



Summer/Fall 2020

Atlanta Board
of Education

SUCCESS SNAPSHOTS

Through a caring culture of equity, trust, and collaboration, every student will graduate ready for college, career, and life.

Message from the Chair

We are in challenging times, as a school district, a city and a nation. We are faced with the unprecedented situation of operating and governing our city's schools against a global pandemic and recent and recurring events of racial injustice and civil unrest. Through it all, I want you to know that the Atlanta Board of Education continues to make the physical, emotional, and academic health of our students and staff our top priority, no matter the challenges we face.

In response to the COVID-19 guidelines, the Board began meeting virtually in March. Using Zoom and hosting on Facebook Live, members of the public were able to view and participate with comments that appeared live and with full transparency. To support our families, Board members have supported the Administration by volunteering with food and meal delivery and distribution at the designated pick up locations. Finally, we have been working with the Administration on the District's reopening plan which was announced July 10, and we will continue to weigh public health expertise and State and City government guidance as they monitor the pandemic and its impact.

The Board and all of the APS community welcome continued progress with the selection of our Superintendent, **Dr. Lisa Herring**. We look forward to an exciting new chapter as we begin the 2020 2021 school year with her at the helm. Many of you met Dr. Herring virtually this past spring and learned for yourselves that she is an amazing choice to lead the District and a perfect fit for where we are now and what we want to achieve in the years to come. (Please read more about Dr. Herring on page 2.) Look for more opportunities to engage with her in the weeks ahead.

Also this past spring, the Board adopted the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan for the District. With the guiding principles of Equity, Ethics, Engagement and Excellence, the Board developed the plan together with parents, community stakeholders, and staff at every level, highlighting our core values: putting students and schools first; committing to teamwork; focusing on communication; demonstrating respect for each other; being accountable; acting with integrity; and embracing and driving change. We are grateful for the public



feedback and robust community engagement that fed into the development of the plan. Over a six month period, we received 1,200 survey responses and hosted more than 1,000 stakeholders

at community conversations, including our first APS Table Talks for parent feedback. **Please see the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan here.**

Finally, last fall we welcomed into the fold a new member, Aretta Baldon, who won a special election to represent District 2. (Please read more about her on page 3.) Aretta hit the ground running last December, and we are grateful for her hard work, her dedication, and her engagement with her colleagues and the community.

As we start a new school year, we thank you for your patience, care, and concern as we all work to rise above our current challenges and ensure success for all. Know that we are here to support all our students, employees, and their families to make APS and Atlanta the best they can be.

Jason Esteves
Board Chair and At-large Seat 9

MEETING SCHEDULE

Due to COVID-19 guidelines, all meetings will be held virtually on the 1st Monday of each month at 2:30 pm unless otherwise posted. The public can watch and submit comments via Facebook Live, the link to which can be found on ABOE's website: AtlantaPublicSchools.us/APSboard.

Introducing APS Superintendent Dr. Lisa Herring

A BOE is pleased to introduce **Dr. Lisa Herring** as Superintendent to lead Atlanta Public Schools. At a Special Called Meeting on May 11, 2020, the Board approved a three-year contract for Dr. Herring, whose duties officially started on July 1.

"We are thrilled Dr. Herring will assume leadership of Atlanta Public Schools and are energized by her passion for equity and building strong relationships," said Board member **Michelle D. Olympiadis** (District 3). "As a successful instructional leader, Dr. Herring will provide a vision for continuous improvement for all students no matter their background or barriers."

The Board launched a nationwide search in October, which included an extensive community engagement period and interviews with a diverse group of candidates before announcing Dr. Herring as its sole finalist on April 21. Dr. Herring then held 30 virtual meetings with more than 3,500 attendees including APS employees, students, families, committees and task forces, school governance GO Teams, community partners, business leaders, elected officials, clergy and the public. During these meetings, she was able to introduce herself, answer questions and hear concerns from the community while respecting social distancing.

"It is an honor to be chosen for this important role, and I look forward to strengthening the educational and emotional journeys of our scholars throughout APS," said Dr. Herring. "I am committed to continued engagement to learn more about the district's victories and challenges while building a strong sense of community which will help fuel our success – both now and in the years to come."

Formerly the superintendent of Birmingham City Schools in Alabama, Dr. Herring has spent her entire career in education,

serving students for more than 25 years and bringing success to urban public school districts. In addition to her strong academic background and laser focus on creating equity and access, Dr. Herring forged civic and corporate partnerships, including The Birmingham Promise and ED FARM, which brought innovative and equitable opportunities to students and the community.

Prior to her tenure in Birmingham, Dr. Herring was the Chief Academic Officer for Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, KY, a system with more than 100,000 students where she successfully restructured the academic division and led the implementation of the district's strategic plan. She also served



as the Deputy Superintendent of Academics for the Charleston County, SC School District, as well as Chief Academic Officer, Associate Superintendent for Instructional Support and Executive Director of Student Support Services while there.

Starting her position in a school year impacted by the global pandemic and at-home learning due to sudden school closures, Dr. Herring spent her transition period with APS' chief engagement officers while participating on the COVID-19 and Re-opening Task Forces.

"The Board looks forward to Dr. Herring joining the Equity Task Force as well, to offer her experience in the ongoing development of APS' Equity Policy, said Board member **Leslie Grant** (District 1). "We wish Dr. Herring all the best as we move forward for our students and our families."

ABOE speaks out against police brutality and racist acts

On June 1, the school board released this statement:

Earlier today, the Board took time to pause for a moment of reflection in memory of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, victims of police brutality and racist acts. We are heartbroken and upset by these recent events.

But the murders of Black men and women by vigilantes and police are not new, and it is important for the Board to reaffirm that Black Lives Matter. We stand in solidarity with those peacefully advocating for change and are committed to doing our part to channel the anger and hopelessness our community feels into sustained and effective change.

We know that we cannot do this work alone. The work of dismantling a racist and op-

pressive system that has an over 400-year legacy will not be easy and requires people of all communities coming together to address inequities.

With the recently adopted Strategic Plan and the Equity Policy that was adopted last year, the Board is committed to ensuring Atlanta Public Schools is a leader in this work. We look forward to working with our students, faculty, staff, and our community so that we can finally see a day where the color of your skin does not predict whether you are likely to be healthy and safe, graduate from high school, be economically stable, or live out your childhood dreams.

Facilities Master Plan nearly complete

In 2019, APS hired a team of experts to help develop recommendations for a **Facilities Master Plan**. The 18-month planning process is guided by goals and guidelines set forth by ABOE and informed by the APS Strategic Plan as well as APS policies and goals related to all facilities and buildings throughout the District. The process seeks to engage the community while examining school capacity as part of a demographic study to help forecast trends and determine where the school-age populations are increasing or declining.

“APS is broad and diverse and changing rapidly,” explains Board member **Nancy M. Meister** (District 4). “Master plan development is critical for the growth, equity and success of our schools and because of its long-term impacts, cannot be rushed. We are thankful for the community input that has gone into the plan so far.”

Three rounds of regional community conversations and one round of cluster-specific conversations were scheduled across the district. After a dozen successful meetings were held, the final round had to be postponed due to COVID-19 and shelter-in-place guidelines. Once the team has had a chance to bring Dr. Herring up to date, a final round of public meetings will be set. After the community conversations are complete, the administration will develop recommendations and give ABOE several weeks to review and share them with the community before adopting a final Facilities Master Plan.

New ABOE member Aretta Baldon jumps in



Though **Aretta Baldon** will say she was already behind when she joined the Atlanta Board of Education, having filled a seat that had been vacant for seven months, she hit the ground running. Baldon was elected to the District 2 post last fall after the representative of that district resigned from the Board to run for another office.

Filling a vacancy, however, wasn't the main reason she stepped up. Baldon says she wanted to see change. She lives in a community with a high number of chronically failing schools, and the children, she says, are not getting the education they deserve. “Our children's education is the responsibility of all of us, and I knew that if I truly was serious about it, I had to be the change I wanted to see.”

And Baldon says her life has prepared her for this job. Professional roles spanning from serving as a security guard at the Georgia World Congress Center to the Director of Digital Analytics and Media Currency at Turner Broadcasting helped to build a diverse life experience. Add to that, training in improv comedy – “helps with being good on your toes,” she says – and currently working as a photographer for which angles and perspectives matter, and it's apparent Baldon is well-equipped for this role.

“Most importantly, I'm a mother,” she adds. “I have fought for my child. I'm vocal. If there is something that needs to be said that may be uncomfortable, I will say it.”

Baldon says she is proud of all the work this Board has done since she joined, and feels like her voice is valued among her colleagues. From finalizing a new strategic plan to hiring a superintendent, the group has accomplished some major initiatives, but she acknowledges the hard work has just begun.

Equi·ty / 'ĕk wītē / noun

1: the quality or ideal of being just and fair, regardless of economic, social, cultural, and human differences among and between persons

The Atlanta Board of Education is committed to demonstrating and applying equity in all decisions, policies and practices, and established the district's first **Equity Policy** in 2019. Since then, ABOE has consciously and purposefully followed through on several commitments to uplift and improve equitable outcomes for APS students, families, teachers and other stakeholders, including:

- ▶ Establishing a LGBTQIA+ Task Force
- ▶ Embedding equity in every aspect of the 2020-25 Strategic Plan
- ▶ Creating an Equity Taskforce to advise the Superintendent
- ▶ Officially supporting the US Census, voter registration and engagement, and Georgia's recently passed hate crimes legislation
- ▶ Working with APS administration to meet student needs during the COVID-19 crisis, including system wide access to Wi-Fi, devices, online learning, food, and emotional support
- ▶ Approving the Student Success Formula for budgeting based on student needs
- ▶ Piloting the African American Male Initiative in Atlanta Public Schools
- ▶ Approving the creation of a Chief Equity and Social Justice Officer

“We are striving to model equity within our strategic plan,” said **Erika Y. Mitchell** (District 5), “which will require putting systems in place to ensure that all children have an equal chance for success and will reach their full potential.”



ATLANTA BOARD OF EDUCATION 2020

Pictured from left: **Leslie Grant** (District 1), **Aretta Baldon** (District 2), **Michelle Olympiadis** (District 3), **Eshé P. Collins** (District 6) - Vice Chair, **Jason F. Esteves** (Seat 9) - Board Chair, **Nancy M. Meister** (District 4), **Erika Mitchell** (District 5), **Kandis Wood Jackson** (Seat 7), **Cynthia Briscoe Brown** (Seat 8).

Student Advisory Council providing impactful student input to ABOE

For its first official year as an established body, the 2019-2020 Student Advisory Council was quite busy fulfilling their **mission** to provide an authentic student voice on district issues. Two students from the 17-member group served on the superintendent search panel and all members completed the survey to establish the candidate profile. Members met monthly and, among other critical initiatives, provided input on the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan and the Facilities Master Plan.

"The Student Advisory Council creates an authentic voice for those who are most impacted by Board decisions," explains Board member **Cynthia Briscoe Brown**, At-Large Seat 8. "The hard work of these students, consulting with their classmates across APS and bringing us their ideas and concerns, helps us focus our efforts where they make the most difference for our kids."

In an effort to help more APS students connect with ABOE, SAC plans to host "Breakfast with the Board" events this school year at all the District's high schools. With funding from the **Southern Education Foundation** and a goal of listening to students, each breakfast will be documented to provide needed follow up with each school. With the SEF grant, the SAC also plans to develop initiatives to get students more involved with civic engagement.



Student Advisory Council 2019-2020

Grady High School	Bria Brown (chair)
South Atlanta High School	Deona Davis (vice-chair) Tyrese Miller
Mays High School	Destiny Crawford (communication coordinator)
Douglass High School	Jordan Stone Edward Porter
Washington High School	Alaira Blackwell
Jackson High School	David Cole Olivia Calder-Williams
North Atlanta High School	Rebie Benedict Emily Daehiardi
Carver High School	Cy'Riah Pearson
Carver Early College	Tallis Lewis Jr
Therrell High School	Miracle Smith Khamar Carlisie
Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy	Taniya Williams Miala Wilkerson
B.E.S.T Academy	Rashawn McKelvey Flud DeCarlos McKinney
KIPP Atlanta Collegiate	Tynia Bake Chiqui Benton

School Board launches task force to support LGBTQIA students

Last October, your Board launched a new task force to help and support Atlanta students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual. The LGBTQIA Task Force is made up of students, teachers, administrators and outside experts, including elected officials and representatives from Georgia Equality and the Counter Narrative Project, an Atlanta-based organization which supports black gay men and their allies. The group's charge is to assess what policies and supports are currently available to students, what additional resources should be offered, and to make available extra-curricular clubs that support LGBTQIA students at additional schools, particularly those with large populations of people of color. At their meeting on August 3, the Board approved several key recommendations (right).

"We want to do what we can to ensure all our students not only feel safe to attend school, but feel supported in who they are as human beings," says Board Member **Kandis Wood Jackson** (At-large Seat 7).

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Build supports for students and student groups
- Enhance the inclusiveness of the curriculum
- Improve educator knowledge and skills
- Create supportive and inclusive school environments by connecting with community supports
- Strengthen district policies and practices by adopting a LGBTQIA+ Advisory Council and incorporating inclusive language

LGBTQIA Task Force

DeCarlos McKinney	Student/BEST Academy
Rashawn McKelvey-Fludd	Student/BEST Academy
Oscar Miranda	Student/South Atlanta High School
Royce Mann	Student/Grady High School
Chase Turner	Bolton Academy GO Team (Parent)
Jesse McNulty	Georgia Safe Schools Coalition
Samuel Lim	Educator at Carver High School
Stephen Spring	Community Advocate
Petrina Bloodworth	OUT Georgia Business Alliance
Glen Paul Freedman	Freedman Group
Wes Sanders	Georgia Equality
Jeff Graham	Georgia Equality
Charles Stephens	Counter Narrative Project
Rep. Park Cannon	State Representative
Amazin LeThi	Community Advocate
Malik Brown	Mayor's Office
Kia McCall-Barnes	Community Advocate
Troy Keller	Assistant Director, Special Ed.
MaryAnn Green	Coordinator, Psych. Services
Maria Grovner	Coordinator, Counseling Services
Janean Lewis	Coordinator, Social Studies
Michelle Segall	Parent
Katika Lovett	Assistant Supt., Student Services
Tom Munn	Program Director, Washington, Grady & Carver Clusters (K-8)

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

New school keeps old name; new start for a former school; renamings considered

To address overcrowding in the Grady Cluster's middle school, students who attended or were zoned to Inman Middle School will relocate this August to the newly renovated, much larger David T. Howard Middle School. In accordance with the Board's **Naming Policy**, a renaming committee worked last fall to gather community input on whether to keep the long-closed school's name, or change it. Alumni from the Howard High School in the Old Fourth Ward were in attendance for the unanimous vote to keep the name as it was in years past.

Additionally, the building that formerly housed Parks Middle School has been

renamed the Dr. Michael Maze Atlanta College and Career Academy. "Dr. Maze was a dedicated and talented leader of the district's career, technical and agricultural education programs, so it wasn't difficult to choose a name for this new and promising asset," says **Eshè P. Collins**, Board Vice-Chair (District 6) and Chair of the Academy.

Opening this fall, the Atlanta College and Career Academy will offer technical training for high school students from across the district who applied last school year. With a maximum enrollment of 1,000 students, the school will educate juniors and seniors interested in

14 career fields: aviation maintenance; carpentry; criminal investigation; culinary arts; cybersecurity; dental science; early childhood care and education; emergency medical responder; general automotive technology; graphic design; hospitality, recreation and tourism; heating, ventilating and air conditioning and refrigeration; patient care and programming.

In response to student requests and concerns over glorifying an inglorious past, renaming committees have been formed to consider potentially changing the names of Brown Middle, Grady High and Forrest Hill Academy.



Office of
Atlanta Board of Education
Atlanta Public Schools
 130 Trinity Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30303
 Office: 404-802-2255
 Fax: 404-802-1204

Jason F. Esteves | Board Chair (At-Large, Seat 9)
 jesteves@atlantapublicschools.us

Eshè P. Collins | Board Vice-Chair (District 6)
 epcollins@atlantapublicschools.us

Leslie Grant (District 1)
 lgrant@atlantapublicschools.us

Aretta Baldon (District 2)
 abaldon@atlantapublicschools.us

Michelle D. Olympiadis (District 3)
 michelle.olympiadis@atlanta.k12.ga.us

Nancy Meister (District 4)
 nmeister@atlanta.k12.ga.us

Erika Y. Mitchell (District 5)
 erika.mitchell@atlanta.k12.ga.us

Kandis Wood Jackson (At-Large, Seat 7)
 kandis.woodjackson@atlanta.k12.ga.us

Cynthia Briscoe Brown (At-Large, Seat 8)
 cbriscoe_brown@atlanta.k12.ga.us

Pierre Gaither | Executive Director
 404-802-2249
 pierre.gaither@atlanta.k12.ga.us

Linda Israel | Office Administrator
 404-802-2255
 linda.israel@atlanta.k12.ga.us

Keith Glass | Community Affairs Specialist
 404-802-2267
 keith.glass2@atlanta.k12.ga.us

atlantapublicschools.us/apsboard
 @BOEAPS | @APSBOE
 apsboard

FAST FACTS

Strategic Planning

CONDUCTED **17** community engagement meetings

HOSTED **3** planning retreats

ENGAGED more than **1,000** constituents

Superintendent Search

CREATED **website** documenting all things related to search

INTERVIEWED **3** search firms to hire one to manage the process

HIRED consultants to facilitate **4** regional meetings and **60** focus group meetings to engage more than **1,500** stakeholders to develop a profile

APPOINTED **19** community stakeholders to serve on an advisory panel

HOSTED **3** public retreats to update stakeholders

CONNECTED with more than **100** interested candidates

RECEIVED **54** completed applications

ENGAGED the sole finalist with more than **3,500** stakeholders

HIRED **Dr. Lisa Herring** in May to serve as Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent

Facility Master Planning

HOSTED **16** planning meetings

ENGAGED more than **800** constituents

HOSTED **3** planning retreats