



BTG / Quarterly Update

Pinellas County Schools created the Bridging the Gap strategic plan to guide its work in closing the achievement gaps between black students and their non-black peers. The district garnered input from teachers, parents, and community members in developing a plan in 2016-17 that includes ambitious data targets and action steps as part of its aspirational goal of eliminating or greatly narrowing the gaps between black and non-black learners within 10 years.

The plan outlines gaps across six goal areas:

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

Equity with Excellence for All / Belief Statement

Pinellas County Schools is committed to ensuring equity and excellence for all learners with the ambitious goal of eliminating or greatly narrowing the achievement gap within 10 years between black and non-black learners. The district is fully committed to this work as a way of expressing its beliefs and commitment to diversity throughout the school system through fostering a growth mindset, ensuring culturally inclusive lessons and materials, celebrating all learners and families, and hiring a workforce that is representative of the students we serve. The District and School Board aspire to lead the state and nation in closing the achievement gap and are dedicating all the necessary resources to support innovative solutions in meeting the aspirational targets outlined in this plan.

Bridging the Gap Plan / Purpose

The Bridging the Gap (BTG) Plan will continue to be revised to include bold initiatives to affect substantive changes in the way we engage, enrich, and empower our teachers, children, and families to meet high expectations for all learners. The plan will be reviewed annually and updated accordingly. It is important to note that the data utilized for baseline measures are from the 2015-16 school year, with the 2016-17 school year considered a planning year, and the 2017-18 school year identified as the first year of implementation.

Summary Report to the Board and Community

- **Pinellas County Schools is committed to reporting its progress to the community each year by compiling an end-of-year report that addresses each of the six goal areas.** That report is posted to the district website.
- **This Quarterly Board Report is designed as a brief update to the community on the progress of the key BTG action steps across each of the six goal areas.**
 - Note: Data updates will be provided each quarter as data are available, though the summative data across all six goals and the district's key findings and recommendations for next steps will only be provided via the annual report.



Equitable Outcomes / Current Health Crisis

In light of the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 health crisis, the district's work in support of equitable access and outcomes continues to shift to support students and families during these unusual times.

■ Quarter 2 Update:

- Students continued to return to face-to-face instruction during Quarter 2, moving from 51% of students on campus (face to face) in the fall to 72% on campus by January. The percentages for black students attending school in person versus online are similar to the district's population by race.
- The district continued its new PCS Connects initiative to provide laptop computers to all students. For the 2020-21 school year, the district will provide computers to all students in grades four through nine and then expand by two grades each year until all students in grades 1-12 have a device and hot spot if needed. These devices may be taken home or left at school each day. The use of digital devices will be integrated into the instructional day for content delivery, research, creativity, innovation and collaboration. This initiative will also allow for a deeper partnership between families, students, and teachers. During the first semester, the district distributed computer devices to every 6th, 7th and 8th grade student in the district.
- The district also initiated a unique before-school Extended Learning Program for students in grades 4 and 5 to address the COVID slide in mathematics. This action was coupled with device distribution to all 4th and 5th grade students as a critical step to increasing expectations and supports for math skill development.
- Targeted webinars were offered to families to support at-home and in-person learning and community groups were involved to promote the webinars to families of black learners.
- The district continues to closely monitor student assessment results and classroom performance for students learning on campus and at home. More than 5,000 remote learners have been identified by schools as struggling academically and families have been contacted to encourage their return to on-campus learning and-or to provide a personalized plan of support for second semester. The black learners identified for additional supports (1,061 in total) are enrolled across schools and levels:
 - **Elementary School:** 277 students **Middle School:** 408 students **High School:** 376 students



Key Action Steps / Progress Update

BTG Goals 1-3: Graduation Rate / Academic Achievement / Advanced Coursework



Implementing Culturally Relevant Instructional Practices in all Classrooms / Progress Update

The district’s Equity Task Force continues to monitor equity initiatives through its review of key benchmarks, progress measures, and stakeholder feedback to ensure quality of implementation.

PCS / Equity Task Force / Implementation Monitoring	Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation Timelines 	Calendaring and aligning next step(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key Benchmarks / Training Targets, Progress Outcomes 	Validating and evaluating key benchmarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fidelity Measures / Data Tools 	Measuring efficacy of initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cycles of Support / System Follow-Through and Growth 	Establishing systems in support of equitable outcomes

Quarter 2 Updates / Teaching and Learning:

- The Teaching and Learning division has continued its yearlong Curriculum Task Force Review of curriculum materials with a focus on addressing anti-racist topics in K-12 English and Social Studies courses. A report on the Task Force results will be presented to the School Board at the end of the school year.
- A key action of the BTG Plan is underway in targeting supports for black learners in 3rd grade who need additional intervention in reading. The Teaching and Learning team has implemented an in-school, small group instruction model specifically for black students to increase third grade proficiency. Entitled “Accelerated Learning,” the model includes the teacher introducing a key lesson / skill, helping students to practice, and then formatively assessing student progress in the standard(s). The cycle is reintroduced each week, tailored to student progress.

Equity Training / Update:

The district’s equity training has continued into 2020-21, though much of the training has shifted to virtual options. The training aligns three key areas that are critical to improving teacher practice and classroom community.

- Equity Champions / Mindset:** Developing cultural competence by recognizing the historical, cultural, social, and racial barriers that can influence beliefs and biases and impact learning.
- AVID’s Culturally Relevant Teaching:** Developing curriculum, lessons, and activities that include specific, intentional, and practical strategies to engage, challenge, and support diverse learners.
- PBIS / 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.

Equity Champions / Mindset

- The district now has 515 teachers and leaders trained and credentialed as Equity Champions.



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- The district equity team offers a variety of trainings to deepen faculty and staff understanding of inequality, prejudice, and racism. Those include: *Courageous Conversations: Beyond Diversity* training, and a local Heritage Hike in partnership with the African American Heritage Association.
 - **During Quarter 2**, the Equity Champions conducted 19 trainings across district schools.

School-based Equity Champions are partnering with district equity leaders in developing a robust equity toolkit to align the following areas for improvement:

- Improved Instruction
- Systems Change
- Equity Leadership
- Culture and Climate

AVID's Culturally Relevant Teaching training:

- The district adopted the AVID training protocol in the Spring of the 2017-18 school year with the ambitious goal of training all teachers (approx. 7,500) over 3-5 years.
 - **As of Quarter 2**, the district had trained 2,465 teachers (36% of all teachers in the district).

BTG Goal 2 Action Update / Reading Recovery program

- **The district's first-year implementation of Reading Recovery in 2019-20 showed promising results.** The program is designed to support struggling readers in 1st Grade and includes intensive training for teachers and one-on-one support for children. The students receive a half-hour lesson each day for 12-20 weeks with a specially trained Reading Recovery teacher.
- **The program has expanded in 2020-21 to 14 district schools.**
 - **Schools:** *Bay Point, Bear Creek, Campbell Park, Fairmount Park, Frontier, Gulfport, High Point, Lakewood, Maximo, Melrose, Ponce De Leon, Sandy Lane, Seventy-Fourth Street, Woodlawn.*
- **In Quarter 1**, 134 students (82 of whom are black) were receiving direct support from the reading program teacher, as well as 356 additional students who were being supported in reading groups with strategies specific to the students' deficits.
 - **Data Update:** Among all Reading Recovery participants, 91 first graders were found to be reading at a pre-Kindergarten level. After the first five weeks of intensive reading support, all of those students improved to a mid-year Kindergarten or 1st Grade level.

Program Notes:

- Reading Recovery teachers are leading school-based training sessions for other teachers at the schools.
- District reading specialists are using Behind the Glass sessions to improve the district's coaching supports with literacy coaches.
- The first cycle of students for 2020-21 exited the program in December/January and a new set of students has begun for second semester (groups may be adjusted as needed).

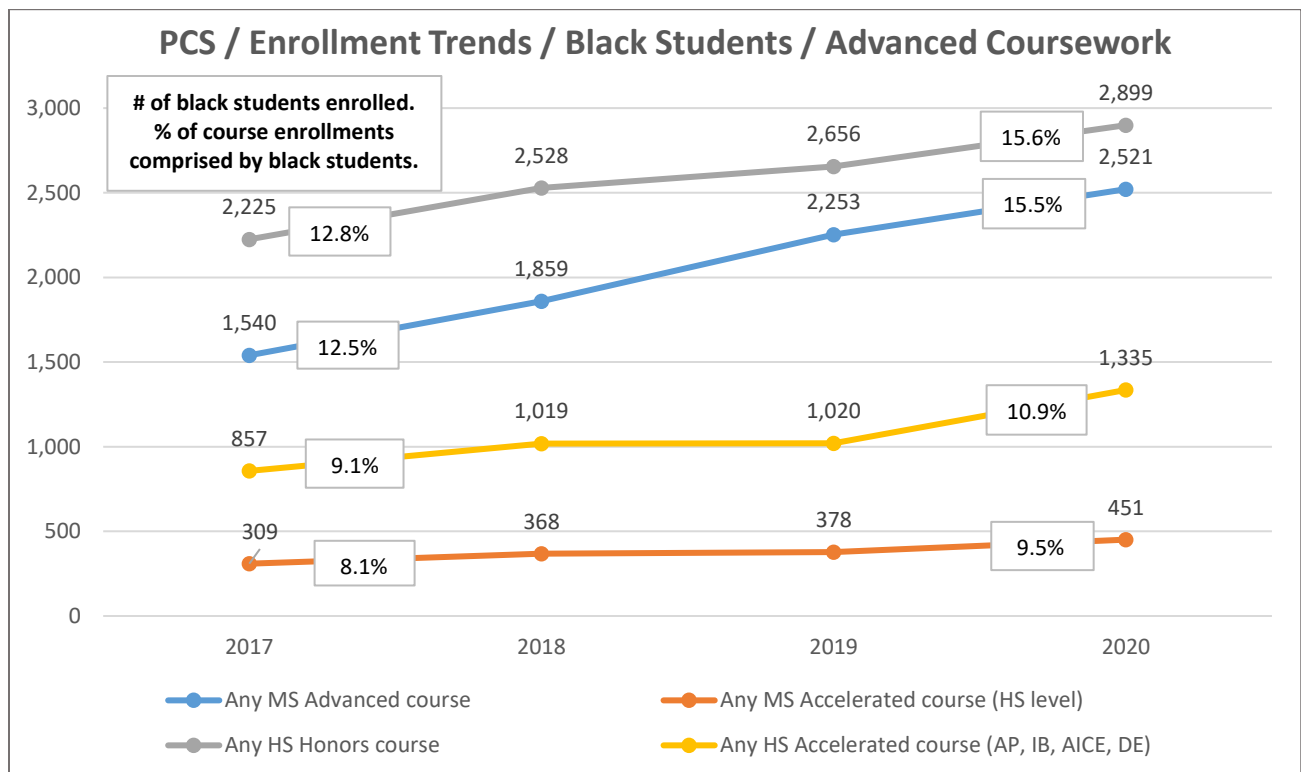


Goal 3: Data Update / Advanced Coursework



Advanced Coursework / Open Access to College Readiness Testing / Gifted / Progress Update

- Expanded data use across the Goal 3 action steps is resulting 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. See table below.
- Steps to increase black student participation in advanced coursework includes early identification of gifted and talented learners and open access to advanced courses in middle school. Additionally, district tracking systems have improved, including 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.
- Data Note:** Official enrollment counts for purposes of the BTG Plan are measured in the spring of each school year (February-March). The annual totals and percentages for 2020-21 will be updated in the Quarter 3 report.





Additional Goal 3 Progress Updates / College Readiness Access

PSAT / SAT

- The district has been consistent in offering free, on-campus access to all students to the PSAT and SAT. Since the district began its SAT School Day in March of 2017, there has been considerable progress in providing access to college readiness measures to students of color:
 - Since 2017, a 70% overall increase in SAT participation is evident among all students.
 - 102% for Hispanic/Latino students
 - 82% for Black students
 - 55% for White students

As of Quarter 1, the district again offered PSAT testing on campus despite the challenges from the current health crisis. The test was offered as an option for those who chose to take part.

As of Quarter 2, all black learners in Grades 11 and 12 who need a college-ready score have been registered for the on-campus SAT in March. As well, the Elevating Excellence team put together a three-tiered SAT support plan for 11th-grade students that begins with virtual instruction for Math and Evidenced-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) lessons through a Canvas course. The lessons are focused on both testing strategies and topics with which our Elevating Excellence students tend to need additional support.

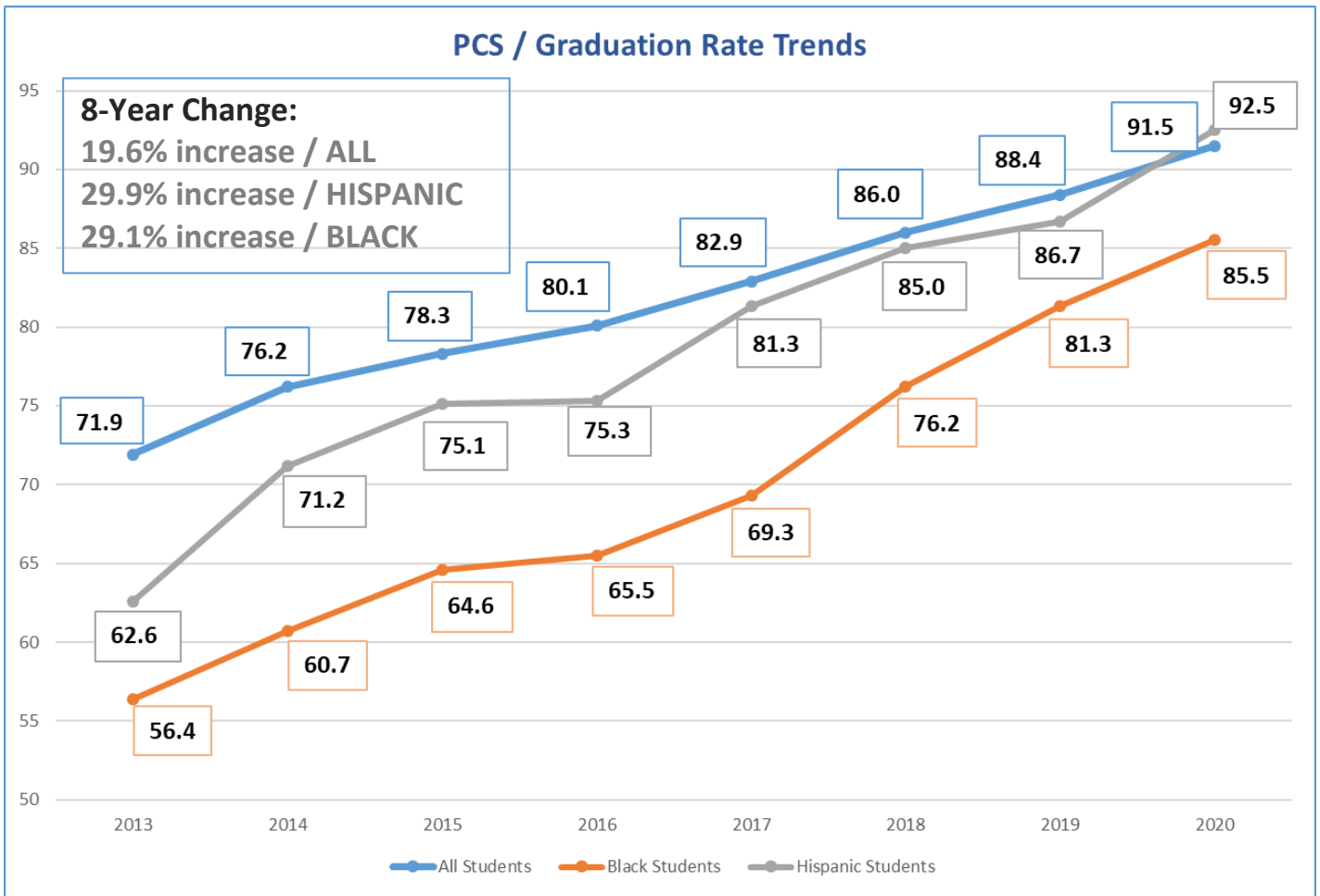


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Goal 1: Data Update / Graduation Rates

- The state released graduation rates in January for the 2019-20 graduating class.
- The district continued its impressive gains in its graduation rates, reaching 91.5% for all graduates and 85.5% for black graduates (see table below). These are both the highest totals in district history.
- With the increase in black graduation rate, the district also continued its steady improvement in reducing the achievement gap between black and non-black graduates (now down to 7.2 percentage points from a previous gap of 17.9 percentage points in the BTG’s baseline year of 2015-16).





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Table: PCS Graduation Rates by Race and Gender

Graduation Rate	2018-19					2019-20				
	# Cohort	# Graduates	Grad Rate TOTAL %	Grad Rate FEMALE %	Grad Rate MALE %	# Cohort	# Graduates	Grad Rate TOTAL %	Grad Rate FEMALE %	Grad Rate MALE %
Hispanic	1,184	1,027	86.7	89.8	83.3	1,254	1,160	92.5	95.1	90.0
Black	1,313	1,067	81.3	85.6	76.7	1,238	1,058	85.5	90.0	80.6
Multi-Racial	275	250	90.9	93.3	88.6	285	257	90.2	90.2	90.2
American Indian	19	14	73.7	71.4	75.0	18	16	88.9	90.0	84.5
White	4,376	3,959	90.5	93.4	87.5	4,282	3,967	92.6	94.6	90.9
Asian	416	393	94.5	97.8	90.5	329	320	97.3	98.8	95.7
Pacific Islander	18	13	72.2	*	*	17	15	88.2	*	*
District TOTAL	7,601	6,723	88.4	91.6	85.2	7,423	6,793	91.5	93.9	89.2
Black	1,313	1,067	81.3%			1,238	1,058	85.5%		
Non-Black	6,288	5,656	90.0%			6,185	5,735	92.7%		
		GAP	8.7				GAP	7.2		

	2019 Standard Diploma Graduates / By WD Code					2020 Standard Diploma Graduates / By WD Code				
	Total # of Grads	W06 / No Concordant or Waiver Required	WFT / Concordant Score Required	WRW ESE Waiver Required	OTHER Grads WD codes	Total # of Grads	W06 / No Concordant or Waiver Required	WFT / Concordant Score Required	WRW ESE Waiver Required	OTHER Grads WD codes
Black	1,067	332	471	53	211	1,058	260	434	58	306
Non-Black	5,656	3,267	1,533	107	749	5,735	3,399	1,218	99	1,019

Note: In 2019-20, seniors were not provided an opportunity to take the state FSA assessment in the spring due to COVID-19. For this reason, students were allowed to graduate with a standard diploma as "exempt" from the required assessments. A new state withdrawal code (WCO) was provided to note the students graduating via this option. Black: 89 students. Non-Black: 193 students.



Key Action Steps / Brief Update

Goal 4: Student Behavior / Discipline Disparity



Behavior policies, practices / Training on PBIS-Restorative Practices / Progress Update

PBIS

- **Despite a summer delay due to the COVID-19 health crisis, the district moved forward in the fall of 2020-21 to train the lead PBIS coordinators at each school on discipline structures aligned to the key elements of Positive Behavioral Support and Intervention (PBIS).** The new PBIS training has a culturally responsive, restorative focus and was transitioned to a virtual format as part of a districtwide re-refresh of PBIS. A designated assistant principal is leading school teams through a revision of schoolwide behavior plans and protocols aligned to each school's unique school community.
 - **As of Quarter 2,** each school coordinator has been trained by state PBIS experts on the process for data review and collaboration among staff and students in establishing supportive structures and systems.

Restorative Practices

- **The district continued its investment in trainers, training materials, and timelines for implementing restorative practices.** The district has entered its third full year of implementation. Each school has developed a team that is dedicated to this work. The teams began their work in the Summer of 2017 as part of a three-day workshop titled Introduction to Restorative Practices.
- **In 2018-19,** the district began its first year of full implementation of restorative practices and began the process of training every teacher in the district in cooperation with the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP). By the end of the school, nearly every teacher in the district had been trained. A district survey issued to all teachers showed that nearly 70% of teachers had embraced the use of restorative practices and believe they were adequately trained.
- **As of 2019-20,** every school had a certified restorative practices trainer on site. As turnover in schools occurred, ongoing training sessions were scheduled for schools to prepare additional certified trainers. A complete resource site was also developed for schools around restorative practices, including materials that schools can use to set goals, reflect on best practices, and engage staff and students in these new strategies.
- **As of 2020-21,** the district has contracted with the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) to provide additional, intensive training for 20 district schools. That training was implemented successfully in the fall and will continue throughout the school year.
 - **Through Quarter 2:** Each of the 20 schools have taken part in the following (virtually):
 - **Restorative Justice Conferencing training / formalized / intensive / a lead facilitator trained from each school;**
 - **Principals Professional Learning Community (PLC) / principal collaboration on best practice;**



- Six intensive training sessions with IIRP coaches / school teams taking part.
- District schools that are not among the cohort of 20 schools: / six webinars / restorative practices refresher re: the social discipline window, using affective statements, etc.
- District MTSS specialists (partnering with Area Superintendents) have also embedded restorative practices discussions and examples into their area meetings.

Goal 4: Data Update: / Out of School Suspensions (OSS)

Quarter 2 Discipline Data / Update:

- **The district's discipline data trends for both referrals and suspensions (OSS) show significant drops** as expected during the first and second quarters of 2020-21. Due to the COVID-19 health crisis, many students are learning at home and on-campus enrollments are much lower (making quarter-over-quarter comparisons to previous years unequal).
 - **As an example**, among all PCS students, there were 3,438 out-of-school suspensions (OSS) through Quarter 2 of last year (2019-20) and only 935 this year (a 72.8% drop). Similarly, the number of suspensions given to black students was 1,864 last year (2019-20) compared to 495 through Quarter 2 of this year (a 73.4% decrease).
- **To make equitable comparisons between school years**, the district measured the Quarter 3 discipline totals in 2019-20 (prior to the pandemic) to Quarter 3 of the previous school year. In doing so, the total number of out-of-school suspensions (OSS) and total number of students suspended among all students and black students had decreased considerably last year compared to the previous year, though the disparity gap between black and non-black students was similar. See data tables below.
- **The district's Equity Task Force continues to work with the district's research division to garner feedback from teachers, staff, and administrators on school discipline processes, alternatives to suspension, and new ideas to support students who are off-task.** Focus groups were conducted last year at six district middle schools and feedback is being used to develop alternative consequences and interventions in keeping students on task and social-emotionally supported. The focus groups are in alignment with the district's continued efforts to consider restorative approaches to discipline and to seek input from teachers and staff as to what strategies might be most effective.
 - **In Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 of 2020-21**, 12 additional schools were identified for visits and feedback from school staff on improved discipline processes and procedures. That work will continue into second semester.
- **The district continues to monitor out-of-school suspensions for black students to meet its goal of eliminating OSS for non-violent infractions such as skipping, missed detention, tardies, and minor bus infractions.**
 - **Through Quarter 2 of 2020-21**, 5 suspensions were given for these non-violent offenses (less than 1% of all suspensions issued).



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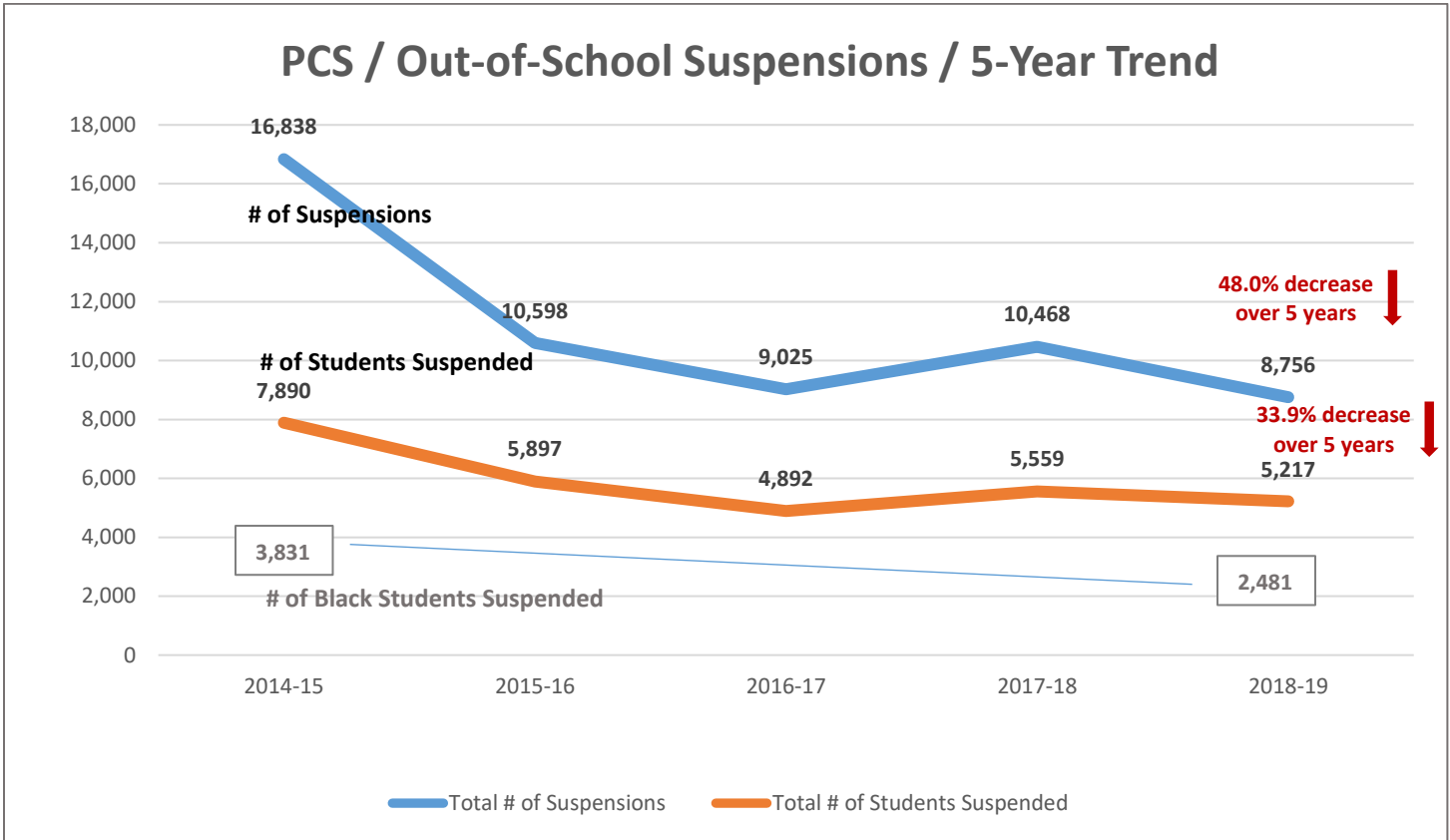


Table: Discipline Data Comparison / Quarter 2 to Quarter 2

PCS / OSS / Thru Quarter 2 / Update / 2020-21										
thru Q2	Total # of Suspensions WHITE	Total # of Students Suspended WHITE	Total # of Suspensions BLACK	Total # of Students Suspended BLACK	Total # of Suspensions HISPANIC	Total # of Students Suspended HISPANIC	Total # of Suspensions ASIAN	Total # of Students Suspended ASIAN	Total # of Suspensions MULTI	Total # of Students Suspended MULTI
2019-20	934	688	1,864	1,244	406	306	33	27	198	130
2020-21	314	265	495	419	77	70	8	6	39	32
Change	-620	-423	-1,369	-825	-329	-236	-25	-21	-159	-98
	-63.4%	-61.5%	-73.4%	-66.3%	-81.0%	-77.1%	-75.8%	-77.8%	-80.3%	-75.4%

- Data caution: District discipline data trends are being impacted by the current health crisis, making comparisons from quarter-to-quarter and year-over-year more difficult at this time. With many students taking part in school from home (virtually), fewer students are on campus and that has impacted district referrals and suspensions.**



Key Action Steps / Progress Update

Goal 5: ESE Identification (EBD)



EBD Data review / Early Intervening Services / Progress Update

- **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. As of Quarter 2 of 2020-21, the numbers continue to trend positively.
- **Intensive problem solving on behavioral intervention and additional training for school-based staff** is occurring consistently with district behavior specialists in support of early intervention.
 - **Through Quarter 2 of 2020-21:**
 - All School-Based Behavior Specialists have now completed the 40 hours of Registered Behavior Technician coursework. District ESE staff are seeing positive results in how behavior specialists assess and intervene with students who are exhibiting behaviors of concern. Additionally, some support and administrative staff have also completed the coursework for a total of 93 participants at this point.
 - Two District Behavior Specialists have completed the rigorous Board Certification and passed the exam. The remaining specialists are on track to complete the training and certification this school year.
 - District staff are also seeing a decrease in the number of supports and requests by schools specifically to address behavior needs as compared to last year.
 - As of Quarter 2, District Behavior Specialists have received school support requests for the following:
 - 116 for individual students / functional behavioral assessment (FBA) support / Tier 3
 - 123 for group supports / Tier 2
 - 25 for Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) strategies
 - 15 for Whole Staff Training
- As of the fall of 2020-21, the new Insights to Behavior program was underway at 13 pilot schools. The staff at the target schools are taking part in the training that outlines research-based classrooms structures and behavior management strategies. The schools are: *Bear Creek ES, Calvin Hunsinger, Carwise MS, Dunedin ES, Largo MS, McMullen Booth ES, New Heights ES, Nina Harris, Northeast HS, Pinellas Park MS, Safety Harbor MS, St. Petersburg HS, and Tarpon Springs ES.*
- **The Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Department continues to work collaboratively with the district data departments in creating improved eligibility data reports.** The reports are reviewed and compared to ensure accuracy of the data and coding.
- **The district reviews every student with a primary eligibility of EBD** at the student's annual IEP meeting.



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- **As of Quarter 1**, 8 black students transferred into Pinellas County Schools who already had an EBD designation. **As of Quarter 2**, 4 black students with an EBD designation transferred to PCS. Those students are being re-evaluated per the process outlined in the BTG Plan.
- **The district has assigned four additional district intervention specialists to specifically support early intervening services at high minority schools.** Additional support and training for schools from behavior specialists is also available as needed. This new way of work emphasizes the critical need to establish high-quality general education intervention procedures. The goal is to reduce identification of students found eligible.

As of Quarter 2, 17 district schools were receiving this direct support.



Key Action Steps / Progress Update

Goal 6: Minority Hiring



Improved Processes / Hiring of a Minority Recruitment Team / Progress Update

The district Human Resources Department continues to conduct an annual, internal review of district processes to identify challenge areas. This internal review, coupled with feedback from the Urban Schools Human Capital Academy, has 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.

BTG Goal 6 Action Update / Call Me MISTER Program

- Despite the ongoing health crisis, the district is moving forward with its new Call Me Mister program 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 is also moving forward with its new Teacher Cadet program as outlined in the BTG Plan. The program identifies future black educators among current PCS students.

As of Quarter 2, the district has partnered with the USF St. Petersburg campus to grow a pipeline of black male high school students interested in a career in elementary and middle grades education. The program will include:

- A summer leadership institute;
- Mentorship;
- Tuition support / book support, academic and social support;
- Conferences and professional development;
- Student teaching at “high-need” schools;
- Advance contract binder, guaranteed job placement at “high-needs” elementary or middle schools.

As outlined in the BTG Plan, the district continues to employ a Manager of Talent Acquisition and additional hiring specialists to focus on minority hiring and filling critical shortage areas. The team has taken critical steps to support recruitment and retention of minority candidates. Those include:

- Building strong relationships with current minority candidates in keeping the candidate pool “warm.”
- Reducing the hiring manager’s time by recommending the most qualified candidates for an interview and facilitating recommendations for hire.
- Rebranding PCS marketing materials to reflect the diversity of the Pinellas County community.
- Providing frequent “check ins” with 1st year teachers in support of improved retention.
- Conducting weekly reviews of black applicants via Search Soft software. Continuing to reach out, provide guidance on certification, etc. Tracking number of applicants, fully certified applicants, and hire status.
- Conducting virtual outreach to meet and recruit black teachers through both urban education and traditional programs (HBCUs).

As of Quarter 2, the HR team has also taken part in national webinars specific to the following areas / topics:

- Recruiting Trends
- Educators Rising
- Data-Driven Equity
- Recruiting Strategies During COVID-19



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- The HR team has continued its support of the district's black educators' organization (PABSE). New promotional materials were created over the past year including a new banner, table runner, consumable items, and informational flyer to recruit new teachers to join the organization. The team also held its Inaugural "Coffee & Conversation" last year and that will continue into this year. Focus Groups have also been conducted to gain understanding of the challenges that black teachers face in the district.
 - **As of Quarter 2**, HR has worked with district equity leaders to form affinity groups of teachers of similar races and cultures in building stronger relationships, understanding, and supports.