



# WASHINGTON CLUSTER PLAN



**2016-2020**

Our mission is to inspire, expose, and prepare students to continue our legacy of greatness by becoming active citizens who advocate for their local and global community.

# Letter from the Superintendent & Board



Dear Staff, Students, Families and Parents of the Washington Cluster,

We truly believe APS stands at an exciting transformational moment. This school year, APS has put a new Charter System operating system in motion in conjunction with our cluster planning. Through these efforts, APS stakeholders will become more engaged in their schools and develop creative solutions to give more educational opportunities for all students.

More specifically, APS has created a collaborative alignment framework that gives you and your schools and the Washington Cluster more autonomy and flexibility to do what you know works best in your individual classrooms and for your students. Over the past year, we engaged in a cluster-planning process that allows us to create for each cluster a flagship high school with strong academic signature programs and then backward map that curriculum and approach to Pre-K and elementary school so that it builds up to a producing a successful high school graduate.

As a cluster, Washington has created a list of priorities that align with the four pillars of the district's Strategic Plan: Academics, Talent, Resources, and Culture. These are explained in more detail on Page 8. Further, Washington has adopted as its Signature Theme the Partnership for 21st-Century Learning, a College and Career prep approach that focuses on the essential skills, knowledge and dispositions that children need to succeed as citizens and workers in today's world.

The work you see within this Washington Cluster Plan came through extensive cluster engagement efforts that involved every one of you, and must continue as we all move forward preparing every Atlanta Public Schools student for college and career.

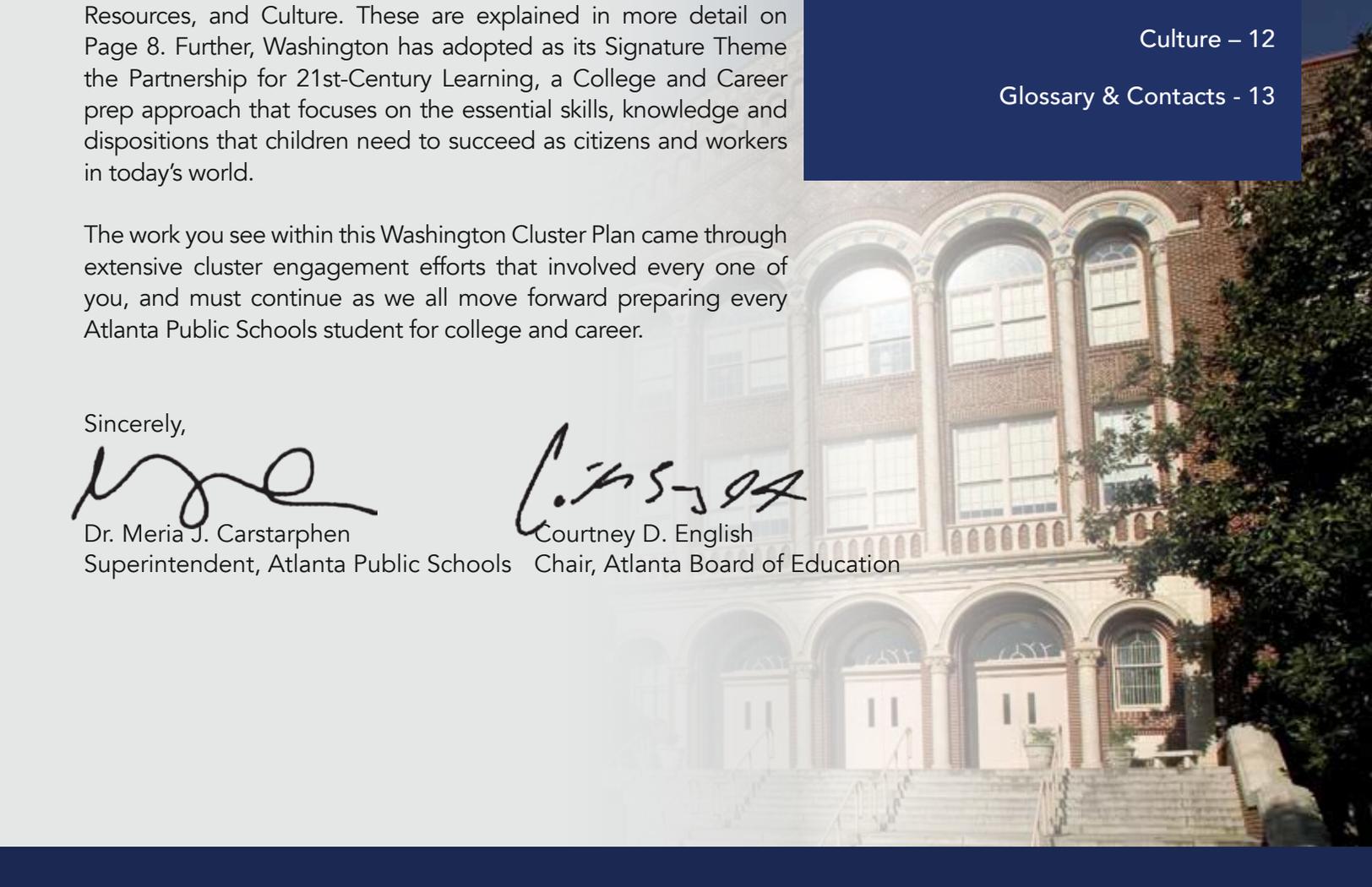
Sincerely,

Dr. Meria J. Carstarphen  
Superintendent, Atlanta Public Schools

Courtney D. English  
Chair, Atlanta Board of Education

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# Letter from the Washington Cluster Planning Team

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Dear Staff, Students, Families, and Partners of the Washington Cluster,

This strategic plan does not begin to capture all the work, commitment, and expertise that have gone into the past year and a half of creating a plan for our cluster that builds on our legacy. The community has come together to describe our vision for our children, what makes our cluster special, and how the student experience will position our children to achieve lifelong success. Our legacy is more than the esteemed alumni of Washington High School or countless partnerships established to support our schools. It is a pursuit of excellence that has positioned us to honestly evaluate where we are in relation to where we want to be and create a plan that reflects that reality. This plan is the roadmap to that vision.

Washington graduates will be strong critical thinkers and skilled problem solvers, academically prepared, motivated, community focused, self-confident and self-aware, resourceful and responsible leaders. We are preparing our students for college and career through Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math curriculum delivered using an Expeditionary Learning approach that includes a focus on stewardship and character, exposure to arts and music, and Spanish world-language instruction across all grade levels. With your support, we have the vision, resources, and action plan we need to build on our legacy for the next generation. We look forward to working with you!

## The 2015 Washington Cluster Planning Team

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Andrea Dziengue, Member  
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Westside Communities Alliance

# About the Washington Cluster

Established in 1924 as the first public high school for African Americans in Georgia, Washington High School has such distinguished alumni as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; Lena Horne; "Able Mable" Thomas; Lyndon Wade; Leroy Johnson; and George Wallace. Today, the Washington Cluster is building on its rich history to prepare the next generation of students for college and career.

The Washington Cluster is comprised of 3,200 students across six schools serving a geographic area that includes Georgia Tech and the Atlanta University Center. All Washington Cluster 6th-8th graders attend Brown Middle, which receives students from M. R. Hollis Innovation Academy, Tuskegee Airmen Global Academy, and M. Agnes Jones Elementary.

Washington High transitioned to a comprehensive high school model in the 2014-15 school year, and enrollment zones were shifted for the elementary schools.

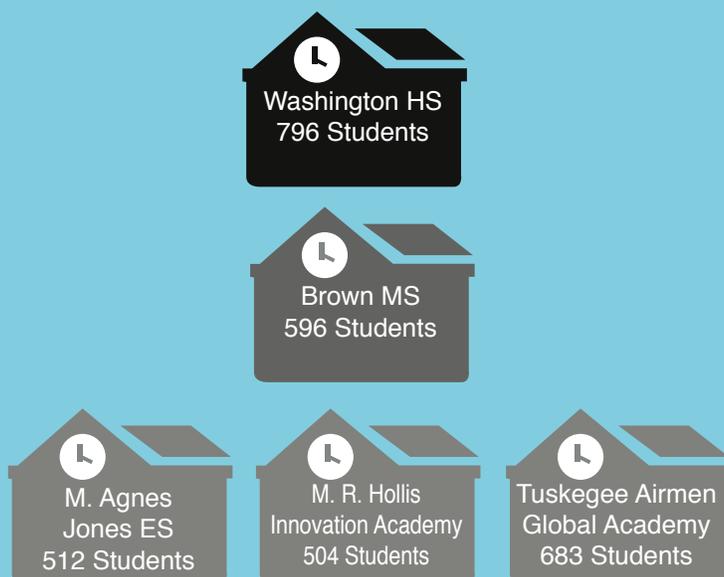
Thanks to the alignment of programming across the cluster's schools and generous support from parents and community, the high school's graduation rate increased by nearly ten percentage points to 76.8% from 2014 to 2015, and our students are becoming better prepared for college and career upon graduation.



## Washington Cluster Fast Facts

Student Enrollment	3,200
Elementary Schools	4
Middle School	1
High School	1
Graduation Rate	76.8%
2014 Graduates	142
Cluster CCRPI (2014)	64.8
Ave. Progress Points	15
Number of Title 1 Schools	100%

### Enrollment (2015)



Black	98.7%
Hispanic	0.75%
White	0.03%
Two or More Races	0.36%
Asian	0.03%
Native America	0.13%
Students with Disabilities	19%
English Language Learners	1%

# Washington Cluster Strengths

At any school or cluster meeting, a wide array of partners and alumni (from as far back as the 1960s) are likely to be present and advocating for the community's students.

Partners include but are not limited to:

- Raising Expectations
- Washington High School Alumni Association
- Washington Cluster PTA Organizations
- Washington Cluster Advocacy Group
- Morehouse College
- Morehouse School of Medicine
- Bonner Office of Community Service & Student Development
- Westside Communities Alliance
- Alonzo A. Crim Center for Urban Educational Excellence (GSU)
- Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts (Georgia Tech)
- Government & Community Relations at Georgia Tech
- Coca-Cola
- College of Architecture (Georgia Tech)
- The Arthur Blank Foundation
- Communities in Schools
- City of Atlanta
- Atlanta Housing Authority
- Georgia World Congress Center
- Interdenominational Theological Center
- Chick-Fil-A Foundation

The community's commitment to the success of the schools and its students is a testament to the cluster's legacy and the will, skill and connections to resources that will lead the cluster to excellence.



- High level of parent and community engagement and partnerships
- Strong extra-curricular programs (Fine Arts, Foreign Language, Clubs, and Sports)
- Pride in the community
- Wrap-around Services
- Resiliency
- Legacy, history and culture
- Cultural Benefits
- Location
- Higher-education Partnerships
- Diverse Community



# Executive Summary

The Washington Cluster Strategic Plan provides the roadmap for the cluster through 2020 to ensure every Washington Cluster student graduates college and career ready. It is the result of Atlanta Public Schools' support for each cluster community to create its own vision and path to success in alignment with the APS Strategic Plan.

The Washington Cluster Planning Team is made up of principals and designees from each school. With input from across the community, this team collaborated to develop a plan that prepares Washington graduates for lifelong success. Through surveys, open houses, monthly planning meetings, and town halls, the Washington Cluster Strategic Plan has evolved into an inclusive, connecting, and community-based experience that fosters perseverance and excellence for all.

As a result of the planning process, stakeholders identified a mission, signature program, priorities, and values to unite the Washington Cluster behind a common vision for Washington graduates. This alignment ensures every student can build skills year by year, while providing opportunities for collaboration across schools.

Washington Cluster schools have already begun to make changes, including reorganization of feeder patterns, alignment of course offerings across schools, and strengthened partnerships with community organizations. Cluster schools are benefitting from revitalization efforts on the west side through initiatives like the stadium development project and a revitalization grant with the Atlanta Housing Authority and City of Atlanta. Partnerships with Communities in Schools, the Arthur Blank Foundation, and the myriad of diverse partners included in the Westside Ready initiative are continuing to be strengthened to ensure Washington Cluster students have the wrap-around supports they need to exceed expectations. Schools are also preparing to elect school site governance teams, or GO Teams, which will allocate many governance decisions for each school to elected parent, teacher, and community representatives.

A Cluster Advisory Team comprised of one representative from each school's GO Team will continue to meet to review progress against goals as a cluster, ensuring each school has the support and resources it needs for the cluster to build on its legacy of excellence. This strategic plan is the roadmap to reach these goals over the next five years and positions all Washington Cluster schools for success.

## Mission:

To continue the legacy of excellence by supporting students in reaching their highest potential through a whole-child and community-centered approach to ensure college and career preparedness.

## Vision:

To utilize the support of parents and community to inspire, expose, and prepare students to continue the legacy of greatness by becoming active citizens who advocate for their local and global community.

## Washington Cluster core values:

- Inclusivity
- Perseverance
- Excellence
- Deep Community Connection

## Cluster-wide Performance Measures

### Academics

- Increase Graduation Rate (Measure: Four Year Graduate Rate)
- Improve Student Achievement (Measure: College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI))
- Increase Student Attendance (Measure: Average Daily Attendance)

### Talent

- Improve Teacher Quality (Measure: Teacher Observation)

### Resources

- Ensure GO Team Effectiveness (Measure: Key Deliverables)

### Culture

- Ensure School has High Standards for Achievement (Measure: Climate Survey)

# Washington Cluster Student Data

## An Opportunity for Change

The dramatic increase in the graduation rate at Washington High School is just the beginning of the changes necessary to achieve the cluster's mission.

The Washington legacy has been challenged by the concentrated poverty and changing student needs in recent years. Student performance demonstrates that the academic program needs to be strengthened and support for students needs to be increased.

Cluster schools must improve student outcomes on assessments in all subject areas for all grade levels, with a focus on math, literacy, and students with special needs.

Social emotional supports for students that will build character and improve school culture are also critical to delivering on the legacy of the Washington Cluster.

Partnerships and community supports must be aligned to the needs of students and their schools to ensure every school has the talent and resources it needs to achieve the mission.

## CCRPI (2015)

School Name	Achievement Points	Progress Points	CCRPI Score
Booker T. Washington High School	24.4	36.2	68.5
Brown Middle School	18.1	32.6	56.2
M. A. Jones Elementary School	22.9	32.2	64.1
Bethune Elementary School	13.9	26.1	44.7
<i>* Closed with zoned students attending the Hollis Innovation Academy in 2016-2017</i>			
Connally Elementary School	25.6	12.2	39.8
Venetian Hills Elementary School	42.3	19	76.8
<i>* Connally and Venetian Hills merged to create Tuskegee Airmen Academy in 2016-2017</i>			

## CCRPI Description

The College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) is Georgia's annual 100-point scale for measuring how well its schools are preparing students. The CCRPI includes four main components: Achievement, Progress, Achievement Gap, and Challenge Points. The table include two major components: Achievement and Progress. Achievement addresses student performance on state assessments, graduate rate, and other measures of college and career readiness. Progress measures whether students are growing compared to academically-similar students across Georgia.

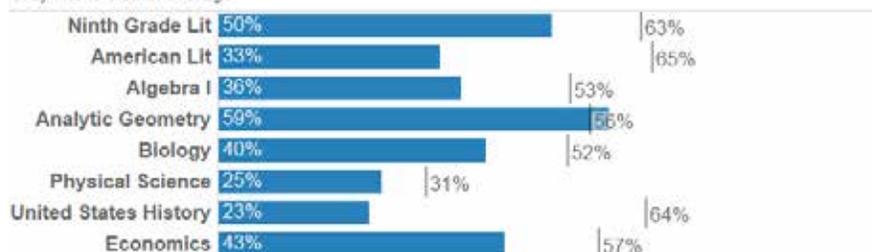
Graduation Rate  
(2015)



## Milestones

Milestones Percentage Developing or Higher: Washington Cluster

Grey line is district average



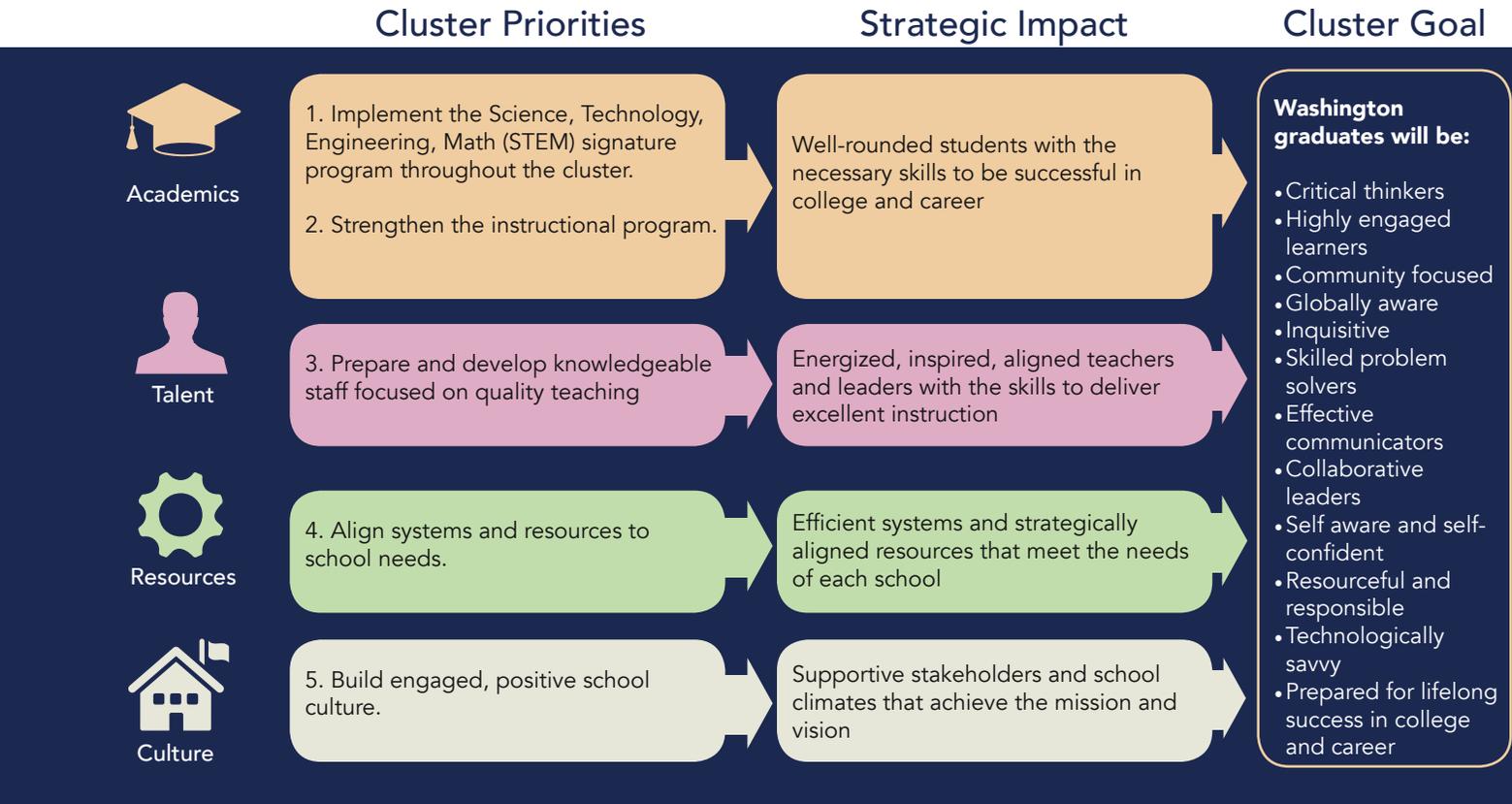
Milestones Percentage Developing or Higher: Washington Cluster

Grey line is district average



# Washington Cluster Strategy Map

The Washington Cluster Plan is organized into cluster-specific priorities under each of the four goals of the APS 2015-2020 strategic plan: academics, talent, resources, and culture. The strategies detailed on subsequent pages are organized under each priority to align the cluster toward a common goal for graduates. School site GO Teams and the Cluster Planning Team will review strategy implementation as well as progress toward the cluster's goals.



## School Turnaround Strategy

Atlanta Public Schools is implementing a bold strategy to increase student achievement dramatically and to transform its lowest-performing schools through comprehensive direct services to students, recruitment and development of top turnaround leaders and teachers, school operations changes and education partnership opportunities. The APS Turnaround Strategy is based upon six key themes shown below and has a tiered approach to identify which schools receive a certain level of needed support:



### School Turnaround Strategy

#### Lay strong instructional foundation for all schools

- District-wide instructional framework and consistent theory of action
- District-wide balanced assessment to support instruction
- Improved quality and consistency of all teacher and leader professional learning
- District-wide parent and alumni engagement strategy

### Intensive Support

#### Build leader and teacher capacity; help children to be ready to learn; reinforce literacy and math skills

- Targeted professional learning for school leadership teams and teachers focused on school turnaround
- Recruiting and placing strong turnaround leaders
- Accelerating and strengthening wraparounds to support non-academic needs
- Resource-efficient strategies to reinforce literacy, math skills

### Targeted Interventions

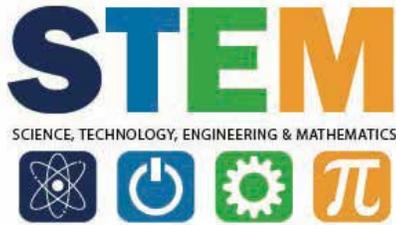
#### Increase time and focus on foundational skills; deepen capacity building

- Menu of options for schools to deliver intensive, high quality student learning time: reading/math specialists, high dosage tutoring, extended day/year and/or vacation academies
- Additional investment in capacity building (e.g., dedicated professional learning time)

# STEM & Expeditionary Learning

The signature program for the Washington cluster is STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), using Expeditionary Learning (EL) as the educational approach.

Students will experience an integrated STEM curriculum, a focus on stewardship and character, exposure to arts and music as well as Spanish world-language instruction across all grade levels.



Based on feedback from parents, students, teachers and community members, the Washington Cluster will build on the STEM programs already in place at three of the cluster schools by attaining STEM certification for every school in the cluster.

Schools are aligning coursework and curricula for a seamless K-12 STEM program that builds critical thinking skills, leverages university partnerships, provides rigorous academic curriculum, and meets the demands of a new workforce. A K-12 signature program for the whole cluster ensures consistent practices across grade bands, continuity throughout academics and electives to build knowledge from one grade to the next, the capacity to plan across schools and a necessary focus on improving math and science instruction. The STEM education focus incorporates several researched-based best practices proven to improve student achievement, including:

- Inter-disciplinary instruction—students practice concepts from different content areas simultaneously
- Inquiry-based learning and project-based learning
- Collaborative learning
- Laboratory investigations
- Research projects
- Real-world experiences via work-based learning opportunities
- Access to Advanced Placement (AP); college Dual Enrollment; and Career, Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) programs at the high school level

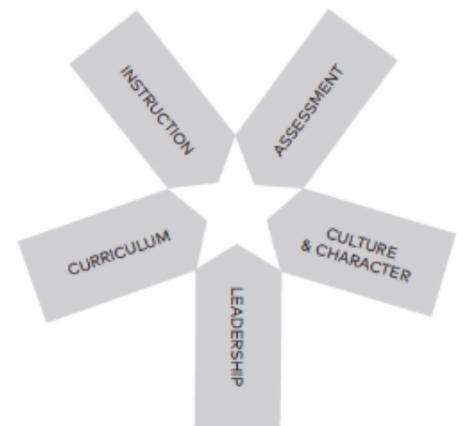
## Did you know?

- STEM occupations are projected to grow by 17% from 2008 to 2018, compared to 9.8% growth for non-STEM occupations.
- STEM workers earn 26% more than non-STEM counterparts.
- STEM schools report higher achievement with an average of 82% of elementary school students meeting math/science standards, compared to 69% in non-STEM schools.

## Education

Expeditionary Learning harnesses the natural passion to learn and is a powerful method for developing the curiosity, skills, knowledge and courage needed to imagine a better world and work toward realizing it.

- In Expeditionary Learning schools, students learn by conducting “learning expeditions” rather than by sitting in a classroom being taught one subject at a time.
- Expeditionary Learning works on developing the character -- as well as the intellect -- of students.
- Expeditionary Learning changes not only how students learn but also a school’s culture.
- Expeditionary Learning is built around 10 Design Principles and five Core Practices that guide the teaching and learning in EL schools.





# Academics

## Priority #1: Implement the STEM signature program.

The Washington Cluster Strategic Plan serves as the roadmap for the cluster from 2015-2020. As such, there are a number of initiatives described herein that are already underway:

- In the 2015-16 school year, two of the cluster schools are preparing for STEM certification.
- Coursework across schools has been aligned.
- A number of wrap-around supports and partnerships for students have been formed.
- GO Teams are being elected for each school.

Detailed implementation plans are being managed by the cluster planning team, who continues to meet monthly to ensure the strategies outlined herein are implemented.

Program	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
Hollis Innovation Academy	STEM Planning	STEM Implementation			STEM Certification
TAG Academy	STEM Implementation				STEM Certification
MA Jones ES	STEM Certification				
Brown MS	STEM Implementation				STEM Certification
Washington HS	STEM Implementation				STEM Certification

### Strategies

**A. Implement STEM enriched curriculum across cluster to drive interdisciplinary and project-based career exploration and college preparation**

**B. Provide students STEM learning opportunities that drive career exploration and college preparation**

**C. Build parent knowledge to reinforce, promote and participate in STEM activities**

**D. Seek partnerships, community, businesses, post-secondary institutions that engages students and staff in problem-based learning activities that are solution focused**

### Outcomes

- Increased rigor and academic attainment
- Established cadre of STEM expert teachers
- Practice in independent innovations
- Deepened understanding of science and math for all students
- Improved critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills
- Preparation for college and career
- Improved student performance
- Access to higher paying and rapidly growing careers in STEM



# Academic

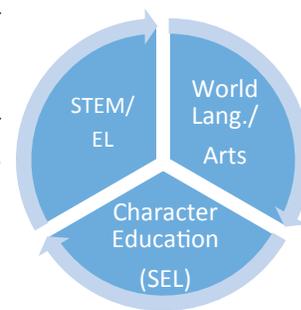
## Priority #2: Strengthen the instructional program.

The instructional program, cluster-wide, must be strengthened in order for Washington Cluster students to graduate college and career ready. One component of the STEM Signature Program is curriculum alignment across schools, meaning all schools will implement the same best practices and students will build on what they learned in each grade K-12. However, strengthening the instructional program will take more than just STEM certification for all schools.

Every school will utilize common instructional frameworks and assessments that ensure planning is rigorous, standards-aligned and high-quality. Because course offerings across schools are aligned, students will enter middle and high school with a common foundation that makes higher level coursework accessible.

Expeditionary Learning (EL) will be implemented across schools, providing a model for teaching and learning that challenges students to think critically and take active roles in their classrooms and communities. The EL approach effects higher achievement and greater engagement in school.

Resources and supports for student who need extra help or have special needs will be increased across all schools to ensure every student is positioned for college and career success. Finally, college and career planning will begin for every student in middle school, providing all students with a clear pathway to realize their aspirations.



### Strategies

### Outcomes

### Vertical Alignment of Cluster Coursework

- A. Implement a common instructional framework for all schools using STEM and EL Education as major resources
- B. Align all course offerings across all levels
- C. Implement EL Education Core Practices based on individual school plans
- D. Bolster resources and align intervention and special education supports across schools
- E. Implementation of career and college planning and supports starting in middle school
- F. Build a cluster-wide K-12 literacy model and best practices

- Strong literacy foundation for every student
- Increased rigor and academic attainment across content areas
- Highly engaging, real-world applications for learning
- Critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills
- Clear alignment of coursework to each student's college and/or career path
- Improved support for students who aren't meeting goals
- Increased support and resources for students with special needs
- Strong, standards-based instruction from every teacher every day





## Priority #3: Prepare and develop knowledgeable staff focused on quality teaching.

Teacher skill is critical to student success. In order to ensure every teacher in the Washington Cluster has the skills needed to achieve our mission, Priority 3 is focused on building the alignment, support, collaboration, and capacity for teachers in every cluster school.

Implementation of the STEM Signature Program and strengthening of instruction will provide opportunities for consistent adoption of best practices, shared training resources, and collaboration across schools through a cluster-wide professional learning plan.

Teacher supports like mentors, recognition programs, and opportunities to add endorsements and certifications will build teacher capacity while improving morale. Teachers receive clear expectations and the information they need to constantly grow from effective monitoring and feedback. Cluster-wide recruitment and selection practices ensure consistently high expectations for new staff.

Finally, leadership tracks enable high-performing teachers to build their leadership expertise and take an increasing role in leading the cluster to success. All of these strategies will not only promote the increased skills teachers need to meet the diverse demands of our cluster's students, but reward and retain our best teachers so they can lead the next generation of Washington Cluster students to success.

### Strategies

**A. Develop and implement a cluster-wide professional learning plan aligned to standards, STEM, and EL.**

**B. Develop and implement teacher supports like mentoring, recognition programs, and endorsement opportunities.**

**C. Implement monitoring and evaluation protocols across cluster to build practice and consistency across schools.**

**D. Refine recruitment and selection processes for hiring and promoting within the cluster for highest quality recruits.**

**E. Expand leadership development and roles for teachers and leaders.**

### Outcomes

- **Increased teacher performance and skill**
- **Improved teacher morale and retention**
- **Development of teacher leadership**
- **Consistency in expectations and supports for teachers across schools**
- **Provision of high-quality tools and resources for all teachers**
- **Implementation of best practices across classrooms that enable all students to succeed**



## Resources

### Priority #4: Align systems and resources to school needs.

The Washington Cluster is positioned to access the resources necessary to meet its mission through a number of initiatives, grants, and partnerships.

GO Teams, which provide peer-elected representation to parents, staff, students, and community members for each school, will ensure resources and operations are aligned to the specific needs of that school's students.

Partnerships will be strengthened and codified to provide cluster students access to college and career planning, STEM and EL opportunities, internships and work experiences, and the wrap-around services critical to student success.



**STRONG SCHOOLS  
START WITH ME!**

Atlanta Public Schools has reorganized as a charter system to provide the flexibility and school site decision-making authority schools need to succeed. Starting in January of 2016, every school will be electing its GO Team, or school site decision-making committee. GO Teams in the Washington Cluster are one way partnerships and community collaboration will be formalized to benefit students. Localized decision-making will ensure resources and operations are aligned to the needs at the school, providing each school with the capacity it needs to achieve the mission for all students.

#### Strategies

**A. Election of high-capacity parents, teachers, and community members to each school's GO Team for school site-level decision-making**

**B. Alignment of resources and partnerships to key priorities for the cluster, including STEM, EL, and wrap-around services**

**C. Access to career and college planning, internships, and learning opportunities for students**

#### Outcomes

- Opportunities for meaningful partner engagement at each school
- Students make authentic college and career connections with future employers and schools
- Alignment of school site needs to systems and resources
- Transparency and localization of decision-making
- Means of collaboration and between stakeholder groups in support of schools
- Alignment of resources and partners to highest leverage initiatives

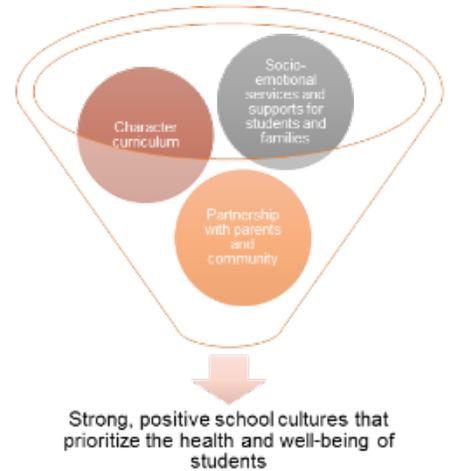


## Priority #5: Build an engaged, positive school culture.

Delivering on the legacy of the Washington Cluster for our next generation of students requires more than an academic focus. Our students and families need more resources and support to ensure every school maintains a positive, productive culture where students' well-being and health are priorities. Our fifth priority includes strategies that provide the supports, partnerships, resources and opportunities for collaboration that will make every Washington Cluster school a place characterized by inclusivity, perseverance, deep community connections and excellence. Social emotional supports and programming will enable every school to build scholars who are self-aware, self-confident, and prepared for community leadership.

Training, partnerships, and opportunities for collaboration with parents will provide the school-home alignment vital to the success of our students. Robust resources available in the community will be streamlined into the cluster to ensure all schools can leverage the resources on behalf of their families, providing a wrap-around approach to student success that mitigates current challenges.

A cohesive community that champions its children will be reflected in the positive, engaged cultures of every Washington Cluster school.



### Strategies

**A. Increase/align wrap-around services and supports for socio-emotional needs at all schools**

**B. Provide character education focused on character and citizenship at all schools**

**C. Leverage partnerships to provide services and supports to students, parents, and families across the cluster**

**D. Develop and implement practices across the cluster that improve the health and well-being of students**

**E. Increase parent engagement through Parent University and participation opportunities at all schools**

### Outcomes

- More positive, engaged, trusting relationships between stakeholders
- Increased parent engagement and support
- Mitigation of barriers to success for students and families
- Leverage community resources on behalf of cluster students and families
- Improved student performance and long-term



# Glossary of Terms

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**CCRPI:** College and Career Readiness Performance Index — the score each school receives each year that considers measures like test scores, survey data, and attendance to determine how well the school is preparing its students for college and career.

**Charter System:** The new operating model chosen by Atlanta Public Schools, which will afford each school greater decision-making autonomy, as well as flexibility to innovate across the district. Atlanta Public Schools was fully transitioned to a charter system in the 2016-2017 school year.

**EL: Expeditionary Learning**—an approach to instruction that starts with students asking a question or investigating with teacher support. Builds critical thinking, engagement, and higher order thinking skills across all content areas.

**GO Teams (Local School Governance Teams):** GO Teams are the committees of three parents, three teachers, two community members, and one swing seat (one student at high schools), peer-elected for each school and governing in the 2016-2017 school year.

**Signature Program:** The approach adopted by a cluster to align all schools behind a common curriculum. For the Washington Cluster, the Signature Program is STEM.

**Standards-based:** Courses that teach the skills or standards that the state has determined are most important for students to know. Standards are assessed through the Georgia Milestones and End of Course Tests required for every student by the state of Georgia.

**STEM:** Science, Technology, Engineering & Math — an approach to curriculum that provides interdisciplinary, hands-on learning and builds skills applicable to all fields and disciplines.

## Washington Cluster Contact Information

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**M. Agnes Jones  
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# Atlanta Board of Education



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Superintendent



STRONG STUDENTS | STRONG SCHOOLS | STRONG STAFF | STRONG SYSTEM