MOVING YOUR NUMBERS

Gwinnett County Public Schools: Achievement Profile

Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students With Disabilities as Part of District-wide Improvement

NATIONAL CENTER ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

In collaboration with:
Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)

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About Moving Your Numbers

Moving Your Numbers: Improving Learning for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-wide Reform, examines how school districts with vastly different demographics increase the performance of students with disabilities and other at-risk learners as part of whole-district reform efforts. Case studies of featured districts, as described in the full report, provide evidence that students with disabilities, like all other students, can learn at higher levels when adults focus their collective efforts on improving instructional practice, consistently implement core work across the district, and use assessment and accountability as a lever for ongoing system and student learning and improvement.

Moving Your Numbers identifies six essential practices that must be in place to improve the performance of students with disabilities. Evidence suggests that these six practices, when used in an aligned and coherent manner, are associated with higher student achievement. These practices are use data well, focus your goals, select and implement shared instructional practices (individually and collectively), implement deeply, monitor and provide feedback and support, and inquire and learn.

Moving Your Numbers was initiated and is supported through the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) under the leadership of Dr. Martha Thurlow, NCEO Director; Rachel Quenemoen, NCEO Senior Research Fellow; and Dr. Laurene Christensen, NCEO Research Associate. Dr. Deborah Telfer, Director, School of Education and Allied Professions Grant Center, University of Dayton, coordinates the development and review of Moving Your Numbers on behalf of NCEO. NCEO was established in 1990 to provide national leadership in designing and building educational assessments and accountability systems that appropriately monitor educational results for all students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs).

Photographs used in this publication have been provided courtesy of the districts featured and the Ohio Department of Education.

Additional case studies of featured districts will be added to the Moving Your Numbers website as they are developed. Go to www.MovingYourNumbers.org for the complete report and additional tools and resources, and to submit success stories.

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‘One document, 10 priorities, one direction’ sums up Gwinnett County Public Schools’ strategic focus on improving instruction and student learning across the district. As the gateway to metro Atlanta from the north/northeast, Gwinnett County is home to more than 805,000 individuals, one-fifth of whom are children and youth educated by the Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS). In this highly diverse county, which encompasses 15 municipalities across 437 square miles, district leadership believes that it is the responsibility of the adults in the district to not only sustain the district’s record of success, but also to continually make the kinds of improvements needed to achieve the goal of being a ‘system of world-class schools.’

And, because the district believes that it is within its direct control to change or, at a minimum, influence practice across the district through the attitude and action of adults, it has put reforms in place that are designed to support the people employed by the district while, at the same time, demanding that each of them holds high expectations for student learning and takes responsibility for the results achieved.

This is no small feat in a district with 133 school buildings (i.e., 77 elementary schools, 26 middle schools, 19 high schools, and 11 additional educational facilities). The district has outlined Strategic Priorities, defined as qualities and characteristics stakeholders believe are desirable for 10 major components of the district, which include students; employees; parents and guardians; governance and leadership; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; facilities and operations; financial stewardship; information management and technology; communication; and public image and community pride. These Strategic Priorities keep the district focused on its core business—teaching and learning—and they drive continuous improvement. They link GCPS’ vision, mission, and beliefs to the goals, initiatives, and operational management plans/local school plans for improvement.

The details in these plans outline the necessary actions that will bring the Strategic Priorities to life and move the district closer to realizing its vision of becoming a system of world-class schools. For example, part of the vision for the governance and leadership component is that “leaders (at all levels) will focus on results, particularly as they relate to students, and will value accountability.”

**Defined Autonomy**

“In Gwinnett, our direction is clear,” explained Dr. Colin Martin, executive director of Research and Evaluation for Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS). “We focus on teaching and learning within a structure that supports and encourages excellence.” Martin joined the district in 1977 working first as a teacher, then as a lead teacher, middle school administrator, and K-12 language arts coordinator, and eventually moving in the mid-1990’s to his current position as executive director with primary responsibility for ensuring the fair and appropriate evaluation of the performance of each school in the district. With almost 35 years of service to GCPS, Martin has watched the district grow from its rural origins to become the vibrant district that it is today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gwinnett County Public Schools Student Demographics</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Enrollment:</strong> 162,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Students Identified as Children Served in Special Education: 11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Students Identified as Minority: 68.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Students Designated as English Language Learners: 15.0</td>
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The mission of GCPS is to pursue excellence in academic knowledge, skills, and behaviors for each student, resulting in measured improvement against local, national, and world-class standards.
roots to an emerging suburban district, to its current status as a large urban district, the largest school system in Georgia, and the 13th largest district in the nation.

**Focus Your Goals.** “With so many of my years being at central office, I’ve gotten a pretty good perspective on the nature of change in a large district,” said Martin who credits stable district leadership as a primary factor in Gwinnett’s capacity for focusing and aligning all work around teaching and learning. “I attribute an awful lot of whatever success we have to a combination of stability, but stability with excellent leadership,” said Martin in describing the tenure of Superintendent/CEO J. Alvin Wilbanks, now starting his 16th year as GCPS superintendent and the longest serving superintendent of a large urban district in the country. “Our superintendent believes that the district exists to serve the schools, but not in a way that promotes fragmentation. Instead, he believes in results-based management that supports every single school in being the very best that it can be,” explained Martin.

A 2006 report by Waters and Marzano on the effect of superintendent leadership on student achievement suggested that superintendent tenure is positively correlated with student achievement. This finding, one of three resulting from a meta-analysis of 27 studies involving 2,817 districts and the achievement scores of 3.4 million students, found that such positive effects appeared to manifest themselves as early as two years into a superintendent’s tenure. A further finding involved the correlation between building autonomy and student achievement, and the role of site-based management. While site-based management was associated with a decrease in student achievement, effective superintendents were shown to provide clear direction for learning and instruction, providing principals and school leadership teams with ‘defined autonomy’ for taking responsibility for meeting district-defined expectations (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p. 4).

This notion of defined autonomy – described by GCPS as a balance of accountability and empowerment – characterizes the district’s theory of action. Referred to as Managed Performance/Empowerment, the district is unwavering in the high standards it holds for schools, teachers and students, while, at the same time, providing for a certain amount of flexibility at the school level.

Collectively, the expectations outlined by the board and district leadership provide a strategic vision designed to reach the district’s stable and longstanding strategic goals, all of which are geared toward improving the core work of teaching and learning. Established in April 2002, these strategic goals are used to:

1. Ensure a world-class education for all students by focusing on teaching and learning the Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) curriculum;
2. Ensure a safe, secure, and orderly environment for all;
3. Optimize student achievement through responsible stewardship of its financial resources and the proactive pursuit of all resources necessary to meet current and future demands;

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4. Recruit, employ, develop, and retain a workforce that achieves the mission and goals of the organization;
5. Meet the continuing and changing demand for essential information through technological systems and processes that support effective performance and desired results;
6. Provide and manage the systems facilities and operations in an exemplary manner as determined by programmatic needs and best management practices; and
7. Apply continuous improvement strategies and principles as the way the organization does business.2

That focus on teaching and learning that is a part of the first strategic goal is embedded throughout the district and lends coherence to this large urban school district. For example, in the Strategic Priority that focuses on the curriculum, instruction, and assessment component, all schools in the district are expected to “accelerate instruction not only for students who excel, but also for those who are academically behind.” At the school level, each building’s leadership team uses a collaborative process to create a Local School Plan for Improvement (LSPI) that identifies needs based on a review of student achievement data, and develops specific measurable annual objectives and an implementation design for reaching those objectives.

At Bethesda Elementary School, for example, one of the school’s three goals (each goal has one objective) used to align and focus instruction for all learners is “to improve in the areas of reading and English/language arts to meet and exceed state averages on all assessments. Bethesda Elementary will increase academic performance in language arts including reading, writing and the application of those skills in social studies.” The accompanying objective is “to increase academic performance in the area of reading/English language arts for all students with focus on the students with disabilities (SWD) subgroup to meet or exceed annual targets through collaborative planning between regular and special education teachers, vocabulary development, guided reading groups, literacy committee interventions and writers’ workshop, collaborative and co-teaching, inclusion with support staff and focus on integration of social studies through literacy.”

Use Data Well. A variety of assessments are available to be used as tools for measuring performance, guiding instruction, and evaluating results, and teachers are expected to use data to increase academic achievement for every student. This focus on assessment and using data to improve instruction was key to the district’s identification as the winner of the 2010 Broad Prize for urban education, an annual award that recognizes and rewards a large urban district that demonstrates the greatest overall performance and improvement, while significantly reducing gaps among poor and minority children.

Gwinnett’s Efforts to Improve Instruction and Achievement Wins the Broad Prize!

Established in 2002, the $1 million Broad Prize is the largest education award in the country given to school districts. Awarded by the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation each year, the prize honors urban school districts that demonstrate the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while reducing achievement gaps among poor and minority students.

Seventy-five of the country’s largest districts that also serve a significant percentage of low-income and minority students are automatically eligible for the prize each year. Established criteria for the award include having an urban designation and serving at least 37,500 students in grades K-12, of which at least 40% are eligible for free or reduced-price school lunches, and at least 40% are from minority groups. Following extensive analysis of data from eligible districts, the Foundation determines finalists based on factors related to performance and degree of improvement, and conducts site visits. A selection jury comprised of prominent leaders in education, research, and government selected Gwinnett from among the five finalists for the 2010 Prize.

The $1 million award allowed Gwinnett County Public Schools to provide college scholarships (up to $20,000 for students who enrolled in four-year colleges) for high school seniors who graduated in 2011 and who demonstrated a significant financial need and a record of academic improvement during their high school career.

2 Gwinnett County Public Schools Strategic Directions.
Dr. Jeff Barker, Executive Director of Accountability and Assessment, has been with GCPS for about 15 years, beginning in 1990 as a teacher and then assistant principal, and leaving for a seven-year appointment as the Georgia Department of Education’s director of assessment before returning to GCPS. “We’ve worked to change the way of thinking about testing,” explained Barker. “Testing is not an event; it’s a process, and we can’t wait until test data are released to identify and prioritize our needs and plan for how to respond instructionally,” he said.

Gwinnett’s commitment to using data and addressing the achievement gaps between subgroups of children is evident in the district’s placement of the Office of Assessment and Accountability as part of the Division of Teaching and Learning Support, and in its use of assessment and accountability as a major lever for improving instructional practice. Barker explains, “We intentionally integrate curriculum, instruction, and assessment by incorporating curriculum content specialists into the Office of Accountability and Assessment and that has made a huge impact. In many school systems, curriculum and assessment are in two different parts of the organization. We know that would not be efficient in GCPS, especially as we build our interim and formative assessment system. Our bottom line is what’s best for kids.” And that bottom line applies to every child in the district. “Our goal is to provide valid and reliable assessments that can be used to improve instruction for all learners,” said Lorna Gallimore, director of the Office of Student Accountability, which provides support in compiling and analyzing student academic achievement data in relation to school improvement initiatives. Gallimore, who describes herself as a “special education teacher by birth,” has been with GCPS for 21 years, starting as a teacher of children with moderate/severe/profound disabilities and moving to an assistant principal position before assuming her current post.

The district’s work to use assessment and accountability to improve instruction appears to be paying off, not only for poor and minority students, but also for students with disabilities receiving special education services and English language learners (ELL). At the 3rd grade level, for example, the percentage of students with disabilities that met standards increased by 11 percentage points steadily over the past four years, from 50 percent in 2007-08 to 61 percent in 2010-11. The percentage of students with disabilities meeting state standards increased in math
from 32 to 43 percent, while the percentage of these students “exceeding” the standards increased from 23 to 31 percent. This steady increase is evident across grade levels with Gwinnett students surpassing the state average for students performing at the 'exceeds standards' level.

In addition to using state assessment data, GCPS uses a variety of local assessments to gauge student progress and the effectiveness of instruction. The district has two platforms for interim and formative assessment – My Students and Elements – both of which are intended to help make relevant data accessible to teachers and leadership teams. My Students was developed in-house about 10 years ago and allows teachers and teams to review five years of trend data and answer the question, “How did my students perform?” Data can be disaggregated for groups of children so the answer to that question can be obtained for students with disabilities, children of color, children at a particular grade level, etc. As data become available, they’re added to the site and linked to class rosters. Teachers can “drill down” to particular skill areas and get a strand ranking report for strand areas such
as vocabulary, and numbers and operations. The report lists students’ performance – from weakest to strongest – and indicates next to each student’s name whether the student is part of a particular subgroup (e.g., economically disadvantaged). Any person who teaches a student has access to that student’s data.

Elements, begun about nine years ago and under constant refinement, allows teachers and others to determine on which standards students are successful at the indicator level. Reports in Elements are generated showing which students selected which distracters, allowing teachers to begin work immediately addressing any gaps in instruction or student understanding. “We believe the power in the system is in highlighting the distracter. Standards may be so broad that it’s difficult to know as a teacher what caused a student to miss an item, leading the teacher to presuppose why a particular student answered incorrectly,” explained Barker. “Elements provides more targeted and focused information to teachers about why children may have selected an incorrect answer, allowing for better use of instructional time,” he added. Teachers can make their own assessments and put them into the tool to get additional disaggregated reports.

Gallimore described the kinds of assessments used by the district as (1) local Gateway tests given in addition to state tests for promotion and graduation; (2) district-developed interim assessments that are required for all schools; and (3) common assessments developed and used by teachers to evaluate daily acquisition of what’s taught. “Universal design principles are used in the district’s development of test items to ensure access for all of our kids,” said Barker.

All students (unless otherwise specified in a child’s individualized education program) take the same tests, and all schools in the district are required to administer the district’s interim assessments at specified times during the year. For example, all levels (elementary, middle, and high) are provided interim assessments every nine weeks with interim assessments (at the 9th and 27th week) and post-tests (at the 18th and 36th week) provided. Elementary schools are required to administer both interim assessments at the 9th and 27th week, as well as the 18-week post-test. The 36th-week post-test, and a pre-test, are optional. The middle schools, since they are on semesters have two optional pre-tests. And, at the high school level, all interim assessments and post-tests are required with only the pretest being optional. High school students also take end-of-course (EOC) district tests. While district-developed tests (i.e., the CRCT-D) mirror the CRCT in terms of content weights and the standards being assessed, GCPS interim assessments are aligned with the district’s Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) curriculum, which, according to GCPS personnel, goes beyond the Georgia academic content standards.

“It is difficult to provide true predictors of performance on the state tests; our tests are really diagnostic,” commented Barker. “We do not want to imply that if a student did well on the district-developed interim assessment, then the student would also perform well on the state assessments. Rather, we want teachers to look at areas of weakness and provide instruction to build knowledge and skills in that area,” he said. Title I schools have assistant principals with expertise in data management and the data are not used for teacher evaluation, but rather as tools for improving collective instructional practice.

**Promoting Excellence in Instructional Practice**

GCPS promotes clear expectations for what every Gwinnett student is expected to know and be able to do through the use of the district-developed Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS), which delineates the required academic knowledge and skills and provides accompanying resources for each grade level and content area. Information is provided in K-12 formats for core content areas

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1 Universally designed assessment incorporates seven elements such as maximum readability and comprehension. For additional information, see NCEO’s Frequently Asked Questions, accessible at [http://www.cehd.umn.edu/nceo/topicareas/UnivDesign/UnivDesignFAQ.htm](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/nceo/topicareas/UnivDesign/UnivDesignFAQ.htm).
and by school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high) as AKS Vertical Booklets. In addition to the foundation that AKS provides in terms of a consistent, district-wide instructional program, all schools have a required leadership team comprised of the principal, assistant principal(s), grade-level/departmental, non-core, (e.g., music) and ELL and special education representatives. Team members analyze student data, honing in on the greatest areas of need, and identifying plans of action to address those needs. At the teacher or classroom level, an increasing number of data teams are in operation, using the district common formative assessment data to inform and improve instructional practice.

Select and Implement Shared Instructional Practices. While schools are allowed flexibility in implementing, and in monitoring the degree of implementation of instructional strategies, each school in the district is expected to use an improvement process based on a plan-do-study-act (PDSA) model, and to use research-based instructional strategies, collectively referred to as the GCPS Quality-Plus Teaching Strategies. These strategies (e.g., provide collaborative learning opportunities) are cross-content strategies that are used to facilitate student engagement and the consistent integration of reading, writing, and mathematics into all content areas.

Instructional calendars aligned with AKS and the Quality-Plus Teaching Strategies are provided by the district for every course/content area at every grade level. Teachers and teacher teams use the calendars in tandem with formative assessment pretest and interim data to identify particular skill areas (e.g., changing decimals to fractions) that should be introduced earlier in the year, allowing for additional time to learn and practice the skill. According to Chris Emsley, long-time GCPS principal currently working from central office as a principal mentor, “previewing skills at the beginning of the year instead of waiting until those areas would normally be taught gives kids prior knowledge and a chance to acquire greater understanding by the end of the year.”

While teacher teams may look a little different from school to school across the district, teachers come together as colleagues to look at data. “We’re all responsible collectively for all kids,” said Paula Everett-Truppi, Executive Director of Special Education & Psychological Services. “We do a disservice to staff if we look at people in isolation. In the old days, gifted education was separate, but the strategies they used should be used for all kids,” explained Everett-Truppi. “Instructional strategies are instructional strategies,” she added.

Monitor and Provide Feedback and Support.

Emsley believes that the Quality-Plus Teaching Strategies provide a vehicle for shared learning around instructional practice. Common understanding around high-quality instruction on the part of teacher teams, as well as groups of principals, is facilitated by having a consistent process and set of strategies for engaging students and tailoring instruction to meet individual learner needs.

Emsley explains: “In my building, I had 20 teachers in fourth and fifth grade and we knew from reviewing our data that we had a weakness in math at that level. My three assistant principals and I conducted walk-through observations in collaboration:

Provide collaborative learning opportunities.

Evidence of effective use of strategy:
• Teacher provides multiple and frequent opportunities for a variety of collaborative student experiences.
• Teacher provides students with individual and group feedback on specific techniques for effective collaboration.
• Teacher acts as a coach and collaborator to model and give feedback on appropriate strategies.
• Teacher grades student individually on his or her learning of the AKS.
• Students move smoothly among whole-group, small group, and individual learning tasks.
• All learners are engaged in the task at hand.

Source: GCPS Quality-Plus Teaching Strategies
each of the 20 classrooms to determine the degree to which teachers were using specific Quality-Plus strategies. We found that we were doing OK in some areas, such as collaboration, but not at all well in others such as summarizing and math vocabulary. Our 4th and 5th grade teacher teams used the data we collected, as well as other formative assessment data, to discuss and provide feedback to each other on common practices used by teachers, what worked well, and what needed to be improved. “As a principal, my area superintendent would ask me, ‘How do you know your teachers are really implementing a particular strategy?’” said Emsley. “In every conversation, I had to produce the data,” she added. In GCPS, area superintendents supervise principals.

Everett-Truppi echoes Emsley’s comments about the focus on results. “The shift has been from looking at teacher behavior to also looking more at student engagement and outcomes in terms of learning with the important question being, ‘How are students demonstrating learning and at what level?’” she said. “When I was a principal, we tried not to call the teams anything, but rather focus on using the data effectively, especially just-in-time data,” said Everett-Truppi.

GCPS promotes and uses co-teaching models to support students with disabilities and other learning challenges in regular environments so they’re educated with their regular peers. Partnering among offices is prevalent and used to address specific need areas. For example, the Office of Special Education & Psychological Services works with math content experts from the Office of Curriculum and Instruction on the SEAM (Special Education And Math departments) initiative designed to improve the math performance of students with disabilities.

“We’re all teaching the same curriculum and we exist not only to build the capacity of special education teachers, but also to build the capacity of regular educators to meet the needs of all students, said Everett-Truppi, whose office provides feedback and support to all teachers (including the district’s 1,800 special education teachers and 1,000 paraprofessionals) through instructional coaches, and extensive professional development for all staff.

The district uses a response to intervention (RtI) model for embedding interventions into the instructional process. “I don’t like to think of RtI as a program; rather, it is what good teachers do,” said Everett-Truppi. The value of RtI, in Everett-Truppi’s opinion, is that it has reinforced the notion that just because a child needs additional instructional time does not mean that the child has a disability. “The value of RtI was that it anchored the expectation that teachers must address student needs in the classroom,” she explained.

While the percent of GCPS students identified as having a disability and receiving special education services has remained relatively stable (i.e., between 11 and 12%) over the last three years, the district has experienced a decrease in the number of children identified as other health impaired (OHH) and emotionally disabled (ED), and a corresponding increase in the number identified with autism, low incidence disabilities, and young children with significant developmental delays. “Parents of children with more significant needs are attracted to Gwinnett because of our reputation for quality services and this has implications for the number and skills of staff needed to meet the needs of an increasingly challenging
population,” explained Everett-Truppi. “No one is going to look a parent in the eyes and say ‘We’re going to offer less amounting to an inferior education or we’re not going to challenge your child because of budget shortfalls; we just have to make it work,’” she said.

**THE 3CS: CONTINUITY, CONSISTENCY, AND COURAGEOUS BEHAVIOR**

Executive Director of Leadership Development Dr. Glenn Pethel believes that there is no one program or strategy that can serve as the silver bullet educators are often reputed to seek. Instead, he credits hard work and a commitment on the part of district leadership to continuity, consistency, and courageous behavior for the district’s success. “Sustained progress is key. If you’re using your data and turning it into information that allows you to make better instructional decisions, all children – whether they’re students with disabilities, English language learners, or children typically thought of as regular education – will benefit from the district’s focus on instruction and learning,” said Pethel.

Pethel oversaw the district’s comprehensive *Quality-Plus Leader Academy* (QPLA) – a local initiative that includes all activities associated with the training, development, and mentoring of principals and aspiring principals (i.e., teachers aspiring to be assistant principals, and assistant principals aspiring to be principals). QPLA focuses on shared leadership and emphasizes such essential competencies as focusing on results, viewing accountability as a value, leading by example, and execution (consistently turning vision into desired results). Pethel was superintendent of a neighboring district before joining GCPS in 1983 and served as Chief Human Resources Officer for the district before assuming his current assignment.

**Inquire and Learn.** According to Pethel, district leaders are students of Peter Drucker and Edwards Deming. Consistent with the district’s belief in defined autonomy, QPLA promotes tightly managing the instructional program in place district-wide and loosely managing school operations, ensuring common, high quality standards-based instruction in every building while allowing for flexibility at the school level to address school operational issues.

The district invests heavily in ongoing training and support for both principals and teachers, believing that teachers are its greatest resource. “Teacher capacity is maximized through opportunities for teachers to inform each other’s practice,” according to Pethel.

Support for an ongoing inquiry process based on the PDSA model is also operationalized through the district-wide use of the *Results-Based Evaluation System* (RBES) – a method for setting expectations, defining accountability, and building a high-performance culture that attends to both results and to the improvement/inquiry process. At the school level, for example, principals have common monthly meeting time that includes:

- Monthly cluster meetings where principals from elementary, middle, and high schools within a given cluster of the district meet;
- Monthly meetings by cluster that involve principals at a given level (e.g., elementary); and
- Monthly level meetings where all principals at a given level (e.g., elementary) meet.

All meetings are used to discuss progress toward reaching common expectations, brainstorm ideas, and learn from each other. Clusters are defined by a high school and configured so that every high school draws its students from only designated middle and elementary schools.
Indicators of school performance in four categories are used to evaluate each school in the district. Each school receives a weighted school assessment and an annual score (on a scale from 0 to 100) with student achievement worth 70 percent of the total rating, and initiatives to improve, customer satisfaction, and school management accounting for 12, 8, and 10 percent, respectively. The process allows the district to make both within-school and across-school comparisons, and promote shared learning across schools. Martin comments that the district’s theory of action is “vigorously implemented” and an accountability continuum is used to measure effectiveness in relation to standards at the student, teacher, principal, division head, and superintendent/CEO levels.

The RBES process is used to both recognize and support schools. Martin explains: “Schools that are in the lowest quartile receive much more directive support from central office that is orchestrated by one of the district’s three area superintendents.”

**BECOMING A SYSTEM OF WORLD-CLASS SCHOOLS**

The mission of GCPS to become a system of world-class schools starts with the fundamental belief that all students can learn at or above grade level and that the job of the district is to ensure that each student acquires the knowledge and skills he/she needs to be successful in continued education at the postsecondary level and/or in the workforce. A focus on student learning, coupled with high and clearly articulated expectations for academic excellence, supportive structures and a comprehensive and usable data system set GCPS apart as a major urban district that has sustained progress and made steady in-roads in reducing achievement gaps among groups of children.

As noted by Dr. Pethel, “The district, beginning with the school board and superintendent/CEO, exemplifies staying the course, being transparent through the effective use of data, and not backing down in holding all adults accountable for student success.”

**Advice from Gwinnett County Public Schools**

1. Hold all adults in the district to high standards and clearly define expectations around the core work of teaching and learning.
2. Provide a balance of defined autonomy and flexibility for schools to meet expectations, but require that every single school meet them.
3. Require the effective and ongoing use of data at all levels to identify needs, gauge progress, and make continual improvements to instructional practice.
4. Value accountability and make results the central focus of the school system.
5. Align all work across the district with the district mission and vision to improve student learning.
6. Integrate curriculum, instruction, and assessment in real ways.
7. Support shared learning and responsibility among adults for the success of all students.

For additional information about the Gwinnett County Public Schools, contact Sloan Roach, Executive Director of Communication and Media Relations, 437 Old Peachtree Rd., NW, Suwanee, GA 30024-2978 at 678.301.6021 or via email at Sloan-Roach@Gwinnett.k12.ga.us.
Available MOVING YOUR NUMBERS Publications:

• Administrator Preparation Guide: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-wide Improvement.

• District Self-Assessment Guide for Moving Our Numbers: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

• Moving Your Numbers: A Synthesis of Lessons Learned from Districts Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

• Moving Your Numbers: Five Districts Share How They Used Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

• Moving Your Numbers: The Critical Role of Regional Providers in Facilitating School District Capacity to Improve Achievement for Students with Disabilities.

• Moving Your Numbers: The Critical Role of SEAs in Facilitating School District Capacity to Improve Achievement for Students with Disabilities.

• Parent/Family Companion Guide: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

• Teacher Preparation Guide: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

For More Information on Moving Your Numbers, Contact NCEO or Visit:
movingyournumbers.org

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