

# Strategic Direction (Values and Goals)

Virtual  
2.25.25

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?

### Key Points:

- **Academic Mastery:** Students should have strong literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking skills, reading and doing math at or above grade level, with a focus on mastering foundational concepts.
- **Life and Career Readiness:** Students should graduate prepared for college, careers, or technical pathways, with practical life skills, study habits, and the ability to navigate post-graduation options, including non-technical trades like carpentry or cosmetology.
- **Study and Research Skills:** Students should develop effective study habits, research skills, internet literacy, and the ability to independently seek and process information.
- **Communication and Collaboration:** The ability to express themselves, work with diverse groups, present ideas confidently through public speaking and presentations, and navigate social situations is essential.
- **Better and Consistent Communication:** Strong communication at all levels—district, school, and class—is crucial, especially in higher grades to support family engagement.
- **Soft and Problem-Solving Skills:** Students should build resilience, adaptability, and the ability to solve problems creatively and collaboratively.
- **Equity and Access:** All students, regardless of school, should have access to the same resources, programs, and extracurricular opportunities.
- **High Expectations:** A culture where students, teachers, and parents hold high expectations for one another, fostering a mindset of excellence and continuous growth.

### Direct Quotes:

- “Clear post-secondary options, including non-technology paths like carpentry or cosmetology.”

- “Better and consistent communication, especially at higher grades, to support family engagement.”
- “Students should know how to plan, prepare, study, and apply what they learn to real-life situations.”
- “We need 100% literacy and numeracy—stop over-celebrating small gains.”
- “High expectations for students, teachers for teachers, teachers for students, students for teachers, parents for schools.”

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

### Key Points:

- **Too Many New Programs:** Constant changes make it hard for everyone to keep up. Students need time to benefit from a program before it’s replaced. APS should stick with programs long enough to see results.
- **Too Much Screen Time:** More hands-on learning and physical materials should be used to reduce screen time and digital fatigue.
- **Uneven Resources:** Some schools don’t have the same resources or programs. APS should rethink the current cluster model and potentially move to “magnet” programs, to make sure all students have equal access to programs and resources.
- **Cutting Arts Programs:** Arts should not be cut in favor of just focusing on STEM. A well-rounded education, including arts, is important for all students.
- **Frequent Half-Days:** There are too many half-days and days off. Students need consistent, full school days for learning.
- **Pulling Students from General Education:** Students with special needs should stay in regular classrooms as much as possible, with support from the whole school.
- **Ignoring Attendance Issues:** The district should focus on addressing the reasons behind poor attendance and ensure students are attending school regularly.
- **Clarifying Interventions for Struggling Schools:** When a school is underperforming, APS should clearly define and communicate what “high-impact interventions” are and when they are happening.
- **Over-testing:** Students are being tested too much. APS should reduce the amount of standardized testing to give students more time to learn.

### Direct Quotes:

- “More is not always better — too many expectations make it hard to focus on what truly matters.”
- “Stop normalizing underperformance and create a collective urgency for student success.”

- “APS should rethink the cluster model and bring back magnet programs to ensure all students have equal access to resources.”
- “There are too many half-days and days off — students need more consistent, full school days.”
- “Stop cutting arts programs — not every student thrives in a STEM-only environment.”
- “Students with special needs should be supported in regular classrooms, not just pulled out.”
- “We need clearer communication about when high-impact interventions are happening in struggling schools.”
- “We need to reduce standardized testing — over-testing is a concern.”