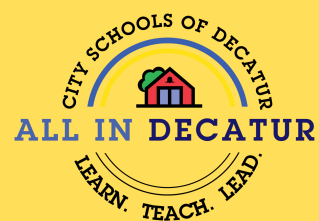




SUPERINTENDENT
DR. GYIMAH WHITAKER

90-DAY REVIEW



OCTOBER 10, 2023

90-DAY REVIEW SUMMARY

Superintendent Dr. Gyimah Whitaker's 90-day review highlights the mission, vision, and core values of City Schools of Decatur. It includes an overview of the G.E.M. Entry Plan and its timeline, the district's instructional and organizational leadership and communication strategies, along with key findings and recommendations.

- The G.E.M. Entry Plan aligns with the district's five-year strategic plan, All In Decatur, and aims to improve instructional and organizational leadership and enhance communication.
- As part of the G.E.M. plan, community listening sessions, stakeholder meetings, and surveys were conducted, and a three-phase approach of gathering, envisioning, and maximizing was followed.
- Under instructional leadership, the plan focuses on literacy, reducing the achievement gap, and implementing interventions. The goal is to ensure high-quality instruction and improved outcomes for all students.
- Organizational leadership aims to build adult capacities to sustain positive outcomes for students. This includes creating a communication structure, enhancing project management skills, and creating a competitive compensation package.
- The communications strategy aims to develop strong relationships of trust with the City Schools of Decatur, the Board, and the community through two-way communication and professionalized communication processes.
- Key findings indicate opportunities for improving the instructional infrastructure, enhancing professional learning, creating authentic student and family partnerships, and improving interoperable support structures and data systems.

G.E.M. ENTRY PLAN OVERALL KEY FINDINGS

MAXIMIZING OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

In order to optimize outcomes for all students, we will continue to implement the G.E.M. strategy. First, we will prioritize instructional **Coherence**, ensuring high-quality instruction aligns with the Georgia Standards of Excellence. Regular assessments will be evidence-based, and we will monitor progress toward mastery standards to accelerate success for all students. We will enhance leadership **Capacity**, focusing on project and change management to demonstrate transparency, not just related to student outcomes, but financially as well. There will be a **Clarion Call** for all, with equity work dedicated to ensuring that all students are successful. We will put structures in place to facilitate student outcomes, enabling all to achieve brilliance. Thank you for entrusting me with your GEM. I am committed to ensuring even greater levels of success for student outcomes in the City Schools of Decatur, where all truly means all.

BELIEFS AND CORE VALUES

As a leader, my core beliefs are:

- Equity is the vehicle to excellence
- Leadership matters
- Engagement inspires

CITY SCHOOLS OF DECATUR



MISSION

We strive to cultivate an educational foundation that empowers students to realize their full potential, thrive as productive global citizens, ignite positive change, and create a more just and equitable world.

VISION

In partnership with our community, our mission is to inspire and enable student growth through meaningful and engaging learning experiences supported by highly qualified and caring educators in a safe and inviting environment.

G.E.M. ENTRY PLAN

The G.E.M. entry plan aligns with the district's new five-year strategic plan, called All In Decatur, that was approved by the City Schools of Decatur's Board of Education in March 2023.



G.E.M. ENTRY PLAN TIMELINE

1

PRE-ENTRY PHASE

Meet with board members, conduct school canvases, research internal processes, systems, evaluations, budget and division summaries

2

PHASE I - GATHER

Conduct community listening sessions, key stakeholder meetings, and surveys, gathering data and information

3

PHASE II - ENVISION

Reviewing the findings to envision plan forward

4

PHASE III - MAXIMIZE

Maximizing the results



OBJECTIVES

● INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Ensure City Schools of Decatur possess an instructional infrastructure which establishes the conditions for high-literacy instruction, producing improved outcomes for all students.

● ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Ensure City Schools of Decatur is an organization that builds the capacity of adults in order to sustain positive outcomes for all students.

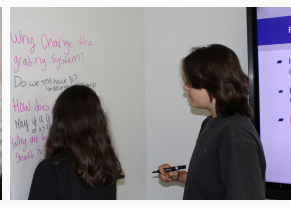
● COMMUNICATIONS

Develop a strong relationship of trust with the City Schools of Decatur, Board, and the community.

FIRST: LISTEN, LEARN, AND UNDERSTAND



DISTRICTWIDE COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS



COUNCILS WITH STUDENTS, TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF, PTO/PTA, AND SLT



MEETINGS WITH LOCAL AND STATE ELECTED OFFICIALS

The G.E.M. entry plan began with a series of opportunities to listen and learn from all stakeholders. Guiding questions were asked to capture the unique perspectives:

- What is CSD doing well and not doing well?
- How can we work together to ensure every student feels safe, seen, and successful?
- How can I support you as your superintendent?



88

CLASSROOM VISITS



325

SESSION/COUNCIL PARTICIPANTS



10

LISTENING SESSIONS



22

PUBLIC OFFICIALS



24

NONPROFIT/ COMMUNITY



353

SURVEY/ EVALUATIONS



10

SCHOOL CANVASES

90

STUDENT CONVERSATIONS

137

SCHOOL-BASED STAFF CONVERSATIONS



G.E.M. INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP LITERACY



- **LITERACY**
- **ACHIEVEMENT GAP**
- **INTERVENTIONS**

GOAL

Ensure City Schools of Decatur possess an instructional infrastructure which establishes the conditions for high-quality **literacy** instruction, producing improved outcomes for all students.

GATHERING

- Review alignment of curriculum, assessment, and professional development
- Review all literacy student achievement data
- Benchmark literacy framework, ensuring the development of reading, writing, listening, and speaking
- Review alignment of central office support structures
- Visit all schools to observe and understand the instruction

ENVISIONING AND MAXIMIZING

Quick Wins

- Reduced misaligned ARC training
- Provided focused phonics professional development
- Created Principal Theory of Action for student achievement

Completed

- Developed:
 - repository of curriculum resources
 - inventory of literacy diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments
 - process for establishing a literacy framework

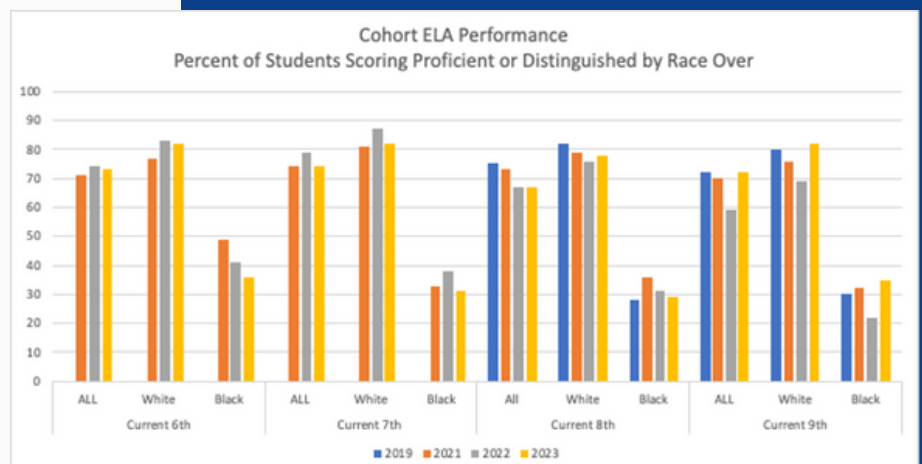
- School canvases
- Shared initial findings and action steps from canvases with the Board
- Conducted district instructional audit for literacy
- Kindled relationships with Science of Reading experts
- Realignment of support by refocusing the ELA director's work to the 6-12 grade literacy
- Continually reframing ARC instruction to explicitly include standards, creating a standard unpacking tool

KEY FINDINGS: LITERACY

City Schools of Decatur (CSD) is a high-achieving school district. After a comprehensive review of student data from Milestones and MAP, there is evidence of a significant gap in achievement for subgroups within the same cohorts. This presents opportunities for reframing the instructional infrastructure to:

- Align prescribed instructional minutes and explicit instruction with the five pillars of reading
- Use data to drive small-group instruction
- Increase use of evidence-based resources, including an alignment to Georgia Standards of Excellence and Science of Reading
- Enhance coaching and professional development for literacy

GA MILESTONES RESULTS



G.E.M. INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ACHIEVEMENT GAP



- LITERACY
- **ACHIEVEMENT GAP**
- INTERVENTIONS

GOAL

Ensure City Schools of Decatur possess instructional infrastructure that establishes the conditions for high-quality instruction, producing improved outcomes for **ALL** students.

GATHERING

- Canvas all schools, including virtual program, to observe and understand the climate and culture of teaching and learning
- Review and discuss school profiles, including attendance, discipline, perception, subgroup performance, and college/career readiness
- Review results of equity audit, data systems, and outcomes-based contracts
- Assess professional learning and adult learning needs

ENVISIONING AND MAXIMIZING

Quick Wins

- Conducted root cause analysis with all schools and the Board of Education
- Supported each school in developing a Theory of Action
- Delivered training on DIME* model

- School data review calendar
- School canvases
- Equity assessment
- Analysis of current data systems and reached consensus to shift to Tableau
- Instructional cabinet data review calendar

Completed

- Repository of
 - interoperable data systems
 - data analysis protocols
 - school profiles
 - equity audits
- Root cause presentation

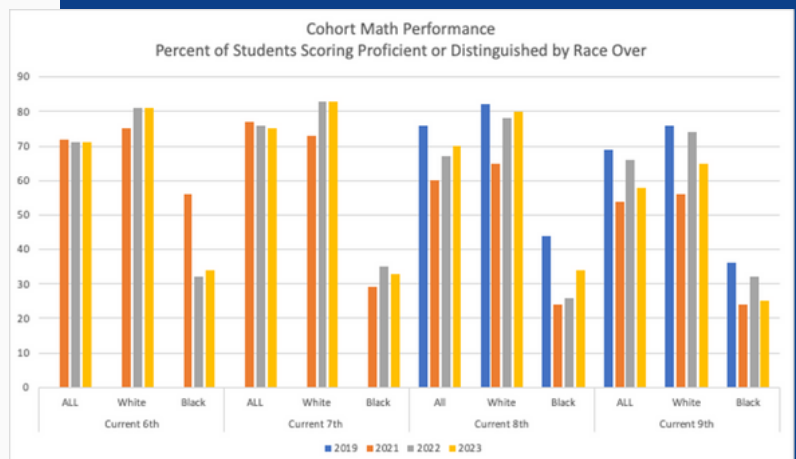
*DIME: Design - Implement - Monitor - Evaluate

KEY FINDINGS: ACHIEVEMENT GAP

While the majority of students in CSD continue to outperform their peers across the state and nationally, review of data represents a disproportionate gap in academic outcomes for marginalized students within the same cohorts. This presents opportunities to improve outcomes for all students by:

- Improving interoperable support structures and data systems used for visualizing student performance
- Enhancing professional learning and collaborative structures for adults
- Creating authentic student, family, and partnerships structure
- Advancing equity work to be more student-focused by operationalizing outcomes-based results

GA MILESTONES RESULTS



G.E.M. INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP INTERVENTIONS



- LITERACY
- ACHIEVEMENT GAP
- INTERVENTIONS

GOAL

Ensure City Schools of Decatur possess instructional infrastructure that establishes the conditions for **evidence-based interventions**, producing improved outcomes for all students.

GATHERING

- Canvas all schools to observe and understand interventions and models implemented
- Review multi-tiered systems and supports (MTSS) district documents and processes
- Audit reading, math, SEL, mental health, behavior, and attendance interventions for evidence-based alignment
- Audit progress monitoring tools
- Meet with all staff charged with supporting intervention
- Assess professional learning and adult learning needs

ENVISIONING AND MAXIMIZING

Quick Wins

- Created an inventory of intervention and progress-monitoring tools
- Hosted CSD Program Overview Night inclusive of MTSS, ESOL & Federal Programs, Gifted, and Equity/ Student Services
- Established focus on MTSS with Hanover Research

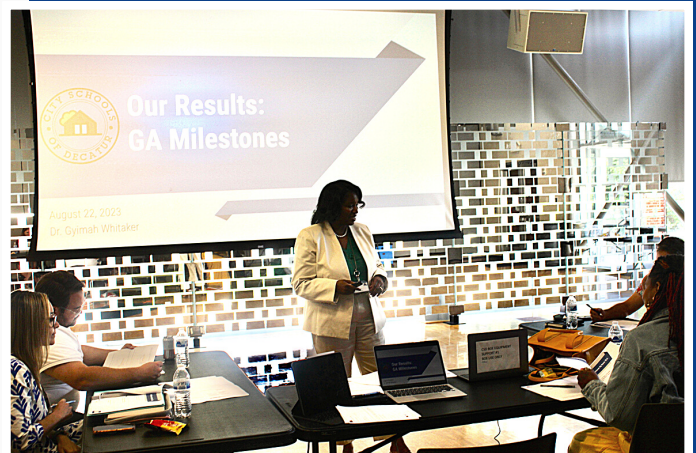
Completed

- Listening sessions to determine the culture and climate of departments
- Protocol for frequency of data review with instructional cabinet
- Data review calendar
- School canvases
- Training and initial steps for outcomes-based contracting
- Review MTSS district documents and process
- Initial draft of MTSS flowchart, problem-solving framework, and data review process
- Tuning of the MTSS Lead job description

KEY FINDINGS: INTERVENTIONS

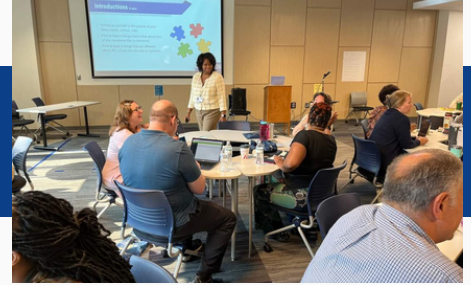
A review of CSD's Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) documents and an audit of the MTSS processes and progress monitoring tools revealed opportunities for reframing the instructional infrastructure to improve student outcomes by:

- Implementing the DIME* model for MTSS
- Following GaDOE guidance on MTSS
- Retraining staff on progress monitoring processes
- Creating a repository of risk reporting systems and evidence-based interventions and tools
- Ensuring alignment of central office support structures for interventions
- Pursuing outcomes-based contracting



*DIME: Design - Implement - Monitor - Evaluate

G.E.M. ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE



- STRUCTURE
- EVALUATION
- RECRUITMENT

GOAL

Ensure City Schools of Decatur is an organization that **builds the capacity** of adults in order to sustain positive outcomes for students.

GATHERING

- Host district-level listening sessions to learn and understand the climate and culture of departments
- Conduct one-on-one interviews with all direct reports
- Evaluate cabinet professional learning needs and opportunities
- Establish bi-monthly meetings with principals
- Review current or anticipated vacancies
- Establish cabinet communications and decision-making channels
- Review leadership competency and development framework
- Conduct behavioral event interviews for cabinet and principals
- Host cabinet retreat
- Establish a project management tracker

ENVISIONING AND MAXIMIZING

Quick Wins

- Hired audits and investigations personnel
- Adjusted Board Meeting schedule, introducing retreats and community meetings
- Structured weekly communication cadence between the Superintendent and the Board
- Provided training on Project Management

Completed

- Review of:
 - Current or anticipated vacancies
 - Leadership competency and development framework
- Admin Council Retreat inclusive of Strengths-Finder training
- Listening sessions to determine the culture and climate of departments
- Communication and decision-making channels structure with chiefs
- Bi-monthly meetings with principals
- One-on-one interviews with all direct reports
- Capacity building plan for cabinet

KEY FINDINGS STRUCTURE

A review of the organizational leadership structure presented opportunities to establish systems and structures for collaboration and efficiency within the organization by:

- Creating Administrative Staff to establish a channel for communication, support, and accountability within the organization
- Building capacity around key business processes such as change management and project management
- Creating a competitive compensation package
- Auditing and reorganizing the finance department to ensure fiscal responsibility and transparency with resources
- Illuminating the need for an Enterprise Human Resources Information System



G.E.M. COMMUNICATIONS



- TWO-WAY INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION
- PROFESSIONALIZE COMMUNICATION

GOAL

Develop a strong relationship of trust with City Schools of Decatur, Board and community

GATHERING

- Establish *Words with Whitaker* two-way communication
- Schedule *Words with Whitaker* sessions for families and teachers
- Maximize Back-to-School Message
- Conduct a perception survey of communication for stakeholders
- Meet with existing councils and advisory committees
- Establish a cadence of meetings with elected officials
- Meet with key stakeholders
- Visit faith-based and community events
- Create and establish the use of the constituent tracker
- Analyze district website
- Understand the district's crisis and media protocols

ENVISIONING AND MAXIMIZING

Quick Wins

- Hired Chief Communications Officer
- Created additional Councils, Increased collaboration with DHA and DEF
- Rebuilt trust with Dekalb Delegation
- Leadership in United Way Advisory for DeKalb County, DeKalb County Chamber of Commerce Workforce Development Committee, Decatur Education Foundation Board, Learn4Life Council, Decatur Rotary, Leadership DeKalb Cohort 2024, Racial Equity Leadership Network Fellow, Georgia State Principal Center Board

- Dr. Whitaker's Video Message
- GSBA video
- Two-way communications:
 - Superintendent's Listening Sessions
 - Council meetings
- Individual meetings with key stakeholders
- Audit district website
- Visit community events
- Branding guide and logo standards
- Repository of letterheads and templates
- Understand the district's crisis and media protocols

Completed

- Maximize Back-to-School Message
- Opening Day
- Dr. Whitaker's First Day tour of schools

KEY FINDINGS: COMMUNICATIONS

The communications department was created in the pre-entry phase in an effort to professionalize communications and develop a strong relationship of trust between the City Schools of Decatur and the community by:

- Increasing positive publicity of CSD and media relations
- Establishing opportunities for two-way communications with students, staff, parents, key business leaders, elected officials, and the community
- Elevating the position of CSD in metro, state, and nation on key issues concerning education, policy, budget, instructional technology, equity for marginalized populations
- Developing processes for reputation and crisis management





“One of the more debilitating mindsets that leaders can trap themselves into is the idea that the way it’s always been done is the only way and best way it can be done.”

-Airick Journey Crabhill from Great on Their Behalf



THANK YOU