

BESSEMER CITY SCHOOLS

“New Outcomes for a New Day”

Three-Year Strategic Plan 2017 - 2020

VISION

Empowering Students through Excellence in Education.

Bessemer City Mission Statement

The mission of Bessemer Schools is to produce informed, responsible, productive citizens who will be lifelong learners and successful contributors of society. We will accomplish this mission in cooperation with parents and the community, by providing a dedicated staff, a diverse and challenging curriculum, within a clean, safe and caring environment.



Adopted: April 17, 2018

BCSS

Continuous Improvement

Bessemer City Board of Education

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Nearly a year ago Bessemer City School System (BCSS) embarked on a transformational journey to completely and systemically change the way teachers are delivering the curriculum. Inspired by the research of work of Steven Covey, William Glasser, Jay McTighe, Marc Prensky, Tony Wagner, Grant Wiggins, Yong Zhao, Jim Collins, and many others, we built a high-level strategic plan for change – a plan that sets the stage for change based on the convergence of literature and research; a plan that empowers great teachers and leaders to change the way they teach our students to increase learning.

This new plan will chart a new course. It will build on what we have learned and imagining our priorities forward. One of the frailties of education is instability – not staying the course long enough. Leaders are often tempted to jump from one new idea to another. It is imperative that we not do that, no matter how tempting, so this plan continues our work on our three priorities of Early Learning, World Class Education, and System Performance. It takes each of those to the next level of implementation.

BCSS has long said that Safety is our number one priority. That is absolutely true and we have demonstrated this by improving security throughout the system. With this plan, we believe that it is time to move Safety forward as our first priority, bringing the total number of priorities in our district (and in our plan) to four—(1) Safety; (2) Early Learning; (3) World Class Education; and (4) System Performance .



Dr. Keith Allen Stewart
BCSS Superintendent

Theme: “New Outcomes for a New Day”

Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities

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Strengths:

- **Of the 283 certified employees in Bessemer City Schools, 80 % of all teachers hold master's degrees or higher.**
- BCSS has 17 National Board Certified Teachers.
- The grade structure (K-5, 6-8, 9-12) is developmentally appropriate for students.
- The district is AdvancED accredited.
- All students in grades 5-12 participate in the BCSS 1:1 Laptop Initiative.
- All administrators and teachers have been issued a laptop and/or iPad.
- The system has an Alabama Connecting Classrooms Educators Students Statewide (ACCESS) distance learning lab for receiving and offering real-time courses.
- The Career / Technical Education Department offers over 38 courses in 8 fields.
- BCSS has 21st century technology in every classroom.
- Local support of Bessemer City Schools accounts for 37% of the system's \$41,000,000 budget.
- The high school curriculum is expansive, offering a wide range of courses 154 total courses, including 38 Career Tech, 18 Advanced Placement, 4 foreign languages. The district's graduation rate has increased from 33% in 2010 to 80% in 2017.
- BCSS participates in 12 different interscholastic sports that encompass 12 competitive teams.
- The BCHS Class of 2017 was awarded \$6,000,000 in scholarship dollars.
- Comprehensive health and social services (e.g., nurses, on-campus therapists, homeless counselor, social workers, career coach) provide assistance to students and their parents.
- There are successful on-going partnerships with post-secondary institutions, community agencies/service clubs, and city government.
- The middle, high school, and alternative program have full-time School Resource Officers.
- Bessemer City School System has a virtual high school (grades 9-12) as an option for students.

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Challenges:

- There were 25,258 days of student absences in 2016-2017.
- Poor public image of school system.
- There is an achievement gap as evidenced by subgroup assessment data.
- Continuous efforts are needed to ensure high morale among employees.
- Low parent/guardian participation is a challenge in middle and high school grades.
- Infusing 1:1 technology initiative into our instructional culture to positively impact student engagement and achievement.
- Effective use of data based on learning gains and growth.
- Because of the mobility of families, graduating students in the required 4-year cohort must be kept at the forefront.
- Keeping public informational systems (e.g., district and school websites, Chalkable Parent Portal, social media) current is critical.
- Positive relationships must be maintained throughout the community by all district employees.
- School safety is an on-going challenge.
- Renovating current facilities and staying abreast of preventive maintenance schedules.

Opportunities:

- There are large segments of highly supportive parents (e.g., Boosters, PTSA, etc.).
- The school system is expanding meaningful partnerships with businesses/non-profits.
- SchoolCast, websites, Facebook, Twitter, Edmodo, Chalkable, etc. provide opportunities for better school/home/community communication.
- Dual enrollment is available through local community colleges and many universities.
- College Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), and Quality Core instruction and implementation in grades K-12

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As a System, we have strong traditions of innovation, excellence and economic efficiency.

Our Core Values

Our Core Values remain constant in an ever-changing world. They provide the foundation for our work, and influence how we conduct ourselves and engage with others.

➤ Educational Excellence	➤ Human Diversity	➤ Individual Potential	➤ Lifelong Learning
High expectations are the focus of everything we do. We challenge all people to acquire a foundation of knowledge and academic skills, and to achieve their highest potential	Varied beliefs and backgrounds strengthen a public education system. We respect differences which contribute to a better society for all human beings.	Individual develop within an environment that nurtures intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and aesthetic growth.	Education is a process that begins at birth and continues throughout life. We foster curiosity, motivation and the desire to learn that extends beyond school settings.
➤ Productive Effort	➤ Shared Responsibility	➤ Ethical Behavior	➤ Continuous Improvement
The pursuit of greater knowledge and more powerful thinking demands hard work, perseverance and commitment.	The partnership among parents, students, staff and community members are characterized by mutual commitment and collaborative effort.	Our actions are distinguished by the highest standards of personal behavior, including trust, honesty, fairness, integrity and mutual respect.	Our System, structures and processes, will be subject to continual scrutiny and improvement. We will be recognized for management by facts, results focus and a long-range outlook.

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Our Commitments

Our Commitments summarize our promises to our students, parents, staff and community. They are based on our Core Values and provide a broad philosophy that filters our daily work.

Commitment to Our Students	Commitment to Our Employees
Bessemer City School System is committed to the success of our students as lifelong learners and critical thinkers. We value all students as individuals with visions of their own futures and connections to the world, and we guide them toward their full potential. BCSS will encourage our students to build meaningful relationships with their peers, teachers, administrators and staff. BCSS is committed to providing our students with physically and emotionally safe educational environments, the necessary tools for learning and the freedom to explore their many options in life.	Bessemer City School System is committed to respecting and supporting all employees. We value the skills and experiences our colleagues possess – qualities which allow them to meet high expectations and fulfill varied responsibilities. BCSS will empower employees to make decisions about student success in a collaborative environment. We encourage staff members to embrace the choices they have in career and professional development opportunities. BCSS is committed to retaining our staff through competitive compensation and by promoting an environment in which employees share their passion for their work.
Commitment to Our Parents and Families	Commitment to Our Community
Bessemer City School System is committed to welcoming, encouraging, and supporting parents and family members as key partners in the education of our students. We value the ideas, opinions and concerns of our parents, knowing they have an understanding of how issues and events affect their students and families. BCSS is committed to providing our parents and families with choices to meet every student’s individual learning needs.	Bessemer City School System is committed to engaging our community members as partners in providing a world-class education for our students. We value the support of our community to graduate well-rounded citizens who will make meaningful contributions to our society. BCSS will responsibly use the taxpayer resources provided by our community acting as good neighbors and in the best interest of our students. BCSS is committed to being honest stewards of the property entrusted to us by our community, and will be accountable to them through transparent dealings and the academic growth of our students.

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Priorities 2017 – 2020

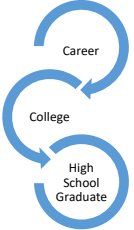
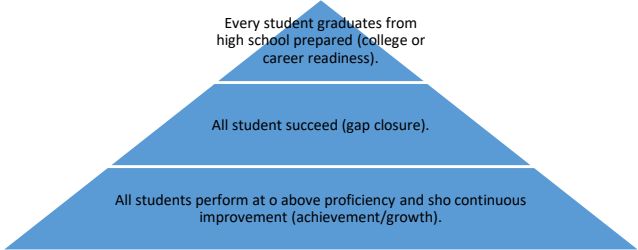
Over the past year, the Bessemer City School System blazed an innovative trail – expanding opportunities for success, integrating sustainable learning strategies, and defining and measuring what matters most for our students. The results are evident. When you walk into these BCSS classrooms, there is an energy and an excitement that you can see and feel.

Our work continues, which is why our original strategic priorities are evolving. And while we have always said that safety is our top priority, it now has a place in our Strategic Plan.

<h2>Safety</h2>	<p>Maximizing physical, psychological and online safety for students, staff and community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring physically safe learning environments• Collaborating with all schools to create a system-wide culture that prioritizes and values psychological safety and wellness• Ensuring online safety and data privacy
<h2>Early Learning</h2>	<p>Providing each child, the maximum opportunity for success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• an enthusiasm for learning,• an ability to function in a social setting,• age-appropriate communication and problem solving skills,• age-appropriate physical and emotional skills, and• optimal health.• get higher paying salaries as adults, and• are more likely to stay out of prison and off welfare.

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<h2>World Class Education</h2>	 <p>Provide all students a world class education – college, career and citizenship ready for the 21st century.</p>
<h2>System Performance</h2>	 <p>Every student graduates from high school prepared (college or career readiness).</p> <p>All student succeed (gap closure).</p> <p>All students perform at o above proficiency and sho continuous improvement (achievement/growth).</p>

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Safety

Explore	Set Expectations	Create	Integrate	Implement	Evaluate	Refine
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Goal	Strategy
CREATE a culture of safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate current state of district and school safety culture • Create BCSS key safety characteristics for school strategic planning tool • Create and implement system to monitor and maintain culture of safety • Create and implement safety feedback tool
INTEGRATE and IMPLEMENT the BCSS psychological safety and wellness framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate current state of school mental health services • Refine mental health service delivery model
EVALUATE and Refine physical safety measures and systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate current state of school security and safety systems • Create and implement recommendations for security personnel staffing • Refine security and surveillance hardware through capital planning • Evaluate effectiveness of layered safety programs
CREATE and INTEGRATE staff understanding through training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine the evaluation and mitigation of dangerous (bullying, threatening, suicidal) behavior, child abuse and child neglect • Implement restorative practices to maintain safe learning environments • Create and implement additional training opportunities for campus security personnel • Create and implement system-wide staff training to increase understanding of physical safety measures, systems and procedures • Create and implement system-wide staff training to increase awareness, understanding and psychological safety skill-building
CREATE and INTEGRATE student learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate success of current community partnerships • Refine community partnerships to seamlessly serve students, staff and parents

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EVALUATE and REFINE community partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate success of current community partnerships• Refine community partnerships to seamlessly serve students, staff and parents
EVALUATE and REFINE student online safety and data privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create and implement safe digital citizenship programs to educate our students on data and information sharing on the Internet• Create and implement school staff training regarding student data privacy laws• Create and implement school staff training regarding student data privacy laws• Implement a formal and robust digital data privacy program to ensure all data in the school community is protected

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Early Learning

The Office of School Readiness defines school readiness as a condition whereby children enter school with:

- an enthusiasm for learning,
- an ability to function in a social setting,
- age-appropriate communication and problem solving skills,
- age-appropriate physical and emotional skills, and
- optimal health.
- get higher paying salaries as adults, and
- are more likely to stay out of prison and off welfare.

Explore	Set Expectations	Create	Integrate	Implement	Evaluate	Refine
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Goal	Strategy
EARLY LEARNING We will focus on early assessment and intervention at the Pre-K through third grade levels to ensure early academic success.	Classroom Environment “A preschool learning environment includes outside spaces, indoor places, and everything in between—toys, learning materials, wall displays, and equipment. It also includes the children and adults who interact in these spaces. A well-planned environment reflects the culture, home language, and interests of all children and their families. The learning environment has an important impact on children’s efforts to build relationships, play and learn, eat, and rest.” (Cairone & Mackrain, pg.107) The social environment (schedules, responsibilities, expectations, and routines) works in tandem with the physical environment (materials, displays, learning areas, furniture, and maintenance) to create a positive and supportive learning community.

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Explore	Set Expectations	Create	Integrate	Implement	Evaluate	Refine
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Goal	Strategy
<p>EARLY LEARNING We will focus on early assessment and intervention at the Pre-K through third grade levels to ensure early academic success.</p>	<p>Classroom Community A well-managed and inclusive classroom supports constructive and positive relationships, and discourages inappropriate behaviors. The goal is to help children develop self-regulation and autonomy. Creating this environment is a shared responsibility of the lead and auxiliary teacher, the director and all staff members (food service, custodial, special area teachers, volunteers, etc.) who work with the Pre-K child in the OSR classroom.</p>
	<p>Building a Classroom Community “Caring relationships are fostered through nurturing practices, and are the basis for building a safe, strong, and caring community in which everyone is accepted, secure, and ready to learn and have fun.” (Cairone & Mackrain, pg. B11)</p>
	<p>Cooperation Among Teachers</p>
	<p>Transitions “When transitions are well planned and children are not expected to wait for long periods of time, which is something they are not yet developmentally ready to do, behaviors are more likely to be positive.” (Cairone & Mackrain, pg.96)</p>
	<p>Discipline and Behavior Management (Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs, pgs. 150-159) “Teaching preschoolers is hard work and can quickly become overwhelming when children’s behavioral concerns are a problem. There is no one solution or recipe that will ensure every day runs smoothly; however, there are steps teachers can take to help create a peaceful and inviting classroom, where both children and teachers feel safe and happy. Creating such places and implementing these practices ensures learning is happening at each and every moment, and children are gaining the social and emotional</p>

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	skills they need for a lifetime of success in and beyond the classroom.” (Cairone & Mackrain, pg. 5)
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Explore	Set Expectations	Create	Integrate	Implement	Evaluate	Refine
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Goal	Strategy
<p>EARLY LEARNING We will focus on early assessment and intervention at the Pre-K through third grade levels to ensure early academic success.</p>	<p>Planning, Teaching, Learning Planning for instruction includes creating a daily schedule, daily lesson plans, short term lesson plans, (weekly/monthly themes and lessons), and long term lesson plans (themes or studies for the year). The interests, curiosity, and needs of the children should be taken into consideration when developing classroom plans. Developing lessons and free choice activities around themes or studies, maximizes learning in a meaningful context based on the NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice</p>
	<p>Gross Motor/Outdoor Play Daily activities should include many opportunities for young children to develop competence and confidence in their gross motor skills. While children develop many of their physical capabilities through play they also need planned movement activities with verbal and modeled instruction and structured physical skill development opportunities. The OSR Pre-K classroom schedule is required to include 60 minutes of gross motor activity. This 60 minutes may be broken into smaller segments of time within the day.</p>

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EARLY LEARNING

We will focus on early assessment and intervention at the Pre-K through third grade levels to ensure early academic success.

Teaching Strategies GOLD® is an authentic, ongoing observational system for assessing children from birth through third grade. Extensive field tests have shown it to be both valid and reliable. Available online and in print, the system can be used with any developmentally appropriate early childhood curriculum.

Teaching Strategies GOLD® is based on 38 objectives that include predictors of school success and are aligned with state early learning standards. These objectives are the heart of the system- teachers use them to focus their observations as they gather information to make classroom decisions.

With Teaching Strategies GOLD® online, teachers can:

- use a variety of tools to gather and organize meaningful data quickly.



- create a developmental profile of each child to answer the questions, “What does this child know? What is he or she able to do?”
- understand how their observations relate to important objectives for development and learning and use that understanding to scaffold each child’s learning.
- determine if a child is making progress and compare the child’s knowledge, skills, and behaviors to those of most children of his or her age or class/group.
- recognize children who might benefit from special help, screening, or further evaluation.
- generate comprehensive reports that can be customized easily and shared with family members and other stakeholders.

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World Class Education

The goal of a world class education is to prepare students for the college or career path of their choice.

Challenged by authors like Marc Prensky, Tony Wagner and Yong Zhao, Bessemer City School System aspires to provide a world class education for all students. We believe our students are the future leaders of this country and perhaps the world. We want to prepare them to compete on the world stage for any college or career of their choice. Or as Tony Wagner says, "...we want our students to be college, career and citizenship ready for the 21st century."

What this means in education is that we must transform our curriculum – the knowledge and skills we teach our students, and the outcomes. We must streamline the number of benchmarks assessments, hold data meetings with principals and instructional coaches to discuss academic gains and losses; teachers must use real time data to adjust their instruction—focusing on student mastery. We must transform our instructional strategies to make sure that learning sticks, or is sustainable, and engages all students deeply. We also know that in order to reimagine and transform teaching, learning and leading for the 21st century, we must align all support systems with this work.

BCSS started transforming its curriculum in 2016. We did so by examining the academic rigor and cognitive complexity of Alabama state standards, common core academic standards and national standards against what we know our students will need for success in their lifetimes. We found that most standards are written at lower level thinking skills or lower level cognitive complexity. We also found that most standards are isolated fragments of learning disconnected from higher, more important concepts and skills. This is not best for our students.

Therefore, after reviewing the knowledge and skills most desired by today's businesses and employers, our teachers worked to integrate the state and national standards to create a foundation or curricular floor. Next, teachers raised the cognitive complexity of

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our new World Class Outcomes, so that these integrated standards require higher order thinking skills and were aligned to the knowledge and skills our “end-users” desire most.

BCSS participates in Alabama State Department of Education testing programs. Students in grades 3-8 take Scantron Performance Series. This assessment measures progress towards being college and career ready by the time a student graduates high school. This assessment is used to evaluate the effectiveness of school programs and instruction and to identify areas students may need additional help to master.

Students in 11th grade take the **ACT**. The state of Alabama pays for one administration of this college entrance examination (taken in the spring of the 11th grade year) so all students have an opportunity to consider all available post-high school options. Students who earn the college ready benchmark score on any of the subject tests are considered "college ready" in that area.

ACT - [ACT Student Website](#)

Students in 12th grade take the **ACT WorkKeys**. This assessment measures key skills employers want their workers to have. Students who score at the silver level or above on the WorkKeys are considered "career ready" by the state of Alabama.

BCSS has also created and integrated expectations for World Class Instructional Practices. These include choosing higher order thinking strategies that are at the top of Bloom’s Taxonomy, engaging digital native students via a focus on student voice and choice, personalizing learning strategies that are relevant and rigorous, and integrating world class tools.

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World Class Education Continued

Achieving sustainable learning for the 21st century

- Preparing students to compete on a world stage for jobs that require a high level of creativity and innovation
- Offering essential sustainable learning that requires the most important information to be taught in a way that can be retained, that stretches across content areas and that incorporates the tools our young people will be required to use in the workforce
- Personalizing education so students develop a deep understanding of self, world, career and their own pathway to success

Explore	Set Expectations	Create	Integrate	Implement	Evaluate	Refine
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Goal	Strategy
Provide all students a world class education – college, career and citizenship ready for the 21 st century.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement the CCRS Curriculum• Create, integrate and implement the BCSS Curriculum• Evaluate and refine the implementation of current BCSS world class instructional practices• Implement a balanced assessment approach based on formative and summative assessments• Create pathways for student advocacy to ensure that students are college, career and citizenship ready• Integrate, implement and refine the alignment of resources to what is best for students as outlined in the BCSS Strategic Plan

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement and evaluate evidence-based design to create, engineer and build school environments that supports a world class education for all students.• Evaluate and refine policies that ensure a world class education for all students
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System Performance

The system performance priority empowers the System to define and measure what matters most.

The **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015, and represents good news for our nation’s schools. Since the inception of ESSA, there has been a bright light on accountability in America education. In the Bessemer City School System, we embrace our responsibilities to our students, staff and community, and welcome quality accountability at all levels and for all aspects of our educational organization.

As we launch this strategic plan to create the accountability structures, processes and mechanisms we hope to see in American education – accountability systems that measure the most important outcomes from each part of our system. We are pushing ourselves to make sure that the accountability systems we envision and build are of the highest quality, embrace authenticity, and are focused on rigorous and important outcomes – outcomes expected by our business partners and higher education – and that would serve our students well.

As we look toward the next three years, we plan to stay the course in developing, implementing and refining our balanced assessment system for students. This includes all of the various system components. We also plan to continue to refine our school accreditation process aligned to system expectations, and various communication tools for parents and community members.

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System Performance Continued

Defining and measuring what matters most

- Defining what matters most to our stakeholders
- Developing a cutting-edge System performance Framework to measure student, educator, school, leader and System performance
- Integrating authentic measurements that will lead to continuous improvement for our students and allow our stakeholders to remain informed

Explore	Set Expectations	Create	Integrate	Implement	Evaluate	Refine
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Goal	Strategy
REFINE BCSS as an Employer of Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set expectations to ensure accountability for a healthy culture and productive climate of professionals • Refine the salary schedule to include all employee groups
IMPLEMENT continuous development and improvement of the BCSS balanced assessment system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine the balanced assessment system to measure 21st century skills through authentic performance relevant to real-world expectations • Refine professional development support systems and pathways from induction to leadership development • Evaluate effectiveness and strategically align goals and direction of support services • Evaluate operational support services in order to improve efficiency in processes and systems • Evaluate align, rigor and role-specificity of all employee evaluation systems

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CREATE autonomy with accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create and implement various communication tools to better inform and engage parents and community members
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Academic Accountability Indicators Bessemer City School District State Report Card

School Year	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	
Academic Achievement – 20.00% Overall Score	36.90			
Academic Growth- 30.00% Overall Score	76.02			
Graduation Rate – 30.00% Overall Score	78.40			
College and Career Readiness – 10% Overall Score	28.00			
Chronic Absenteeism – 10% Overall Score	21.55			
Student Engagement	NA			
Average Daily Membership (Students)	3,740.8			
Overall District Score: (Points)	D (64)			

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND MONITORING

The superintendent and central office directors will ensure continuous improvement and monitoring is being done through the following actions:

1. Two community strategic plan update meetings per year
2. Strategic plan monitoring in monthly principal meetings
3. Strategic plan monitoring in monthly staff meetings
4. Aligning each board action to strategic plan area, goal, and objective