

Journey to Excellence 2008-09

Report on Atlanta Public Schools





Atlanta Public Schools: The Best Is Yet to Come

While our country's economic crisis extends from the boardroom to the classroom, Atlanta Public Schools is determined to continue its journey to excellence. Our remarkable turnaround can be measured in a teacher's pride in welcoming a new class of kindergartners, a parent's confidence in our district and wide smiles on graduation day.

APS understands that tough times require tough decisions, but we refuse to compromise our dedication to quality instruction. Our students deserve nothing less.

Consider this annual report an action plan designed to ensure that all APS students graduate from high school prepared for success in college and life. We have outlined our work to create a world-class work force that will lead Atlanta, the nation and the world. Here are a few key points:

APS is in the midst of a remarkable turnaround. Test scores on state assessments reinforce our nine-year trend

of progress. In 2000, only 47 percent of APS eighth-graders met or exceeded standards in English/language arts. By the 2008-09 school year, approximately 90 percent earned that distinction. Our work has drawn attention from the U.S. Department of Education, which has identified a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence in every quadrant of Atlanta. The graduation rate also has risen by more than 80 percent — from 39 percent in 2002 to 72 percent in 2008.

The district is more efficient. APS has cut 1,336 staff positions since 2002. With taxpayer support, APS also has invested \$900 million in facilities upgrades and new additions such as environmentally friendly Springdale Park Elementary. In 1997, the average age of our buildings was 65 years old. Since 2003, the average age has decreased to 20 years old. Our fleet of school buses has been enhanced by more than 260 new vehicles equipped with digital cameras and fuel-efficiency mechanisms

Atlanta believes in APS. A vast network of Fortune 500 companies, civic organizations and community leaders reinforces our commitment to achievement. Principal For

A Day places students' goals within reach as they interact with the city's CEOs and civic leaders. A \$22 million GE grant funds our innovative math and science initiative, including professional learning seminars for about 2,000 teachers. Each year the Atlanta Partners for Education recognizes outstanding educators for their dedication to students. The 100 Black Men of Atlanta is committed to making a difference in the lives of APS students. This year, the organization purchased a uniform for every student at B.E.S.T. Academy and pledged to continue mentoring efforts that reinforce academic and social responsibility. Our schools also have strong relationships with local companies and community organizations.

After serving Atlanta Public Schools for 10 years, I know that the best is yet to come. Visit our schools and witness this journey to excellence; then join us in spreading the good news.

Beverly L. Hall, Ed.D.
Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent



"It was a bold experiment. It took the courage to try something new. Now that special day has arrived."

Atlanta Falcons owner Arthur M. Blank at The New Schools at Carver graduation



"At B.E.S.T. [Academy], we intend to help equip our students with the academic tools needed to reach any and all goals that they pursue in their journey to be the best."

**LaPaul Shelton, Principal,
B.E.S.T. Academy at Ben
Carson**

Journey to Excellence

Under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Beverly L. Hall, Atlanta Public Schools has transformed into one of the nation's top-performing urban school districts. We attribute this success to three areas of focus: quality instruction, quality leadership, and community support.

I. QUALITY INSTRUCTION

Using research and best practices, APS has invested heavily in improving teacher quality. Our approach includes providing veteran teachers with professional development and younger teachers with mentors, as well as implementing programs such as Teach for America. APS also uses nationally proven curriculum models, such as the K-12 International Baccalaureate Program.

II. QUALITY LEADERSHIP

APS has placed new principals in schools to implement the district's aggressive reform agenda. Performance measurements assure school leaders — as well as central office staff — are held accountable for student success. The district also created School Reform Teams (SRTs) — or "mini" school districts — to provide academic services and operational support

directly to schools. This model enables principals to spend more time working with staff to improve classroom instruction.

III. COMMUNITY SUPPORT

A coalition of community partners support APS through funding initiatives and unique programs:

- **Metro Atlanta Chamber (www.metroatlantachamber.com)**, Atlanta's network of civic and business leaders, has invested in APS through mentoring programs and school partnerships. The district's Principal For A Day program strengthens that relationship as leaders spend a day witnessing the challenges — and the success stories — that take place every day in APS.
- **Atlanta Education Fund (atlef.org)** is an education foundation that supports and nurtures APS reform initiatives, helps inform the public about the district, and explores policy issues, best practices and trends that ensure reform success. The AEF also helps coordinate support from the private sector. The AEF sponsors Fund for Teachers, which enhances teachers' professional development.
- **Philanthropic community** supports the achievement of all students by contributing millions of dollars to help meet the intellectual and financial needs of the schools.

Making the Grade

For the ninth consecutive year, APS students posted significant gains on the Georgia Department of Education's Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) and the Georgia High School Graduation Tests and Writing Tests. APS is closing the achievement gap with the state, even as the bar has risen.

CRCT 2009

APS students met or exceeded their performance on state-mandated assessments. More importantly, test results show that more students than ever before are not just meeting but exceeding state standards.

In 2000, only 43 percent of APS fourth-graders met or exceeded state standards in math. In 2009, 71 percent earned that distinction, while 90 percent of APS eighth-graders met or exceeded state standards on the English/language arts portion of the test.

GHSGT/GHSWT

On a constantly changing playing field, APS ended the 2008-09 school year with steady improvements:

- 92 percent of students passed the writing test, outpacing the state by one percentage point
- 80 percent of students passed the social studies portion, up one percentage point
- 86 percent passed the mathematics portion, up two percentage points
- 77 percent passed the science portion, up one percentage point



ABOUT THE APS CLASS OF 2009:

- Graduates earned more than \$92.1 million in scholarship offers.
- Eight students were honored as 21st Century Atlanta Scholars, with mentoring and financial-aid packages for small, private colleges in New England.
- Twenty students were named Gates Millennium Scholars, earning money to cover their undergraduate coursework.
- Members of the "Legacy Class," graduates of the transformed New Schools at Carver, earned about \$18 million in scholarship offers.

APS HIGHLIGHTS:

- Dr. Beverly L. Hall was named 2009 Georgia and National Superintendent of the Year.
- F.L. Stanton Elementary was named a National Blue Ribbon School.
- Grady High School's mock-trial team won its third state championship.
- Woodson Elementary third-grade teacher Charon Kirkland was named 2009 APS Teacher of the Year.
- Maynard H. Jackson High was named one of the best high schools in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report* and *BusinessWeek* magazines.
- South Atlanta High School's basketball team won Georgia's Class AAA title.
- The Atlanta Wolfpack, comprised of APS student-athletes, captured their third Georgia State Wheelchair Basketball Program title.



STAY CONNECTED

Get the latest news about APS directly from the source.

APS Web site: Bookmark www.atlantapublicschools.us and stay plugged in to district events.

School Web Sites: Learn about plays, contact your child's teacher or form a partnership. Type www.atlantapublicschools.us/schoolname.

The Atlanta Educator: This publication highlights students, teachers, administrators and parents who are part of the APS journey to excellence.

Talk Up APS: Count on the district's bimonthly digital newsletter to deliver information about new programs and initiatives.

Social Networking: Get the latest APS news and tips by following "APSupdate" on Twitter.





"Our children have high expectations, and we're in positions to help them exercise their right to a high-quality education."

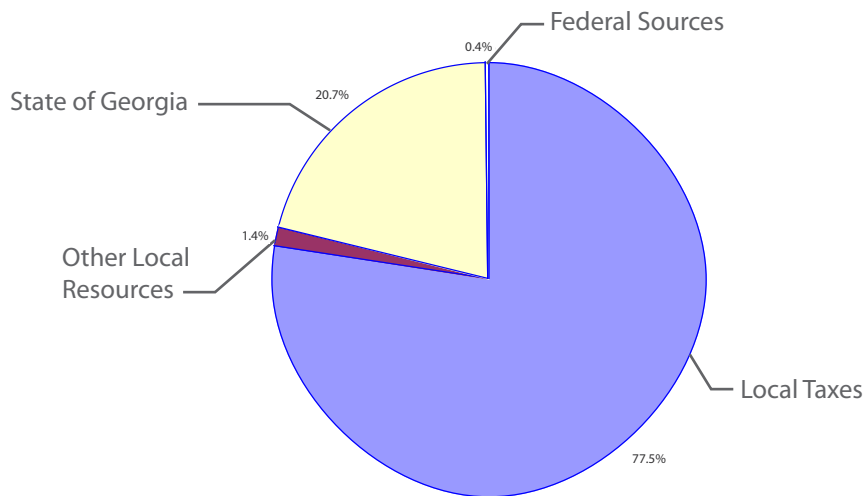
Dr. Beverly L. Hall, Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent



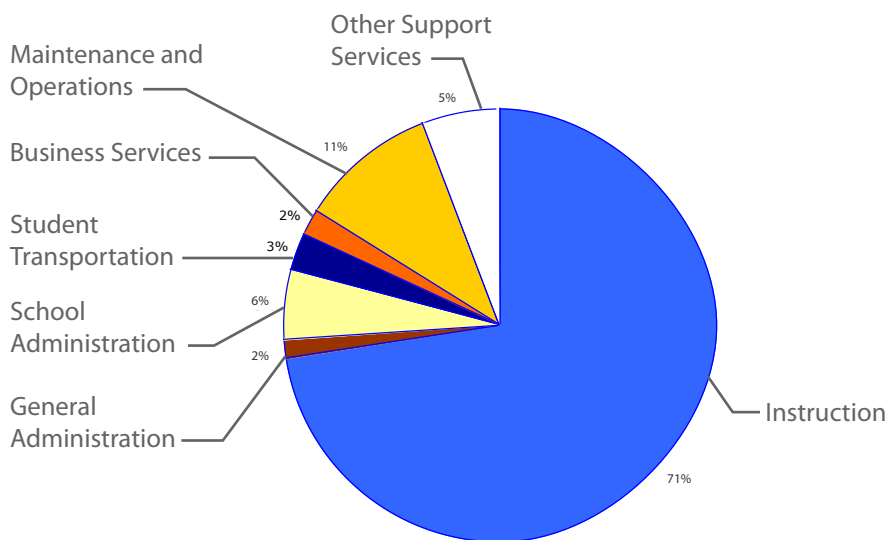
A snapshot of the 2008-09 fiscal year

As a large urban school district, we're working diligently to balance student needs with economic realities. We are dedicated to being good stewards of tax dollars. Take a look at 2008-09 revenue and expenditures from our \$661.6 million budget. Our focus on classroom instruction shows that Atlanta Public Schools is dedicated to making a difference in the lives of our students:

2008-09 GENERAL FUND REVENUE – \$661.6 MILLION



2008-09 GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES – \$661.6 MILLION



ABOUT ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2009-10

Student enrollment	47,789
Elementary schools	55
Middle schools	16
Single-gender academies	2
High schools	19
Nontraditional programs	2
Charter schools	9
Evening school programs	2
Total APS learning sites	101

Ethnic Distribution of Students

African American	82.6%
Caucasian	10.4%
Hispanic	4.8%
Multiracial	1.4%
Asian	.8%
American Indian/Alaskan	.1%

Teacher/student Ratio

Kindergarten	1:15
Grades 1-3	1:17
Grades 4-5	1:23
Grades 6-8	1:20
Grades 9-12	1:23
Computer/Student Ratio	1:2

Students eligible for free and reduced priced meals 76.33%

Number of 2009 graduates 2,132

Scholarships offered to class of 2009 \$92 million+

Number of Title I Schools 96

FY 10 General Fund Budget \$652.5 million





APS GOES GREEN

Atlanta Public Schools is dedicated to creating healthy and environmentally conscious campuses for its students. The August debut of Springdale Park Elementary, the district's first school to apply for LEED certification, underscores our commitment to going "green." The school also will implement various earth-friendly programs, such as recycling, composting, and Farm to School initiatives.

In fact, gardens are sprouting up all over APS, most notably at Cascade, E. Rivers and Morningside, Burgess-Peterson, Coan, Whitefoord and Drew Charter, thanks in part to partnerships with organizations such as Georgia Organics and the Melendez Foundation.

ATLANTA BOARD OF EDUCATION

LaChandra Butler Burks, Chair, District 5
Cecily Harsch-Kinnane, Vice Chair, District 3
Brenda J. Muhammad, District 1
Khaatim Sherrer El, District 2
Kathleen B. Pattillo, District 4
Yolanda K. Johnson, District 6
Eric W. Wilson, At-Large Seat 7
Mark B. Riley, At-Large Seat 8
Emmett D. Johnson, At-Large Seat 9



"Atlanta's business, civic and academic leaders have a responsibility to encourage and inspire students to succeed — and to help build a stronger, better-educated work force for the future."

Bill Lorenz, Merrill Lynch Regional Managing Director

Atlanta Public Schools
is one of the
top-performing
urban **school**
systems
in America.

Our innovative learning programs, nationally recognized best practices and excellent teachers are making a difference in the lives of our K-12 students. We are committed to ensuring that all students graduate from our schools ready for success in college and life, and prepared to build a stronger Atlanta.

Journey to Excellence 2008-09 Annual Report on Atlanta Public Schools was produced by the Office of Communications. For the latest news on Atlanta Public Schools, visit our Web site: www.atlantapublicschools.us.

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