

Therrell HS Strategic Planning Workshop 3.17

Atlanta Public Schools hosted a Strategic Planning session with community members to explore what must be true for schools to achieve the goals of Academic Excellence & Critical Thinking and Life Skills & College and Career Readiness. Participants generated ideas focused on support systems, equity, access, and meaningful school-community collaboration.

Schools

Goal: Academic Excellence & Critical Thinking

- **Shift from test scores to learning:** Emphasize the learning process over standardized outcomes.
- **Rigor with respect:** Promote a culture of high expectations in a supportive, student-respecting environment.
- **Culturally responsive teaching:** Ensure students see themselves reflected in the content.
- **Student-centered learning:** Project-based learning, productive struggle, and differentiated instruction.
- **Social-emotional learning (SEL):** Integrate SEL practices that support whole-child development.
- **Reduce punitive discipline:** Avoid criminalizing behavior; redefine "insubordination" and related terms.
- **Inclusive classrooms:** Heterogeneous groupings and fluid pathways for all learners.
- **Teacher development:** Focus on teachers' intellect, skill, and rigor in delivering instruction.

Goal: Life Skills & Career Readiness

- **Student choice & pathways:** Offer access to vocational, college, and military readiness based on student interests.
- **Early exposure to career options:** Especially in middle school (exploratory courses).
- **CTAE certifications:** Ensure students can leave high school with tangible credentials.
- **Entrepreneurship & financial literacy:** Encourage real-world planning, like business plan development.
- **Soft skills training:** Communication, time management, and other real-life competencies.
- **Post-secondary planning:** Help students design meaningful post-high school plans.
- **Local apprenticeships:** Develop community-based job shadowing and apprenticeship opportunities.

Operations

Goal: Academic Excellence & Critical Thinking

- **Facilities that support learning:**
 - Safe, welcoming, and clean school environments.
 - Furniture that supports 21st-century learning.
 - Beautification and access to green/sensory spaces.
- **After-school program support:** Include supper and enrichment aligned with academic goals.
- **Equity for special populations:**
 - ADA-compliant infrastructure.
 - Support for exceptional education and multilingual learners.

Goal: Life Skills & Career Readiness

- **Transportation improvements:**
 - Access to internships and career programs.
 - Engage bus drivers in logistics planning.
 - Consider the use of MARTA passes for students.
- **Innovation spaces:** Labs or makerspaces that foster creativity and real-world skills.
- **Life 101 courses:** Modernized home economics, health education, and practical life skills.
- **Health and wellness services:**
 - Mental health support embedded in schools.
 - In-school clinics with wraparound services.
- **Consistent attendance policies:** Standardized and enforced across schools.
- **Virtual options:** Enrichment or acceleration with proper tech support.

Community & Family Partnerships

Goal: Academic Excellence & Critical Thinking

- **Shared community spaces:**
 - Accessible tutoring, mentoring, and workshops.
 - Whole child” services (mental health, therapy, wellness).
- **Broad communication strategies:**
 - Multilingual content, user-friendly websites.
 - In-person outreach in neighborhoods, not just at schools.
- **Parent engagement:**
 - Parenting classes from Pre-K through 12th grade.
- “ Make-and-take” resources to support learning at home.
- **Peer mentorship:**
 - High school students supporting middle/elementary students.
- **GED & Adult Education:** Expand and promote programs for adult learners.
- **Vetting of partners:** Evaluate effectiveness and alignment of community partners.

Goal: Life Skills & Career Readiness

- **District-wide family engagement framework:** To guide school-family-community collaboration.
- **Baseline needs assessment:**
 - Surveys to understand what life skills students lack (e.g., ID, financial literacy).
- **Business and workforce partnerships:**
 - Paid internships and apprenticeships.
 - Cross-cluster and cross-district collaboration.
 - Support for parents with disabilities or language needs.
- **Field trips tied to dreams and exposure:** Walkable, local, and tied to career interests.
- **Local investment:**
 - List and share businesses for school partnerships and community engagement.
 - Engage alumni and local leaders intentionally.