

# Creating a System of Excellent Schools

Community Conversation  
28 November 2018

# Today's agenda

FOCUS	TIME	PURPOSE
Welcome & Overview		
Vision of School Excellence		Garner perspective on attributes of an excellent school and school excellence framework
Closing & Next Steps		Identify next steps and reflect on the day

# Why this project? Why now?

Together, our aim is to:

- Knit together into a more cohesive whole the important initiatives and work streams we already have underway;
- Deepen our implementation of the strategic plan and core tenets of our operating model; and
- Better prepare us to develop our next strategic plan.



---

## What is this initiative about?

1. Picture a child in APS about whom you care a lot—a child, a niece, a nephew, a mentee.
2. How many of you would rate in your top 5 aspirations for that child to be zoned to an excellent school?
3. How confident are you that the child you are envisioning currently attends or can attend an excellent school? How do you know?
4. And, how confident are you that you could live anywhere in the city and have an excellent school in your neighborhood? How do you know?

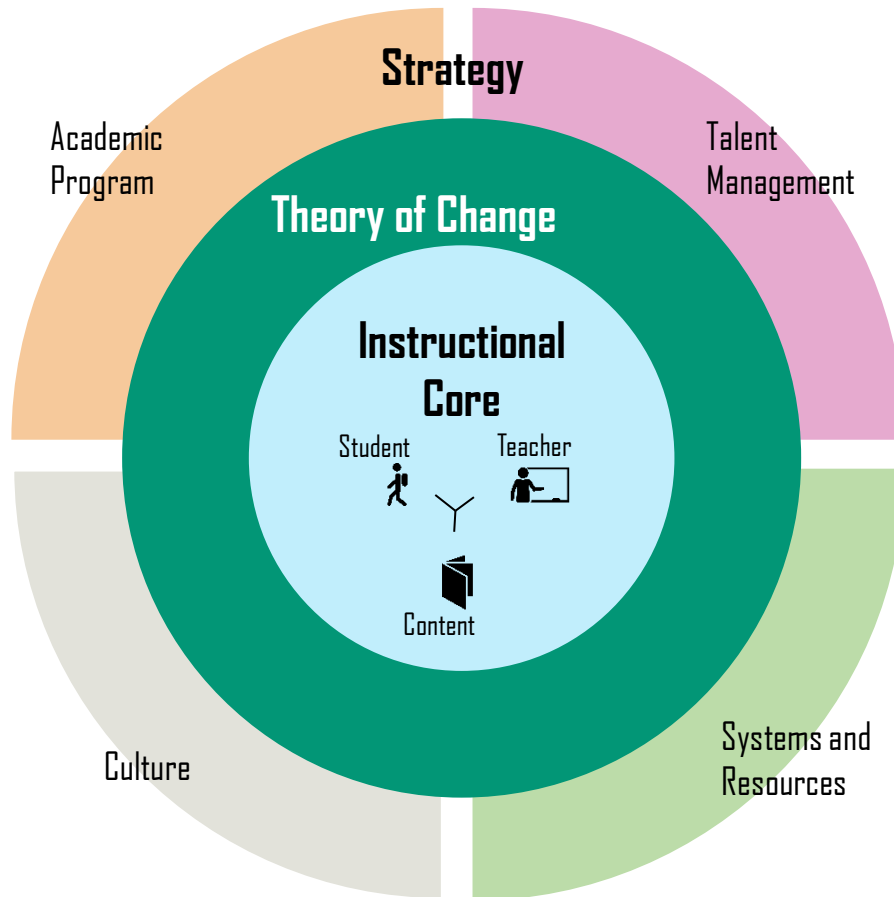
---

What is this initiative all about?

“This initiative is the natural next step in the implementation of our district transformation strategy.

We will define the characteristics of an excellent school and what the district is committed to doing to ensure that every school is, in fact, excellent.”

# APS holds beliefs about the relationship between its strategy and its intended impact on the instructional core (i.e., a theory of change)



## Theory of Change

### If we...

Build the capacity of school-based leadership teams and empower them

### Then...

They will make decisions that best meet the needs of their unique school communities

### So that...


We will be positioned to achieve our mission of ensuring our kids graduate ready for college and career

# These three dimensions, when used in equal measure in practice, serve to “balance” how systems of excellent schools are managed

## Autonomy

- Central office is focused on a culture of innovation and support
- Schools have most decision-making power, including control over staff, budget, pay, curriculum, assessment and professional development
- Schools can seek and earn additional freedoms through waivers

## Balanced system of excellent schools



## Support

- School funding is based on student need
- Central office has expertise that can be deployed to schools, but schools can choose from an array of service providers
- Schools are able to learn from one another

## Accountability

- Common framework measures school effectiveness
- Framework is accompanied by a defined set of school actions to ensure students have access to better schools
- Framework is available to the public and used as part of a comprehensive annual planning process

# Today's agenda

FOCUS	TIME	PURPOSE
Welcome & Overview		
Vision of School Excellence		Garner perspective on attributes of an excellent school and school excellence framework
Closing & Next Steps		Identify next steps and reflect on the day



# These three deliverables are intentionally linked together to help facilitate a System of Excellent Schools



## Vision of Excellence

Integrates with definitions of teaching and leadership excellence to define the characteristics of excellent schools and learning experiences that prepare APS students for college, career and community



## Excellent Schools Framework

Translates the vision of school excellence into specific, measurable domains of school performance to enable planning, analysis and public transparency



## School Actions Framework

Outlines the scenarios and decision criteria that will guide the district's responses to schools' progress toward our vision of excellence and answers related questions about autonomy, accountability and authorizing

Replicate

Expand

Fill to capacity

**A Vision of School Excellence defines the characteristics of APS schools that are preparing students for college, career and community**



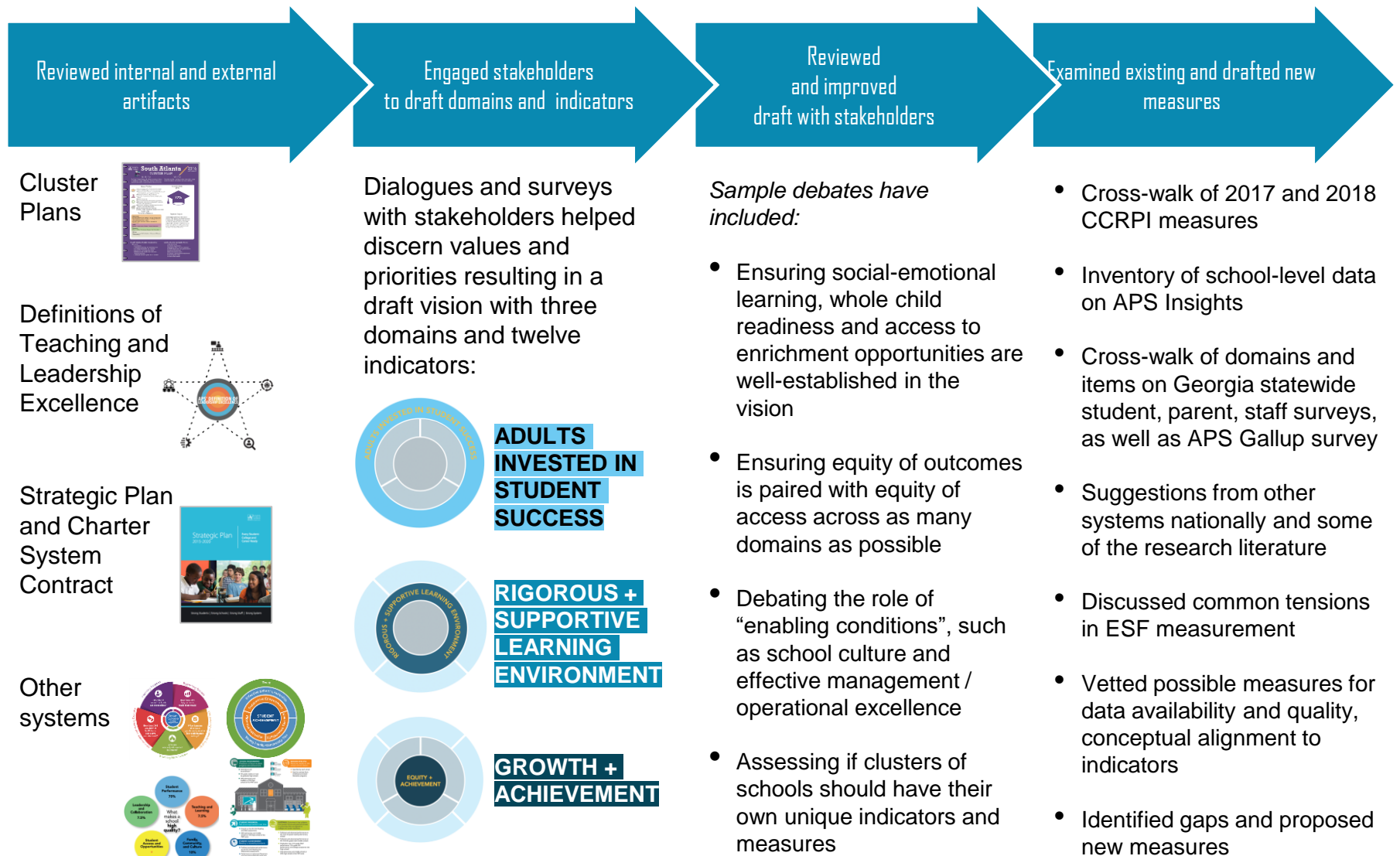
Source: <https://atlsuper.com/2017/05/26/congratulations-grad-nation-aps-class-of-2017/>

## To date, hundreds of stakeholders have influenced our thinking

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	UNIQUE CONSTITUENTS	TOUCH-POINTS
Working Group	6 district leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>14 meetings totaling ~20 hours of engagement</li></ul>
SELT	~30 district senior executives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>5 in-person meetings totaling &gt;15 hours of engagement</li></ul>
Advisory Committee	>40 teachers, principals, GO team members, community members, central office leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2 in-person and 1 virtual meetings totaling &gt;6 hours of engagement</li></ul>
Expanded Cabinet	~66 principals ~134 district leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2 in-person meetings totaling &gt;4 hours of engagement</li></ul>
Community At-Large	>600 respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Community-wide survey generating over 600 unique responses</li></ul>

Additional engagement sessions, including citywide community meetings, will continue through January.

# We've incorporated significant input from our previous sessions with the Board, SELT and Advisory Committee members



# Why produce an APS-specific Vision and Framework?

Our engagement surfaced three reasons to augment the CCRPI:






1. Stakeholders want to provide a **more complete picture** of school quality. For example, social-emotional competency development and PK-2 progress are important components of APS' Excellent Schools Framework, but are not measured by the CCRPI.
2. Stakeholders want to prioritize indicators that **support the district transformation strategy**. Culture is a critical pillar of the APS 2015-2020 strategic plan, and while the CCRPI measures *aspects* of family or community investment in schools, they are not scored in the CCRPI calculation (but separately in the star rating).
3. Stakeholders want to **co-create the Framework** with the community so it represents the values and voices of Atlanta Public Schools.

## Indicators of interest to APS and CCRPI

status	
Indicator Idea*	CCRPI
Talent development	Not measured
Collaboration	Not scored
Job satisfaction	Not scored
Effective school leadership	Not measured
Effective teachers	Not measured
Family engagement	Not scored
Community trust	Not measured
Customer service quality	Not measured
Rigorous instruction	Not measured
Culture of learning	Not measured
Social-emotional learning	Not measured
Signature program implementation	Not measured
Enrichment opportunities	Not measured
School safety	Not scored
Caring culture	Not scored
Adult trust	Not scored
Student satisfaction	Not scored

\*These represent a subset of essential elements of an Excellent Schools Framework developed in Board and SELT brainstorming sessions

# Components of the Vision and Framework

		What is it?	Example
<b>Vision of Excellence</b> Narrative definition of school quality	<b>Domains</b>  Each domain can have multiple indicators	Broad constructs that make up the core components of an excellent school	Strong Family Partnerships
	<b>Indicators</b>  Each indicator can have multiple measures	Descriptions of the individual inputs, activities, outputs or outcomes that are expected of an excellent school; each is associated with a single domain	Parents that engage regularly in school activities
<b>Excellent Schools Framework</b> Translates the Vision into a measurable representation of school quality	<b>Measure</b>  Each measure only has one weight, floor and target	Quantitative metrics that assess the degree to which an indicator in the vision has been fulfilled	% of parents who agree or strongly agree with the statement, "I am involved in activities at my student's school"
	<b>Weights</b> 	The allocation of the total possible points in the Framework to each measure, which signifies how much each measure will count in the total assessment of a school	10% (10 points out of 100)
	<b>Targets</b> 	The score on a measure at or above which a school learns all of the available points for that measure (this is commonly set at a system-wide goal, a national comparable standard or the performance level of the top decile or quartile of school performance on the measure)	90% (e.g., a school with a parent agreement score of 60% on this measure is exactly halfway between the target, 90%, and the floor, 30%, which would result in the school earning 50% of the available points for that measure)
	<b>Floors</b>	The score on a measure at or below which a school earns none of the available points (this is commonly set at the performance level of the bottom decile or quartile of school performance on the measure)	30%

# Vision of Excellence



*If a school has a strong team of...*

## **ADULTS INVESTED IN STUDENT SUCCESS**

The school strategically leverages and supports teachers, school leaders, families and community partners in serving as equal and effective stewards of student success.

Domain  
#3



*...who work collaboratively to ensure a...*

## **RIGOROUS + SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

The school has a safe, trusting and collaborative environment conducive to learning, where all students have equitable access to rigor and intervention, are challenged to achieve, take ownership of their academic journey and are deeply and joyfully engaged in learning.

Domain  
#2



*...then we can enable high levels of...*

## **GROWTH + ACHIEVEMENT**

The school ensures that all students, regardless of background, attain the skills, knowledge bases, mindsets and dispositions they need to succeed in college, career and community. Students of all backgrounds make needed annual growth to ensure they graduate with the social, emotional and academic skills needed for success and this growth results in the closure or elimination of gaps between student subgroups.

Domain  
#1



# Vision of Excellence

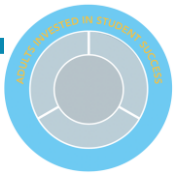
## Our commitment to equity in access and outcomes\*

In our approach to decision-making, equity is strategic decision-making with the goal of remedying opportunity and learning gaps and creating a barrier-free environment which enables all students to graduate ready for college and career.

*\*Note: To be updated to include language from the Board's equity task force.*





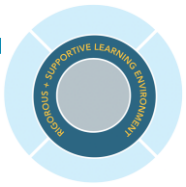


## ADULTS INVESTED IN STUDENT SUCCESS

The school strategically leverages and supports teachers, school leaders and families in serving as equal and effective partners in student success.

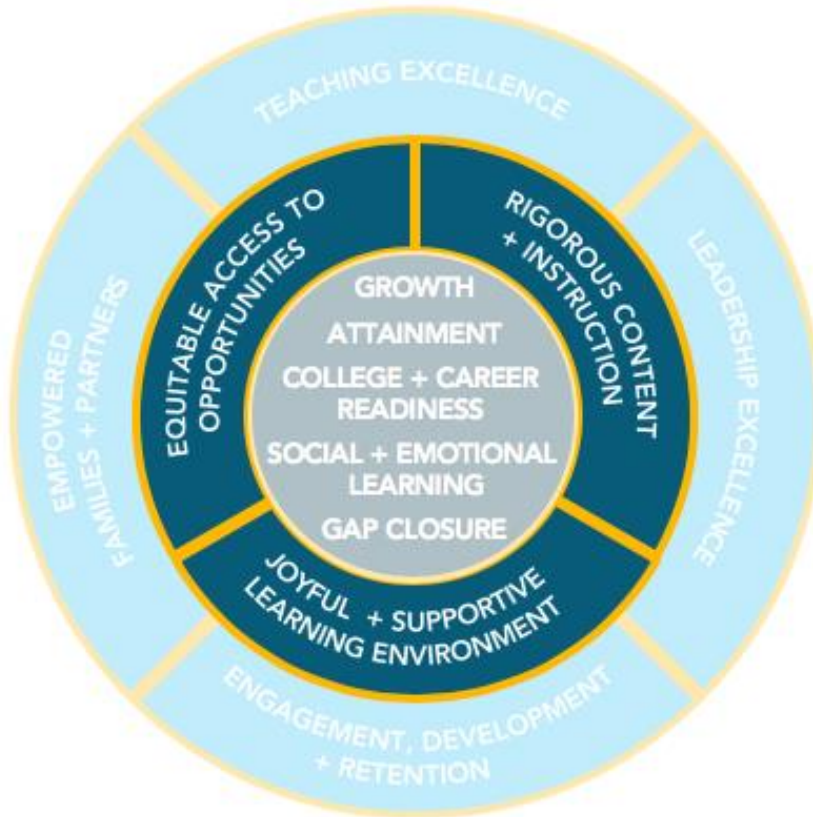


1. **Teaching Excellence:** Teachers are advancing achievement for all students; adults hold high expectations of students
2. **Leadership Excellence:** School leadership is effective; allocates people, time and money toward priorities; holds high expectations for adults and students
3. **Engagement, Development and Retention:** Staff feel supported, are developing their skills, deepening their connections with each other, growing their social and emotional competencies, and are retained at the school over time
4. **Empowered Families and Partners:** The school proactively invests families and community partners in its mission and families are equipped with the information and resources they need to advocate for their students

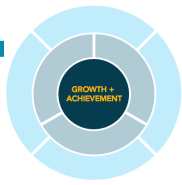


## RIGOROUS + SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The school has a safe, trusting and collaborative environment conducive to learning, where all students have equitable access to rigor and intervention, are challenged to achieve, take ownership of their academic journey, and are deeply and joyfully engaged in learning.

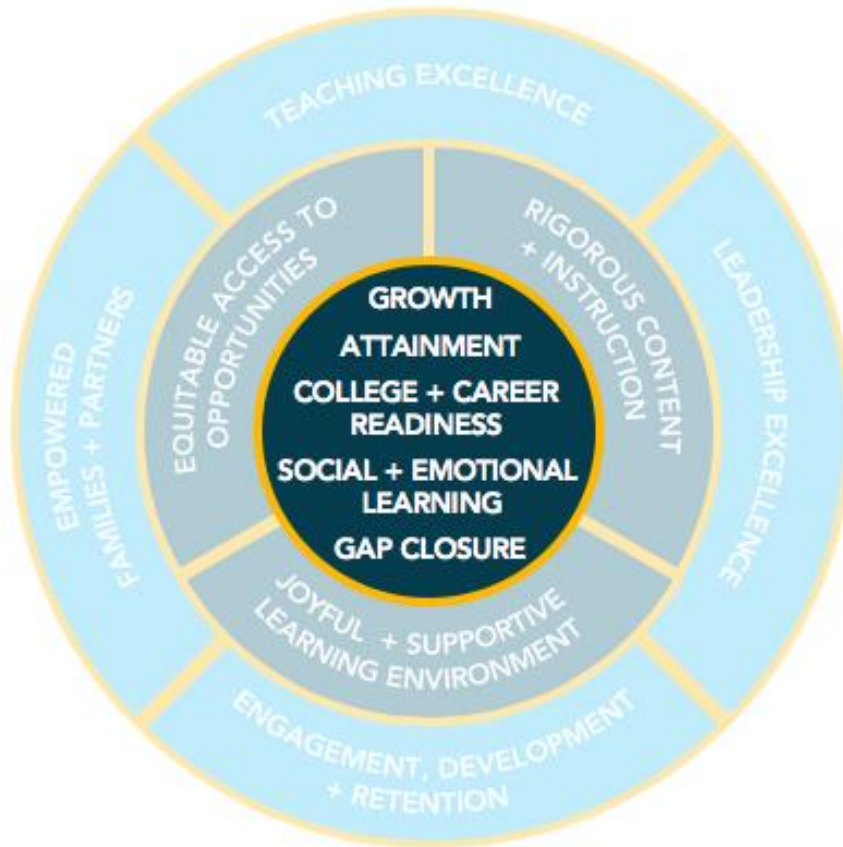


1. **Rigorous Content and Instruction:** All students have equitable access to rigorous and relevant content; instruction is standards-based, culturally responsive and rigorous
2. **Equitable Access to Opportunities:** All students have equitable access to support services and opportunities for enrichment and holistic development
3. **Joyful and Supportive Learning Environment:** The school environment is clean and safe; students, families and staff have strong, trusting interpersonal relationships; students are supported with needed interventions; students feel supported to take risks and take ownership of their academic journey; students' learning experiences are joyful and challenging



## GROWTH + ACHIEVEMENT

The school ensures that all students, regardless of background, develop the skills, knowledge bases, mindsets and dispositions they need to succeed in college, career and community. Students of all backgrounds make needed annual growth to ensure they graduate with the social, emotional and academic skills needed for success and this growth results in the closure or elimination of gaps between student subgroups.



1. **Growth:** Students of all achievement levels are making annual growth
2. **Attainment:** Students are performing at or above grade level expectations
3. **College and Career Readiness:** Both before and during high school, students are increasing their readiness for college and career; that is, students can enter postsecondary education without remediation and are competitive in the job market
4. **Social and Emotional and Whole Child Learning:** Students are actively developing social-emotional competencies and mindsets needed for lifelong citizenship
5. **Gap Closure:** Gaps between student subgroups are closing

## Time for discussion – Small Group

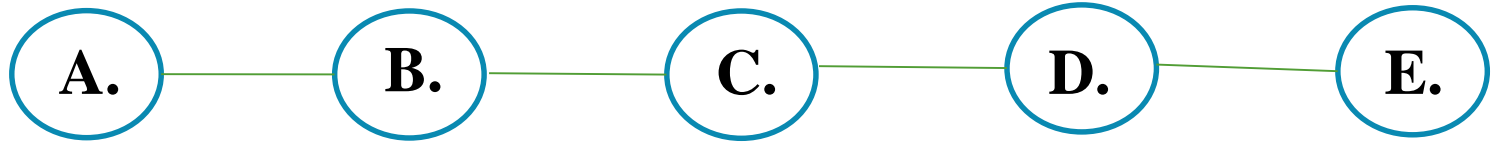
---

Think back to the kid you imagined during our conversation

What are your initial reactions to the Vision of Excellence domains and indicators?

---

To what degree does this Vision of Excellence reflect your beliefs about the characteristics of excellent schools?



Encompasses most or all  
of the most important  
characteristics of an  
excellent school

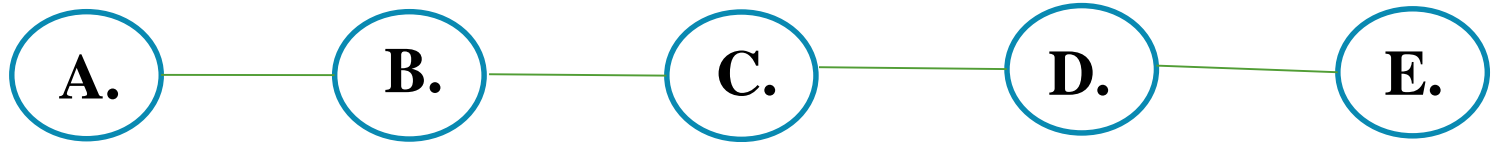
Is missing many of  
the most important  
characteristics of  
an excellent school

## Time for discussion

---

If you believe it is missing important characteristics of an excellent school – what are they?

# To what degree would a local Excellent Schools Framework benefit APS (compared to simply using the CCRPI)?



Very much – while the CCRPI measures many things we care about, it is not a comprehensive picture of school excellence according to our specific community and context

Not at all – the current CCRPI fully reflects APS' vision of what constitutes an excellent school

---

## Next steps for the Vision of Excellence and Excellent Schools Framework

- More refinement and technical work based on Board and community engagement
- Community Conversations will be held in January 2019 to discuss the Excellent Schools Framework
- For up to date information, please visit - <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/Page/58601>

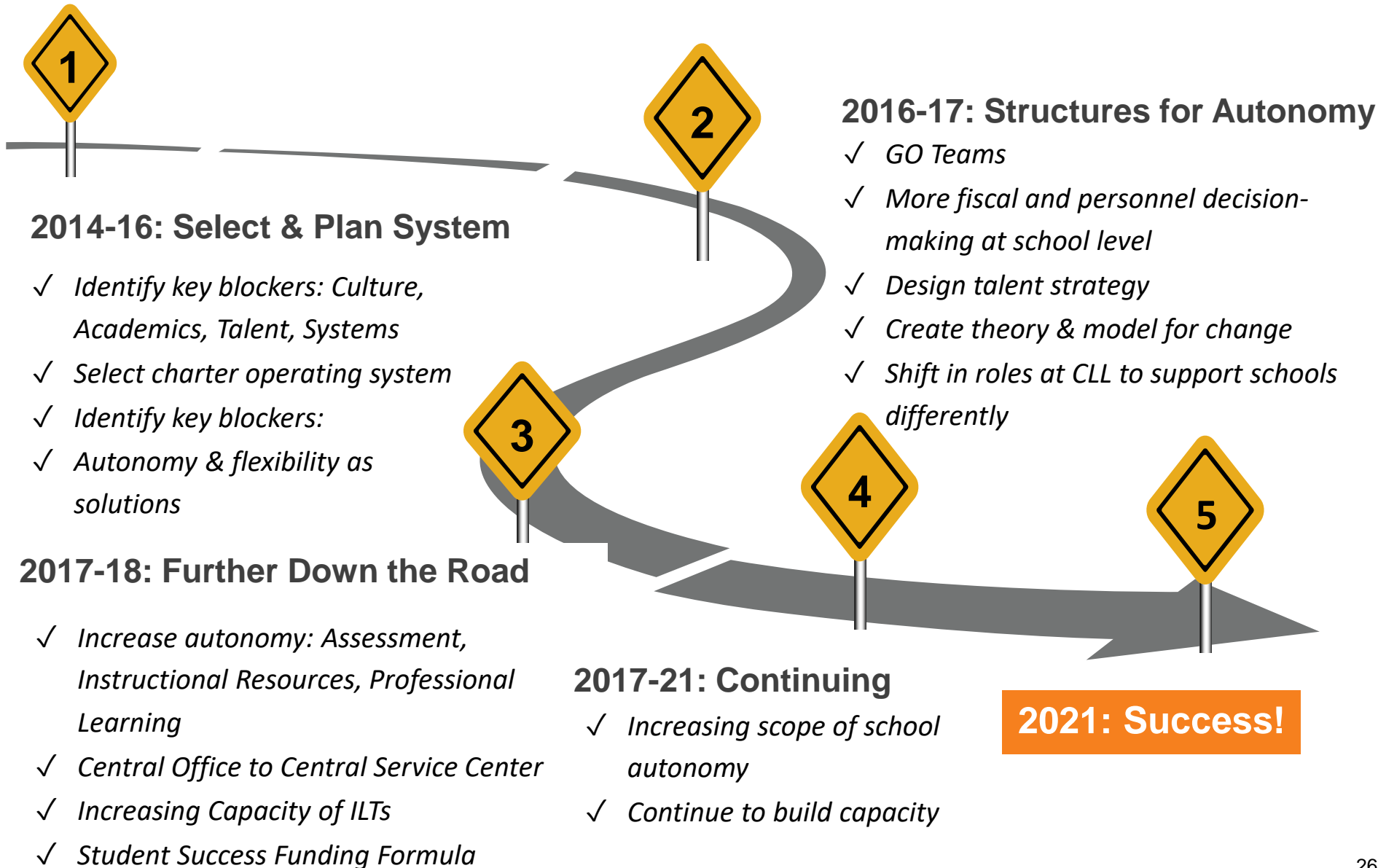


## Thank You For Your Time



Source: <https://atlsuper.com/2017/05/26/congratulations-grad-nation-aps-class-of-2017/>

# Our Road Map



# Opportunities

Past experience suggests that successful implementation requires a multi-faceted approach to school empowerment

## Core Tenets

- Ensure every student receives the best education, no matter where he/she sits in the district
- Ensure Central Office has the capacity to effectively to support schools

## Common Definitions & Guiding Principles

- Strengthen and communicate how we define centralized/hold tight; flexibility; autonomy
- Develop Guiding Principles

## Shared Definitions of Excellence

- Expand definitions to include central office leaders

## Instructional Leadership Framework

- Data-informed priorities for school & staff
- Feedback loops
- Aligned PL

## Aligned Accountability

- Develop a Performance Framework