MATHEMATICA Policy Research

REPORT

FINAL

Implementation Findings from Year 2 of the Atlanta Public Schools' Turnaround Strategy Evaluation

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I. STUDY BACKGROUND AND DATA SOURCES

A. Study background

The Atlanta Public Schools' (APS) Turnaround Strategy seeks to transform the district's lowest-performing schools and increase students' achievement. To promote the transformation of these schools, the Turnaround Strategy provides three levels of supports: foundational supports for 27 turnaround schools, more intensive supports for 6 schools that show greater needs, and additional targeted supports for 13 schools that demonstrate the highest needs. These 13 schools, referred to as targeted schools, receive resources for implementing academic and nonacademic supports. In addition to schools that receive foundational, intensive, and targeted supports, the Turnaround Strategy includes schools whose daily operations are overseen and managed by two partner organizations: Kindezi and Purpose Built Schools (PBS).

APS contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to better understand how schools implement the Turnaround Strategy and of the effectiveness of the Strategy on students' academic and behavioral outcomes. Mathematica's evaluation team submitted the first annual report to APS in October 2017. It included implementation findings for the first year of the Turnaround Strategy (2016–2017) and results from impact analyses of two of the Strategy's components: High Impact Tutoring and the PBS partnership with Thomasville Heights Elementary School.

This report is the first part of the second annual report on the Turnaround Strategy. For the 2017–2018 school year, the report presents the implementation findings on (1) the academic and nonacademic supports received by the 13 targeted schools and (2) the four Kindezi and PBS partner schools. The report concludes with a short synthesis of the key implementation findings. In fall 2018, we will submit the second part of the annual report, which will include estimates of the impacts of targeted and partner schools on student outcomes.

B. Data sources

In spring 2018, we conducted site visits to the 13 targeted schools, the Kindezi partner school, and the three PBS partner schools. The data sources for the implementation analysis included semi-structured interviews and focus groups with principals, teachers, and other school staff at targeted schools and at Kindezi or PBS partner schools (Table 1). We defined a focus group as any interview that included more than one respondent.

Table 1. Number and types of respondents in year 2 of the evaluation of the APS Turnaround Strategy

Respondent type	Individual interviews	Multiple respondent focus groups	Total number of respondents
Targeted schools (N=13)			
Principals and assistant principals[a]	11	2	16
Teachers	1	4	10
Practitioners			
Instructional coaches	5	4	13

Respondent type	Individual interviews	Multiple respondent focus groups	Total number of respondents
Tutors	2	1	4
Reading and math specialists	11	8	33
Paraprofessionals[b]	0	1	2
Student support practitioners[c]	5	1	7
Community In Schools (CIS) coordinators	3	0	3
Total	**38**	**21**	**88**
Partner schools (N=4)			
School leadership	1	2	5
Principals	2	2	4
Assistant principals	1	-	1
Deans	1	3	5
Teachers	1	8	25
Practitioners			
Academic practitioners[d]	-	7	9
Nonacademic practitioners[e]	1	2	7
Total	**7**	**24**	**56**

Source: March 2018 APS site visits.

[a]We interviewed school leaders at every targeted school. In two schools, we interviewed the assistant principal or the interim principal instead of the principal. In three schools, we interviewed assistant principals in addition to principals.

[b] [a]Only one school used paraprofessionals. In order to protect the confidentiality of respondents, we do not include their descriptions of paraprofessionals.

[c]The student support practitioners we interviewed included behavioral specialists, clinical therapists, counselors, and social workers.

[d]The academic practitioners we interviewed included special education lead teachers, reading and math specialists, instructional coaches, and after-school program staff.

[e]The nonacademic practitioners we interviewed included community engagement coordinators, Response to Intervention coordinators, family engagement specialists, community advocates, and therapists.

Interviews in all of the schools focused on the respondents' experiences with academic, nonacademic, instructional, and leadership supports. The team also asked respondents to share the successes they achieved and the challenges they encountered during the 2017–2018 school year and, if applicable, what changed since the 2016–2017 school year. We also asked staff to rate the extent to which they felt that the Strategy's components supported the turnaround of the school, as well as improvements in students' academic achievement, students' behavior, and/or teachers' instruction. The evaluation team averaged the ratings across schools to determine the degree to which staff perceived the Strategy's effectiveness in supporting school turnaround and other outcomes (see Appendix A for more methodological information).

II. TARGETED SCHOOLS' EXPERIENCES WITH THE TURNAROUND STRATEGY IN 2017–2018

In the second year of the Turnaround Strategy, targeted schools implemented key academic and nonacademic supports to promote learning. This section describes the findings on both types of supports. For each type, we describe the respondents' ratings and discuss their reports about the successes and challenges they experienced while implementing the supports. We conclude with the respondents' reports about the effectiveness of the overall Turnaround Strategy.

A. Implementation of academic supports

In spring 2017, APS asked principals in targeted schools to select, from eight options, the academic supports[1] they wanted to implement at their schools in the 2017–2018 school year: (1) reading and math specialists, (2) instructional coaches, (3) paraprofessionals[2], (4) tutoring, (5) an intervention block, (6) Saturday school, (7) an extended school day, and (8) Spring Break Academy. Principals reported that they examined five criteria holistically to ensure that they selected supports that balanced existing programs and addressed academic or nonacademic areas that needed attention. Key criteria that the principals considered included (1) the number of students targeted by the support, (2) students' needs, (3) data on students' academic achievement, (4) previous experiences with the supports, and (5) staff needs. All schools included one or two reading specialists, one or two math specialists, beween one to three instructional coaches, and a CIS coordinator. In addition, five schools included intervention blocks, two schools included Saturday school, and four schools included tutoring. Table 2 presents additional detail on the eight academic supports, including a description, whether the support provides additional instructional time or content area supports, and whether students or staff are the target recipients of the support.

[1] Principals selected academic supports according to a fixed budget provided byAPS. For example, funds that were allocated for high impact tutoring were made available to principals to use for academic supports other than high impact tutoring. For example, one school discontinued high impact tutoring from the first year of the Strategy and added an additional reading specialist, math specialist, and the intervention block in the second year (in addition to retaining a reading specialist, math specialist, two coaches, and the student support practitioner). Another school discontinued high impact tutoring from the first year and added paraprofessional support and an instructional coach (in addition to retaining a reading specialist, math specialist, two coaches, and he student support practitioner).

Table 2. Academic support options for targeted schools in the 2017–2018 school year

Academic support and number of targeted schools using the support	Description	Extended instructional hours	Reading or math support	Direct support to students	Direct support to staff
Additional specialists (reading or math)[a] (11 schools)	Targeted schools each received one reading and one math specialist. Schools that chose this support added one or more specialists to work with low-performing students (bottom 5–10 percent) on foundational reading using the *Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI),* or math skills using the *Do the Math* curricula and resources.		X	X	
Additional instructional coach (reading or math)[b] (1 school)	Targeted schools each received two instructional coaches through Title I funding. Schools that chose this support as part of the Strategy added one or more coaches to deliver instructional support to teachers through structured coaching cycles and professional learning opportunities.		X		X
Paraprofessionals[c] (1 school)	Paraprofessionals helped teachers to carry out their responsibilities, including classroom instruction, classroom management, and administrative tasks.		X	X	
Tutoring (4 schools)	Tutors worked with small groups of students on reading or math instruction by using iReady. Two schools included tutoring during the school day, one school included tutoring during school hours and afterschool, and another school included tutoring afterschool only. Schools had the option of using tutors from Hands on Atlanta or another vendor, or hiring their own tutors.		X	X	
Intervention block (6 schools)	Schools received resources to implement additional core academic instruction during the regular school day, on Saturdays, or during after-school hours. School leaders have discretion to make decisions about staff, students, and content.	X	X	X	
Saturday school (2 schools)[e]		X	X	X	
Extended day[f] (1 school)		X	X	X	
Spring break vacation academy (0 schools)	During spring break, students attended district-run programs that included reading, math, social studies, or science instruction and enrichment opportunities.	X	X	X	

Source: March 2018 APS site visits.

[a] 10 schools included 2 reading specialists and the remainder had 1 specialist. 9 schools included 2 math specialist and the remainder had 1 specialist.

[b] 1 school had one instructional coach, 10 schools had 2 instructional coaches, and 2 schools had 3 instructional coaches.

[c] The school with paraprofessionals had 8 paraprofessionals on staff.

[d] One school's Saturday school program was funded through Title I funds.

[e] One school added the extended day support in the middle of the school year.

1. Principals appreciated having the flexibility to select academic supports.

Principals stated overwhelmingly that having the flexibility to select academic supports allowed them to meet their schools' needs in the best way possible. Principals also appreciated being able to adjust supports as the school year progressed. For example, one principal initially selected Saturday school because of positive feedback about and high student attendance at, an informal, nondistrict-sponsored Saturday program conducted the previous year. However, after low student attendance in 2017–2018, the principal cancelled Saturday school and re-allocated funds to extended learning days. The principal explained that shifting to a different support helped the school to provide academic support to students while using the funding effectively.

Table 3 displays the average rating provided by respondents about the effectiveness of the academic supports at their schools. The rating scale went from 1 to 4, where 1 is "not at all effective," 2 is "somewhat effective," 3 is "moderately effective," and 4 is "very effective." On average, respondents stated that the academic supports were either moderately or very effective for supporting student achievement. Reading and math specialists were perceived as a very effective support (average rating of 3.5), and Saturday school was perceived only as a somewhat effective support (average rating of 2.3). The following sections describe the respondents' perceptions about each academic support in detail.

Table 3. Staff perceptions of the effectiveness of academic supports in targeted schools

Academic support[a]	Number of schools[b]	Effectiveness in supporting student academic achievement	Number of respondents[c]
Reading and math specialists	13	3.5	81
Instructional coaches	13	3.4[d]	33
Tutoring	4	3.1	24
Saturday school	2	2.3	5
Intervention blocks	6	3.4	18

Source: March 2018 APS site visits.

Note: Respondents provided ratings on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is "not at all effective," 2 is "somewhat effective," 3 is "moderately effective," and 4 is "very effective." See Appendix A for detailed information on the data analysis methodology. We did not ask schools to rate spring break vacation academy because no targeted schools selected this support. We also did not ask the school that added the extended day support in the middle of the school year to rate that support.

[a]Only one school included paraprofessionals. Respondents from that school rated paraprofessionals' effectiveness in supporting students' academic achievement, but the ratings are not included in this report to protect the confidentiality of the respondents.

[b]The number of schools refers to the number of targeted schools with staff who were asked to rate this type of support.

[c]The number of respondents refers to the number of staff we interviewed and who were asked to rate this type of support.

[d]This rating refers to the effectiveness of the instructional coach in improving teachers' instructional practices.

2. Staff from nine schools viewed reading and math specialists as very effective in supporting academic achievement because they provided students with necessary foundational skills.

All targeted schools had at least one reading and one math specialist in the first year of the Turnaround Strategy, and 11 principals elected to use additional reading and/or math specialist(s) in the second year. Across all targeted schools, on average, school leaders and staff perceived specialists to be very effective (average score of 3.5 for supporting students' academic achievement).

School leaders and staff viewed specialists as effective because they provided much-needed instruction on foundational skills to students who were below grade level. Specialists worked with students in small groups while teaching them reading and math. In eight schools, specialists worked with students daily, and in the remaining five schools, specialists worked with students at least three days a week in 30- to 60-minute sessions. These sessions occurred outside of core instructional time during, for example, students' homeroom or specials periods. Specialists in at least two schools noted that they tutored during instructional time as well. In one school, specialists said they oversaw classrooms of students who worked on reading and math computer programs during their teachers' planning periods.

3. At more than half of the schools, staff said all students would benefit from working with reading and math specialists.

Schools typically use a curriculum that assumes that students have mastered foundational skills. Teachers may therefore not focus lessons on foundational skills because the curriculum does not include this aspect of instruction. Schools assign reading and math specialists to work with a specific subset of students—those in the bottom 5 to 10 percent[3] on the Georgia Milestone assessments—but at more than half of the 13 targeted schools, staff described how all students would benefit from working with reading and math specialists. They explained that the majority of their students did not meet grade-level standards and required additional foundational support in reading and math. In addition, school leaders explained that they typically assign students to either a reading or a math specialist—but not both—in order to maximize the number of students who could be served. Staff indicated that many students would benefit from working with specialists in both areas, and that even more students would benefit from this support.

4. Instructional coaches found it hard to find time to coach teachers individually because of many coaching and administrative duties.

The work that instructional coaches did with teachers included co-teaching, conducting school walk-throughs, organizing professional learning supports (for example, Professional Learning Communities), and providing coaching. They held individual coaching sessions with teachers that varied in length based on needs that coaches identified. For example, a coach may drop into a classroom, observe a teacher for 10 minutes, and provide feedback; or a coach may

[3] Specialists in 4 of 13 schools served students in the bottom 10 to 35 percent.

take 90 minutes to observe an entire class period followed by a longer coaching session with the teacher.

Several coaches noted that teachers interested in improving their teaching practice often requested individualized coaching sessions, but the coaches lacked the time to provide the same level of attention to teachers who needed to improve but did not seek coaching. At most schools, instructional coaches also served as members of their school's administration team, which limited their time for individualized coaching. Their administrative duties included planning class schedules, securing teacher or substitute coverage during testing, implementing school-wide academic initiatives (such as math competitions), preparing data summaries for meetings with school leaders or teachers, and being first in command if the principal and assistant principal were out.

5. School leaders reported that certain teachers were resistant to coaching, which limited the its effectiveness.

School leaders and staff perceived instructional coaches as moderately effective in supporting improvements to teachers' instructional practices (average rating of 3.4[4]). At five schools, staff explained that they gave coaches a moderate rating of effectiveness because a number of teachers resisted instructional coaching and were unwilling to adapt their teaching practices and listen to feedback. For example, one instructional coach noted that veteran teachers were resistant to adopting substantially different math instructional practices than those they had used for years. In addition, one school leader stated that coaches re-taught the same practices many times because teachers repeatedly reverted to old practices.

6. School leaders noted the challenges involved in working with tutors who did not have teaching experience.

Four schools chose to implement tutoring, which consisted of using the iReady curriculum to provide individualized math and/or ELA instruction to small groups of students both in and out of the classroom. Schools had the option of hiring tutors from a Hands on Atlanta (HOA) or a different vendor, or training their own staff to deliver tutoring instruction. School leaders reported that they chose tutoring as a way to provide math and reading instruction to students who needed additional foundational support and who were not working with specialists. The target student population for tutoring varied by school. For example, one school targeted students nearing proficiency, whereas another school targeted students two to three years below grade level. Tutors typically worked with groups of 5 to 7 students.

Respondents rated tutoring as moderately effective (average ratings of 3.1). Staff from the schools with HOA tutors rated their tutors as less effective, compared with how the staff at other schools rated their tutors who were former teachers. Staff explained that it seemed HOA tutors lacked classroom experience and preparation for working with students, and struggled with issues such as classroom management. In some cases, however, staff reported that they had success with individual HOA tutors and gave their effective tutors additional responsibilities, such as providing support to teachers and working with students not originally assigned to

[4] 23 respondents from 13 schools rated their perceptions of the effectiveness of instructional coaches in supporting teachers' instructional practices. See Appendix A, Table A.1.

receive tutoring. For example, one school that opted not to select tutoring for 2018–2019 described retaining a strong HOA tutor as a paraprofessional in order to keep this individual at the school.

One school selected paraprofessionals to use as general teaching assistants in the classroom. Their responsibilities varied according to their assigned teachers' needs, but their activities included pulling students for small groups, monitoring student behavior, and helping teachers with paperwork. The school leader chose this option in order to give teachers additional support and to reduce the adult-to-student ratio in the early grades (i.e., K–4). As the year progressed, some paraprofessionals shifted to supporting teachers with students who required additional one-on-one support, such as special education students. The school leader perceived that the paraprofessionals did not have the instructional expertise to provide teachers and students with effective support so the school leader plans to use a different type of academic support in lieu of paraprofessionals in 2018–2019.

7. Two school leaders who used iReady said that it could be adopted widely, offered individualized support, and allowed for progress monitoring.

Two school leaders implemented or planned to implement iReady broadly with students not assigned to a tutor. These leaders emphasized the utility of two strengths of iReady: (1) the ability to give students individualized lessons, and (2) the availability of diagnostic and instructional data. iReady provides competency-based lessons through a computer program and additional materials, which included portable document format (PDF) files for direct instruction and workbooks for students. Students were given multiple diagnostic assessments throughout the year to determine the lessons they should receive. In addition to diagnostic assessments, the iReady platform tracked each student's progress on lessons and instructional time. School leaders reported that the iReady data provided a useful measure of progress for students who were not at grade level.

8. Intervention blocks and Saturday school allowed schools to reach more students or to further use the expertise of specialists, instructional coaches, and strong teachers.

The eight schools that integrated intervention blocks or Saturday school used a variety of staff—including instructional coaches, reading and math specialists, and teachers—to implement additional math and/or ELA instruction for these supports. In general, school leaders reported choosing these supports as a more flexible and less expensive way to provide students outside of the lowest performing 5 to 10 percent with instructional support. Staff described how they experimented with different methods of delivering additional instruction during intervention blocks or Saturday school. Two methods were to replicate the curricula used by reading and math specialists and to develop original content.

Schools designed intervention blocks on the basis of staff availability to provide instruction, students' needs, and academic content to be covered. For example, three schools reported that they targeted all students, including those performing at grade-level. Two such schools required all staff—including the principal——to deliver instruction in a way that would reach all students. One school leader described using the intervention blocks to maximize the influence of reading and math specialists and instructional coaches. At this school, the specialists, instructional

coaches, and several teachers worked together to develop original reading and math content that they provided to staff who worked with students in small groups during the intervention blocks.

Overall, staff rated the intervention blocks as moderately effective in supporting students' academic achievement (average rating of 3.4). They said that they had additional instructional time in the school day before the Turnaround Strategy, so they did not think of the intervention block as an additional support but saw it as a continuation of an existing practice. Other staff, however, rated the intervention blocks as effective, pointing out that all students benefited from the opportunity to receive additional one-on-one support from experienced staff.

The two schools that selected Saturday school targeted this support to students who were performing below grade-level, but they also invited all students to attend. Staff provided reading and math instruction, and at one school, volunteers provided breakfast for students. However, school staff rated Saturday school as the least effective academic support for improving student achievement (average rating of 2.3) because of low student attendance. One school decided mid-year to replace Saturday school with after school tutorials, which many more students attended.

B. Implementation of nonacademic supports

APS provided targeted schools with two nonacademic supports: a student support practitioner (for example, a behavioral therapist) and a half-time Communities in Schools (CIS) coordinator.[5] Both positions typically worked with a caseload of students assigned on the basis of attendance or behavioral records, such as the number of referrals to the office. Principals selected which practitioner role—behavioral specialist, clinical therapist, counselor, or social worker—to include at their schools. Depending on the role, pracitioners provided support to students on their caseloads for special needs, mental health, trauma, and at-risk behaviors. They often worked with students outside the classroom and communicated with parents or guardians and other stakeholders as needed. CIS coordinators provided intensive, individualized wraparound and dropout prevention services to students on their caseloads. These services included transportation to and from school, and connecting the students' families to health services. Table 4 presents the respondents' average ratings of the effectiveness of these nonacademic supports.

Table 4. Staff perceptions of the effectiveness of nonacademic supports at targeted schools

Type of staff	Number of schools[a]	Effectiveness in supporting student behavior	Number of respondents[b]
Student support practitioner	**13**	**3.2**	**33**
Behavioral specialists	6	2.6	12
Clinical therapists	3	3.5	7
Counselors	1	3.3	5
Social workers	3	3.4	10
CIS coordinators	**13**	**2.6**	**29**

[5] One school had a full-time CIS coordinator.

Source: March 2018 APS site visits.

Note: Respondents provided ratings on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is "not at all effective," 2 is "somewhat effective," 3 is "moderately effective," and 4 is "very effective." See Appendix A for detailed information on the data analysis methodology.

[a]The number of schools refers to the number of targeted schools with staff who were asked to rate this type of support.

[b] The number of respondents refers to the number of staff we interviewed and who were asked to rate this type of support.

1. Despite positive changes in student behavior, more than three-quarters of the targeted schools continued to face pervasive behavioral issues and wanted nonacademic supports for all students at the school.

Though staff from all schools reported noticing positive changes that they attributed to nonacademic supports, school leaders and staff at nine targeted schools said that students continued to demonstrate moderate to severe behavioral issues that regularly interrupted instruction or required additional staff support. In light of this, staff emphasized the need for nonacademic supports for all students at the school, not just for students on the caseloads of student support practitioners or CIS coordinators (see the section below for more detail).

2. Student support practitioners were perceived as only moderately effective because they supported students on their caseloads rather than the whole school.

Schools rated student support practitioners as moderately effective in addressing student behavior (average rating of 3.2) because practitioners only provided supports to students on their caseloads, rather than to the entire school. Though this was by design, school leaders and staff described how—to be fully effective—the student support practitioner should benefit all students at their schools.

Respondents from at least four schools described how their student support practitioner provided additional school-wide programming beyond their caseloads. For example, one school's counselors teamed up to lead a "career and college readiness week" in which guest speakers talked in classrooms about going to college or about their profession, and they organized events to address drug awareness and bullying. At another school, nonacademic practitioners taught mindfulness practices, such as breathing techniques, in classrooms so that students and teachers could adopt similar practices. Staff at another school suggested that, in order to integrate nonacademic supports school-wide, practitioners could hold staff workshops to promote the strategies they use to support positive student behavior and the development of social and emotional skills. Respondents noted that expanding these efforts school-wide required schools to have a team of nonacademic practitioners at their schools, including practitioners outside of the Turnaround Strategy (for example, existing social workers and parent liaisons).

3. When selecting behavioral specialists principals did not fully understand the responsibilities of this position, so behavioral specialists did not meet schools' needs.

Staff in schools with behavioral specialists rated this position as least effective among the four types of student support practitioners (average rating of 2.6). Principals in four schools noted that the behavioral specialist did not fully meet their schools' nonacademic needs. The principals did not understand the responsibilities of the position until they worked with the

specialist directly. For example, one school leader believed that a behavioral specialist would address students' behavioral issues at the school, whereas the intention of the behavioral specialist role was to work closely with students with special needs.

4. Staff cited CIS coordinators' half-time schedules as the main challenge to their effectiveness.

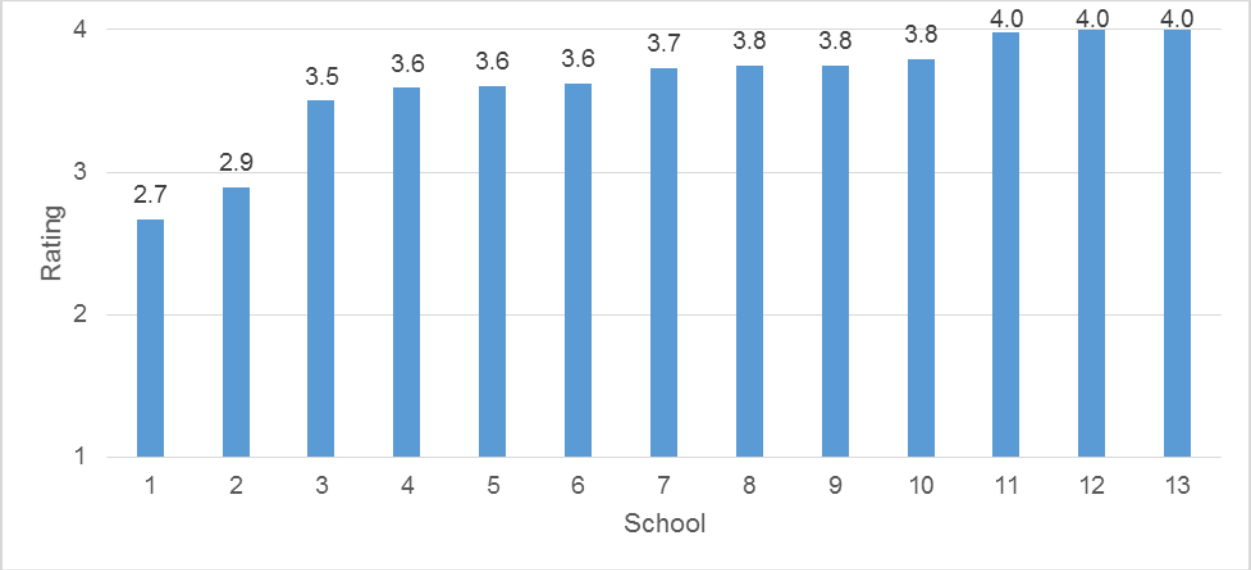
Across all targeted schools, staff rated CIS coordinators as only somewhat effective in addressing student behavior (average rating of 2.6). Staff stated that the CIS coordinators' schedules as half-time support staff posed the greatest challenge. For example, one respondent reported that the CIS coordinator did not adhere to the schedule set at the beginning of the year, which made it difficult to leverage this position because staff did not know when the CIS coordinator would be at the school. Another respondent stated that the inconsistent schedule limited opportunities to build consistent and positive relationships with students on their caseloads. Staff at two schools explained that having a new CIS coordinator required building relationships with staff and acquainting the coordinators with the school culture and processes.

C. Perceptions about the Turnaround Strategy's effectiveness

Staff from 11 schools rated the Turnaround Strategy as effective (3.5 to 4.0) because they felt it provided supports critical to students' academic achievement. Leaders from 10 of these schools were excited about the Strategy and wanted to continue its implementation so that students could further benefit and meet grade-level standards.

Figure 1 displays the average ratings from each school on the Turnaround Strategy's effectiveness. Two schools rated the Strategy as only moderately effective (2.5 to 3.0). Staff explained that they perceived the Strategy to be only moderately effective because both schools faced internal challenges that affected the implementation of the Strategy. For example, teachers at one school resisted working with instructional coaches to improve their instructional practices that were designed to support the turnaround. At the other school, significant mid-year staffing changes required rebuilding relationships, school culture, and morale.

Figure 1. Average ratings from each school on the Turnaround Strategy's effectiveness



Note. Each bar represents a targeted school's average rating of effectiveness on a scale of 1 to 4.

1. Teachers faced challenges to improving academic achievement because of limited capacity, "compassion fatigue", or burnout.

We asked school staff to rate the effectiveness of the teachers at targeted schools. Across 12 targeted schools,[6] staff rated these teachers as moderately effective (average rating of 3.2, see Table Appendix A, Table A.1). At six schools, school leaders and staff perceived teachers as effective (ratings from 3.0 to 4.0) and recognized that many teachers improved their instructional practices.

In the six remaining schools, however, school leaders and staff discussed the need for teachers to improve. School leaders stated that teachers needed additional improvements in their instructional practices, deeper content knowledge, or a quicker reponse to feedback on their instructional practices. These school leaders emphasized the importance of teachers rapidly adjusting to supporting the academic growth of low-performing students. Teachers at these schools explained that teaching grade-level curriculum to students struggling with foundational skills and the students' frequent, pervasive disruptions to instructional time made growth in academic achievement, especially at a rapid pace, difficult. In three of the schools, school leaders and staff described how teachers struggled to work in a "tough environment." School leaders also noted that teachers often had "compassion fatigue" from working with students, parents, and communities that faced chronic challenges such as homelessness, violence, and poverty. School leaders also said that burnout rates were high because teachers were working in a climate of constant change, their job security was limited, they had to take on multiple roles, and they felt a great deal of pressure. Teachers explained that they never felt that they had enough time for all of

[6] Twelve targeted schools provided a rating for teachers, but one school did not. Analyses include the twelve schools that provided information on teachers. See appendix table A.1.

their duties because they had more to do than teachers in non-turnaround schools; for instance, they needed more time to plan their instruction or to enter the large quantity of student data used for the weekly monitoring of students' progress.

2. When planning for next year, school leaders want more of the existing nonacademic supports, but they feel compelled to add academic supports because academic outcomes can be easily measured.

Eight principals described the need for additional nonacademic supports to address different types of nonacademic issues. For example, staff at one school reported that they would benefit from an additional clinical specialist and CIS coordinator. Staff at two schools said that part of addressing all students' needs included receiving more intensive resources such as referrals to health care specialists. One school also described how it used external grants to fund resources such as an in-school clinic that provided physical and mental health services to students as well as their families.

Even with this need for nonacademic supports, at least two principals reported that they chose additional academic supports for the coming year instead of nonacademic support staff. They gave two reasons for this decision. First, they wanted to build on the academic achievements that they associated with the academic supports. For example, one principal chose to add another reading specialist over a nonacademic practitioner because the academic growth among students who worked with specialists seemed greater than that of students who worked with nonacademic support staff. Second, principals struggled to determine the best way measure growth for students receiving nonacademic supports. For example, one principal used a mix of academic achievement, attendance, and behavioral data to assess the effectiveness of nonacademic supports but acknowledged that these data may not accurately capture the impact of nonacademic supports.

In response to feedback from the turnaround schools in 2017-2018, APS will continue to offer a menu of academic support options to principals for the 2018-2019 school year. APS also plans to provide all targeted schools with full-time CIS coordinators in 2018-2019.

III. PARTNER SCHOOLS

Leaders and staff at the partner schools went through many transitions in the 2017–2018 school year. Kindezi began operating one school, Gideons Elementary. PBS began operating two schools, Slater Elementary and Price Middle School, and continued the second year of its partnership with Thomasville Elementary. In all of the schools, the majority of staff were new and needed to learn and integrate new curricula into daily instruction, and the three schools that began to operate in 2017–2018 moved into a new building and established relationships with the surrounding communities.

This section describes the implementation and perceived effectiveness of various supports used in the Kindezi and PBS models. Staffacross all four partner schools, including leadership team members, teachers, and academic and non-academic practitioners, perceived the supports provided through Kindezi or PBS models to be moderately or very effective in turning around the school (average ratings of 3.9, see Table 5).

Table 5. Staff perceptions of the effectiveness of the Kindezi/PBS model in supporting the turnaround of their school

School	Effectiness in supporting turnaround of their school (Average rating)	Number of respondents[a]
Gideons (Kindezi)	3.9	5[b]
All PBS Schools	3.9	46
Price Middle School (PBS)	3.9	10
Slater Elementary School (PBS)	4.0	18
Thomasville Heights Elementary School (PBS)	3.8	18

Source: March 2018 APS site visits.

Note: See Appendix A for detailed information on the data analysis methodology.

[a]The number of respondents refers to the number of interviewed staff who gave a rating for this item.

[b]The Gideons school site visit was approximately 2 hours in length because it had to be rescheduled to accommodate the school's schedule. For this reason, the evaluation team was only able to interview a small number of staff.

A. The Kindezi School at Gideons Elementary

Kindezi school began operating Gideons Elementary in August 2017. As a Kindezi school, Gideons enrolled all students previously served by the school and also accepted students outside of the neighborhoods traditionally served by Gideons. The Kindezi schools feature small classes, afterschool programs, strong staff support from school leadership, and an expansive set of academic and nonacademic supports. Appendix B provides more information about Kindezi.

1. Kindezi leadership aggressively hired and trained staff to prepare them for the first year of Kindezi.

Kindezi leadership described the biggest priority of the first year of Gideons as having qualified staff aligned with the Kindezi model. Kindezi leadership engaged in an intensive hiring and training process that included (1) recruiting from the existing Gideons staff, (2) expanding

recruitment to external candidates, (3) doubling the number of leaders at another Kindezi school in 2016–2017 in order to develop and prepare a pool of candidates for the Gideons leadership team, and (4) recruiting school leaders for Gideons. Kindezi hired nearly all new staff for Gideons for the 2017–2018 school year because, according to Kindezi leadership, staff from 2016–2017 did not express an interest in using the Kindezi model or because Kindezi could not always match the salaries of these staff.

To train school leaders, Kindezi doubled the number of administrators at the Kindezi charter school in the preceding year so that the 2017–2018 principal, assistant principals, and dean of culture could work together for a full year before transitioning to Gideons. In addition, Kindezi held a three-week summer training for new staff that included information about the Kindezi model, classroom management practices, and academic content. Kindezi conducted part of the training across its three schools in Atlanta and part of the training with only Gideons staff.

2. Kindezi launched an aggressive effort to engage families prior to and during the first year of Kindezi.

Kindezi focused aggressive outreach on families and community members to prepare them for the implementation of Kindezi at Gideons. They held town hall style meetings organized by APS to inform the community about their model, but poor attendance compelled the the Gideons leadership team to begin an even more aggressive engagement campaign. It included direct mailers, door-to-door canvassing, home visits, and attending various community events such as football games. Once the school year began, teachers at Gideons also spoke with every parent or guardian who had a student attending the school.

Staff at Gideons stated that parents communicated their need for additional caregiving support, especially families with children in different grades. To be responsive, Gideons tailored the typical Kindezi school-wide afterschool programming to provide caregiving for younger students while older students participated in afterschool tutorials and enrichment studios. The school also created a worry-free experience for parents by providing dinner and transportation for students after the afterschool programming. Gideons provided these services at no cost in partnership with the Andrew P. Stewart Center, and Kindezi leadership reported positive feedback from parents. The leaders felt that parents demonstrated strong engagement and buy-in with Gideons, citing examples of "parents bending over backwards" to ensure that their children attended school. Even when families moved, staff reported that parents and their children commuted to Gideons rather than transfer to a closer school.

3. Shifts in mid-year student enrollment and reduced access to special education resources created challenges for Gideons when converting from a neighborhood school to the Kindezi model.

Typically, Kindezi charter schools enroll students at the start of the school year and discontinue new enrollment after a specified date. However, as a partnership school, Gideons operates as a neighborhood school, so students may enroll or leave throughout the school year. Kindezi needed to accommodate students who enrolled after the start of the school year while maintaining the its model's teacher-student ratio (approximately 1 teacher to 8 students). In order to do so, staff made changes to classroom rosters by hiring new teachers to create additional

classes or by shifting students across classes if new students enrolled. Staff described disruptions to teaching, instructional content, and relationship-building as a result of these shifts.

Staff also reported that as a neighborhood school, Gideons needed to meet APS requirements for special education—such as hiring nursing staff and certified teachers—but without APS-provided direct supports. Staff noted the particular challenge of hiring certified staff and meeting legal requirements for students with special needs who enrolled in the middle of the school year without specialized recruitment or hiring resources such as those employed by APS.

4. Staff attributed successes in academic achievement to a low student-teacher ratio and supports for teachers.

Staff perceived the academic supports at Gideons to be effective in improving students' academic achievement (average rating of 3.6). Teachers attributed success in academic achievement to the low student-teacher ratio. At Gideons, school leadership reported that they made class size a priority in the budget so that every classroom had two teachers who co-taught approximately 16 students. Each teacher focused on a group of eight students during instruction. Teachers described their success in building positive relationships with students and opportunities to work individually with students who needed additional support.

Kindezi leadership provided Gideons teachers with supports, including lesson plans and intensive professional learning opportunities. Kindezi academic officers developed flexible lesson plans that teachers could use or adapt and that aligned with the scope and sequence of Georgia's state standards.With respect to professional learning opportunities, an assistant principal, who served as an instructional coach, led Kindezi teachers through weekly coaching cycles and planning sessions on making data-driven decisions about which lessons to use.

5. In the face of the challenges involved in implementing the Kindezi curricula with students who had limited foundational skills, staff added time for remediation.

Teachers described significant challenges in implementing the Kindezi curricula because of the students' low academic performance (sometimes two to three grade levels behind) and particular difficulty with foundational reading skills. For this reason, Gideons added 25 minutes to the core academic schedule dedicated to remediation and building foundational reading skills.

Even with additional time for building foundational skills, teachers reported that they needed additional planning time to ensure that the Kindezi lesson plans addressed their students' foundational skills because the lesson plans assumed that students had grade-level knowledge. Kindezi leadership stated that teacher development data indicated the need to provide teachers with clearer guidance on how to modify lesson plans to provide instruction on foundational skills while meeting grade-level standards. Kindezi leadership plans to implement additional professional development for teacher on academic content in 2018–2019 that will address this topic.

6. Intensive and purposeful nonacademic supports helped improve student behavior, but behavioral challenges persisted.

Kindezi and school leaders noted that behavioral issues improved significantly compared with when they observed the school prior to the Kindezi partnership. They attributed these successes to the range of nonacademic supports offered at the school, which included an on-site social worker, counselor, and four behavioral aides. Gideons also implemented a daily block for socioemotional learning using the Second Step program; a daily block for "community meetings;" and a behavioral accountability system that deducts points for negative behaviors and rewards positive behaviors with points and incentives such as weekly pizza parties. Gideons staff also reported success in using in-school rather than out-of-school suspensions that kept students accountable and minimized loss of instructional time. Although staff acknowledged behavioral improvements, several teachers reported persistent behavioral issues from students, including fighting and classroom disruptions that impeded student learning. To address classroom management issues, teachers said that they needed additional supports such as additional behavioral aides or stronger expectations about behaviorand stronger consequences falling short of expectations.

7. Kindezi students required additional wraparound services and trauma-informed care.

Kindezi leadership acknowledged that students at Gideons had a much higher need for nonacademic services compared with students at the Kindezi charter schools. The leaders described ongoing efforts to form partnerships with organizations that have the capacity to address nonacademic needs, namely those related to wraparound services and mental health. For example, school staff felt they needed support to help homeless or transient families find housing. They also sought partnerships to provide school supplies, healthy snacks, and clothing in addition to what Kindezi provided. The Gideons and Kindezi leadership teams identified students' experiences with trauma as a primary growth area for the next school year, and they plan to find an external organization(s) that can provide individualized professional development to school leaders and teachers on trauma-informed care for students.

B. Purpose Built Schools

In 2016, PBS began operating its first APS school, Thomasville Heights Elementary School. Slater Elementary and Price Middle School transitioned to the PBS model in the 2017–2018 school year, and Carver High School will transition to the PBS model in the 2018–2019 school year. PBS provides comprehensive academic and nonacademic supports for students, increased instruction through extended school days and afterschool programs, a high adult-to-student ratio at the school (one adult for every five students), and a number of family support programs. Appendix B provides additional information about PBS.

1. PBS provided intensive training to new and returning staff at PBS schools.

PBS leaders reported that all three PBS schools, including the school in its second year,[7] hired the majority of teachers for the 2017–2018 school year, which meant that the schools had

[7] The PBS school in its second year also hired the majority of its teaching force for the 2017–2018 school year because former teachers were promoted to other roles at PBS, and a handful voluntarily transferred to other first-year PBS schools.

staff both new to their schools and new to the PBS model. School leaders engaged in intensive staff training and in relationship and culture building at their schools. PBS and school leaders explained that they relied on the hiring and training processes they used the previous year at Thomasville, which they said accounted for few challenges related to onboarding new staff. All new and returning staff at PBS schools reported they felt very supported in their roles (average ratings of 3.9, see Appendix A, Table A.4).

2. Staff attributed success in academic achievement at PBS schools to a generous student-teacher ratio.

Staff perceived PBS to be very effective in improving students' academic achievement (average rating of 4.0, see Appendix A, Table A.5). Teachers attributed success in academic achievement to the generous adult-to-student ratio designed to provide students with more access to staff who gave personalized attention and socioemotional supports. This ratio exists in each classroom where teachers work alongside paraprofessionals, and in the literacy and math labs where multiple teachers provide instruction and support.

3. The integration of restorative justice practices supported noticeable behavior changes, particularly at Thomasville.

In response to significant behavioral issues among students, the PBS schools adopted restorative justice practices mid-way through the school year. CHRIS 180 provided training on restorative justice practices, which are intended to avoid punitive measures and infuse safety and trust into the school culture. Staff encouraged students to use the restorative justice practices so that everyone had specific strategies for expressing frustration or other negative feelings. For example, school staff used restorative justice practices to manage disputes or behavioral issues. Practices included asking students what happened, validating their feelings, and either suggesting or asking them to think of a different strategy for handling the situation. Many staff wore placards on lanyards around their necks that had the common language they might use, such as, "I understand you're frustrated" or "Your [behavior] is hurting my feelings." Placards also included strategies that staff can suggest students use when frustrated, such as taking deep breaths ("belly breaths") or taking a "time out" for themselves in which they may go to an area of the room designated for breaks.

After integrating restorative justice practices in the winter, staff at Thomasville described an immediate change in student behavior. They noted, for example, that students started using restorative language with staff and with their peers without prompting; staff also noticed a sharp decline in referrals for suspensions. One teacher stated that she did not have a single fight in her classroom the rest of the year after practicing restorative justice strategies. Teachers described how restorative justice practices extended students' vocabulary to words like "empathy" and "frustrated." Thomasville staff felt that the school culture grew stronger as students began trusting staff, recognized the school as a safe space, and established mutual respect between students and teachers. Staff also noted that parents expressed an interest in getting trained so they could integrate the practices in into their home lives. Finally, Thomasville staff described how the restorative justice practices helped staff to support one another. Staff described how, for example, they practiced giving one another time and space to take a "time out" because with multiple staff in a classroom at any given time, they could find another person to step in when needed.

Although staff at Price and Slater said that they noticed positive changes, student behavior continued to pose an ongoing challenge. Staff attributed behavior issues to the trauma students experienced outside of school and characterized it as part of working in a turnaround school. Staff at Price, in particular, explained that students' familiarity with how the school operated prior to PBS created resistance to the behavior expectations imposed by the PBS model, which resulted in power struggles between students and teachers.

4. School leaders made substantial modifications to new academic curricula in order to support students below grade-level.

The three PBS schools adopted new academic curricula for the 2017–2018 school year. Slater and Price adopted new curricula across all content areas, and Thomasville Heights adopted a new ELA curriculum. According to school leaders, the new curricula had to be modified heavily to meet their students' needs, new lesson plans had to be created, and additional training had to be provided to teachers.

School leaders described the need to heavily supplement the curriculum and tailor it for students. For example, when selecting the new ELA curriculum at Thomasville, Wit & Wisdom, school leaders wanted to find a rigorous curriculum in terms of content, language level, and vocabulary. However, they felt that Wit & Wisdom made assumptions about what students know and are able to do, and because many of their students performed below grade level and often did not have foundational skills, adopting the curriculum posed a challenge. As a result, staff needed to find or create extensive supplemental materials to provide learning scaffolds for students. In response, Thomasville and Slater opted to supplement Wit & Wisdom with a standalone phonics curriculum, the Maxscholar Phonics Program.

Staff described the transition to new curricula as difficult because the material is rigorous. They explained that prior to PBS, students had grown accustomed to a less demanding curriculum and sometimes seemed "very comfortable in failure." They described how, when first using the new curricula, they heard a lot of sighing from students and experienced frequent behavioral issues as the students struggled with more rigorous expectations. Staff described how, in the face of challenging content, students acted out and disrupted the class, would not engage, or refused to continue their classwork. Despite this reaction, staff stated that they continued to push students and implemented a number of instructional strategies, such as breaking down difficult concepts over multiple activities, using academic games, having students rotate through small group instruction, and using manipulatives. Staff described how, over time, students became "comfortable with growing" and demonstrated positive academic changes.

5. Staff at first-year PBS schools noted the need for more parental engagement.

To address the significant challenges faced by the students' parents, PBS schools provided family supports, such as parental outreach to improve their children's attendance, a parent liaison at each school, home visits, job fairs, providing food and other necessary resources, and referrals to community supports such as legal services. School leaders and staff described how these supports fostered parental buy-in for the school and reduced some of the stress in students' lives, allowing them to focus on school.

However, staff from Slater and Price indicated that parental engagement continued to be weaker than they hoped. They stated that parents faced barriers, such as transportation, to participating in school activities. Staff also explained that parents were not accustomed to the level of parental participation and engagement that PBS staff desired. At Price, for example, some staff reported that parents did not understand the need for their involvement with middle school students. Staff described trying to communicate regularly with families about available supports, but this proved difficult because parents frequently changed phone numbers and addresses or missed appointments.

Staff at Thomasville reported that school leaders, staff, and the parental liaison worked with the parents to encourage schoolwide parent engagement and participation. Leaders and staff cultivated the parents' buy-in by creating a culture of mutual respect and strong communication, and by demonstrating to parents a commitment to student success. Leaders noted that in Thomasville's first year as a PBS school, parents were much less responsive, but in 2017–2018, they seemed to trust school leaders and staff and to respond to home visits or phone calls. Leaders said that they used a pre-kindergarten family educator who worked with the parents to raise awareness about their childrens' progress, class activities, and wraparound resources. Thomasville also used community coordinators to bridge school and home by regularly communicating with parents about attendance, supporting parent-teacher conferencing, and informing parents about community initiatives. Finally, leaders and staff described the parent liaison's critical role in guiding parents about school initiatives, answering questions, and encouraging active engagement in parent-teacher conferences and school activities. School leaders and staff reported that parents of Thomasville students respected and trusted the parent liaison and that the parent liaison effectively supported the school's parental engagement efforts.

IV. CONCLUSION

This report focused on the implementation of the Turnaround Strategy in its second year (2017–2018) in targeted and in partner schools. Perceptions that Turnaround Strategy effectively supported improvements prevailed at most targeted schools and at both types of partner schools. This section presents a synthesis of the findings, followed by a set of recommendations for APS' consideration.

A. Synthesis of findings

At the targeted schools, staff said that they rely heavily on the academic and nonacademic supports offered through the Turnaround Strategy to improve students' academic achievement and behavior. Many staff perceived gains in the students' achievements and behavior throughout the year but felt constrained by the limited number of students who could receive the supports (i.e., only students on practitioners' caseloads). Principals noted that there is a need to provide supports, such as reading or math specialists, to all students performing below standards in ELA or math. They also discussed the importance of providing nonacademic supports for the whole school, such as student support practitioners providing instruction or professional development to staff on mental health strategies or social and emotional skills, or providing additional positive behavior reinforcement strategies to classrooms. Principals at targeted schools appreciated having the flexibility to select academic supports; they may also appreciate having the discretion and the flexibility to (1) determine which nonacademic supports are needed at their schools and (2) deploy academic and nonacademic supports so that these services can reach more students.

In the partner schools, Kindezi and PBS school leaders had more discretion to tailor school activities and add academic supports. Kindezi leaders developed their own curriculum and altered their school schedule to add time for instruction in order to build students' foundational skills. PBS leaders selected a new curriculum and supplemented it with materials that provided academic support in foundational skills. In Kindezi and PBS schools, staff believed that the generous teacher-student ratio, which provided students with more attention from adults and personalized instruction, helped student progress. Kindezi and PBS schools also took advantage of their flexibility to modify or add nonacademic supports. Kindezi leaders explained how they partnered with other organizations to address nonacademic needs by including additional wraparound and mental health services for students and their families. The leaders took this approach because their students had a higher need for nonacademic services than did students at other Kindezi schools. Similarly, PBS leaders described how, in the face of chronic behavioral issues, they integrated restorative justice practices in the middle of the school year as a means to attend to students' social and emotional needs; leaders also addressed behavioral issues.

To further improve students' progress, staff from targeted and partner schools said that they needed continued supports to develop students' foundational skills and address pervasive behavioral issues. For example, staff expressed a desire to use academically rigorous curricula but struggled to implement it because students needed support to master foundational skills, and teachers needed extra time to plan accordingly. (Students often acted out when they felt frustrated with the content.) Behavioral issues that stemmed from the students' homes and communities needed constant attention and support. In response, schools offered access to

wraparound supports, engaged parents, and targeted significantly challenging students with supports, but the schools still needed more supports all students.

B. Recommendations and next steps

Overall, staff at targeted and partner schools perceived the Turnaround Strategy to be moderately or very effective in improving their schools. The staff also explained how the Strategy supported their schools' turnaround needs. Even so, the interviews with school leaders and staff at the both types of schools suggest three recommendations for implementing the Turnaround Strategy going forward:

Focus on developing all students' foundational reading and math skills. Curricula often assume that students have mastered foundational skills and perform at (or just below) grade level. However, many students at the targeted and partner schools perform one to two levels below grade-level, which makes it difficult for teachers to implement the curricula and, at times, frustrated the students. APS may need to consider how to support schools in serving more (if not all) students who require support in developing their foundational skills. Some approaches now used by schools (as described in the interviews) included time in schedules for focusing on foundational skills mastery, supplementing grade-level curricula with additional instruction in foundational skills, or deploying more staff to support more students.

Continue to focus on improving student behavior. Behavioral issues remain a challenge in targeted and partner schools, but staff noted that attention to the students' behavior must extend beyond nonacademic practitioners who work with a caseload of students who demonstrate the most challenging behaviors. Staff suggested that they need training in the best way address many kinds of disruptive behaviors. APS and school leaders may need more decision-making power or resources to deploy nonacademic and behavioral services to all students at their schools.

Extending the supports in the Turnaround Strategy may be critical as schools begin to improve. Targeted and partner schools reported that they saw an improvement in the students' academics and nonacademics, yet they also pointed to the need to see additional and continued improvements in both areas. For example, school staff described how students made gains in academic achievement but noted that many of these students were still not performing at grade level. School staff also noted that students showed growth in their social and emotional skills but continued to behave in ways that disrupted student learning during class time. As schools begin to show improvements, APS might consider how to scaffold or extend the Turnaround Strategy supports so that schools can effect lasting change.

APPENDIX A:

IMPLEMENTATION STUDY METHODOLOGY

The evaluation team collected and analyzed comprehensive, in-depth data from interviews with partner organization officials, school leaders, teachers, academic support staff, and nonacademic support staff from all 13 targeted schools and all 4 partner schools in March of the 2017–2018 school year. During site visits in spring 2018, the team collected two types of data: (1) responses to questions about the effectiveness of the Turnaround Strategy or the partner school model and supports for changing specified outcomes and (2) responses to open-ended interview questions about the implementation of Turnaround Strategy or partner school activities, including successes and challenges faced by staff as well as information on the school and community context. The appendix describes what we collected and how we analyzed the data.

A. Ratings questions

We asked school leaders and staff questions designed to elicit their perceptions about the effectiveness of the turnaround supports at targeted schools or about the effectiveness of the Kindezi or PBS supports.

The evaluation team asked staff at the targeted schools to use a scale of 1 to 4, in which the ratings correspond to the following responses: "1" indicates not at all, "2" indicates somewhat, "3" indicates moderately, "4" indicates "very." Respondents could also choose "NA" if the question was not applicable to their experiences. The evaluation team asked school leaders, instructional coaches, support staff, and teachers at targeted schools the following questions:

- School leaders and instructional coaches were asked to rate other support staff by responding to the question: "How effective are [support staff role] in supporting the turnaround of this school?"
- School support staff were asked to rate themselves on, "How important is [support] in helping turn around this school?"
- School leaders, instructional coaches, and academic support staff were asked to provide a rating about, "To what extent have students shown improvements in their academic achievement as a result of working with/receiving services from a [support staff role]?"
- School leaders, instructional coaches, and nonacademic support staff were asked to provide a rating about, "To what extent have students shown improvements in their behavior as a result of working with/receiving services from a [support staff role]?"
- School leaders, instructional coaches, and teachers were asked to provide a rating about, "To what extent have teachers shown improvements in their instructional practice as a result of working with instructional coaches?"

The evaluation team asked the Kindezi and PBS schools staff to use a scale of 1 to 4, where the ratings correspond to the following responses: "1" indicates not at all, "2" indicates somewhat, "3" indicates moderately, "4" indicates "very". Respondents could also respond with "NA" if the question was not applicable to their experiences. The evaluation team asked school leaders, academic practitioners, nonacademic practitioners, and teachers the following questions:

- All respondents were asked to provide a rating about, "Overall, how effective is the [school model] in supporting the turnaround of this school?"; "To what extent have students shown improvements in their academic achievement as a result of attending a [partner] school?"; and "To what extent have students shown improvements in their behavior as a result of attending a [partner] school?"
- School leaders were asked to provide a rating about, "How supported do you feel to lead this school?" The evaluation team asked all other respondents, "How supported do you feel in meeting the expectations of your role?"; and "To what extent have students shown improvements in their academic achievement as a result of the academic supports provided at this school?"
- Academic practitioners were asked to provide a rating about, "To what extent have students shown improvements in their academic achievement as a result of working with you?"

To aggregate staff perceptions, the evaluation team calculated averages across respondents at each school. To ensure that respondents that took on different types roles in the school were equally represented, the evaluation team grouped the respondents at each school into one of five types and, for groups with more than one respondent, the evaluation team averaged their ratings for each question. The five respondent groups were (1) principals, (2) leadership team (assistant principals and instructional coaches), (3) academic support staff (reading or math specialists, tutors, Saturday school staff, paraprofessionals), (4) nonacademic support staff (CIS coordinators, student support staff), and (5) teachers.

To calculate a school-level average, the evaluation team averaged the five respondent group means. Finally, to calculate the average presented in this report, we averaged the 13 Targeted schools' ratings. We used the same approach to calculate staff perceptions of the Kindezi or PBS supports at partner schools, but we categorized respondents into one of four types: (1) school leaders (i.e, principals), (2) teachers, (3) academic practitioners (i.e., reading and math specialists), and (4) nonacademic practitioners (i.e., community advocates and therapists). These respondent types align with the types of staff and supports implemented by partner schools.

Tables A.1 and A.2 present average ratings and the minimum and maximum range of ratings across respondents about academic and nonacademic supports. Table A.3 presents perceptions among staff at partner schools about the effectiveness of their schools. Table A.4 presents perceptions about how supported staff felt. Table A.5 presents perceptions about the effectiveness of partner models school attendance and participation in academic supports.

Table A.1. Average and range of ratings about staff perceptions of academic supports' effectiveness at targeted schools

Academic support	Number of schools[a]	Effectiveness to support student academic achievement (range)	Number of respondents[b]	Effectiveness to support teachers' instructional practices (range)	Number of respondents[b]
Reading and math specialists	13	3.5 (1-4)	81	-	81
Instructional coaches	13	-	33	3.4 (2-4)	33
Tutors	4	3.1 (2-4)	23	-	24
Saturday school	2	2.3 (1-4)	5	-	5
Intervention blocks	6	3.4 (1-4)	18	-	18
Teachers	13	3.4 (2-4)	24	-	23

Source: March 2018 APS site visits.

Note: Respondents provided ratings on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is "not at all effective," 2 is "somewhat effective," 3 is "moderately effective," and 4 is "very effective." We did not ask schools to rate spring break academies because no targeted schools selected this support. We also did not ask the school that added the extended day support in the middle of the school year to rate that support.

[a]The number of schools refers to the number of targeted schools with staff who gave a rating for this type of support.

[b]The number of respondents refers to the number of staff we interviewed and who gave a rating for this type of support.

Table A.2. Staff perceptions of the effectiveness of the nonacademic supports at targeted schools

Type of staff	Effectiveness in supporting student behavior (range)	Number of schools responding[a]	Number of respondents[b]
Student support staff	3.2 (2-4)	12	33
Behavioral specialists	2.6 (2-3)	5	11
Clinical therapists	3.5 (3-4)	3	7
Counselors	3.3 (2-4)	1	5
Social workers	3.4 (3-4)	3	10
CIS coordinators	2.6 (1-4)	13	29

Source: March 2018 APS site visits.

Note: Respondents provided ratings on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is "not at all effective," 2 is "somewhat effective," 3 is "moderately effective," and 4 is "very effective."

[a] The number of schools responding refers to the number of targeted schools with staff who gave a rating for this type of support.

[b] The number of respondents refers to the number of staff we interviewed and who gave a rating for this type of support.

Table A.3. Staff perceptions of the effectiveness of the Kindezi/PBS model in supporting the turnaround of their school

School	Mean (range)	Number of respondents[a]
Gideons Elementary School	3.9 (3-4)	5
Price Middle School	3.9 (3-4)	10
Slater Elementary School	4.0 (3-4)	18
Thomasville Heights Elementary School	3.8 (3-4)	18
All PBS Schools	3.9	46

Source: March 2018 APS site visits.

Notes: Respondents provided ratings on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is "not at all effective," 2 is "somewhat effective," 3 is "moderately effective," and 4 is "very effective."

[a]The number of respondents refers to the number of staff we interviewed and who gave a rating for this item.

Table A.4. Partner school staff perceptions on how supported they felt in fulfilling their roles

School	Mean (range)	Number of respondents[a]
Gideons Elementary School	3.5 (3-4)	5
Price Middle School	3.9 (3-4)	12
Slater Elementary School	4.0 (3-4)	10
Thomasville Heights Elementary School	3.8 (3-4)	18
All PBS schools	3.9	40

Source: March 2018 APS site visits.

Notes: Respondents provided ratings on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is "not at all supported," 2 is "somewhat supported," 3 is "moderately supported," and 4 is "very supported.".

[a]The number of respondents refers to the number of staff we interviewed and who gave a rating to this item.

Table A.5. Partner school staff perceptions on the degree of student improvement in academics and behavior related to Kindezi/PBS school attendance or participation in Kindezi/PBS academic supports

School	Mean (range)	Number of respondents[a]
Improvements in academic achievement with Kindezi/PBS school attendance		
Gideons Elementary School	3.5 (3-4)	5
Price Middle School	4.0 (4-4)	3
Slater Elementary School	4.0 (4-4)	8
Thomasville Heights Elementary School	4.0 (4-4)	2
All PBS schools	4.0	13

School	Mean (range)	Number of respondents[a]
Improvements in behavior with Kindezi/PBS school attendance		
Gideons Elementary School	3.0 (2-4)	5
Price Middle School	3.9 (3-4)	4
Slater Elementary School	3.7 (3-4)	3
Thomasville Heights Elementary School	-	-
All PBS schools	3.8 (3-4)	7
Improvements in academic achievement with Kindezi/PBS academic supports		
Gideons Elementary School	-	-
Price Middle School	3.7 (3-4)	9
Slater Elementary School	3.5 (3-4)	16
Thomasville Heights Elementary School	3.7 (3-4)	18
All PBS schools	3.6	43

Source: March 2018 APS site visits.

Note: Respondents provided ratings on a scale from 1 to 4 on level of improvement, where 1 is "not at all," 2 is "somewhat," 3 is "moderately," and 4 is "very."

[a]The number of respondents refers to the number of staff we interviewed and who gave a rating for this item.

B. Open-ended interviews

The evaluation team asked respondents about their experience in implementing the turnaround supports or partner model supports, the training and support they received from either district leaders or school leaders (depending on the role of the respondent), successes and challenges they faced, and the school and community contexts. We asked principals of targeted schools about the implementation, successes, and challenges of each individual turnaround support at their schools and about how they made decisions about which academic supports to include in their schools. We asked partner school leaders about the onboarding of new staff, what processes they followed in their first year of working with new schools, and whether they experienced any differences at the turnaround schools compared with non-turnaround schools with which they worked. We also asked Kindezi leaders questions about the Kindezi model, the organizational processes of adding a new school, and the successes they had and challenges they faced with adding a new school.

The evaluation team coded the open-ended interview responses deductively and inductively by using an iterative process. We based deductive codes on topics of interest to APS and topics from the 2016–2017 implementation report, and we based inductive codes on the responses of school leaders and staff. The main codes included successes and challenges associated with implementing the various supports, or the Kindezi or PBS model, and perceptions of the capacity of school leaders and staff to turn the school around. The evaluation team used the coded interview data to cull examples and provide context or explanations for the respondents' ratings.

APPENDIX B:

INFORMATION ON PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL MODELS

This appendix provides background information on the models used by Kindezi schools and the Purpose Built Schools.

The Kindezi Schools

Kindezi operates in accordance with four goals and six pillars. The goals capture the aims of the organizations, and the pillars capture the process through which the organizations will achieve their goals. The four goals include (1) all students learning, (2) academic ownership, (3) student culture and socioemotional learning, and (4) community connectedness. In addition to setting goals, Kindezi uses data to monitor its progress toward the four goals. For example, Kindezi leaders reported that they used student engagement surveys to capture the students' motivation to learn, and they used parent engagement surveys to capture feedback from the community.

The six pillars include (1) *family-sized classes* that foster opportunities for differentiation and authentic, deep relationships; (2) *excellent teaching* with highly selective hiring, high-quality development, and career pathways; (3) *challenge and support* characterized by rigorous expectations accompanied by caring, individualized support; (4) *community and relationships* that have time to build community and connectedness, (5) *racial and socioeconomic diversity* through which all students learn from each other and thrive; and (6) *holistic data-driven*, where academic and nonacademic data inform decisions.

In accordance with the six pillars, all Kindezi schools have a small teacher-to-student ratio (1 to 8), weekly teacher coaching cycles, afterschool programming, and student or staff enrichment opportunities, such as teachers who receive coaching from assistant principals. Kindezi has a leadership team that includes an executive director and a chief academic officer serving the three Kindezi schools in Atlanta. Each school also has a leadership team that includes a principal and multiple assistant principals who also operate as instructional coaches for teachers.

Purpose Built Schools

PBS schools follow the Drew Instructional Model, which focuses on high quality and increased instruction, as well as comprehensive systems of student and family support. PBS schools have an extended school day, afterschool programs, enrichment opportunities, and social and emotional supports. PBS elementary schools offer pre-kindergarten that provides additional educational opportunities to the families in neighborhoods they serve. The model focuses on literacy and math to promote student learning, relies on high quality teachers, and uses a thematic, project-based curriculum that focuses on science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM). The PBS model also emphasizes early intervention provided through a math and literacy lab. Two teachers and a specialist provide supplemental academic support to the lowest-performing students in their subject area through one-on-one or small group instruction in the labs.

PBS schools have an administrative leadership team that includes positions such as the head of schools and dean of academics; the team works across the PBS schools in Atlanta. In addition, each school has a leadership team that includes a principal, an assistant principal, and instructional coaches. Each school also has a number of other staff in order to maintain its high

adult-to-student ratio (1 adult for every 5 students at the school). This ratio provides students with more access to adults who can offer personalized attention and socioemotional supports. The ratio's benefits also carry over into each classroom, as all of the teachers work alongside paraprofessionals, and multiple teachers work in the literacy or math labs.

PBS schools also feature a number of family supports. Each school has at least one family and community outreach coordinator who monitors attendance, conducts outreach to families, and works with referred students and families to address their needs. PBS schools communicate consistently with families through their phone messaging application, and they have a parent group in which parent representatives communicate to other parents at the school. They also offer a number of supports to families, such as legal services from the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation, and wraparound services and training for their staff through CHRIS 180.

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