



Jackson High School (Left) and Douglass High School (Right)  
Class of 2019

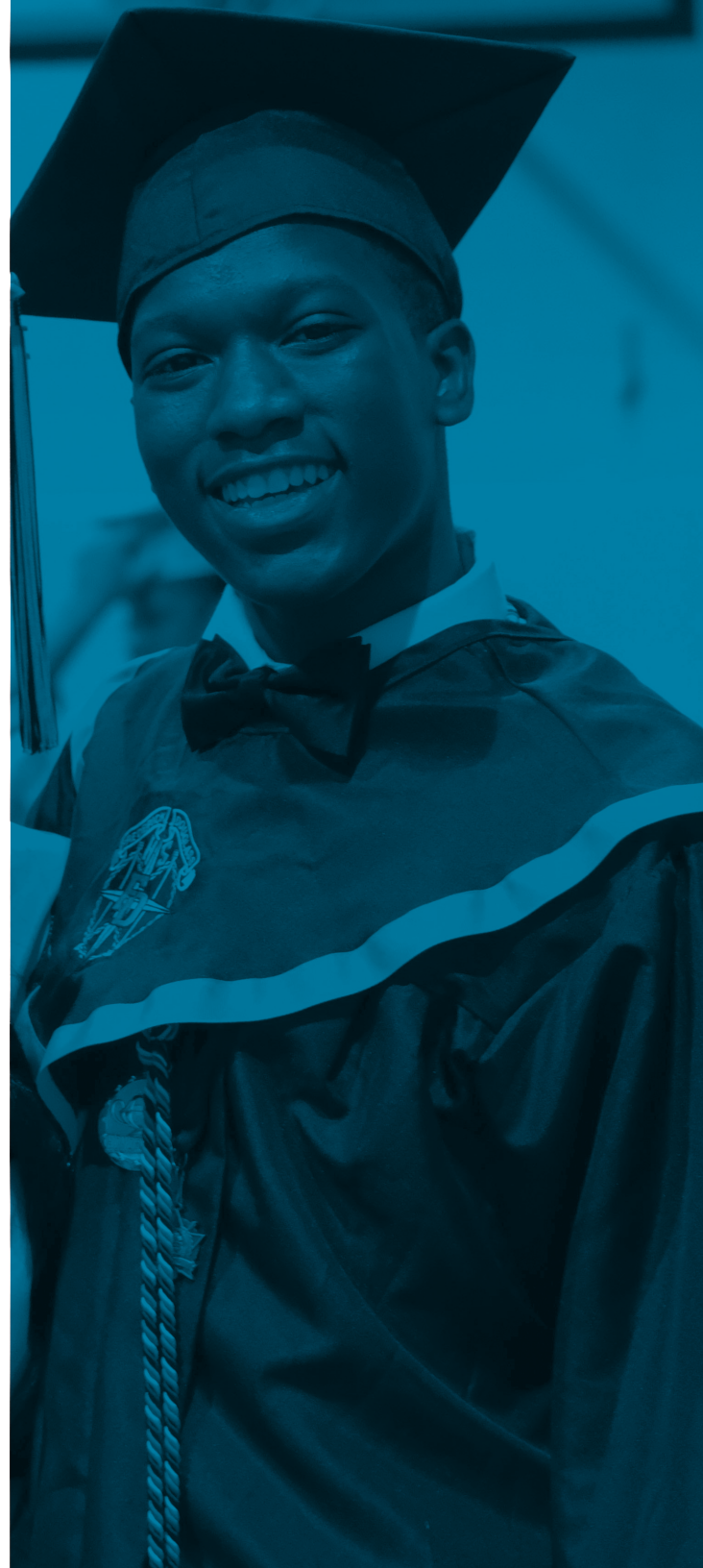
# WE ARE APS BUILDING ON OUR LEGACY



ATLANTA  
PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS

Strategic Plan

2020-2025



## Foreword

We are excited to share our collective vision for the next five years. Our plan, titled “**We are APS, Building on Our Legacy,**” is about how we come together as a community to achieve our vision of a “high-performing school district where students love to learn, educators inspire, families engage, and the community trusts the system.” The plan provides an intentional focus and direction for all of us as we move through the next five years.

The 2020-2025 strategic plan creates a bold direction for our students and families centered on great public schools regardless of the neighborhood, zip code, or area of the city. This plan is ambitious because it places equity at the forefront of our work. We want it to serve as an important anchor of our work, as it focuses on increasing educational equity for all of our students.

Outlined in this plan are a set of equity commitments that provide a framework for staff to address educational equity in specific and impactful ways. This work will guide how we, as a school system, define and measure student success, support and elevate teachers, provide schools the resources they need to support every child, and create conditions that help students thrive regardless of which school they attend in APS.

The strategic plan includes a revised mission, goals, and priorities focused on improving educational outcomes and opportunities for all students.

The success of this strategic plan rests on everyone. When all of us work together as a community to carry out our mission and strategic plan, our students and graduates will have the tools and resources needed to have choice-filled lives. Through a caring culture of equity, trust, and collaboration, every student will graduate ready for college, career, and life – this strategic plan outlines the vision for this work in 2020-2025. ■

**Atlanta Public Schools**

# THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Engaged Committees +  
Internal Employee Groups

We want to thank the APS community for your engagement and feedback throughout the development of this strategic plan. This plan represents countless hours of feedback from stakeholders around our community. Over the past six months, students, families, teachers, staff, leaders, and community members shared their vision, their hopes, their concerns, and their ideas for the next five years. Your feedback, in all the ways the APS community came together to provide it, was invaluable in informing where we are, where we need to go, and what we need to get there.

We are grateful that the APS community shared its experiences to ensure the strategic plan would reflect a diversity of perspectives. This strategic plan for 2020-2025 reflects your collective input and recognizes important priorities needed to achieve our mission and vision. ■

**1,200**  
surveys

**Hosted 1<sup>st</sup>**  
**APS Table**  
**Talks for parent**  
**feedback**

**1,000** engaged stakeholders  
attended community conversations

**A strategic plan is a roadmap for an organization. It shows where everyone is starting, where they are headed, and all the possible pathways to get there. A good strategic plan keeps us aligned and focused, even if different schools take different paths.**

The 2015-2020 strategic plan made the strengthening of our students, schools, staff, and system the focus. In that plan, we:

- Realigned our neighborhoods into collaborative clusters of schools with common signature programs,
- Reorganized our district into a charter system that gives schools greater flexibility to serve their families and students, and
- Refined our practices as a district to ensure that schools can identify and access what they need.

That strengthening enabled us to increase our graduation rate to 77.9% with a district high of 2,506 on-time student graduates in 2019. We are also proud of our investments to begin to address equity-related challenges. For example, APS has improved the facilities infrastructure; implemented a more flexible and equitable funding formula; executed a plan to improve chronically under-performing schools; expanded Pre-K seats; integrated Social and Emotional Learning throughout the curriculum; and addressed support and practices for special populations.

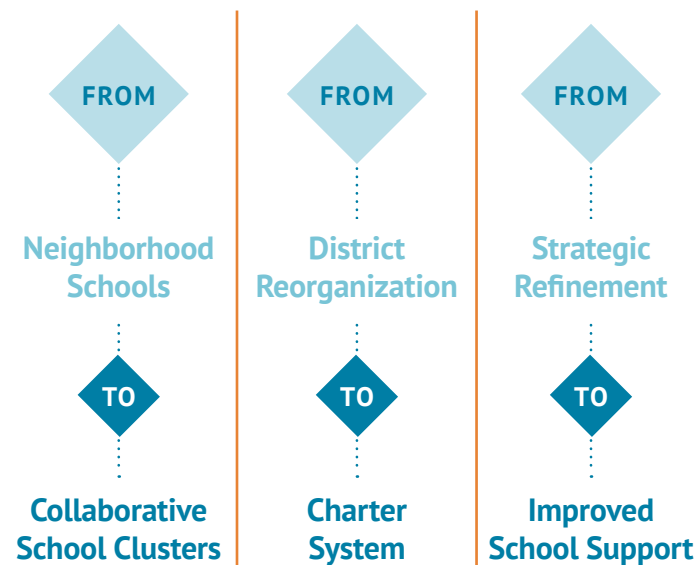
Now that we have strengthened the foundation, our community has made it clear that it is time to close gaps in opportunities between student groups and make a common expectation of excellence accessible to all. APS students, teachers, staff, families, volunteers, and advocates came together from across the city to provide their perspectives through online surveys, principals' meetings, neighborhood gatherings, and a variety of other activities to talk about what is working, what needs more work, and where we should be focused for the next five years.

With a greater focus on understanding and addressing school needs, we are ready for the next critical step in preparing every APS student for college, career, and life. Equity, ethics, engagement and excellence will continue to guide our work moving forward, we will lead with an equity lens. The strategic plan will prioritize raising the achievement of all students while minimizing the gaps between different student groups, ensuring access to opportunity across race, gender, household income, and special education status.

We are committed to using this plan to guide our collective vision for APS over the next five years. ■

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 2015-2020 in Review





# FOUNDATION

## Mission

Through a caring culture of **equity**, **trust**, and **collaboration**, **every** student will graduate ready for college, career, and life.

## Vision

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

## Guiding Principles

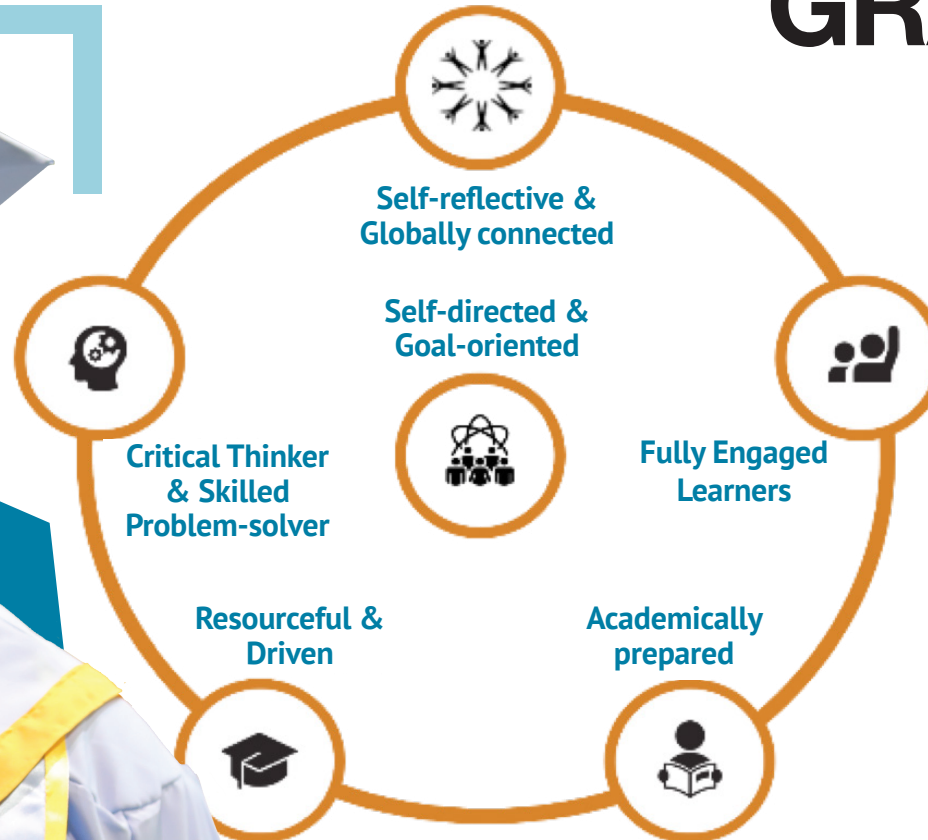
- **Equity** in our approach to decision-making
- **Ethics** to demonstrate our integrity
- **Engagement** with our school community
- **Excellence** in everything we do

## Core Values

1. Put students and schools first
2. Commit to teamwork
3. Focus on communication
4. Demonstrate respect for each other
5. Be accountable
6. Act with integrity
7. Embrace and drive change



# PROFILE OF A GRADUATE



Our vision for teaching and learning, exemplified by the characteristics of the APS Profile of a Graduate, is an exciting step toward preparing each student for their journey into the future, and preparing our staff to help guide the way. As we prepare each student to graduate ready for college, career, and life, APS will use this Portrait of a Graduate to further define the knowledge, skills, and mindsets expected of our graduates. We believe the profile characteristics are critical skills for engaged citizenship, successful career paths beyond high school, and meaningful community involvement. We are excited to explore how each of the profile characteristics will be demonstrated at different ages. ■





Washington High School, Class of 2019

**91** Schools  
+ Programs

**9**  
Clusters

**2,506**  
Class of 2019  
graduates

**52,416**  
Students  
2020 school year  
projection



South Atlanta High School

## Population

**Student**

- 72.9% African American
- 15.9% Caucasian
- 7.6% Hispanic
- 2.4% Multi-racial
- 1.3% Other

6

**16**  
GHSA  
Middle +  
High School  
Athletic  
Programs

**21,215**  
Bus miles traveled  
per day  
293 Total bus routes  
32,069 Students transported

**5,294**  
Total teachers  
3,217 Traditional  
2,077 Non-traditional

**74.4%**  
Students qualify  
for free or  
reduced lunch

Smith Elementary School



# ABOUT APS

Atlanta Public Schools is one of the largest districts in Georgia, serving more than 52,000 students throughout Atlanta. APS is organized into nine high school feeder patterns. The cluster model allows all students from the cluster elementary schools to matriculate to the same middle and high school. The cluster model ensures continuity for students from kindergarten through grade 12 and enables all students to have access to music, arts, foreign language and core academic programs. The cluster model also provides opportunities for curriculum alignment, college and career programming (i.e. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM), International Baccalaureate (IB) and College & Career Prep) as well as strategies focused on student achievement. ■

# 3

## Primary Areas Requiring Our Focus:

### Graduation

**75.5%**

Graduation Rate  
Black Students (2019)

**80%**

Graduation Rate  
Latino Students (2019)

**93.4%**

Graduation Rate  
White Students (2019)

**56.6%**

Graduation Rate  
Students With  
Disabilities (2019)

### Math

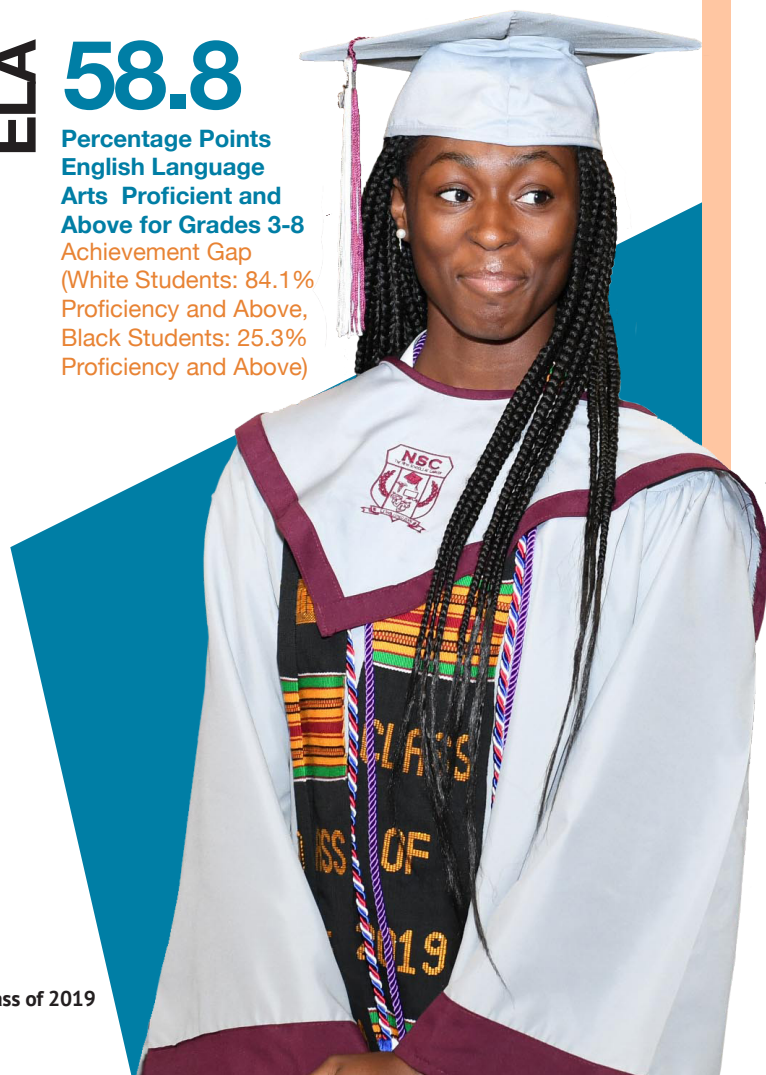
**76%**

8th Grade APS  
Students  
Not Proficient or  
Above in Math

### ELA

**58.8**

Percentage Points  
English Language  
Arts Proficient and  
Above for Grades 3-8  
Achievement Gap  
(White Students: 84.1%  
Proficiency and Above,  
Black Students: 25.3%  
Proficiency and Above)



## LOOKING AHEAD

APS has made improvements over the past five years that speak to the tremendous hard work, commitment, and growth across our schools. APS has achieved its highest gains to date in the percentage of students who scored proficient and above across all subjects on the 2019 Georgia Milestones End-of-Grade and End-of-Course Assessments. On all 24 assessments of the Milestones tests, about a third of our students scored proficient or better. More students – 2,506 of them – graduated on-time from APS in 2019 than any other year since 2012. All 17 APS schools that received targeted or partnership support as part of the initial cohort of the APS Turnaround Strategy have improved their Milestones proficiency rates since 2016. These outcomes are the result of a focus on strengthening our students, schools, staff, and system over the last five years.

We are proud of these achievements, and we recognize that access to opportunity and excellence has not been equitably accessible in our district. As we made these gains, we also maintained persistent academic gaps. Our district cannot celebrate excellence until it can be accessed equitably by all. We are committed, as an APS family, to focus on the gaps in college and career readiness between students groups across our district. ■

# EQUITY

Equity is at the core of the 2020-2025 strategic plan and will guide our work as a school system. The Atlanta Board of Education recognizes equity means the quality or ideal of being just and fair, regardless of economic, social, cultural, and human differences among and between persons. We believe that achieving equity requires strategic decision-making to remedy opportunity and learning gaps and create a barrier-free environment, which enables all students to graduate ready for college, career, and life. The aim of equity is to provide students with additional and differentiated resources based on their educational needs.



Carver Early College High School



APS Special Olympics

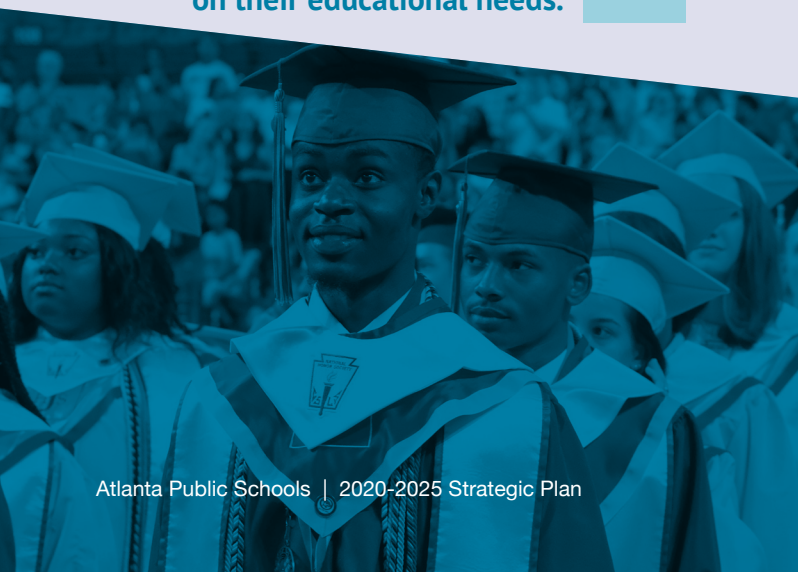
We understand that achieving educational equity will require changes in how the district fundamentally operates so all students may have access to the opportunities and resources they need to achieve their full potential. Over the years, the district has taken a number of approaches to address pockets of inequities in the system. These initial efforts have included developing more equitable funding distribution strategies, strengthening the teacher workforce, and fostering inclusive policies and practices that validate the diverse backgrounds and identities of students.

To support our ongoing efforts to overcome educational inequities at scale within the district, the Atlanta Board of Education, working in collaboration with the community and the administration, has developed an APS Equity Policy to serve as a guiding document.

District leaders and staff will use this policy as a lens to become more effective in practices, operations,

and actions. Outlined here are our equity commitments that speak to several focus areas we believe are instrumental to creating a more equitable school system. This framework does not identify every opportunity to advance equity but highlights areas in which the board and district leadership will focus their efforts. These commitments identify the most pressing concerns and greatest opportunities and create a framework for an equity plan that allows efforts toward educational equity to be implemented, monitored, modified, and measured over the course of the strategic plan.

It is not feasible or realistic for us to implement all of these commitments at one time. In order to lead with equity, we must plan, develop, and implement a multifaceted strategic approach that is phased over time. Throughout the course of the 2020-2025 strategic plan, we shall develop a separate and detailed equity plan to support the district's new equity policy. ■



Jackson High School, Class of 2019



Dobbs Elementary School



# EQUITY COMMITMENTS



Burgess-Peterson Academy

Inman Middle School



## Leveraging School Improvement to Advance Equity

We commit to integrating school improvement efforts with effective strategies and interventions to help ensure that all students can reach their full potential.



## Ensuring Equitable Funding

We commit to ensuring available funds are distributed equitably and appropriately to provide high-quality programming for all students and close resource gaps.



## Increasing Access to Effective Leaders and Teachers

We commit to ensuring all students have access to high-quality leaders and teachers, with a priority on the students with the greatest need.



## Partnering with Families and Communities

We commit to partnering respectfully and collaboratively with families and communities to address the needs of all students.



## Supporting Special Populations

We commit to implementing targeted strategies to prioritize support for special populations such as English learners, students with disabilities, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students.



## Increasing Access to Advanced Coursework

We commit to increasing access to advanced coursework for historically disadvantaged student groups.



## Addressing Disproportionate Discipline Practices

We commit to promote equity in disciplinary practices to avoid disproportionate enforcement or punishment targeting any specific student group.



## Integrating Social, Emotional, and Academic Practices

We commit to a comprehensive approach to addressing students' social, emotional, and academic development in order to meet the various needs of all students.



## Improving Access to High-Quality Instructional Programming and Materials

We commit to using effective instructional materials in all classrooms so that all students have access to high-quality curricula and robust signature programming.



## Expanding Access to Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular Activities

We commit to expanding access to co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to historically disadvantaged student groups according to their interests.



## Ensuring Equitable Learning Environments

We commit to providing safe, welcoming, and engaging learning environments for all students.

**Promoting a culture of equity: We commit to creating a culture of equity-minded individuals**

# THEORY OF ACTION

A theory of action is a statement that outlines an organization's belief and assumptions in what will lead to long term success and change. The statement articulates how an organization will move from its current state to its desired future state.

## If We ...

Provide clear information and data on student, school, and district performance to support transparent and equitable decision-making

+

Empower and equip schools to set goals and priorities to continually improve performance

+

Engage stakeholders, identify success, and commit to timelines and effective support strategies

## Then We ...

Assess progress and act with urgency to adjust strategies when schools are chronically under-performing

## So That ...

Every student will attain the skills, knowledge, and tools to succeed in college, career, and life

"I have a clear understanding of what defines a high-quality school and how my school is performing."

"My school is able to address the unique needs of students and the community."

"My school has a clear plan and the support it needs from the district and the community."

"If my school does not improve over time, district leadership will engage communities to make decisions in the best interest of students."

"My school is preparing every student for success."



Without clear measures of success, we will not know if we are successful in graduating students ready for college, career, and life. These strategic goals provide us indicators we can use to better understand where to focus attention. If we implement our strategy with fidelity, we should see positive results in increasing the percentage and closing the gaps in each of these strategic goals.

# STRATEGIC GOALS



Smith Elementary School

Increase the Percentage  
& Close the Gaps  
of students  
proficient or  
above in  
English  
Language Arts



Coretta Scott King YWLA

Increase the Percentage  
& Close the Gaps  
of 8th grade  
students  
proficient or  
above in math



Carver Early College High School

Increase the Percentage  
& Close the Gaps  
of students'  
scores  
improving on  
the SAT/ACT



Therrell High School, Class of 2019

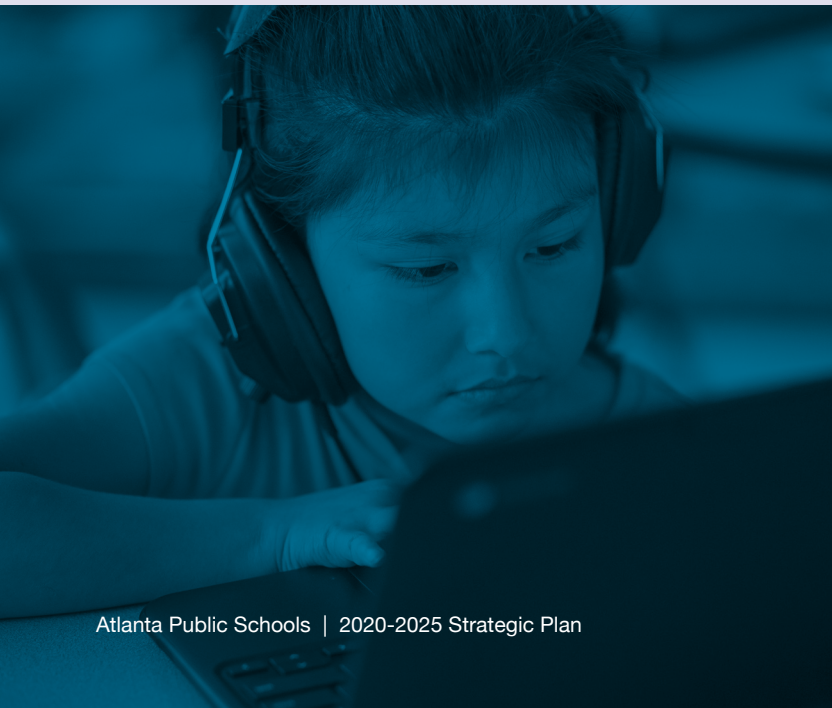
Increase the Percentage  
& Close the Gaps  
of students  
graduating



# APS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2020-2025

APS is focused on four key priorities. The following pages communicate APS' five year strategy, highlighting the strategic priorities, objectives and work streams we will pursue to close the gap between current and desired performance. All components work together to ultimately achieve our mission and vision.

12



Garden Hills Elementary School

1

## We are fostering academic excellence for all

We are closing the gaps in access that have disparate outcomes. We are identifying and addressing the needs of each student, regardless of background, so they have the skills, knowledge, and tools to succeed in college, career, and life.

2

## We are building a culture of student support

Students are attending schools and learning in classrooms that bring a sense of belonging, inclusiveness, care, joy, safety, and collaboration. The student-centered culture fosters being a part of something bigger than oneself, which leads to a sense of responsibility and encourages the well-being and development of each student.

3

## We are equipping and empowering leaders and staff

We are rallying teachers, staff, volunteers, families, and community members to create a cohesive coalition of support for each student, investing in his/her/their success. We are working together to enthusiastically champion each child, PK-12, through their academic journey at APS.

4

## We are creating a system of support for schools

With a focus on capacity-building and growth, every staff member is given the training, support, coaching, and advocacy needed to build their skills and raise the bar for excellence. By providing staff with resources and autonomy, schools are better positioned to address the needs of their students and their community.

## Mission

Through a caring culture of **equity, trust, and collaboration**, every student will graduate ready for college, career, and life.

## Vision

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

### Increase the Percentage and Close the Gaps

English Language Arts | Math | SAT/ACT | Graduation

# 1

**We are fostering academic excellence for all**

- Expand the impact of schools that are closing racial and socio-economic achievement gaps by sharing best practices and implementing program elements that have led to their success
- Focus on PK-12 literacy and mathematics
- Equip students for college and career readiness across the PK-12 continuum (eg. signature programming, advanced coursework, pathways)

# 2

**We are building a culture of student support**

- Provide services to address the social, emotional, mental, and behavioral well-being of all students (e.g. wraparound supports, SEL)
- Equitably increase opportunities and participation in enrichment (core and extended core) and holistic development based on individual student interest
- Invest in evidence-based 21st Century school learning environments, while monitoring implementation and effectiveness
- Promote environments that value inclusiveness and collaboration (e.g. students with disabilities, English learners)

# 3

**We are equipping and empowering leaders and staff**

- Attract, grow, support, and retain the highest quality leaders, teachers and staff
- Promote adult mindsets that positively impact the pursuit of equity and fairness
- Partner with families and our community to include business and non-profit organizations to support all schools
- Provide services to improve the engagement and overall well-being of all staff
- Create opportunities for outstanding staff to stay in APS and expand their reach through additional leadership roles

# 4

**We are creating a system of support for schools**

- Continually improve service and support to schools
- Adopt an equity-minded timeline for effective support and intervention strategies in each school based on school needs
- Enable school-level autonomy for all schools
- Set goals to equitably distribute and maximize resources to schools

# APS STRATEGY

## 1 We are fostering academic excellence for all

### Strategic Objectives

- Expand the impact of schools that are closing racial and socio-economic achievement gaps by sharing best practices and implementing program elements that have led to their success
- Focus on PK-12 literacy and mathematics
- Equip students for college and career readiness across the PK-12 continuum (eg. signature programming, advanced coursework, pathways)

### Strategic Work Streams

- Curricular and Instructional Programming With Aligned Professional Learning
- Non-Proficient Learner Targeted Support
- College and Career Readiness Programming (e.g. Signature Programs, College and Career Academy)
- Early Learning

## 2 We are building a culture of student support

### Strategic Objectives

- Provide services to address the social, emotional, mental, and behavioral well-being of all students (e.g. wraparound supports, SEL)
- Equitably increase opportunities and participation in enrichment (core and extended core) and holistic development based on individual student interest
- Invest in evidence-based 21st Century school learning environments, while monitoring implementation and effectiveness
- Promote environments that value inclusiveness and collaboration (e.g. students with disabilities, English learners)

### Strategic Work Streams

- Comprehensive Framework for Whole Child Support
- Enrichment and Holistic Development Expansion Plan
- English Language Learners (ELL) and Students with Disabilities (SWD) Professional Learning



Deerwood Academy





### **3 We are equipping and empowering leaders and staff**

#### **Strategic Objectives**

- Attract, grow, support, and retain the highest quality leaders, teachers and staff
- Promote adult mindsets that positively impact the pursuit of equity and fairness
- Partner with families and our community to include business and non-profit organizations to support all schools
- Provide services to improve the engagement and overall well-being of all staff
- Create opportunities for outstanding staff to stay in APS and expand their reach through additional leadership roles

#### **Strategic Work Streams**

- District-wide Equity Plan
- High-quality Staff Recruitment and Retention
- Families and Community Support
- Non-instructional Staff Development



### **4 We are creating a system of support for schools**

#### **Strategic Objectives**

- Continually improve service and support to schools
- Adopt an equity-minded timeline for effective support and intervention strategies in each school based on school needs
- Enable school-level autonomy for all schools
- Set goals to equitably distribute and maximize resources to schools

#### **Strategic Work Streams**

- District-wide Processes and Systems Improvement
- Roadmap and Framework for Autonomy and Flexibility
- District Support for School Improvement

## Atlanta Public Schools

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Superintendent

**Jerod Bishop**  
Chief of Staff

**Lisa Bracken**  
Chief Financial Officer

**Yolanda Brown**  
Chief of Academics

**Skye Duckett**  
Chief Human Resources Officer

**Nina Gupta**  
General Counsel

**Larry Hoskins**  
Chief Operating Officer

**Angela King Smith**  
Chief Engagement Officer

**Anita Williams**  
Chief of Schools

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