



## 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.



### Key Action Steps / Progress Update

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

### 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 continued and shifted to support students and families during these unusual times.

- **MyPCS Online:** The district continues to provide equitable choices for families via a variety of learning options in the fall of 2020-21. Families had the option of attending face to face, through Pinellas Virtual School, or via MyPCS Online, a virtual option that followed the regular school-day schedule. At the start of the school year, 52% of black students were enrolled in face-to-face / on campus school. By November 67% of black students were enrolled in the face-to-face option. The percentages for black students attending school in person versus online are similar to the district's entire student demographic. PCS will continue to allow for family choice in learning options through the remainder of the school year.
- **PCS Connects:** The district moved forward with a major initiative to provide laptop computers to all students. For the 2020-21 school year, PCS Connects 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, as parents will have daily access to instruction and enrichment materials for their student. A new resource website has been set up at: [www.pcsb.org/PCSConnects](http://www.pcsb.org/PCSConnects)
- **Summer Bridge:** Despite the ongoing health crisis, the district implemented a virtual Summer Bridge program with 3,916 black students attending (25.6% of all students in attendance). Students in Summer Bridge received daily, live lessons in English Language Arts and Math, including an arts integrated focus for many lessons. A review of fall assessment data show that students attending Summer Bridge experienced higher performance on baseline assessments upon returning to school in August.



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

Last school year, each school conducted an equity data walk 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 data walk on each campus was organized by the district’s equity team as part of its Equity with Excellence training plan. The training aligns the district strategies that are key 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.

Despite the challenges brought on by the pandemic, more than 1,000 teachers attended virtual equity trainings over the summer. Additionally, the number of Equity Champions increased to over 500 districtwide (up from 300 at the start of last school year).

#### Equity Champions / Mindset

- The district now has 514 teachers and leaders trained and credentialed as Equity Champions.
- 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 1**, the Equity Champions conducted 17 trainings across district schools.

#### 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 1**, the district had trained 2,465 teachers (36% of all teachers in the district).



## Bridging the Gap / Pinellas County Schools

### Quarter 1 Update / 2020-21 / School Board Briefing

- In partnership with AVID's national headquarters, the district has also secured additional trainers to continue to increase its capacity to train and re-train teachers.

#### 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. See table below.
  - 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 1<sup>st</sup> Grade level.

Students Enrolled in Program	Total	Black	Hispanic	White	Other	Multi-Racial
Number of Students Receiving 1:1 Support	134	82 (61%)	19	24	2	7
Number of Students Served in Group Settings	356	246 (69%)	35	54	5	16

#### 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 will exit the program in December/January and a new set of students will begin (groups may be adjusted as needed).

#### New BTG Goal 2 Action / Grade 3 Readiness Intervention

- In addition to Reading Recovery in 1<sup>st</sup> Grade, several new actions are in place in 2020-21 to support black learners who are not on track for grade-level proficiency entering 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade. Nearly 200 students have been identified for intensive supports provided through the Teaching and Learning Division.

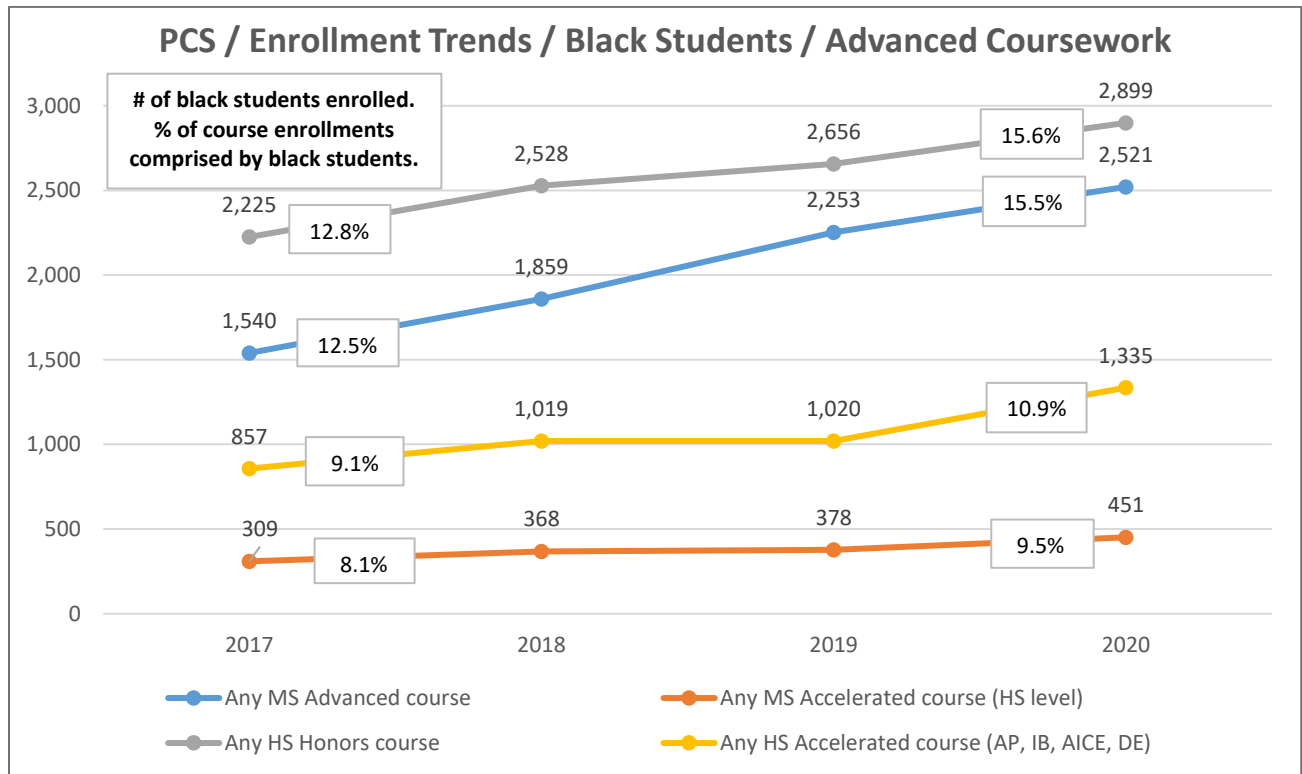


### Goal 3: Data Update / Advanced Coursework



#### 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.





# Bridging the Gap / Pinellas County Schools

Quarter 1 Update / 2020-21 / School Board Briefing

## Additional Goal 3 Progress Updates / College Readiness Access

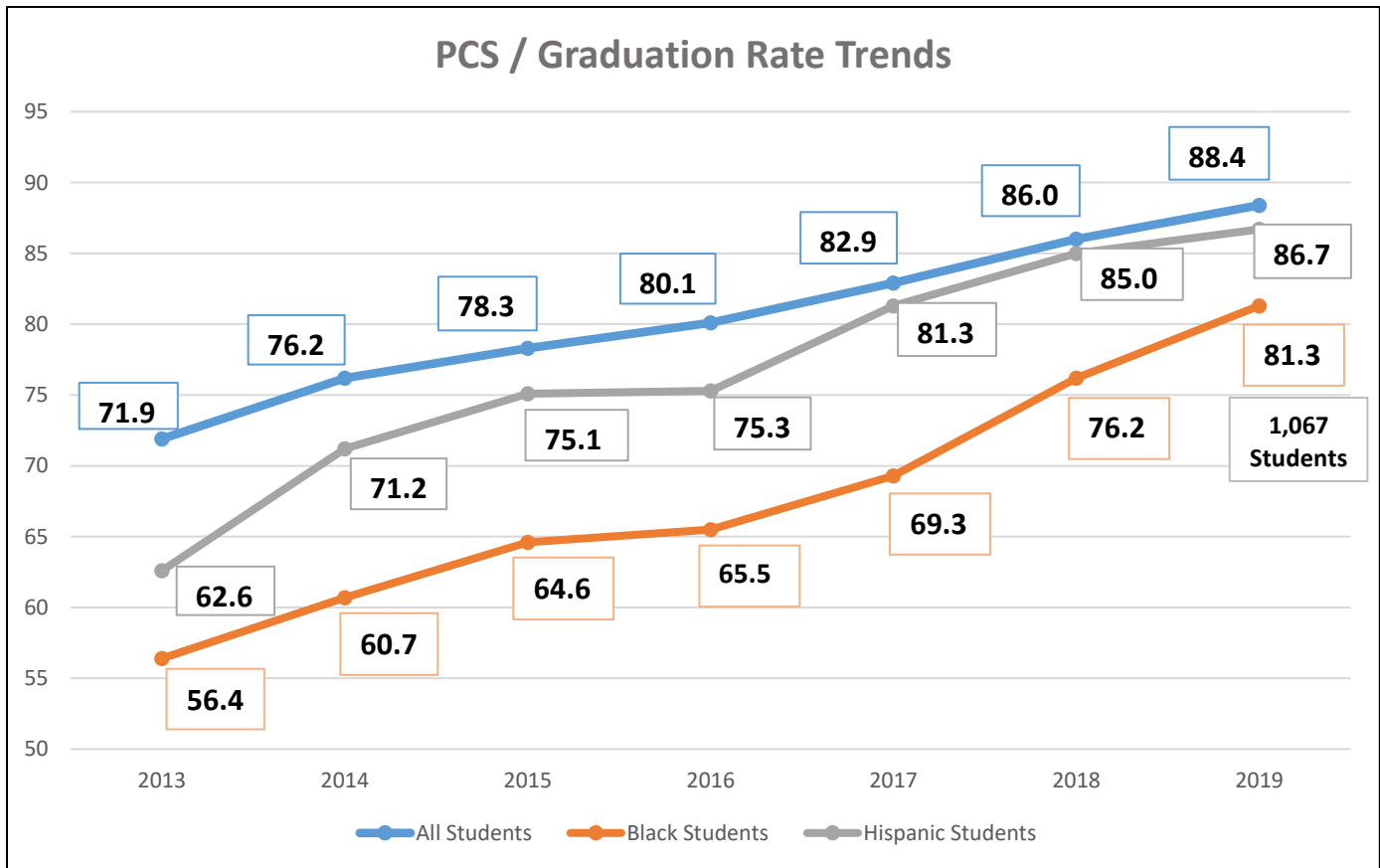
### PSAT / SAT

- 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.

## Goal 1: Data Update / Graduation Rates

- NOTE:** Graduation rates for 2019-20 have not yet been released by the state but are expected soon. The district's internal graduation rate tracking shows progress again this year.



The district continued its steady improvement in its graduation rate in 2018-19. The district reached a record-high graduation rate for the 2018-2019 school year (88.4%). The district also continued to see a steady improvement in its black graduation rate (81.3%) and saw a strong decrease in the achievement gap (down to 8.7 percentage points from a previous gap of 11.9 percentage points the previous year).



### Key Action Steps / Brief Update

#### Goal 4: Student Behavior / Discipline Disparity



#### Behavior policies, practices / Training on 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.

### Restorative Practices

- **The district continued its investment in trainers, training materials, and timelines for implementing restorative practices.** The district has entered its second 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 addition to school teams, the district's Executive Leadership Team, Transportation Department managers, district PCTA members, and some community members attended those trainings. The third day of the training was designed to show teams how to incorporate restorative strategies into their School Wide Behavior Plans and existing processes and procedures. The 2017-18 school year was an exploratory year for all schools.
- **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 Quarter 1 of 2020-21,** the district 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 into the following school year.





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

#### Quarter 1 Discipline Data / Update:

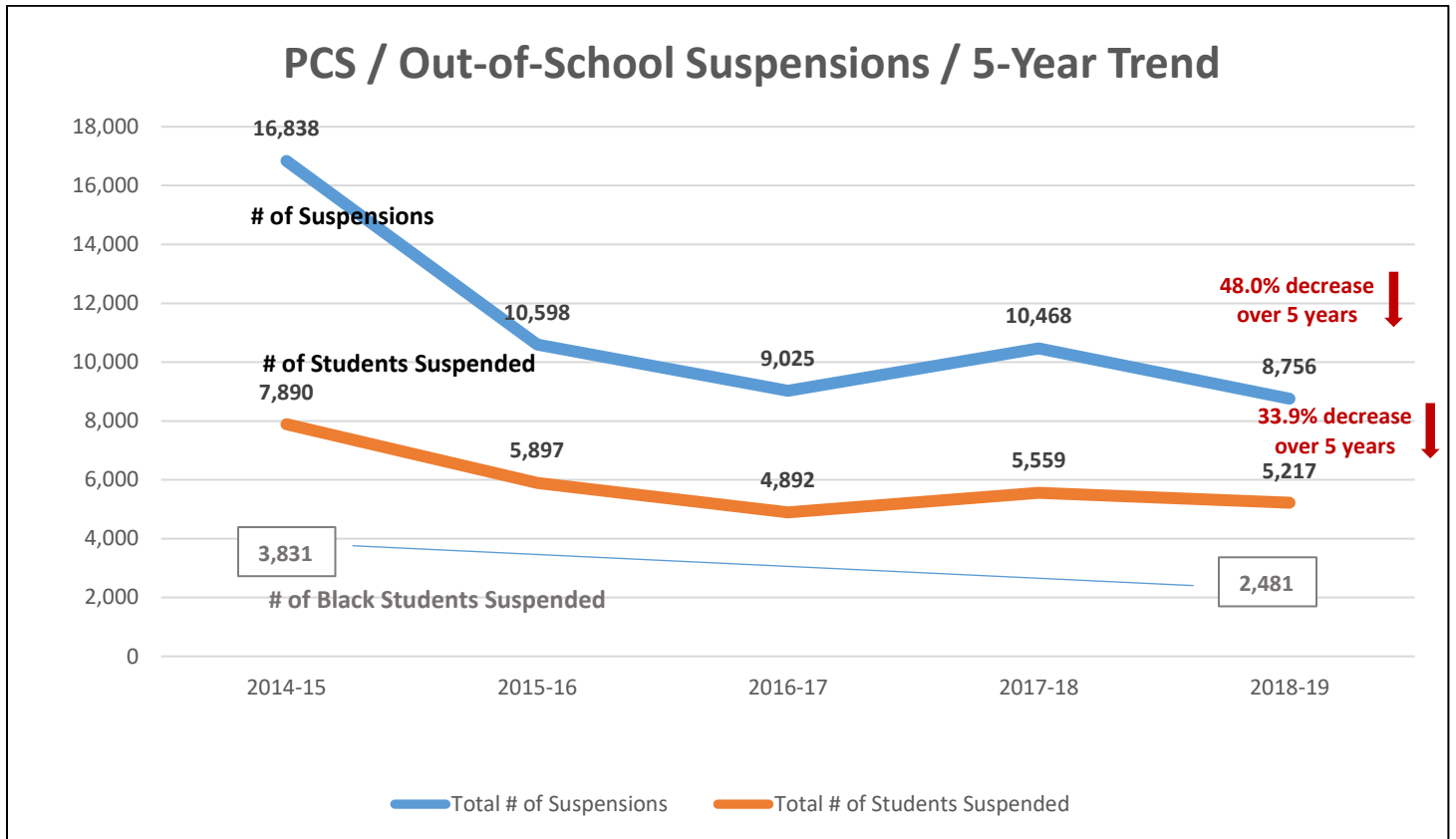
- **District discipline data trends are being impacted by the current health crisis**, making comparisons from quarter-to-quarter and year-over-year more difficult at this time. With many students taking part in school from home (virtually), district referrals and suspensions dropped dramatically in the final quarter of 2019-20 and the first quarter of 2020-21.
- **The district's discipline data trends for both referrals and suspensions (OSS) show significant drops** as expected during the first quarter of 2020-21. Due to the COVID-19 health crisis, many students are learning at home and on-campus enrollments are much lower (making Q1 comparisons to previous years unreliable).
  - **As an example**, among all PCS students, there were 1,333 out-of-school suspensions (OSS) in Quarter 1 of last year (2019-20) and only 409 this year. Similarly, the number of suspensions given to black students was 710 last year (2019-20) compared to 198 through Quarter 1 of this year. The percentage of black students suspended dropped slightly, though shifting enrollments in schools make exact comparisons difficult.
- **To make equitable comparisons between school years**, the district measured the Quarter 3 discipline totals (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 6 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 of 2020-21**, 12 additional schools were identified for visits and feedback from school staff on improved discipline processes and procedures.
- **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 3 (prior to the pandemic)**, only 17 suspensions (less than 1%) were given to black students for those non-violent infractions. The district's Area Superintendents continue to evaluate each of these occurrences to ensure that the school's handling and coding of each infraction is correct. The district's monitoring of discipline trends by school and the involvement and support of the Area Superintendents has created an ongoing focus on reducing disparate discipline rates.
    - **Through Quarter 1 of 2020-21**, those trends continued.





# Bridging the Gap / Pinellas County Schools

Quarter 1 Update / 2020-21 / School Board Briefing



### Discipline Data Comparison / Quarter 3 to Quarter 3

- The trends for the past three years are provided through Quarter 3 because of the impact of school closures during the fourth quarter of 2019-20. This comparison provides a more accurate representation over time.

### 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	2019-20	2,907	9,574	6,006	1,281	1,621	21,389
	2018-19	3,015	9,163	8,565	1,364	1,213	23,320
	2017-18	2,836	9,825	9,888	1,064	1,499	25,112
<b>Change:</b>		<b>71</b>	<b>-251</b>	<b>-3882</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>-3,723</b>

### 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
<b>Change:</b>		<b>131</b>	<b>-652</b>	<b>-117</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>-519</b>



### 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.
- **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 1 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.
  - One District Behavior Specialist completed their rigorous Board Certification and passed the exam. The remaining specialists are on track to complete the training and certification in the 2020-21 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.
- **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.
  - **As of Quarter 1,** 8 new black students transferred into Pinellas County Schools who already had an EBD designation. 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 1,** 13 district schools were receiving direct support in meeting this goal.



### 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 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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).
- The district’s Talent Acquisition Team has also 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 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” in February of 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 1**, 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.



## **Bridging the Gap / Pinellas County Schools**

*Quarter 1 Update / 2020-21 / School Board Briefing*



## **Bridging the Gap / Pinellas County Schools**

*Quarter 1 Update / 2020-21 / School Board Briefing*