

Atlanta Public Schools

LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

February 3, 2019

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in January of 2020, for the superintendent position in the Atlanta Public Schools (APS). The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when meeting with individuals and groups in either individual interviews or focus group settings on January 6-13, 2020, and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders between December 3, 2019 and January 8, 2020. APS also provided constituents with open ended survey questions through their website “Let’s Talk”. The consultants also utilized the results of the APS facilitated community meetings about the superintendent vacancy from the fall of 2019. The surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Forty-nine stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings were used to collect information regarding the strengths of the district, the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years, and desired characteristics in the new superintendent. The online survey was used to collect data relevant to ranking desired characteristics in the new superintendent as well as suggestions for prospective superintendent candidates. Data collected through the online survey were very consistent with the input of the stakeholder interviews and focus groups.

Participation

The number of participants in interview and/or focus groups sessions, by stakeholder group, in the two methods of data gathering are listed below:

Group	Personal Interviews or Focus Groups	Online Survey
Board	9	N/A
Administrators	35	148
Teachers	12	434
Support Staff	15	292
Parents	14	580
Community	25	171
Students	10	35
Total	120	1660

The Board of Education members were individually interviewed. Many other central office administrators and elected officials also received individual interviews. Various different community members and groups were invited and participated, including the Mayor, County Commissioners, Public Safety Officials, and numerous others. Open invitation community forums for parents, staff and community were offered at various times and locations.

The responses provided by the individuals and focus groups during the interviews are listed in two places: 1) "Summary of Consistent Themes. . ." which are listed on pages 7 and 8 of the report, and; 2) "Summary of All Reported Comments and Observations..." which begin on page 9. They are listed alphabetically with no attempt to prioritize them. Finally, a draft of desired characteristics for the new Superintendent, to be discussed with the entire Board on February 3, 2020, can be found on page 35. Separate documents will provide the Board with the statistical results of the online survey and the Let's Talk comments.

The 1660 respondents on the on-line survey represent an outstanding cross sampling of the different groups engaged with the Atlanta Public Schools District. Parents and community members were especially well represented with 39 individuals attending meetings in person and 751 individual responses to the on-line survey. Atlanta Public School staff members were also well represented with 62 meeting the consultants in person and 844 individuals responding to the on-line survey. The on-line survey comparative statistical analysis, ranking desired characteristics sought in the new superintendent, and the comments from Let's Talk and the facilitated community meetings amplify the findings and themes from the focus groups.

It should be emphasized that the data from the focus groups are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they are attributed. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention.

Strengths of the District

When asked about the strengths of Atlanta Public Schools District, almost every person and group interviewed cited the quality of life, the vibrant culture of Atlanta and the diversity of the community. People spoke with pride about the resources and opportunities of Atlanta. The city is growing and flourishing in many areas of business and commerce. The City of Atlanta is unique in that it is geographically located in Fulton County and is the state capital of Georgia. This confluence means a multitude of government agencies operate in the City of Atlanta, which was seen as both a strength and a concern. The business community, the clergy and parishes of Atlanta and these governmental agencies all believe the key to the success of the City of Atlanta is the public schools. Participants and groups all cited the incredible commitment of the community to support the schools and support the students and families in need.

The most common source of pride for many citizens of Atlanta is the history. Seen as the epicenter of the civil rights movement, Atlanta citizens continue to believe as a community they have advanced civil rights and serve as a lighthouse community for the nation with a deep history. The Atlanta Public Schools have played an incredible role in the civil rights movement and many prestigious African American graduates of APS have left their legacy on that movement. Alumni and graduates speak with great pride of the role of APS in this history.

The compact size and location of Atlanta Public Schools District was seen as a strength for finding a way and a means for every child to succeed. There is great pride from all respondents in the commitment to the individual child and how the staff is committed to providing for the basic needs of children in need. Principals and teachers were praised by many respondents for going the extra mile with challenging and sometimes dire family situations to advance the needs of the child.

Many focus group and survey respondents recognized the quality of Dr. Carstarphen's leadership and tenure. At the start of Dr. Carstarphen's tenure in 2009 APS was recovering from a testing scandal. Her forthright no nonsense approach and her longevity allowed APS to rebuild trust in the employees who did not participate in the testing scandal. She also had to administer and lead a district with over 100 employees under indictment. Many participants praised Dr. Carstarphen for being the right superintendent at the right time for APS to survive the corruption of the test results

Progress has been made in high school graduation rates, test scores and other indicators. Various and numerous curriculum initiatives were also instituted under Dr. Carstarphen.

Many groups such as religious groups, health care, higher education and a plethora of non-profits all provide resources and can't do enough for the students and families of Atlanta. The impacts of poverty in Atlanta would be far greater if it were not for the committed citizens of Atlanta.

The passion of the commitment to students from the teachers and the entire staff was consistently referenced. Many of the employee participants were either products of Atlanta Public Schools District or were residents with children attending the Atlanta Public Schools. Frequent mention was made of the dedication of the professional staff and their relationships with their students. Students, parents, and community members made reference to teachers and building administrators that went "above and beyond" in assuring the academic needs of all students were met regardless of budget or program constraints with which they may have been faced. Students were also pleased to acknowledge the presence of district administrators, teachers, and building administrators in other aspects of their lives (the arts, sports, mentoring, etc.). Even more impressive were the words used by many participants to describe the teacher workforce, i.e., passionate, gracious, dedicated, and devoted.

Principals and the Central Office also received praise for their competence and their commitment to the mission of the schools. It is rare for the consultants to hear such universal praise of staff. Staff retention and quality principal appointments were singled out for praise as a vast improvement from past years. Central office cabinet personnel were very knowledgeable and competent in their respective areas of responsibility. APS runs very well, and the superintendent, the Board and the staff deserve praise for running a great organization in an urban setting. This does not happen in many cities!!

The facilities are in very good condition and improvements continue on a rolling basis. The Atlanta Public Schools District has committed funds for growth, renovation and school safety through ESPLOST that make the facilities function at a very high level. The school district has even

included doctor staffed medical clinics at six schools to serve the students and the community. There is a recognition that more needs to be done in the impoverished communities but that everyone is committed to solving the problem.

Atlanta is a community that has great pride in the history of its schools and they are committed to continually improve the schools to ensure that all children have equal access to the highest levels of student achievement.

Challenges/Concerns/Issues Facing the District

Atlanta has a very high poverty rate as indicated by per capita income in the state of Georgia. The distribution of poverty in APS is extremely bifurcated. The most frequent quote from all participants was “A tale of two cities”. A large array of train tracks and an Interstate highway dissect Atlanta into a north and south orientation. Higher per capita incomes and much of Atlanta’s resurgent growth has occurred on the north side. The south side has not experienced redevelopment and community poverty is extreme on the south side.

As a result of this demographic/economic divide, APS schools on the north side are perceived as well appointed, high achieving and at capacity. Schools on the south side have excess capacity, and students come from families in crisis. Providing a stable and safe environment is the highest priority on the south side. The extreme need for all types of social services competes with raising the academic achievement on the south side. As one staff member said, “all staff in the poorest schools want and believe all children can achieve, there are just so many obstacles of social issues to overcome”.

Demographics are changing in APS as well. African Americans are for the first time in the history of the school district projected to not be the majority student base. Increasing whites, latinx and Asians are all changing the demographics.

Generational poverty remains the challenge for APS and City of Atlanta. But the commitment of Atlanta citizens is strong and with great leadership in the schools and in cooperation with the City, it is our hope that Atlanta be the community that can address a systemic approach to poverty.

Superintendent and Board relations were cited by many respondents as needing improvement. And there is a broader realm of relationships and cooperation with City government and other governmental agencies that needs enhancement. Atlanta has tremendous resources and many felt that the existing state of these relationships hinders the educational mission.

There was recognition that the teachers were dedicated and passionate, but there was also a teacher quality issue that many felt needed improvement. Numerous teachers were APS graduates and just as generational poverty impacts communities, many respondents felt that APS teacher graduates could and should model higher teacher expectations and improve their content knowledge and teaching skills.

The new superintendent should establish an open and responsive communication system to ensure teacher input and concerns are included as a standard operating procedure.

The Atlanta Board of Education members must also redefine their roles with the new superintendent. The majority of Board members feel a new working relationship needs to be established quickly upon the appointment of the new superintendent. Communication between the superintendent and the Board must be transparent and must be inclusive to ensure all members are receiving all of the communication. The new superintendent and the Board should consider an early workshop to focus on roles, responsibilities, communication and expectations.

Despite these concerns, the citizens and especially the Board, staff, and parents should and continue to be very proud of the many strengths and accomplishments of the Atlanta Public Schools District.

Desired Characteristics

The most often-mentioned response to this question was passionate educators able to maintain the current achievements yet provide a vision for continuous improvement for APS. Many expressed a desire to not hire a change agent

The new superintendent must be a community builder! Relationships in Atlanta for the superintendent extend far beyond the Board and the school staff. A harmonious and productive relationship must exist with and among a multitude of governmental agencies, businesses, higher education, clergy, health care and community groups of Atlanta. The relationships with the City of Atlanta call for the most improvement and the new superintendent must make an extended effort and have a cooperative working relationship with the City.

The successful candidate should also be a great communicator who can reach out to engage the entire community, all parents, and all citizens across the wide spectrum of diversity in Atlanta. Communicating, supporting and seeking the input of the teachers will also be vital to the success of Atlanta Public Schools District. Community involvement and visibility in schools and the community are highly desired.

The candidate should also be able to analyze and create a strategy to ensure standard operating procedures, curriculum and instruction occur with greater consistency in all schools for all students. Fewer initiatives, analysis of current initiatives and seeking staff input on initiatives would all be welcome qualities in the new superintendent.

In summary, the high level of survey responses, along with participation in the focus groups and community meetings, are strong indicators of a school district that is very proud of past accomplishments, but seek a talented leader who can build on the excellence and move the district forward in transparent communication, community engagement and continued and improved high student achievement.

HYA cannot promise to find a candidate who possesses all of the characteristics desired by respondents. However, HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to address the concerns expressed by the constituent groups. We will seek a new superintendent who can work with the Atlanta Public Schools Board of Education to provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards for all students, while meeting the unique needs of each of its students.

The consultants would like to thank all the members of the Atlanta Public School Board of Education who provided valuable information through individual meetings, as well as Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Maria Carstarphen, for sharing time with us. We would like to thank all the individuals who participated in the focus meetings for their candid “on the ground input” and specificity in dealing with the positive aspects of the district, varying challenges facing the district in the future, and comments regarding characteristics they would like to see in the new superintendent. Equally important was the input provided through the online survey in ranking the top characteristics for the new superintendent and candid comments regarding the superintendent search. We would also like to thank the Atlanta Public Schools District staff members who were most accommodating and always made us feel comfortable as we borrowed office space and navigated our way through the Atlanta Central Office complex. Finally, a very special thank you is extended to Pierre Gaither and Keith Glass, who assisted us greatly in identifying constituent groups and coordinating meeting times within the Atlanta Public Schools District community.

Respectfully submitted,

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SUMMARY OF CONSISTENT THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

Strengths

- An engaged and supportive City that wants APS to succeed
- APS has a long history of distinguished graduates and alumni
- Atlanta is a vibrant city with growth and unlimited potential
- Atlanta's access to higher education, the arts, businesses, and recreational resources
- Board members are committed to their governance role
- Funding and resources are available for the needs of APS
- Graduation rates and other academic indicators have risen in recent history
- Legacy of civil rights movement is part of Atlanta and APS history
- Principal and central office staff are highly competent
- School facilities and maintenance are in good shape with funding sources from ESPLOST
- Schools and staff embrace and care for the neediest families in poverty
- Staff is passionate and committed to all students
- Talented teachers that are dedicated, committed, and responsive to parents as well as students

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- “Tale of Two Cities” a city with wealth and poverty in the extremes
- Board and superintendent roles, relationships, governance and engagement are vital to the success and longevity
- Capacity issues with crowding in the north with underutilization in the south
- Diversity—racial, ethnic, socio-economic, etc.
- Equity—many different viewpoints and definitions
- Many schools in need academic improvement for accreditation
- Provide equal access for all students (north and south) to a rigorous curriculum
- Relationship improvement with the City and other governmental agencies is a priority

Desired Characteristics

- Communicates and connects with parents and all citizens in a caring and gracious manner
- Collaborative with the community, the schools, and especially the governance structure of APS and Atlanta
- Develops ideas and is able to stand her/his ground in the face of political pressures
- Engages, supports and seeks the input of teachers
- Instructional leader with urban experience
- Demonstrated results in an urban setting to close the achievement gap
- Systemic thinker who is proactive - not reactive
- Teaching background is desired
- Honesty/integrity/transparency are critical attributes
- Understands diversity in all forms, comfortable in all settings

- Willing to listen and observe while learning the district – doesn't start changing things immediately

Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

Listed in alphabetical order

“/” indicates multiple similar responses from different interviews

Board Members

Strengths

1996 Olympics put us on the map
52000 great students who need APS
6000 employees who commit to these students every day
Affordability
African American—leadership and opportunity
Airport serves the world
All benefits of big city with a small-town feel
Ambitious strategic plan focused on closing achievement gaps between subgroups
APS desegregation was a historical leader
APS has a legacy of graduates—Martin Luther King, and many others
APS has rich history—noted and appreciated—distinguished graduates //
APS identifies principals through strong screening process
Atlanta has great opportunity—philanthropic, corporate and city and County resources
Atlanta is an up and coming city to live in
Attracts business and international—to southern hospitality
Board
Budget
Buildsmart—Master Plan led to ESPLOST for construction—facilities are good shape
Challenging position
City growth and growth mode
Collaboration potential
Community engagement office—ensures parents the skill to navigate APS
Community support of schools
Community wants APS to succeed
Community will rally and support the new superintendent—Buckhead to Bankhead
Contributions of people are valued, especially those of color
Corporate partnerships
Current Atlanta Mayor is a Douglass graduate
District on the rise
Diversity is very strong and welcomed ////
Dual enrollment—700 students and growing
Emerging city—still a long way to go
Every landform within a few hours
Facility growth potential
Funding is very good—money is available for all critical needs
Good foundation is in place—great things that need to continue
Graduation rate of Latinx students increased

Great City-offers great opportunities— “A city too busy to hate”
Groundwork is in place for a new superintendent to take it to the next level
Growing exponentially
Historical
Momentum is in place
Operations have improved to allow future superintendent to focus on academics
Striving for excellence
Strong Board of Education
Strong educated AA’s in every aspect of the school chain
Strong focus on students
Strong funding--community ready and willing to help
Strong instructional focus—APS has moved beyond compliance
Strong system for some—but you sometimes you have to fight to get it
Students
Teaching excellence and leadership excellence
The worst is over—but there is still a lot left to do
Unique city
Weather

Challenges

1% gains in schools is not enough
6 of the 9 school clusters need improvement—87 schools
APS children are not getting the same education
Barriers—city, state and county need to be held accountable for improving students lives
Barriers—income disparity is very wide
Board elected by popularity, not skills
Budget allocation
Build relationships with trust in the community
Capacity issues split by north and south—can’t be solved by busing
CEO model needed--not a monarchy
Challenging Board sometimes get too involved in small issues
Charter Schools—no need to extend or expand—focus on the traditional schools rather than turn more schools over to Charters
Children need a vision and hope—we owe that to them
Children not reading on grade level
Communication (internal/external)
Community Buy-in
Consider reorganization
Continue successful initiatives
Culture of mistrust
Cycle of poverty in the City is persistent—creates funding needs for wrap around services
Develop a strong relationship with the Board as a whole and each individual member of the Board to leverage synergy in APS
Develop a thorough knowledge of organizational structure of APS to ensure all central office activities are in support of the students
Develop strategic thinkers not just test takers

Develop, establish and maintain professional boundaries with the entire Board and individual Board members
Disparity of private resources in individual schools is exasperating the achievement gap
Diversity
Ensure Stability and continuity
Equity and disparity ///
Focusing on turning around low performing schools—highest priority
Funding is plentiful—how does this impact the lives of the children –unravel the current expenditures to ensure student achievement
Gaining trust of community members is vital—only an ecumenical approach will work
Give the north what they need—then let them figure it out
Graduation rate increases will be more difficult to achieve than the recent graduation growth APS has experienced
High poverty—needs effort of the entire city to make a change
Housing is an issue—livable wages would help too
Improved communication
Inequities of the parents and homes is tremendous
Innovation
Lack of food, breakfast and lunch – why not food pantries
Large constituency still wants current superintendent to stay
Letting adult problems getting in the way of educating the children
Linkages and connections are important—don't take credit for all good ideas—let others shine
Literacy
Low enrollment
Low performing schools concentrated geographically
Majority of students not performing at the proper levels
Maria's legacy
Navigating APS is still too difficult for parent and staff, website improvement is still needed
Need immediate improvement in low performing schools
Not all principals are clear in their vision and addressing discipline, teacher empowerment, and the overall culture of the school
Opportunities:
Parent engagement
Peacetime general versus wartime general—it's time for the peacetime
Perceived accountability – nothing seems to happen in the schools that are continually failing
Political stamina
Politics—always navigating City with State with County
Poverty //
Predominantly white and high socio-economic schools need to become more diverse
Race—tail of two cities, haves and have not's //
Racism
Relationships need improvement with the City of Atlanta and other governmental agencies ///
Restorative practices
Schools are not diverse
Schools—facility equity issue remains
Services-housing, food, mental health
Shift to autonomy school principals need different skill sets

Social and emotional learning
Socioeconomic divide
Students having access and equity to curriculum and resources such as technology are a concern
Superintendent's legacy
Tale of two cities—North and South—demographics, income, education
Teacher support
Teamwork with Board and Superintendent
Threats
Time is a constraint on the 70% of students not reading on grade level at 3rd grade
Tough district—from community input to political involvement
Traffic
Transportation—bussing will not solve the issue, but the limits of traffic impact solutions
Trust is not where it needs to be between the parents and the school system
Water polo practice sites versus do children have meals and food—what are our priorities
We need someone to work cooperatively with us now
Workforce quality—concerns about employee accountability to the needs of the child

Characteristics

'TEAM KIDS'
"Genuinely" increase achievement
Ability to recognize mistakes and come back with a good solution
Advocate for APS students
Assertive
Bridge builder not bridge burner
Can adapt to change and be able to coach employees rather than scare them
Challenging environment experience
Change agent not needed
Child advocate
Collaborative /////
Come in and work with those who need it the most
Commitment
Communication effectively with all constituents and communities ///
Deep and broad experience in education
Deep urban, poverty, achievement, experience needed
Delegates
Diversity of thought
Diversity—all forms
Drama free
Emotional intelligence /
Engaging
Equity and inequity experience //
Experience in the schools /
Experience with low performing schools
Fearless
Flexibility and autonomy would be valued in school leaders
Gender/Race/LGBTQ, age does not matter

Heart for students
High expectations for student achievement
Honesty ///
Humility
Hyper focused on school district—keep the main thing the main thing and focused on APS
Independent
Innovative ///
Integrate and network community groups while protecting the district’s interest
Integrity ///
Knowledge of instruction
Manage the employees—hold them accountable
Model for ‘out of the box’ thinking
Need someone like Dr. C
No spotlights—link arms instead
Non-education candidates do not fit APS needs
Organized
Passion for students—drive for success
People person
Political maneuverability is very important
Priority:
Qualities
Recognizes differences but prioritizes unity
Relationships with city official
Respect what’s working
Scare tactics and fear do not work
Self-awareness
Servant leader
Someone who can navigate external and internal politics of schools and governmental agencies
Someone who cares deeply about eradicating poverty—using education as the vehicle to do it
Someone with a history of closing achievement gaps
Someone with turnaround success in schools and school districts
Strategic Thinker
Strong leader, manager
Students first
Study and understand the beat of APS—don’t assume
Supports internal compliance
System approach
Systems thinker
Team Player
Teamwork and collaboration
Thought partnerships with solutions
Transparency ///
Trustworthy
Understand the civil rights history of APS and the role it played in US history
Understands an urban district
Understands the importance of addressing the needs of the whole child
Use data to make informed decisions

Value divergent points of view—engage and consider input from staff and parents

Values

Values data

Vision for instruction—continue the recent initiatives

Worked up through the ranks

Works well with the board

Administrative Team

Strengths

500,000 to 1.2 million in City population growth is expected
Accountability in tech division
APS attached to city of Atlanta
APS Police Dept
APS used to be 100,000 students—we may grow back to that
Atlanta is a great thriving city
Atlanta is unique for school choice options—charters are not a brain drain
Atlanta was seen as progressive before the cheating scandal
Central Office leaders
Charter system and school-based autonomy engages communities in a new way
Cohesive board
Collaborative atmosphere
Communication from district
Communities loves their schools
Credibility in attracting and retaining partnerships
Culture and economic strength
Culture of the organization is improving everyday—no trust issues
Custodial 50% outsourced and food service is entirely outsourced
Dedicated staff
Defined academic program—many curriculum improvements
Director/principal had high turnover—that has changed
Discipline—proactive with discipline supports
Diversity //
Employees are committed to the students
Engagement of alumni, community, parents, students
Enormous workforce talent within the schools
Family atmosphere—very welcoming and embracing
Family oriented
Financial stability
Go teams are very successful
Great accomplishments—foundational stuff—documenting SOP's, beyond regulations and policies
Great City
Great communication
Great schools
Growth should double in the next 20 years
Hub of the south
Leadership development program
Legacy of APS
Operationally sound organization
Opportunities to interact with businesses which have had an impact on the district
Opportunity to put your stamp on Atlanta
Organization is resource rich, especially for an urban environment

Partnerships are very strong
Passion for the work from the employees
Passionate staff
People care about the City, the families and the students
Positive momentum in academic outcomes
Poverty of students is decreasing
Principals
Principals are empowered—ability to innovate is fostered
Principals are strong
Principals owning their buildings—operational leaders
Rich history of the city and school district
Robust professional development
Room to move district to the next level
School based health clinics in several schools staffed with M.D.'s
Schools
Smart capable staff
SPLOST gives \$100 million a year for facilities
Stability at the principal level
Stable leadership
Strong cabinet
Systems in place
Talent pool is strong and highly educated
Talent pool of the senior staff is excellent
Unique and passionate neighborhoods
Very rigorous selection process for principals
Wrap around supports for mental, social and emotional health

Challenges

76% free and reduced is moving lower
Accountability for student success from all stakeholders
Advocacy groups
Affordable housing is an issue
African American population will not be the majority group in the future
Asian and Caucasians demographics are increasing
Behavior and discipline – professional development still needed
Better relationships with the City of Atlanta
Board service sometimes used as political springboard
Board informed decision making (content specialists cuts)
Bureaucracy can be streamlined—the flow charts are not strong and not always followed
Commitment to Community
Competition for talent in Metro Area
Content knowledge
Cultural work still needs improvement
District's past
Diversity

Division of communities
Engagement of “all” community
Generational poverty
Global HR/Lawson
Haves and have not’s—tale of two cities
How to bring a Board together—how to build trust in a Board that hasn’t been able to do it themselves
Inequity
Lack of education of Board members leads to the Board not understanding consequences of the decision
Major demographic shift
Money/funds become politically attractive—but students need to remain the focus
More pressure—everything from celebrations to crisis has tremendous coverage from the press
Navigation of tradition
Need to repair the relationship with the City of Atlanta and other governmental entities
Parent engagement is a challenge
Political landscape needs careful and thoughtful attention
Politics
Pre-K reading
Pressures on taxes—tax allocations
Racial segregation -- community development seems to be geared to the high socio-economic clientele
Relationship between district and the city
Relationship between district/city
SOP’s need improvement and need to be documented
Stable leadership needs to be maintained
Stagnant literacy performance
Strategic Planning is not evident in the top of the administrative level
Student achievement has been flat
Talent deficit in the teacher and transportation workforce
Teacher training
Tech budget insufficient
Technology is a challenge
Transition from a school system to “a system of schools”
Trust
Turnover is still too high
Very wealthy or very poor—bifurcated district
Wages

Characteristics

“Moral politics” (what’s best for kids)
Ability to navigate highly complex political relationships with City, State, Business Community, State Education, officials, etc.
Able to bring a divided Board together

Academic leader
Accessible atmosphere is well established and can't be diminished
Board relationships
Collaborator
Come in with open mind and heart; don't believe they have all the answers
Committed to community
Communicate "good information" to parents/community //
Community is very engaged—candidate must be open to the community
Culture building skills
Deliberative
Don't stop the positive momentum—assess what's working
Effective school board experience
Eliminate silos
Empowers leadership
Enroll their children in APS
Errol Davis type—CEO—nontraditional – pink unicorn
Ethical //
Evidence of raising student achievement
Excellent transparent communication skills especially with Board Members
Focus needed—many different priorities and much noise distract
Goal focused
Good listener
Grit is needed
Instructional leader
Instructional leader with a strong background
Integrity
Internal team talent builder
Involved
Knows instruction
Personable and willing to hear the concerns
Politically savvy /
Preserve dignity of all
Priority is APS business
Public school experience
Relates to all constituents and families in the district
Relationship builder /
School Leader experience
Silo eliminator
Slow steady progress is needed
Spotless personal background
Stabilizing leader—not transformational
Staff developer
Strong managerial skills
Superintendent experience
Supporter of strategic plan process
Thick skin ///
Trust

Union experience—right to work state—but organizations/associations still need superintendent relationship skills
Urban experience in large districts /
Value staff
Visible in and out of district
Willing to listen

Principals

Strengths

Acquisition of resources
Birthplace of civil rights movement
Collaboration
Equity
Family oriented, passion for children
Hearing stakeholders
High School principal unity
Impressive education for Urban students
Increasing employee morale
Intentional focus on excellence
Location, Atlanta a thriving city
Longevity of employees, skill set
Opportunities for success
Opportunity for diverse groups
Opportunity to help underserved
Positive changes over last 5 years; re-branding
Resiliency of District
Students are great
Trajectory of student achievement growth

Challenges

Academic underachievement
Atlanta politics
Changing management
Deal with diverse politics
Employees morale
Enforcement of policies equally
Equity //
Establish rules of engagement that are consistent
Financial needs
Gentrification impacts
Improve discipline protocols
Increase number of college bound students
Literacy improvement
Provide in-house opportunities for staff

Re- branding/images
Retention of highly regarded employees
Socio-economic and educational divide
Special Education
Streamlining of initiatives
Support building principals
Support employees of closing schools
Whole child approach to teaching and learning
Work-life balance distribution

Characteristics

Principal in an Urban School
Turnaround experience
Passionate, approachable
Able to build/develop relationship with staff/community
Navigate the political landscape
Allow communication protocols to work
Defined position on charter schools
Able to connect to community
Able to enhance partnerships and fund raising
Focus on children
Willing to review current programs before changes
Thoughtful, reflective
Able to understand and utilization data
Able to focus on literacy
Able to distribute resources based on **need**

Directors and Instructional Staff

Strengths

Administrators are supportive of the Arts
Area attractions, social and historical
Charter system is great
Community history/legacy
Community passion and attachment to schools
Cultural capital of the US
Diversity, economically, racially and culturally
Economic growth potential
Facilities are good
Focus of social-emotional learning
Focus on vision/mission
Forward-looking school district
Growth and development
Increasing number of partnerships
Infrastructure
Job opportunities
Melting pot
Metropolitan city
Opportunities for student growth
Opportunities in district/community
Opportunities to address challenges
Opportunities to increase partnerships
Partnerships are abundant /
Professional staff
Quality of life
Resources
Schools could almost run without a superintendent
Staff engagement
Staff longevity
Strategic plan
Support system for the schools is very strong—facilities, mental health, student services, etc.
Teachers have heart for the kids
Untapped potential for growth and prosperity
Very talented and skilled educators
Vibrant city for the Arts
Workforce is very dedicated—they go over and above for their students

Challenges

Academic performance
Autonomy of schools
Charters
Collaboration with city/state //
Community dynamics vary
Continue student reach
Continued re-branding
Culture shift needed
Decision making does not include all information
Developing a caring culture
Disconnect between district and schools
Employee social/emotional support
Equity ///
Equity between the different areas north versus south – levels of service
Equity in Arts
Family database is not current
Financial commitment to prior pension plans
Focus on social emotional learning
Focus on vision and mission
Full engagement of business and community groups
Impoverish communities
Managing changing demographics and diversity
Move from focus on numbers to people
New leadership anxiety
Overcoming the “cheating scandal”
Politics will be a challenge—special favors/needs—many requests
Population of students in poverty—poverty issue transition into the schools
Recruit more Black males
Redistricting
Relationships with 10 clusters
Silos do not engage community
Some employees here for the wrong reason
Student achievement
Student and Teacher safety
Student behavior
Teacher and student advocacy
Top down focus

Transparency
Trust

Characteristics

Ability to work with government and community groups
Able to access staff, forward thinking, motivator
Able to work with BOE, and communicator
Academic achievement experience
Academics are a priority
Active listener
Approachable—by all employees and all citizens
Authentic
Available to press
Awareness and Sensitivity to Special needs students
Children first mentality
Clear vision and implementation plan
Commitment to district and students first
Communicator
Consistent messages
Develops relationships with staff and others without getting caught up in politics
Effective communicator, visionary
Ego does not impede work
Experience as a principal, traditional public school
Experience in an Urban center
Focus on order, operations, structure
Focused on students
Fund raiser for resources
Gets out of the central office
Listen without being offended
Local administrator
Loves Atlanta
Manager of district operations
Media savvy
Non-Educator
Not a “yes” person
Polished in delivery of difficult messages
Politically savvy
Proven track record of building capacity
Respect work of the District
Someone with Atlanta experience and historical history

Transparency //
Treat staff as professionals
Trustworthy, approachable, visible, caring /
Utilizes an inclusive decision-making model
Values school discipline
Visible
Visionary
Voice expectations
Willing to engage and learn from community
Willing to understand before initiating change

Teachers

Strengths

Big city with increasing population
Caring and nurturing staff
Great City leaders
Great diversity
Great teachers
In the process of turnaround
Job opportunities
Partnerships
Serious investment in Student Learning
Students
Teachers are able to help others
Willing to spend money to build infrastructure

Challenges

Continue the transparency
Equity
Power and autonomy of principals
Resistance to change in leadership

Characteristics

Able to build relationships with partners
Be a true advocate of district, teachers and teachers
Great communicator
Honest, reliable and keep promises
Knowledgeable, visionary
Non-Bully
Well aware of education protocols and practices
Willing to focus on improving behavior of students
Willing to hold everyone accountable
Willing to include teachers in decision making process
Willing to observe current work before making changes
Willing to work with teachers to improve work place benefits

Students

Strengths

Abundant resources
Family atmosphere
Freshmen mentoring program
Grads return to see teachers
Multiple activities centered around student interests
Parent, teacher, staff support system
Project based learning
Public figures serve as mentors
Single gender schools
Staff stability
Superintendent attends events
Teachers prepare students for career pathways

Challenges

Bright Students from underserved families are not encouraged to seek opportunities available to others
College readiness is not introduced until senior year
Financial college resources reserved for top 10%
High teacher turnover in one of the schools
Limited inclusion of sped students
Limited SEL training for Staff/students
Low student-counselor ratio for college prep
Money management classes needed
More ACT/SAT prep needed
Negative teacher energy impact students negatively- (“I have my degree, you have to get yours”)
Ongoing redistricting conversations
Provide Special Ed students need same opportunities as others
Recognize, respond, provide resources to LGBTQI students
Teachers experiencing emotional stress
Teachers released midyear from “Purpose Built” (partnership company) schools
Tension which may result from future demographic shifts
Threats to send kids to Forest Hills (alternative school)
Under-resourced communities handled differently than resourced communities

Characteristics

Compassionate
Driven
Education experience
Experience in a diverse district
Genuine
Involved

Meets with students to clarify the impact of decisions

Open-minded

Outgoing

Resilient

Selflessness

Understanding

Support Staff

Strengths

Approachable
Communication
Great working relationship with the current superintendent
Welcoming

Challenges

Current hierarchy—will they work with the team in place—be mindful of the different organizations
Large shoes to fill with personality
Stop outsourcing—bring nutrition back in house

Characteristics

Always have children as a first priority
Can't be all about the teachers—they've got to be flexible
High-spirited
Leadership skills—tough skin
Open-minded
Put the students first—core value
Solution oriented
Someone who is grounded but has an ear for everybody—welcome everybody to the table
Support services are important

Local Government Officials

Strengths

Administrators are effective
Atlanta is one of the most desirable places to live in the US. i.e. cost of living—weather—
employment opportunities
Balance of compassion and commerce
Community Resources
Community resources
Community willing to help shape future direction of APS
Cost of living
Disposal income—leads to enrollment in private schools
Diverse student population
Diversity /
Dr. C's leadership put APS in an upward trajectory
Facilities
Growing
Growing area
It's ATLANTA!
Partners support the legacy of the community
Partnerships with school districts
Progressive //
Proposed transit system
Recognition of historical figures
Residents want to see schools succeed
Rich history
Small town nurturing
Strong private schools
Students are great
Superintendent was passionate about the students
Synergy between philanthropic, business companies
Tech savvy district

Challenges

2 police systems – city/APS
Able to work with school board
Alternative school student management
Diversity
Don't know if the top school district exists now.
Dysfunctional relationship between city/Superintendent
Expectations will be high
Failure to have equity on north/south sides
Familiarity with nuances of Atlanta
Gentrification
Growing population

Ignored/disenfranchised employees
Majority of schools need improvement
Morale is bad
No real powerhouses on the Board
Parents put Superintendent under a lot of scrutiny
Police equipment/vehicles needed
Politics
Resources to support student needs
School failure impacts outcomes for community
Separate and unequal school system
Share APS mission/vision with community
Socioeconomic gaps
Strong willed
Superintendent should put students first and not bow into the City of Atlanta's priorities
Support salary review needed
Traffic
Try to get along with everybody

Characteristics

Active in community
Belief that turnaround can occur within a reasonable time
Builds relationships with officials to achieve goals
Collaborative with internal/external stakeholders
Committed to living in Atlanta
Communicate with all district/community constituents
Demonstrated success with school boards
Desire to serve
Ego cannot take a front seat
Engages with employees
Familiar with Atlanta, nuances of Atlanta
Fearless
Flexible
Focus on safety and security
Get out in community to share APS mission and vision
Heart for children and communities
History of moving districts in a positive direction
Involved in community
Kids first, not business officials
Listener
Move students toward college and career
Optimism
Outgoing
Passion for students of color
Personable /
Politically savvy

Progressive thinking
resources for all students/families
Seek input prior to decision making
Social consciousness
Successful work with community partners
Supportive of APS Police
Understands uniqueness of Atlanta
Vision which is clear to all
work with students in and out of classrooms
Work Effectively with city/state officials

Clergy

Strengths

APS is resource rich
Many opportunities here, culture is very rich
Many resources for children beyond the school system
Principal qualities are great and still improving
Principals are ensuring the safety net for all children
Vibrant City

Challenges

Accountability systems need to accommodate different teaching and learning styles?
APS is losing ground with competitive pay
APS needs to recruit and retain a better teacher workforce
Are all HS graduates ready for employment or college without taking remediation courses?
Do teachers just teach to the test? Students need skills beyond test taking?
Great teachers don't seem to stay in the positions that need them the most
Make decisions that may be diverse from the Board to protect students
Superintendent needs to understand the challenges of APS youth
Superintendent should meet with clergy interfaith on a regular basis
Teachers are the lynchpin to future APS success
Wealth disparity—impacts youth—so many challenges based on poverty

Characteristics

Conviction over convenience
Empowerment is more important than power
Heart of service for children
Not a career path—comes to APS as a calling
Passion for the entire job—students, staff and community
Principle over pleasure
Principled—not easily persuaded
Relationships are the best skills for leadership
What does leadership look like—it's not about power—it should be about service

Alumni

Strengths

A sense of community, family and Legacy
Changing demographics
Partners
The program of “no C’s”
Untapped potential of Atlanta

Challenges

Need for students to rise from the “Ashes” (untapped potential)
Need to be more family than business
Empower principals
Equity
Fix the infrastructure/fundamentals

Characteristics

A focus on community awareness and engagement
A focus on improving reading for all students
Ability to merge various identities into one
Ability to work with government agencies
Able to communicate a vision
Cultural awareness
Honesty and Integrity
Instructional orientation/student achievement
Proven track record in achieving district wide equity
Work with Atlanta politics

**Atlanta Public Schools District
Superintendent of Schools
Desired Characteristics
(in alphabetical order—not prioritized)**

After seeking input from its Board members, parents, staff, students, and community via focus groups, interviews, and an online survey, the Board of Education of the Atlanta Public Schools District (APS) seeks a strong and dynamic educational leader who possesses the following characteristics:

- Ability to champion and execute a shared vision on equity.
- Accessibility that is transparent and welcoming for community groups and organizations.
- Adaptability in developing a professional presence that is demonstrated through visibility.
- Humility and resilience in the face of dealing with difficult decisions and varying needs of the community.
- Inclusive style of leadership that engages and collaborates with Board Members, staff and community in a transparent style of leadership.
- Urban teaching and administrative experience that serves as a foundation for understanding differentiation of instruction, meeting individual student needs, and provide a curriculum and strategies to close the achievement gap.

With regard to leadership experiences and accomplishments, the successful candidate will:

- Demonstrate community and family engagement built upon transparency, trust, honesty and integrity.
- Demonstrate proven skills in building a governance model that is inclusive of excellent working relationships with the Board, the governmental agencies of the region and especially the community.
- Demonstrate skilled leadership in curriculum and program development that is research based, evidence based, and is supported by well-planned and sequenced implementation and professional development.
- Demonstrates an ability encompass vision, mission and strategic plans but also demonstrates and ability to work with current initiatives and provide a continuous feedback loop for improvement.
- Demonstrate district wide achievement results that have raised the bar of accomplishment while reducing achievement gaps between and among all student groups.
- Demonstrate creativity in the development of an educational working environment that is effective, well managed, fairly evaluated, inclusive and holds all employees accountable.
- Demonstrate human resource(s) skills that attract outstanding candidates for all positions and decrease turnover vulnerabilities.

