

Strategic Plan

2015-2020

Every Student:
College and
Career Ready



Strong Students | Strong Schools | Strong Staff | Strong System

Letter From the Superintendent & Board Chair



Dear Staff, Students, Families and Partners of Atlanta Public Schools,

On behalf of our school system and school board, we are pleased to present an updated five-year strategic plan. The plan reflects your feedback and the priorities that you identified as necessary to help Atlanta Public Schools move forward as a strong system. We know that our organization has experienced a number of challenges over the years, and now is our time to refocus our school system on a better future for all students in every classroom, every school and every neighborhood.

The launch of this 2015-2020 strategic plan provides an exciting new chapter for Atlanta Public Schools. Our plan, titled “Strong Students, Strong Schools, Strong Staff, Strong System,” is about shifting our focus to our strengths and creating an organizational culture where students and staff are engaged, supported and encouraged. If we focus on doing the right things and doing them well, we can become a system where every school builds on each student’s strengths and where every teacher makes students excited about the future.

The strategic plan includes our newly developed mission and vision, updated guiding principles and revised goals. At the heart of the plan is our mission, which is, in part, to ensure that every student will graduate ready for college and career. Our strategic plan serves as a roadmap for achieving our vision to be a high-performing district where students love to learn, educators inspire, families engage and the community trusts the system.

A Gallup study found that the one variable most likely to predict whether or not a student will be successful in college is hope. The research shows that when students feel hopeful, they do better in school and in life. It’s just that simple. The same is true of adults. This plan serves as our guide for meeting specific goals and inspiring hope in our students, as well as the staff, families and partners that surround them.

We believe this strategic plan is a significant first step of the many we plan to take together to move our system forward. Success does not happen by accident. Schools and districts do not become high performing by chance. Having “strong students, strong schools, strong staff and a strong system” requires our personal and collective commitment, dedication, discipline and focus on building a caring culture of trust and collaboration. The success of this strategic plan rests on everyone. When all of us across our school community and organization carry out our respective roles, our children will graduate on time from high school; have real choices to pursue college and careers; and most importantly, use their talents to answer a calling that will make them happy and fulfilled in life.

Sincerely,

Dr. Meria J. Carstarphen, Superintendent
Atlanta Public Schools

Courtney D. English, Chair
Atlanta Board of Education

About Atlanta Public Schools

FAST FACTS ABOUT ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2014-2015

Student Enrollment Est. **52,700**

Elementary Schools

Non-Charter

Primary Campuses 5
K-5 & Intermediate Campuses 47

Middle Schools

Non-Charter

12*

High Schools

Non-Charter

18*

Open Campus 1

Alternative/Nontraditional Programs

4

Evening School/Adult Education Programs

2

Charter Schools 17

Total APS Learning Sites & Programs **106**

**Includes two single-gender campuses*

Ethnic Distribution of Students

African-American 76.2%

Caucasian 14.3%

Hispanic 6.7%

Multiracial 1.6%

Asian/American Indian/
Alaskan/Other 1.2%

Other Facts About Our Students

Students Eligible for Free-
and Reduced-Priced Meals 77.32%

Number of 2014 Graduates 1,905

Scholarships offered
to Class of 2014 \$100 Million

Number of Title I Schools 91

FY15 General
Fund Budget \$657.5 Million

Atlanta Public Schools (APS) is one of the largest districts in Georgia, serving more than 52,700 students at 106 learning sites throughout Atlanta, including two single gender campuses and 17 charter schools. APS is organized into nine high school clusters with distinct feeder patterns. The cluster model allows all students from a particular elementary school to matriculate at the same middle school, and students enrolled at that middle school to attend the same high school. The cluster model also provides greater access to a more equitable distribution of resources and multiple layers of support.



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Executive Summary

The vision of Atlanta Public Schools is to be a high-performing school district where students love to learn, educators inspire, families engage and the community trusts the system. The district has built on the previous strategic plan and laid the foundation for this vision with the development of the 2015-2020 “Strong Students, Strong Schools, Strong Staff, Strong System” strategic plan. This plan reflects our focus on strengths as a district. The strategic planning process involved the Atlanta Board of Education, district and school staff, students and community stakeholders. Feedback was gathered from across the district through town halls and neighborhood meetings, parent advocacy groups, small focus group discussions, school site visits, surveys and principal and administrative meetings.

This five-year strategic plan pairs the strengths of the district with a theory of change that is highlighted in an updated strategy map. It shows the steps required to achieve our mission. This map organizes the work into four strategic goals: (1) Academic Program; (2) Talent Management; (3) Systems and Resources; and (4) Culture. Culture is a new focus area for the district and is essential to building an organization of trust and collaboration.

These four goals and eight objectives described in this plan will drive our thinking, actions, and investments over the next five years. If the district achieves the objectives in each of the strategic goals, then we will achieve our strategic outcomes—ultimately leading us to accomplish our mission for every student to graduate

ready for college and career. The district will implement the plan using strategic initiatives aligned to each objective and goal. These initiatives are cross-functional and range from expanding early childhood offerings; enhancing community engagement to building organizational culture using strength-based strategies.

APS students depend on all stakeholders, internal and external, to work together toward one comprehensive, aligned strategic plan that is focused on building hope and success for our students.



District Planning Processes

The district planning process includes strategic planning and detailed cluster planning to drive the implementation of an operating model to support the future direction of our school system.

Strategic Planning

The strategic planning process began as a part of the transition process for the new superintendent. Throughout the transition, the superintendent, board and administration worked to identify short-term and long-term priorities and key issues in each cluster across our system. One of the initial steps in developing the updated strategic plan was to gather feedback and input from stakeholders across the system. Channels for feedback included town halls, neighborhood meetings, parent advocacy groups, small group discussions, school site visits, survey and principal and administrative meetings.

Cluster Planning

Cluster planning is a new tool that the school system is using to build alignment and collaboration across schools that feed into a neighborhood high school. The goal of the cluster planning process is to develop a roadmap for instructional programming across schools within a cluster. Teams will be working together throughout 2014-2015 to complete each of the cluster plans.

Operating Model

The district is complying with State of Georgia law that requires a school system to select an operating model by June 2015. After completing vision, mission and strategic planning while also exploring the merits of the available state operating models, the Atlanta Board of Education has determined that the Charter System model is the best fit for Atlanta Public Schools. The Charter System model provides opportunities for flexibility as well as shared governance and best aligns with the needs of all students across our diverse school system. Our plans for innovation, accountability and distributed leadership are a strong match with the Charter System model. The school system will use the strategic and cluster plans along with community input to tailor our operating model design and application.

Next Steps

All of these plans will be considered in our budget process, by outlining key budget priorities and financial needs to ensure that the implementation of these plans are possible in the upcoming fiscal years. We will communicate and share the high-level plan across the organization with our stakeholders with the intent of ensuring alignment to the district's strategy.



STRONG SYSTEM DISTRICT PLANNING PROCESS



Mission

With a caring culture of trust and collaboration, every student will graduate ready for college and career.

Vision

A high-performing school district where students love to learn, educators inspire, families engage and the community trusts the system.



Guiding Principles

EXCELLENCE ...

IN EVERYTHING WE DO

By changing the focus from what's wrong to what's strong, APS will use a strengths-based staff development model and employee performance management to strive for excellence from every staff member for all of our students.

EQUITY ...

IN OUR APPROACH TO DECISION-MAKING

Equity is strategic decision-making with the goal of remedying opportunity and learning gaps and creating a barrier-free environment which enables all students to graduate ready for college and career.

ETHICS ...

TO REBUILD OUR INTEGRITY

APS will build on previously implemented testing security and ethics training and establish new supports to rebuild our organization's integrity by ensuring all staff apply ethical practices across the organization and live up to our core beliefs and norms.

ENGAGEMENT ...

WITH OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

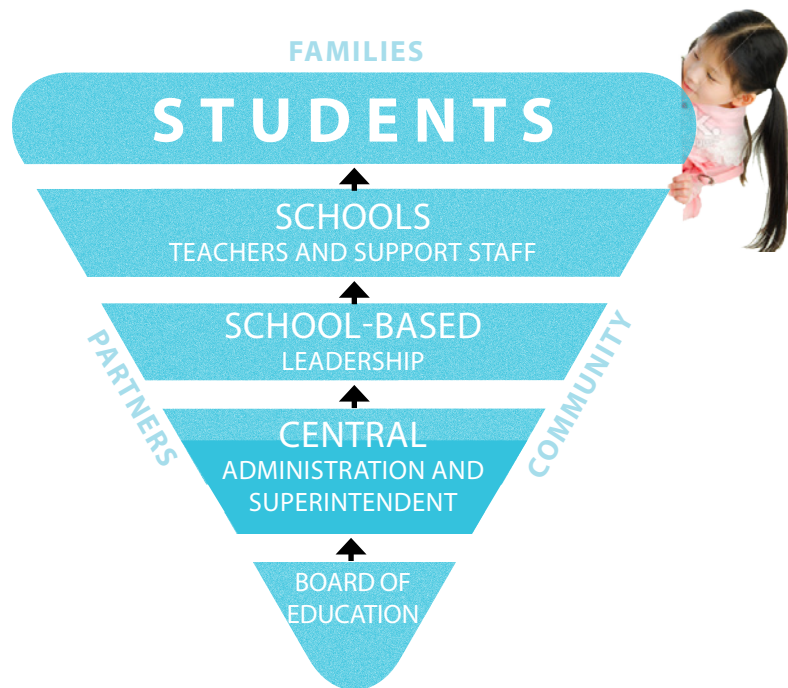
APS is redefining communications and engagement efforts to build trust, strengthen relationships and reshape the opinions of its stakeholders and overall public perception.



Approach to Collaboration: Putting Students and Schools First

At Atlanta Public Schools, we believe that schools, clusters, and the central administration need to align and collaborate to ensure that every child is college and career ready. To that end, each of these teams is responsible for working together to ensure that student outcomes are improved. Over time, APS will prepare to transition to a new operating model. This means:

- School leaders and school teams will be empowered through flexible, school-based decision-making including the use of resources to meet students' needs;
- Clusters will collaborate to plan and align instructional programming across neighborhood schools;
- Schools and clusters will have the opportunity to innovate and inform instructional programming and environments that best meet the academic and social-emotional needs of their students;
- Central administration will manage and provide recommended guidance for standards, curriculum systems, and graduation requirements to ensure excellence and equity across the district.



One of the important mindset shifts we are making within our organizational culture is putting students at the top of how we think, feel, behave and operate. The traditional pyramid of a top-down structure has been inverted so that the students we serve are at the top. We want to create an organizational culture where everyone focuses on students and their educational outcomes, and understand the important role we all have in supporting student learning. At each level of the organization, we must redirect our support to front-line staff and students. This organizational culture shift is important to our strategic direction and our ability to achieve our goals.



Strategic Goals

2015-2020

The strategic goals provide guidance for APS leadership in the development of policies and regulations, objectives, strategies and initiatives to achieve the vision.

The following pages communicate APS' five year strategy and translate the strategy map into action. Each page highlights the strategic goals, objectives and initiatives we will pursue to close the gap between current and desired performance. All components work together to achieve our strategic vision.



ACADEMIC PROGRAM ...

Our students will be well-rounded individuals who possess the necessary academic skills and knowledge and are excited about learning.



TALENT MANAGEMENT ...

We will retain an energized and inspired team of employees who are capable of advancing ever-increasing levels of achievement for students of all backgrounds.



SYSTEMS AND RESOURCES ...

We will improve efficiency (productivity, cost, etc.) while also making decisions (including resource allocations) that are grounded in a strategic academic direction and data.



CULTURE ...

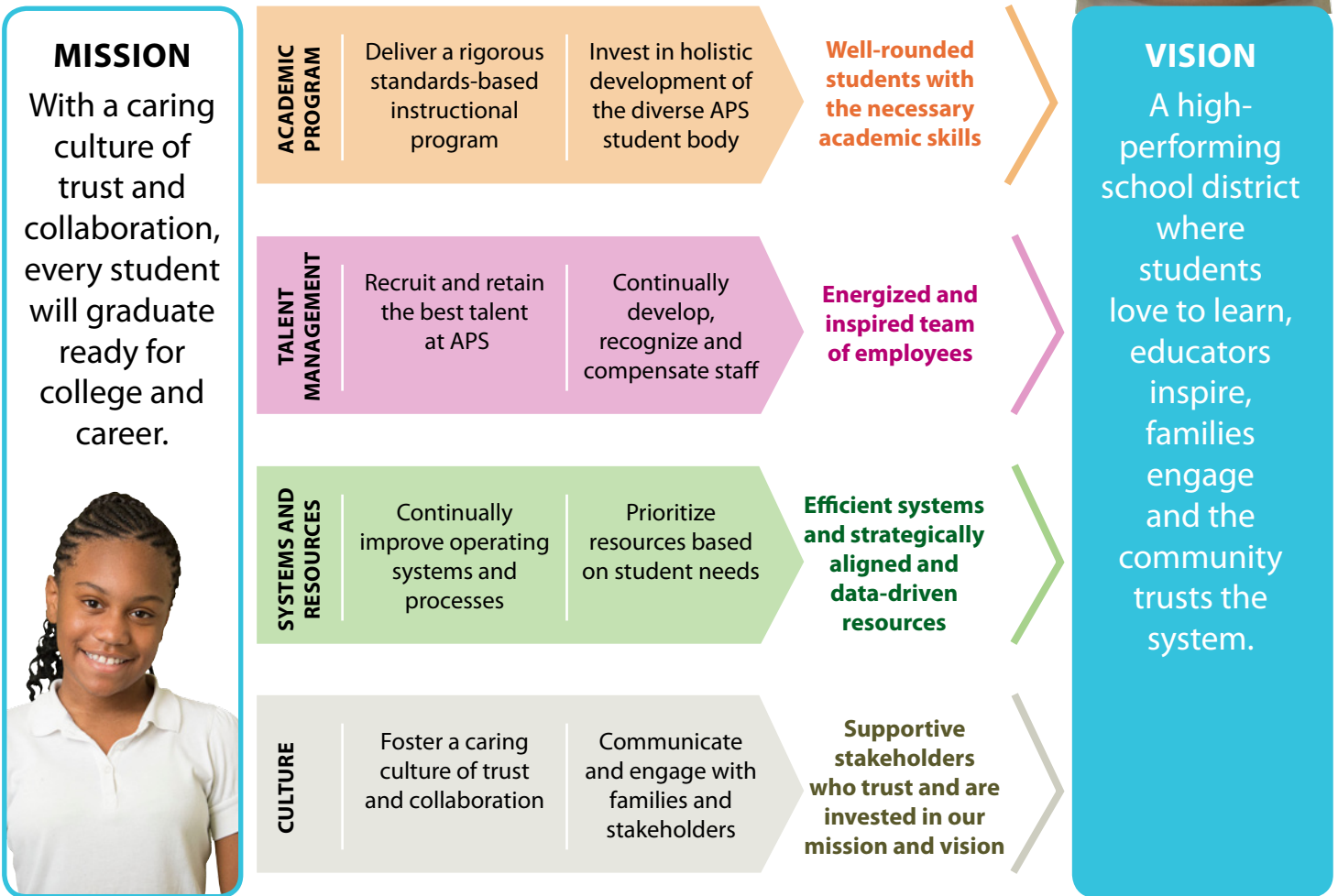
We will build trust with the community, and we will have engaged stakeholders (*employees, students, parents, community members, partners, etc.*) who are invested in the mission and vision and who support the creation of student-centered learning communities.

Strategy Map



APS uses the strategy map below to illustrate relationships between strategic goals, objectives and outcomes. The map visualizes how various components of the strategy align with the mission (what we do everyday) and our vision (what we strive to become).

Every Student: College and Career Ready



MISSION

With a caring culture of trust and collaboration, every student will graduate ready for college and career.



MISSION

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Deliver a rigorous standards-based instructional program | Invest in holistic development of the diverse APS student body

TALENT MANAGEMENT

Recruit and retain the best talent at APS | Continually develop, recognize and compensate staff

SYSTEMS AND RESOURCES

Continually improve operating systems and processes | Prioritize resources based on student needs

CULTURE

Foster a caring culture of trust and collaboration | Communicate and engage with families and stakeholders

Well-rounded students with the necessary academic skills

Energized and inspired team of employees

Efficient systems and strategically aligned and data-driven resources

Supportive stakeholders who trust and are invested in our mission and vision

VISION

A high-performing school district where students love to learn, educators inspire, families engage and the community trusts the system.

STRATEGIC GOALS

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

VISION

Strategic Goals



Goal 1: Academic Program

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Deliver a rigorous standards-based instructional program

Invest in holistic development of the diverse APS student body

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Kindergarten Readiness
- Student Achievement – GA Milestones
- Student Achievement – Advanced Courses
- Student Achievement – Alternative Pathways and Credit Recovery
- Student Attendance
- Student Engagement
- High School Readiness
- Graduation Rate
- College Readiness/Enrollment

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Early Childhood Offerings

Expand Pre-K seats across the city and establish APS early childhood collaborative with other providers.

Common Core/Georgia Performance Standards Support

Provide targeted professional learning opportunities for teachers and instructional coaches, especially in literacy and mathematics. Implement regular, aligned assessments, along with comprehensive, balanced literacy integration.

Positive Behavior Strategies

Promote social and emotional learning through comprehensive teacher professional learning on interventions and strategies, curriculum, assessments and cultural norms and standards.

College and Career Access Strategies

Strengthen pathway offerings and advisory processes; increase ACT/SAT preparation offerings; and provide access to Advance Placement, International Baccalaureate and Dual Enrollment courses.



Goal 2: Talent Management

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Recruit and retain the best talent at APS

Continually develop, recognize and compensate staff

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Teacher and Leader Effectiveness
- Teacher and Leader Retention
- Teacher, Principal, Executive Fill Rate
- Professional Learning



STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Teacher and Leader Recruitment Strategies

Ensure APS has the most effective, innovative hiring practices to attract and recruit the best people and bring them on board efficiently.

Teacher and Leadership Development Programs/ Staff Professional Learning

Develop new and enhance existing programs to increase the retention of novice teachers and leaders. Provide our staff with more leadership development opportunities and ensure that all employees (instructional, non-instructional and classified) receive targeted professional learning that aligns to the district's strategic plan.

Equity in Compensation Study

Perform a detailed review of compensation to determine equity across pay programs and structures.



Strategic Goals



Goal 3: Systems and Resources

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Continually improve operating systems and processes

Prioritize resources based on student needs

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Spending Directed to Instruction
- Technology to Support Teaching and Learning
- Customer Service
- School Safety and Security
- Audit Results
- System Completion Milestones

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

System Upgrade and Integration for HR and Finance Technology

Upgrade our enterprise resource planning management systems to integrate our HR and Finance data systems.

Strategic Facilities and Capital Plan

Develop and implement a plan to ensure our facilities are strategically aligned to district priorities and our academic vision.

Instructional and Infrastructure Technology Plans

Develop and implement plans to enhance our instructional technology support to the classroom as well as build the infrastructure foundations required to further innovate in the future.

Strategic Budgeting

Develop, manage, and allocate our budget to align with school needs and the implementation of the system operating model.

Safe and Secure Learning Environments

Ensure all students, staff and community feel welcomed, engaged, and safe in our schools.



Goal 4: Culture

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Foster a caring culture of trust and collaboration

Communicate and engage with families and stakeholders

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Parent/Community Outreach and Engagement
- Ethics
- Staff Engagement
- Employee Attendance

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Strength-Based Strategies to Support Organizational Culture

Engage staff with Gallup's StrengthsFinder tools and processes to encourage a shift in the organization from what's wrong to what's strong.

Ethical Programming and Practices

Build on the current ethics training program and implement new strategies to ensure our staff are applying ethical practices across our organization and living up to our core beliefs and established norms.

Stakeholder Communication and Engagement

Implement and manage a comprehensive strategic communication and engagement plan to touch all stakeholders—staff, parents, students, partners, community, and others to ensure all are well-informed and invested in the system's mission and vision.



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