lesson. Often what they really need is for us to make it more interesting and give them more opportunities to see things in different ways,” explains Stephen.

The teachers work together to create lessons that reach the learning strengths of each student. “We adjust our lessons every year based on the students we have in the room. For example, if we’re teaching social studies and know that two students don’t understand the concept of time, we will put material into timelines,” says Paquette.

The SMART Document Camera helps Paquette and Stephen illustrate concepts in hands-on ways for tactile learners. They recently taught equivalent fractions and changing denominators using pattern blocks that were displayed on the SMART Document Camera.

“Manipulating the pattern blocks was so effective. The students mastered every single concept. When we can work with something tangible, we can help students reach a higher level of conceptualization,” says Paquette.



Last year, 100 percent of the third-grade students in their classroom met or exceeded state standards in every subject area. “And many of our students have individual plans and goals. It has been refreshing to see them meet and exceed their goals. Classroom technology has enhanced our instruction in so many ways, and we’re seeing these successful learning outcomes as a result,” says Stephen.



Your school can become a SMART Showcase School and be recognized for using SMART education solutions to create exceptional learning environments. If selected, your school will receive exclusive membership benefits and opportunities. It will have an opportunity to share its success story and serve as a host site for other educators who want to find out more about the benefits of implementing SMART products. [Learn more.](#)