

THE CASE

Please fill out the Excel versions of the following chart found at <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Charter-Schools/Pages/Charter-Petition-Application.aspx>

1. What challenges is your school district facing?

- Provide a brief description of the specific issues that, if resolved, would allow you to consider your school district a complete success.

Atlanta Public Schools (APS) is one of the largest districts in the state with more than 51,000 students, nearly 6,000 staff members, and 106 learning sites. Over the past few years, the challenges of meeting the needs of such a large, diverse district have been complicated by a “perfect storm” that included staff transition, scandal, the threatened loss of accreditation, and budget challenges. Following the aftermath of the CRCT investigation, APS has been faced with the daunting task of rebuilding. After several years of dealing with crisis and turmoil, APS is beginning to emerge from this “perfect storm” poised for transformational change. The challenges the district faces require a new APS. The people inside and outside of the organization have endured, and the resilience and determination of the students, staff, and community is not only inspiring, but also serve as the catalyst for change. As the district moves forward, the key challenges are:

1. Changing culture throughout the organization to promote positive, productive learning environments where students and staff are highly engaged
2. Building an academic program that responds to diverse needs and prepares all students for college and careers
3. Hiring, retaining, and developing high-quality talent for teaching and leadership roles
4. Developing the resources and refining the systems that will support the academic vision of the organization

These challenges are the key drivers in the district’s revised 2015-2020 strategic plan. These four challenges are not just bullets in a written plan, but the real challenges that stakeholders face every day and have reported in community meetings, town halls, staff interviews, and focus groups. The leadership of APS understands that true transformation must address all of these challenges and will require a new approach to operation. The charter system operating model is a cornerstone of this new approach.

Challenges

1. Culture: The district does not have the trust or engagement of stakeholders necessary to achieve the mission.

As the saying goes, culture eats strategy for breakfast every day. Therefore, in APS, we need to create a student-focused organizational culture that is not driven by adult agendas inside and outside the district.

APS has experienced significant rifts in trust that have compromised performance and engagement. In the aftermath of wide-spread cheating on the 2009 CRCTs, APS must earn back the trust and cooperation to achieve the mission. The district must restore organizational integrity and improve culture across all stakeholder groups and levels of the organization. Even as leadership has stabilized and structures to ensure integrity are beginning to be implemented, conversations with community members, employees, students, and parents consistently highlight the need for supports that will transform the culture at APS to build trust and cooperation.

Trust and Engagement

As a chapter closes on the APS cheating trial, it has left the trust across the organization compromised. In recent years, concerns regarding communication, transparency, integrity and ethics have been prevalent in dialogue with stakeholders. The rifts in trust have also exacerbated disengagement and dissatisfaction. A Gallup poll of APS staff in 2014 showed that only 30% of staff across the district report they feel engaged and inspired at work. Gallup defines engaged employees as those who are involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace. Additionally, the research indicates organizations with engaged workforces are more productive, have less turnover and less employee absenteeism. Based on the results of APS' initial results, improving employee engagement will be important moving forward. The turnover rate within the principal ranks was significant during the cheating investigation with nearly 42 principal vacancies. Two years later, there were 22 principal vacancies in APS schools (at the end of the 2013-2014 school year). High rates of turnover across district roles and low levels of job satisfaction are symptoms of the cultural challenges that APS faces.

Parent and community engagement and satisfaction are the other critical elements of this challenge. Participation in surveys and feedback sessions has been inconsistent, and participation at schools has been largely low across the majority of the district. Only 18 of 106 APS schools had LSCs considered "in good standing" by the end of the 2013-14 school year. As of 2014, 20% of APS schools did not have an active PTA, and half of those schools with a PTA had fewer than 100 members¹. APS will need to build trust and engagement to get the parent and community support needed for students to succeed.

School Site Culture

There is a significant need for improved culture at the school level for many APS sites. For example, of the APS students who participated in a 2013 district survey:

¹ Although PTAs are operated outside of the district as a separate, voluntary organization, participation in PTAs is an indicator of parent engagement.

- 30% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they felt safe at school
- 23% disagreed or strongly disagreed that teachers treated them with respect
- 34% indicated that classroom behaviors prevented teachers from teaching and interfered with their learning

Staff, parents, community members, and school site visits confirm this data, with stakeholders at many schools reporting concerns about behavior and school safety. Discipline data across schools and subgroups demonstrates the need for different strategies and systems in different schools. For example, African American males with and without disabilities have been disproportionately suspended in APS. Average rates of suspension and disciplinary action in some clusters are up to ten times the average of that in others. This data demonstrates that the disciplinary structures in place are not effectively driving the culture in schools needed to manifest the mission and vision.

2. Academic Program: The district is not on a predictive path to college and career readiness for all students.

Student achievement and growth data show that the academic program in place is not positioning all students for college and career readiness. The current trajectory of growth across measures such as graduation, CCPRI, college matriculation, and state assessments is not sufficient to meet goals. 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 on foundational skills/school readiness, attendance, and retention, as well as disaggregated achievement data by subgroup, point to the need for revisions to the academic program.

Student Needs

One of the critical requirements of the academic program is responsiveness to the significant and diverse needs of students throughout APS. The district includes 17 charter schools, 2 adult education programs, 4 alternative programs, 19 high schools, 12 middle schools, 47 K-5 and intermediate campuses, and 5 primary campuses organized into nine community clusters (see Exhibit 5 for details about each cluster). 91 of the 106 schools qualify as Title I schools. The total student body is 76% African American, 14% Caucasian, 7% Hispanic, 2% Multiracial, and 1% Asian/American Indian/Alaskan/Other. 9% of students qualify for special education, 10% qualify for gifted, and 4% qualify for English Learner services.

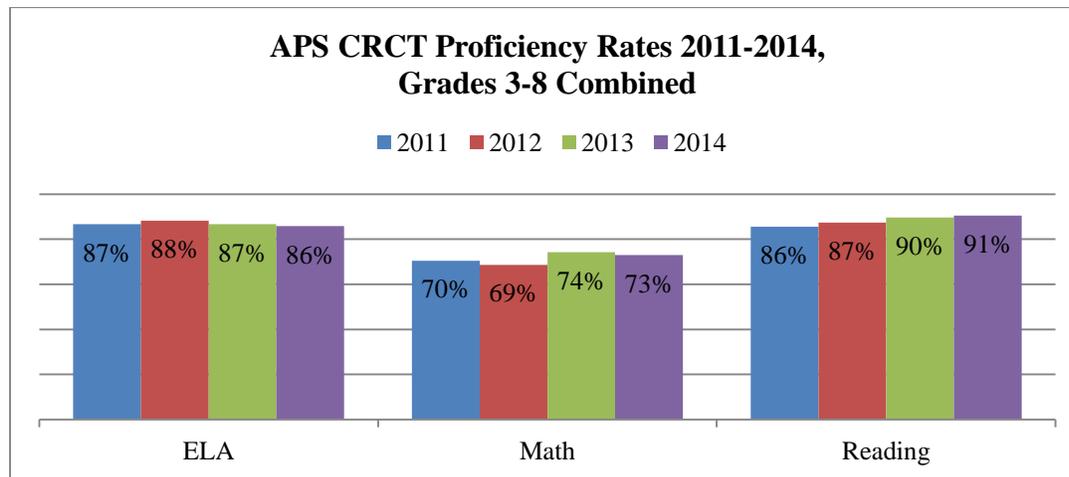
76% of APS students are eligible for free/reduced-price lunch, with 70 schools having an eligibility rate of 90% or higher. However, the district also has five schools with eligibility of 10% or less. According to

the 2013 American Communities Survey, APS has three of the ten poorest census tracts by median income, as well as two of the ten wealthiest, making APS the only school district with census tracts in both the top and bottom ten. Mobility is another challenge, with a district-wide mobility rate in 2012-2013 of nearly 30%--the highest in the state. Across schools, mobility rates range from more than 50% (eight schools) to less than 5% (four schools)², emphasizing a need for different student support strategies at different schools. Poverty, mobility, and specialized learning needs across a diverse district present a barrier that the academic program must consider.

Overall Performance

Atlanta Public Schools' four-year graduation rate in 2014 was 59.1%. This rate reflects a .5 percentage point increase from the prior year, but is still 13.4 percentage points behind the rate for Georgia. Of those students who graduated from APS in four years, 50% enrolled in college and 33% persisted through a third year of college. Nearly 50% of students across the district did not meet proficiency in at least one subject area in 2014, and growth on the CRCT since 2011 has been stagnant and, in some content areas, even decreased (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: APS Assessment Outcomes From 2011-2014



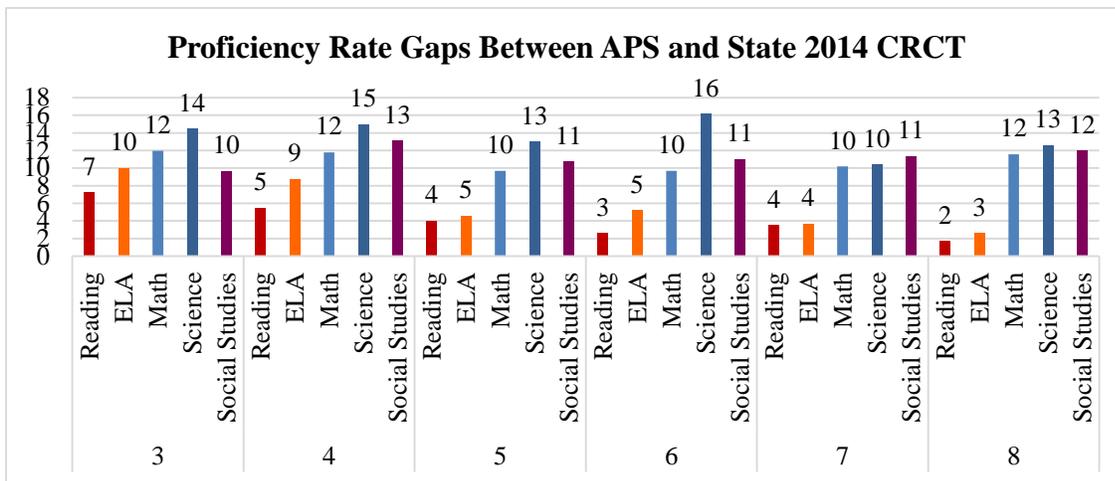
Comparative Performance

Comparative data shows that APS is outperformed by the state across all data points. Achievement and growth data as measured through CCRPI show that APS is consistently behind the state at each school level, with an overall average in the 2013-14 school year (the most recent year for which CCRPI data is

² Beaudette, Pascael. (2014). *Student Mobility in Georgia: Establishing Patterns and Predictors*. Retrieved from <https://gosa.georgia.gov/sites/gosa.georgia.gov/files/Mobility%20Report%20070714.pdf>

available at this time) that is 10 points lower (APS CCRPI for 2012-13 was 10.5 points lower, demonstrating an incremental closing of the gap). A comparison of proficiency rate gaps between APS and GA on the 2014 CRCT (see Figure 1.2) shows that the percentage of APS students who score proficient or above on the CRCT is lower than that of the state across all content areas and grade levels tested, a trend that has been consistent during all years for which there is CRCT data. APS proficiency rates are significantly below that of the state in math, science, and social studies, as illustrated in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2: Proficiency Rate Gaps



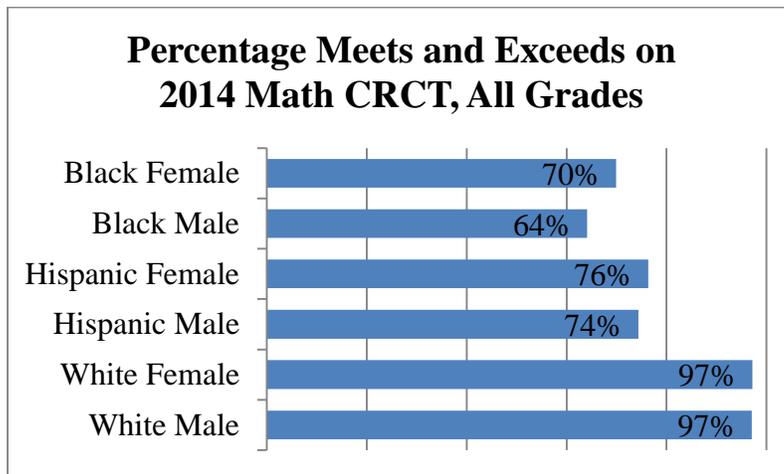
Performance by Subgroup

A 2014 Equity Audit (conducted at the request of APS by Georgia State University) analyzed achievement and readiness across subgroups and schools. The study found that substantial variation existed between schools in all areas examined, highlighting the need for strategies that can be tailored to the unique needs of each school. For example, academically disadvantaged students in the East and South regions of the district report that there is greater differentiation in their instruction, but their learning environment is less challenging and less positive than that reported by academically disadvantaged students in the other two regions. Disparity between schools and subgroups demonstrate that the incremental growth being made as a district is inconsistent across schools and subgroups. Increases in graduation rates, CRCT proficiency, and EOCT scores have not been rapid enough to outperform the state, nor has that growth closed gaps in performance between subgroups.

Over the past three years, the three highest performing high schools in APS achieved increasing graduation rates, with as many as 98% of all students graduating in 2013 (Early College at Carver). Conversely, the lowest performing high schools in APS experienced *decreasing* graduation rates, with fewer than half of their students graduating in four years.

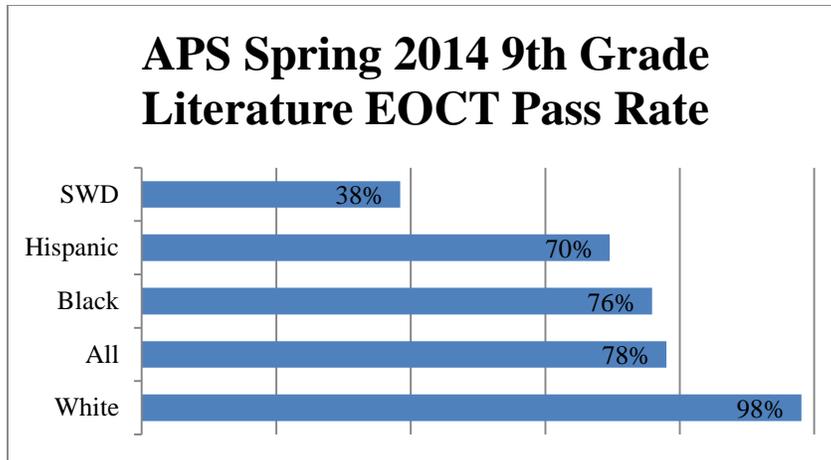
Another example of disparity in achievement by subgroup comes from an analysis of assessment outcomes by subgroup. As demonstrated in Figure 1.3, there are persistent, significant gaps in proficiency between students of different racial groups, socioeconomic status designations, and eligibility for English Learner and/or Special Education services.

Figure 1.3: Assessment Outcomes by Subgroup



Disparity in performance by subgroup was also found in all eight required End Of Course Tests (EOCTs). Despite APS’ gains across the past three years in most content areas, the achievement gap remained: for example, the percentage of White students who scored proficient on the 9th Grade Composition and Literature EOCT was 22 percentage points higher than Black students, 28 percentage points higher than Hispanic students, and 60 percentage points higher than students with disabilities (see Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4: 9th Grade Composition and Literature EOCT Proficiency by Subgroup



The Equity Audit also uncovered gaps in resources and systems needed to effectively address disparity in student outcomes. For example, there are a disproportionate number of special education and homeless students in the district’s alternative schools (nearly double that of any other school in the region). APS had only eight schools that earned Reward status in 2014, and three of these schools were independently operated charters.

Research shows that students who miss ten or more days of school are 2.5 times more likely to drop out. The percentage of students absent more than ten days across APS has increased over the prior four years at all three levels of programming (see Figure 1.5). When evaluated by subgroup (Figure 1.6), the percentage of students missing ten or more days is significantly higher for low-income students and students of color.

Figure 1.5: 2014 Attendance Over Time

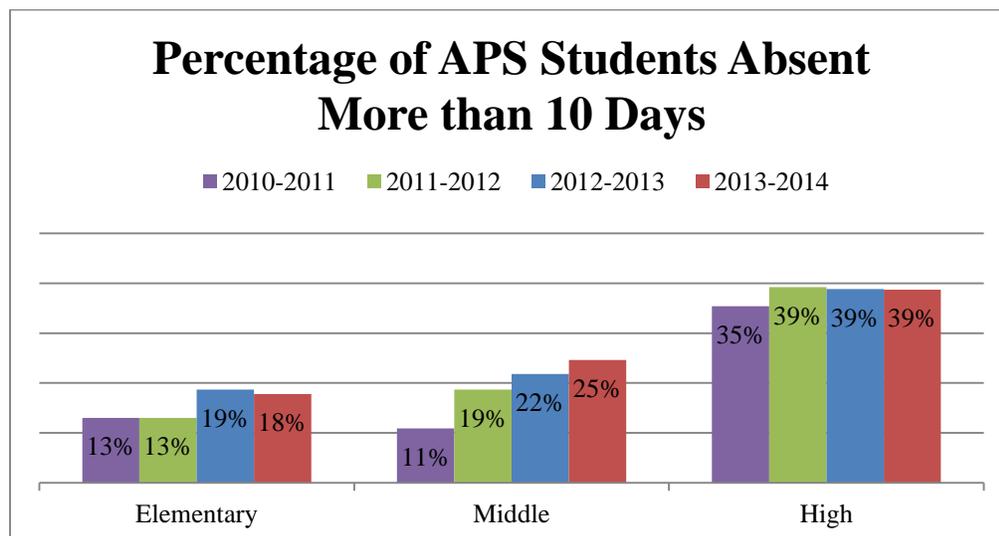


Figure 1.6: 2014 Percentage of Students Absent More Than 10 Days by Subgroup

Subgroup	Elementary	Middle	High
Black Male	22%	30%	40%
Black Female	19%	25%	41%
Hispanic Male	14%	19%	40%
Hispanic Female	13%	17%	45%
White Male	9%	10%	21%
White Female	9%	11%	27%

APS has increased student achievement over the past three years; however, the academic programming across the district requires significant revision in order to meet the mission and serve a diverse student population. 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.

3. Talent Management: The talent management systems need to be revised to recruit, retain, and develop the talent needed (across all levels of the organization) to achieve the mission.

Challenges in Human Resources Systems

APS has experienced significant challenges around recruiting, placing, and retaining high-quality teachers, leaders, and district staff. The removal of more than 200 staff as the result of the 2011 investigation left APS with an urgent need to fill a record number of seats, many of which had to be filled by novice leaders, including 22 principal vacancies that needed to be filled by permanent appointments three years later. Though there have been significant investments in increasing the volume of candidates for vacancies in all roles, the systems in place were limiting for those charged with hiring/promoting new staff because many of the processes offered only a “one size fits all” approach. Long timelines for hiring and insufficient systems to track applicants and vacancies have led to the loss of quality talent. At the school site level, this challenge was exacerbated by the limited options for principals to reallocate staffing resources to place talent where it was needed.

After onboarding new staff, the performance management system was not supporting effective development and retention. APS has experienced annual average teacher turnover as high as 32% in the past three years. Inconsistency in implementation of performance management tools and alignment of professional learning opportunities and unclear compensation guidelines resulted in insufficient resources

to retain staff. A lack of codified leadership and career pathways for staff compounded the challenges around satisfaction, retention, and development.

Talent Management Inequities

In addition to inequity in academic achievement, the 2014 Equity Audit also highlighted disparities in talent management. For example, the average number of years of experience for APS teachers is 13; however, students in alternative schools spend about 28% of their time with inexperienced teachers who have produced the lowest growth. At some of the lowest-performing schools, students spend more than one-third of their day with inexperienced teachers, and almost half of the economically disadvantaged students across the district have at least one inexperienced teacher. Yet the region with the lowest percentage of economically disadvantaged students (the North) has the most experienced teachers. Teach for America (TFA) teachers in APS, who comprise a portion of the inexperienced teachers, were found to have produced approximately two more months of student learning than new, non-TFA teachers. However, the disparity in teacher experience demonstrates that the academically neediest students may be systemically assigned to the district's least experienced teachers, regardless of TFA status. Research³ on teacher effectiveness shows that there are negative impacts on learning outcomes for students of teachers in their first year (opposed to teachers with three or more years of experience). In the 2013-14 school year, APS school leaders had an average of 20 years' experience. However, the leadership within a cluster that has the highest rates of economic disadvantage has only 60% of the experience of the leadership in a cluster with the lowest rates of economic disadvantage. Although experience does not necessarily predict student success, the experience levels of teaching and leadership talent are disproportionately represented throughout the district, with the schools having the highest levels of poverty and student need staffed by the least experienced teachers and leaders.

4. Systems and Resources: Current systems are not driving achievement of the academic vision.

In addition to the talent management systems challenges outlined above, alignment and efficiency of other support systems were not driving achievement of the academic vision. Systems, such as those in use for budgeting, Information Technology (IT), HR, and data (attendance, progress monitoring, diagnostic, summative performance, retention, satisfaction, etc.) did not support cross-departmental collaboration and communication, which produced barriers to real-time, data-driven decision-making at all levels of the organization. Schools did not have flexibility to use systems in a way that met the needs of the students, and data available did not support effective or timely action from the district. Support staff at the district

³ Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor. (2006). Teacher-Student Matching and the Assessment of Teacher Effectiveness. *Journal of Human Resources*. University of Wisconsin Press. 41(4).

were largely unable to respond to school needs in a timely way because responses were not school-specific or most high-leverage. Teachers and other school site staff were still not using data to drive instruction, despite its increased availability.

Beyond challenges with HR and data systems, the budgeting process did not offer the flexibility schools require to respond to their school-specific needs. The APS budgeting process was very traditional in that schools received budget allocations without opportunities to make adjustments. Specific support structures, staffing, and supplies critical to the success of students at one school may not be the critical levers at another. Increased autonomy over resource allocations at the school site is needed to reduce these inequities by mitigating the existing barriers to school level strategic budgeting.

2. What is the rank order priority of these challenges (from most to least important)?

APS cannot meet its mission of college and career readiness for every student without addressing all four of these challenges. The challenges, like the strategies that will address them, are interdependent and synergistic; however, APS cannot attain its mission and vision or improve outcomes for students without first addressing culture and building trust, cooperation, and engagement. A transformation of the culture at all levels of the organization and across all communities will support an improved academic program and talent management approach, while building the collaboration with parents and communities that is critical to the success of APS students. Providing academic programming that will address diverse student needs and build the skills necessary for college and career readiness is important and is the core of what we do. The next priority is retention of an energized and inspired team of employees who are capable of increasing student achievement is also important. Finally, we understand that we need to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the systems and routines.

3. Which of these challenges will your school district be able to address by becoming a charter system?

The initiatives that will address all four challenges are availed by the transition to a charter system operating model.

- Culture

The charter system model will increase stakeholder engagement and build trust through decentralized decision-making. Local School Governance Teams will have autonomy and input into decisions made for the school and the district, and provide a means of authentic collaboration and engagement for

stakeholders. Through the Local School Governance Teams, schools will develop strategies tailored to the needs of their schools that will improve culture.

- Academic Program

The uneven growth across subjects, schools, and student subgroups indicates that APS's current academic programming needs to be strengthened and customized to the specific needs of its diverse student body and portfolio of schools. The charter system model will facilitate school-site customization through stakeholder engagement and the flexibility to adopt innovations that require a waiver.

- Talent

The charter system model allows schools greater flexibility to customize talent acquisition, development, and management to meet their specific needs. The charter system will also empower school sites to make decisions about the talent they need to meet their goals with the autonomy to recruit and retain that talent.

- Systems

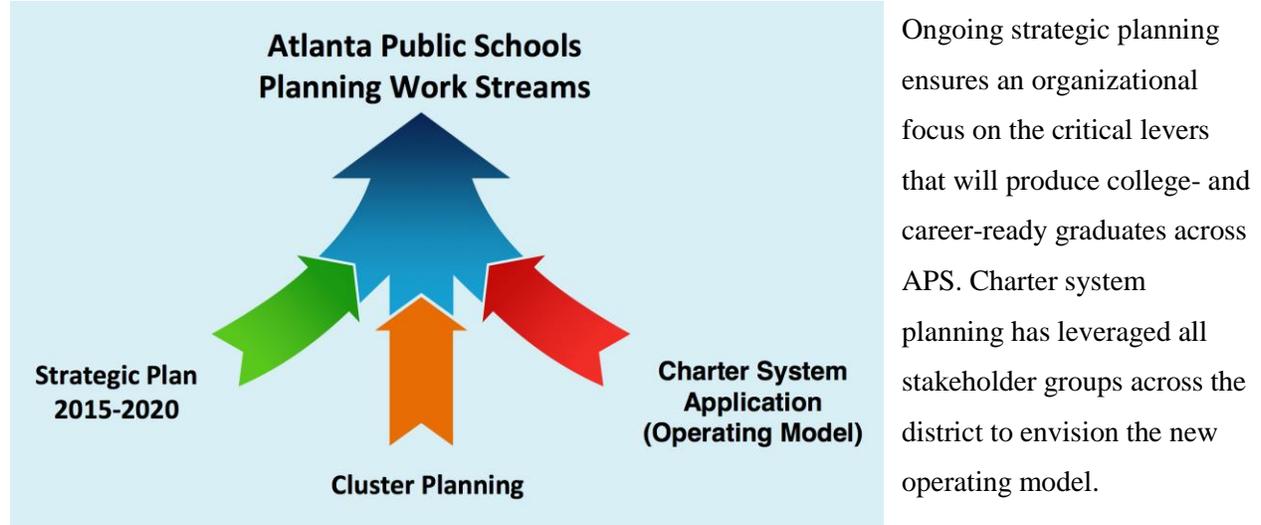
The charter system model allows flexibility with the use of funds, access to innovations in systems and resource allocation, and a school-based approach to system functionality that ensures each school has the resources and systems it needs.

4. What specific actions will your district take to address each of these challenges (listed in #3 above) during its five-year charter term?

A System Ready for Change

The 2013 election of a solutions-oriented board and 2014 appointment of a new Superintendent have initiated a transformation at APS. A new vision, mission, and five-year strategic plan are the results of collaboration between and among stakeholder groups throughout the district over the past year. The mission of Atlanta Public Schools is: With a caring culture of trust and collaboration, every student will graduate ready for college and career. The vision of Atlanta Public Schools is to be a high-performing school district where students love to learn, educators inspire, families engage, and the community trusts the system. The guiding principles are: Excellence in everything we do, Equity in our approach to decision-making, Ethics to rebuild our integrity, and Engagement with our school community: "the four Es." The new mission, vision, and guiding principles are being used to drive goal-setting and organizational planning to improve Atlanta Public Schools.

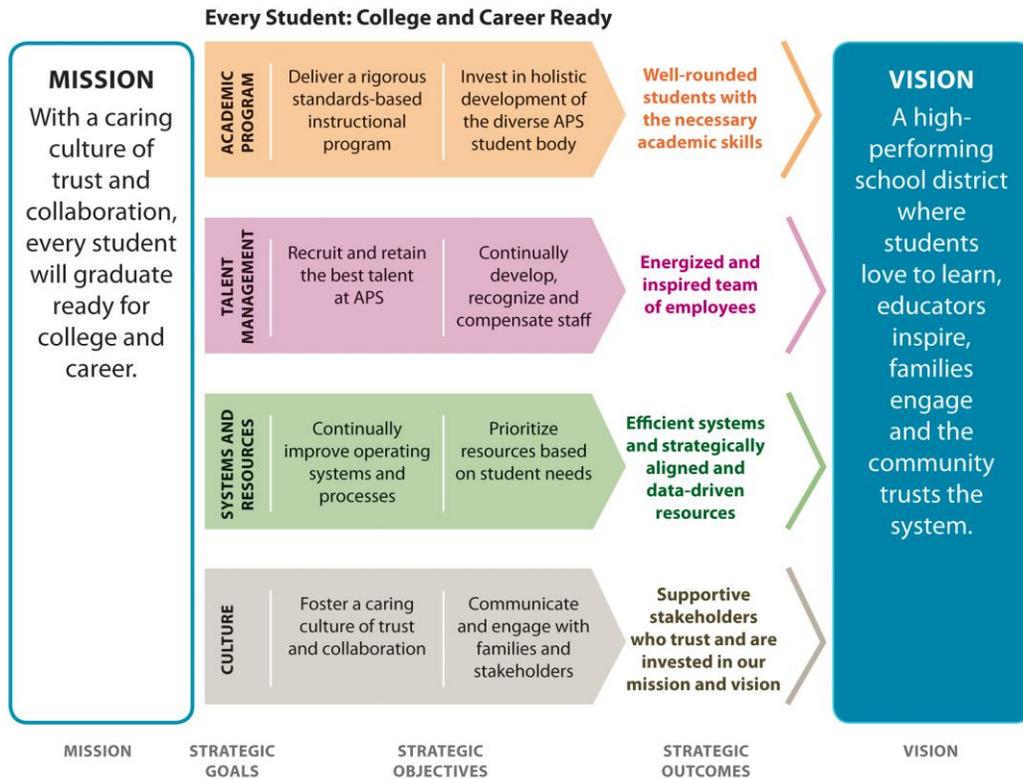
Community and staff members across the metropolitan Atlanta area are now deepening their collaboration in three simultaneous and interrelated work streams: district-wide strategic planning, cluster planning, and charter system planning (see Figure 1.7). Through cluster visioning, school communities are working together to coordinate strategies and leverage resources to create vertically aligned feeder patterns.



Strategic Planning

A critical element of the new leadership’s move toward district-wide improvement was the creation of a 2015-2020 strategic plan. Entitled *Strong Students, Strong Schools, Strong Staff, Strong System*, planning began with thorough self-analysis to determine the critical levers for district-wide improvement. Leadership analyzed data over multiple years, participated in site visits, administered stakeholder surveys, hosted community meetings, and examined the climate in the years leading up to the strategic plan. This self-study illuminated the four challenges outlined above. The adoption of the five-year plan aligns action across all levels of the organization to these four focus areas, creating a common direction toward which the whole district is working.

Figure 1.8: APS Strategic Plan



Cluster Planning

The 2012 redistricting process organized APS into nine community clusters, which are neighborhood-based feeder patterns with a designated high school for each. Clusters were designed to allow all students in an elementary school to matriculate to the same middle school, and students enrolled in that middle school to matriculate to the same high school. The 2015-2020 strategic plan initiated a more impactful vision of this model, providing greater access to a more equitable distribution of resources and multiple layers of support through cluster planning and alignment. Over the course of the 2014-15 school year, stakeholders in each of the nine community clusters have come together at visioning sessions and cluster planning meetings to develop vertically aligned visions for their cluster of schools. As clusters continue to build the plans for their schools throughout the planning year, the flexibility of a charter system will be a critical means of removing impediments to student success.

Charter System Planning

Stakeholders from across the district came together at the start of the 2014-15 school year to explore the different system options and determine which would best position APS to deliver on its new mission. The charter system was chosen by a significant majority because it provides the flexibility and decentralized decision-making necessary to meet the needs of APS' diverse schools. Once the decision was made, a charter advisory team comprised of representatives from all levels of the organization, stakeholder

groups, and clusters convened monthly to develop, review, and refine the plan to reorganize under a charter system operating model. Frequent engagement with other charter systems and feedback from regularly scheduled community listening sessions and surveys in each cluster shaped the charter system application as outlined herein.

Pre-Charter Strategies

The strategic planning and cluster planning processes in place have begun the work of addressing the challenges faced by APS. The transition to a charter system is not the panacea for these challenges; rather, it provides the next high-leverage step to build on the foundation that has been established. Many of the solutions that will address the challenges outlined herein are not yet determined because they will be driven by the localized decision-making bodies yet to be formed. Authentic engagement and responsive strategies require high-capacity LSGTs to ensure improvement plans belong to the experts best positioned to determine and execute on them: the schools themselves. The following initiatives have been undertaken to address the four challenges and provide the foundation for the charter system operating model.

Culture: The district does not have the trust or engagement of stakeholders necessary to achieve the mission.

- *Strengths-based strategies to support organizational culture:* Implementation of Gallup's StrengthsFinder tools and processes to encourage a shift from what's wrong to what's strong. The decentralized decision-making model recognizes the expertise of individuals and school-based teams and seeks to position these strengths and insight as the lever for school improvement.
- *Ethical programming and practices:* APS is building on the current ethics training program and implementing additional strategies to ensure staff are applying ethical practices across the organization and living up to core beliefs and established norms.
- *Stakeholder communication and engagement:* The district is implementing and managing a comprehensive strategic communication and engagement plan to touch all stakeholders—staff, parents, students, partners, and community to ensure all are well-informed and invested in the system's mission and vision. The Gallup Engagement Survey will be implemented to gauge employee engagement and satisfaction across departments, clusters, and schools.
- *Cluster and strategic planning:* From cluster planning meetings to the first district-wide LSC Summit, the focus on engagement has included authentic investment of community members in planning initiatives for the strategic and cluster plans. Attendance at these sessions has increased over the application year and as plans increasingly reflect the input of the community.

- *School culture supports:* All schools are receiving training and tools to support the implementation of culture supports that include a positive behavior support approach and restorative justice strategies.

Academic Program: The district is not on a predictive path to college and career readiness for all students.

- *Cluster signature programs:* Each cluster is developing a signature program plan that responds to the needs and vision of the communities the cluster serves (see Exhibit 5). Flexibility to adopt the curriculum and instructional structures that best facilitate this program will be the purview of the LSGTs, and the district is supporting clusters and schools with development of these programs.
- *Early childhood offerings:* APS is preparing to increase the number of Pre-K seats across the city and is establishing an APS early childhood collaborative with other providers and partners.
- *Common Core/Georgia Performance Standards Support:* APS is providing targeted professional learning opportunities for teachers and instructional coaches, especially in literacy and mathematics. The district implements regular, aligned assessments, along with comprehensive, balanced literacy integration across all school sites.
- *Positive behavior strategies:* APS is promoting social and emotional learning through comprehensive teacher professional learning on interventions and strategies, curriculum, assessments, and cultural norms and standards. Schools have the autonomy to choose the positive behavior tools or curriculum they adopt, and the district has already begun to provide resources, training, and support in implementing a positive behavior support framework to inform character education and discipline systems at each school.
- *College and career access strategies:* APS is strengthening pathway offerings and advisory processes across all schools, increasing ACT/SAT preparation offerings; and providing increased access to Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, STEM, and Dual Enrollment courses. Cluster signature program implementation will significantly bolster this initiative.
- *Wraparound service partnerships:* Resources and formalized partnerships are being established across the district, with specific partnerships directed toward the clusters and schools that need services most. These resources and partnerships include mental health, adult education, job force development for parents, childcare, and healthcare. The formation of the Office of Partnerships and Development enhances partnership development.
- *City-wide innovative programs:* In addition to the cluster-based signature programs, APS is committed to providing diverse portfolio of high-performing charter schools, single-gender academies, and alternative and open campus models. APS is partnering with Atlanta Technical

College to offer the district's first College and Career Academy (see Attachment 4) and is codifying collaboration between traditional and charter schools.

Talent Management: The talent management systems need to be revised to recruit, retain, and develop the talent needed (across all levels of the organization) to achieve the mission.

- *Equity in compensation study:* APS has undertaken a detailed review of compensation to determine equity across pay programs and structures. District staff will use this data to revise the compensation strategy to ensure consistency among educators with similar experience levels, encouraging retention of high-performing staff.
- *Teacher and leadership recruitment strategies:* APS is investing capacity in the refinement of strategies to ensure the most effective, innovative hiring practices will attract and recruit the best people. On-boarding systems are also being revamped to ensure the process for new staff is efficient and effective.
- *Teacher leadership development programs/staff professional learning:* APS is developing and enhancing programs to increase the retention of novice teachers and leaders. The district is providing staff with increased leadership development opportunities (instructional, non-instructional, and classified) and targeted professional learning that aligns to the district's strategic plan.
- *Implementation of new Human Resources systems and tools:* The district is finalizing its adoption of the Gallup Teacher/Principal Insight tool and HireVue Talent Interaction Platform to support more efficient and effective recruitment and selection of staff, providing school site teams with the information they need to find the best fits for their vacancies. Training on identifying the right talent and a complete hiring toolkit for each principal is being developed to support their increased autonomy. In addition, online background checks and a new applicant tracking system are being added to the district's purview to ensure efficiency in hiring.
- *Reorganization of Human Resources department and systems:* HR is in the process of improving services and driving efficiency in order to better support principals in talent acquisition, management, and development.

Systems and Resources: Current systems are not driving achievement of the academic vision.

- *Reorganization of the Center for Leadership and Learning:* Ongoing departmental self-studies are identifying the critical functions, gaps in efficiency, and needs for existing support mechanisms as the district transitions to a school support-based role. Other departments will continue to be reshaped as the needs shift with the charter system transition.
- *System upgrade and integration for HR and finance technology:* APS is upgrading the enterprise resource planning management systems to integrate HR and finance data systems.

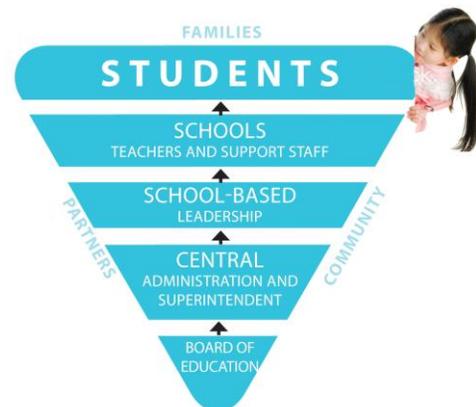
- *Strategic facilities and capital plan:* The district is developing and implementing a plan to ensure facilities are strategically aligned to the priorities and academic vision.
- *Strategic budgeting:* Beyond the decentralized budgeting process, the district is updating systems to remove any impediments from school-site budgeting. This includes developing, managing, and allocating the district budget to align with school needs and implementation of the system operating model. Work underway on this strategy includes redefining budget codes to increase allocation autonomy (the previous codes were too granular and limiting), revision of the procurement process, implementation of Lawson’s Strategic Budgeting application, and development of a strategic sourcing model that allows principals to “shop” with partners directly to leverage cost savings without compromising school level autonomy.
- *Instructional and infrastructure technology plans:* An examination of information technology and data systems has initiated additional changes to this system. The district is developing and implementing plans to enhance instructional technology support to the classroom as well as build the infrastructure foundations required to further innovate in the future. Adoption of data systems like GradTracker across high schools provides timely access to relevant data necessary to determine appropriate supports and interventions for students. A scorecard is also in development to provide snapshot data across goals that can be used as a progress monitoring tool to inform supports at all levels of the organization—from school sites to the central office.

Charter Term Action Strategies

Decentralized Decision-Making

One of the critical shifts at APS is putting students at the top of how the district thinks, feels, behaves, and operates. The traditional pyramid of a top-down structure has been inverted so that the students of APS are now at the top (see Figure 1.9). At each level and role of the organization, support is being redirected to school site staff and students. This requires greater autonomy at the front line to respond authentically and efficiently to students. The district is already decentralizing authority through a variety of means including increased discretionary funding for principals, cluster planning, and reorganization of district teams. Restructuring as a charter system deepens this shift by positioning those closest to students to make decisions for their schools through Local School Governance Teams (LSGTs). Decentralized decision-making recognizes the expertise and insight of educators and the community at the school site level and empowers them to align resources and strategies

Figure 1.9



to their students' needs.

LSGTs will determine solutions for their schools through an annual process of budgeting and improvement planning. School level decision-making is aligned to a cluster strategic plan, which is a multi-year vision developed by a committee of representatives from each school in the cluster called the Cluster Advisory Team (CAT). The elected chair of each of the nine CATs participates in a CAT Executive Committee, which convenes to review and recommend approval or revision of any initiative presented to this committee by the Superintendent. This multi-tiered level of support and input equips school sites within a cluster to align, support one another, and provide feedback on district-level initiatives.

Flexibility to Innovate

The broad flexibility waiver provides access to previously unavailable innovative solutions that meet the needs of students. The flexibility to adopt solutions that meet the needs of just one school, like adjustment to staffing models, modification of instructional time, development of new courses, or credit recovery options have all been unavailable because of the constraints of the district's organization and the laws that govern traditional schools. Innovations that have been proven to address these same challenges in APS' own charter schools and in other charter systems in the state will now be viable to inform instructional programming and socio-emotional supports critical to success. All four of the challenges outlined above will be in some way addressed by innovations adopted at the school site level that the flexibility to innovate provides.

Specific Innovations

The strategies to be developed by the district and each school site within the charter term will build on the foundation outlined above. The first action of the charter term to address these challenges will be the organization of Local School Governance Teams (LSGTs) and Cluster Advisory Teams (CATs). Both bodies will be elected for each school in APS in the spring of 2016. Training and school improvement planning will begin immediately so that the LSGTs and CATs are positioned to begin the annual cycle of the work in the summer of the first year of the charter term. The first School-Based Solutions (SBSs), innovations proposed by LSGTs that require the broad flexibility waiver, will be approved by the Superintendent by February of 2017.

Strategies that may be adopted by the district or school sites and require the broad flexibility waiver afforded by charter system status are summarized in Figure 1.10 (see Question 5 below) and outlined in detail (including waivers needed to implement) in Attachment 1.

5. Provide a clear explanation of how each of these specific actions (listed in #4 above) will lead to the specific challenge being addressed.

The shift to a model that empowers school sites to be responsive to student needs leverages the district to provide differentiated support to each school. When the student population served is so large and diverse, a top-down approach to district management exacerbates challenges this decentralized model will mitigate. The most critical next steps to address the challenges are those that will be adopted by clusters and schools using the flexibility of the charter system. See Attachment 1 for the specific innovations that may be adopted and the waivers required for implementation.

Figure 1.10: Overview of Charter System Solutions

Strategic Goal	Charter System Solutions		Impact
	District Level	School Site Level	
1. Culture: We will build trust with the community, and we will have engaged stakeholders (Employees, students, parents, community members, partners, etc.) who are invested in the mission and vision and who support the creation of student-centered learning communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentic community engagement in school site decision-making through LSGTs Input/expertise/insight from community members, teachers, students, parents on school culture challenges and the venue to collaborate to improve it (LSGTs, CATs) Transparency in decision-making across all levels of the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of signature programs that align to the vision of the communities served that may require flexibility in curriculum Adoption of character development and behavioral support strategies that are the right fit for the school Emphasis on customized system of supports for restorative justice and discipline reform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows for school programming that reflects the needs of students and their communities Provides authentic means of engagement for stakeholders Facilitates collaboration and transparency across and within stakeholder groups Provides space for practitioners to make decisions that leverage their insight and expertise Increases communication and participation
2. Academic Program:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity to leverage community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of waiver-required staffing models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables schools to adopt staffing,

<p>Our students will be well-rounded individuals who possess the necessary academic skills and knowledge and are excited about learning.</p>	<p>expertise/insight in decision-making and problem-solving for a school through the LSGT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in retention policies, creation of a grade 8.5, and other drop-out prevention innovations • Creation of a College and Career Academy with Atlanta Tech (see Attachment 4), increased access to career pathways • Adoption of charter school best practices currently unavailable to schools 	<p>and resource allocation for wrap-around support services that address community-specific student needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility in instructional time and pacing to afford a school day, school year, and intersession programming that meets the needs of students (extended year, double blocks of literacy and/or math, adjusted school day, differentiated remediation programs with flexible pacing) • Expanded use of blended learning, with FTE awarded for time spent in virtual learning environments • Integration of curricular and instructional materials, staffing models to support signature programming • Increased access to career pathways and dual enrollment programming that leverage the waiver • Adoption of charter school best practices currently unavailable to schools 	<p>programmatic, curricular innovations that meet the needs of their students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates authentic engagement of the community to better leverage expertise and increase support • Provides flexibility for schools/clusters to respond to the changing needs of students •
<p>3. Talent Management: We will retain an energized and inspired team of employees who are capable of advancing ever-increasing levels of achievement for students of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision of district HR systems to provide autonomy to determine the staff candidates who are the best fit for students at each school site • Flexibility in contracting requirements to ensure high-quality educator placements in every school site • Flexibility in certification requirements to recruit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of staffing models that meet the academic and wrap-around supports needs of students • Flexibility to adopt development/continuing education that efficiently responds to student data and/or aligns with signature programming • Flexibility to hire staff who do not meet current certification requirements for signature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides the flexibility needed to respond to diverse staffing needs • Enables schools to recruit, retain, and develop the talent they need • Eliminates the bureaucracy that prevents timely retention of the talent needed

all backgrounds.	candidates who are the best fit for a given school	programming and/or school specific needs	
4. Systems and Resources: We will improve efficiency (productivity, cost, etc.) while also making decisions (including resource allocations) that are grounded in a strategic academic direction and data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in inefficiencies in decision-making by localizing the decision-making purview Decrease in categorical budgetary requirements to increase discretionary dollars Creation of district Title I spending and resource allocation plan that honors school-level decision-making and differentiated staffing models (without negatively impacting comparability requirements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgetary flexibility to allow for targeted resource allocation that meets the needs of students (and leverages the assets at the school) Flexibility in state staffing, spending, and programmatic requirements to best leverage funds to support innovations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows schools to allocate resources in the most high-leverage ways Eliminates waste of resources Affords transparency in decision-making about spending

6. Although you will be granted a broad flexibility waiver if you are granted a charter, please list the specific Georgia law or State Board rule that must be waived to allow your district to implement each specific action (listed in #4 above).

- Please also list the waivers you have used during the past five years (including those granted to the entire state, e.g. class size) and what goals they helped you accomplish during those five years?

Prior Waivers

APS has utilized several waivers each year to accommodate programming needs. The table below outlines the waivers requested to date by Atlanta Public Schools. These waivers have served as an important foundation for understanding the scope and flexibility offered under the charter system operating model.

Figure 1.9: Waivers Used to Date by APS

State Regulation	Rationale for Waiver	Waiver Used in Last Five Years?
Class Size SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.08 O.C.G.A. 20-2-182 / 20-2-152	Provides flexibility in the allocation and use of instructional personnel.	Class size waivers are currently used system-wide due to financial hardship.
Categorical Expenditure Controls SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.29 O.C.G.A. 20-2-171	Provides flexibility from State controls for direct classroom expenditures and from sanctions for not meeting such requirements.	Expenditure waivers are currently used system-wide due to financial hardship.

Categorical Expenditure Controls O.C.G.A. 20-2-167	Provides flexibility from State controls for direct instructional, media center and staff development expenditures	Expenditure waivers are currently used system-wide due to financial hardship.
Categorical Expenditure Controls O.C.G.A. 20-2-184.1	Provides flexibility from State controls for “20 additional days of instruction” expenditures.	Expenditure waivers are currently used system-wide due to financial hardship.
Categorical Expenditure Controls O.C.G.A. 20-2-184 / 185 / 186	Provides flexibility from State controls for staffing expenditures by position.	Expenditure waivers are currently used system-wide due to financial hardship.
Required Personnel SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.22	Provides flexibility from State controls to employ certain personnel as allotted.	Waiver for one certified administrator to serve as the principal of small schools housed at the same facility.

Use of Broad Flexibility Waiver

APS will utilize the broad flexibility waiver by providing each school with flexibility to devise solutions that meet the school’s unique needs. The specific laws and rules from which the district will require flexibility will depend largely on the innovations developed by each LSGT. Any innovation that diverges from the cluster vision and strategic plan or requires the use of the broad flexibility waiver will be applied for and vetted through the School-Based Solution (SBS) process. Through the ongoing cluster planning process and transition from LSCs to LSGTs, school sites are beginning to hypothesize specific innovations that will leverage this flexibility. Robust training and support from the district will equip each school site with guidance on how their improvement planning may leverage flexibility, how to apply for and implement SBSs, and how to effectively implement innovations customized to their school. The cluster planning and SBS processes will ensure this flexibility is used within the guardrails of a common cluster vision and district goals to improve student outcomes.

See Attachment 1 for the specific school- and district-level strategies that may be implemented and the corresponding required waivers.

7. Indicate the timeline for implementation of each specific action (listed in #4 above).

See Attachment 3 for the complete implementation timeline.

8. Indicate which of these specific actions (listed in #4 above) represents an innovation for your school district.

The board and Superintendent seek to innovate and holistically rebuild the district, shifting from a more reactive to proactive posture that leverages the deep strengths across the organization. Shifting decision-making to the school sites and allowing for flexibility to innovate is wholly new and innovative for APS.

Positioning students at the top of all decision-making completely reframes the approach to district improvement. Through the charter system, barriers that principals cited as impediments to their students' success are being removed, and school site leadership is being supported to leverage their strengths and build their capacity to innovate.

Although the district has utilized waivers granted in the past, they were largely used to alleviate budgetary constraints and were applied universally to a diverse district of 106 learning sites. Empowering every school community to utilize a broad flexibility waiver for school-specific programmatic innovations that meet their students' needs is an innovation for APS.

PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

9. What are your school system's specific student performance expectations for your five-year charter term?
- As background for your answer to this question, please see the CCRPI and Beating the Odds expectations listed below. These expectations will be included in your charter contract.
 - In your answer to this question you will list the specific areas you will target to achieve your CCRPI and Beating the Odds expectations. For example, you may choose to target Math or ELA to raise your overall CCRPI score – because your current Math or ELA scores are dragging your CCRPI score down.
 - As a way to be competitive on Beating the Odds, you may also choose to focus on closing the gap in your system between educationally advantaged and educationally disadvantaged students – or you may choose to ensure gifted students are well-served, since average-performing gifted students will lower your Beating the Odds ranking compared to schools and districts with high-performing gifted students.

Atlanta Public Schools is committed to school improvement and will increase student outcomes, as measured by CCRPI scores that meet and exceed that of the state, over the course of the charter term. The guidance of the strategic plan and transition to a charter system operating model will position the district to more quickly and effectively improve the culture, academic program, talent management, and systems and resources to also increase the number of schools that earn the Beating The Odds expectation over the course of its charter term.

The District has implemented a cluster planning process for schools to determine a signature program theme focused on the vertical and horizontal alignment of academic programs for schools and neighborhoods. Additionally, the district is focused on targeted support for under-performing schools. District initiatives to support immediate growth across all of these schools include improved leadership evaluation and training, robust student supports and wraparound services, implementation of a socio-

emotional curriculum (as one of nine districts in the country partnering with CASEL⁴ to implement this curriculum), and improved training and curriculum for intervention. A strategy to frontload capacity is increased access to early childhood education, especially in communities feeding lower performing elementary schools. Adjustments are also being made to high school programming including structure of the school day to support working students, increased access to credit recovery and dual enrollment, and signature programs that provide students with more applicable and engaging curriculum. These strategies and the focus on support will enable the district to improve overall CCRPI, as well as the CCRPI for each of those previously struggling schools.

Throughout the district, the decentralized decision-making model empowers each school to focus on the critical levers for that specific school. The curriculum, instructional strategies, and supplemental supports necessary to meet the needs of each school's students will be determined by that school's LSGT and principal to improve their CCRPI and position the district to "beat the odds." This approach responds to the disparity in performance and diversity of needs between subgroups and across schools. Revision of talent management systems, increased resources and support for academic programming, localized decision-making, and improved systems and resources will ensure each school is positioned to drive increased CCRPI scores.

Goal 1: During each year of its first five-year charter term, the APS Charter System shall "beat the odds" as determined by a formula measuring expected student growth.

A. The Beating the Odds analysis is a cross-sectional, fixed effects regression model that uses the following factors from the CCRPI school-level dataset, GaDOE student record file, and GaDOE CPI data.

a. Student-based Factors:

- % African American
- % Hispanic
- % White
- % Other
- % Free/Reduced-price Lunch
- % Students with Disabilities
- % English Learners
- % Gifted

⁴ < <http://www.casel.org/> >.

b. School-based Factors:

- School Size (FTE)
- Student/Teacher Ratio
- School Configuration/CCRPI Score Type (i.e. Elementary, Middle, High)
- Locale Type (i.e. City, Town, Rural)
- District Performance (Fixed Effect)

APS is committed to increasing the number of schools that earn a CCRPI that meet or exceeds the state and a beating the odds designation. However, the size of the district and number of schools that are currently persistently low-performing make attainment of a beating the odds designation for all schools within the charter term too aggressive to be a SMART goal. Given that there is no beating the odds data available for APS schools at this time, APS will develop a rigorous goal based on annual increase of schools eligible for the beating the odds designation over the course of the charter term, determining from that baseline the attainable number of years projected for all schools to beat the odds.

Goal 2: During each year of its first five-year charter term, each System Charter School shall “beat the odds” as determined by a formula measuring expected student growth. If each System Charter School fails to beat the odds in Year 1 of the charter, the Charter System shall decrease the number of System Charter Schools not beating the odds during Years 2 and 3 at a rate so that all System Charter Schools will beat the odds in Year 4.

Goal 3: The Charter System will demonstrate proficiency and/or improvement on the CCRPI.

- A. Measure 1: For new Charter Systems first converting in 2015 or later, using Year 1 of the charter term to establish a CCRPI baseline, the Charter System’s CCRPI score shall be equal to or better than the State in Year 2, and better than the State in Years 3-5 of the charter contract.
- B. Measure 2: If the Charter System’s first-year CCRPI score is lower than the State, the Charter System shall have until the end of Year 2 of the charter term to close the gap between the Charter System and the State.
- C. Measure 3: In Years 3-5 of the charter term, the Charter System’s CCRPI score shall be better than the State.

Again, the size of the district and number of persistently low-performing schools to date make the attainability of the district’s overall CCRPI besting that of the state unlikely within the charter term. As of 2014, the APS CCRPI is 10 points behind that of the state. Through the targeted supports for persistently

low-performing schools and district-wide initiatives that include the transition to a charter system operating model, APS will increase its CCRPI by at least 1.5 points annually to close the gap between the performance of the district and the state. The goals outlined above will demonstrate some of the impact of the four strategic imperatives and transition to a charter system; however, the culture of the organization must also be improved for APS to realize its mission. As such, Goal 4 has been devised to outline other metrics toward which the district is working throughout the course of the charter term.

Goal 4: The Charter System will demonstrate improvement in measurable improvement of organizational culture.

- A. Measure 1: The percentage of students absent 10 days or more across the district will decrease by 2.5 or more percentage points annually over the course of the charter term (starting from a baseline of 24%, the percentage reported in 2014) with a target of 11.5% by the end of the first charter term.

Table 4A1: Percentage of Students Absent 10 or More Days to Date and Projected

2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	Application (14-15)	Planning (15-16)	Year 1 (16-17)	Year 2 (17-18)	Year 3 (18-19)	Year 4 (19-20)	Year 5 (20-21)
20%	24%	24%	????	24%	21.5%	19%	16.5%*	14%	11.5%

*The lowest percentage since 2005 was 16%, achieved in 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, making the year 4 and 5 goals more rigorous than any attendance rates achieved by APS.

- B. Measure 2: The percentage of out of school suspensions per student will decrease by .5 percentage points annually with a target of 11% by the end of the first charter term. *Table 4B1: Out of School Suspensions Per Student to Date and Projected*

2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	Application (14-15)	Planning (15-16)	Year 1 (16-17)	Year 2 (17-18)	Year 3 (18-19)	Year 4 (19-20)	Year 5 (20-21)
14.8%	13.6%	13.6%	????	13.6%	13.1%	12.6%	12.1%	11.6%	11%

- C. Measure 3: Staff and Community Engagement

Based off of our district 2015-2020 strategic plan, we will monitor performance data from the performance measure outlined below to ensure that we are executing the strategic plan and meeting our strategic objectives.

- Parent/Community Outreach and Engagement
- Teacher and Leader Retention
- Staff Engagement

- Employee Attendance

Local School Governance

A key characteristic of charter systems is their distributed leadership decision-making structure. Within such a structure, a charter system must implement school level governance and grant decision-making authority in personnel decisions, financial decisions, curriculum and instruction, resource allocation, establishing and monitoring the achievement of school improvement goals, and school operations per O.C.G.A. 20-2-2063(d).

10. Explain how your system will transition from Local School Advisory Councils to effective and fully functioning decision-making Local School Governance Teams (LSGTs).

- Provide a timeline that shows all the major steps in this transition, including the timing of the formation of LSGTs, the training of principals and LSGTs, and anything you deem important in making this critical transition for decentralized/distributed decision-making.
- Include information about the steps that have already occurred or will occur to inform all stakeholders of the new governance structure.

Decentralized Decision-Making Model

One of the most pivotal elements of the APS strategic plan is the decentralization of decision-making. Each school⁵ will be governed by a high-capacity Local School Governance Team (LSGT). This body will be comprised of parents, staff, community members, the principal, and a student representative and will meet regularly to lead decision-making and advocacy for the school. This body will replace the Local School Council advisory model. Each cluster will benefit from the advisement and advocacy of a Cluster Advisory Team (CAT) comprised of the principal (or his/her designee from the school's leadership team) and an elected LSGT representative from each school (including any charter schools serving the same communities), as well as key community partners. CATs will increase alignment and communication across schools and throughout the communities they serve and be the advocate body for all schools that comprise them. The elected chairs of each Cluster Advisory Team form the district's Executive Committee, which will convene when called upon to advise the Superintendent and BOE. At the district level, the District Support Team (DST) will be comprised of the specific district staff charged with ensuring the LSGTs and CATs have the capacity necessary to lead every APS school to improved outcomes. The DST will provide the training, coaching, and alignment for each LSGT and CAT.

The Superintendent's role in decision-making for school sites will be annual approval of School-Based Solutions (SBSs) and development of district-wide strategies approved first by the Executive Committee. SBSs will be proposed by LSGTs to advocate for school-specific innovations. Cluster-wide

⁵ The proposed college career academy (see Attachment 4 for details on this proposed learning site and its governance model) and charter schools (both those in operation and to be opened throughout the charter term of the charter system) will retain the localized governance structure dictated by their charter contract and will not be affected by the transition to LSGTs. The governing bodies of charter schools with enrollment focus areas in a given cluster will be encouraged to designate a representative to participate on their local CAT to encourage alignment and collaboration.

innovations may be suggested by a CAT with the recommendation for approval from all schools involved. District initiatives proposed by the Superintendent will require the review and feedback from the Executive Committee before review by the board, providing another means of localized input in regional decision-making. This transition from district-level, top-down decision-making to a distributed model that grants school site authority and input over personnel, finance, curriculum/instruction, resource allocation, operations, and goal-setting, will empower stakeholders in the school communities to make decisions in the best interest of their students. It also ensures all district decisions have the input of the practitioners and communities from each school.

LSGT Planning

The transition from the advisory role of Local School Councils (LSCs) to decision-making LSGTs commenced with re-engagement of LSCs and other community members in cluster and charter system planning. Through community surveys, LSC meetings (and a district-wide LSC summit in March), cluster visioning sessions, and advisory committee meetings, community members (including those on LSCs) have provided the structure, purview, and transition plan for each school to exercise localized decision-making through an LSGT (see Exhibit 3 for the list of planning/feedback activities to date). Rather than create a model and solicit feedback to inform revisions, this input from the community and potential LSGT candidates created the proposed LSGT composition, training, purview, School-Based Solution process, timeline for implementation, and proactive strategies to mitigate potential risks. Advisory meetings to inform LSGT planning have also identified the varied supports necessary from the district to ensure diverse schools have the resources and capacity needed for successful governance. Feedback on each school's current culture and climate for engagement, risks to localized governance, and strengths that must be leveraged is being used to formulate the skills, bandwidth, and protocols of support that will guide the District Support Team's formation. The varied experiences of LSC members, community leaders, principals, and other stakeholders have provided the lens through which best practices of localized governance in other systems have been examined and revised to meet the specific needs of the APS charter system.

Cluster Planning

Cluster planning teams, which have been meeting since the fall of 2014, laid the groundwork for Cluster Advisory Teams (CATs) through the creation of cluster-wide vision, mission, priorities, signature programming, and strategic plans (see Exhibit 5). By coming together within a cluster to analyze K-12 data and develop a plan of improvement in response to that data, cluster planning teams have begun the work that CATs will continue. CATs will maintain the aligned vision for a pipeline to college and career

readiness across schools and support each LSGT within their cluster to ensure all schools have the capacity to reach their goals. The cluster planning work will culminate with a cluster strategic plan for years one through three of the charter, which will include the specific supports each school will need. In the spring of the planning year, LSGTs will elect their CAT representative who will partner with the principal (or his/her leadership team designee) as the school's CAT representatives. CATs will replace cluster planning teams and will meet for the first time in the spring of 2016 to identify community partners, confirm the CAT meeting schedule for the subsequent year, and participate in training on the function and role of the body. This first meeting of the CAT will include each school's representatives and designees from any cluster-wide community partners to be determined by the cluster planning team.

The current cluster planning teams will continue to meet monthly through LSGT elections to ensure each school has the support of their cluster to identify a slate of high-capacity candidates for the election. After the introductory meeting in the spring of the planning year, the CAT will begin meeting quarterly in year 1 following an annual agenda for topics to be addressed at quarterly meetings. Each cluster planning team, as a part of their strategic plan for the cluster, may organize committees or additional meeting dates to address specifics of that cluster's strategic plan.

LSGT Transition

Input and Planning

Based on the increased levels of interest and participation in cluster, charter, and strategic planning meetings, APS feels strongly that the engagement necessary to facilitate the transition to LSGTs is already in place in most clusters. All LSCs held elections in the application year, positioning every school with a foundation of engagement upon which to build LSGTs. The capacity to support increased engagement where needed is present in the reorganized district staffing model, and will continue to be honed through the formation of the DST in the planning year. APS will continue this momentum by providing training and support measures throughout the planning year, dedicating district staff capacity and resources to ongoing outreach with intensive focus on communities that need higher levels of engagement than currently present.

The Application Year (2014-2015)

Community feedback sessions and open cluster planning team meetings have initiated increased participation from stakeholders across all clusters. Initiatives like the Local School Council Summit brought together LSC members and stakeholders from across the district to begin outlining their vision for high levels of community engagement in each cluster. District staff gathered information from

stakeholders to ensure there is capacity to support the needs of each cluster in the transition to localized decision-making. Associate Superintendents are infusing a focus on engagement and preparation for LSGTs in their support of principals and through their ongoing participation in planning initiatives. The candidate bank is being developed to connect schools with potential partners like local universities, philanthropic support, and community businesses.

The Planning Year (2015-2016)

The planning year will be characterized by communication and outreach to build interest and understanding of the LSGTs. Through formation of partnerships in alignment with signature programs (supported by the Office of Partnerships and Development), school site open houses, and community information sessions that focus on LSGTs, each school will build engagement from stakeholders. LSCs at each school will participate in training and planning for the transition to LSGTs as a component of their advisory responsibilities. Cluster planning teams will continue to meet regularly to create cluster strategic plans and begin advocating for those schools within the cluster that need support engaging the community. Examples of this support could include making connections to existing partners for other schools, recruiting parents with students across schools to participate in multiple sites, and peer collaboration for staff across schools. Increased communication amongst schools and a more defined cluster identity will also be leveraged in planning events, trainings, and communication.

By spring of 2016, each school will have an LSGT elected using the electronic voting system. At the district level, roles will shift to reorganize a District Support Team (DST), which includes designated liaisons for each cluster; facilitators for community meetings and engagement coaches for principals; and specific contacts from each area of district purview to serve as cluster advisors. This team will engage with newly elected LSGTs through training and robust support to prepare for their governance role. In addition to participation in training for their role, LSGTs will meet to create the school improvement plans that will guide the subsequent year. LSGT officers and CAT representatives will be elected, and the first meeting of CATs will be held in late spring to ensure new teams are ready to start the next school year with the supports in place for each school to deliver on their plans.

Year One of the Charter System (2016-2017)

LSGTs and CATs will begin meeting at the start of the new school year to plan the innovations they will need to support their plans. Initial training on School-Based Solutions and the first round of proposals will be developed in the fall, and LSGTs will approve budgets to support their plans in the winter. One seat in each stakeholder group will be designated a three-year term in the first election to stagger the terms of the

inaugural LSGT. A second round of LSGT elections will take place to elect candidates to take the place of any members who served for a two-year term in the spring of 2017-18, and then elections will be held to fill open seats annually thereafter.

Timeline for Training

Training for each LSGT will be provided by the DST and aligned to specific actions in the annual decision-making timeline for each school site. Strategies are being designed to mitigate risks and build capacity across all school sites, such as recruitment of community partners for an LSGT candidate bank, school site information sessions for community members to build interest in LSGT participation, advisory committee meetings that include community leaders, and principal development on community engagement and change management. These are all part of the action plan for the planning year to prepare all schools to effectively recruit their first LSGTs.

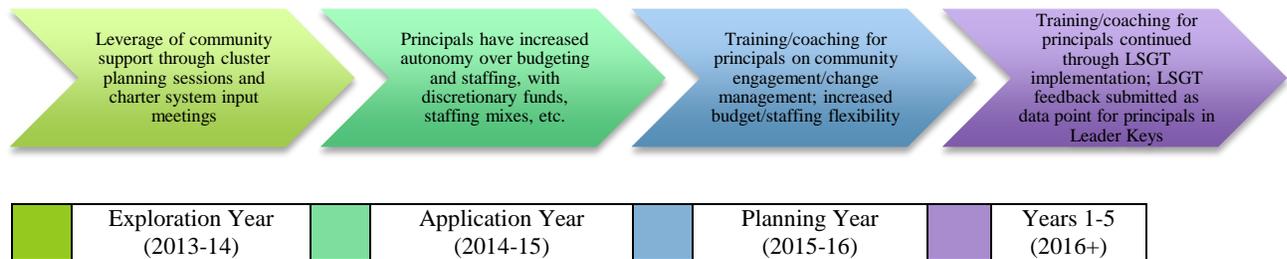
Planning/Year 1	
January-February (2016)	LSGT informational meetings (all schools)
Late January - March (2016)	LSGT elections
February-April (2016)	LSGT initial training
April-August (2016)	LSGT strategic planning process
August-September (2016)	LSGT SBS training
September-November (2016)	LSGT creates SBSs
October-November (2016)	LSGTs submit SBSs that implicate cluster plans or require district-wide increased flexibility to CAT for feedback and recommendations
December-January (2017)	LSGTs receive budget/finance training
February (2017)	Superintendent approves or denies SBSs
January-March (2017)	LSGTs begin budget approval process

Year 1/Year 2	
March-April (2017)	LSGT initial training for any appointees to fill vacancies
May-August (2017)	LSGT strategic planning process
August-September (2017)	LSGT SBS training
September-November (2017)	LSGT creates SBSs
October-November (2017)	LSGTs submit SBSs for vetting
December-January (2018)	LSGTs receive budget/finance training
February 2018	Superintendent approves or denies SBSs
January-March (2018)	LSGTs begin budget approval process
January (2018)	LSGT informational meetings
Late January-February (2018)	LSGT elections to refill initial two-year term seats

Transition Support for Principals

In tandem with the transition to LSGTs outlined above, APS has already begun to gradually release localized decision-making in finance and resource allocation to principals. Principals (and their designees) have participated in various planning committees to develop and provide feedback on the charter system and cluster planning. This provides a new means of transparency in decision-making and goal-setting, and codifies cooperation amongst community members and principals to set and work toward cluster goals. The gradual release of decision-making to principals began in the 2014-2015 year with training and increased autonomy for principal-led staffing and hiring. In FY 2015-2016, all principals will have increased school site discretionary budgets in alignment with their school improvement plans. Training for principals on community engagement and change management will begin in the planning year and be supplemented by dedicated coaching around the dynamics of productive engagement and cooperation in the specific community the principal serves. Effective and cooperative collaboration with LSGTs will be a data point considered in professional standards 2 and 8 of Leader Keys, with stakeholder surveys administered annually to inform strategic planning.

Figure 3.3: Principal Support Model



Risks and Mitigation

Based on the feedback from stakeholders (including principals, LSCs, community partners, staff, and parents) to date, the most critical risk of transitioning from LSCs to LSGTs is that in some parts of the system, low levels of engagement, cooperation, and capacity may cause challenges with building strong LSGTs in some schools. Although all schools held LSC elections in 2015, many schools still need to build engagement for effective localized governance. Stakeholder surveys and feedback suggest that the capacity of school leadership to leverage and cooperate with a school site governance body is a risk of varying degrees depending on the school. Robust training, dedicated coaching, the gradual release of responsibilities to schools, and accountability for cooperation through stakeholder surveys are all elements of the transition plan designed to mitigate these challenges.

Other specific strategies that support risk mitigation in the transition to decentralized decision-making include:

1. Formation of the charter advisory team (in FY 2014-2015) to represent various areas of expertise and lead stakeholder engagement in the planning process
2. Cluster participation for all schools organized into community feeder patterns
3. Organization of CAT to provide each LSGT with support and collaboration
4. Intensive training for cluster planning committees, principals, and all LSC members beginning in the application year (FY 2014-2015)
5. Outreach to potential community partners as part of the exploration and planning years to build a candidate bank that can be used to recruit candidates. Each CAT will suggest and recruit candidates for the bank (with partners developed by clusters and the district) provide each school with a list of volunteers who may be elected to serve on the LSGT.
6. LSC-sponsored (with district support) annual open houses at each school to build understanding, engagement, and capacity for the transition.
7. Information dissemination through all PTAs to share information about the LSGT
8. LSGT information available at each school site through parent liaisons and at enrollment and orientation events
9. Formation of the Office of Partnerships and Development at the district level to build community relationships, fundraise, and recruit engagement to each cluster
10. Annual stakeholder survey process (through Gallup) that collects satisfaction data from parents and staff at each school
11. Collaboration with district charter schools to share best practices
12. Intensive training and resources for LSGTs

11. Address the formation of the local School Governing Teams, including how members are selected, the terms of members, and how and why members may be removed.

- Be specific!

Local School Governance Teams (LSGTs)

Composition

The composition of the LSGT was determined through community and cluster meetings, wherein stakeholders reviewed the legal requirements for LSGT composition, considered the prospective purview of the LSGTs, and evaluated the needs of their communities. Meetings were held in each cluster and nearly 500 community members voted on LSGT composition considerations, including number of LSGT members, length of terms, and role of principal in the LSGT. Across all elements of LSGT composition,

votes for the composition outlined below comprised significantly more than half of votes collected, demonstrating alignment across communities in the vision for LSGTs. APS LSGTs are designed to be collaborative bodies consisting of parents, community members, educators, and students, with parents and community members in the majority. This design aligns with legal requirements and the charter system philosophy that input from all stakeholder groups is necessary to address our schools' challenges. Based on the input from communities in these sessions, LSGTs will be comprised of nine voting seats, 1 voting seat at the high school level, and ex-officio representatives.

- Three parent/legal guardians elected by a majority of parent/guardian votes with one vote per family
- Three non-supervisory instructional staff members such as but not limited to teachers, instructional coaches and media specialists elected by a majority of full-time staff at the school site, with one vote per staff member
- Two community members recommended by the principal, who will consider recommendations from the LSGT, community, and parents, and ratified by a majority of votes of the LSGT parent and staff members
- One swing seat/member at large who is elected by a majority vote of the LSGT. This member may be a parent/guardian, staff member, or community member to ensure skills/capacities needed on the LSGT are filled and may be recruited/nominated by the principal or LSGT
- Principal (non-voting position)
- One high school student, nominated by the LSGT. At the high school level, the student will have voting power during the school strategic planning process and the School-Based Solutions Process and may opt to serve as an ex officio member on all other matters.

Focus groups chose LSGTs of nine voting members and one high school student representative to ensure adequate capacity and representation for highly effective decision-making. Parents/guardians and staff members are elected by their stakeholder group as representatives for their constituency. The principal will collaborate with the LSGT chair to set the monthly agenda and will share data as called upon for decision-making.

Schools may opt to apply for a revised LSGT structure after building initial capacity as an LSGT through the SBS application process. Examples of such revisions may include additional seats for larger schools with larger stakeholder bases or allocation of additional seats for community partners wherein a particular innovation requires specific capacities on the LSGT. For example, the three clusters who voted in favor of a larger LSGT may choose to apply for an SBS to increase the number of LSGT seats at their school.

Parents who are also staff members will be expected to represent the constituency that elects them. No member elected to an LSGT may simultaneously hold an LSGT seat at another school within Atlanta Public Schools during their term.

Recruitment and Candidacy

LSGT members, in the planning year, must participate in a web-based or on-site orientation to be eligible for election each spring. This ensures an interested candidate has an accurate understanding of the commitment required to participate before running. In addition to completion of the orientation, candidates must commit to regular attendance at LSGT meetings, participation in an annual cluster summit, and a set number of hours monthly. Once elected, all new LSGT members will participate in the training as described below in Question 14.

Candidates with experience and/or expertise in the domains governed by the LSGT (curriculum and instruction, human resources, budget/finance, school improvement) will be sought. Community representatives who will add capacity through their expertise, especially in the areas prioritized in the school's strategic plan (as guided by the cluster plan) and/or with demonstrated expertise/experience in governance (strong communication skills, engagement in the community, governance/strategic planning experience) will also be favored for nomination to build capacity at each school. CATs will meet to identify vacancies on each school's LSGT and provide support to the school in recruiting candidates. CATs will leverage the community to help identify potential candidates for the LSGT Candidate Bank.

LSGT Candidate Bank

The candidate bank will be managed by the District Support Team (with the support of the newly formed Office of Partnerships and Development) and updated by CATs and LSGTs. Entities and community members who wish to support schools through LSGT membership can request to be added to the candidate bank, which will provide principals with possible LSGT candidates from the community with a vested interest in the cluster signature program, communities served, or a specific school. This provides a means of connecting schools with high-capacity partners and affords access to expertise to build equity across schools. Principals will have the autonomy to recruit LSGT candidates who best match the needs of the school whether or not they are listed in the bank. Entities like schools of higher education and non-profit student support providers with whom there is not a conflict of interest will be encouraged to contribute high-capacity individuals as volunteers to the bank. CATs will use the candidate bank as a strategy to increase school level capacity, community communication, and engagement.

Cluster Advisory Teams (CATs) Composition

An elected representative of the LSGT (elected by the LSGT annually when electing officers) and the principal or his/her leadership team designee represent each community school in a CAT. Those schools that are not a part of a community feeder pattern (like the single-gender and alternative schools) will be governed by LSGTs and will collaborate with neighboring CATs as needed. Charter schools with an enrollment focus area in a given cluster will be allocated one seat for a designated representative to encourage alignment and collaboration between charters and neighborhood schools. Each CAT will also provide seats for up to three cluster-wide community partners. Examples of these partners could include a university to support a cluster's signature program or a community group that advocates for the community. Community groups may request participation on the CAT to its chair, and the CAT will vote to determine if that group's formal participation in the CAT aligns with their strategic plan.

The CAT will meet at least once per semester. Annual responsibilities will include updates to the cluster strategic plan; review of SBSs that impact the cluster strategic plan and/or vision; and alignment, support, and advocacy for all cluster schools to support cluster-wide success.

CAT Executive Committee

The chair of each cluster will comprise the CAT Executive Committee. This committee may be asked to convene at the behest of the Superintendent and/or board of education to review a district-initiated proposal (such as an adjustment to the district's instructional calendar or a recommendation for furlough) and provide a recommendation for approval or revision. The executive committee may also elect to meet to address district-wide needs to make recommendations to the Superintendent. The committee will meet at least once annually following the annual State of the Schools address to identify and discuss initiatives for the coming year in alignment with the district's strategic plan.

Terms, Offices, and Committees

Terms

All LSGT members (except for students, who are nominated annually) will serve two-year terms with eligibility to serve one additional consecutive 2-year term if re-elected/reappointed. LSGT members in the first year will serve staggered terms, with one seat in each stakeholder group designated as a three-year term, eligible for re-election.

LSGT representatives are elected by a majority of votes of the LSGT to the CAT for one year with a maximum of two consecutive terms. Should an LSGT representative who is the elected CAT member be

removed (using the process described below) or relinquish his/her seat, the LSGT chair may appoint a replacement to the CAT for the remainder of the term.

Offices and Committees

The LSGT will elect officers (chair, vice-chair, secretary, finance chair, and CAT representative) annually by May 1, and officers may be re-elected for up to two consecutive terms. An officer may also serve as the CAT representative if so elected. Committee roles will also be assigned by May 1 to ensure alignment of skills and interests to committee responsibilities before the start of the new school year. The role of officers and standing committees will be communicated during training for election eligibility to ensure clear expectations of all members who run for an office. All officers are eligible to run for consecutive terms of office and will be elected by a majority of members present at the meeting.

Each LSGT and CAT may choose to organize standing and ad hoc committees in alignment with their strategic plans. Examples of potential committees include: budget/finance, academic excellence, nominating committee, family engagement committee, or a committee that oversees supplementary programming for students. Officers of the CAT (chair, vice chair, and secretary) are elected annually in the first annual CAT meeting and are eligible for re-election with no maximum number of consecutive terms. The chair of each CAT will serve on the CAT Executive Committee (described above). The cluster planning team, as part of its strategic plan, may organize additional standing committees as needed.

Election and Removal

Election

Elections for each stakeholder group (parents, teachers, community members) will be held by secret ballot by March 30 of each year. Funding to purchase online voting software for every school has been allocated in the 2015-2016 district budget, and the principal will work with the support of the DST to hold elections in the planning year for the inaugural LSGT. From year 1 forward, the LSGT will oversee the local election process, providing means for stakeholder groups to submit votes using the software within a reasonable amount of time. LSGT elections will take place at the same time district-wide to ensure clarity of communication.

All LSGT members, except students, will be required to complete the district's policy and process for volunteering, which may include a background check applicable for this type of service. All members will also be required to complete a conflict of interest statement (see Exhibit 7 for a draft) once elected.

Removal

LSGT members (with the exception of the principal) can be removed under the following circumstances with a 2/3 majority vote of *all* LSGT members (not just those present at a given meeting):

- Failure to fulfill LSGT member duties, pursuant to the expectations in the LSGT Code of Conduct
- Violation of Conflict of Interest policy (see Exhibit 7)
- Violation of the Code of Ethics
- Loss of eligibility to serve

Should an individual violate the terms of his/her participation as an LSGT member, the District will work closely with the LSGT to determine whether removal is justified and resolve the issue appropriately. If a member is removed under the circumstances described above, the vacancy will be filled by an appointment of the principal, ratified by a 2/3 vote of the LSGT. This appointment is in effect until the next regular elections are held, at which time the appointee may choose to run for what will be deemed a second term.

Indicators of Efficacy

Each LSGT will participate in a self-assessment at the end of each year. Using a tool to be devised by APS and then supplemented by CATs and LSGTs to reflect cluster- and school-specific priorities, each LSGT will close out the year by assessing its performance against goals. The results of this self-assessment will be shared with the incoming LSGT and APS to inform subsequent trainings and supports.

12. Use the Charter System Application – Local School Governance Matrix found at this link <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Charter-Schools/Pages/Charter-Petition-Application.aspx> to show how the Superintendent will share with Local School Governance Teams his/her authority to develop recommendations to the Board of Education.

As outlined in the Local School Governance Matrix (see Attachment 2), the transition to a charter system is necessary for the next steps in decentralized decision-making for APS. District-level initiatives developed by the Superintendent will be reviewed by the CAT Executive Committee and then recommended for revision or approval by the board of education (if required). All decision-making at the school site level will be informed by the LSGT's annual improvement plan (in alignment with the cluster's strategic plan). Principals will continue to make management decisions and will bring governance decisions once reserved for the district to the LSGT. For example, principals will continue to manage operations logistics, make final decisions on staff selection, and choose instructional modalities that best meet the needs of students. The LSGT will develop new policies to address operational

challenges, vet and approve preferred job qualifications for new roles, and recommend expenditures for instructional materials to support those modalities. The LSGT also functions as a thought partner for leadership by collaborating to review data and develop improvement plans, availing opportunities to leverage the insight and expertise of the members and their constituencies in improvement planning. School representation in the CAT provides an additional means school site decision-making and advocacy through the CAT's development of strategic plans, cluster goals, and cluster-wide programming. The CAT Executive Committee's role in providing feedback and recommendations on district-level solutions ensures school site representation through the voice of the cluster's chair. These means of localized input and planning are essential to the decentralization of decision-making, and the District will work closely with both LSGTs and CATs to prepare and support these entities for maximum functionality and efficacy.

School-Based Decision-Making Purview

Guidance for some aspects of the decision-making purview below is provided to each school through the cluster strategic plan. The CAT will review SBSs implicating the cluster's strategic or that are not aligned to the cluster vision and provide feedback on the SBS to the LSGT before submission. The vision of the cluster will establish guardrails for school-based decisions, ensuring K-12 alignment.

Personnel

LSGT decision-making purview in personnel includes (but is not limited to):

- Participation in principal candidate interviews (to fill a vacancy) and selection of final three candidates for Superintendent consideration
- Provide a data point for principal evaluation in Standards 2 and 8 of Leaders Keys (and/or other domains addressing cooperation and collaboration with stakeholders in schools with supplementary evaluation tools)
- Consider, develop, and recommend preferred job qualifications for the principal and other staff positions created in conjunction with SBSs
- Review available annual stakeholder surveys and staff retention data to inform personnel goal-setting and school improvement initiatives for the following year
- Recommend resource allocations around staffing to address personnel needs
- Develop and propose SBSs that pertain to personnel innovations for the school

Financial Decisions and Resource Allocations

LSGT decision-making purview in financial decisions and resource allocations includes (but is not limited to):

- Develop recommendations for the annual strategic school budget

- Evaluate the need for resource allocations that may be considered an innovation and create SBS proposals accordingly
- Develop and manage requests for funding to support new innovative proposals
- Review and recommend alignment of spending to improvement planning

The amount of funds considered discretionary and related budgetary purview for school sites is being increased gradually over time, ultimately affording school sites autonomy over strategic plan-aligned, balanced budgets.

Curriculum and Instruction

LSGT decision-making purview in curriculum and instruction includes (but is not limited to):

- Input and feedback on substantive changes to curriculum and instruction proposed by the principal
- Recommendation of strategies for intervention, remediation, acceleration, and other measures to meet the needs of diverse learners
- Review performance data to set internal benchmarks and progress monitoring goals
- Development and approval of revised course descriptions, instructional time, daily and annual calendar, etc.
- Development of SBS proposals for innovations in curriculum and instruction that leverage the broad flexibility waiver

Curricular and instructional decisions at the school site may be initiated by the principal or any other member of the LSGT in response to the school's progress and needs.

School Goals and Improvement Planning

LSGT decision-making purview in school goals and improvement planning includes (but is not limited to):

- Creation of a three-year school site strategic plan (in alignment with the cluster's strategic plan)
- Establishment of annual goals and benchmarks
- Ongoing review of data to inform action and leverage the expertise of the body
- Participate in School Improvement Plans, Title I plans, and any other related plans that drive school improvement
- Development of SBS proposals to introduce higher leverage improvement strategies
- Alignment of the annual budget to the school's goals and improvement plan

School Operations

LSGT decision-making purview in operations includes (but is not limited to):

- Instructional time (supplemental time in school day, year)
- Supplemental program offerings
- Parent/community engagement initiative planning and execution
- Input into school operations that relate to school's strategic plan and oversight of its implementation

All compliance-based issues (like emergency planning) will continue to be the purview of the principal but may be informed by feedback from the LSGT as appropriate.

Role of the CAT

The Cluster Advisory Teams (CAT) will add a localized layer of support and alignment for each school site. The Cluster Advisory Teams were developed in response to concerns about equity and capacity at each school for high-functioning LSGTs. The CAT will meet at least three times a year with the following responsibilities:

- Develop/update/maintain a cluster-wide strategic plan (spanning three to five years) with clear goals and milestones that will serve as guardrails for each school's planning. The CAT will identify needs and specific goals for the cluster. The CAT's strategic plans and updates will build on the visioning completed by the cluster planning teams in the planning year and will provide a road map for each school to attain annual achievement goals.
- Review and provide feedback on SBS proposals that impact or implicate the cluster. Examples of SBSs that may be reviewed by the CAT include deviation from a signature program or offerings in the feeder pattern that impact other schools. CATs may also advocate for a school or group of schools within the cluster to develop an SBS proposal for a cluster-wide innovation, such as creation of a new staff role to meet a need of a signature program. SBS proposals that require CAT review are recommended before submission to the Superintendent.
- Respond to cluster-level support requests to enable a school to accomplish a specific goal or address a barrier to success. These requests might include help communicating with the community about an initiative, recruiting a representative from a particular stakeholder group to fill an LSGT vacancy, provide feedback on a school improvement initiative, or create cross-campus solutions (such as a shared staff member or afterschool program between school sites). Requests for school support may be made at any of the meetings or be issued via electronic

communication should they arise between meetings. Participation of cluster partners in the CAT ensures that a large network of support is in place for every school.

- Each LSGT will provide a brief report on the health and function of their LSGT as part of the regularly scheduled, quarterly CAT meetings. LSGT metrics are reviewed by the CAT throughout the year to ensure the cluster is engaged in the support of each school

See Attachment 2 for the Local School Governance Matrix for details on the decision rights of this model.

13. Highlight the differences between the current local school advisory council structure and the new structure your new charter system will implement.

LSGTs will be a different structure from LSCs. The current LSC model functions in a strictly advisory capacity and does not require the level of input from the community required by an LSGT. Participation in LSCs has been difficult to recruit in some communities because of the lack of authority and collaboration that characterize them. The LSGT composition more clearly outlines the constituencies of each group (for more diverse representation), has a slightly larger minimum number, and allows for each stakeholder group to elect their representative. LSGTs will meet more frequently, with a minimum of six meetings annually (LSCs meet a minimum of four times annually) and clear guidance on the outcomes of specific meetings (budget approval, strategic plan approval, school based solution development, annual summit, etc.) where there is no such requirement for LSCs. Because LSGTs are a decision-making committee (rather than solely advisory), there are outcomes and metrics for necessary action for each LSGT that provide for a clearer role of the body. The LSGT handbook (which provides more detailed guidance on membership) and mandatory annual training for all members of LSGTs provides greater clarity and capacity-building than what we are currently providing LSCs. The feedback from the LSGT in the principal's evaluation provides an additional level of localized accountability, enabling community members to support their school sites in cooperative collaboration.

As a decision-making body that provides both input and a vote to approve or reject key decisions in each of the domains outlined Figure 3.4, the LSGT becomes a more critical thought and accountability partner for each school leader. LSGTs will have annual formal voting capacity to approve/reject budgets, strategic plans, goals, curricular and instructional changes, personnel positions, resource allocations, operations plans, and all other areas of purview as outlined in Attachment 2. LSGTs are empowered to be proactive drivers of innovation that leverage the strengths of their stakeholders.

Figure 3.5: Differences in LSGTs

	Current LSC	Proposed LSGT
Members/ Composition	Minimum of 7 members (majority parents): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 parents (2 parents must be businesspeople) • 2 teachers (not administrators) • Principal 	9 voting members, except for High School LSGT, (1 student voting member at HS level): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 parents/guardians elected by parents/guardians • 3 instructional staff members elected by staff members • 2 community members nominated by principal • 1 swing seat recruited by principal/or members of the LSGT and ratified by LSGT • Principal (non-voting member) • 1 student (voting member) at high school level, nominated by LSGT
Governing Standards	LSAC-adopted by-laws and state requirements	LSGT Code of Conduct, Bylaws, and Code of Ethics
Role	Advisory body	Voting, decision-making, and advisory
Meetings	Required to meet 4 times per year at a minimum	LSGTs will be expected to meet at least six times annually. LSGTs will participate in trainings and an annual summit.
Training/ Supports	Training offered annually at APS for new members	On-site trainings, annual cluster summit, and on-line access to training through LSGT University access. Designated liaisons and organized CAT dedicated to LSGTs and CATs, CATs provide additional support as needed
Accountability	School principals charged with recruiting LSC candidates, limited support or accountability for LSC operations/health	Principals coached on participation and LSGTs provide data point in evaluation, LSGT responsible for supporting school strategic plan LSGT vote required for SBS proposals, annual strategic plan and budget approval

School-Based Solutions (SBSs)

Although the district will be awarded a broad flexibility waiver, proposed innovations at the school site that leverage waivers and/or deviate substantially from the program in place will require a School-Based Solution (SBS) proposal. A dedicated liaison from the DST for each cluster will work closely with LSGTs to determine innovations for which an SBS will be required. All LSGTs will be trained on the SBS proposal process in the fall of each year and will receive approval for implementation in the subsequent year from the Superintendent by February. Because the scale and/or consideration of those innovations proposed in SBSs may be substantial, the process of review includes feedback from the community and district personnel to ensure viability and school support. Metrics of success, alignment to school and/or cluster strategic plans, and data that supports the need for the innovation will all be required as a part of the SBS proposal. Increased autonomy over use of discretionary funds, staffing mixes, and instruction will continue to be the purview of the school through its LSGT if it is a governance decision, or principal if it is a management decision. However, innovations that require a waiver through the charter system will be approved using the following process:

1. LSGT develops an SBS proposal (using the guidance and templates provided in the SBS training for every LSGT every year) and shares the proposal in the community for public comment to inform revisions.

2. The LSGT votes by a 2/3 (or greater) majority to submit the proposal.
3. The Associate Superintendent reviews the proposal and provides feedback to guide revisions.
4. The district policy department, legal team, and any other applicable district department (depending on the nature of the SBS) review the proposal for feedback and revision. The revised draft is sent back to the LSGT for final approval.
5. The CAT reviews any proposals that implicate the cluster, and makes a recommendation for approval by the Superintendent or further revision by the LSGT.
6. The final draft of the proposal is submitted to the Superintendent for approval by February (to be adopted in the subsequent school year).

The role of the district in the proposal approval process is to provide feedback and input on innovations and remove any barriers to implementation. The process ensures LSGTs are empowered to effectively implement innovations that will yield school improvement.

14. Describe the governance training to be provided to principals and members of the Local School Governing Teams in order to build the capacity needed to make decisions in the areas included in the spreadsheet.

- Note that training should occur before the charter begins because your local School Governance Teams will be expected to make decisions beginning in Year 1 of your charter. Be sure to show this in the timeline requested in #10 above.

Preparing for the Transition to Localized Governance

The focus of training in the application year (FY 2014-2015) has been LSC participation in cluster visioning and charter system planning. An LSC summit held in March prepared schools for the transition with community planning sessions around their vision for engagement and the obstacles and assets to this vision at each school. The summit also included training on supporting student achievement and recruiting increased stakeholder involvement to begin school level recruitment of potential candidates. LSCs will participate in ongoing self-assessment to inform the supports each school will need to effectively transition to high-performing LSGTs. Monthly cluster planning team meetings will continue to address cluster-level visioning and needs, supporting each school leader in building a foundation for LSGT recruitment.

The planning year trainings will focus on dissemination of more targeted information about the LSGTs and charter system basics. It is intended to both garner interest in participation in school site governance and prepare LSGTs to be fully operational at the start of year 1 of the charter term. All stakeholder groups will be invited to open houses at each school that feature information about the transition to charter

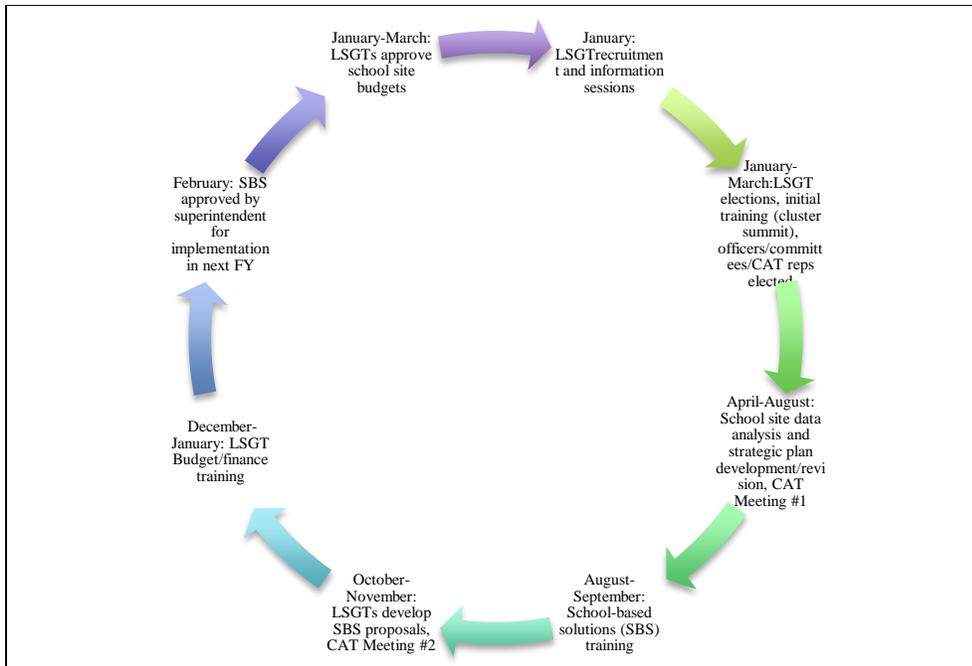
system. The cluster planning team will continue to meet monthly to share best practices in engagement at these meetings and craft the cluster strategic plan, which will include engagement goals and needs. The DST will designate liaisons to each cluster to provide differentiated training and guidance in their planning and outreach, as well as set target outcomes and agenda outlines for the open houses. The DST will also collect data from the informational meetings to shape ongoing support plans for each school. By December of 2015, the district will provide school site trainings and a web-based orientation for interested LSGT candidates. By the end of 2015, each school's LSC and principal will begin recruitment and preparation for the election process. The district will support each school in holding elections for LSGTs to be formed by late January - March.

Annual Training Calendar

The annual training calendar will include web-based modules through LSGT University that can be accessed at any time, an annual cluster-wide summit that provides intensive capacity-building and collaboration within each cluster, and school site training provided by the DST. The DST will monitor LSGT minutes and proposals to ensure training aligns to the needs of LSGTs. Continuing education will be made available to all LSGTs, with targeted offerings that align to the needs of specific schools.

The annual training calendar is matched to specific milestones in the annual LSGT calendar, providing timely access to intensive training in advance of each action step in the annual cycle of local governance. The Superintendent will approve SBS proposals by February of each year (for implementation in the subsequent year) to inform any budgetary and/or strategic planning considerations. CATs will plan the timing of their cluster summits in their strategic plans.

Figure 3.7: Annual LSGT Training/Action Cycle



Web-Based Orientation

The web-based orientation will include an overview of the responsibilities of LSGT members, the election process, the charter system structure, and the annual calendar (including benchmark outcomes for which the LSGT is responsible). Once the webinar is completed, the participant will have access to contact information if s/he needs additional information and will be able to print out a certificate of completion, which is required for eligibility to run for election. This ensures transparency about responsibilities and roles for all candidates before election.

Initial Training

Once elected, all LSGT members participate in an initial training provided by the DST. The initial training brings together all LSGT members in the cluster to build communication and cooperation and strengthen the network of resources each LSGT will access. All LSGT members (including principals, members who were re-elected, and any CAT community partner representatives) will be required to participate in this training, ensuring timely guidance is provided to all. This training will be held within the first two months of elections (February-April) and will include the following topics:

- Cluster vision, mission, priorities, and strategic plan overview
- Role of the LSGT
- Governance vs. day-to-day management
- School budget basics

- Academic data interpretation basics
- SBS proposal process
- Role of CAT and community partners available
- Consensus building and interpersonal skills for effective board governance
- Engagement, handling politics and valuing diversity
- Review of Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics (signed and returned by all members)
- Open records and open meetings requirements
- Confidentiality of student and employee data

School Based Solutions (SBS) Training

The SBS training will be held in late summer-early fall (August-October) of each year, provided by an APS facilitator at the school site or for the whole cluster. This training will provide each school with direct access to a District Support Team member who will serve as primary liaison for questions and guidance throughout the school year. The training will focus on the needs for SBSs, the process for inviting public comment on the proposal (including CAT feedback for those SBSs that require cluster review), and the submission of a proposal to the Superintendent for review. Exploration of innovations at similar schools in other charter systems or parts of the country to build understanding and awareness of applicable practices may be included as part of the training to encourage full use of this flexibility to drive school improvement. The training on SBS proposals provides time for each school to develop any proposals they feel will drive the results they plan for the coming year.

Strategic Planning/Budget Training

The third LSGT training will be held in the late fall/early winter (November-January) of each year. This training will provide in-depth guidance on strategic planning and budgeting (which LSGTs undertake each spring). Topics addressed in this training will include strategic budgeting, developing metrics and milestones toward goals, funding and resource allocation, guidance for federal and designated funds, and the student performance and growth goals set for each school (CCRPI goal and specific outcomes required to achieve “Beating the Odds” designation).

LSGT University

Over the course of the planning year, the DST will develop an online “university” for LSGT members that will continue to be updated and supplemented by request and as needs arise. The university will serve as a resource for LSGT members throughout the district, with cluster-specific access as well. Examples of general reference information include the candidate orientation webinar; district, cluster, and school site

strategic plans; FAQs about the charter system and LSGTs; contact information for LSGT chairs; school engagement plans and ways to get involved; and a form for submitting questions and concerns to the LSGT. Web-based modules available to elected LSGT members include reference materials from all trainings, data portals to access school-based data, the candidate bank and related community partners by cluster, resources and vendors for services, training on effective communication and community engagement, and other guidance that will build the capacity of LSGTs. As part of the CAT support request process, CATs may refer a need to the DST to make capacity-building and training available on the LSGT University. Mini-trainings may range from a handout to a webinar. All LSGTs will be encouraged to determine the trainings that align with their strategic plan and to request resources they need to build the University offerings.

See Exhibit 6 for a detailed description of the LSGT training to be provided and the calendar for this training.

15. Provide the name of the provider(s) of local School Governing Team training that you are considering approaching, if known. (Note that such providers can be internal or external to the school district.)

Given the size of the school district and expertise within, APS will focus on developing sustained internal capacity to lead training and LSGT support rather than contract with an external vendor. Currently, the Charter System Team oversees charter system planning. This team, comprised of managers from nine departments at the Center for Learning and Leadership, includes staff who led district strategic planning and departments whose support and expertise will be critical to LSGT formation (budget, data/IT, innovation, policy, human resources, etc.). This team has also received support from other district staff, representatives from other charter systems, facilitators to support community engagement, and consultants who have demonstrated experience with charter system formation and operation throughout Georgia. Designees from this team may be appointed to the District Support Team as it is organized in the planning year.

Collaboration with local charter systems, like Fulton County, Putnam County, and Marietta City, will inform the DST model, leveraging the best practices and lessons learned by these more experienced charter systems on behalf of APS. Consulting support from experienced national leaders in this arena, such the educational law team at Nelson Mullins (who provided support to Marietta City, Fulton County Schools, and DeKalb County Schools, etc.) has already been secured in the development of the governance plan and development of training modules, and will continue to be utilized to inform training for LSGTs and CATs as it is developed in the planning year.

APS also has the benefit of authorizing several of the highest-performing charters in the state, many of which have high-performing boards. In alignment with the district's commitment to leverage its assets, the DST will examine and collaborate with these boards and their training providers to employ any applicable best practices or guidance already in use in APS charter schools.

16. Provide the name and contact information of an employee of the charter system that will facilitate communications between the Department and the chairpersons of the Local School Governing Teams in your charter system.

The Office of the Superintendent will serve as the key department for implementation and oversight of LSGTs. Within this department, the Special Assistant to the Superintendent (Angela Smith | aksmith@atlanta.k12.ga.us | 404.802.2805) will serve as the leader for the implementation of the charter system operating model and its various components, including the overall process transitioning to this new model. The Governance and Policy Advisor to the Superintendent (Rebecca Kaye | rkaye@atlanta.k12.ga.us | 404.802.2897) will serve as the liaison to the chairpersons for each Local School Governing Team. Both of these individuals will work closely to map out the design and training needed for the local school governance teams.

Additional positions within the DST are being developed and will be phased in over the course of the planning year. The liaison to the LSGT chairs will also connect LSGTs and CATs to resources and district expertise to support their transition and ongoing governance of their school.

17. Explain how your system will transition its central office from a Compliance Culture (where success is measured by simply achieving requirements) to an Achievement Culture (where success is measured by achieving high expectations).

APS has already embarked on a shift from a culture of compliance to an achievement culture focused on the needs of students. The vision of the new Superintendent, board, and stakeholders, as codified in the district's strategic plan, is focused on shifting mindsets to redirect support to front-line staff and students. APS is creating an organizational culture that positions students and their educational outcomes at the epicenter of the work. The charter system advances this vision. The district office has been repositioned in the organizational model as the base of the organization to support the work of schools, rather than the top of the model from which directives flow down to schools. The charter system model envisioned herein provides for two bands of localized advocacy and engagement, with governance by the stakeholders who are most directly engaged in fostering achievement. The dismantling of bureaucratic, ineffective

processes and reorganization of district support provides flexibility to infuse real-time solutions that will bolster achievement and eliminate the inefficiency of compliance-driven roles.

Strategies in place now that have codified this transition include (but are not limited to):

- New district leadership that has implemented assets-based training and paradigms across all levels of the organization (StrengthsFinder assessments and tools for all district employees, celebration of wins across organization, increased presence and availability throughout the communities served), shifting how staff are perceived, developed, and evaluated
- Redefinition of mission, vision, and principles that position college and career readiness for every student at heart of everything APS does
- A strategic plan rooted in achievement with clear strategies that align all levels of the organization to common critical levers
- Milestones and metrics for each imperative that foster authentic progress monitoring and intervention
- Increased means of authentic engagement from across stakeholder groups to inform visioning, planning, budgeting, and decision-making (advisory groups that include staff, parents, community partners, and students; transparency about budgeting and resource allocation through a new process for budget planning; increased training and support for communities to engage in APS learning sites)
- Improved communication between and among stakeholder groups to ensure goal attainment is being measured reliably, realistically, and authentically (budget advisory committee, multiple modalities of communication from and to leadership, focus on attendance and community engagement measures across schools, cluster planning)
- New initiatives to support social-emotional learning and support as part of the wraparound services for students and their families

Additional strategies that will be utilized to advance this shift in the next five years include:

- Organization of LSGTs and CATs to center decision-making around the specific students served
- Flexibility in strategies and modalities of instruction (as outlined throughout this application) to ensure curriculum, instruction, and student supports increase student achievement
- Reorganization of district personnel to infuse support and capacity where it's needed and dismantle inequity through a differentiated approach to school site support
- Revision of systems and structures to provide cleaner, more accurate data and the capacities to respond to this data efficiently and appropriately