

# Strategic Direction (Values and Goals)

South Atlanta High School

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:

- **Strong Reading, Writing, and Math Skills** – Every student should be on grade level in literacy and numeracy, as these are the foundation for all learning.
- **Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving** – Students should be able to think independently, solve problems, and apply creativity and multiple approaches to learning, including in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).
- **Life and Career Readiness** – Students need skills for success beyond high school, including financial literacy, self-advocacy, and knowledge of college, trades, and career options.
- **Digital Literacy and AI Skills** – As technology advances, students must know how to use digital tools, understand artificial intelligence (AI), and navigate online spaces responsibly.
- **Access to Resources and a Positive Learning Environment** – Schools should provide students with what they need to succeed based on their unique challenges. The resources available in one APS cluster may not be the same as those needed in another..

### Direct Quotes:

- *"Students should be able to problem solve and have critical thinking skills."*
- *"They should be able to communicate orally, verbally, and have written expression."*
- *"Creativity through STEM—meaning that we can find multiple ways to solve a problem other than just following the steps that we're given."*

- *"Knowing how to use AI, not just use it, but knowing what to get from it instead of just copying and pasting."*
- *"Students should have exposure and access or we should—the students should have differentiated resources. For example, what we need in South Atlanta may be different from resources that are needed in another cluster."*

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

### Direct Quotes

- **Too Much Testing** – Standardized tests take time away from real learning and don't always measure student understanding.
- **One-Size-Fits-All Approach** – Schools have different needs, and APS should allow more flexibility in curriculum and resources.
- **Too Many Priorities at Once** – Trying to focus on everything at the same time makes it harder to improve the most important areas.
- **Too Many Curriculum Options ("Potluck Curriculum")** – Having too many different curriculum choices for teachers to pull from can cause inconsistency in learning, making it harder for students to master key concepts.
- **Harsh or Inequitable Discipline Practices** – Disciplinary actions should focus on student growth rather than criminalizing behavior, with more emphasis on mental health support and conflict resolution.
- **Underutilizing Community Partners** – Local businesses and organizations should be engaged for mentorship and hands-on support, not just funding.
- **Outdated Teaching Methods** – Modern skills like digital literacy and problem-solving need updated approaches to teaching.
- **Lack of Transparency** – Parents want clearer communication about APS decisions, funding, and student progress.
- **Limited Parent Accountability** – Schools need more support from families to ensure student success.

### Direct Quotes:

- *"Stop not holding parents accountable, because we do a lot in the school buildings... We need that support."*
- *"Stop allocating funds for things that are not high priority."*
- *"Stop over-testing or overlapping of assessments. Our students are testing all the time... We have to stop instruction to test."*
- *"Too many different curricula create confusion—teachers are pulling from multiple places, and students aren't getting consistent instruction."*

- *"Discipline should not criminalize students. If we say we care about mental health, we need to approach discipline differently."*
- *"We need to stop looking at partners as just funding sources—mentorship and hands-on support matter just as much as money."*
- *"Stop using subjective language in discipline policies leading to disproportionate outcomes—like 'insubordination.'"*
- *"Stop being afraid of accountability and transparency."*