Annual Report to the Community

Key Actions and Next Steps / 2018-19

Prepared by Pinellas County School District

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 equitable performance on standardized assessments, improved graduation rates, 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.

Summary of Equity Gaps

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. To this end, the district has set 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 will decrease quickly while others may remain stable (or widen) until the plan's actions are carried out with fidelity, monitored, refined, and re-deployed. At the end of 2018-19 school year, the district narrowed the gaps in several goals areas, with graduation rate not yet finalized but internal metrics showing continued improvement.

Table 1. Gaps / Data Trends

	BTG Goal Areas / Achievement Gaps	Race	Baseline Year 2016	2017	2018	2019	1 YR GAP Change	2 YR GAP Change
1	**Graduation Rate** % of students graduating / 4 years	Black	65.5	69.3	76.2	80.0*		
		Non Black	83.4	85.8	88.1	89.2*		
		GAP	**17.9**	**16.5**	**11.9**	**9.2***	**2.1**	**6.7**
2	**FSA ELA-READING** % of students scoring Level 3+	Black	24.2	25.7	24.6	27.1		
		Non Black	56.4	57.7	57.4	59.7		
		GAP	**32.2**	**32.0**	**32.8**	**32.6**	**0.2**	**0.6**
	FSA MATH % of students scoring Level 3+	Black	27.9	29.0	29.2	30.0		
		Non Black	60.9	62.0	62.2	62.8		
		GAP	**33.0**	**33.0**	**33.0**	**32.8**	**0.2**	**0.2**
3	**Advanced Coursework** % of students enrolled in gifted	Black	3.8	4.0	5.0	5.9		
		GAP	**14.2**	**14.0**	**13.0**	**12.1**	**0.9**	**1.9**
	Advanced Coursework % of students enrolled advanced courses	Black	12.1	11.9	13.7	14.5		
		GAP	**5.9**	**6.1**	**4.3**	**3.5**	**0.8**	**2.6**
4	**Student Discipline / OSS** Risk Ratio / Out-of-School Suspensions	Black	4.33	4.07	3.61	3.79		
		GAP	**3.33**	**3.07**	**2.61**	**2.79**	**0.18**	**0.28**
	Student Discipline / Referrals Risk Ratio / Referrals	Black	2.38	2.64	2.43	2.60		
		GAP	**1.38**	**1.64**	**1.43**	**1.60**	**0.17**	**0.04**
5	**ESE Identification** Risk Ratio / ESE	Black	1.45	1.45	1.46	1.40		
		GAP	**.45**	**.45**	**.46**	**.40**	**0.06**	**0.05**
	ESE Identification Risk Ratio / EBD	Black	4.20	3.94	3.84	3.34		
		GAP	**3.20**	**2.94**	**2.84**	**2.34**	**0.50**	**0.60**
6	**Minority Hiring** % of instructional positions	Black	8.3	8.8	9.2	9.1		
		GAP	**9.7**	**9.2**	**8.8**	**8.9**	**0.10**	**0.30**

(Left side vertical label: BTG DATA SUMMARY)

Note: Key definitions and data rules for each goal are outlined in detail in the BTG Plan.
*Graduation rates for 2018-19 are not final and have not been released by the state. The totals provided here are internal estimates only and are provided for BTG planning purposes. They should be viewed only as close approximations of final totals. Final graduation rates are expected to be released by the state in December 2019.

- **Goal 1: Graduation Rate:** The district continues to see positive increases in its black graduation rate, which has improved by 10.7 percentage points over three years and 15.5 percentage points over the past five years (from 60.7% in 2013-14 to 76.2% in 2017-18).The district has not received its final 2018-19 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 80.0%). 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. When the 2019 graduation rate is released by the state, the district expects that the black graduation rate will outpace the non-black rate for the fourth consecutive year, leading to a narrowing of the gap from 16.5 percentage points in 2016-17 to an estimated 9.2 percentage points in 2018-19. If internal estimates hold true, the district will have the highest black graduation rate in its history.

- **Goal 2: Academic Achievement:** The district has seen increases in both English-Language Arts (ELA) and Math proficiency among black learners, though the gap has 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 (7,000 teachers in all) and continues to explore new actions to impact the gap in the short-term. The district's investment in Reading Recovery as a one-on-one reading intervention for first graders is one such example.

- **Goal 3: Advanced Coursework:** The district has seen consistent narrowing of enrollment gaps in gifted and advanced and accelerated courses. Black enrollment in gifted reached 5.9% of all gifted students in grades K-8. That is up from 4.0% two years ago and is the highest minority enrollment in gifted that the district has seen in its history. Though a gap remains, the district's efforts to expand gifted screening and training for gifted teachers is having an impact. A similarly strong trajectory is found among 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 2018-19 is now at 14.5% and the gap continues to narrow each year. 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 has seen declines in the number of black students receiving a referral and out-of-school suspension (OSS) and discipline gaps have improved slightly. The district has seen a 33.9%

decrease in the number of black students suspended over the past five years, but those decreases have leveled off in the past three years. The district measures discipline disparity gaps via a "risk ratio," the ratio of referrals and suspensions given to black students compared to their non-black peers. The 2018-19 risk ratio for black students for referrals and OSS increased slightly from the previous year but has decreased over three years. The district continues its investment in equity training for all staff and restorative practices that are 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 percentage of black students assigned to the ESE designation of Emotional / Behavioral Disability (EBD). Both the state and district measure equity gaps in ESE via a "risk ratio," the ratio of special education services given to black students compared to their non-black peers. The district's BTG Plan is specific to monitoring and reducing the high percentage of black learners identified for EBD. The risk ratio EBD for black students has dropped steadily and has now reached 3.34, the lowest it has been since the district began tracking it. This improvement has led to the district being removed from the state's monitoring list, though a gap remains and will be tracked via the district's BTG efforts. The overall risk ratio for black students across all ESE designations dropped as well for the third consecutive year and is now at 1.40. The district's training of school behavior specialists, improved processes, and tighter controls outlined in the BTG Plan are contributing to improvements in this area.

- **Goal 6: Minority Hiring:** The district has seen slight increases in the percentage of district teachers who are black, though the percentage in 2018-19 did not improve. 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 employed 651 black teachers at the end of 2018-19, which is 9.1% of the district's total teaching staff.

Successes to Date

- The district has trained more than a quarter of its teaching staff and all school leadership teams in the foundational strategies related to culturally relevant teaching.
- The district has trained nearly all teachers and all school leadership teams in the foundations of restorative practices.
- Nearly every school now has an Equity Champion on staff to support critical data reviews and strategy alignment specific to impacting racial achievement gaps.

- Classroom strategies related to building strong relationships with children, creating relevant learning activities, and setting high expectations for all have been built into the district's classroom observation processes. Nearly 5,000 classroom observations were conducted by district staff in 2018-19.

- 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.

- The district's Transformation Zone (TZ) continues to see evidence of success. Eleven of the 13 schools improved a full letter grade or more (two schools improved two letter grades). Professional development included standards-based lesson delivery and equity training that may be scalable to other school sites.

- Schools conducted universal screening of all first grade students for gifted, as well as a "Plan B" eligibility option to accurately identify as many students as possible.

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

- An innovative campaign is underway to identify PCS high school graduates who are black or Hispanic to offer them a supported pathway through college in becoming a teacher.

Next Steps

- The district has reviewed and updated its Equity with Excellence training plan and modules to provide a more cohesive structure for equity training, including a deliberate effort to infuse culturally responsive actions into the training for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). This training was folded into the pre-school training days entering the 2019-20 school year.

- The district has invested in Reading Recovery as a promising intervention for struggling readers in first grade. The program will be offered in 12 elementary schools with high minority enrollments.

- A new, on-site SAT prep program is planned for all high schools as an additional method for fostering a college-readiness culture for all students and leveling the opportunity gap.

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

BTG Implementation / Summary of 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 just underway. As racial achievement gaps are long-standing in this school district (and most others nationally), the plan as a set of actions and measures is just a 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 the classroom.

To ensure alignment and clarity of the goals and desired outcomes, the district has spent much of the first two 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 staff meetings with BTG Plan goal managers have continued, nearly uninterrupted, for two years running and the district's Executive Leadership (including the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, and Minority Achievement Officer) are continually present for those meetings.

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 has caused misunderstanding at times. Still, equity efforts continue to improve and some successes are evident in the second year of the BTG Plan that were not found previously.

Bridging the Gap (BTG) / Key Action Area

Equity-Centered Professional Development

District leadership has been intentional from the early development of the BTG Plan in building teacher capacity around the unique challenges of creating equitable practices and outcomes. The district has been clear that, without substantive change to teacher practice, meeting its goals related to student performance outcomes and reducing gaps is unlikely. The district has invested much of its equity efforts on building system infrastructures to support a comprehensive professional development plan to enhance cultural proficiency of its staff to directly benefit students. The district has begun a broad-based effort to provide equity training for the entirety of its instructional staff (more than 7,000 teachers in all). Tackling the enormity of this goal necessitated engaging several planning teams to inform the process for large-scale implementation, including providing an evidence-based framework for the training curriculum and identifying (and hiring) staff developers with the requisite competencies to deliver the training.

The key to impacting equitable outcomes is creating a delivery model for professional development that expands teacher knowledge and skill along with the necessary mindset shifts needed to engage educators in difficult conversations about race and bias. It became clear that a single approach would be insufficient to meet strategic goals. The district's solution was to identity three essential components of equity to serve as the framework for increasing system capacity to implement effective practices. Those three components are:

- **Developing an Equity Mindset / Training Title:** Equity Champions

- **Designing Equitable Systems, Processes / Training Title(s):** Restorative Practices and PBIS

- **Engaging Diverse Learners in the Classroom/ Training Title:** Culturally Relevant Teaching

Figure 1. District Equity Trainings / Goals and Progress

PCS / District Equity Training Focus		
Equity Champions Developing cultural competence by recognizing the historical, cultural, social, and racial barriers that can influence beliefs and biases and impact learning.	2019 Goal	• Every school should have at least one Equity Champion by August 2018 (two-day training required). • Equity Champions must be a part of the school's Site-Based Leadership Team (SBLT).
	Status	• All but six schools (95%) have an Equity Champion, 16 others have Champions who are still completing their project required for the credentialing. • More than 600 trained. To date, 311 have been credentialed as Equity Champions. • Equity Champions have completed Equity Audits at 9 pilot schools. Those results and processes were reviewed so as to make improvements for 2019-20. • All Equity Champions who are classrooms teachers were invited to a feedback-focus group to garner their responses related to next steps in equity-centered practices.
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.	2019 Goal	• Every school should have at least one certified Restorative Practices Facilitator by August 2018 (three-day training required). • Restorative Practices Facilitator must be a part of each school's SBLT. • School teams are required to attend a two-day Equity with Excellence follow-up and planning session.
	Status	• Every school had a trainer when school began in August. Some turnover occurred and two sessions were held this year for schools that need a certified RP trainer. • Processes put in place for alignment of Restorative Practices with PBIS practices. District Area Meetings included ongoing training and extensive discussions. PBIS fidelity checks occurred at a sampling of schools. • A new fidelity survey was administered during Semester 2 to gauge where schools were during their first year of implementation.
AVID Culturally Relevant Teaching Developing Curriculum, Lessons and Activities that include Specific, Intentional and Practical Strategies to Engage, Challenge, and Support Diverse Learners.	2019 Goal	• Every school should have at least four teachers trained in AVID's Culturally Relevant Teaching (two-day training) by August 2018. • Long-term district goal is to have every teacher in the district trained and using CRT strategies.
	Status	• 975 trained by the end of the school year. An additional 700 were trained over the summer. • 70 schools have 4 or more teachers trained, 30 more schools have between 1 and 3 teachers trained. • Two district staff developers (trainers) conducted follow-up coaching sessions with teachers who attended the AVID training. During the school year to date, 125 of the AVID-trained teachers took part in those follow-up sessions. In Quarter 4, the staff developers conducted 52 coaching sessions with 22 teachers and supported 153 additional educators via training. • School counselors were also trained.

The district has been steadfast in meeting its initial benchmarks to train its staff and, to date, nearly every teacher has been trained in the foundational concepts and strategies related to restorative practices, more than 1,600 have received *AVID's Culturally Relevant Teaching* training, and more than 600 have taken the equity mindset training titled *Equity Champions*. As an example of the extent of the district's commitment to the plan, district bus drivers were trained this summer in the foundations of restorative practices.

Impacting lasting change to teacher practice will require additional coaching beyond the initial training(s) and research findings support that teachers will respond faster if they can see the strategies for themselves. To this end, the

district provided a lead restorative practices trainer at every school, hired additional equity coaches at the district level, and began a process of training and installing Equity Champions at each school to leverage conversations about race, data inequities, etc. The district also began the process of creating model equity classrooms at each school.

Bridging the Gap (BTG) / Key Action Area

Data Collection and Analysis in Support of Equity

The district has been forward-thinking and deliberate in developing systematic tracking mechanisms related to the key data outcomes outlined in the BTG Plan. In fact, many of the district's data mining solutions and achievement gap reports were not in place (or were not disaggregated by race) prior to the adoption of the BTG Plan. Nearly every aspect of student achievement and discipline outcomes by race are now tracked at the district, school, and classroom levels. This includes student assessment data, behavioral data, enrollment in advanced courses, access to interventions such as credit recovery and Summer Bridge, and student placement into exceptional education services. To date, district data use efforts have focused on presenting timely data to schools, providing professional development for staff to assist with data use, supporting district-level decision making to set goals, identifying group needs, evaluating instructional efficacy via analysis such as value-added modeling (VAM), and determining resource allocation.

Research around successful equity efforts supports systematic approaches for identifying students at-risk of not meeting academic benchmarks and interventions to support each student's needs. This is a substantive portion of the strategies outlined in the BTG Plan, from personalized learning plans for each at-risk student to after-school programs and creative web-based supports. Quick access to data is also required as part of the BTG Plan and must be accessible by teachers and school leaders to provide the appropriate support for all learners (and minority learners in particular). Real-time student data are available across multiple platforms. BTG Goals managers have been largely successful and instrumental in pushing the district to create such solutions and that work can be credited to some improvement in achievement gaps (graduation rate as one example).

The district must now meet the challenge of monitoring data usage and specific actions in support of student growth. Accessing data and-or using data simply to track students will not be enough to impact gaps long-term. This may require some re-shaping of the BTG Plan in providing not just overarching strategies (training all teachers) but something much more nuanced (attending to the unique math deficits of a small population of students). The district's investment in Reading Recovery as an intervention specific to struggling readers in first grade is one such example. Another is the district's more exacting approach to enrolling students into Summer Bridge in 2019. School principals were provided the names of the students who would benefit most from summer learning supports and the district tracked those enrollments closely. These are steps that show some promise and are aligned to best practice.

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	2016-17		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020 Target
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%**	**80.0%***		**75.0**
			Target	67.3%	69.1%	70.9%	72.7%	
	Non-Black	85.8%	Actual	85.8%	88.1%	89.2%*		**10.7**
	GAP	**17.9**	**Actual**	**16.5**	**11.9**	**9.2***		

*Graduation rates for 2018-19 are not final and have not been released by the state. The totals provided here are internal estimates only and are provided for BTG planning purposes. They should be viewed only as close approximations of final totals. Final graduation rates are expected to be released by the state in December 2019.

The graduation rate for the 2018-19 school year was not yet available as of the time of this report, but the district's internal estimates show the graduation rate for black students will increase again this year (estimated at 80.0%*) and the gap will continue to close. 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. Once the 2018-19 graduation rate is finalized by the state, the district is expected to have the highest black graduation rate in its history. This is consistent with the previous five-year trend data that show a 15.5 percentage point increase in black student graduation rate. Though graduation rates have improved for all student subgroups across the district, racial gaps remain and black students graduate at a lesser rate than their non-black peers.

Goal 1 / Key Actions / Research Findings

- Trends across the majority of the district's traditional high schools reveal consistently high black student graduation rates. Each of the district's 16 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 show 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.

- 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.

Goal 1 / Next Steps / Recommendations From District Research Evaluation

- ❖ Ensure that an effective mechanism is in place to monitor student interventions for black students who are at-risk for not graduating. The district has piloted a reporting system that includes intervention plans, goals, timelines, and progress monitoring of action steps aligned to individual student needs, but must ensure that those actions are executed across schools. The evolution of the BTG Plan will require the district to determine the efficacy and fidelity of individual student plans and hold school leadership and instructional staff accountable that interventions are in place and working.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ 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	2016-17		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020 Target
# 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%		40
			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		19.2
# 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%		45
			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		20.2

The 2018-19 proficiency rates for black students in the district remain 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. Though the district has seen some progress in black proficiency, the three-year trend data reveal negligible changes in the gap.

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 evident.

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 monitored the

initial rollout 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 greater calibration is still needed.

Nearly 5,000 classrooms were observed with nearly half of classrooms showing some evidence of culturally relevant practices in use and 80% having activities in place to build strong classroom relationships. These data have shifted substantially from the previous year, though the classroom observation instrument and calibration have changed from the previous year so no valid research conclusions can yet be made. In keeping with the evolution of the BTG Plan and its monitoring systems, the district should continue to ensure that both curriculum materials and classroom observation tools are aligned to the district's expectations around culturally relevant instruction and restorative practices and that those conducting the observations are calibrated in the work.

PCS / Instructional Support Model (ISM) / Classroom Observations / 2018-19							
Teacher connects student academic content through practices that are culturally relevant and responsive. Lessons reflect awareness and understanding of cultural referents and resources that are meaningful to students.							
% of responses # of responses		**Culturally Relevant Teaching**					
		Building Relational Capacity via class meetings, restorative practices, community-building, etc.		**Including Student Experiences, Voice** via relevant materials, examples, class discussion, etc.		**Monitoring for High Expectations** via inclusion of all learning styles, explicit models of excellent work, etc.	
School Type	Classrooms Visited (N)	Evident	Not Evident	Evident	Not Evident	Evident	Not Evident
District	**4,804**	80% 3845	20% 956	47% 2238	53% 2485	48% 2174	52% 2367
All High Schools	**1,290**	66% 857	34% 433	36% 466	64% 824	34% 441	66% 849
All Middle Schools	**1,152**	79% 915	21% 237	41% 475	59% 677	41% 471	59% 681
All Elem Schools	**2,362**	88% 2073	12% 286	57% 1297	43% 984	60% 1262	40% 837

Note: "N/A" or blank responses not tabulated; sections may not add up to 100% of Visits (N)

- A robust professional development plan is in place to train all teachers in culturally relevant teaching strategies and an equity mindset that sets high expectations for all children. 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.

- Innovative interventions are underway specific to the needs of students who are scoring below proficiency. This includes the district's Summer Bridge Program, the new 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 six 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

- ❖ 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.

- ❖ 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). Black students identified via early warning indicators should require a PMP and have access to a number of interventions including: mentorship, tutoring, data chats after assessments, and peer mentors in the classroom. 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 (ie. 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.

❖ 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. One such example is a promising pilot program underway in district middle schools. The new Middle School Equity Project brought together district content experts (reading, math, science, and social studies) with MTSS coordinators and equity trainers to design a robust discussion protocol for teachers that may get at root causes of racial achievement gaps. The new equity-centered problem solving technical assistance training and methods will be piloted in five middle schools in 2019-20.

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		2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020 Target
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%**		**17.0**
			Target	13%	14%	15%	16%	
	GAP	**5.9**	Actual	**6.1**	**4.3**	**3.5**		**1.0**
	Gap is compared to black student enrollment of 18%.							

The district continues to meet its annual BTG benchmarks through increased enrollments of black students in advanced and accelerated courses. Though gaps remain, the trends are promising and BTG actions specific to these outcomes appear to be having an impact. In fact, the district has decreased the gap in this goal area by nearly half in just three years. The district's long-term goal is to ensure that the enrollment of students taking advanced coursework mirrors the district's student population by race. In attempting to reach a minimum enrollment of 18% of students

taking these courses, the district reached 14.5% in 2018-19. This is a percentage increase of 40% over three years, from 3,775 black students enrolled in advanced and accelerated courses in 2017 to 5,269 in 2019 (see table above).

The largest increases are found among black learners enrolled in middle school advanced courses, where nearly twice as many black students are taking those courses than were enrolled in 2017. Similar growth is found in high school honors courses, were black students now comprise 15.3% of students enrolled. The district has seen smaller increases in enrollments in accelerated coursework (defined as Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement, IB, or AICE). This is an area for improvement.

The percent increase of black students enrolled in gifted increased again in 2019, though a gap still remains. Some of the steady improvement is connected to the district's commitment to universal screening for all students by the end of first grade. Note: The district moved from testing students in 2nd grade in 2018 to 1st grade in 2019 as part of its annual review of data outcomes and best practices. A total of 1,928 black students were screened in 2018-19. Of those students, 162 were identified for further evaluation and possible gifted placement (8% of all black students screened). A total of 475 black students in grades K-8 received gifted services in the 2019, up from 281 students in 2017. Of all students enrolled in gifted, black students now comprise 5.9% of the population. 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. This method identified 488 students for gifted eligibility, 76 of whom were black learners (16%).

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.

- In most cases, black learners with high grade point averages, proficiency on state assessments, and-or strong PSAT scores are already enrolled in these courses. 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 were already enrolled in at least once 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.

- It should be noted that the actions and outcomes for Goal 3 of the BTG Plan (enrollment in advanced courses) are highly correlated to the measures for Goal 2 (performance on state ELA and math assessments). The district is not likely to meet its enrollment goals for advanced courses until it increases the number and percentage of black learners showing proficiency on state tests. Conversely, challenging students of color to take more rigorous courses may increase their skills and academic confidence in reaching proficiency on state tests.

- The district's commitment to AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) may 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.

- The district continued its 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.

- The BTG Plan originally outlined an equity training plan for teachers of advanced courses, but the training was also adapted and provided to school counselor teams in 2018-19. This training included the use of data from the SAT Suite of Assessments to support student selection of accelerated course options, with a unique focus on minority learners.

- The district has implemented a promising new initiative entitled Elevating Excellence to provide 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.

Goal 3 / Next Steps / Recommendations From District Research Evaluation

- ❖ Continue to provide targeted professional development specifically for guidance counselors and assistant principals for curriculum (APCs) to foster buy-in for equity initiatives. Trainings 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.

- ❖ Create a series of communication actions aimed at the 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 ongoing, and should not rely only on traditional communication tools such as email and district websites.

- ❖ Ensure that all black students in middle school who show interest in or potential for taking rigorous courses are scheduled into those courses beginning in 6th grade. Additionally, ensure that AVID is available in all middle schools and schedule all students who need additional supports into both AVID and an advanced course.

- ❖ 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 (or lack thereof) still contribute somewhat to the underrepresentation of black students

in advanced studies. As of the end of 2018-19, 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		2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020 Target
Discipline Disparity Rate / Risk Ratio (referrals) / black students	2.38	Actual	2.64	2.43	2.60		1.90
		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		2.70
		Target	4.00	3.70	3.40	3.00	
Related Outcomes Measures	Baseline 2015/16		2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020 Target
# and % of black students with an office disciplinary referral	(7,009) 46.1% of all referrals	Actual	(6,919) 47.6%	(6,867) 45.7%	(6,548) 47.1%		
# 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) 51.3%	(2,481) 51.3%		

The district's goals for reducing discipline disparity gaps has been focused on increased monitoring of school discipline data by race and additional training specific to both Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and restorative practices. The district has seen some declines in the number of black students receiving a referral and out-of-school suspension (OSS) and discipline gaps have improved slightly over three years. The district measures discipline disparity gaps via a "risk ratio," the ratio of referrals and suspensions given to black students compared to their non-black peers. The 2018-19 risk ratio for black students for referrals and OSS increased slightly from the previous year but has decreased over three years.

The district has seen a 33.9% decrease in the number of black students suspended over the past five years, but those decreases have leveled off in the past three years. The number of black students receiving referrals continues to see a steady drop. Those declines are similar to those found among non-black students, which explains why the district risk ratio for referrals has remained relatively unchanged. The improvements in referrals and suspensions have been most evident in middle schools, though it should be noted that middle schools remain the level where a higher percentage of referrals and suspensions are issued. The new district equity pilot in middle schools is one action in place to tackle this recurring challenge.

Table G4a. District Change in Referrals over 3 Years / Black Learners

		Elementary	Middle	High	K-8 Schools	ESE Centers	Total
Black	2018-19	4,161	12,302	10,993	1,935	1,712	31,103
	2017-18	4,128	13,525	12,353	1,584	2,002	33,592
	2016-17	3,572	14,711	13,842	1,718	1,430	35,273
	Change:	**589**	**- 2,409**	**-2,849**	**217**	**282**	**-4,170**

Table G4b. District Change in OSS over 3 Years / Black Learners

		Elementary	Middle	High	K-8 Schools	ESE Centers	Total
Black	2018-19	618	2127	1039	572	133	4489
	2017-18	578	3064	1001	579	95	5317
	2016-17	327	2850	977	435	75	4664
	Change:	**291**	**-723**	**62**	**137**	**58**	**-175**

Goal 4 / Key Actions / Research Findings

- 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.

- The district continued its stated commitment to Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as "a framework or approach comprised of intervention practices and organizational systems for establishing the social culture, learning and teaching environment, and individual behavior supports needed to achieve academic and social success for all students" (Sugai et al., 2010, p. 13). As part of the District Strategic Plan, schools were asked to review their PBIS plans, analyze discipline at the school level, and transform their discipline approach to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, disproportionality.

- The district has aggressively implemented training for *Restorative Practices* (RP), a promising practice, as a sustainable change effort to reduce disciplinary actions and create a safe, caring learning environment for all students. The Area Superintendents and district MTSS coordinators have been active locally and nationally in professional development specific to best practices in equitable disciplinary practices.

- The district has begun incorporating restorative practices into the existing PBIS framework, with the intent of having schools focus on the academic and social emotional needs of students as both a positive behavior approach to foster school community as well as consideration within discipline processes. The work of communicating these expectations, training school leaders, and providing technical assistance has been strategic even if discipline trends do not yet depict a shift in practice.

- A district survey administered to all instructional staff provides key insights into the district's successes to date and challenges ahead. More than 90% of teacher respondents (1,267 in total) reported that they "agree" or "mostly agree" that they are aware of student achievement gaps present in their classrooms and have embraced an equity mindset and the strategies needed to make improvements. More than two-thirds of respondents reported that they "agree" or "mostly agree" that their school has identified achievement gaps and has a vision, purpose, and direction for infusing culturally relevant strategies into their classrooms. Still, a quarter of respondents were not sure or did not agree.

- District survey questions specific to the initial rollout of restorative practices showed that nearly 70% of teachers had embraced the use of restorative practices and were adequately trained. Still, a smaller percentage reported using these practices and most teachers said that monitoring systems were not yet in place to ensure that restorative practices were used effectively. It should be noted that the 2018-19 school year was the first full year of implementation of restorative practices and that initial implementation benchmarks were focused on training staff and improving understanding of key concepts (ie. circles). Other critical implementation steps (ie. installing quality control measures) are planned for year two and beyond.

- The district continued its partnership with the FLPBIS project to create systems that support effective PBIS practices. Schools were encouraged to use team-based planning and problem solving to support school-wide (Tier 1), targeted group (Tier 2), and individual student (Tier 3) levels of support to reduce problem behaviors and improve school culture and climate. As part of the FLPBIS project, schools were asked to complete self-assessments of the PBIS Implementation Checklist (PIC) and the Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ). Results from the spring administration of the BOQ show 74% of the 123 schools who submitted end-of-year data report self-assessment scores of 70 or higher. Schools scoring 70 percent or higher indicate that they are implementing universal/Tier 1 PBIS with fidelity. Twenty-four schools (20%); including fourteen elementary schools (58%), 7 middle schools (29%), and 3 high schools (13%) reported scores of less than 70. Fifty-two schools reported decreased BOQ scores across three years ranging from a 1% to an 87% change.

- 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 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. Stakeholders require delineation of district expectations and resources/supports that establish district and

school level structures to minimize reliance on exclusionary discipline, particularly for more minor (and more disposed to subjectivity) Level One offenses.

- ❖ Establish an equity-centered team to examine the code of conduct, RtI and MTSS approaches, and PBIS plans to revise and align language, processes, and consequences that reflect the district's commitment to RP/CRT. District mindsets in combatting bias that leads to exclusionary discipline practices are 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 could create and monitor *data-informed* plans by prioritizing supports at schools with the most serious discipline problems by race, while moving all schools toward equitable discipline practices over time.

- ❖ Involve the district MTSS coordinators and school-based PBIS contact in the district's ISM walkthrough processes when possible. Agree on an appropriate observation tool that can be completed and discussed during the school visitation debrief. Both the PBIS walkthrough tool and TFI walkthrough tool should be considered. The LSI questions related to positive "conditions for learning" are also promising.

- ❖ 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.

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

Goal 5: Annual Outcome Measures	Baseline (2015/16)		2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020 Target
Risk Ratio (ESE overall) / black	1.45	Actual	1.45	1.46	1.40		1.25
		Target	1.45	1.40	1.35	1.30	
	4.20	Actual	3.94	3.84	3.34		

Risk Ratio (EBD) / black		Target	3.95	3.70	3.45	3.20	2.95
Related Outcomes Measures							
# and % of black students identified for ESE services	(3,618) **25%**	Actual	(3,371) **25%**	(3,947) **23%**	TBD		
# and % of black students identified for Emotional Behavioral Disability (EBD) identification / Total	(427) **49%**	Actual	(335) **49%**	(363) **48%**	TBD		

The district has seen a steady decline in the percentage of black students assigned to the ESE designation of Emotional / Behavioral Disability (EBD). Both the state and district measure equity gaps in ESE via a "risk ratio," the ratio of special education services given to black students compared to their non-black peers. The district's BTG Plan is specific to monitoring and reducing the high percentage of black learners identified for EBD. The risk ratio EBD for black students has dropped steadily and has now reached 3.34, the lowest it has been since the district began tracking it. This improvement has led to the district being removed from the state's monitoring list, though a gap still remains and will be tracked via the district's BTG efforts. The overall risk ratio for black students across all ESE designations dropped as well for the third consecutive year and is now at 1.40. The district's training of school behavior specialists, improved processes, and tighter controls outlined in the BTG Plan are contributing to improvements in this area.

The district's department of Exceptional Student Education expanded the scope of its systemic improvements in reducing disproportionate representation by building on the exacting guidelines it put in place two years ago. The emphasis shifted in 2018-19 from not only tighter tracking of students who might be eligible for EBD to dedicated equity training for school-based behavior specialists. Of the 66 behavior specialists, 57 were trained (86%) in handling behavior in a manner consistent with increased cultural awareness and in strict alignment to the student's behavior intervention plan (PBIP). The department also focused on two areas specific to data and closer monitoring; the first was the development of specific guidelines aimed at reducing disparate identification of black students found eligible for EBD with specific courses of action for reevaluation processes and considerations for of EBD. Additionally, the department conducted extensive record reviews of students with current primary EBD or EBD plus other exceptionality designations to determine if reevaluation was warranted.

Goal 5 / Key Actions / Research Findings

- Data analysis from previous school years revealed a large number of transfer students entering the district and receiving reciprocity for EBD services in the district. Given that overrepresentation of students by race is not an issue unique to Pinellas County Schools, the ESE department sought to ensure that transfer students' eligibility placement was accurate and reciprocity of services was appropriate.

- Another focus area was 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.

- Both the risk ratio for ESE and for EBD (see table above) improved for the second consecutive year and the state informed district officials this year that PCS has moved under the threshold for state monitoring for the first time. Even with this reduction, the designation remains disproportionate from identifications for non-black students and remains above a 3.5 likelihood for identification. There were (28) new EBD eligibilities for black students in the 2018-19 school year, 9 were via transfer from another district; 19 were identified by the district. The drop in EBD eligibilities in 2019 was helped by a smaller number of students with EBD transferring to the district (30% fewer transfer students than last year).

- 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 67 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

- ❖ 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.

- ❖ Establish pre-referral intervention teams at high minority schools and schools with multiple referrals in 2018-19 to improve the functionality of early intervention.

- ❖ 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 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	2020 Target
# and % of total instructional positions / black	Black	(622) 8.3%	Actual	(647) 8.8%	(671) 9.2%	(651) 9.1%		13.0
			Target	9%	10%	11%	12%	
	GAP	9.7	Actual	9.2	8.8	8.9		
		Gap is compared to black student enrollment of 18%.						

The district has increased its hiring of black teachers and decreased the gap between black and non-black instructional staff over the past three years. Though it trended downward slightly in 2018-19, the district has increased its percentage of instructional staff to 9.1% after many years at or around 8%. The gap is measured against the total district enrollment of black students (18%) and the district ended the school year 8.9 percentage points below that number in, a slight improvement from two years ago. The number of black teachers employed at the end of the 2018-19 school year was 651.

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.

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 (called "partners") to assist schools in finding qualified staff. HR has also streamlined the processes for certification verification and fingerprinting in an effort to expedite hiring timelines.

- The district's Talent Acquisition Team developed a new outreach program for graduating PCS seniors who may want to become teachers. The district contacted all black and Hispanic graduates and offered them a promise of a job after college. This is part of the actions outlined in the BTG Plan to grow local talent in light of the nationwide shortage of minority teaching 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.

- 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 state universities that have majority Caucasian enrollments (in addition to historically black colleges) and identify black student associations within those schools as avenues to build relationships with potential teaching candidates.