Excellent Schools Project

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Excellent Schools Project?

The System of Excellent Schools project will be the beginning of a collaborative conversation with the Board, staff, parents/caretakers, and the community to establish a clear vision of excellence for all APS schools as well as a plan to operationalize that vision. To learn more about the project, click here.

Why is this work important?

Having a **vision of school excellence** will help us clarify the common elements of an excellent school that we want to ensure come to life in all schools, for all kids, in APS. Consider a child in APS about whom you care a lot—a child, a niece, a nephew, a mentee. How confident are you that the child currently has access to an excellent school? How do you know? How confident are you that the child could live anywhere in the city and have access to an excellent school? How do you know? This work is our journey to answer these questions.

Is this different from the Charter System Operating Model?

The Charter System Operating Model is the foundation to our work. We believe we can best accomplish our mission using a model that provides freedom from many state education regulations in exchange for increased accountability for student achievement. The Excellent Schools Project helps articulate our expectations, how we measure progress, and how we expand excellence and equity to all schools.

How is this different from CCRPI?

We feel it is important to augment the CCRPI (College and Career Ready Performance Index) for three reasons:

1. We want to provide a **more complete picture** of school quality. For example, social-emotional competency development and PK-2 progress are at the heart of APS' Excellent Schools Framework, but are not measured by the CCRPI.

2. We want to prioritize indicators that **support APS' strategy**. Culture is a critical pillar of the APS 2015-2020 strategic plan, and while the CCPRI measures *aspects* of family or community investment in schools, they are not scored in the CCRPI calculation (but separately in the star rating).

3. We want to **co-create our Framework** with our community so it represents the values and voices of Atlanta Public Schools.

How are you collecting feedback from the community?

Throughout this process we are collecting feedback from a variety of stakeholders through multiple avenues:

External Stakeholders:

- We will be doing surveys and in person meetings to provide information and receive feedback from the community. In addition, we will hold two meetings in the fall 2018 (November, December) and four meetings in February 2019. Please go to this website for updated dates, times and locations.
- We have also created an Advisory Committee made up for parents/caretakers, principals, teachers, staff, and district partners. This Advisory Committee provides feedback throughout the process through webinars, in-person meetings, and surveys. (September 24, October 22, November 12, December 17)

Internal Stakeholders:

- In addition to the Advisory Committee, we regularly meet with the Board of Education, Senior Cabinet, Senior Executive Leadership Team, Expanded Cabinet, Principals, Teachers, and other APS employees throughout this process.

How do you ensure this isn't a "one size fits all" approach?

It is important to agree as a district on our vision of excellent schools and how we measure excellence. The path to excellence for a school may be different based on the strengths, data, leadership, staff, students, and community of each school. Regardless of the path taken, we should strive for a common understanding of excellence across all schools in the district.

What is the role of central office in this project and its implementation?
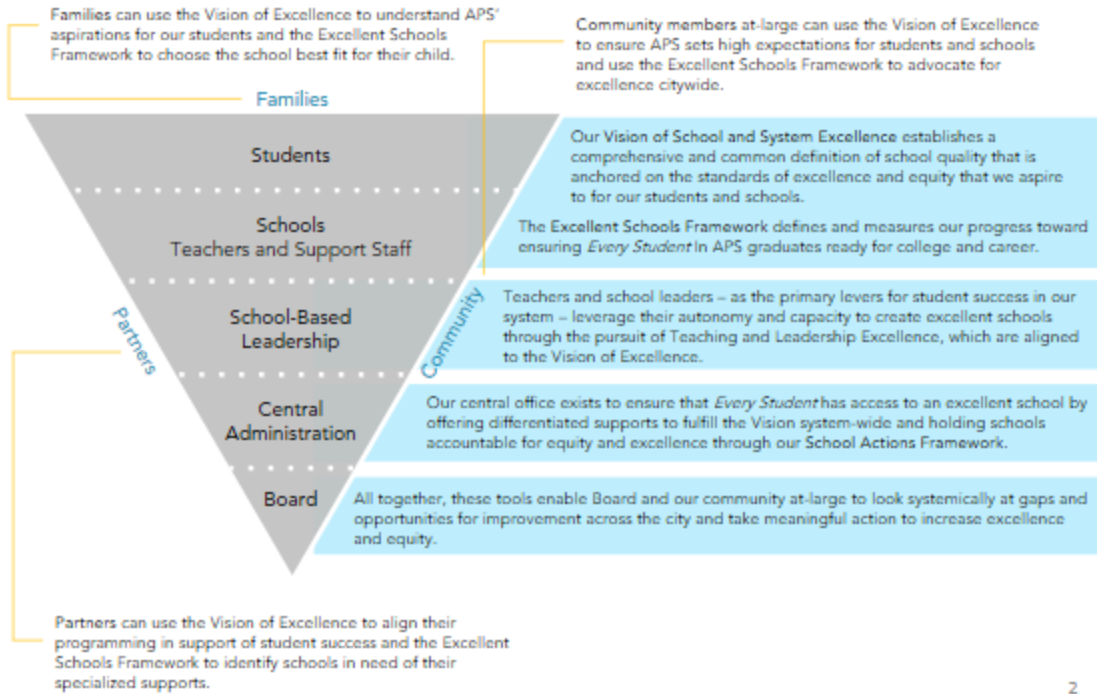
Central Office plays a critical role in supporting schools in their path toward excellence. With a clear understanding of how we define and measure excellence, Central Office can align their work and resources to support schools.

How will this work support our focus on increased equity?

APS believes that all students can attain the skills, knowledge and mindsets needed for success in college, career and community. Therefore, this work will help us hold ourselves accountable to measuring, closing and eliminating gaps for historically disadvantaged students. Achieving equitable outcomes for students also means that more opportunities are available to those students who need them the most. This commitment will be woven throughout our Vision of School Excellence.

How do we all play a role in advancing this work?

This graphic illustrates where we all fit in this work (see below). In addition to internal stakeholders, families, partners and the community are critical to this work. Families can use the Vision of Excellence to understand APS' aspirations for our students and the Excellent Schools Framework. Community members at-large can use the Vision of Excellence to ensure APS sets high expectations for students and schools and use the Excellent Schools Framework to advocate for excellence citywide. Partners can use the Vision of Excellence to align their programming in support of student success and the Excellent Schools Framework to identify schools in need of their specialized supports.

Families can use the Vision of Excellence to understand APS' aspirations for our students and the Excellent Schools Framework to choose the school best fit for their child.

Families

Community members at-large can use the Vision of Excellence to ensure APS sets high expectations for students and schools and use the Excellent Schools Framework to advocate for excellence citywide.

Students

Schools
Teachers and Support Staff

Our Vision of School and System Excellence establishes a comprehensive and common definition of school quality that is anchored on the standards of excellence and equity that we aspire to for our students and schools.

The Excellent Schools Framework defines and measures our progress toward ensuring *Every Student* in APS graduates ready for college and career.

School-Based Leadership

Teachers and school leaders – as the primary levers for student success in our system – leverage their autonomy and capacity to create excellent schools through the pursuit of Teaching and Leadership Excellence, which are aligned to the Vision of Excellence.

Central Administration

Our central office exists to ensure that *Every Student* has access to an excellent school by offering differentiated supports to fulfill the Vision system-wide and holding schools accountable for equity and excellence through our School Actions Framework.

Board

All together, these tools enable Board and our community at-large to look systemically at gaps and opportunities for improvement across the city and take meaningful action to increase excellence and equity.

Partners can use the Vision of Excellence to align their programming in support of student success and the Excellent Schools Framework to identify schools in need of their specialized supports.

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What will the end result look like? Will we have a list of "excellent" schools? What will the definition result in?

This phase of the work will end with three sets of deliverables to help guide decisions as the district builds a system of excellent schools.

WORKSTREAM	COMPONENTS	DESCRIPTION
1. Vision of Excellence	1A. Vision of School Excellence	Integrates with definitions of teaching and leadership excellence to define the characteristics of excellent schools that prepare APS students for college, career and community
	1B. Portrait of a Graduate	Defines the competencies, mindsets and knowledge bases APS graduates must attain to prepare for college, career and community (and may be back-mapped to other milestones by APS)
	1C. Excellent Schools Framework	Translates the vision of school excellence into specific, measurable domains of school performance to enable planning, analysis and public transparency
2. Excellent Schools Analysis and Action Planning	2A. Access to Excellence Analysis	Assesses the performance of the current system of schools against the Excellent Schools Framework and highlights areas of opportunity and challenge for expanding access to and enrollment in excellent schools

	2B. Individual School Reports	Individual school summaries of performance against the Excellent Schools Framework
	2C. 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
3. Implementation Support	3A. Multiyear Implementation Plan	Identifies the implementation priorities and initiatives required to move APS schools and central office toward a system of excellent schools
	3B. School Models Analysis and Go/No Go Decision	Facilitates the organization to clarity about adding new school models; if yes, recommends a course of action for leveraging new models across the system

How does this connect to what we're already doing?

While this may feel like something new or a change, it is truly continuing our journey of transformation and building upon where we are. We believe we've been focused on the right work (2015-2020 Strategic Plan) with the right operating model (Charter System). This builds on our strong foundation by outlining a clear vision and path toward ensuring every student attends an excellent school.

What type of longitudinal supports will be put in place to ensure we're monitoring progress / getting results?

Part of this work is developing those supports. The following deliverables will help ensure we are providing support and getting the results we desire:

- School Actions Framework: Outline 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 authorization.
- Multiyear Implementation Plan: Identify the implementation priorities and initiatives required to move APS schools and central office toward a system of excellent schools.
- School Models Analysis and GO/No Go Decision: Facilitate the organization to clarity about adding new school models; if yes, recommends a course of action for leveraging new models across the system.

How will community/prospective parents access the results of this work - i.e., when you pull up each school's website, will their "score" on the excellence scale be readily posted/advertised?

We have not outlined how parents will access their school results, but we will strive to ensure transparency, clarity, and timeliness.

Where do I send in questions, recommendations, or concerns about this work?

Please reach out to Travis Norvell (tnorvell@atlanta.k12.ga.us) for any assistance.