

Strategic Planning Meeting - Phase 3

April 22, 2025
Carver Early College

1. Comments on the Statement: “Empowering Atlanta students to shape the future”

- **Initial Appeal:** Participants acknowledged that the statement sounds promising and aspirational at first glance.
- **Missing Human Element:** Upon reflection, some felt the statement was too abstract or industry-oriented, lacking emphasis on personal growth, emotional development, and creativity.
- **Suggestions for Enrichment:**
 - Incorporate values like responsible decision-making, interpersonal skills, creativity, community service, and introspection.
 - Include concepts that reflect the whole child—not just as future workers, but as empowered individuals and community members.

2. Comments on the Statement: “Educate with excellence, creating growth, building grit, and preparing graduates”

- **Excellence and Growth:** Generally well received; seen as foundational to a strong educational system.
- **Controversy Around “Grit”:**
 - Concerns that the term shifts responsibility for success onto students without acknowledging systemic barriers (e.g., teacher turnover, unstable school leadership).
 - Risks perpetuating a harmful “hustle culture” mentality—i.e., “sleep when you die” or “grind to survive.”
 - Participants asked for a more nuanced or alternative framing if “grit” remains. One group attempted to redefine it or even suggested dropping the term altogether.
- **Call for Systemic Accountability:**
 - Highlighted the need for the district to own its role in dismantling inequities and not solely place pressure on students to “persevere” through structural barriers.

3. Top Priorities Identified by Participants

A. Schools

- **High-Quality Teaching:** Emphasis on strong instructional practices and teacher accountability.

- **Assessment & Accountability:** Ongoing, formative assessment aligned to student needs; not just end-of-year testing.
- **Whole Child Learning:**
 - Valuing and nurturing students as people.
 - Equity and inclusion as essential components.
- **Career Pathways for All:** Exposure to diverse career options early and continuously.

B. District Operations

- **Facilities & Infrastructure:**
 - Clean, safe, modern learning environments.
 - Reliable transportation (e.g., after-school tutorial buses) to support equitable access.
- **Data-Informed Systems:**
 - Tools like APS Graphs praised for enabling real-time decisions and support.
 - Desire for clean, user-friendly data translated into layman's terms.
- **Mental Health & Wellness:**
 - Critical during adolescence, especially for building self-esteem and navigating identity development.
 - Support systems (e.g., counselors, social workers) need to be available and accessible.
- **Nutrition & Housing:**
 - Acknowledged as often overlooked, but foundational to learning—"If you're hungry, how are you going to learn?"

C. Family & Community Partnerships

- **Aligned Expectations:**
 - Ensure consistent academic and behavioral standards across schools (especially important for transient student populations).
- **Shared Responsibility:**
 - Strong emphasis on collaboration between families, schools, and community stakeholders.
- **Community-Based Career Exposure:**
 - Bringing in role models and professionals that students can relate to, particularly from tech and creative industries.
- **Parent University / Workshops:**
 - Help families understand curriculum (e.g., "new math") and build their own capacity to support students.
- **Cultural Respect & Appreciation:**
 - Combat ongoing inequities and promote inclusive practices.
 - Participants noted persistent lack of appreciation for diverse communities even in 2025.