

## Overview

In October 2015, Atlanta Public Schools (APS) announced a district-wide strategy focused on investing in and turning around some of our most challenged schools. This plan, developed with input from the community, details the strategies needed to ensure that all students have a high-quality educational experience with APS (Appendix A: Turnaround Strategy). As part of this strategy, three recommendations for operating model changes were approved that impact school usage and programming. These school closures and consolidations were recommended with the following considerations: 1) schools with inadequate performance, 2) low enrollment relative to the capacity of the building, 3) facilities in need of significant renovations, and 4) the performance of neighboring schools (Appendix B: Rationale). The following actions were approved in support of the turnaround plan:

- Closure of Bethune Elementary School and opening of a new PK-8 STEM Academy at the former Kennedy Middle School site
- Merger of Connally Elementary School and Venetian Hills Elementary School
- Merger of Grove Park Intermediate Elementary School and Woodson Primary Elementary School

The decision to close a school is one of the most difficult and emotionally charged experiences for students, staff, and impacted communities. APS understands that a decision to close a school should be made as timely as possible and above all else this process must have integrity, meaning:

- Parents/students understand impacts of the closure/merger and are able to evaluate their school choice options
- A comprehensive community involvement strategy is effectively planned and executed
- Cross-functional staff collaborate to develop, communicate, and implement the transition plan
- Efforts are in place to ensure the transfer of students is a positive experience
- Reallocation of resources and staff fully supports student learning and the academic program
- Financial impacts of the school closure – additional costs and savings – are considered

With these goals in mind, this transition plan is designed to serve as a blueprint for the Superintendent's closure of Bethune Elementary School; merger of Connally Elementary School and Venetian Hills Elementary School; merger of Grove Park Intermediate Elementary School and Woodson Primary Elementary School (now named Woodson Park Academy); and the opening of the new PK-8 STEM Academy (now named the Michael R. Hollis Innovation Academy) at the former Kennedy Middle School site.

# School Mergers/Closures/Launch Transition Plan

The plan highlights the core responsibilities of key support areas across the district — Office of the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent, Schools Office, Academic Office, Finance, Human Resources, Accountability and Information, and Operations — which are essential for success. Additionally, this plan is supplemented by a project schedule of tasks that will help facilitate a smooth transition in approximately three (3) months.

This transition plan and the supplemental checklist of detailed tasks should be considered “living” documents that are regularly reviewed and updated based on newly-identified responsibilities encountered during the school closure and merger process. Following this process, there will be an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned for continuous improvement.

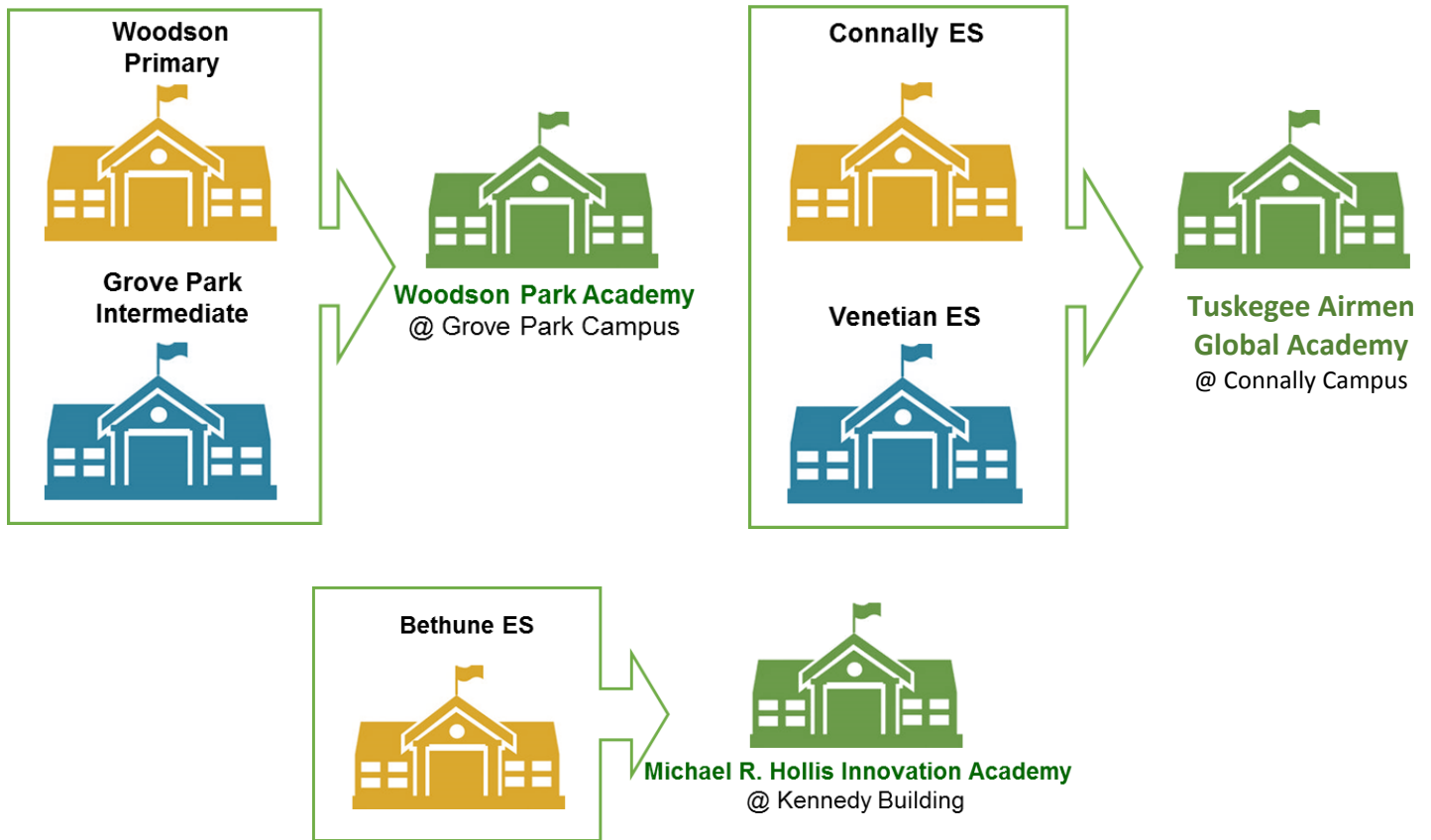
## Proposal Summary

The following is a table and a graphic illustrating the transitions:

*Table 1: Three Operating Model Changes*

Cluster	Recommendation	Notes
1 Washington	<b>Close Bethune ES and open a new K-8 STEM academy at Kennedy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bethune has 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest 3-year CCRPI average in district (42.1); strong desire to leverage Kennedy facility in Washington community</li> <li>- Closure provides opportunity to reset and launch new innovative academy, providing capacity for anticipated enrollment growth connected to Westside development</li> <li>- \$3M facility improvements would be completed over summer of 2016 allowing for August 2016 start of new academy; \$10M to be included in SPLOST 2017 budget for larger scale renovations</li> </ul>
2 Washington	<b>Merge Connally ES with Venetian Hills ES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connally is tied for 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest 3-year CCRPI average in district (46.5) while Venetian's 2014 CCRPI was 76.8</li> <li>- Both schools are significantly under-enrolled and in need of renovations</li> <li>- Recommend opening merged school in Connally facility (following facility improvements over summer of 2016); \$23.5M in renovations planned for 2017 SPLOST</li> <li>- Potentially use Venetian site for early childhood center</li> </ul>
3 Douglass	<b>Merge Grove Park Intermediate with Woodson Primary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grove Park ES is tied for 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest 3-year CCRPI average in district (46.5) while Woodson's 2014 CCRPI was 83.2</li> <li>- K-2/3-5 split has no real strategy and does not support coherence</li> <li>- Both schools are significantly under-enrolled and in need of renovations</li> <li>- Recommend opening merged school in Grove Park facility</li> <li>- \$18.5M in renovations planned for 2017 SPLOST</li> <li>- Potentially use Woodson facility for early childhood center</li> </ul>

Figure 1: Three Operating Model Transition Graphic



## Core Responsibilities

**Offices of the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent** are responsible for leading the turnaround strategy and transition efforts. The offices are also responsible for the development and implementation of a robust communications and engagement plan that outlines how students, parents, and the community will stay informed about the transitions. Another major responsibility of the team is facilitating the community involvement process, which will involve soliciting input from a variety of internal and external constituents. This work has already started and will become increasingly important as APS continues to execute the Turnaround Strategy.

**Schools Office (CSO)** and **Academics Office (CAO)** will work closely to support principals through the transition of each school to ensure effective instruction and learning continues throughout the school closure process. Within CSO and CAO, various departments, such as Teaching & Learning, Special Education, Student Supports, Student Placement & Discipline, Title I, and others will collaborate to address instructional needs for the combined and new schools. The CSO and CAO will work with the principal to determine course offerings, develop the master schedule, secure textbooks, and ensure students in the combined and new schools have the supports they need to achieve academically. At

the school-level, the Associate Superintendent and principals of merged and new schools will be responsible for managing the responsibilities of the school closure and relocation process. With support from the central office, principals will develop a relocation work plan that continues to maximize students' instructional time, while ensuring that materials and supplies are packed and ready to be moved within the established timeline.

**Finance** will identify funding sources to cover costs associated with executing the transitions. Additionally, Finance will perform account close-out responsibilities for each impacted school to ensure that there is an accurate accounting of fixed assets the closing schools and an appropriate transfer and inventory of fixed assets that will be relocated to the receiving schools. Prior to the design phase for renovating campuses, Finance will also identify SPLOST funding for the project and establish accounts to track expenditures related to the renovations.

**Human Resources (HR)** will facilitate employee transitions, as appropriate, for staff who are impacted by the school closures and mergers. HR will also work closely with the Associate Superintendent and the principals of the impacted schools to provide staffing support and guidance throughout the transition, which will include: attending school faculty meetings to update impacted staff; sharing employment guidance based on short- and long-term staffing needs; executing the abolishment plan for impacted staff; and supporting the principals through recruitment of staff to ensure all staff are in place for teaching and learning to begin at the start of the school year.

**Accountability & Information** will provide project management oversight and serve as the primary contact between departments. A dedicated project manager will coordinate cross-functional collaboration and planning, document progress of the project team, and monitor the project schedule to ensure that tasks stay on track for timely completion. Additionally, this team will identify potential challenges and derive solutions with a cross-functional team, provide project management expertise, and help with managing internal stakeholder communications regarding the status of the work. In addition, the office will partner with school leadership to coordinate all technology-related school closure tasks, including: assessing IT equipment and lab needs, implementing an IT change control process to ensure successful migrations from current to destination school sites, purging obsolete software/hardware equipment prior to the move, performing functionality testing of instructional and administrative technology equipment, and reallocating IT resources based on enrollment priorities.

**Operations** will serve an integral role in coordinating the physical relocations of impacted schools and ensuring the combined and new school operates efficiently across four (4) key departments: Facilities, Nutrition, Safety & Security, and Transportation.

**Facilities** will primarily oversee all move coordination and building maintenance activities. These responsibilities include: physical moves, facility inspections/repairs, custodial services and cleaning, grounds-keeping/landscaping needs, securing the school campus, and re-distribution of building assets as appropriate. Several teams within Facilities Services will engage at different stages of the school closure and merger process to ensure maintenance, relocation, property management, and ultimately, construction/capital improvement needs are met during the renovations.

**Nutrition** will manage the transfer of food and supplies to proper storage units until the receiving sites are ready for occupancy. The Nutrition department will also meet with the relocation teams to coordinate moving kitchen equipment, providing equipment for temporary kitchens, and repairing/maintaining all kitchen equipment, as needed, to deliver a quality food service program for students at the start of the school year.

**Safety & Security** will maintain building security and the integrity of security systems throughout the school closure and merger process. The team will ensure physical monitoring is in place. Additionally, to protect the district's people, property, and assets, virtual network connectivity for safety and security devices will be operational.

**Transportation** will evaluate needs and options for school bus transportation to serve the combined and new schools. The team will plan bus routes, stops, and schedules for the newly created school attendance zone boundary map resulting from the closure. As appropriate, the team will also coordinate parent school bus transportation to ensure that parents are familiar with the bus routes.

## Transition Planning Teams

One of the first steps in the process of a physical closure of a school is to convene transition planning teams to guide the work of the district and the community. The following four (4) teams will be in place to manage the closure, mergers, and launches of the new schools.

Figure 2: Support Teams and Committees



**District Steering Committee** – This team will foster a meaningful exchange of ideas and feedback between the internal and community-based stakeholders. Comprised of district-level staff, this team supports each principal with vision-setting and action planning and makes final decisions and approvals.

*Figure 3: District Steering Committee*



## **District Steering Committee**

- Supports principal with vision-setting and action planning
- Makes final decisions and approvals

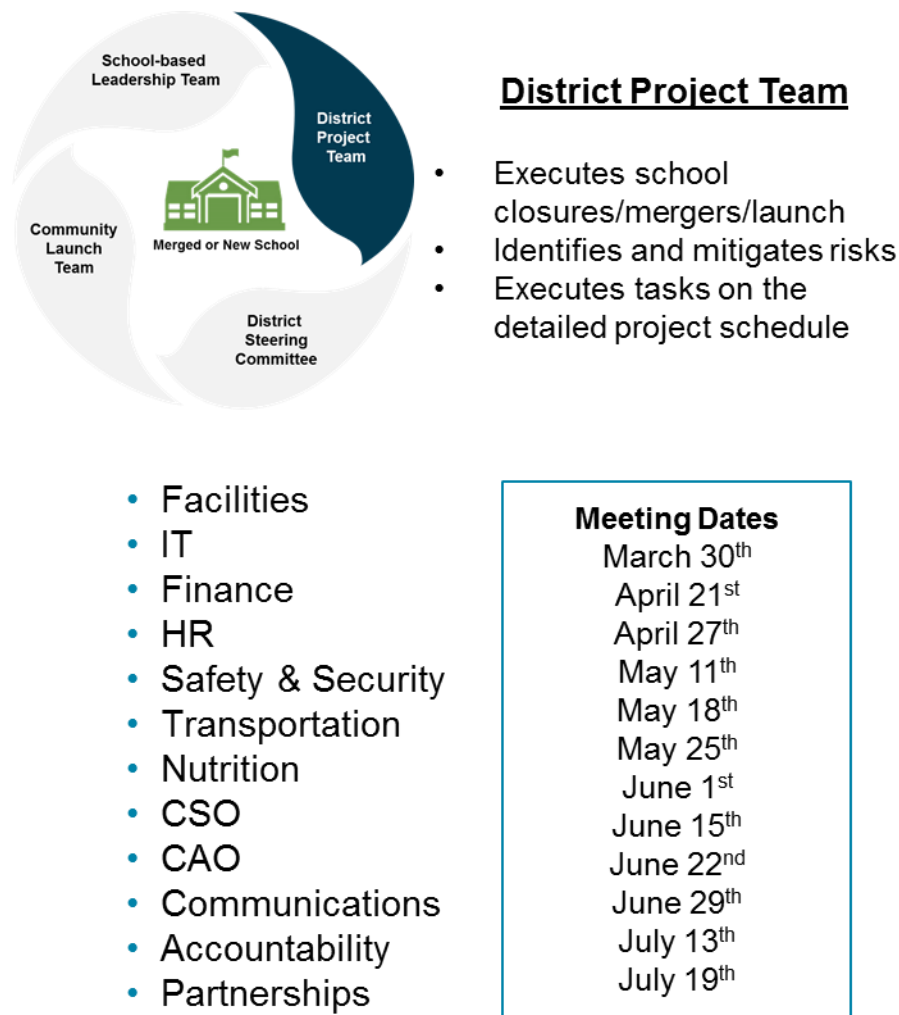
- Lincoln Wood, Principal
- Susan Crim-McClendon, Principal
- Diamond Jack, Principal
- Angela Smith, Special Assistant
- Raynise Smith, Executive Director, School Turnaround
- Latisha Gray, Director, Communications
- Brene' Bradley, STEM Coordinator
- Aleigha Henderson-Rosser, Executive Director, Instructional Technology
- Emily Massey, Associate Superintendent
- Gyimah Whitaker, Assistant Superintendent
- Skye Duckett, Deputy HR
- Elwood Duckworth, Special Assistant, Operations
- Wanda McClure, Expeditionary Learning (PK-8 only)
- Chris Purdy, Student Services

### **Meeting Dates**

March 25<sup>th</sup>  
April 12<sup>th</sup>  
May 10<sup>th</sup>  
June 14<sup>th</sup>  
July 12<sup>th</sup>

**District Project Team** – This team will execute the school closures, mergers, and launches of the new schools. They will identify and mitigate risks (Appendix C: Risks) and execute the tasks on the detailed project schedules.

Figure 4: District Project Team



**Community Launch Team** – This team, composed of school leadership, parents, local community stakeholders, and partners will have the opportunity to provide feedback on important decisions. These teams will build partnerships with key stakeholders; engage the larger community; connect resources; and help ensure a seamless transition for students, parents and staff.

**School-based Leadership Team** – This team handles the day-to-day operations of the school's transition.



## ***School Name & State Code***

With multiple schools closing, three new school names and codes will be identified. The school renaming process is led by the following appointed board members:

- PK – 8 STEM Academy - Board Member Byron Amos
- Venetian/Connally – co-chaired by Board Members Eshe' Collins and Steven Lee
- Woodson/Grove Park – Board Member Steven Lee

At the May 2, 2016 Board Meeting, the board approved the name Woodson Park Academy for the newly merged Woodson/Grove Park Schools and the Michael R. Hollis Innovation Academy for the new PK-8 STEM Academy. The new name for the Venetian/Connally merger is currently being considered. We are currently working with the state to obtain the new state codes for these schools.

## ***Transition Activities (Spring & Summer)***

### ***Student Engagement***

Several activities will be planned to support a successful transition for the students, their families, and the neighborhoods. Currently, the principals are working to develop activities focused on teamwork and culture-building activities for students and families from impacted communities.

### ***Staff Engagement***

Throughout this school closure process, APS must consider ways to ensure staff feel appreciated, as they play a central role in setting the tone for the culture of the combined school community. Each of the principals have begun planning staff engagement activities that will take place throughout the summer. The activities will include building and sharing the vision, providing opportunities for team and culture-building, and instructional planning and preparation for the upcoming school year.

### ***Community Engagement***

Community Engagement is essential to the success of these closures, mergers, and launches. The district is facilitating a broad community engagement strategy to support each of our school's transitions. A community engagement plan has been developed to support a smooth transition process, and community engagement meetings will begin the week of May 9<sup>th</sup>. In addition, School Transition Teams, comprised of parents, students, business partners and community members, will be established to support the design and delivery of four community-wide meetings for the merging schools. Parent and student representatives from each school will also be trained to co-facilitate the meetings and organize 3-5 parent-hosted small meetings to increase family engagement and identify and address potential challenges. Two student meetings and fall transition meetings will be conducted



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at the new schools to ensure smooth transitions for students. Once schools have merged, two follow-up transition meetings will be conducted at the new schools to ensure a smooth transition. Below are the dates of the first community meetings.

*Figure 5: Community Meetings for Transition Schools*

Date	School Community Meeting	Location
May 10	Woodson Park Academy*	Woodson Primary 1605 Donald Lee Hollowell Pkwy
May 12	Connally/Venetian	Connally ES 1654 S Alvarado Ter SW
May 17	Michael R. Hollis Innovation Academy*	Kennedy Building 225 James P Brawley Dr NW

### Staffing Plan

APS' immediate goal for the combined and new schools is to hire the instructional and non-instructional staff needed to ensure a successful Day One opening on August 3, 2016. Principals are currently interviewing staff and making their decisions to ensure that they meet this goal.

### Funding

APS has committed additional financial resources in FY16 and FY17 to each of the merged schools and the new PK-8 STEM Academy. These financial resources will help the principal augment existing staff and supplies to better support the transition.

### Student Support Services

Our Student Support Services team will ensure that all students who receive student support services are appropriately identified so that there will be no interruption to services for the upcoming school year.

### Student Records

Planning for the appropriate transfer of all student academic records is currently underway. School-based staff will assist in handling health, counseling, and social work records so that all pertinent files are intact and readily accessible.

## Safety & Security

Our Safety and Security team will work with our Facilities team to ensure that buildings are secured, once moves are complete.

## Transportation

A primary area of focus for Transportation staff will be utilizing residence information for students within the attendance zone boundary maps to begin planning: adequate bus driver/operator staffing, optimal bus stop route scheduling, and opportunities to perform practice runs before the start of the new school year.

## Technology

IT staff will work with school leadership to conduct walk-throughs of each site to inventory equipment, assess technology needs, tag obsolete resources, and coordinate the moves. IT will also engage in long-term planning for the future to ensure technology investments match the resources required to support the instructional program and design.

## Long-term Planning

A comprehensive plan is being developed for the use of building no longer serving as school sites. The below figure shows the current status.

Figure 6: Facility Status

 <p><b>Woodson Elementary Facility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing plan to use for early childhood center</li> <li>• In conversations with potential partner as part of a comprehensive early childhood strategy</li> <li>• Timeline is still TBD</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Venetian Hills Elementary Facility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing plan to use for early childhood center</li> <li>• In conversations with potential partner as part of a comprehensive early childhood strategy</li> <li>• Timeline is still TBD</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Bethune Elementary Facility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facility will be used as swing space while other construction projects are completed</li> <li>• Centennial Place Academy will use in the short-term as their middle school campus is designed and constructed</li> </ul>
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## Conclusion

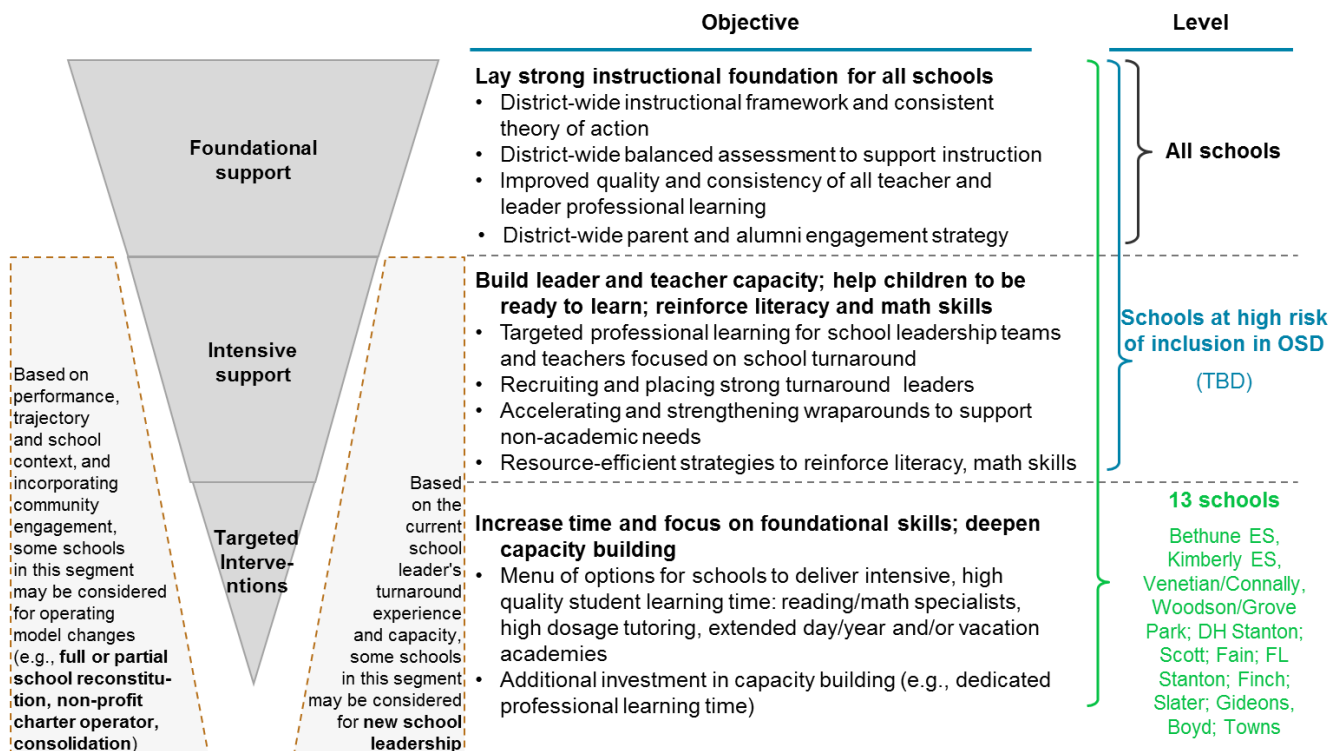
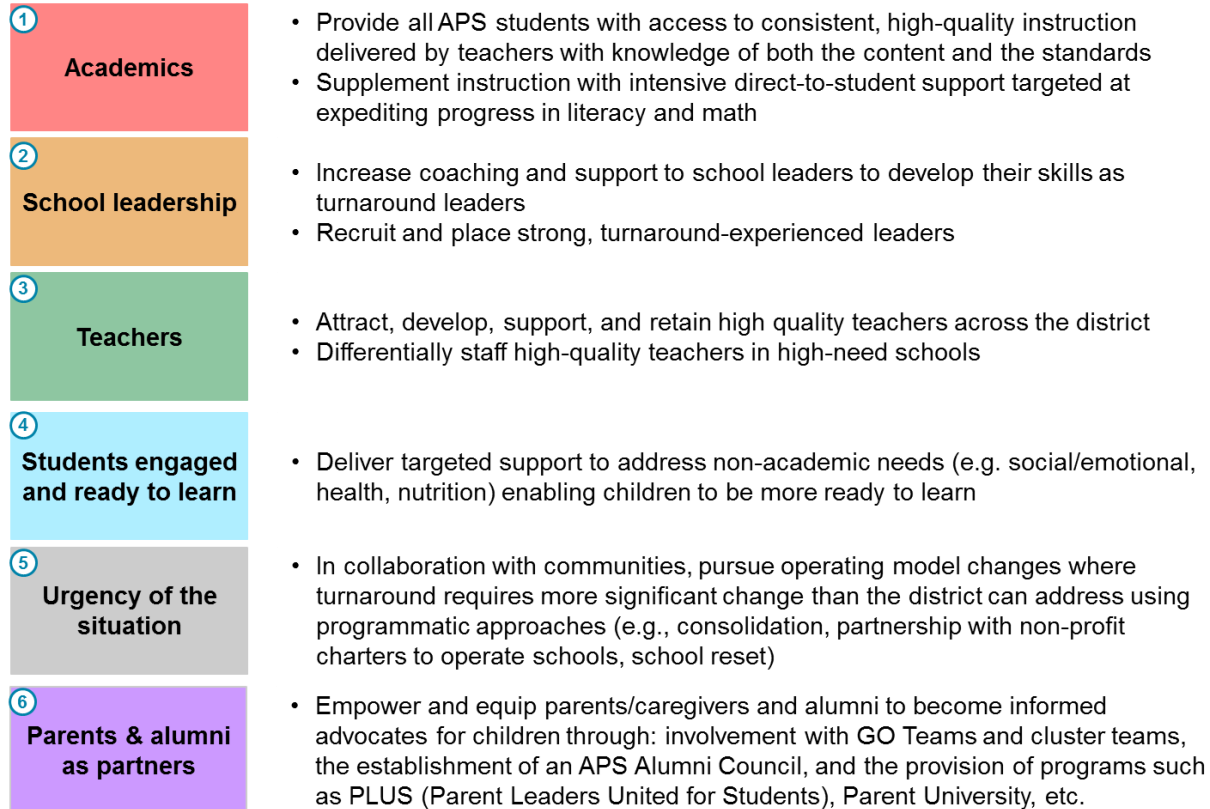
APS has created a plan to support the successful closure, merger, and launch of schools in the Washington and Douglass Clusters. This plan addresses the physical move of school resources, staff



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allocation, and student, staff and community engagement. Utilizing lessons learned from previous Atlanta Public School closures, the project team is working with school leaders to ensure that students' and families' needs are addressed prior to and after the move.

## APPENDIX A: Turnaround Strategy Overview



Note: D.H. Stanton ES has also been invited to participate in some targeted interventions, including high-dosage tutoring

## APPENDIX B: Rationale for Transitions

### **Recommendation 1: Merge Venetian with Connally and complete major renovation on the Connally site**

#### *Rationale*

- Connally is tied for third lowest 3-year CCRPI average in district (46.5) while Venetian Hill's 2014 CCRPI was 76.8.
- Both schools are significantly under-enrolled and in need of significant renovations.

#### *Advantages*

- Improved school facilities and learning environment
- Initial improvements over summer of 2016 and \$23.5M in renovations planned for 2017 SPLOST
- Access to robust STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) partnership with Morehouse School of Medicine
- Opportunity to add an asset within the community to address early childhood education needs (Early Childhood Center) at Venetian Hills campus
- The district will invest and provide students more support:
- Tutoring for students performing below grade level
- Reading and math specialists to work directly with students and teachers
- Access to resources to give students more instructional time
- Aggressive plan to avoid state takeover (Georgia Opportunity School District)
- Top teachers from both schools will be considered for hiring at newly merged school

### **Recommendation 2: Close Bethune ES and launch innovative PK-8 STEM Academy at former Kennedy MS site**

#### *Rationale*

- Bethune has second lowest 3-year CCRPI average in district (42.1); strong desire to leverage Kennedy facility in Washington community
- Closure provides opportunity to reset and launch new innovative academy, providing capacity for anticipated enrollment growth in community

#### *Advantages*

- Improved school facilities and a learning environment that includes signature program design of cluster (K-8)
- Initial improvements over summer of 2016 and \$10M in renovations planned for 2017 SPLOST
- Access to robust STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) partnerships (in early conversations with partners)
- Opportunity to engage community in designing and naming school
- The district will invest and provide students more support:
- Tutoring for students performing below grade level
- Reading and math specialists to work directly with students and teachers
- Access to resources to give students more instructional time
- Aggressive plan to avoid state takeover (Georgia Opportunity School District)
- Top teachers from both schools will be considered for hiring at newly merged school

## **Recommendation 3:**

### *Rationale*

- Grove Park's has the third lowest three-year CCRPI\* average (46.5) in the district.
- During the 2012 redistricting, Woodson Primary (Pre-K- 2) emerged to serve the same attendance zone as Grove Park.
- Grove Park and Woodson are both under enrolled and need renovations.

### *Advantages*

- All students will attend school together across grade levels. (Pre-K- 5th grade)
- Alignment of instructional programs including STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) program
- Improved school facilities and learning environment
- Early childhood learning center for the community at the Woodson campus.
- The district will invest and provide students more support:
- Tutoring for students performing below grade level
- Reading and math specialists to work directly with students and teachers
- Access to resources to give students more instructional time
- Aggressive plan to avoid state takeover (Georgia Opportunity School District)
- Top teachers from both schools will be considered for hiring at newly merged school

\*College and Career Readiness Performance Index

# School Mergers/Closures/Launch Transition Plan

## APPENDIX C: Risks

Risk	Schools Impacted	Description
School equipment bought with e-rate funds must be addressed separately	Connally ES; Venetian Hills ES; Grove Park Intermediate; Woodson Primary; Bethune ES; K-8 STEM	E-rate equipment is filed by school so each school will need to be addressed with where the equipment will ultimately land. There is a process in place with the E-rate program to address. The team will need to work with Randall sellers to understand timelines to move the equipment appropriately.
Name Change and School Code	Connally ES; Woodson Primary; K-8 STEM	Changing a school name and receiving a new school code is a requirement needed before many other tasks can start
Title I Budget	Connally ES; Venetian Hills ES; Grove Park Intermediate; Woodson Primary; Bethune ES; K-8 STEM	When should the school stop spending Title I funds and turn things over to the new administration?
Title I Inventory	Connally ES; Venetian Hills ES; Grove Park Intermediate; Woodson Primary; Bethune ES	How will Title I inventory be catalogued and moved to the appropriate school? Does it follow the student?
Moving of Materials	Connally ES; Venetian Hills ES; Grove Park Intermediate; Woodson Primary; Bethune ES	Instructional materials should be inventoried, purged, and packed before teachers leave. Materials should be identified with the final location. Obsolete materials should not be moved to new schools.
Merging accounts	Venetian Hills ES; Woodson Primary; Bethune ES	Merging schools require the merging of SABO accounts. Transition funds need to be allocated. Outstanding invoices should be paid.
Parking issues	Connally ES	Not enough parking for new # of employees
Technology Safe Room	K-8 STEM	With the addition of donated and purchased technology, what safe room and security procedures are put into place?
Information Technology Space	Connally ES; Grove Park Intermediate; K-8 STEM	Where will funding for labor and hardware come from? What space is available for computer labs and in-classroom computers?
Cross-functional Communication	Connally ES; Venetian Hills ES; Grove Park Intermediate; Woodson Primary; Bethune ES; K-8 STEM	Proper and on-time communication between departments is critical
Vandalism	Connally ES; Grove Park Intermediate; K-8 STEM	Preventing vandalism on closing, merging, and new schools
Summer Schedule	Connally ES; Venetian Hills ES; Grove Park Intermediate; Woodson Primary; Bethune ES; K-8 STEM	Four-day work week and 4th of July week will reduce the time during the summer needed for these moves.
Activities in the Buildings	Connally ES; Woodson Primary; K-8 STEM	Engagement activities and other programs taking place in the buildings causing delays in work taking place.





## **School Mergers/Closures/Launch Transition Plan**

### **APPENDIX D: Project Task List for School Closures/Mergers**

Please see attached project task lists.