

Strategic Direction (Values and Goals)

Cluster Advisory Session

3.6.25

Atlanta Public Schools is hosting a series of community meetings to help shape the district's five-year strategic plan. Board members are leading the first set of meetings to update the district's goals and guardrails, emphasizing the importance of community feedback in defining the district's vision and priorities. The meeting was structured to gather input through group discussions and a survey, ensuring the final plan reflects what families and stakeholders want for students' futures. The board asked two main questions during the session, and participants' feedback is summarized below.

What Should Students Know or Be Able to Do by the Time They Leave APS?

Main Themes:

- **Basic Academic Proficiency** – Students should achieve proficiency or exceed grade-level expectations in literacy (reading and writing), numeracy (math), and critical thinking skills.
- **Post-Secondary Readiness** – Schools should provide clearer pathways to post-secondary options, including vocational training, college, and career readiness. This includes executive functioning skills, soft skills, and exposure to diverse career opportunities.
- **Equity in Resources & Extracurriculars** – Schools should provide equitable access to extracurricular activities, arts, sports, and academic programs across all clusters to support whole-child development.
- **Effective Communication Skills & Engagement** – Students should develop strong verbal and written communication skills and be able to advocate for themselves. The district should also prioritize clear and consistent communication between schools, students, and families to foster collaboration and engagement.

Direct Quotes:

- *"We should be providing extracurricular activities. Different schools do this differently. Some schools provide lots of options while other schools just focus on academics."*
- *"Knowledge of career options – especially outside of technology."*
- *"Communication at all levels - district, school, and class. Better and consistent communication, especially at higher grades. (Help facilitate relationships between*

parents and the schools to support their students...not just more emails/information. Make it more collaborative.)"

What Should APS Stop or Avoid Doing to Better Support Student Outcomes?

Direct Quotes

- **Reduce Overcomplication and Initiatives Overload** – The district should streamline priorities, avoid excessive new initiatives, and maintain consistency in programs and focus areas.
- **Ensure Equity in Student Support & Inclusion** – Schools should avoid removing exceptional students from the least restrictive environment and should implement a whole-school approach for support.
- **Preserve Arts, Music, and Equitable Access to Programs** – The district should avoid cutting arts, music, and extracurricular programs while ensuring all students have equal access to resources across clusters.
- **Move Away from the Cluster Model** – The district should avoid sticking with the cluster model in order to desegregate schools and give all students more equitable access to resources and programs, especially on the high school level.
- **Prioritize Attendance Support** – The district should not take their focus away from attendance and instead provide better support for the whole child and the issues students face around attendance.
- **Reduce Technology Reliance** – The district should prioritize reading physical books over screen time and encourage more hands-on, in-person learning.
- **Enhance Individualized Learning Plans** – Schools should implement more individualized planning to accommodate each student's unique learning style.

Direct Quotes:

- "More is not better – too many priorities, too many initiatives, too many expectations."
- "Be consistent with programs, initiatives, and focus."
- "Avoid moving Exceptional students out of the least restrictive environment; use a more whole-school approach to support all students."
- "The district should avoid sticking with the cluster model in order to desegregate schools and give all students more equitable access to resources and programs, especially on the high school level."
- "Stop relying so much on technology and bring back more in-person, hands-on learning."
- "Less Technology (Read more books instead of on-screen time)."
- "More individualized planning for each student's learning style."