

Focus and Priorities of Summaries Combined

Atlanta Public Schools hosted a series of Strategic Planning sessions with students, families, and community members to explore what must be true for schools, operations, and family and community partnerships to achieve the district's goals of Academic Excellence & Critical Thinking and Life Skills & College and Career Readiness. Stakeholders emphasized the need for inclusive instruction, early career exposure, and strong social-emotional support.

SCHOOLS

Academic Excellence & Critical Thinking

- **High-Quality Teaching:** Invest in recruiting, developing, and retaining certified, competent educators. Teachers should receive ongoing professional learning and support.
- **Rigorous & Relevant Curriculum:** Curriculum must be modern, aligned to standards, and reflect students' cultures and lived experiences. Families want stronger emphasis on reading, math, writing, and computer science.
- **Whole-Child Learning:** Social-emotional learning (SEL) should be integrated into the classroom. Schools should be welcoming, inclusive, and safe, both physically and emotionally.
- **Equity & Inclusion:** Provide equitable learning environments where all students, including multilingual learners and students with disabilities, feel supported and capable.
- **Instructional Practices:** Use evidence-based teaching strategies, project-based learning, and student-centered approaches like differentiated instruction and productive struggle.
- **Assessment & Accountability:** Shift focus from test scores to the learning process. Hold all schools (APS, charter, partner) accountable with transparency in student outcomes and policies.

Life Skills & Career Readiness

- **Early & Continuous Career Exposure:** Stakeholders advocate for real-world learning (e.g., JROTC, vocational training, job shadowing, apprenticeships) starting in early grades.
- **Financial Literacy & Practical Skills:** Life readiness should include soft skills, resume writing, managing money, signing documents, and "Life 101" courses.
- **Pathways for All Students:** Emphasis on providing multiple post-secondary options—college, career, military—based on student interest and aptitude, supported by assessments and CTAE certifications.

- **Support for Diverse Needs:** More individual teacher attention, SEL support, and equitable access to career-prep programs across schools and student backgrounds.

OPERATIONS

Academic Excellence & Critical Thinking

- **Facilities & Infrastructure:** Clean, safe, inclusive school buildings, ADA compliance, and modern classrooms that support teaching and learning (including green and sensory spaces).
- **Data-Informed Systems:** Use data and accountability tools to evaluate program success and ensure district responsiveness.
- **Technology & Tools:** Equitable access to devices and instructional platforms; improved training for both families and educators on key systems.
- **Staffing & Scheduling:** Address inconsistencies in hiring, certification, and scheduling across clusters to ensure academic equity.

Life Skills & Career Readiness

- **Transportation Equity:** Ensure reliable and timely transport for internships, after-school programs, and daily attendance—MARTA passes and bus route input mentioned.
- **Mental Health & Wellness:** School-based clinics, mental health staff, "Zen rooms," and wraparound services are essential to readiness.
- **Life Enrichment Spaces:** Innovation labs, makerspaces, and modernized electives foster career-linked skills.
- **Policy Review:** Need for clear, fair, and consistently applied attendance and discipline policies—avoiding criminalization of student behavior.
- **Nutrition & Housing:** Provide healthy meals and explore housing support for teachers as readiness barriers.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Academic Excellence & Critical Thinking

- **Accessible Communication:** Multilingual, transparent communication is vital—via websites, text platforms, in-person outreach, and asynchronous resources.
- **Aligned Expectations:** Educators and families need shared understanding of academic expectations and curriculum goals.
Adult Learning & Support: GED programs, parenting classes, and home-learning resources (e.g., make-and-take kits) are valued.
- **Tutoring & Mentoring:** Families want access to out-of-school academic support and peer mentoring among students.

- **Cultural Respect & Appreciation:** Families seek school environments that reinforce respect for cultural values and family roles.

Life Skills & Career Readiness

- **Parent University & Workshops:** Strong demand for family education in topics like scholarships, job prep, financial literacy, and college navigation.
- **Community-Based Career Exposure:** Field trips, local apprenticeships, and career days should connect students with nearby businesses and professionals.
- **District-Wide Frameworks:** Families support establishing consistent engagement and resource frameworks to avoid initiative fatigue.
- **Support for Marginalized Families:** Special consideration for parents with disabilities or limited English proficiency; ensure all families can navigate school systems.
- **Shared Responsibility:** Families want to be co-creators in student readiness, with structured roles via GO Teams and shared decision-making.