Annual Report to the Community

Key Actions and Next Steps / 2019-20

- Prepared by Pinellas County Schools
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Executive Summary

Bridging the Gap (BTG) is a Pinellas County Schools (PCS) initiative designed by the district to close or greatly narrow educational achievement gaps between black students and their non-black peers by the year 2027. The BTG Plan outlines educational equity gaps across six goal areas as follows:

- **Goal 1:** Graduation Rate   **Goal 4:** Student Discipline
- **Goal 2:** Student Achievement   **Goal 5:** ESE Identification
- **Goal 3:** Advanced Coursework   **Goal 6:** Minority Hiring

The initiative's overarching goal is to provide supported pathways to improve the educational outcomes of black students, particularly with regard to improved graduation rates, equitable performance on standardized assessments, participation in advanced level coursework, reductions in disproportionate disciplinary consequences and overrepresentation in Exceptional Student Education (Emotional/Behavioral Disability in particular). Additionally, the district has prioritized increased teacher diversity in developing strategies to recruit and retain teachers of color.

The plan was formally approved by the School Board in May of 2017 and executed for the first time during the 2017-18 school year. The challenges of addressing differences in educational outcomes for black students have required broad revisions to district practice to impact gap closure. In addition, substantive system changes to measure and monitor the gaps, manage the strategies as written, and communicate BTG efforts to schools and local communities has been essential. The district's plan has been recognized nationally and statewide for its ambitious targets, timelines, and public transparency.

The key findings presented in this report represent a summary of conclusions regarding implementation efforts for the six goals stated above. The district's ongoing evaluation of its efforts is designed to accomplish the following: (1) identify the extent to which PCS has developed structures and systems to support educational equity and meet stated BTG goals (2) highlight the successes of the BTG initiative to date (3) identify areas for refinement or improvement and (4) establish a set of best-practice recommendations for improving the plan moving forward. The findings are part of a multi-year evaluation of the BTG Plan that is ongoing in support of district leadership and annual improvements to the plan.

The district continues to track data outcomes related to the six gaps addressed in the BTG Plan, with the aspirational goal of eliminating those gaps over 10 years. At the end of 2019-20 school year, the district narrowed the gaps in several goals areas, with graduation rates not yet finalized but internal metrics showing continued improvement.

Table 1. Gaps / Data Trends

BTG Goal Areas / Districtwide Data		Race	Baseline Data 2016	Planning Year 2017	2018	2019	2020	GAP Change
Goal 1	**Graduation Rate** % of students graduating / 4 years	Black %	65.5	69.3	76.2	81.3	*	+15.8
		Non-Black	83.4	85.8	88.1	90.0	*	+6.6
		GAP	**17.9**	**16.5**	**11.9**	**8.7**	*	**9.2**
Goal 2	**FSA ELA-READING** % of students scoring Level 3+	Black %	24.2	25.7	24.6	27.1	*	+2.9
		Non-Black	56.4	57.7	57.4	59.7	*	+3.3
		GAP	**32.2**	**32.0**	**32.8**	**32.6**	*	**0.4**
	FSA MATH % of students scoring Level 3+	Black %	27.9	29.0	29.2	30.0	*	+2.1
		Non-Black	60.9	62.0	62.2	62.8	*	+1.9
		GAP	**33.0**	**33.0**	**33.0**	**32.8**	*	**0.2**
Goal 3	**Advanced Coursework** % of students enrolled in gifted (K-8)	Black %	3.8	4.0	5.0	5.9	6.3	
		GAP	**14.2**	**14.0**	**13.0**	**12.1**	**11.7**	**2.5**
	Advanced Coursework % of students enrolled advanced courses (6-12)	Black %	12.1	11.9	13.7	14.5	15.1	
		GAP	**5.9**	**6.1**	**4.3**	**3.5**	**2.9**	**3.0**
Goal 4	**Student Discipline / OSS** Risk Ratio / # of students suspended	Black #	2,918	2,374	2,625	2,481	1,790	-1,128
		Black RR	4.33	4.07	3.61	3.79	4.34	
		GAP	**3.33**	**3.07**	**2.61**	**2.79**	**3.34**	**0.01**
	Student Discipline / Referrals Risk Ratio / # of students w/ a referral	Black #	7,009	6,919	6,867	6,548	5,343	-1,666
		Black RR	2.38	2.64	2.43	2.60	2.64	
		GAP	**1.38**	**1.64**	**1.43**	**1.60**	**1.64**	**0.26**
Goal 5	**ESE Identification** Risk Ratio / ESE	Black RR	1.45	1.45	1.46	1.40	1.43	
		GAP	**0.45**	**0.45**	**0.46**	**0.40**	**0.43**	**0.2**
	ESE Identification Risk Ratio / # of students as EBD	Black #	427	335	363	300	255	-172
		Black RR	4.20	3.94	3.84	3.34	3.50	
		GAP	**3.20**	**2.94**	**2.84**	**2.34**	**2.50**	**0.7**
Goal 6	**Minority Hiring** % of instructional positions	Black %	8.3	8.8	9.2	9.1	9.2	
		GAP	**9.7**	**9.2**	**8.8**	**8.9**	**8.8**	**0.9**

The district has set 10-year goals and annual benchmarks for each goal area, though it should be noted that the gaps are not likely to decrease equally each year. The district may find that some gaps decrease quickly while others remain stable (or widen) until the plan's actions work in unison to bring about the systemic change needed to impact all gaps.

- **Goal 1: Graduation Rate:** The district continues to see positive increases in its black graduation rate, which has improved by 15.8 percentage points since the baseline year of 2015-16 (from 65.5% in 2015-16 to 81.3% in 2018-19). This is the highest black graduation rate in our district's history. The district has not received its final 2019-20 graduation rate totals from the state as of the publication of this report, though internal metrics show that the graduation rate for black students will increase again this year (estimated at or near 83%). Both the improvement in the black graduation rate and the reduction in the gap are trending ahead of the district's annual targets outlined in the BTG Plan. A series of interventions and advanced data protocols outlined in the BTG Plan have contributed to steady increases. The 2019-20 graduation rate is expected to be released by the state in December of 2020.

- **Goal 2: Academic Achievement:** Due to the current COVID-19 health crises, the 2019-20 state FSA testing used to measure achievement gaps in reading and math were cancelled by the state Department of Education. For this reason, the BTG Goal 2 data cannot be updated for 2019-20. However, data from district assessments in reading and math taken prior to the school closings showed positive trends in black achievement. Using state assessment data from the previous school year (2018-19), the district has seen increases in both English-Language Arts (ELA) and math proficiency among black learners, though the gaps have not yet narrowed. The gaps in 2018-19 were slightly better than the previous year, with nearly a 33-percentage point gap remaining among black and non-black students in ELA and math. The scores for black students earning satisfactory scores (Level 3 or above) on the FSA ELA and math assessments ranged from 25% to 30% depending on the grade level. The district remains committed to its long-term goal of equity and cultural competence training for its instructional staff (approx. 7,000 teachers) and continues to explore new actions to impact academic gaps. The district's investment in Reading Recovery as a one-on-one reading intervention for first graders and the recent formation of a community committee to review curriculum through a lens of anti-racism and bias are two examples. The district's consistent increases in black student enrollment in advanced courses may also impact reading and math performance in time.

- **Goal 3: Advanced Coursework:** The district has seen consistent narrowing of enrollment gaps in gifted, advanced, and accelerated courses. Actions outlined in the BTG Plan specific to Goal 3 are impacting positive trends. Black enrollment in gifted in 2019-20 reached 6.3% of all gifted students in 2019-20 in grades K-8. That is up from just 3.8% in the baseline year of 2015-16 and is the highest minority enrollment in gifted that the

district has had. A similarly strong trajectory is found in enrollments in advanced and accelerated courses in middle and high school. The gaps for Goal 3 are defined as the percentage of black students enrolled in gifted and advanced courses in comparison to the district's black student population of 18%. The district's black enrollment in advanced and accelerated courses as of 2019-20 is now at 15.1% and the gap continues to narrow each year. Total enrollment was at 12.1% during the baseline year of 2015-16. Though a gap remains, the district's efforts to expand gifted screening, install new data monitoring tools that identify students who may be interested in advanced courses, and one-on-one supports for schools in creating more inclusive master schedules are having an impact. The courses included in this measure are all advanced courses offered in middle school, and all honors, Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement (AP), AICE and IB courses offered in high school.

- **Goal 4: Student Discipline:** The district continues to see declines in the number of black students receiving a referral or out-of-school suspension (OSS), though disparity gaps remain. The initial rollout of restorative practices has focused on preventative measures and culture-climate building and may be positively impacting school climate as evidenced by fewer referrals and suspensions for both black and non-black students. Due to school closures at the end of the 2019-20 school year, referrals and suspensions were not issued during the final quarter of the school year. Still, disparity gaps were calculated in comparing the issuance of referrals and suspensions to black students in comparison to their non-black peers through Quarter 3. Black students remain about two times more likely to receive a referral and about four times more likely to be suspended. The district measures discipline disparity gaps via a "risk ratio," the ratio of referrals and suspensions given to black students relative to the black student population. The risk ratio for black students in 2019-20 was 2.64 for referrals and 4.34 for OSS. To reduce the risk and close the disparity gaps, the district must successfully reduce referrals and suspensions for black students until the percentage of referrals and suspensions issued is similar to the black population in the district (which is measured as 18% for purposes of the BTG Plan). In 2019-20, 38.5% of students receiving referrals were black and 50.7% of students receiving an OSS were black. The district continues its commitment to PBIS and its investment in equity and restorative practices training for all staff that is designed to build stronger classroom relationships, respectful dialogue between students and teachers, and improved processes to limit out-of-school suspensions.

- **Goal 5: ESE Identification:** The district has seen a steady decline in the number of black students assigned to the ESE designation of Emotional / Behavioral Disability (EBD), and the number and percentage of new black eligibilities has also dropped. The district's number of black students who are EBD was at 255 at the end of the 2019-20 school year, down from 427 in the baseline year of 2015-16 (a 40% decrease). The number of new EBD eligibilities identified across all PCS schools has dropped as well, a decrease of 75% since the baseline year from 20 black students in 2015-16 to 5 in 2019-20. Despite reductions in new eligibilities, identifications for black

students in EBD remains disproportionate and the district's risk ratio has been relatively stable for the past two years. The risk ratio for EBD for black students was at 3.50 in 2019-20, slightly lower than the baseline year of 2015-16. The overall risk ratio for black students across all ESE designations is 1.43. To reach district targets in reducing risk ratios the percentage must be at or near 18% (the percentage of black students in the district per the baseline year). Among all students identified as EBD, 46% are black. As a result of actions outlined the BTG Plan, a positive trend is emerging among new eligibilities. In the 2019-20 school year, 12 black students were newly designated as EBD, representing 25% of all new EBD eligibilities (7 transferring into the district and 5 identified by PCS staff). The district's training of school behavior specialists, improved processes, and tighter controls outlined in the BTG Plan are in place to impact these outcomes over time.

- **Goal 6: Minority Hiring:** The district has seen steady increases in the number of district teachers who are black, with the number and percentage of black teachers hired increasing slightly in 2019-20. The gap for Goal 6 is defined as the percentage of black teachers in comparison to the district's black student population of 18%. The district has increased the percentage of black teachers from 8.3% (622) in 2015-16 to 9.2% (665) in 2019-20. The Human Resources department has been innovative in its approaches, including the hiring of new HR "partners" to work with schools more closely in finding candidates and filling positions efficiently.

BTG Implementation / Key Actions

The Bridging the Gap initiative is a large-scale effort to improve persistent inequitable educational outcomes for black students in Pinellas County Schools. The data outcomes measured within the plan have seen improvement, though much work is yet to be done and some of the systems changes needed across a large school district are still in the early stages. As racial achievement gaps are long-standing in the school district (and most others nationally), the plan as a set of actions and measures is the start of a multi-year journey to address deep, structural changes required by the district centered on equity alignment, accountability, and sustainability. Transformation of mindsets and practices specific to race will be needed at all levels of the organization, from district processes to classroom instruction.

To ensure alignment and clarity of the goals and desired outcomes, the district has spent much of the first three years of implementation communicating the plan to stakeholders, developing consistent methods and measures, fine-tuning action steps, and rolling out some of the larger initiatives in small steps. The district has been successful in keeping the plan and the hard realities of racial achievement gaps in front of its leaders and teachers in spite of many other mandates coming from state and federal legislation. Ongoing meetings with BTG Plan goal managers have continued, nearly uninterrupted, for three years running and the district's Executive Leadership (including the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, and Minority Achievement Officer) are consistently present for those meetings. The Minority Achievement Officer was hired with input from the community to help coordinate the efforts of the BTG Plan.

The district has established new systems that show promise in advancing the strategies moving forward and has met many of the implementation benchmarks it has set forth. The installation of new systems has been coupled with new data reporting mechanisms and training that are still new to most staff members. Challenges to large-scale implementation of the plan across every district school are real and have slowed progress in some cases. Still, many creative solutions are in place and some notable progress is evident in implementing actions outlined in the BTG Plan, from hiring equity trainers to the development of tracking systems to identify students of color who can succeed in advanced courses but who are not yet registered. The district has been innovative in introducing new solutions, even if the integration into existing district systems are not fully complete. Still, equity efforts continue to improve, and some successes are evident that were not found in previous years.

Successes to Date

- Led by school-based Equity Champions, equity teams at each school conduct ongoing trainings, lead professional dialogue around bias and racism, and problem-solve around data to reduce equity gaps. In 2019-20, equity teams conducted data walks to review academic and disciplinary gaps by race and increase dialogue among school staff about racial bias and strategies to move the needle for black learners.

- The district has trained nearly all of its teachers and school leadership teams in the foundations of restorative practices and has trained more than 30% of its teaching staff and all school leadership teams in strategies provided by AVID's Culturally Relevant Teaching.

- The district has also trained nearly all its school-based behavior specialists in handling student behavioral matters via a proactive, relational manner consistent with best practice.

- The district has partnered with the Pinellas Education Foundation to fund a staff developer (trainer) to support student access to college resources (applications, financial aid, etc.) through its Elevating Excellence initiative. As part of this initiative, two English and two math teachers at each high school were trained by a test prep company in strategies to support higher SAT and ACT scores for diverse learners.

- The district's Transformation Zone (TZ) continues to see evidence of success. Eleven of the 13 schools have improved a full letter grade or more. Ongoing professional development in TZ schools included standards-based lesson delivery and equity training that may be scalable to other school sites. The district continues to invest in TZ schools through additional training, support staff, extended school days, and retention bonuses.

- New data tracking systems and scheduling processes have led to a steady increase in enrollment rates in advanced coursework with black student participation approaching equal representation of the black student population. Black enrollments across all advanced and accelerated courses reached 15.1% in 2019-20, the highest in the district's history.

Next Steps

- The district has finalized a new contract with the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP). It is designed to support improved implementation across all district schools. Additionally, 20 district schools will receive additional training and guidance in reaching implementation fidelity and serving as examples for other schools to follow.

- An assistant principal from each school was selected as the lead coordinator of schoolwide discipline structures aligned to the key elements of Positive Behavioral Support and Intervention (PBIS). New PBIS training modules aligned to restorative practices have been development and will be offered to school teams in 2020-21. At the end of 2019-20, 48 district schools had been recognized as outstanding PBIS sites.

- The district's investment in Reading Recovery as an intervention for struggling readers in first grade showed promising results during its first year of implementation. The program will be expanded across schools with high minority enrollments.

- A district-wide commitment will continue to support ESE students (including EBD students) remaining at their close-to-home schools in support of more inclusive academic environments.

- A new program is under development called Call Me MISTER that is designed to support, mentor, and engage black males in high school. The district is partnering with the College of Education at USF-St. Petersburg to develop the program to mirror a similar initiative at Clemson University.

- The district is investing in a new college readiness tool for students and families called Naviance. The website and related college-career planning tools are designed to help all learners identify their strengths, improve their social-emotional skills, and gain confidence in planning for high school success and beyond.

- The district has invested in a new Equity Training Specialist position in the Professional Development Department to coordinate equity trainings and follow-up coaching for teachers and staff in support of strategies to reduce achievement gaps.

Bridging the Gap (BTG) / Summary Findings

Pinellas County Schools has focused on three essential approaches for systemic change to promote educational equity aimed at developing employee and system awareness of achievement gaps and, in turn, increasing application and advocacy of best practices to improve outcomes for black learners. The focus areas are:

- **Supporting a deeper understanding of systemic inequities, implicit bias, and institutional racism to better understand root causes of the achievement gap through equity-centered professional development;**
- **Expanding data use to identify inequities, plan for improvement, and monitor progress of equity efforts;**
- **Integrating culturally relevant and restorative practices within school structures and instructional and classroom management strategies to foster student learning environments that meet the needs of diverse learners.**

The district has made progress within its equity efforts, particularly with regard to developing and implementing system-wide professional development and improving early warning systems. Some goals within the Bridging the Gap

Plan have evidenced greater success in terms of student outcomes than others, consistent with three-year implementation expectations. In shifting from theory to practice, the district will need to continue to refine and adapt its goals and actions to align with current capacity and promote sustainability and scalability in time.

A majority of action steps within each goal have focused on equity training for teachers and leaders, improved data monitoring, and the identification and tracking of students who are at risk. There is evidence of systems growth in each of these key areas. As an example, the district has built elaborate data systems that track and color-code the progress of students in meeting graduation requirements and matching students to advanced courses that may interest them. Another example is the district's investment in partnerships with national experts in equitable practices, the development of local equity trainers, and a wide selection of equity training options.

Professional Development

A successful, comprehensive professional development plan must include continuing education beyond introductory offerings (awareness level training) that emphasize how stakeholders can more effectively act in response to biases and systemic barriers in building equitable, culturally responsive schools and classrooms (application and advocacy level training). This remains an ongoing challenge for a district that employees more than 7,000 teachers and administrators and hires new employees year-round. The district remains focused on training all teachers and staff in the three primary equity trainings offered: Restorative Practices, Culturally Relevant Teaching, and Equity Champions. As of the summer of 2020, nearly all teachers were trained in restorative practices, nearly one-third were trained in AVID's Culturally Relevant Teaching, and approximately 15% had taken part in the Equity Champions (equity mindset) cohort. It should be noted that the equity mindset training (Equity Champions) has been offered initially to those who elect to take part in keeping with a multi-year phased implementation. Many additional offerings are now available as some teachers and leaders have expressed an interest in deepening their understanding and use of equitable practices. The breadth and depth of trainings specific to equity, bias, anti-racism, and culturally responsive practices were not available prior to the development of the BTG Plan and have been a primary focus for the district during the first three years of the plan. The trainings are designed to support each employee's growth along a continuum from "awareness" to "application" and "advocacy." A list of those trainings and a status report on the number of employees trained to date is provided below.

Table 2. District Equity Trainings / Status Update

PCS / District Equity Trainings: Moving from Awareness to Application to Advocacy					
Training Title	**Description**	**Intended Audience**	**Required**	**# Trained**	**Phase***
Required					

Restorative Practices	**Introduction to Restorative Practices**	Developing equity-centered practices that impact school climate and culture to intentionally build classroom community and a stronger sense of belonging for all learners.	All PCS instructional, administration	Required	6,753	Awareness
	Restorative Practices: Using Circles Effectively		All PCS instructional, administration	Required	6,608	Application
AVID CRT	**AVID Culturally Relevant Teaching**	Developing curriculum, lessons and activities that include specific, intentional and practical strategies to engage, challenge, and support diverse learners.	All PCS instructional, administration	Required	2,403	Awareness
Equity Champions	**Equity Champions: Equity Cohort**	Developing cultural competence by recognizing the historical, cultural, social, and racial barriers that can influence beliefs and biases and impact learning.	All PCS instructional, administration, staff	Opt in when ready	1,121	Awareness
	Equity Champions: Continuing Education		All PCS instructional, administration, staff	Required. After completing Equity Cohort	981	Advocacy
Additional / Optional						
Additional Offerings	**Beaches, Benches, Boycotts**		All PCS employees	Optional	535	Awareness
	Critical Literacy in a Culturally Relevant Classroom		All PCS instructional, administration	Optional	306	Application
	CRT and the Brain: Book Study		All PCS instructional, administration	Optional	64	Application
	CRT Theory & Strategies		All PCS employees	Optional	119	Application
	Defining and Confronting Implicit Bias		All PCS employees	Optional	720	Awareness
	Desegregation Bike Tour		All PCS employees	Optional	20	Awareness
	Digging Deeper into Literature		All PCS employees	Optional	175	Application
	Equity Book Study		All PCS employees	Optional	35	Awareness

Equity Podcast Study	All PCS employees	Optional	419	Awareness
Facilitated Equity Planning	All PCS instructional, administration	Optional	181	Application
Heritage Walk	All PCS employees	Optional	522	Awareness
Introduction to Equitable Grading	All PCS instructional, administration	Optional	729	Awareness
Implementing Equitable Grading Practices	All PCS instructional, administration	Optional	242	Application
Model Equity Classrooms	All PCS instructional, administration	Optional	72	Application
Student Voice in a Student-Centered Classroom	All PCS instructional, administration	Optional	35	Application

*Note: The trainings are designed to support each employee's growth along a continuum from "awareness" to "application" and "advocacy."

Though training has expanded considerably, the consistent use of key strategies that are provided in the training(s) is not yet evidenced across schools and classrooms. The fidelity implementation of key actions is a critical next step for the district to be successful in meeting its long-term achievement gap targets. As the district's BTG plan continues to evolve, a shift in strategic planning and implementation is necessary. For example, the district must successfully pivot to new actions in a time and manner that will move the system forward without overwhelming teachers, students, and parents. A successful example of this is the district's decision five years ago to offer on-campus SAT and ACT testing to high school students during the school day instead of Saturdays only (an opportunity gap solution). After several years of fidelity implementation, the district moved to a second phase of student and family support through its Elevating Excellence program, including summer college-reading seminars, trained SAT and ACT tutors available during the school day, and new College and Career Centers in five pilot high schools. The district's Minority Achievement Officer has also hosted ongoing college planning seminars for juniors and seniors and has identified and tracked black middle school students who have shown an interest in college. In this way, the actions of the BTG plan must continue to reach wider and dig deeper.

Though training is a key component to change, the district must weigh the balance between professional development aimed at shifting mindsets (an ongoing and lengthy process) and operational efforts designed to interrupt inequities that may exist in school and district structures (a challenging, shorter-term fix). An example of this is balancing the district's training and exploration of equitable grading practices (a promising, long-term solution) with steps to revisit district grading policies and practices (a more immediate, structural change). The district investment in Reading Recovery as a one-on-one support to struggling readers in first grade is another example of pairing intensive training for teachers with actions that directly impact students and school structures. The reading program was implemented in 2019-20 for the first time and is showing promising results, both in building the instructional skills of teachers and

helping students to read better. Across 12 PCS elementary schools, 89 students were chosen to take part when the school year began (66% of students in the program were black)**.** The students received a half-hour lesson each day for 12-20 weeks with a specially trained Reading Recovery teacher.

Pre- and post-data were available in Quarter 3 for 79 of the original 89 students. Of those 79 students, 66 began the year at a pre-kindergarten reading level and 13 were at a kindergarten level. As of February, none of the students were at a pre-kindergarten level, 40 had advanced to a kindergarten level, 32 scored at a 1st grade level, and 7 had moved beyond 1st grade. When the data for Reading Recovery were reviewed by school, similar positive trends were found at each site (see data below). At each school, the average growth of students from fall to winter was stronger than what is typically found nationally. It should be noted that the PCS students in the program began further behind than what is typical for the program in other school districts. The program will enter its second year in 2020-21.

Figure 1. Reading Recovery Intervention / Fall (Round One) Growth / 2019-20
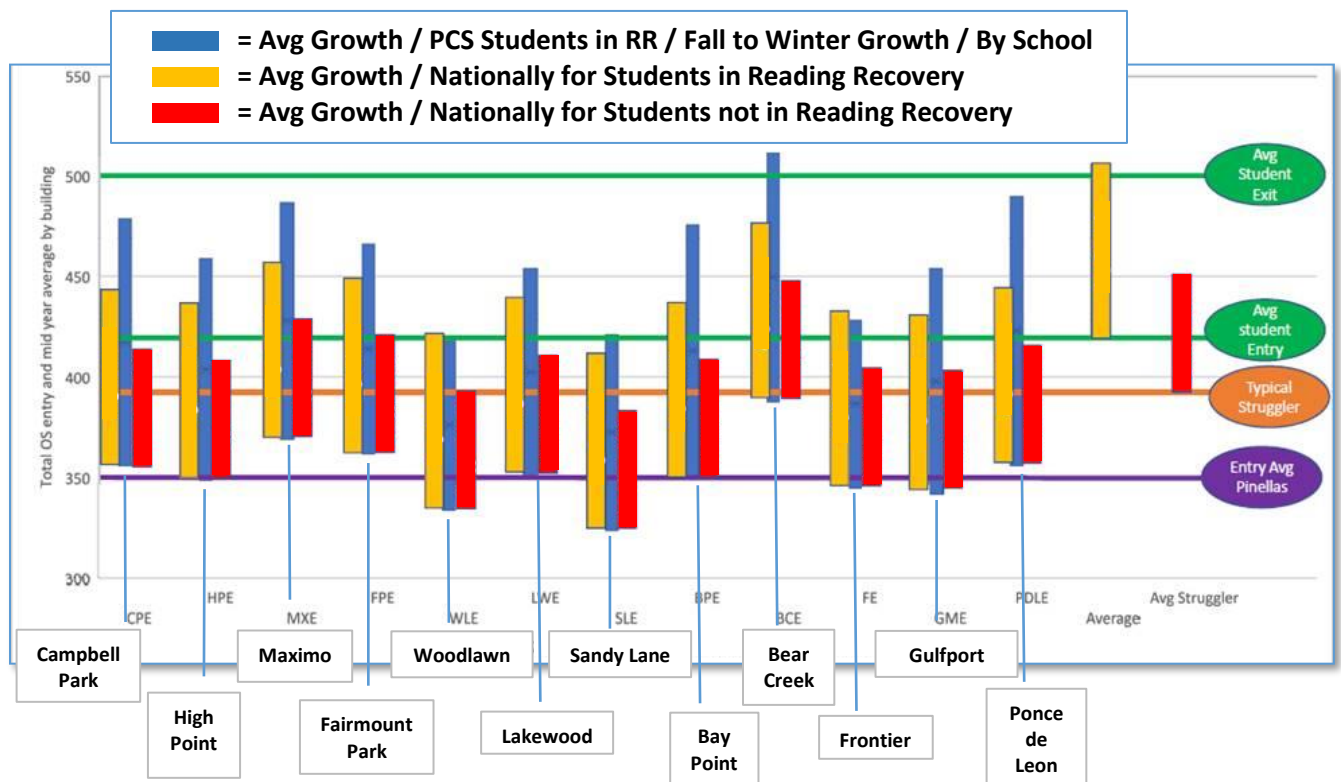
Similar to the other BTG goal areas, action steps specific to Goal 4 (discipline disparity) focus on building capacity for equity-centered practice through professional development. The district has continued its commitment to Positive Behavioral Support and Intervention (PBIS) as a research-based discipline system focused on setting clear expectations for students and preventive measures that reward students for making positive choices. The district has also made a significant investment in training for restorative practices, providing training at scale for introductory methods and using restorative circles. Stakeholders were encouraged to adopt restorative practices, particularly the use of restorative

circles to build classroom community. These practices have yet to be systematized, though attempts to experiment with and implement restorative practices are found in most schools. The initial rollout of restorative practices focused on preventative measures and culture-climate building and may be positively impacting school climate as evidenced by fewer referrals and suspensions. These approaches are still in the early implementation phase and have not yet impacted structural changes in the way discipline is handled systemwide.

The implementation of restorative practices is ongoing and evolving, and examples of success are evident in some schools. In the fall of 2019-20, a district research team visited a sampling of six district middle schools to conduct interviews with school principals, assistant principals, teachers, counselors, and support staff. The purpose was to better understand factors affecting school climate and discipline, schoolwide approaches to behavior management, and use of restorative practices and alternatives to suspension. Respondents were generally positive about PBIS and restorative practices and were using circles and informal conferences with varying degrees of success. In some of the schools that were visited, teachers were working with administrators to alert them to classroom misbehavior before a referral was issued. In those cases, students who were off task were escorted into the hallway for a discussion with an administrator or counselor and then returned to class if the issue could be resolved without disciplinary action.

As outlined in the BTG Plan, district leadership has spent an extensive amount of time learning about discipline disparity. National research studies have been examined at depth and experts have consulted with the district. The district has also prepared a comprehensive professional development support plan, including the re-training of all behavior specialists in 2019-20. This has led to high degrees of systems competence of best practices for improving school climate and reducing disparity and declines in referrals and suspensions overall. To move from awareness (understanding of concepts) to application (usage of strategies), district next steps must include embedding restorative practices into the existing PBIS framework and providing specific resources and supports for schools where the highest number of black referrals and suspensions are evident. The compelling why for addressing disparate discipline practices has been established, instituting best practices for reducing disproportionality, utilizing appropriate systems analysis tools, and revising policy to effectively support the adoption of restorative practices are needed as next steps to interrupt the prediction of discipline outcomes by race.

Data Monitoring

Many actions throughout the BTG Plan attempt to address racial inequities in student outcomes through expanded data use and developing systems to monitor and support black students who are at risk. Advanced data systems have been developed since the BTG Plan was initiated and monitoring of data trends across goal areas has become routine. The district provides access to data and training for the review of disaggregated data by student subgroups to guide data-driven decision making. Early warning systems identify at-risk students across a number of

academic and disciplinary factors, including reading levels, grade point averages, advanced course enrollments, attendance, and referrals.

District data systems have shown to be most effective when paired with training and accountability measures that impact deep structural changes in the way schools schedule their students, support those who fall behind, and improve the skills of teachers and school leaders. The systems in place in support of Goal 1 (graduation rates) and Goal 3 (advanced coursework) are examples of successful data use. The tracking of high school students via the district's graduation cohort report is a BTG action that has reached systemwide use and is executed with high fidelity. The report is used routinely by principals to track the running graduation status of all students and by counselors in discussing graduation progress with students and parents. District staff also use the data during school visits to coach principals in how to broaden and deepen support for students who are behind in credits, in need of ACT or SAT tutoring, etc.
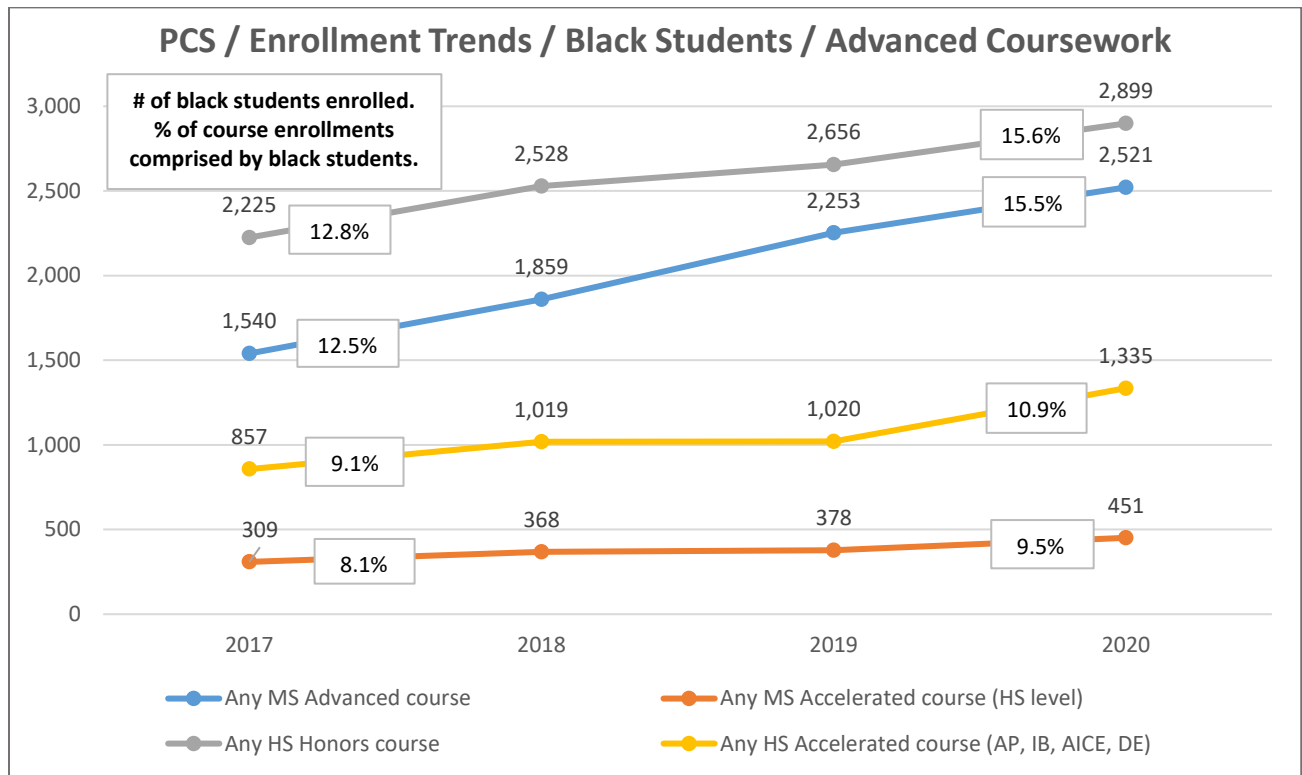
Table 3. Graduation Rate Trends
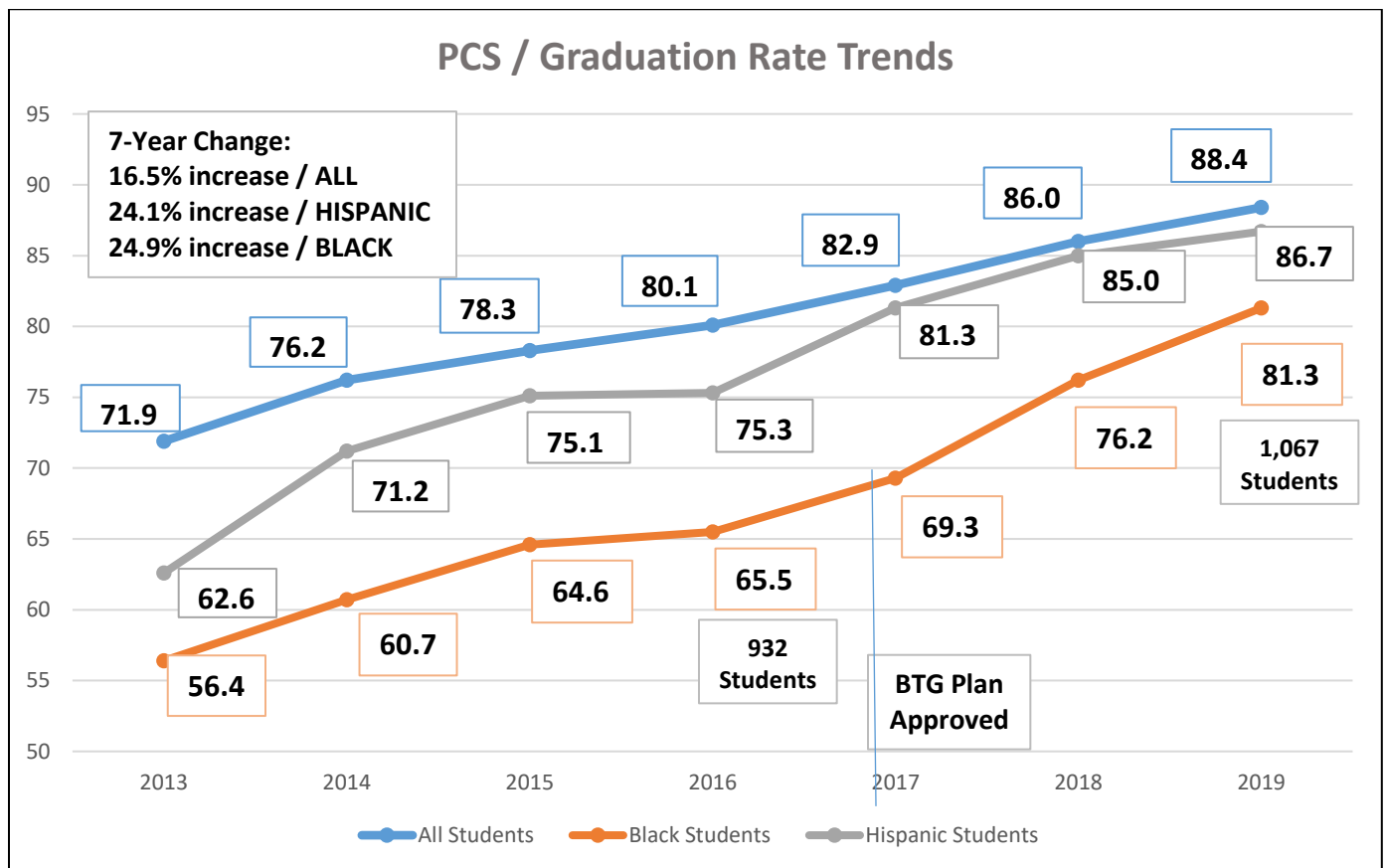
Expanded data use is also evident across the Goal 3 actions and has resulted in increased identification of black students for placement into advanced courses. The district has seen impressive increases and narrowing of enrollment gaps across all types of courses, from middle school advanced classes to Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Enrollment. Steps to increase black student participation in advanced coursework include the development of a color-coded

accelerated course report that has resulted in a more efficient course registration process, including a timeline for master scheduling and embedded checkpoints for accelerated registrations. This includes the district's strategic use of the AVID elective (Advancement Via Individual Determination) to support students who are new to advanced coursework and need additional study and organizational skills. The current efforts at systemic change within BTG Goal 3 are consistent with phased implementation and are a positive step for the district that have resulted in narrowing the opportunity gap in advanced studies. Still, additional actions may be needed as the plan evolves to ensure that the district meets its 10-year targets.

Table 4. Enrollment Trends / Advanced Courses / Black Students

PCS / Enrollment Trends / Black Students / Advanced Coursework

# of black students enrolled.
% of course enrollments comprised by black students.

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Any MS Advanced course	1,540 (12.5%)	1,859	2,253 (15.5%)	2,521
Any MS Accelerated course (HS level)	309 (8.1%)	368	378 (9.5%)	451
Any HS Honors course	2,225 (12.8%)	2,528	2,656 (15.6%)	2,899
Any HS Accelerated course (AP, IB, AICE, DE)	857 (9.1%)	1,019	1,020 (10.9%)	1,335

Though data disaggregated by race are more widely used across schools, improvement is still needed in using data to problem-solve around barriers to student performance and understand structures that may contribute to racial inequities (from the way instruction is carried out in classrooms to the manner in which families are involved). Relevant accountability measures around student outcomes must also be routinely monitored and applied. Teaching and learning strategies must continue to shift from programmatic interventions (i.e., a math or reading program) to adapting core instructional practices that engage and challenge all learners. This will include revising district curriculum and related professional development and integrating effective methods to measure implementation fidelity of culturally relevant and restorative practices in schools and classrooms. These will be critical next steps as district implementation evolves.

Summary Findings by BTG Goal Area

Goal 1 Eliminate the gap between graduation rates for black and non-black students.

Goal 1: Annual Outcome Measures		Baseline 2015-16	Planning Year 2016-17		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Graduation Rate: # and % of black students who graduated on time with a standard, high school diploma / 4-year senior cohort.	Black	(932) **65.5%**	**Actual**	**69.3%**	**76.2%**	**81.3%**	83.0%*
			Target	67.3%	69.1%	70.9%	72.7%
	Non-Black	85.8%	Actual	85.8%	88.1%	90.0%	TBD
	GAP	**17.9**	**Actual**	**16.5**	**11.9**	**8.7**	

*Graduation rates for 2019-20 are not final and have not been released by the state. The percentage provided here is an internal estimate only and is provided for BTG planning purposes. The data should be viewed only an approximation of the final totals. Final graduation rates are expected to be released by the state in December 2020.

The graduation rate for black students reflects sustained, significant improvement since the baseline year of 2015-16. The success of Goal 1 efforts is largely attributable to purposeful data use and changes in processes for the identification of at-risk students. There is also evidence of effective monitoring of student intervention in schools. To sustain increases in graduation rates for historically marginalized students, systemic changes to instructional practices across all grade levels must continue to evolve in meeting district expectations for culturally responsive classrooms. At present, Goal 1 action steps reside primarily at the high school level. In meeting long-term data targets, graduation rates will be largely dependent upon the success of students who are matriculating through district elementary and middle schools. Successful strategies implemented under Goal 1 include comprehensive revisions to the current reporting system that provides information on adequate progress towards on-time graduation. Improvements in the high school early warning system for graduation rate calculations disaggregated by student subgroups has led to: more timely interventions for students; increased communication for schools, students, and families; focused principal coaching on evidence-based strategies and promising practices to increase culturally responsive approaches; and greater accountability for school leadership.

Recognizing that efforts to increase graduation rates for black students must go beyond identification and progress monitoring, actions under Goal 1 now include strategies such as increased access to SAT and ACT assessments during the school day and on-campus tutoring. District high schools offer multiple opportunities for both practice tests and test administration during the school day without cost to students/families. To address systemic inequity and provide information aimed at shifting mindsets, a model of an equitable grading system with pertinent professional

development opportunities has been piloted. Given that grades are an essential component of promotion or retention, course placement, and college admission, a high school leadership group has developed materials for schools to discuss grading practices and achievement data specific to black learners. Resources and school-based training are available for school leaders and teachers to drive adaptive and technical changes in their schools.

A greater collaboration across levels (elementary, middle, and high school) is necessary to bridge equity strategies and develop common practices effective for improving student performance, with specific attention given to the transition years from elementary to middle and middle to high school. Considerations should be given for two additional areas of concentration within BTG Goal 1: (a.) addressing lagging skills and lower college readiness rates for black students and (b.) ensuring that an effective mechanism is in place to monitor interventions plans for students who are off track as early as 9th grade. Though individual student plans have been developed, the specific goals, timelines, and progress monitoring of those plans are not always executed with fidelity. The evolution of the BTG Plan will require the district to determine the efficacy and fidelity of individual student plans and build in tighter accountability methods to ensure that interventions such as tutoring, and after-school programs are in place and working.

Goal 1 / Key Actions / Research Findings

- Stakeholder feedback regarding increased graduation rates points to three factors influencing the improvement of high school graduation rates: The use of early warning data reports to identify students not on-track to graduate, the availability of credit recovery programs for students to recover failed core courses, and the use of alternative assessments to measure proficiency. District leadership has developed a standardized accountability measure to track students not on track to graduate according to several metrics and has been recognized in the state for its effective, close-monitoring systems.

- Trends across the majority of the district's traditional high schools reveal consistently high black student graduation rates. Each of the district's 17 traditional high schools show graduation rates higher than the district total and state rates for black students. This means much of the district's growth in graduation rates moving forward will demand closer attention to interventions within the district's dropout prevention and alternative school sites. It may also require the district to consider methods to bolster alternative programs on its traditional high school campuses.

- The district has developed a series of innovative tracking systems and checks-and-balances that have directly impacted the improvements in graduation rates for black learners. The district's evaluation of graduation rate improvements shows consistent usage of these tracking systems by district and school staff, including school guidance counselors who monitor graduation requirements.

- Student growth in meeting academic standards is monitored tightly through the district's use of quarterly cycle assessments. The development of the district tests aligned to the state End-of-Course (EOC) exams are shown to be effective in identifying and attending to student deficits. The attention given to these assessments and the data analysis provided by district content specialists in reading, math, science, and social studies is especially effective.

- The district continues to provide multiple options for students to meet graduation requirements by offering ACT and SAT testing during the school day, incorporating ACT and SAT prep into high school English classes, allowing

students to complete coursework via online credit recovery programs, and training teachers on strategies to help students meet course standards and improve their grades.

- An analysis of graduation rate data show that improvements among minority learners may be positively impacted by the district's commitment to career-technical programs on its traditional campuses. Black students taking part in those programs continue to show strong graduation rates (97.8%) that are much higher than students not enrolled in such academies.

Goal 1 / Next Steps / Recommendations from District Research Evaluation

- ❖ Consider increasing monitoring and accountability of existing action steps specific to student performance. For example, increasing appropriate academic preparation for college entrance exams to adequately prepare students to meet minimum score requirements for four-year colleges/universities; reporting differential performance by schools and systemically sharing and replicating best practices that lead to higher graduation rates for black students.

- ❖ Scale up existing pilot programs; systemic transformation is not possible absent scalability and will not increase graduation rates without being successfully implemented to scale. For example, equitable grading practices have been adopted by some teachers within some schools. A larger-scale implementation of equitable grading is a required next step to impact student outcomes.

- ❖ Ensure that core content curriculum and lessons in 9th and 10th grades are engaging and relevant to black learners. Both student grades and engagement metrics show consistently lower outcomes for black students compared to their non-black peers. A wider variety of opportunities to deepen understanding of state benchmarks and demonstrate mastery must be explored.

- ❖ Align student progression expectations and close monitoring of individual student plans beginning in 6th grade to increase the likelihood that strong foundations are in place in middle school and successful transition to high school is evidenced. Continue district efforts to increase enrollment of black learners in advanced coursework beginning in 6th grade.

- ❖ Develop systems to communicate in person with the families of black learners who are at-risk, beginning in 9th grade. These efforts will support stronger bonds with families and increase parent agency and confidence around what their child must know and accomplish to graduate. This should include a deliberate method for parents to remain in touch with someone at the school (a personal contact) and how they can track their child's progress weekly.

- ❖ Consider expansion of partnerships with community agencies to provide the necessary resources to address all levels of need for black learners who are highly at-risk (severe reading deficits, students in poverty, etc.). Coordinate these efforts with our district dropout prevention programs and social service agencies to install a whole-child approach.

- ❖ Ensure that black learners are engaged in a school magnet program or career academy. Develop an ambitious parent and student awareness campaign to ensure that no child enters high school without fully exploring these options and making an informed choice. This will likely involve a personal appeal to parents and, in some cases, may include visits to community centers or student homes.

Goal 2 Eliminate the gap between the proficiency rates in reading (ELA) and math on state and national assessments for black and non-black students.

Goal 2: Annual Outcome Measures		Baseline 2015/16	Planning Year 2016-17		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
# and % of black students districtwide scoring Level 3 or above on state FSA ELA-Reading.	Black	(2,494) 24.2%		(2,654) 25.7%	(2,533) 24.6%	(2,831) 27.1%	*
			Target	27.4	30.6%	33.8%	37.0%
	Non-Black	56.4%	Actual	57.7%	57.4%	59.7%	*
	GAP	32.2	Actual	32.0	32.8	32.6	
# and % of black students districtwide scoring Level 3 or above on FSA Math.	Black	(2,143) 27.9%		(2,305) 29.0%	(2,319) 29.2%	(2,336) 30.0%	*
			Target	31.1%	34.3%	37.5%	40.7%
	Non-Black	60.9%	Actual	62.0%	62.2%	62.8%	*
	GAP	33.0	Actual	33.0	33.0	32.8	

*Goal 2 data are not available for 2019-20 due to COVID-19 / suspension of state testing.

Due to the current COVID-19 health crises, the state FSA testing used to measure achievement gaps in reading and math were cancelled by the state Department of Education. For this reason, the BTG Goal 2 data cannot be updated for 2019-20. However, data from district assessments in reading and math taken prior to the school closings showed positive trends in black achievement. Using data from the 2018-19 school year, proficiency rates have improved for black students though they remain well behind their non-black peers. The district gaps in performance on state tests remain at or near 30 percentage points. The 2018-19 ELA proficiency rate for black students in the district was 27.1% compared to 59.6% for non-black students, a gap of 32.6 percentage points. The proficiency rates in math demonstrate a similar achievement gap with 30.0% of black students achieving a Level 3 and above compared to 62.8% of non-black students.

The gaps addressed under Goal 2 are tied in large part to improved teacher practice and action steps are built upon professional development. The district provides targeted professional development and additional coaching to teachers and leadership on culturally relevant strategies to increase engagement in rigorous instruction. To date, the district has trained more than 30% of its teachers in AVID's Culturally Relevant Teaching and additional trainers were added in 2019-20. The training plans for the summer of 2020 were interrupted by the COVID-19 health crisis and that has significantly impacted the district's plan to train hundreds of additional teachers. Despite the comprehensive

approach to professional development, a shift in instructional practice is still in the early stages and remains a challenge across a large school district.

The district has also sought to address lagging skills through significant investments in intervention programming such as iReady, Istation, Dreambox (math), and Reading Recovery, as well as increasing access to before and after school programs. A revised intervention strategies menu has been developed, as has a more streamlined method to maintain student data for progress monitoring. These efforts have led to some increases in student performance across all races. However, as all learner groups improve, achievement gaps persist. District leadership has been deliberate in focusing on improving the instruction of foundational skills of students from pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) through 3rd grade. A district team is working with leading university researchers to amend curriculum materials and develop stronger literacy skills for teachers in the earliest grades.

Targeted strategies to address the achievement gap remain in the early implementation phases and have thus far not interrupted racially disparate outcomes. While the current efforts should continue, expanded efforts to reform systemic policies, programs, and practices that may perpetuate inequities must be considered. This includes revised curriculum models (balancing differentiation with enrichment, consideration of Universal Design for Learning) and reconsidering staffing models (onboarding of new teachers, use and deployment of instructional coaches, impact of substitute teachers on student performance, differentiated staffing for lowest performing schools, and equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers).

The district has been persistent in establishing foundational systems that are designed to the impact the gap in time. These efforts have been successful in meeting district implementation benchmarks related to the training of teachers around equity, the development of improved data systems to track student performance by race, and targeted interventions designed to identify and support black learners who are under-performing. The district remains steadfast in viewing these systems improvements as long-term solutions to the achievement gap, even if short-term results are not always evident.

Goal 2 / Key Actions / Research Findings

- A robust professional development plan is in place to train all teachers in culturally relevant teaching strategies, even if interrupted by the COVID-19 health crisis. The execution of this plan in support of the district's 7,000 instructional staff has included the selection of training materials and the hiring of trainers and equity coaches to follow-up with teachers as they implement these strategies.

- Advanced data reports and dashboards are in use that track students by race specific to their deficits in reading and math. This includes immediate access to academic data by race for teachers and administrators and quarterly reports to schools that show every student by race whose performance is trending up or down per their assessment scores, grades, behavior, and attendance.

- The district continues to implement standards-based instruction with a focus on increasing rigor across all classrooms and supporting teacher growth and evaluation in a common fashion. Additionally, the district monitors the use of culturally relevant practices in its classrooms during school visits using a revised Instructional Support Model (ISM) observation tool. Training was provided to the Teaching and Learning division to guide the alignment of equity components within the observation tool, though tight calibration remains a work in progress.

- Innovative interventions are underway specific to the needs of students who are scoring below proficiency. This includes Reading Recovery, the district's Summer Bridge Program, the Personalized Learner Pathway website, and targeted before- and after-school programs both on campus and at community centers.

- The district continues to offer extended learning programs (ELP) in every district school and has been purposeful in creating options for students to extend their learning. The BTG Plan outlines the importance of connecting the data on at-risk children to effective before school, after-school, and summer learning programs (Summer Bridge). The district has greatly increased its financial commitment to such programs over the past few years and that amount exceeds $8 million. This investment pays for the teachers and materials needed for tutoring, re-teaching, credit recovery, enrichment, and Summer Bridge offerings that go beyond the school day.

- Promising results are evident within the district's Transformation Zone both in terms of students making learning gains in reading and math but also more students of color reaching grade-level proficiency. The professional development related to standards-based lesson delivery and related equity approaches may be scalable and adaptable to other schools or ELP programs such as Summer Bridge.

Goal 2 / Next Steps / Recommendations from District Research Evaluation

- ❖ Apply a strategic gap analysis at the individual school level for the highest priority schools to better understand where teachers struggle moving in from theory to practice. These can be done in conjunction with school-based equity trainers and may prevent or reduce "implementation dip" (Center for Public Education, 2013). Stakeholders may feel motivated to implement changes to their instructional practice but struggle with practical application due to a lack of school-based structures to support their efforts.

- ❖ Establish differentiated support structures to ensure that all schools can meet the demands of the BTG Plan. This includes more effectively monitoring the progress of the solutions for improving academic achievement for black students. This action item should address scalability barriers for high minority schools and chronically low-performing schools. Ensure that the rollout of training and fidelity use of culturally relevant materials meets the demands of schools per their unique needs.

- ❖ Use the promising practices that were piloted as part of the middle school equity project (via the School Climate Transformation Grant) to bring the best ideas to scale. Create improved processes to help teachers and leaders interact with data as a way of problem-solving and not only as a method for tracking and ranking students.

- ❖ Develop push-in or pull-out solutions in schools that effectively impact skills gaps for black students in reading and math. Though equity training and culturally relevant materials should improve outcomes in the long term, the district must address skills gaps that exist presently and help students recover those skills that will catch them up to their no-black peers. Reading Recovery is one such approach that appears promising.

- ❖ Partner with families of black learners who are behind in reading and math in the development and execution of individualized progress monitoring plans (PMPs). Create opportunities for rich dialogue with families and among teachers to lessen the likelihood the monitoring plans are created and compiled but not authentically executed.

- ❖ Include district- or school-based equity trainers or coaches in the district school monitoring visits (ISM) to provide a level expertise similar to what the content staff developers provide for subject areas. This may help in guiding equity discussions during the debriefing sessions. Observations of ISM debrief meetings include some deliberation around equity components, but more robust discussion is needed.

- ❖ Develop relevant content exemplars that provide teachers, students, and families of color with models of what is expected in meeting the standards at each grade level (especially in reading and math). For example, the district might provide families entering middle or high school with exemplary writing samples, student responses to complex texts, and content presentations (i.e., Power Point examples). Use such examples in the classrooms and as a home resource to ensure that students are aware of the grade level expectations and then scaffold supports to make sure all students meet those expectations.

- ❖ Ensure that both curriculum materials and classroom observation tools are aligned to the district's expectations around culturally relevant instruction, and restorative and anti-racist practices. Ensure that those conducting the observations are calibrated in the work.

Goal 3   Eliminate the gap in advanced and accelerated participation and performance rates for black and non-black students.

Goal 3: Annual Outcome Measure		Baseline 2015/16	Planning Year 2016-17		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Grades 6-12 / # and % of total black students in grades 6-12 enrolled in any middle or high school advanced or accelerated course.	Black	(3,792) 12.1%	Actual	(3,775) **11.9%**	(4,691) **13.7%**	(5,269) **14.5%**	(5,666) **15.1%**
			Target	13%	14%	15%	16%
	GAP	5.9	Actual	**6.1**	**4.3**	**3.5**	**2.9**
	Gap is compared to black student enrollment of 18%.						

District data trends continue to show steady increases in enrollment rates in advanced coursework with black student participation approaching equal representation of the black student population. Black enrollments across all advanced and accelerated courses reached 15.1% in 2019-20, up from 12.1% in the baseline year of 2015-16. Three-year data trends represent an increase (17.3%) in the number of black students identified for evaluation for gifted services and a significant increase (85.4%) in the number of black students enrolled in gifted, from 281 gifted students in 2017 to

521 in 2020. Still, current student enrollment in gifted reveals underrepresentation of black students (6.3%), while participation in advanced coursework more closely represents black student enrollment at their respective school sites.

The largest enrollment increases are found among black learners in middle school advanced courses, a 63.7% increase since 2017. A coordinated effort by schools and the district's Teaching and Learning Division to enroll black students in advanced courses in 6th grade is making a difference. In just one year, the district increased its 6th grade advanced enrollments from 956 black students (2018-19) to 1,381 (2019-20), a 44.5% increase. Black enrollment in 6th grade advanced courses in now at 20.6% and the gap has been closed at that grade level. Strong trends also are found in high school honors courses, were black students now comprise 15.6% of students enrolled. Similar trends are found among Hispanic learners. See table below.

Table 5. Enrollment Trends / Gifted / Advanced and Accelerated Courses

	# Enrolled Gifted (K-8)	% Gifted (K-8)	# Enrolled ADV MS	% of Total ADV MS	# Enrolled ACCEL MS	% of Total ACCEL MS	# Enrolled HONORS HS	% of Total HONORS HS	# Enrolled ACCEL HS	% of Total ACCEL HS	# Enrolled Total _MS, HS Adv, Accel*	% Enrolled Total _ Adv, Accel*
Hispanic	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2020	965	11.6%	3,050	18.8%	764	16.1%	2,992	16.1%	1,923	15.8%	6,527	17.4%
2017	628	9.0%	1,790	14.6%	464	12.1%	2,425	14.0%	1,277	13.6%	4535	14.3%
Black												
2020	521	6.3%	2,521	15.5%	451	9.5%	2,899	15.6%	1,335	10.9%	5,666	15.1%
2017	281	4.0%	1,540	12.5%	309	8.1%	2,225	12.8%	857	9.1%	3775	11.9%

*The total number of students represented in the Total Gap column to the far right represent all students who were enrolled in any advanced or accelerated course in middle school or high school and, as such, will not equal the total of the previous columns. Each column is unique unto itself as a way of measuring enrollments at each course and level. The data in these charts include the total number of students identified as gifted in elementary and middle schools combined (grades K-8). The data also include any student enrolled in an advanced, honors, or accelerated course (ie. a middle school student taking a high school course or a high school student taking a Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement, IB or AICE course). *The gap for purposes of participation is defined as the enrollment in such courses compared to the total enrollment of black students in the district (which was 18% as of 2015-16).

Some of the improvement in gifted identification is connected to the universal screening of all students that is conducted the end of first grade. Though screenings were completed in 2019-20 prior to the school closures, the follow-up evaluation of students and placement into the gifted program were interrupted by the COVID-19 health crisis. Those evaluations will be moved to the start of the 2020-21 school year. The district also continued its commitment to "Plan B" as an alternative method of identification that considers students with both gifted and talented potential against a

matrix that includes multiple criteria and not just a single screening assessment. Because of the interruption in evaluations at the end of the 2019-20 school year, the most current data on Plan B eligibility is from 2018-19. In that year, 488 total students were found eligible for gifted, 76 of whom were black (15.6%).

The action steps within BTG Goal 3 center on interrupting opportunity gaps for black students to participate in gifted studies and advanced coursework. Steps to increase black student participation in advanced coursework include the development of an accelerated coursework report (a means of identification and progress monitoring for student participation in advanced or accelerated courses) that has resulted in a more efficient course registration process, including a timeline for master scheduling and embedded checkpoints for accelerated registrations and enrollments into AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination). District office staff have also provided resources for guidance counselors and teachers of advanced studies by offering professional development in culturally responsive practices. Additionally, side-by-side coaching is provided to assistant principals in charge of master scheduling. Structures have been implemented to ensure that AVID course enrollments are monitored, and that teachers of those electives are trained to support students who are new to the rigors of advanced coursework.

As with the other goal areas, an ongoing examination of systemic conditions that perpetuate disproportionality is needed to achieve racial equity. For example, the district's open access policy to advanced coursework eliminates entrance requirements that can act as barriers for underrepresented students. A further review may be needed with regards to transportation and other barriers that may impact enrollment in district enrichment programs (such as STEM camps) and access to high quality tutoring options. Continued success for BTG Goal 3 may be interdependent with increasing student proficiencies outlined in BTG Goal 2 (reading and math proficiency). Goal 3 action steps should consider expanding structures to support student success (such as AVID and Khan Academy resources) and targeted efforts for schools with fewer enrollments.

Goal 3 / Key Actions / Research Findings

- The district's intense monitoring of student enrollments in advanced and accelerated courses has contributed to greater awareness among teachers and counselors of students who show potential to be successful in these courses but are not yet enrolled. The district has made great strides in developing tracking mechanisms (reports, dashboards) to chart enrollment in advanced studies and gifted programs.

- The Office of Gifted Studies has procured grant funding for two multi-year projects aimed at increasing support for the development of talented programs, supporting students who did not meet the eligibility for gifted but who show strong academic potential.

- The district's Elevating Excellence initiative has been well-received in providing high achieving students and their families a personalized path to college success. Part of the design of the program is to ensure that low income and minority students are specifically targeted to participate and benefit in the initiatives such as FAFSA completion, SAT test-taking strategies, and one on one college counseling. The district is in partnership with the Pinellas Education Foundation and has obtained additional funds of more than $2 million to grow and expand the program in support of the targeted student population.

- A district review of black students in grades 6 through 12 with GPAs at or above 3.0 and test scores at or above grade-level proficiency show that nearly all students identified were already enrolled in at least one advanced or accelerated course. This is evidence of the district's improved monitoring and tracking systems. The district must continue to invest in college readiness programs (such as AVID) to encourage and support students with lower GPAs and test scores to take these advanced courses.

- The district's commitment to AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) will be a key component in addressing the gaps that remain. Students enrolled in the AVID elective are provided a series of college-preparatory skills and study habits that pair well with enrollment and successful outcomes in advanced, honors, dual enrollment, and AP courses. As outlined the BTG Plan, the district is closely monitoring enrollments of black learners in AVID with the expectation that this will increase enrollments in advanced courses. In 2019-20, the district developed protected sections within the middle school master schedule to ensure that AVID continues to grow.

- The district continued its long-standing investment in on-campus, open-access testing for all students in taking the PSAT, SAT, and ACT. The PSAT results are key metrics in identifying students who show potential for success in accelerated courses as well as creating a continuum of college-readiness services that are open to all students.

Goal 3 / Next Steps / Recommendations from District Research Evaluation

- ❖ Coordinate with district communication staff to provide ongoing messaging and dialogue with families of black learners. This might begin as early as elementary schools in highlighting the importance of scheduling advanced courses in middle and high school in creating more college-ready graduates. This messaging must be personalized (possibly face-to-face) and should not rely only on traditional communication tools such as email and district websites. The district's new Naviance college readiness website provides a common tool for planning and discussion with families.

- ❖ Conduct a review and analysis of entrance requirements into district choice programs, transportation barriers to district STEM camps and other enrichment programs, and access to high quality tutoring options to reduce system barriers for black learners.

- ❖ Provide targeted coaching cycles for guidance counselors and assistant principals for curriculum (APCs) to foster buy-in for equity initiatives. Trainings and follow-up coaching should be aimed at examining beliefs about student expectations and aligning counseling practices with district strategic goals, as well as to build capacity for school-level leadership to promote consistent, intentional, and equitable practices.

- ❖ Continue to develop and ensure that a uniform, open-access scheduling system is followed districtwide that requires enrollment of eligible black students into advanced courses. This model must be tightly controlled to allay stakeholder concerns regarding disparate systems of identification and gatekeeper barriers to participation opportunities. Communication methods, recruitment practices, reliance on test scores, teacher referrals, and guidance counselor placements can contribute to the underrepresentation of black students in advanced studies. These processes have improved, and that progress needs to continue if district enrollment gaps are to be eliminated.

- ❖ Pursue further expansion of dual enrollment offerings to other state universities and consider partnering with historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) that might be of interest to black learners looking to earn college credits.

Goal 4 Reduce the total number of disciplinary infractions (referrals) and suspensions for black students and decrease the disparity in referrals and suspensions for black students to reach a level that is representative of the black student population.

Goal 4: Annual Outcome Measures	Baseline 2015/16	Planning Year 2016-17		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Discipline Disparity Rate / Risk Ratio (referrals) / black students	2.38	Actual	2.64	2.43	2.60	2.64
		Target	2.30	2.20	2.10	2.00
Discipline Disparity Rate / Risk Ratio (OSS) / black students	4.33	Actual	4.07	3.61	3.79	4.34
		Target	4.00	3.70	3.40	3.00
Related Outcomes Measures	Baseline 2015/16		2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
# and % of black students with an office disciplinary referral	(7,009) 35.7% of all referrals	Actual	(6,919) 38.0%	(6,867) 37.6%	(6,548) 38.3%	(5,343) 38.5%
# and % of black students with an out-of-school suspension (OSS)	(2,918) 49.5% of all OSS	Actual	(2,374) 48.5%	(2,625) 47.2%	(2,481) 47.6%	(1,790) 50.7%

The district has seen steady declines in referrals and out-of-school suspensions (OSS) over the past three years, though disparity rates remain relatively unchanged as the percentage drops have been similar across all races. The number of black students receiving suspensions has decreased by 15%, and the number of black students receiving referrals has decreased by 6.6% over the same time period. Still, black students remain about two times more likely to receive a referral and about four times more likely to be suspended. Discipline risk ratios represent a group's risk of receiving a disciplinary infraction compared to all other students relative to student population. The risk ratio for black students in 2019-20 was 2.64 for referrals and 4.34 for OSS. To reduce the risk and close the disparity gaps, the district must successfully reduce referrals and suspensions for black students until the percentage of referrals and suspensions issued is similar to the black population in the district (which is measured as 18% for purposes of the BTG Plan). In 2019-20, 38.5% of students receiving referrals were black and 50.7% of students receiving an OSS were black.

The district continues to evaluate key actions steps to determine why referrals and suspensions continue to decline while seeing little change in disparity rates. The district's focus on training and close monitoring of discipline data

has been successful in raising awareness across schools to discipline inequities and personal biases that can lead to disparate outcomes. As such, the district's equity trainings specific to restorative and culturally responsive practices may be contributing to decreases in the issuance of referrals and suspensions for all students and not just black learners. To address the disproportionate rate of referrals and suspensions issued to black students, core district structures must shift in moving from employee awareness (mindset) to broader systems change (application). It should be noted that a majority of out-of-school suspensions continue to arise from acts of physical aggression (such as fighting) and serious on-campus incidences (such as threats, battery) that may require a broader community conversation in finding solutions. In district elementary schools, 60.0% of suspensions across all races were given for acts of physical aggression and serious incidences; 58.8% in middle school and 62.3% in high school. Other solutions may require changes to the Code of Student Conduct, staffing changes to better support behavior management and student counseling, and procedural changes that include alternatives to suspension.

In visits to a random sampling of district middle schools, staff reported high degrees of support for PBIS and restorative practices but noted that fidelity of implementation was sometimes lacking, and that the methods had not yet become a way of work across their schools. To improve the support and growth of teachers and staff, each school site was provided a Restorative Practices coordinator (licensed through the International Institute for Restorative Practices). The roles or responsibilities for coordinators are not yet standardized and have resulted in different degrees of success across schools. A robust problem-solving process has been put into place across select schools to research practices that are working well and those that schools are struggling to implement. The district also identified an assistant principal in each school to lead improved PBIS implementation and training for those leaders is underway.

The district also put into place implementation metrics for both PBIS and restorative practices that include the Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ) assessment and the Tiered Fidelity Inventory – RP (TFI-RP), a measure of school-wide application of positive behavior interventions and supports with a supplement for restorative practices (see tables below). The data are reviewed each year by school teams and district staff to identify areas of success and areas for improvement. The TFI-RP data, particularly when triangulated with discipline data and stakeholder feedback, indicate nearly every school (91%) has a school leadership team in place that includes staff who are trained in restorative practices and that the team meets regularly (74%). Lower levels of implementation are found in areas that would impact systemic change such as clearer problem behavior definitions (26%), school level tracking of restorative practices data as an implementation check (21%), and feedback from students and staff on the use and successes of restorative practices (17%). See data table below. It should noted that the district's implementation plan for restorative practices is still in the early stages and calls for some of the more structural changes to reach fidelity in the coming years. The district's updated contract with the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) is designed to support 20 district schools in reaching implementation fidelity and serving as examples for other schools to follow.

Table 6. PCS / Implementation Metrics / Restorative Practices / TFI-RP instrument

TFI-Restorative Practice Results / Schools Reporting Full Implementation

and % of schools reporting full RP implementation by key benchmarks. Data are used for fidelity planning improvements.

Pinellas County Schools	Team Composition in Place	Team Operating Procedures	Behavioral Expectations / Input from Students and Staff	Teaching Expectations re: RP	Problem Behavior Definitions	Discipline Policies Specific to RP	Professional Development	Classroom Procedures	Feedback & Acknowledgement	Faculty Involvement	Student/Family Involvement	Discipline / Use of RP Tracked	Data-Based Decision Making	Fidelity RP Data / Recorded, Tracked for implementation	Evaluation / Implementation Fidelity is Documented
ES (75)	(71) 95%	(60) 80%	(54) 72%	(23) 31%	(15) 20%	(32) 43%	(46) 61%	(48) 64%	(11) 15%	(49) 65%	(24) 32%	(15) 20%	(44) 59%	(42) 56%	(24) 32%
MS (20)	(17) 85%	(13) 65%	(10) 50%	(10) 50%	(6) 30%	(9) 45%	(6) 30%	(13) 65%	(2) 10%	(11) 55%	(7) 35%	(5) 25%	(11) 55%	(8) 40%	(6) 30%
HS (15)	(15) 100%	(11) 73%	(7) 47%	(5) 33%	(4) 27%	(7) 47%	(10) 67%	(6) 40%	(4) 27%	(10) 67%	(6) 40%	(4) 27%	(7) 47%	(9) 60%	(6) 40%
All schools (121)	**(110) 91%**	**(90) 74%**	**(77) 64%**	**(41) 34%**	**(31) 26%**	**(54) 44%**	**(70) 58%**	**(73) 60%**	**(21) 17%**	**(77) 64%**	**(40) 33%**	**(26) 21%**	**(69) 57%**	**(65) 54%**	**(43) 36%**

Note: Results reported by school teams using the Tiered Fidelity Inventory / Restorative Practices (TFI-RP). A sampling of items is provided above. The total number of schools may not match schools by level because non-traditional schools (ESE centers, K-8 schools) are not included in the "levels" row. Source: *TFI-RP / Spring / 2020.*

The school data specific to PBIS as measured by the BoQ instrument shows that PBIS teams are in place in most schools (94%) and that PBIS procedures (96%) and reward systems (75%) are generally in place. A score of 70% or higher is considered a common threshold for strong implementation. Schools are reporting less success in teacher commitment / involvement / feedback (60%) and lesson planning (57%) specific to teaching a behavioral curriculum. Area Superintendents have identified schools where additional support is needed in reaching fidelity implementation. Both the TFI-RP and BoQ are completed by school staffs in the spring of each school year. Each school team, including the principal and PBIS and RP team members, is asked to review discipline and implementation data, complete a series of campus / classroom walkthroughs, and garner feedback from teachers and students as to the strengths and weakness of school-wide PBIS and RP practices. The data are reviewed by district staff in providing support to schools and preparing district-wide training to strengthen PBIS and RP implementation.

Table 7. PCS / Implementation Metrics / PBIS / BoQ instrument

PBIS Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ) Results / Schools Reporting Strong Implementation (70% or higher recommended)											
# of schools reporting strong PBIS implementation by key benchmarks. 70% threshold is preferred as an indicator of fidelity.											
Pinellas County Schools	Overall BoQ Score	PBS Team in Place	Faculty Commitment, Involvement	Effective Procedures	Data Entry & Analysis	Expectations Posted	Reward Program in Place	Lesson Plans include PBIS / expectations	Implementation Plan	Classroom Systems / Rules defined, etc.	Evaluation / Implementation is well documented
ES (73)	(63) 86%	(69) 95%	(40) 55%	(68) 93%	(54) 74%	(70) 96%	(53) (72%)	(42) 73%	42 (73%)	(63) 86%	(50) 68%
MS (18)	(15) 83%	(15) 83%	(11) 61%	(16) 89%	(15) 83%	(16) 89%	(13) 72%	(9) 50%	(12) 67%	(14) 78%	(12) 67%
HS (16)	(11) 69%	(14) 88%	(11) 69%	(15) 94%	(13) 81%	(14) 88%	(12) 75%	(6) 38%	(8) 50%	(10) 63%	(11) 69%
All Schools (115)	**(99) 86%**	**(108) 94%**	**(69) 60%**	**(110) 96%**	**(92) 80%**	**(111) 97%**	**(86) 75%**	**(66) 57%**	**(69) 66%**	**(96) 83%**	**(78) 68%**

Note: Results reported by school teams using the PBIS Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ). A sampling of items is provided above. The total number of schools may not match schools by level because non-traditional schools (ESE centers, K-8 schools) are not included in the "levels" row. Source: *BoQ / Spring / 2020.*

A review of discipline by schools shows similar trends to the district as a whole, with most schools decreasing their number of referrals and suspensions for black students while not impacting the disparity gap. It is important to note that the district's elementary schools issue much fewer referrals and suspensions than are found in middle and high schools and some schools have much higher referral and suspension numbers than others. See tables below. This will require a great degree of differentiation in providing innovative solutions at some schools more than others. The most referrals and suspensions by number and percentage continue to exist in district middle schools, though trends are promising. The district continues to see the largest decreases in middle schools, though disparity rates for black learners are still evident in nearly every middle school. To address this challenge, the district invested in a pilot middle school equity project that led to a $700,000 annual federal grant to impact whole-school climate transformation in identified schools. The School Climate Transformation Grant (SCTG) is designed to impact social-emotional and learning outcomes for diverse learners and the first-year findings from training outcomes and structural improvements in those schools has been positive.

Table 8. District Change in Referrals over 3 Years / Black Students / Quarter 3 to Quarter 3 Comparison

Thru Quarter 3		Elementary	Middle	High	K-8 Schools	ESE Centers	Total
Black	2018-19	2,907	9,574	6,006	1,281	1,621	21,389
	2017-18	3,015	9,163	8,565	1,364	1,213	23,320
	2016-17	2,836	9,825	9,888	1,064	1,499	25,112
	Change:	71	-251	-3882	217	122	-3,723

Table 9. District Change in OSS over 3 Years / Black Students / Quarter 3 to Quarter 3 Comparison

Thru Quarter 3		Elementary	Middle	High	K-8 Schools	ESE Centers	Total
Black	2019-20	486	1,434	585	429	95	3,029
	2018-19	426	1,738	779	406	84	3,433
	2017-18	355	2,086	702	349	56	3,548
	Change:	131	-652	-117	80	39	-519

To improve implementation success, next steps for BTG Goal 4 should include structures that support the practical application of restorative practices in schools, school site visits to monitor fidelity, and tighter alignment of district disciplinary processes and policy to restorative strategies. Efforts within BTG Goal 4 should also provide actionable steps for school leadership and teaching staff to implement culturally responsive behavior plans and incorporate restorative practices into the existing PBIS framework. The district's use of new, online modules that give voice to teachers and students in developing school-wide rules and processes is an example of this integration.

Goal 4 / Key Actions / Research Findings

- The new School Climate Transformation Grant (SCTG) shows great promise in providing a model for schools in building climate and community in schools is a structured, inclusive manner. The pilot schools have been introduced to highly integrated model that more seamlessly aligns restorative practice with culturally relevant instruction. The training offered to schools helps staff to problem-solve around data in support of equitable outcomes for all children.

- The district continued its partnership with the FLPBIS project to create systems that support effective PBIS practices. The updated training materials from FLPBIS more closely align PBIS to restorative practices. Schools will begin working through the new online modules in 2020-21.

- The district has been intentional in its messaging and policy changes around the importance of reducing out-of-school suspensions for non-violent behaviors and reducing the number of days a student is suspended out-of-school. Other formal changes to discipline policy or the student code of conduct to support equitable practice and the adoption of restorative practice within policy and practice are still under development.

- Area Superintendents have focused on coaching efforts with principals to consider restorative approaches and alternatives to suspension. The district's monitoring of discipline trends by school and the involvement of the

Area Superintendents has created a greater sense of urgency among school leaders to reduce disparate discipline rates.

- Restorative practice remains a promising initiative as part of a sustainable change effort to reduce disciplinary actions and create a safe, caring learning environment for all students. Nearly every district teacher has been trained in the introductory methods. The Area Superintendents and district MTSS coordinators have been active locally and nationally in professional development specific to best practices in equitable disciplinary practices.

- Stakeholder feedback from a number of schools with higher disciplinary actions communicate the need for school-wide training to not only build capacity for staff to better meet the unique needs of students experiencing poverty and trauma, but also to build the social capital of families to better navigate the school system and collaborate with staff.

Goal 4 / Next Steps / Recommendations from District Research Evaluation

- ❖ Continue district investment in partnership with the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP). Develop model schools as examples of high-fidelity implementation and close alignment of PBIS with restorative practice. Ensure that Area Superintendents oversee and monitor effective implementation.

- ❖ Continue to refine district discipline policies and the Code of Student Conduct as needed to integrate culturally responsive and restorative practices within district practices and within the existing PBIS framework. Teachers and staff have requested clearer delineation of district expectations and resources that distinguish between a misunderstanding or disagreement that is best addressed through circles or conferences and those that are disciplinary in nature. District mindsets in combatting bias that leads to exclusionary discipline practices appear to be shifting, though changes to policies and practices specific to restorative solutions are not yet fully infused yet into district systems.

- ❖ Continue to improve communication around district vision and actions regarding equity and alignment across district documents and messaging. A review of other school districts shows that some have put into practice a series of guiding principle documents for schools and community members, published stakeholder expectations (students, staff, family), Tier II and Tier III intervention guides, and alternatives to suspension by type of infraction.

- ❖ Embed a tiered set of actions into the BTG Plan to support schools with greater needs for support. Referral rates and issuance of out-of-school suspensions can be reduced for students overall without any significant changes to disparate rates among students of color unless deliberate actions are developed that address race specifically. To assist with these efforts, the district has prioritized 12-15 schools with the most referrals and suspensions by race and will pilot unique interventions to reduce the total number(s) and rates.

- ❖ Consider a change in practice that might involve utilizing SEL-based extended learning programs for K-3 students with chronic behavior issues, possibly in lieu of out-of-school suspensions when appropriate.

- ❖ Empower school equity teams to work with students and families in providing greater ownership of restorative practices in building inclusive school communities. Aligning the work of the equity teams with school-based PMAC committees might be a first step. Providing structures for students and families to have voice is a key component of successful implementation of restorative practices.

Goal 5 Reduce the disparity of black students being found eligible for Exceptional Student Education (ESE).

Goal 5: Annual Outcome Measures	Baseline (2015/16)	Planning Year 2016-17		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Risk Ratio (ESE overall) / black	1.45	Actual	**1.45**	**1.46**	**1.40**	**1.43**
		Target	1.45	1.40	1.35	1.30
Risk Ratio (EBD) / black	4.20	Actual	**3.94**	**3.84**	**3.34**	**3.50**
		Target	3.95	3.70	3.45	3.20
Related Outcomes Measures						
# and % of black students identified for ESE services	(3,618) **25%**	Actual	(3,371) **25%**	(3,947) **23%**	(3,945) **25%**	(4,033) **25%**
# and % of black students identified for Emotional Behavioral Disability (EBD) identification / Total	(427) **49%**	Actual	(335) **49%**	(363) **48%**	(300) **46%**	(255) **46%**

The district has seen a steady decline in the number of black students assigned to the ESE designation of Emotional / Behavioral Disability (EBD), and the number and percentage of new black eligibilities has also dropped. The district's number of black students who are EBD was at 255 at the end of the 2019-20 school year, down from 427 in the baseline year of 2015-16 (a 40% decrease). The number of <u>new</u> EBD eligibilities identified across all PCS schools has dropped as well, a decrease of 75% since the baseline year from 20 black students in 2015-16 to 5 in 2019-20. Despite reductions in new eligibilities, identifications for black students in EBD remains disproportionate and the district's risk ratio has been relatively stable for the past two years. The "risk ratio" is the ratio of special education services given to black students compared to the total black student population. The district's BTG Plan is specific to monitoring and reducing the high percentage of black learners identified for EBD. The risk ratio for EBD for black students was at 3.50 in 2019-20, slightly lower than the baseline year of 2015-16. The overall risk ratio for black students across all ESE designations remains relatively unchanged at 1.43. In terms of percentages, current enrollment in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) shows that black students represent 25% of the ESE student population. To reach district targets in reducing risk ratios the percentage must be at or near 18% (the percentage of black students in the district per the baseline year). Among all students identified as EBD, 46% are black. As a result of actions outlined the BTG Plan, a positive trend is emerging among new eligibilities. In the 2019-20 school year, 12 black students were newly designated as EBD, representing 25% of all new EBD eligibilities (7 transferring into the district and 5 identified by PCS staff).

Action steps within BTG Goal 5 are concentrated on reducing overrepresentation through both professional development and adoption and adaption of systemic methods for early intervening services and EBD designation processes. The ESE department provides professional development sessions for both school-based staff and district specialists to understand the guidelines and procedures for EBD, to introduce expansion of effective response-to-intervention (RtI) strategies, and to discuss cultural components to be considered with positive behavior intervention plans and functional behavior assessments. Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) were expanded to provide appropriate interventions pre-referral. The district assigned an additional behavior specialist to provide early intervening services specifically at high minority schools for students not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral supports to succeed in a general education environment.

BTG Goal 5 action steps have focused on capacity building for appropriate pre-referral intervention processes and this work is continuing. Future action planning should continue to investigate factors that contribute to overrepresentation and provide mechanisms for interrupting systemic inequities. Previous attempts to examine data, conduct record reviews, and revise revaluation procedures that would facilitate the reexamination of eligibility determinations have met challenges. District leadership should consider expanding capacity to complete record reviews and determine if inappropriate identification exists in hopes of exiting students who were identified years ago due to previous policies, procedures, and practices that have since changed. Moreover, a systems analysis of the EBD process should consider culturally responsive practices for functional behavioral assessments, centering cultural and language diversity within RtI, and integrating culturally competent school psychology consultations.

Goal 5 / Key Actions / Research Findings

- The district's ongoing training of behavior specialists in the Registered Behavior Technician coursework has been successful and is consistent with increased cultural awareness in alignment with supporting students and their individual behavior plans (PBIP).

- Another focus area has been expanding Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) to provide appropriate interventions prior to EBD referral. The district assigned an additional behavior specialist to provide early intervening services specifically at high minority schools for students not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral supports to succeed in a general education environment.

- The ESE department has also conducted dedicated professional development sessions for school-based staff to understand the newly developed guidelines and procedures for EBD, to introduce expansion of effective response-to-intervention (RtI) strategies, and to discuss cultural components to be considered with positive behavior intervention plans and functional behavior assessments.

- The ESE department continued to develop and implement a more exacting pre-referral, evaluation, and re-evaluation process for students identified as either at-risk or as EBD/OHI (behavior related). These action steps, while part of the BTG goal to reduce the disparity in EBD identification for black students, had the larger aim of creating a systemic model to support prevention and early intervention through

the MTSS framework. The district CEIS specialists provided supports for students at 20 high minority schools. Coordinated Early Intervening Services were successful in providing comprehensive interventions that met the needs in a general education setting of 80% of participating students. In addition to the CEIS specialist, area district behavior specialists responded to school support requests for early intervening services for black students throughout the district.

Goal 5 / Next Steps / Recommendations from District Research Evaluation

❖ Conduct a systems analysis of the EBD referral process that considers culturally responsive practices for functional behavioral assessments, centering cultural and language diversity within RtI, and integrating culturally competent school psychology consultations. Evaluating the evidence-base for emotional behavioral disorder interventions in schools could also inform targeted prevention approaches and promising practices for exiting students from services when appropriate.

❖ Establish pre-referral intervention teams at high minority schools and schools with multiple referrals in 2019-20 to improve the functionality of early intervention. Align work of behavior specialists at those schools with the PBIS, RP teams in supporting students with proactive, non-punitive measures when possible.

❖ Continue targeted professional development to school-based leadership teams, student services teams, ESE staff, paraprofessionals, and other support staff to provide guidance for considering referrals for evaluations for EBD/OHI, RtI for students with academic and behavior needs, completing re-evaluations for EBD, and completing evaluations for students referred as EBD. Possible revision to guidance documents to identify any possible non-compliance.

❖ To address disproportionality in EBD designations, the ESE department should consider improved systems to identify patterns of noncompliance with FBA, PBIP, and IEP requirements in terms of whether the determinant factor for a continued EBD designation is still behavior. This is in addition to creating practices, procedures, and policy around identification. This consideration should be taken into account when planning record reviews for existing primary EBD placements.

Goal 6 Increase the number of black teachers and administrators to closely mirror the student enrollment by ethnicity

Goal 6: Annual Outcome Measures		Baseline 2015/16		2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
# and % of total instructional positions / black		(622) **8.3%**	Actual	(647) **8.8%**	(671) **9.2%**	(651) **9.1%**	(665) **9.2%**
	Black		Target	9%	10%	11%	12%
	GAP	**9.7**	Actual	**9.2**	**8.8**	**8.9**	**8.8**
			Gap is compared to black student enrollment of 18%.				

The district has seen steady increases in the percentage of district teachers who are black, with the number and percentage of black teachers hired increasing slightly in 2019-20. The gap for Goal 6 is defined as the percentage of black teachers in comparison to the district's black student population of 18%. The number of black teachers employed at the end of the 2019-20 school year was 665 (9.2%), up from 622 (8.3%) in the baseline year of 2015-16.

As part of the BTG Plan, the district employs three additional staff members in the Human Resources Department to focus more attention on recruiting minority candidates. There is some evidence that the Talent Acquisition Team's efforts contributed to increased personalized attention to minority candidates, including personal phone calls, check-ins, and practice interviews at the district office. Nonetheless, feedback from stakeholders continues to point to a lack of minority candidates as a key challenge.

The Human Resources department has been innovative in its approaches, including the hiring of new HR "partners" to work with schools more closely in finding candidates and filling positions efficiently. Additionally, the district is in the planning stages of a new Call Me Mister program through the University of South Florida that is similar to the successful program at Clemson University. The program identifies black males in high school and supports them as they matriculate to college. The district also moved forward in 2019-20 with its new Teacher Cadet program as outlined in the BTG Plan. The program identifies future black educators among current PCS students.

Goal 6 / Key Actions / Research Findings

- The district Human Resources Department conducted an internal review of district processes and found challenge areas within the department that included a lack of standardization of processes among staff. This internal review, coupled with feedback from the Urban Schools Human Capital Academy, led to several substantive changes in personnel supports for schools. This includes the hiring new HR specialists and the streamlining of processes for certification verification and fingerprinting in an effort to expedite hiring timelines.

- The district's Talent Acquisition Team redesigned its webpage to include photos and quotes from current teachers of diverse backgrounds, IT Factor video, and PCS recruitment videos. The HR department also streamlined its links (one click) with pertinent information for candidates.

- The HR department developed more targeted recruitment materials as outlined in the BTG Plan, increased its marketing through social media and other digital platforms, and conducted focus groups with new teachers in attending to improved recruitment and retention practices. Additional efforts centered on state recruitment events resulted in varying levels of success. Stakeholder feedback illustrated success at the Great Florida Teach-In and the Florida Fund for Minority Teachers with several advance binding agreements being offered. Conversely, recruitment efforts at historically black colleges and universities yielded insufficient returns, with district leadership identifying local internship programs and competitive recruitment agencies as a possible cause.

- The HR team continued its support of the district's black educators' organization (PABSE). New promotional materials were created including a new banner, table runner, consumable items, and

informational flyer to recruit new teachers to join the organization. Held Inaugural "Coffee & Conversation" in February (14 attendees, 10 new memberships). Focus Group were also conducted to gain understanding of the challenges that black teachers face in the district. A Lunch & Learn event was held at District-Wide Training to increase awareness of the organization and generate new memberships (19 attendees, 10 new memberships).

- As stated, the district's Human Resources Department did complete a semi-annual review of its processes as required by the BTG Plan. The following recommendations were made:
  - ✓ *Improve networking opportunities in building relationships with potential minority candidates.*

  - ✓ *Revise / streamline the hiring process to decrease the length of time it takes for a candidate to move from being recommended to determining a start date.*

  - ✓ *Ensure that hiring managers, or designee, utilize all available tools (i.e. Search Soft) to provide candidate feedback from Human Resources in order to assist in building a quality pool of candidates.*

  - ✓ *Communicate with candidates in a timely manner to improve their chances of securing an interview (ie. reminding them of what they are missing in their applications).*

Goal 6 / Next Steps / Recommendations from District Research Evaluation

- ❖ Continue to diversify recruitment efforts and networking:
  - o Consider partnering with the county or other large-scale county employers to create a recruiting network aimed at sharing resources to introduce prospective candidates to the county, to attract prospective candidates outside of Pinellas County, and as a means to offer spousal hires (similar to best practices in academia) within other employment areas.
  - o Create partner networks with regional minority groups (Pinellas County Urban League, UNITE – An African-American Business and Social Exchange, African American Chamber of Commerce – Central Florida, etc.) to enhance the minority teacher pipeline and recruit prospective candidates within their member districts and at member events.

- ❖ Collect perception data from staff, possibly through additional focus groups, as another method of assessment of district progress toward a more diversified district workforce. Include analysis and strategic use of feedback from veteran, new, and exiting teachers as an important method for identifying meaningful patterns regarding recruitment and retention and influencing responsive practices.

- ❖ Focus efforts on improving onboarding and mentoring programs to increase retention rates. The district must effectively communicate with and garner feedback from both new and veteran minority teachers to ensure they are properly onboarded, trained, and supported in improving the district's retention rates.

- ❖ Develop relationships with all state universities and identify black student associations within those schools as avenues to build relationships with potential teaching candidates.