



Every Student:  
Ready for  
College, Career  
and Life

Atlanta Public Schools  
Charter System Renewal  
Application Cover Page

*We are APS, Building on Our Legacy*



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*Richard Woods, Georgia's School Superintendent*  
*"Educating Georgia's Future"*

# **Charter System Renewal Application**

## **For Charter Systems Seeking Renewal from the State Board of Education**

*June 2021*

# CHARTER SYSTEM RENEWAL APPLICATION COVER PAGE

Please enter the requested information in the gray boxes following each question.

<b>Charter System Information</b>			
1. Full Name of Charter System Atlanta Public Schools	2. How many schools in total are included in your charter system (including college and career academies)? 67		
3. How many of each of the following schools will be included in your charter system?			
Primary School(s)		High School(s) 10	
Elementary School(s) 42		Elementary/Middle School(s) 2	
College and Career Academy(ies) 1		Middle/High School(s) 2	
Middle School(s) 10			
4. Charter System Street Address  130 Trinity Ave. SW	5. City  Atlanta	6. State  GA	7. Zip  30303
8. Contact Person:  Carolyn Barnett		9. Title:  Director, Charter System and School Governance	
10. Contact Street Address  130 Trinity Ave. SW	11. City  Atlanta	12. State  GA	13. Zip  30303
14. Contact's Telephone Number  404.802.2837	15. Contact's Fax Number		16. Contact's E-mail Address  cbarnett@apsk12.org

## **Introduction to Atlanta Public Schools**

The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) brought about massive changes for school districts around our state and country. Data shows that the pandemic prompted widespread closures of kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) schools, affecting approximately 124,000 schools and 55.1 million students in early 2020 (Martin, & Sorensen, L. C., 2020). This widespread disruption forced school districts to make critical decisions on how best to operate and provide educational services and learning to students. School districts responded to a number of challenges in the areas of technology, infrastructure, financial resources, socioeconomics, and community needs. With school buildings closed, and schooling migrated to an online environment, this unplanned and unprecedented disruption to society and to education, changed not only the work of many school district staff, including teachers and school administrators, but also forced new structures, systems, and processes to support instructional delivery within the COVID-19 environment. Many organizations, including Atlanta Public Schools, implemented creative and innovative solutions to solve many of the operational challenges that were encountered.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Atlanta Public Schools completed the work of a new strategic plan, titled “We are APS, Building on Our Legacy”. This plan includes the district’s collective vision for the next five years and outlines how we will come together as a community to achieve our vision of a “high-performing school district where students love to learn, educators inspire, families engage, and the community trusts the system.” The 2020-2025 strategic plan creates a bold direction for our students and families, centered on great public schools regardless of the neighborhood, zip code, or area of the city. Outlined in the APS strategic plan is an intentional focus on equity and includes 11 equity commitments. The plan is ambitious because it places equity at the forefront of our work. The plan also includes a revised mission, goals, and priorities focused on improving educational outcomes and opportunities for all students.

Atlanta Public Schools also went through a superintendent leadership change recently. In May 2020, the Atlanta Board of Education voted to name Dr. Lisa Herring as the next superintendent to lead Atlanta Public Schools. During a special-called meeting, the Board approved a 3-year contract for Dr. Herring, beginning July 1, 2020. Dr. Herring comes to Atlanta Public Schools with more than 25 years of experience in education. She established her professional career by teaching in both public and private schools. She has held district leadership roles including Associate Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer; more recently, Superintendent in Birmingham, AL.

The COVID-19 crisis, the social unrest, a new strategic plan, and new leadership all serve as an opportunity for reimagining learning and transformation for Atlanta Public Schools in its next phase as a charter system. Delve (2020) states that disruptions in an organization pry open the lid of Pandora's box allowing new possibilities to arise". At Atlanta Public Schools, we believe that this is an opportunity to reimagine our work and the educational experiences for our students. We want to use this opportunity to rethink instructional resources, delivery, and instructional processes. As the district moves forward, we plan to address the following key challenges:

1. Building a more robust academic program that improves instructional delivery quality and responds to diverse needs for students, while preparing them for college, career, and life;
2. Developing student support processes that will enable diagnosis, progress monitoring, and intervention for all students;
3. Fostering a culture of equity and learning that builds staff capacity, and community understanding; and
4. Implementing system structures and processes that redefine the structures for schools and support the academic vision for the organization.

These challenges are key priorities for new leadership and are drivers in the 2020-2025 district's strategic plan. These four challenges are not just bullets in a written plan, but real challenges that stakeholders are invested in addressing moving forward. Over the last few months, the district has been engaged in hosting a series of town halls, community meetings, staff interviews, and focus groups. The leadership of APS understands that we must address all of these challenges, and that the charter system operating model will provide the flexibility needed to do our best work. The charter system operating model has and will continue to serve as an important foundation to address many of the challenges our system is facing today and in the future.

## **Challenges**

- 1. The district is not on a predictive path that would ensure all students are prepared for college, career, or life.***

While APS has made significant improvement during its first charter system term, APS recognizes that student achievement and growth data show that the academic program in place is still not positioning all students for college, career, or life. District-wide and school-level supports to address the complex challenges of a diverse student body are not sufficient to ensure all students can meet the mission. Data, especially data by subgroup, points to the need for revisions to the academic program.

One of the critical requirements of the academic program is responsiveness to the significant and diverse needs of students throughout APS. The district includes nine K-12 clusters with 64 traditional schools, 19 charter schools, six partner schools, two alternative schools, and five alternative programs. 69 of the 87 schools qualify for Title I schools. The total student body is 72% African American, 16% Caucasian, 8% Hispanic, 3% Multiracial, and 1% Asian American. 12% of students qualify for special education, 9% qualify for gifted, and 4% qualify for English Learner services.

68.85% of APS students are eligible for free/reduced price lunch, with 63 schools having an eligibility

rate of 90% or higher. However, the district also has 8 schools with eligibility of 10% or less.

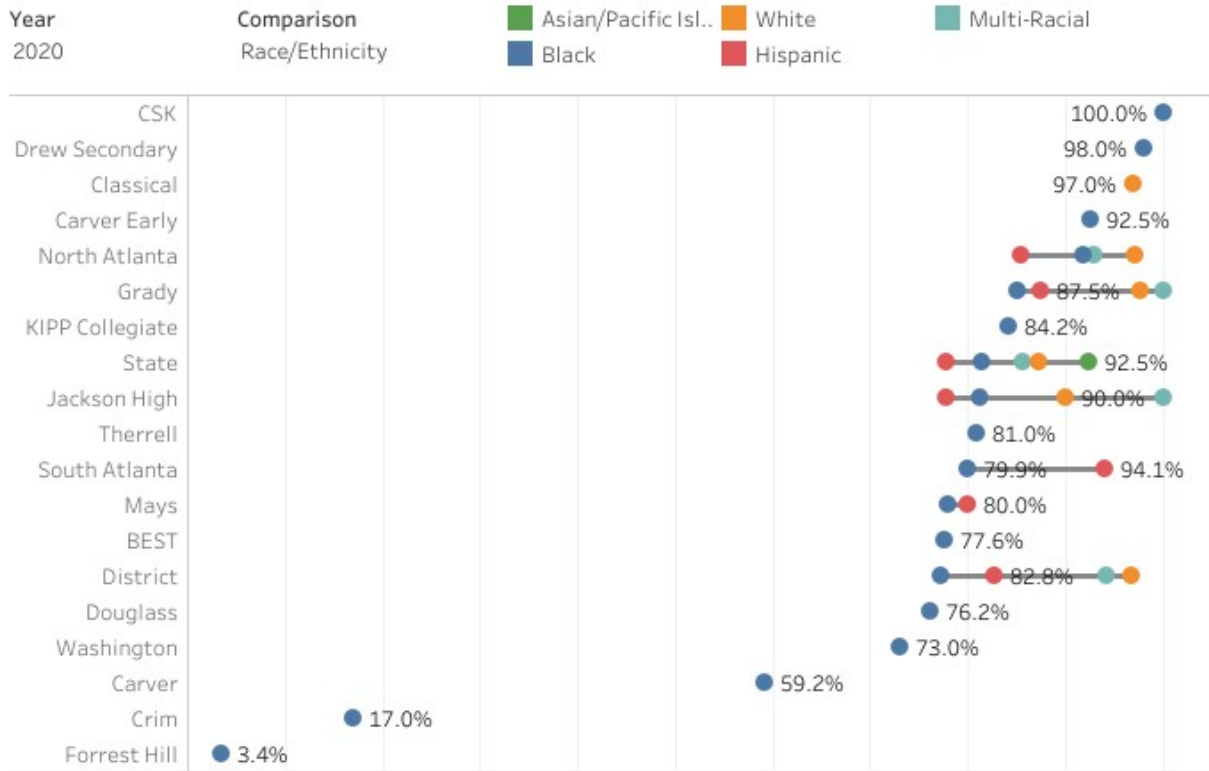
The city of Atlanta is the most income disparate city in the United States. According to the most current census data, the median household income within APS is \$167,087 for white students and \$23,803 for black students. Deep intergenerational poverty is at the heart of nearly every issue facing our students and schools.

APS has an academic achievement gap where white students are nearly 4.5 grade levels ahead of their black peers. Approximately 77% of our children are considered low income. Research shows that a child born in poverty in Atlanta has only a 4.5% chance of achieving upward economic mobility. It is with this knowledge that APS places equity at the forefront of all of its strategic planning.

### **Overall APS Performance**

APS's district-wide graduation rate is now above 80 percent – indicating significant overall improvement. The sub-group data indicates that graduation rates for both White students (96.7%) and Hispanic students (82.8%) reached new highs with the 2020 cohort, while the rate for Black students (77.2%) was higher than the 2019 rate (75.5%) but slightly lower than the 2018 high of 78.2%. Nearly 20 percentage points separate the graduation rates of Black students and White students. The 2020 graduation rate for students with disabilities increased by 8.0 percentage points over 2019 to reach an all-time high of 64.6%.

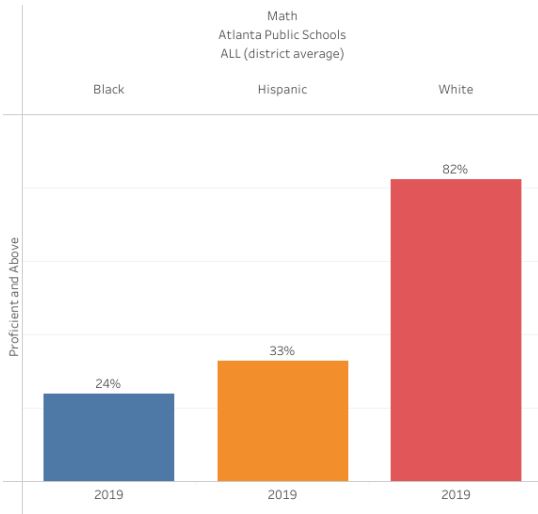
## 2020 Graduation Rates by School and Race/Ethnicity



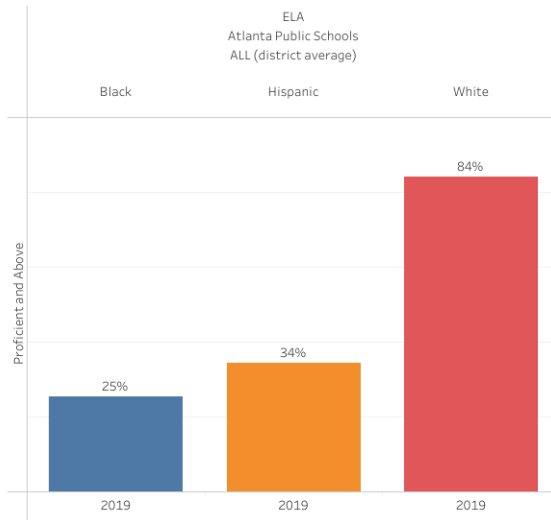
On Milestones, the district continues to have performance gaps. The Milestone data shows that the district-wide percentages for English Language Arts for grades 3 through 8 indicates a large gap between Black and White students. The difference between Black and White students is a 58.8 percentage-point gap. The Mathematics scores also indicate a large gap. Specifically, only 24% of Black 8th Grade APS Students are proficient or above in math, compared to 82% of White students.



Milestones Comparison



Milestones Comparison



An additional challenge to the work came with the global pandemic. Many of the gaps likely broadened over the past year.

There is significant learning loss and unfinished learning that our district must address due to the pandemic. Two Atlanta-based organizations – Learn4Life and RedefinED Atlanta – wanted to gauge how much learning loss happened in spring of 2020, so during the summer they commissioned EmpowerK12 to assess possible future student achievement outcomes due to school-day cancellations related to COVID-19. Given that there is no testing data from Georgia Milestones or other assessments from last year, researchers made assumptions using learning loss data associated with summer learning, patterns observed from natural disasters such as Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Katrina, and student attendance impacts. The study projected that the percentage of third graders reading on grade level declined by 3.6%, while the percentage of 8th graders performing math on grade level declined by 4.9%. The research numbers reflect only the final nine weeks of last school year, so we can expect that the numbers possibly declined further over the first semester of this school year.

APS has increased student achievement over the past five years; however, the academic programming across the district requires significant revision in order to meet the mission and serve a diverse student population in light of the additional challenges and the remaining equity issues present in our district. Disparities in performance and growth within APS reinforce the complexities of this challenge and highlight the need for academic programming that is tailored to the specific students served at each school.

APS plans to implement changes to the instructional delivery models to improve instructional quality, provide opportunities for academic recovery, and create a more personalized learning experience. Over the next five years, we plan to implement or expand the following strategies to the instructional program:

- Blended Learning;
- Teacher and Staff Professional Learning;
- Flexible Schedules (i.e., extended day, extended school year);
- Individualized Learning Plans for Each Student;
- Remote Learning Tools; and
- Personalized Learning Models

***2. The district does not have all of the necessary student support processes that will enable diagnosis, progress monitoring, and intervention for students and schools.***

Over the last few years, the administration has undertaken dramatic changes including partnerships, school mergers, and other strategic efforts designed to address the academic program, resources, culture, leadership, and talent at the lowest performing schools. In 2018-2019, fourteen schools received targeted interventions as a part of the APS Turnaround Strategy. These interventions include additional reading and math specialists, additional wraparound supports, and additional funding for

learning initiatives. APS's charter system model enabled the district to make such dramatic changes.

The 2019 Milestone data indicates that since the initial implementation of the APS turnaround strategy in 2016, all targeted and partnership schools (17 of 17) have improved by decreasing the percent of beginning learners (students who do not yet demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia's content standards). Six schools showed a double-digit decrease.

In addition to the APS Turnaround Strategy, the district also implemented different school models for several schools within the district in need of redesign. In the future, the district will continue to make the necessary changes for schools that require a significant intervention, which is made possible in part due to the flexibility afforded to APS as a charter system.

The Response to Intervention Initiative (RTI) is the foundational program used to provide tiered interventions before students fall behind. Over the past few years, the RTI Initiative has funded SST specialists in schools as well as provided progress monitoring tools for school staff to determine intervention effectiveness. Several years ago, the district implemented STAR Universal Screeners to assist with skill deficit identification and instructional planning, and to monitor the progress of tiered supports. Given the current student achievement gaps and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the district is planning to transition to a new universal screener to enable more robust data collection regarding student growth performance. This new universal screener will serve as a major tool to enable diagnosis, progress monitoring, intervention, and accountability.

In addition, the district is implementing a number of academic intervention tools to address learning loss and gaps in achievement. APS will implement a summer Academic Recovery to provide students the opportunity for academic intervention and enrichment. During the school year, the district plans

to add 30 minutes to the elementary school instructional day to provide time for enhanced intervention/enrichment blocks, classes, or courses for students in the areas of Mathematics, Literacy, and Social Emotional Learning.

An important priority for APS is focused on whole child development and restoration, which will be supported by our APS whole child framework. APS students need student support resources focused not only on academic intervention, but mental health and well-being. To that end, the district is planning to implement additional mental health supports across all schools. This may include mental health counselors on site for all schools, a dedicated APS 24-Hour Mental Health Hotline and on call counselors available for all schools.

***3. The district has not built a culture of equity and student support among its staff and stakeholders needed to achieve the mission.***

Last year, the Atlanta Board of Education made a major change to the mission when it approved its latest five-year strategic plan. The district added “Equity” and “Life” to the mission statement. The mission now reads: Through a caring culture of equity, trust, and collaboration, every student will graduate ready for college, career, and life.

With the word “life,” the Board acknowledged that our work involves more than just preparation for college and career. APS needs to prepare students for life. But the addition of the word “equity” significantly changes our focus for our district and our students. Everything we do in our district, whether it involves academics, operations, our district culture, or our resources, must be addressed through the lens of equity. Equity stands at the core of the district’s 2020- 2025 strategic plan and guides all of our work as a school system.

Atlanta Public Schools Board of Education recognizes equity means the quality or ideal of being just

and fair, regardless of economic, social, cultural, and human differences among and between persons. We believe that achieving equity requires strategic decision-making to remedy opportunity and learning gaps and creating a barrier-free environment, which enables all students to graduate ready for college, career, and life. The aim of equity is to provide students with additional and differentiated resources based on their individual education needs.

The district strategic plan states that achieving equity will require changes in how the district fundamentally operates so that all students have access to the opportunities and resources they need to achieve their full potential. Over the last several years, the district has taken a number of approaches to address pockets of inequities in the system. These initial efforts included developing more equitable funding distribution models, strengthening the teacher workforce, and utilizing practices that validate the diverse backgrounds and identities of our students.

Recently, the district implemented the role of a Chief Equity and Social Justice Officer as the lead executive for developing a detailed approach for implementing an equity framework to enable the 11 Equity Commitments identified in the strategic plan. These commitments speak to several focus areas essential to creating a more equitable school system. In addition, these commitments will serve as an important framework to advance equity and the areas that the board and district leadership will focus their efforts over the strategic timeframe of 2020-2025. The chart below highlights the 11 Equity Commitments as outlined in the district's strategic plan. This work will be managed, supported, and monitored by the Center for Equity and Social Justice.

<b>Equity Commitment</b>	<b>Equity Commitment Description</b>
Leveraging School Improvement to Advance Equity	<i>We commit to integrating school improvement efforts with effective strategies and interventions to help ensure that all students can reach their full potential.</i>
Ensuring Equitable Funding	<i>We commitment to ensuring available funds are distributed equitably and appropriately to provide high quality programming for all students.</i>
Increasing Access to Effective Leaders and Teachers	<i>We commit to ensuring all students have access to high quality leaders and teachers, with a priority on the students with the greatest need.</i>
Partnering with Families and Communities	<i>We commit to partnering respectfully and collaboratively with families and communities to address the needs of all students.</i>
Supporting Special Populations	<i>We commit to implementing targeted strategies to prioritize support for special populations such as English learners, students with disabilities, and socioeconomically disadvantage students.</i>
Increasing Access to Advance Coursework	<i>We commit to increasing access to advanced coursework for historically disadvantage student groups.</i>

Addressing Disproportionate Discipline Practices	<i>We commit to promote equity in disciplinary practices to avoid disproportionate enforcement or punishment targeting any specific students' group.</i>
Integrating Social, Emotional, and Academic Practices	<i>We commit to a comprehensive approach to addressing students' social, emotional, and academic development in order to meet the various needs of all students.</i>
Improving Access to High Quality Instructional Programming and Materials	<i>We commit to using effective instructional materials in all classrooms so that all students have access to high quality curricular and robust signature programming.</i>
Expanding Access to Co-Curricular and Extra Curricular Activities	<i>We commit to expanding access to co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to historically disadvantage student groups according to their interests.</i>
Ensuring Equitable Learning Environments	<i>We commit to providing safe, welcoming, and engaging learning environments for all students.</i>
Promoting a Culture of Equity	<i>We commit to creating a culture of equity-minded individuals.</i>

***4. The district has not implemented the structures and processes needed to redefine the support structures for schools.***

The district is in the process of revising the support structures for schools. This multi-prong approach includes revising the organizational structures, redefining support roles, and implementing processes that will engage school staff in a continuous improvement learning cycle. Like APS's other strategic endeavors, the charter system model provides APS with the tools and flexibility to accomplish its mission.

The district will implement new offices and teams that will provide direct support to schools. For example, the district has created two distinct divisions to provide additional resources to schools. In the past, the Schools and Academics Division was one unit that provided a host of services to schools. Now, this model will shift so that there are two divisions providing support. These two distinct divisions will have separate roles and responsibilities. The Schools division will provide direct support to schools while the Academics division will ensure that the resources and professional learning for schools are high quality. In addition, the district will alter the role of the Associate Superintendent of Schools to focus on the K-12 continuum versus just focusing on K-8 schools or high schools only.

The district will also implement School Accountability Reviews and District Accountability Reviews as a tool to provide support to schools. The School Accountability Review is a data protocol led by the Superintendent each quarter that requires school leaders. The purpose is to discuss the strategies they have implemented and their impact. Schools will share qualitative and quantitative data in a PLC format. These sessions are rooted in learning and helping schools to determine what is and what isn't working in their buildings.



## ***Charter System Renewal Application Questions***

### **A. Essential or Innovative Features Implementation**

1. What is the status of the implementation of each Essential or Innovative Feature included in your charter system contract?

What happens when district and school leaders, teachers, parents, and community members come together with a mission in mind of building a caring culture of trust and collaboration, where every student graduates ready for college and career? Over time they begin to see the fruits of their labor and recognize that their district is on the cusp of becoming a high-performing district where students love to learn, educators inspire, families engage, and the community trusts the system. Atlanta Public Schools is encouraged by our progress thus far with our essential/innovative features; however, we believe we still have more work to do to ensure every student in every neighborhood has the tools, resources, and support needed to be successful. Each essential/innovative feature listed in our current contract is discussed in turn below.

### **I. *Create cluster signature programs to meet the needs of students and our communities -Fully Implemented***

Aligned with its Charter System operating model, APS engaged the community in a planning process that led to the creation of Cluster Plans that highlight instructional programming across schools within a cluster, Pre-K through high school, and define the future direction for each cluster. One focus of the Cluster Plans was the identification and implementation of a signature program. The signature programs focus on the vertical and horizontal alignment of academic programs for schools and neighborhoods. These programs provide rigor, structure, focus, and accountability across the cluster. The programs chosen include: IB, STEM/STEAM and College & Career Readiness. Every school is on a timeline for complete implementation, authorization, certification, or credentialed.

## **II. *Implement positive behavior support approach and restorative justice strategies – Full***

### ***Implementation in Progress***

The innovative practices for positive behavior supports is mostly implemented. As part of the PBIS strategy, the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) department was created and charged with leading the implementation of SEL programming inclusive of PBIS and Restorative Practices. Social Emotional Learning serves as the foundation of the district’s positive behavior supports and is infused in both the academic and behavioral programming. Every staff member in the district receives SEL training and support that is framed using CASEL’s (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) five core competencies. SEL is also at the core of the district’s Definitions of Teaching and Leader Excellence and is a key driver for implementing the district’s academic framework. As of today, all schools in APS have adopted an explicit SEL curriculum (Second Step in PK-8 and School Connect in 9-12) and have practices grounded in SEL that help to create safe and supportive learning environments.

In addition to school wide SEL programming for students, the district has also committed to building the SEL capacity of all adults and aligning policies and practices that shift from punitive to restorative. One portion of these practices includes Restorative Practices (RP) trainings at both the school and district level. To date, over 700 adults including the Safety and Security office have completed intensive RP training that focuses on the tenets of restorative practices, effective use of circles, and restorative conferencing. Additionally, the district also supports schools in the implementation of PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) and ensures its alignment with SEL practices.

## **III. *Establish formal wraparound service partnership district-wide – Fully Implemented***

APS implemented wraparound services in collaboration with district partners, provided targeted behavior intervention support to school leadership teams, and provided trauma-informed care and mental health training.

**IV. *Revise HR systems to support efficient and effective recruitment and selection of staff –Fully Implemented***

APS implemented IT and HR resource planning management systems to better manage data and migrated some systems and data to the Cloud.

**V. *Create a College and Career Academy in partnership with Atlanta Tech – Full Implementation in Progress***

In 2016-2017 Atlanta College and Career Academy opened on the campus of Atlanta Technical College with 102 students. To date, students enrolled in the Atlanta College and Career Academy (ACCA) have earned Technical Certificates of Completion (TCC) and dual enrollment credits. Planning for phase II (campus solely for APS students) began in 2017. In August 2020, Atlanta College and Career Academy began phase II on the Dr. Michael S. Maze Campus (named after APS' greatest champion for CTAE). With both campuses, student enrollment for fall 2020 was 335.

**VI. *Budgetary flexibility to allow for targeted resource allocation that meets the needs of the students and leverages the assets at each school – Fully Implemented***

APS worked to develop a school funding formula that maximizes transparency, provides autonomy & flexibility to schools, and increases equity for all students: the Student Success Funding (SSF). APS will continue to strive for a balanced approach to adjusting the allotment model. Each year the scales are tilted more towards equity while striving to maintain as much stability as possible for all schools in the District.

**VII. *Authentic community engagement in schools site decision making through GO Teams – Fully Implement***

APS school governance teams (GO Teams)- comprised of instructional staff, parents, community

stakeholders, and students - work with school leadership to determine the long-term direction of the school, design innovative solutions to increase student achievement, and serve as school ambassadors to the community. The principal and a GO Team member from each school make up the Cluster Advisory Teams (CAT). Two members from each CAT sit on the District Executive Committee. This vertical alignment was designed to build and ensure understanding of needs and interdependencies between levels.

2. For those Essential or Innovative Features that are not on schedule, what are next steps?

***Create a College and Career Academy in partnership with Atlanta Tech - Full Implementation in Progress***

Atlanta College and Career Academy (ACCA) began operating on Atlanta Technical College's campus in August 2016. In August 2020, ACCA began phase II on the Dr. Michael S. Maze Campus (named after APS' greatest champion for CTAE). The College and Career Academy will offer 14 career technology programs: 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, HVAC and Refrigeration, Patient Care and Programming. ACCA received a pre-certification status from the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) in March 2020, which indicates that the Academy is moving in a positive direction toward meeting certification standards.

Due to COVID 19, ACCA on the Dr. Michael S. Maze Campus officially opened its doors to face-to-face learning on February 16, 2021.

***Implement positive behavior support approach and restorative justice strategies - Full Implementation in Progress***

As part of its Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports strategy, the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) department was created and charged with leading the implementation of SEL programming inclusive of PBIS and Restorative Practices. Social Emotional Learning serves as the foundation of the district's positive behavior supports and is infused in both the academic and behavioral programming. As APS continues its focus on PBIS, the district will continue deepening the work through the academic system and whole child frameworks. This includes aligning practices (trauma-informed, MTSS, instructional practices etc.) to support the capacity of the staff to model SEL skills and implement programming that nurtures a student's ability to make healthy and responsible decisions for both personal and academic choices.

3. Are there any Essential or Innovative Features that should be deleted or added to your new charter system contract (including any college and career academies)?

Yes, APS will add two essential/innovative features to the new charter system contract. While the District will continue to build on its existing essential/innovative features, we will add the build-out and developing work of the new Center for Equity and Social Justice and the district's performance review process (school and district-level) as essential/innovative features. COVID-19 has intensified the need to reimagine resource allocations, school structures, teacher preparation and development, access to technology, mastery-based learning, holistic support for students, and work & life skills for all our students.

Atlanta Public Schools is encouraged by our progress thus far with our essential/innovative features; however, we believe we still have more work to do to ensure every student in every neighborhood has the tools, resources, and support needed to be successful.

In order for APS to achieve our mission that every student graduates ready for college, career, and life, our schools must be joyful places that are equitable and inclusive, and places that create excellence for all, especially for our students of color. The Center for Equity and Social Justice will examine current policies and practices, work to interrupt and eliminate inequitable practices, and create inclusive and just conditions for all students, ensuring that our most vulnerable and marginalized students receive a quality education, including the necessary social-emotional supports, and enroll in supportive postsecondary institutions.

The School Accountability Reviews will be implemented as a data protocol to discuss all strategies implemented, problem solve and identify supports needed for each school. These reviews will help schools to identify the tools and structures that schools are using that are making a positive impact on student learning and achievement. Schools will share qualitative and quantitative data in a PLC format. These sessions are rooted in learning and helping schools to determine what is and what isn't working in their buildings. The District Accountability Reviews will be implemented to ensure departments are providing the necessary supports to schools.

## **B. Academic Accountability**

1. How have your schools done on meeting the academic targets in your charter system contract?

According to statistical analysis released by the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), APS had 36 schools, or 41 percent of its schools, that Beat the Odds in 2019. In addition, APS had the highest percentage of schools that Beat the Odds when compared to other metro-area school districts. On the 2019 EOG tests, APS students achieved their highest overall rates of proficiency since GADOE implemented the Milestones assessments in 2015. The district wide percentage of students scoring proficient and above increased in all subjects compared to 2018. The largest year over year increase was in ELA(+3.3 percentage points). APS has increased its CCRPI scores in each academic level.

2013-14 the CCRPI scores: ES – 67.1, MS – 65.4 and HS – 59.2

APS Overall – 65.3

2019-20 CCRPI Scores: ES – 76.6, MS – 72.2 and HS – 70.4

APS Overall – 74.1

In 2015, APS submitted its first application to become a Charter System. One of the challenges the system faced was changing culture throughout the organization to promote positive, productive learning environments where students and staff are highly engaged. Since 2016 (when APS became a Charter System), APS has increased the number of employees who are engaged from 29% to 48% in 2019 as defined by Gallup. Gallup defines engaged employees as those who are involved in, enthusiastic about, and committed to their work and workplace. Also, during this period, APS saw the number of employee relations complaints filed decrease by 23%. The average absence for teachers (which lend itself to engagement) decreased by 37% - from 14 to 9 days per teacher, per school year.

The district's graduation rate is also steadily increasing - 59.1% (2013- 14) to 80.3% (2019-20). The 2020 graduation rate for students with disabilities increased by 8.0 percentage points over 2019 to reach an all-time high of 64.6% and the graduation rate for English learners also reached a new high of 76.1%, a 6.4-percentage-point increase compared to 2019. Although we celebrate our accomplishments, APS has more ground to cover. Graduation rates for both White students (96.7%) and Hispanic students (82.8%) reached new highs with the 2020 cohort, while the rate for Black students (77.2%) was higher than the 2019 rate (75.5%) but slightly lower than the 2018 high of 78.2%. APS is committed to eliminating the performance and opportunity gaps our students of color experience.

2. What steps have you taken on an annual basis at schools that did not meet their academic targets?

Over the last five to six years, the district has undertaken dramatic changes including partnerships, school mergers, and other strategic efforts designed to address the academic program, resources, culture, leadership, and talent at the lowest performing schools.

In 2018-2019, fourteen schools received targeted interventions as part of the APS Turnaround Strategy. These interventions include additional reading and math specialists, additional wraparound supports, and additional funds for extended learning initiatives. In some cases, the turnaround strategy included partnerships with external organizations – i.e., Purpose Built, Kindezi, and Rensselaerville Institute.

The 2019 Milestones results are the most current available data. This data indicates that since the initial implementation of the turnaround strategy in 2016, all targeted and partnership schools (17 of 17) have improved by decreasing the percent of beginning learners (students who do not yet demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia’s content standards). Six schools showed a double-digit decrease.

Turnaround Intervention	School	Beginning Learners				Change (2016 to 2019)
		2016	2017	2018	2019	
Targeted Supports	Barack & Michelle Obama Academy	68.4%	56.6%	52.6%	53.5%	-14.9



Boyd	74.3%	65.7%	57.9%	64.9%	-9.4
F.L. Stanton	59.8%	60.0%	50.7%	45.6%	-14.2
Fain	72.0%	73.6%	68.6%	63.5%	-8.4

	Finch	63.2%	62.1%	56.8%	58.1%	-5.1
	Hollis Innovation Academy (K-6)	69.8%	62.2%	56.2%	50.8%	-19.0
	Kimberly	59.2%	53.1%	51.2%	51.1%	-8.1
	Perkerson	57.1%	62.5%	53.1%	56.3%	-0.8
	Scott	60.3%	53.8%	53.1%	58.7%	-1.6
	Towns	64.4%	50.5%	53.1%	45.2%	-18.9
	Tuskegee Airmen Global Academy	52.8%	50.0%	45.3%	43.6%	-9.2
	Usher-Collier Heights	51.6%	47.3%	46.7%	43.4%	-8.2
	Woodson Park Academy	60.4%	63.5%	57.4%	59.9%	-0.5
Partnership Model	Gideons	64.7%	59.3%	53.2%	52.4%	-12.3
	Price	63.6%	70.3%	63.5%	60.8%	-2.8
	Slater	57.5%	50.9%	53.7%	51.8%	-5.7
	Thomasville Heights	77.5%	66.6%	67.0%	64.5%	-13.0

It is important to note that in 2018 the CCRPI formula changed. Therefore, the state percentile rank of each school's CCRPI score is a strong indication of school performance over time. Subsequently,

9 of 17 targeted and partnership schools have increased their CCRPI percentile rank after 3 full years of implementation.

Turnaround Intervention	School	CCRPI Percentile Rank				Change (2016 to 2019)
		2016	2017	2018	2019	
Targeted Supports	Barack & Michelle Obama Academy	5	11	46	2	-3
	Boyd	2	8	25	1	-1

	F.L. Stanton	6	3	44	29	+23
	Fain	1	1	5	12	+11
	Finch	2	3	21	14	+12
	Hollis Innovation Academy (K- 7)		12	20	17	+5
	Kimberly	3	9	21	13	+10
	Perkerson	15	9	48	1	-14
	Scott	3	5	7	3	0
	Towns	12	34	7	31	+19
	Tuskegee Airmen Global Academy		16	27	44	+28
	Usher- Collier Heights	24	23	21	23	-1
	WoodsonPark Academy		3	13	3	0
Partnership Model	Gideons	6	12	7	13	+7
	Price	7	2	10	7	0
	Slater	10	17	5	7	-3

	Thomasville Heights	1	14	1	9	+8
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In alignment with the district’s turnaround strategy, the district has successfully implemented the following school changes:

<b>School Changes to Support the Turnaround Strategy</b>
2016-2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched Thomasville Heights ES in partnership with Purpose Built Schools of Atlanta.</li> <li>• Opened Hollis Academy, a new K-8 STEM Academy, after the closure of Bethune ES in the Washington Cluster.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opened Tuskegee Airmen Global Academy in the Washington Cluster after the merger of Connally ES and Venetian Hills ES.</li> </ul>
2017-2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restructured Miles Intermediate as Pre-K-5 school with students from Adamsville Primary in the Mays Cluster.</li> <li>• Phase middle school students into the new John Lewis Invictus Academy in the Douglass Cluster and lay groundwork for a new community revitalization effort in Grove Park.</li> <li>• Launch first year of operations for Slater Elementary and Price Middle with Purpose Built Schools.</li> </ul>
2018-2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched first year of operations for Carver STEAM in partnership with Purpose Built Schools.</li> </ul>
2019-2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opened Harper Archer Elementary School after the merger of Fain ES and Towns ES</li> <li>• John Lewis Invictus Academy (MS) in the Douglass Cluster fully opened with addition of 8<sup>th</sup> grade</li> <li>• Launched first year of operations for KIPP: Woodson Park in partnership with KIPP Schools</li> </ul>

3. What will you be doing for schools that fail to meet their academic targets in the future?

The district will consider a number of interventions for schools that fail to meet performance expectations over an extended time period. Some of the steps that the district may consider includes adding support staff, providing additional resources or partnerships, changing school leadership, reconstituting the staff, changing the school design, or implementing other research models. APS is

committed to school improvement and has a history of taking dramatic action when dramatic action is warranted to provide our students with access to a high-quality education. This commitment will continue.

Because we are innovating around equity, we have developed Standards of Service to ensure that students receive what they need both academically and to support whole child development. Schools are expected to meet student's needs using these Standards of Service and have autonomy and flexibility to build upon them.

As a measure to support schools in meeting their targets, the district plans to implement the School Accountability Review process. The School Accountability Review (SAR) process will assist the district in building a culture of data-driven instruction that is supported by a meaningful professional learning and support. The School Accountability Review is a management, accountability, problem-solving methodology, and support data analysis process for school leaders and their leadership teams. The reviews will be one of the drivers in determining next steps for schools not meeting academic targets. These data review meetings and learning sessions will utilize data such as attendance, discipline, and other formative assessments to monitor and adjust instruction throughout the year. Conversations will be focused on reviewing leading indicators and other school quantitative and qualitative data to determine possible root causes and next steps for improvement. The process is designed for leaders to not only be accountable for their data, but also to discuss the strategies they have implemented within their schools and to articulate support they need for their schools. This process will be a new feature for our charter system application and our district.

### **C. Local Schools Governance implementation**

1. What are the main successes of your implementation of Local School Governance?

APS school governance teams (GO Teams)- comprised of instructional staff, parents, community stakeholders and students - work with school leadership to determine the long-term direction of the school, design innovative solutions to increase student achievement, and serve as school ambassadors to the community. Cluster Advisory Teams (CAT) are comprised of the principal and a GO Team member from each school and up to three cluster-wide community partners. Two members from each CAT sit on the District Executive Committee. This vertical alignment was designed to build and ensure understanding of needs and interdependencies between levels. Training plays a major part in GO Team members understanding their governance roles. All new GO Team members, including principals, are required to complete new member orientation. Topics include: Charter System Overview, GO Team Handbook, Governance vs. Management, Ethics, Meetings that Work, and Roles and Responsibilities. In addition, APS hosts a Governance Summit each year to bring all GO Team members together for team building and opportunities to connect with GO Team members from across the district.

The notion that schools will look and feel different because of local school governance is becoming a reality in APS. School leaders and their GO Teams are using their strategic plans as their north star to drive their work, allocate resources and request flexibility. Some examples of how schools are implementing their strategic plans and leveraging flexibility include seat time waiver to create intervention blocks; school day waiver to increase the number of hours students are at school; and teacher certification waiver to recruit non-traditionally certified instructors with subject matter experience, career knowledge, and technical expertise.

2. What barriers had to be overcome to implement Local School Governance?

As a district going through transformation while understanding the importance of equity, we rolled



out GO Teams at one time for all of our traditional and partner schools. We believed that this was the right direction to take instead of rolling out GO Teams in cohorts. This presented a challenge in the beginning with ensuring every team consistently had nine members and were meeting regularly. The district has since put in place processes and procedures to ensure vacancies or being filled within the 60-day time frame and appropriate concerns are being routed to key leaders.

3. What remains to be done to fully implement Local School Governance with fidelity?

APS will continue to build on the foundation we have developed to ensure all local school governance teams are performing their duties effectively. APS uses the six indicators for high quality school governance teams as defined by GADOE to measure effectiveness. The indicators are: LSGT composition reflects the diversity of the community; Meets regularly and complies with Open Records and Open Meetings Laws; LSGT focuses on governance and stays out of management; Substantial autonomy from local district in designated areas; Receives regular updates on academic operational, and financial progress of the school; and Participates in regular governing council training each year.

On a recent survey, GO Team members indicated that there was a desire to build the capacity of all GO Team members and ensure that all teams represent the diversity of their communities. In addition to developing additional training opportunities, APS reviewed its election criteria for parent seats. It was determined that moving forward, only parents who are not employed by the school will be allowed to declare for parent seats.

APS will look to strengthen the Cluster Advisory Teams and District Executive Committee. APS will also focus on ensuring that all GO Teams are monitoring and communicating the progress of their strategic plan and priorities.

<b>Area of Change</b>	<b>Proposed Changes</b>
School Governance Teams - Structure	<p><b>Parent Seats:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Must be the legal parent/guardian on record of a child attending the school</li> <li>2. May NOT be an employee of the school</li> </ol>
School Governance Teams - Structure	<p><b>Student Seats – High School Only:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Two (2) students. One student elected and one appointed by the principal based upon input from the team (students will participate fully in all voting matters)</li> <li>2. Increase student voice</li> </ol>
School Governance Teams - Meetings	<p><b>Meetings:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. GO Teams must meet 6 times per school year</li> <li>2. At least 3 of the meetings may be virtual</li> <li>3. All meetings will be recorded</li> </ol>

<b>Area of Change</b>	<b>Proposed Changes</b>
Cluster Advisory Teams (CAT)	<p><b>Reporting:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. GO Team members appointed to CAT are responsible for providing a summary report from their school</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. CAT members are responsible for reporting back to their GO Teams</li> </ol>
<p>District Executive Committee (DEC)</p>	<p><b>Roles and Responsibilities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support the development and review of district strategies and initiatives</li> <li>2. Share insights on how to translate that vision into implementation in the district</li> <li>3. Engage in dialogue on other district-level committees surrounding critical issues impacting APS</li> </ol>

#### **D. Charter Supplement Uses**

1. For what did the system use its annual charter system supplemental funds that were included in your QBE funding?

Atlanta Public Schools used the charter system supplemental funds to support our signature programs throughout the district. Each of our nine cluster schools (elementary, middle, and high) are anchored by a signature program which focuses on the vertical and horizontal alignment of academic programs for schools and neighborhoods. These programs provide rigor, structure, focus and accountability across the cluster and ensure alignment through district, cluster, and school strategic plans. APS Signature Programs are: STEM/STEAM, IB and College and Career.

In addition, schools received what APS called flex funds. These funds were provided to support school-based flexibility and autonomy. Clusters also received cluster funds to assist each cluster vertical and horizontal alignment of academic programs, including needed professional development.

2. Will any changes be made in the future to how the supplemental funds are used?

As the District continues operating under the charter system model, APS remains committed to the multiyear budget strategy that features the following:

- Continue to deepen the content knowledge of teachers and administrators around Literacy, Math, Science and Social Studies
- Reduce general administration and central administration costs to redirect resources to schools and to support strategic priorities.
- Leverage all new revenue options
- Provide flexibility and autonomy at the school level for principals to develop staffing plans and invest resources in alignment with the District's Academic Standards of Service

APS will continue to implement the Student Success Funding (SSF) formula, which focuses on an equitable and transparent distribution of funds to our schools. This strategy supports the charter system model to allow additional autonomy, flexibility, and site-based decision-making at our schools. We are also continuing efforts to streamline services and expenses at our central office and redirect more of those dollars to schools. As we develop future budgets, we will work to address needs intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, including ensuring the social, emotional, and mental well-being of our students; ensuring the safety of our students and staff; and addressing any potential learning loss that may have occurred during a fully virtual instruction model. We will work to balance these crucial needs with revenue uncertainty caused by the impact of the pandemic on our economy. Equity stands at the core of our 2020-2025 strategic plan and will guide our budget work.