

MERIA JOEL CARSTARPHEN



Meria Joel Carstarphen, Ed.D., is the superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools (APS) where she leads the district's nearly 52,000 students, 6,000 full-time employees and 87 schools and oversees the system's \$1 billion annual budget. Prior to serving in Atlanta, she was superintendent in diverse, major metropolitan public school districts, including Austin, Texas, and Saint Paul, Minnesota.

In 2014, Dr. Carstarphen was charged with leading the transformation of APS. She has worked to restore organizational integrity and create a student-focused culture. Through her leadership, the District has moved away from an over-reliance on high-stakes testing to emphasize whole-child development.

During her tenure, APS is seeing improvements:

- The District's graduation rate has increased by 20.8 percentage points from 59.1 percent in 2014 to 79.9 percent in 2018, which is the highest graduation rate the District has achieved since the state aligned with the national standard in 2012.
- The school system in 2019 achieved its highest rates of proficiency on all subjects on the Georgia Milestones End-of-Grade and End-of Course assessments since the Georgia Department of Education first implemented the program in 2015.
- From 2018 to 2019, APS achieved year-over-year gains in the percentage of students scoring proficient and above on 21 of 24 (88%) End-of-Grade and End-of-Course assessments compared to gains in just over half (52%) three years ago.
- For the first time in seven years, APS is no longer disproportionate for the over suspension of African-American students with disabilities.
- APS' college-going rate has continued to increase, as 62% of 2018 on-time graduates were enrolled in two- or four-year institutions as of Fall 2018, an increase of 11 percentage points since 2015.
- The number of engaged employees increased significantly, 16 percentage points over five years, exceeding the national average among K-12 programs as reported by Gallup.
- Through the District's social and emotional learning initiative and its restorative practice efforts, the number of student arrests is down by 34% and student suspension rates have decreased overall.

As part of her community involvement, she serves on the boards of the Atlanta Ballet and the Woodruff Arts Center and on the President's Council for Tulane University. She is a graduate of Leadership Atlanta's Class of 2019, a member of the Rotary Club of Atlanta and an honorary member of the Junior League of Atlanta. She recently completed terms of service on the visiting committee for the Harvard Graduate School of Education and as a commissioner with the Aspen Institute's AspenSEAD, a national commission focused on social emotional and academic development.

She is honored and humbled to be the recipient of numerous awards including: Atlanta Magazine "Atlanta Power 500" (2019); Atlanta Business Chronicle "Power 100 – Most Influential Atlantans (2019); American Federation of State and County Municipal Employees and the Georgia Federation of Public Service Employees Superintendent of the Year (2018); Newcomb Alumnae Association at Tulane University Outstanding Alumna Award (2018); Anti-Defamation League Torch of Liberty Award (2017); Atlanta Magazine Women Making A Mark (2017); Georgia Trend Magazine Top 100 Most Influential Georgians (2019, 2018, 2017, 2016); Atlanta Business Chronicle Most Admired CEO Awards (2017, 2016, 2015); Cool Girls Inc., Cool Woman of the Year (2016); YWCA Academy of Women Achievers Award (2015); Austin Chapter of the NAACP DeWitty/Overton Freedom Award (2013); Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce Superintendent of the Year Award (2011).

Dr. Carstarphen earned her doctorate from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, master of education degrees from Auburn University and Harvard University, and a bachelor of arts in political science and Spanish from Tulane University. She has also studied at the University of Seville, Spain, and University of Innsbruck, Austria.

Dr. Carstarphen began her education career as a middle school teacher in her hometown of Selma, Ala, which honored her in 2015 with the inaugural Phoenix Award associated with the Sullivan and Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson Foundation. She also has worked with elementary-level children in Seville, Spain, and Caracas, Venezuela.

Dr. Carstarphen is passionate about public education, leading APS and living its mission every day: With a caring culture of trust and collaboration, every student will graduate ready for college and career.