KCPS Signature and Secondary School Reviews Final Report to Board of Directors

April 22, 2020
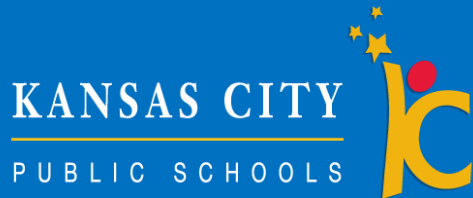
Who is Mass Insight?

Mass Insight Education & Research is a Boston-based nonprofit serving schools, districts, and state education agencies nationwide. *Our mission is to provide leadership in closing achievement and opportunity gaps for underserved students by focusing on system transformation and student academic success.*

Our Partners
(former and current):

★ School, District, SEA Engagement

★ AP Program/College Success Communities

★ State Partnership: SDN or other

Goals for Today

- Share key findings from the educational assessment of secondary and signature schools; and

- Surface recommended areas for consideration for the KCPS system of secondary and signature schools.

  - *We will not recommend solutions before the district determines where they want to be (Phase 2: Goal-setting).*

Introduction

Signature and secondary school reviews are part of a series of assessments that will help guide planning, outreach, and decision-making for Blueprint 2030.

- Human Capital

- Facility Assessment

- Inefficiency Assessment

- Enrollment Trends/Market Research

- **KCPS partnered with Mass Insight to conduct an *Educational Assessment of signature and secondary schools to identify successes, challenges, and opportunities for the KCPS system of signature and secondary schools.***

PHASE
06:
EVALUATION
ARE WE GETTING THERE?

PHASE
01:
ASSESSMENT
WHERE ARE WE?

PHASE
05:
IMPLEMENTATION
HOW DO WE GET THERE?

KCPS
MISSION · VALUES · PURPOSE

2018 - 2023 STRATEGIC PLAN
GOALS & MEASURES OF
STUDENT SUCCESS

PHASE
02:
GOAL SETTING
WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

PHASE
04:
RECOMMENDATIONS
HOW DO WE GET THERE?

PHASE
03:
SCENARIOS
WHAT OPTIONS DO WE HAVE?

Our Methodology

Our school review process examines student and school outcomes and how school functioning contributes to those outcomes.

- We *gather and analyze multiple data sources* to understand the current state of the school: quantitative student and school data, site visit focus groups, observations, and surveys.

- We *triangulate data sources* to assess the presence of theory of action elements and the extent to which evidence meets the highest-performing descriptor.

- We *assign a rating* for each feature that comprises our theory of action elements.

Known facts & data

REPORTED FINDINGS

What we are told

What we observe

Our school reviews assess school functioning by examining the presence of our research-based Theory of Action.

Focus on Instruction: Processes and supports that help teachers work together to constantly improve and refine standards-based instructional practice so that students can engage in deep learning tasks;

Collective Responsibility: The school faculty and staff ensure there is collective responsibility for both the quality of instruction and student learning and success;

Planning: Evidence-based, actionable improvement plans that address the root causes of low performance informed by a review of existing conditions and input from school, district, and community stakeholders;

Performance Management: Consistent processes for using data to measure both implementation and outcomes to determine what's working and inform efforts to improve;

Partnerships: Partnerships that help the school meet the multiple needs of teachers and students;

Leadership: A principal who can manage and communicate complexity while maintaining focus on the school's vision and key priorities; and

Conditions: Sufficient school-level control over people, time, money, and program to address the root causes of low performance.
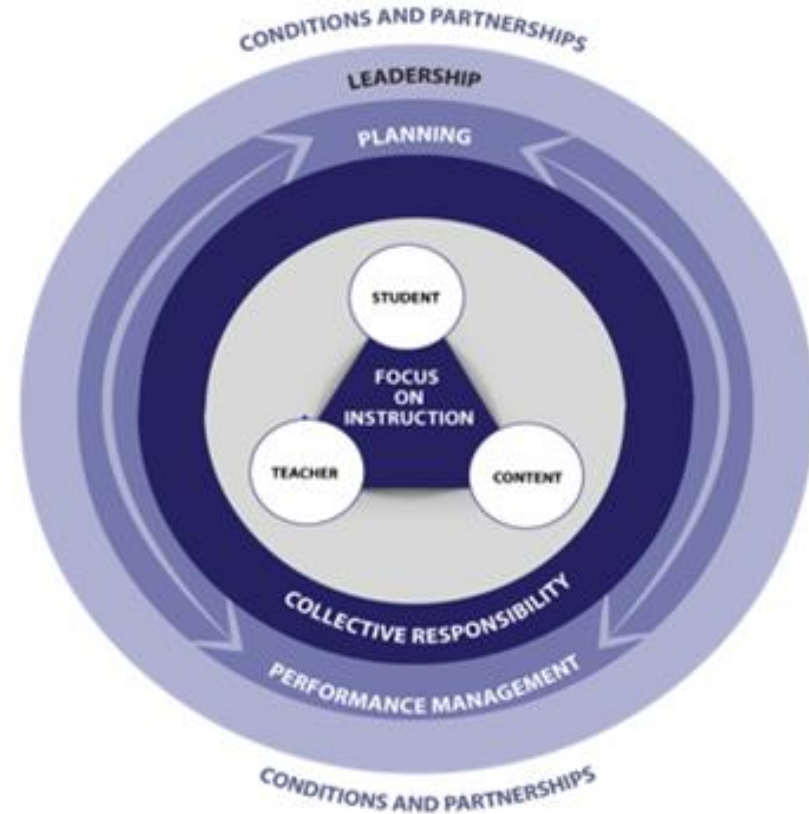
Our school review tool and process assesses the extent to which the school meets the highest performing descriptor at a point in time.

Element	Feature and Highest Performing School Descriptor	Rating	Discussion of Evidence
Focus on Instruction: *Processes and systems help teachers work together to constantly improve and refine standards-based instructional practice, ensuring students engage in deep learning tasks.*	*Instructional vision* There is an instructional vision that is clear, focused on students, aligned with standards, and helps build an understanding of the actions that educators must take to accelerate student learning. The vision is widely understood and drives school decision-making. All teachers and administrators can describe how their work moves the school closer to meeting the vision.		

Rating Level Key:

0: Not Meeting (no, or extremely limited, evidence of this feature; work on this feature has not yet started)

1: Somewhat Meets (some evidence of implementation of this feature)

2: Mostly Meets (considerable evidence of implementation of this feature)

3: Meets (robust evidence of implementation of this feature)

What Informed Our Findings

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Planning, Data and Document Review (Nov. - Dec.)

- School and student academic performance
- School demographics
- Enrollment
- Climate and culture
- Post-secondary readiness
- Graduation and dropout rates
- School improvement plans
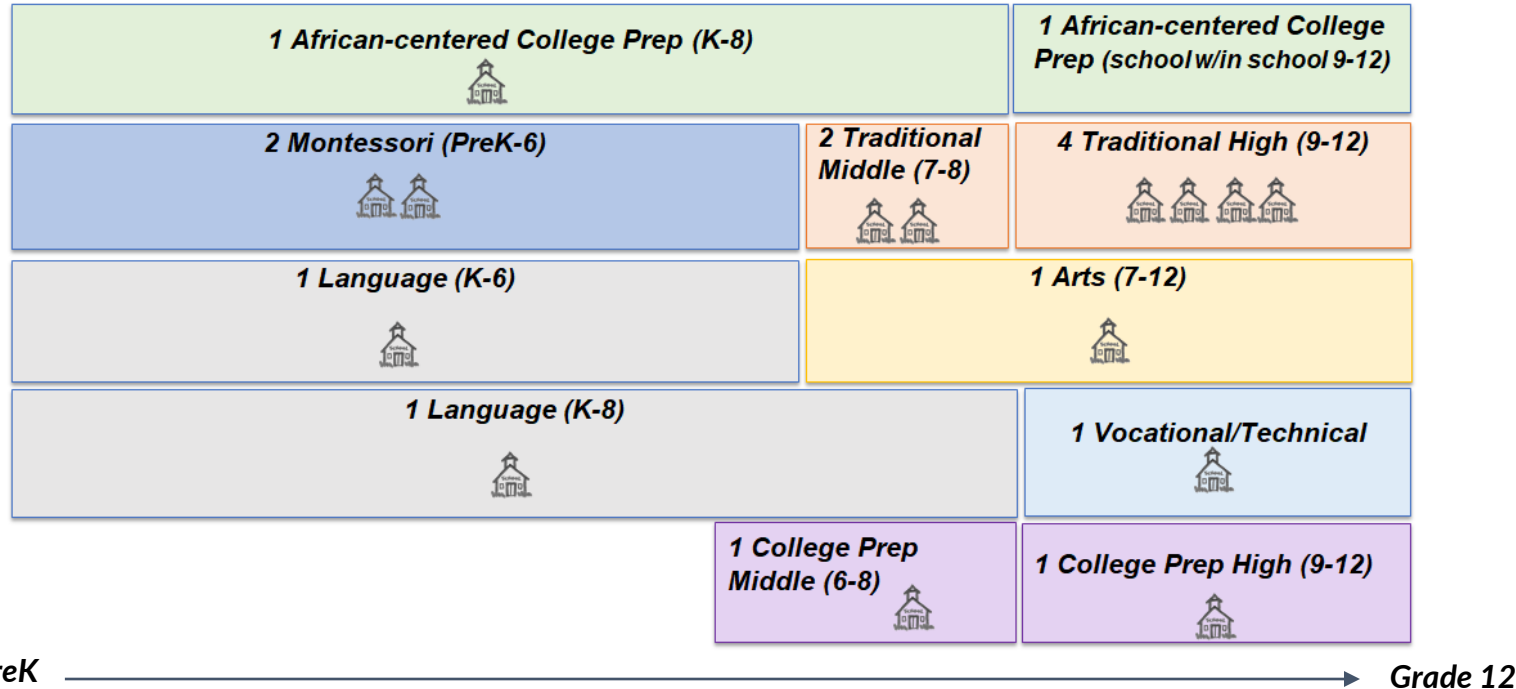- Additional Blueprint 2030 audits and reviews

School Visits and Stakeholder Engagement (Jan.)

- **533** staff, families, and student participants in focus groups and interviews
- **291** Survey responses (school, district, BOE)
- **91** classrooms observed + visit to Manual Tech classrooms
- 1:1 follow up phone calls for stakeholders with additional feedback to share

District Interviews (Jan. - Feb.)

- Superintendent
- Ombudsman
- Enrollment
- Communications/Marketing/PR
- KCPS Ed Foundation
- Family & Partnerships
- Student Support
- Planning
- Human Resources
- Guidance/Discipline
- Finance & Operations
- Research & Accountability
- Curriculum
- Deputy & Assistant Superintendents
- ELL
- Manual and Success Academy

In a landscape of various school choices, KCPS implements neighborhood feeder systems _and_ provides signature school options. We examined both secondary and signature schools.

1 African-centered College Prep (K-8)	**1 African-centered College Prep (school w/in school 9-12)**
2 Montessori (PreK-6)	**2 Traditional Middle (7-8)** / **4 Traditional High (9-12)**
1 Language (K-6)	**1 Arts (7-12)**
1 Language (K-8)	**1 Vocational/Technical**
	1 College Prep Middle (6-8) / **1 College Prep High (9-12)**

PreK ⟶ *Grade 12*

*** This graphic only includes schools reviewed by Mass Insight (secondary and signature schools)*

Findings Part I: Secondary Schools Review

Secondary school enrollment is in flux and impacted by high mobility and segregated demographics.

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- Secondary school enrollment has increased **6%** from the 2017 to 2019 school year.

- KCPS experiences retention challenges, especially approaching secondary levels; only **38%** of all KCPS students attend KCPS secondary schools.

- Traditional secondary schools have very high mobility rates (all above **42%**).

- Southeast HS, Central HS, and Central MS are the least diverse of secondary schools, *and do not mirror district-wide demographics.*

- There is uneven enrollment of ELLs and students with IEPs at secondary schools.

% of KCPS Secondary Students (2019)

28%

72%

■ Signature Secondary   ■ Traditional Secondary
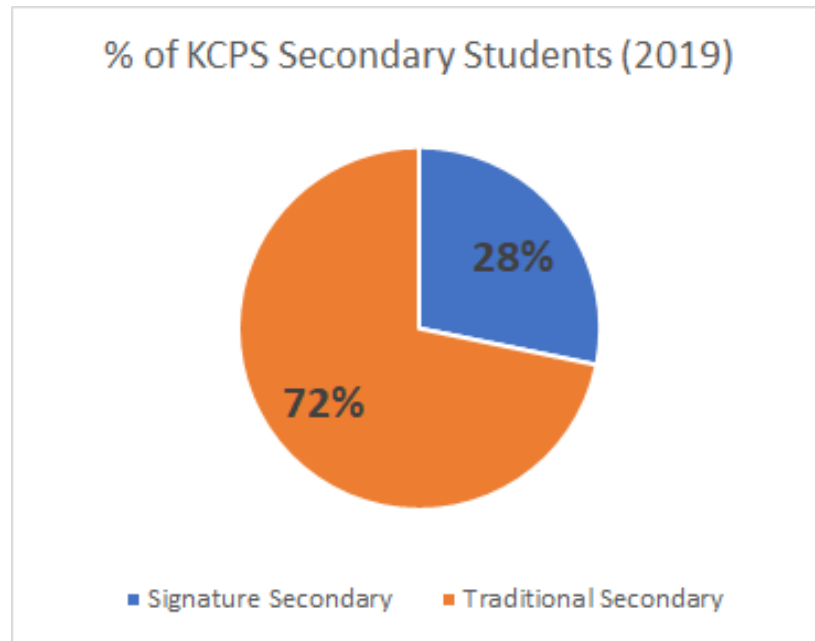
Some foundational improvement efforts are in place at secondary levels - *stakeholders acknowledge a need to do more.*

- The district has focused on the development and implementation of **common, standards-aligned curricula**.

- KCPS efforts to address challenges in Science appear to be yielding results, especially in middle schools with **gains in Science**. *Staff across schools view district science content-area support as valuable.*

- School teams have increased focus on climate and culture, resulting in **improved behavior and attendance** this year, especially at traditional secondary schools.

The district is developing systems to support instruction at secondary schools

Improvement efforts have led to incremental gains. *However, most secondary schools continue to have low ELA and Math achievement and do not meet improvement targets over time.*
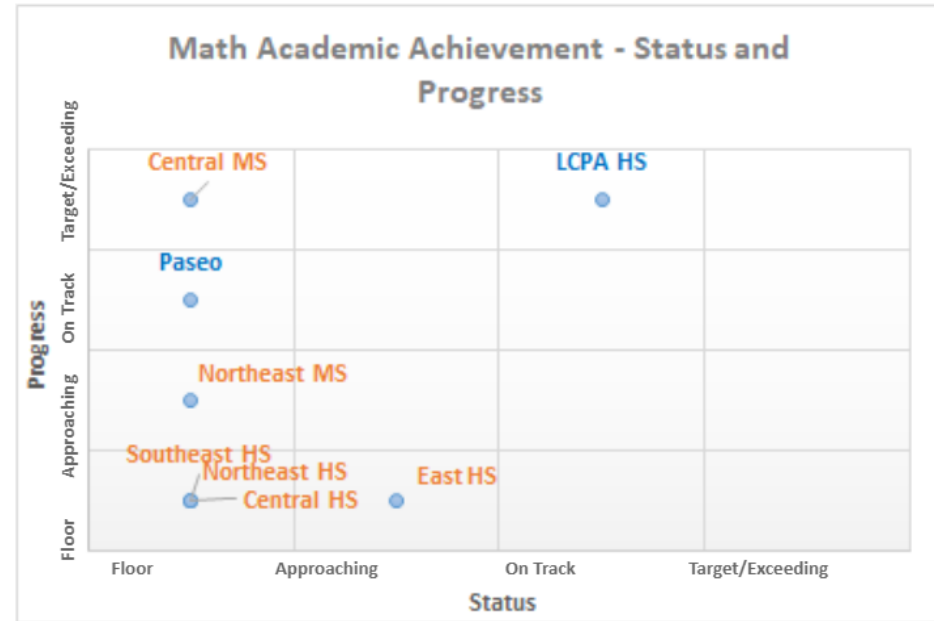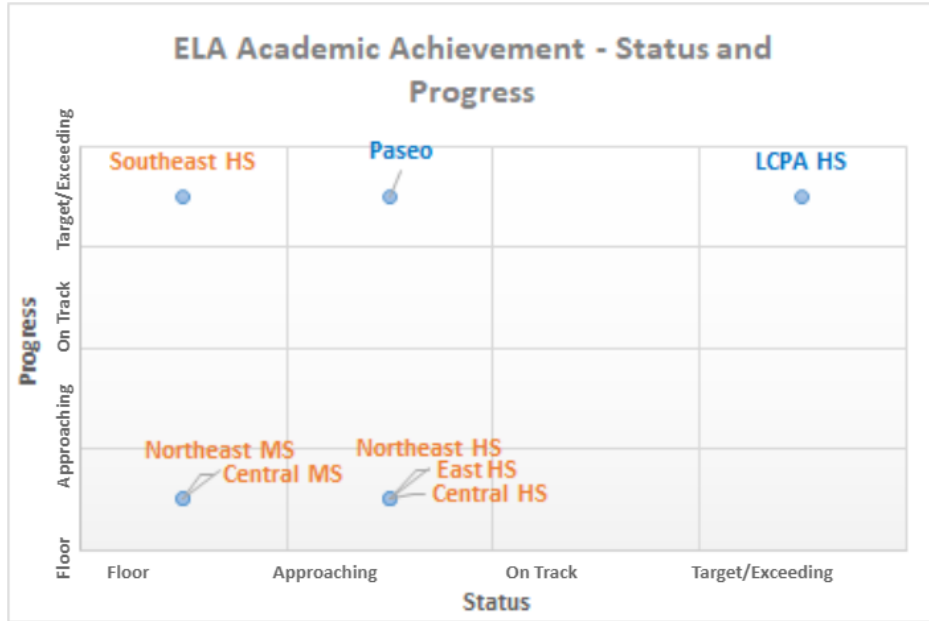
Note: Since this is LCPA MS's first year as a separate school, separate status and progress data is unavailable and is not charted here.

While there are annual improvements in Science, secondary schools are not yet seeing the impact on student achievement. *Additionally, most traditional high schools are not yet improving in Science.*
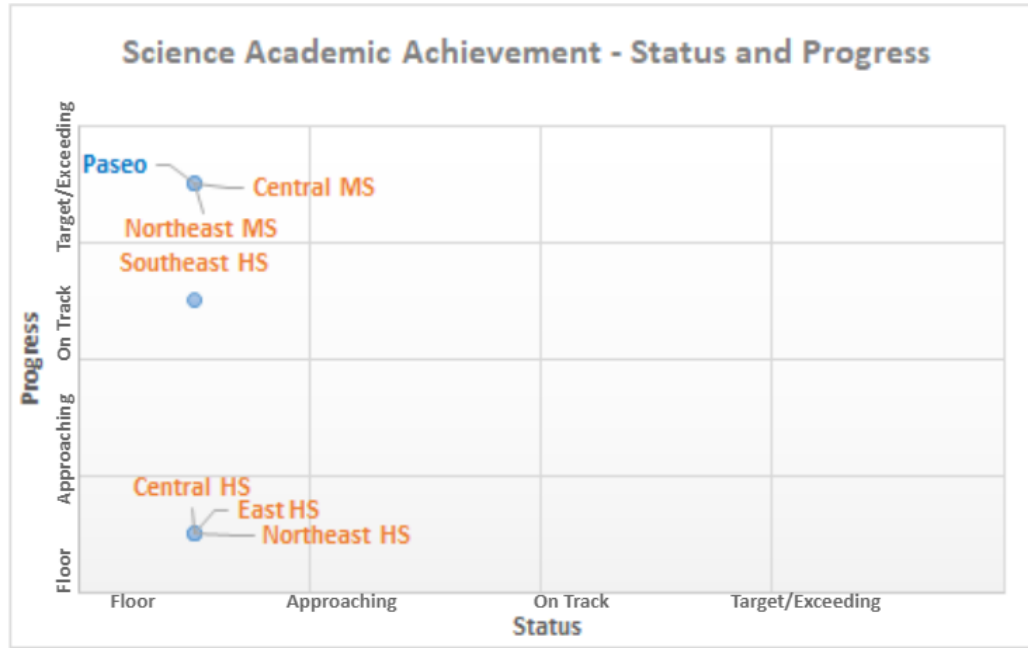

Note: Since this is LCPA MS's first year as a separate school, separate status and progress data is unavailable and is not charted here.
Science progress score not available for LCPA HS. LCPA HS Status is on target/exceeding.

Additionally, leading indicators of instructional rigor are still developing.

Rigor of instruction varies and there are opportunities to strengthen use of data to drive instruction (e.g., aligned assessments, identification and support for students entering below grade-level)
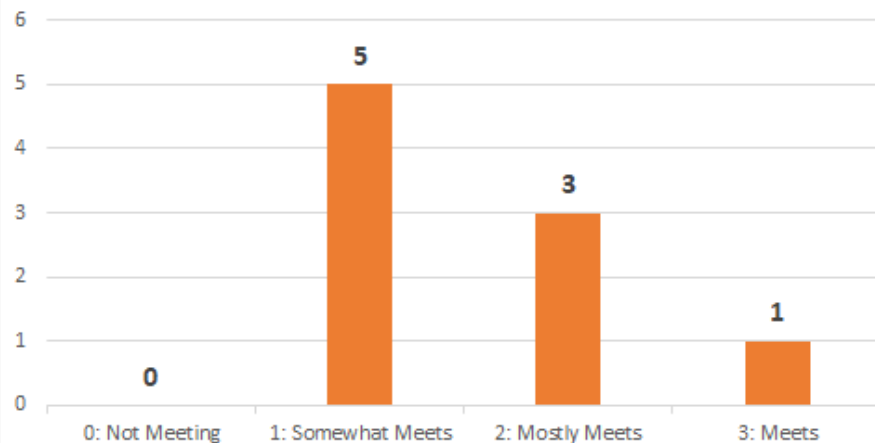

Rigorous Classroom Practice - Secondary Schools

Data-Driven Decision-Making for Classroom Instruction - Secondary Schools
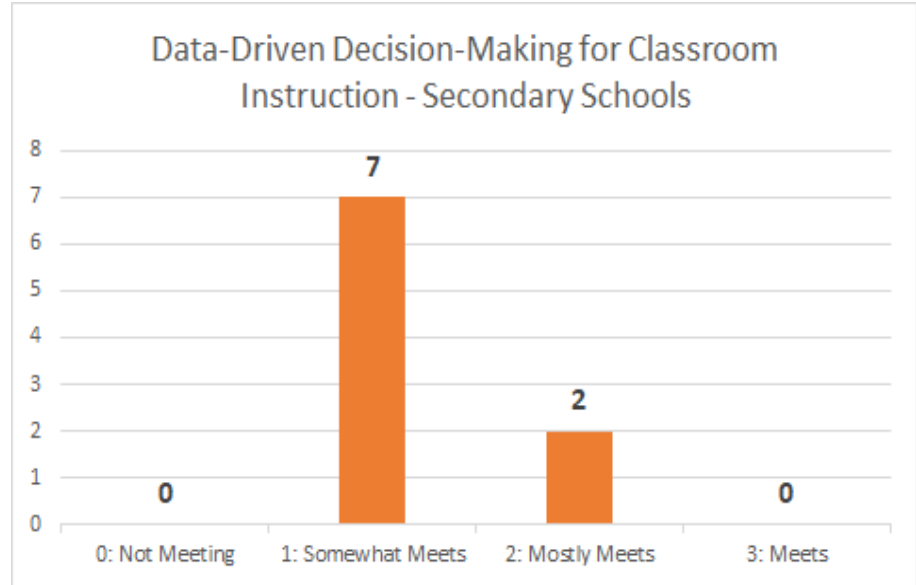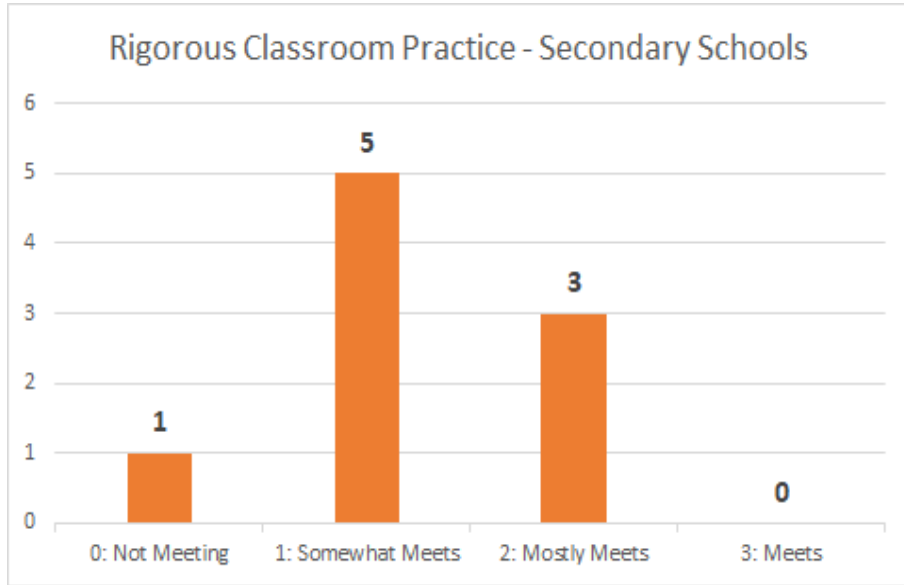
Secondary schools are also still developing collective responsibility for the quality of instruction and the success of all students.

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Systems and structures that ensure students receive high quality instruction, including staff collaboration, trust, and authentic family-school partnerships are still developing. Additionally, while most schools have improvement plans, few demonstrate ownership for plan monitoring and adjustment to meet goals.

Systems and Structures for School-wide Continuous Improvement - Secondary Schools

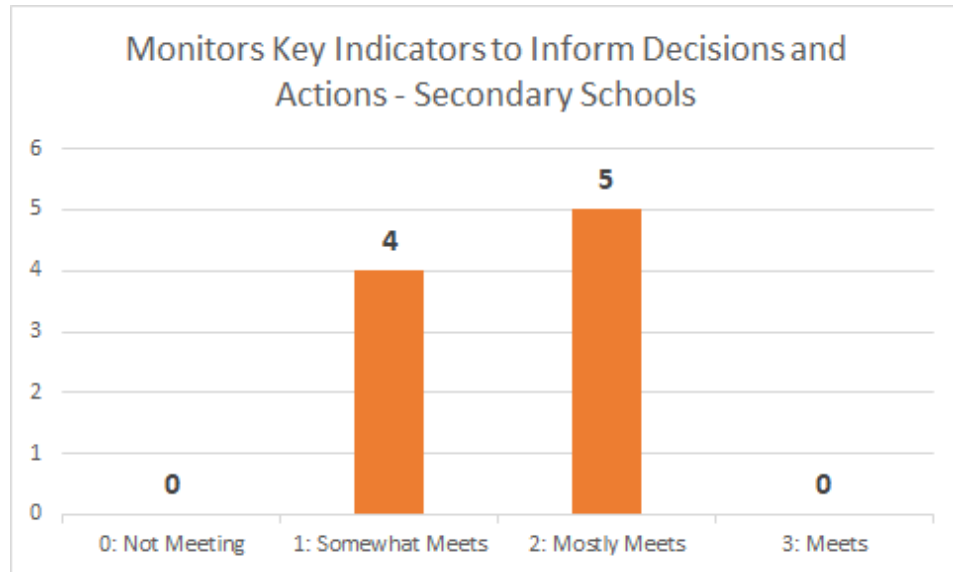| 0: Not Meeting	1: Somewhat Meets	2: Mostly Meets	3: Meets
0	4	5	0
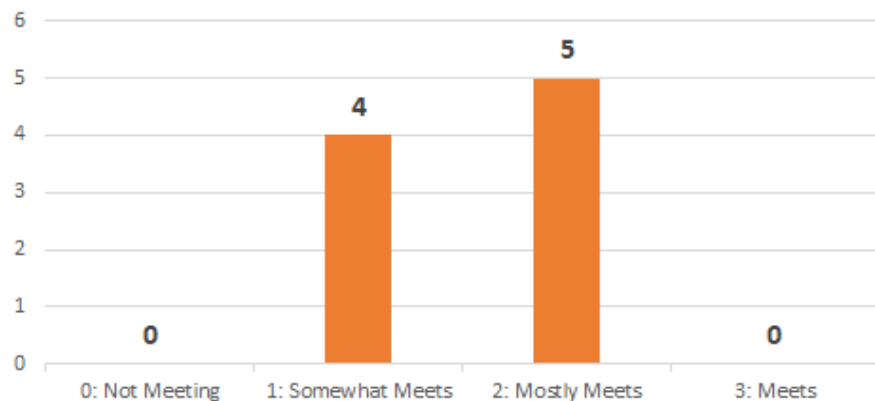
School-wide Beliefs and Trust - Secondary Schools

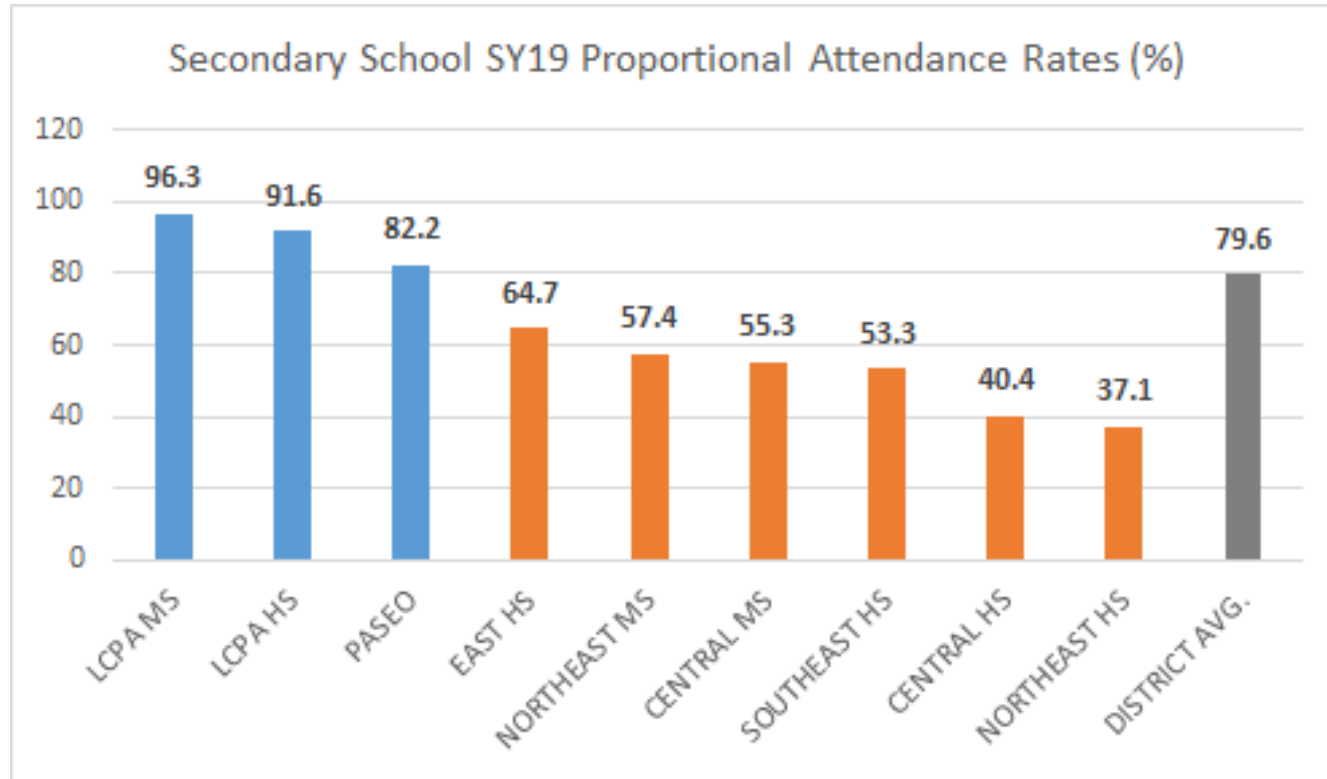| 0: Not Meeting	1: Somewhat Meets	2: Mostly Meets	3: Meets
0	5	3	1

Leading indicators for postsecondary readiness reveal inconsistencies in monitoring and response to at-risk indicators, including students that may enter below grade-level.

- Schools are monitoring behavior and attendance.

- Monitoring and response to postsecondary and at-risk indicators are inconsistent; drop out rates at most secondary schools are high.

- There is limited strategic collaboration between high schools and feeder middle schools to support student transitions.

Monitors Key Indicators to Inform Decisions and Actions - Secondary Schools

Rating	Count
0: Not Meeting	0
1: Somewhat Meets	4
2: Mostly Meets	5
3: Meets	0

Traditional secondary schools have significantly lower proportional attendance rates than signature secondary schools - well below the district average.

Secondary School SY19 Proportional Attendance Rates (%)

School	Rate
LCPA MS	96.3
LCPA HS	91.6
PASEO	82.2
EAST HS	64.7
NORTHEAST MS	57.4
CENTRAL MS	55.3
SOUTHEAST HS	53.3
CENTRAL HS	40.4
NORTHEAST HS	37.1
DISTRICT AVG.	79.6

Most traditional high schools have lower graduation rates, falling well below the district average (71.21%) and state average (89.64%).

Graduation Rate (%)

State Average

KCPS Average

	Central HS	East HS	Northeast HS	Southeast HS	LCPA HS	Paseo
2017	57.8	63.8	68.9	75.2	100.0	92.4
2018	59.2	61.5	68.2	68.8	98.6	91.7
2019	55.1	67.4	72.0	61.8	98.6	91.2
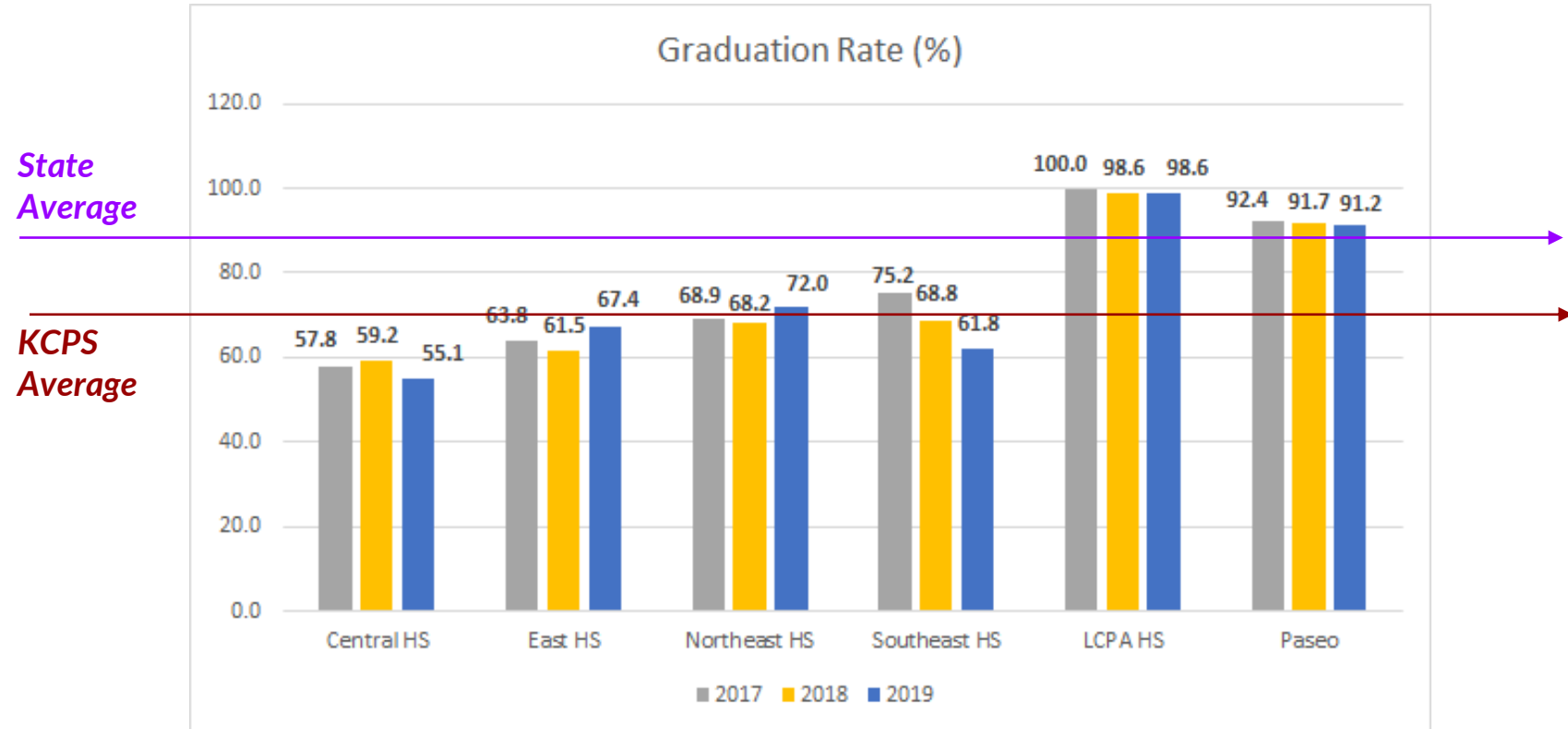
There are not yet consistently equitable secondary options that contribute to the experience/expectations of the KCPS community and district and goals of the strategic plan.

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- KCPS has made positive improvements in leading indicators (e.g., behavior, attendance, science progress).

- Improvements are still incremental, and at the current pace of improvement, it will take years to catch up.

There is a need for KCPS to rethink how it supports the system of secondary schools to move beyond incremental improvements.

Findings Part II: Signature Schools Review

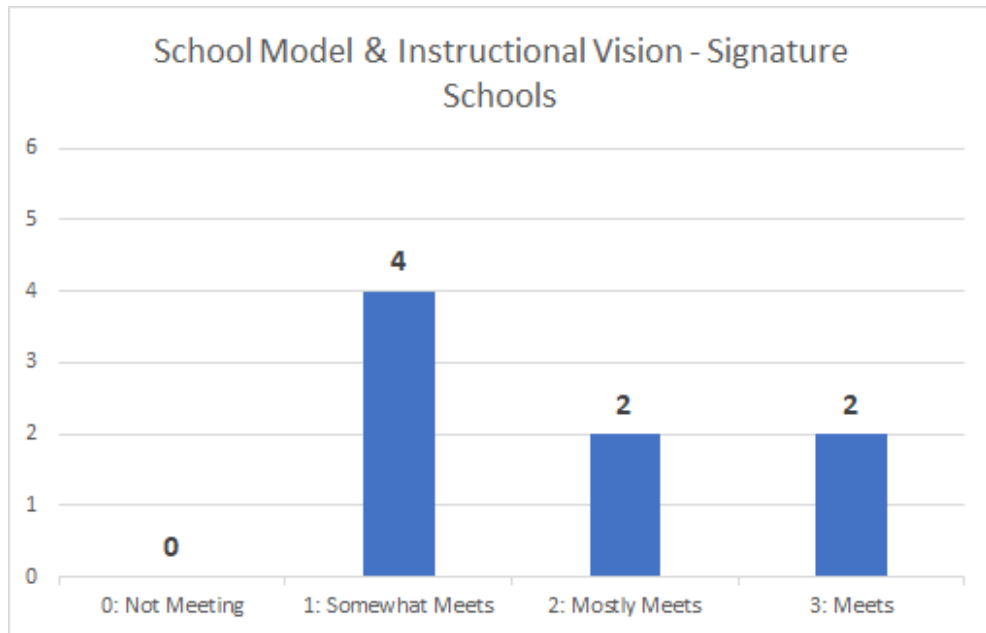# Signature school enrollment is impacted by low retention rates.

- **26%** of KCPS students attend signature schools, an increase of 3% over 3 years.

- Signature schools have significant retention challenges as students approach secondary levels *(5th-6th grade)* and after P4.

- Signature school demographics do not consistently mirror district-wide demographics. *AC Prep Lower and Holliday's populations are over* **90%** *Black. Carver's population is* **82%** *Hispanic.*

- There is uneven enrollment of ELLs and students with IEPs at signature schools *(e.g., Carver and Paseo, respectively).*

% of All KCPS Students (2019)

26%

74%

■ Signature Schools ■ Traditional Schools
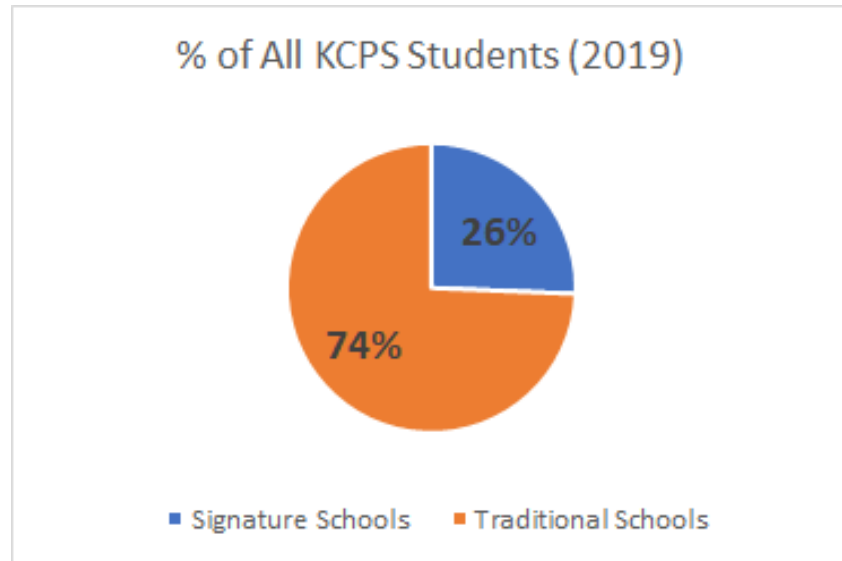
Most signature schools are living their model and theme, contributing to positive culture and greater student outcomes.

AC Prep Lower, Carver, and FLA stakeholders overwhelmingly express a sense of belonging:

- *"This isn't a theme; this is us,"*
- *"We speak the same language; we share codes,"* and
- *"Staff go above and beyond."*

School Model & Instructional Vision - Signature Schools

Category	Value
0: Not Meeting	0
1: Somewhat Meets	4
2: Mostly Meets	2
3: Meets	2

AC Prep Upper is not yet living up to its model; there is a need to clarify the vision for the program, organize structures, and ensure necessary resources.
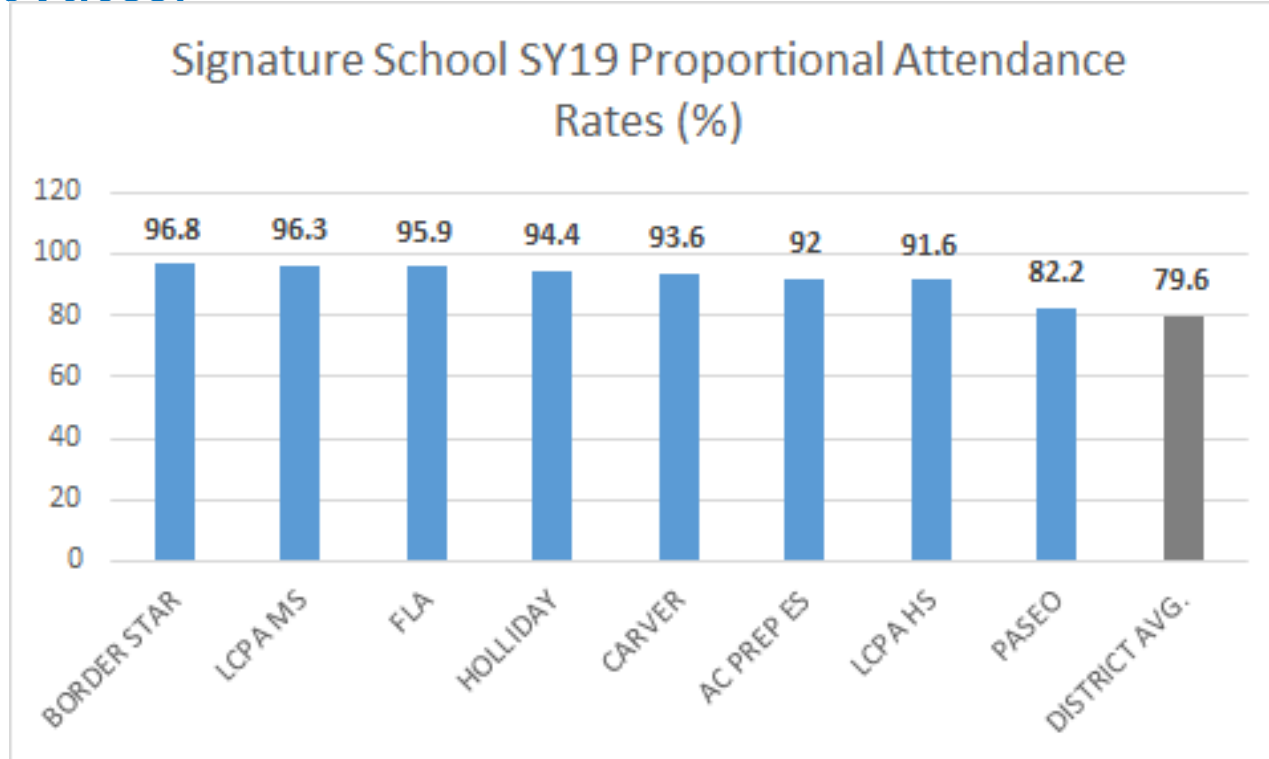
# Although there is demand for signature programs, there is not yet equitable access to signature options.

- **50%** of applications to KCPS schools are applications to signature programs.

- Barriers and inconsistencies in application and enrollment processes limit equitable access to signature options.

- Families often rely on word of mouth to learn about options and application processes - and applications are first-come, first-served.

- Additionally, many signature schools have specific enrollment restrictions that impact access to signature programming.

While **93%** of signature school staff surveyed believe "my school's signature theme or model is attractive/desirable for students and families," only **63%** believe "all students have equitable access to choose and enroll in a signature school."

Signature schools meet or outperform the district on a number of leading indicators of student academic achievement, *including proportional attendance, discipline, and dropout rates.*

Signature School SY19 Proportional Attendance Rates (%)

| School	Rate
BORDER STAR	96.8
LCPA MS	96.3
FLA	95.9
HOLLIDAY	94.4
CARVER	93.6
AC PREP ES	92
LCPA HS	91.6
PASEO	82.2
DISTRICT AVG.	79.6

Despite positive leading indicators and some improvements over time, a majority of signature schools are not yet meeting/exceeding targets for ELA and Math achievement.
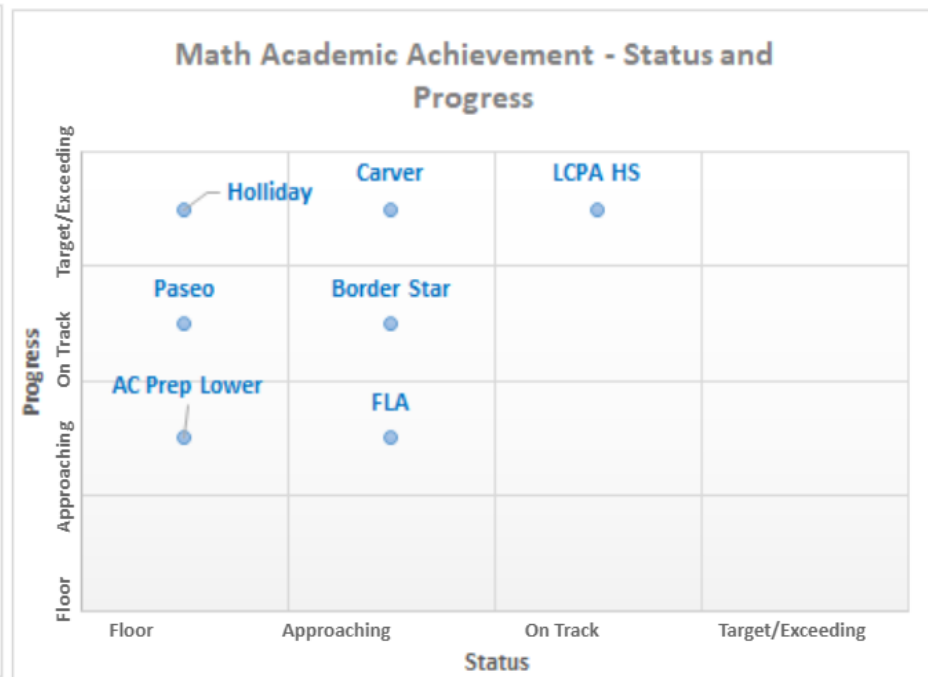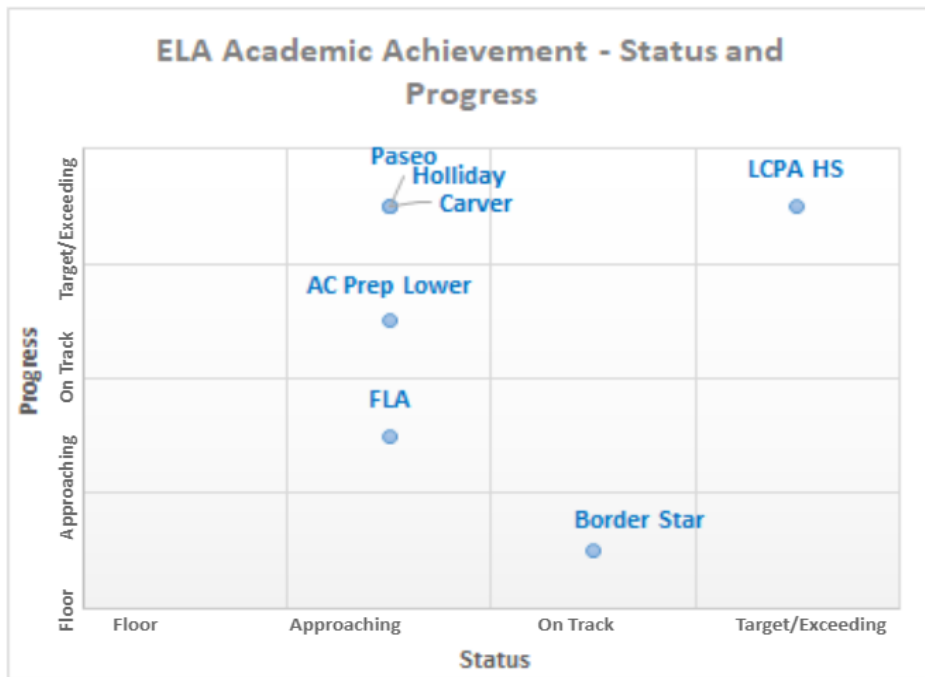
*Note: Since this is LCPA MS's first year as a separate school, separate status and progress data is unavailable and is not charted here.

Similarly, all signature schools demonstrate year to year improvements in Science, yet nearly all schools are not yet meeting targets for Science achievement. *Incremental growth is not yielding sustained academic achievement.*
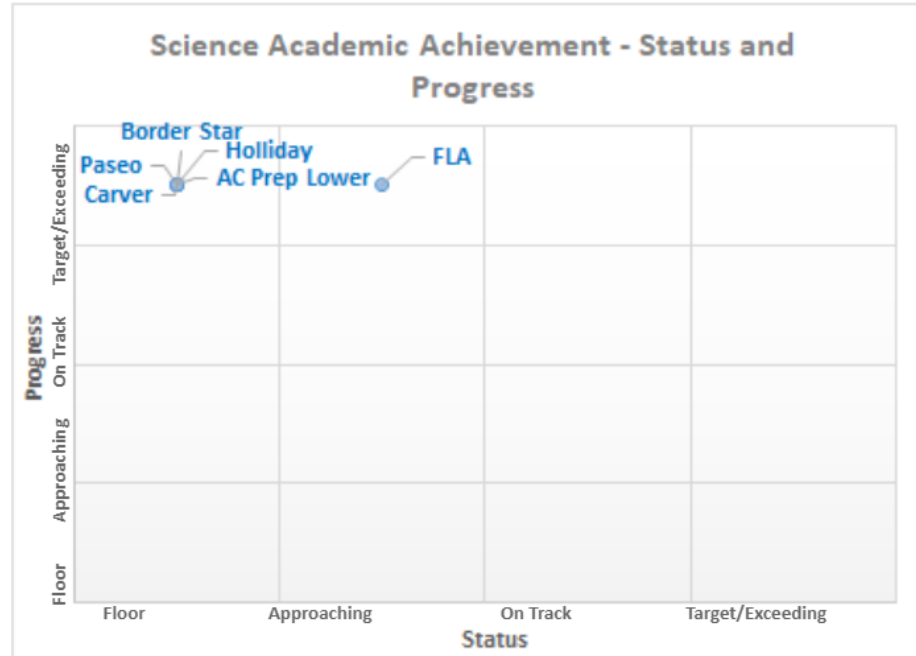
Note: Since this is LCPA MS's first year as a separate school, separate status and progress data is unavailable and is not charted here.
**Science progress score not available for LCPA HS. LCPA HS Status is on target/exceeding.*

Additionally, leading indicators of school functioning reveal an opportunity to strengthen instruction at signature schools.

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Rigor of instruction varies and it is unclear how all schools monitor and respond to warning indicators throughout the year to provide additional support to students who might be at-risk of demittance or drop out.

Rigorous Classroom Practice - Signature Schools

0: Not Meeting	1: Somewhat Meets	2: Mostly Meets	3: Meets
0	3	3	2
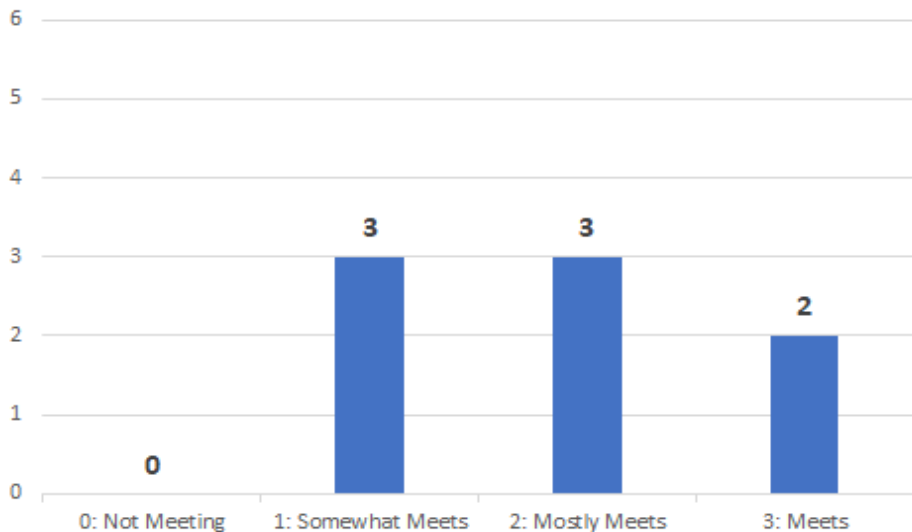
Data-Driven Decision-Making for Classroom Instruction - Signature Schools

0: Not Meeting	1: Somewhat Meets	2: Mostly Meets	3: Meets
0	4	2	2
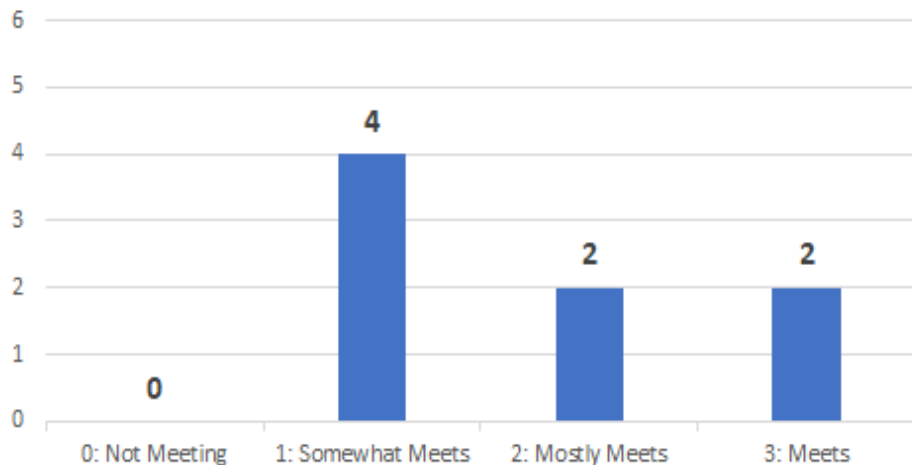
There does not appear to be a district strategy in place for signature offerings, nor is it clear how the district, given its current size and enrollment patterns, effectively supports both signature and traditional schools.

- There is limited coherence across similar-themes, and a lack of continuity across the K-12 trajectory (e.g., AC Prep, LCPA, Montessori, dual-language, few direct feeders).

- School themes enable leaders and staff to more intentionally organize and execute an instructional vision.

There is a need for KCPS to decide if it can sustain its current system of signature and traditional schools -- and what that means for how central office functions to meet unique school needs.

Findings Part III: The KCPS System of Secondary and Signature Schools

KCPS demonstrates efforts to differentiate resourcing and supports for schools. Given the multitude and diversity of school types there is a need for even greater differentiation to create necessary conditions for transformative improvement.

Conditions: Larger Systems, Structures, and Practices - Signature and Traditional Comparison (count)
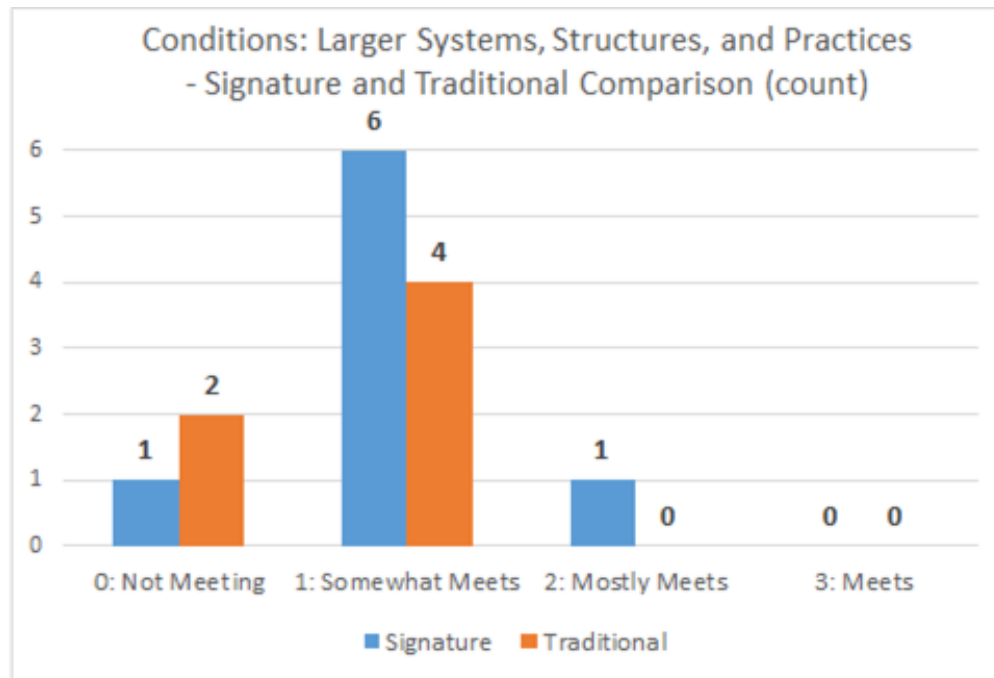
**Conditions Defined:**

- *Sufficient school-level control over people, time, money, and program to address root causes of low performance.*

- District recognizes that the *school is the unit of improvement* and aligns systems and structures so *principals can focus on the success of all students*.

- The district provides school leaders with *support and capacity-building* to achieve school priorities.

For example, now that KCPS implements a core curriculum, there is a need for differentiated instructional supports and resourcing to align with the school models and demographics.

We have a comprehensive assessment system that includes interim and summative assessments that align with our instructional scope

Strongly agree
10.0%

Disagree
30.0%
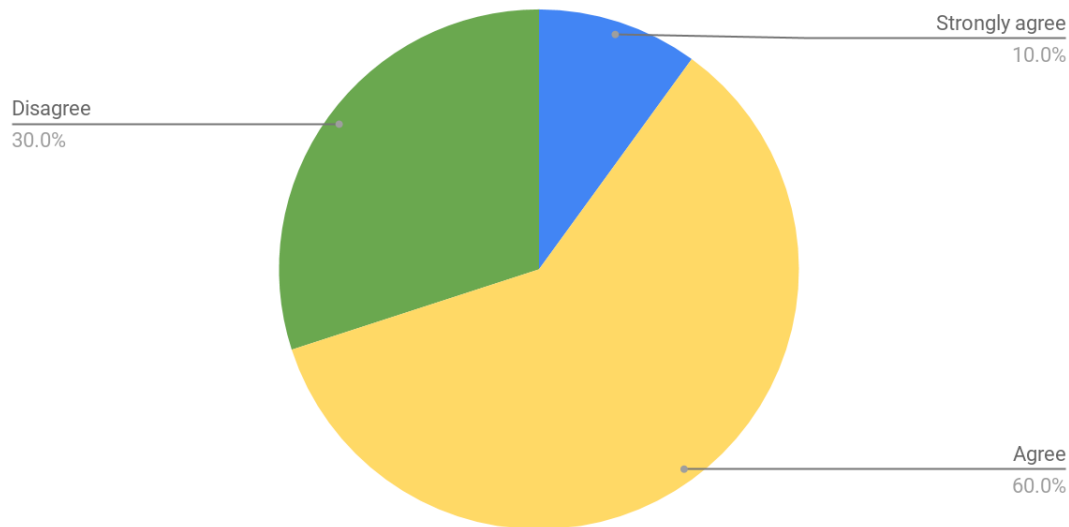
Agree
60.0%

Signature schools do not feel equipped to customize and align curriculum to their unique theme.

50% of traditional and signature surveyed leaders are unsure/disagree/ strongly disagree that curriculum is culturally relevant and responsive to students' needs, identities, and backgrounds.

Also, the variety of schools requires HR to more deeply understand talent needs and execute more targeted recruitment for specialized and diverse candidates. Schools must also have increased flexibility to allocate and organize staff based on needs.

- All schools cite a need for greater support with recruitment - in particular for specialized teachers (*e.g., language, Montessori, certified across grade-levels*).

- Middle schools, in particular, struggle to retain teachers and have several unfilled vacancies that develop over the course of the year.

- Schools cite that staffing structures do not fully account for unique school models and needs (*e.g. ability to align roles to unique school models, flexibility with staff to accommodate secondary students entering below grade level, etc.*).

80% of surveyed leaders disagree and strongly disagree with the statement "I can select from several quality candidates to fill each vacancy."

The variety of KCPS schools also requires highly differentiated school management approaches.

- Schools are assigned to Assistant Superintendents who hold schools accountable for performance and prioritize efforts with the lowest performing schools; *however, there is a need for more personalized and hands-on support (coaching, mentoring).*

- All stakeholders -- leaders, school staff, central office -- express a need to increase trust and demonstrate to communities how central office understands their unique circumstances and is responsive to them.

School Management Defined:

- The district supports *principals to develop coherent school improvement plans that address root causes of low performance.*

- Principal supervisors have *a positive and trusting relationship with principals*.

- *District offices and principal supervisors differentiate supports and conditions based on deep understandings of school and student needs*.

- *Principals are held accountable* for plan implementation and outcomes.

We also examined signature school demand and enrollment trends. **Families and students do not yet have equitable access to desired school choices and a coherent K-12 experience.**

- The variety of grade configurations, as well as inconsistent signature pathways, result in confusion and more opportunities for families to seek alternatives.

- Traditional schools do not feel supported nor do they recognize their role in marketing and positive branding to recruit families.

- Signature and traditional secondary school options are not clear to families and students.

Enrollment and Configuration - Signature and Traditional Comparison (count)
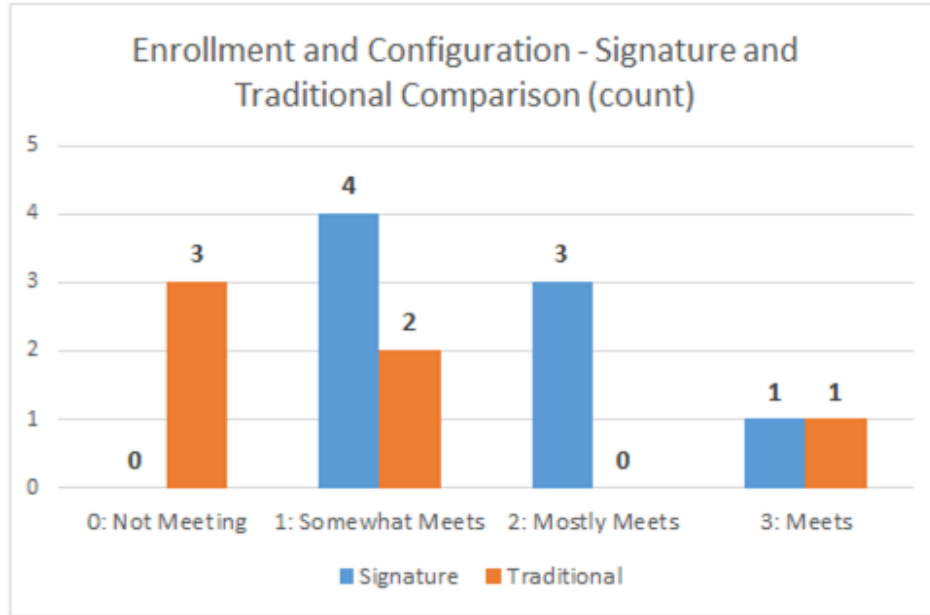
There is high demand for signature schools and, while there is still capacity, eligibility and offer rates are low.

School	Capacity	Utilization	Total Applications	Eligibility Rate	Offer Rate
AC Prep (Lower)	791	**49%**	**924**	58%	45%
AC Prep (Upper)	N/a	N/a	154	**40%**	40%
Border Star	425	**73%**	**510**	87%	33%
FLA - Mandarin	782	**76%**	188	**38%**	33%
FLA - Spanish			353	52%	43%
Carver	446	**74%**	332	**47%**	47%
Holliday*	621	**45%**	**592**	66%	45%
LCPA HS	893	**80%**	367	**47%**	45%
LCPA MS	446	**79%**	**509**	50%	46%
Paseo	871	**50%**	**451**	54%	42%

- There is opportunity to increase enrollment given high demand and current utilization, *especially at AC Prep Lower, Paseo, and Montessori schools.*

- Signature school eligibility and offer rates are below 60%, and *not all eligible students receive an offer, despite school capacity.*

Families actively opt out of traditional secondary schools, and a majority of these schools are under enrolled.

School	Capacity	Utilization	Total Applications	Offered Seats Declined
Central HS	723	**58%**	211	**52%**
Central MS	629	61%	227	45%
East HS	999	**100%**	132	25%
Northeast HS	961	**58%**	154	**55%**
Northeast MS	842	78%	152	**51%**
Southeast HS	1016	**48%**	195	**54%**

Recommended Areas for Consideration

1. Organization of the System of Schools and Implications for the Size and Function of Central Office

KCPS implements two distinct sets of schools. Once KCPS determines a strategy for their schools, then the district can organize in a way that best supports that strategy. **Traditional schools and signature schools require different theories of action for support:**

If We...
- Define/prioritize the practices all schools should implement,
- Provide resources aligned to those practices, and
- Support leaders to implement those practices,

Then...
Schools will improve, student outcomes will improve, and more families will choose KCPS.

If We...
- Create equitable and compelling school options,
- Provide the conditions for schools to deliver high-quality instruction in unique models, and
- Develop leaders to lead those models,

Then...
Schools will be more responsive to student needs/interests, student outcomes will improve, and more families will choose KCPS.
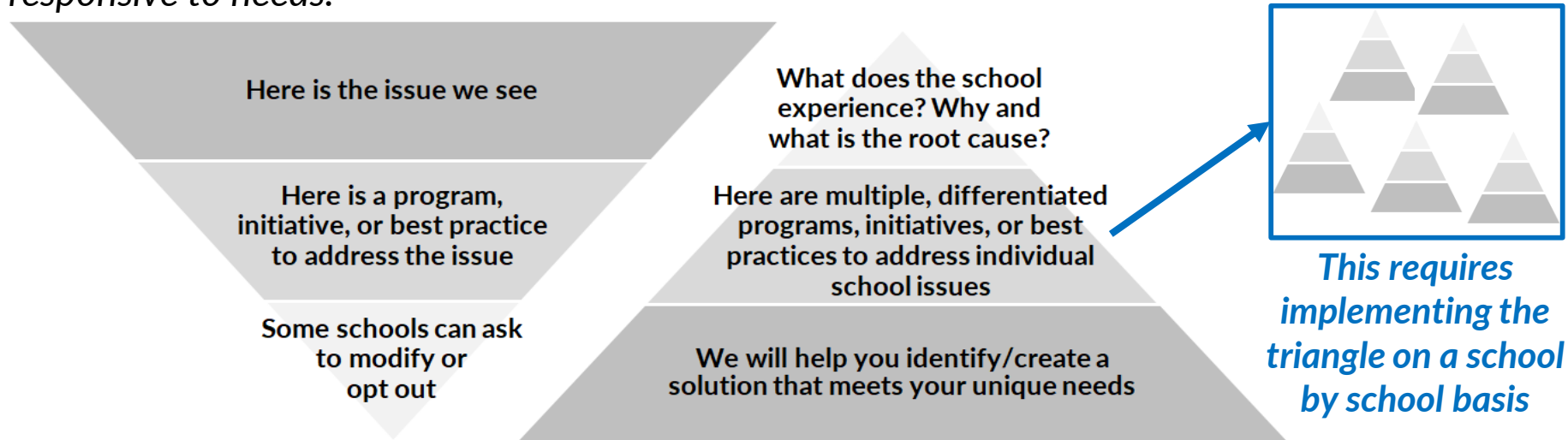
1. Organization of the System of Schools and Implications for the Size and Function of Central Office

Questions for Consideration:

- What type of system does KCPS want to be (e.g., one that supports different school models, one that supports traditional models, or both)?

- Given the district size, enrollment trends, and resourcing, can KCPS sustain a highly differentiated system of schools, especially in light of a desire to reduce operational inefficiencies?

- What would that mean for the size, structure, and role of central office?

2. Improved Conditions for Traditional Schools and Enhanced Flexibility/Differentiation for Signature Schools - *so all schools can strengthen their models and improve achievement*

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A system with a variety of school offerings assumes a management model in which decision-making starts with the school. This requires a shift in the orientation of district decision-making and overall culture of how central office works with schools. *KCPS has provided some choices and differentiation, but they are not consistently perceived by schools as responsive to needs.*

Here is the issue we see

Here is a program, initiative, or best practice to address the issue

Some schools can ask to modify or opt out

What does the school experience? Why and what is the root cause?

Here are multiple, differentiated programs, initiatives, or best practices to address individual school issues

We will help you identify/create a solution that meets your unique needs

This requires implementing the triangle on a school by school basis

2. Improved Conditions for Traditional Schools and Enhanced Flexibility/Differentiation for Signature Schools - *so all schools can strengthen their models and improve achievement*

Questions for Consideration <u>For Traditional Schools</u>: How can KCPS central office improve conditions *(to move beyond incremental change)* for traditional schools so that they have greater ability to address unique root causes by tailoring resourcing, supports, and initiatives in the following areas?

a. Talent recruitment and staffing allocations

b. Academic programming -- Knowing that higher performing students apply to and enroll in signature schools, how might programming at traditional schools need to be differentiated and focused on students who are coming in below grade level?

c. Guidance and requirements for the use of time and scheduling

d. School improvement plan development, implementation, and progress monitoring that address unique root causes, in a way that builds collective ownership

2. Improved Conditions for Traditional Schools and Enhanced Flexibility/Differentiation for Signature Schools - *so all schools can strengthen their models and improve achievement*

Questions for Consideration <u>For Signature Schools</u>:

- Given the variety of signature offerings, how can central office understand and respond to individual signature models and school improvement needs?

- What does this mean for school-level flexibility necessary to sustain and improve signature models and achievement, especially in regards to curriculum, assessment, and decisions to opt out of district initiatives that do not align with their model?

3. Revisions to District Policies to Create More Uninterrupted Transitions for Students

KCPS schools have high mobility rates and families and students experience multiple transitions across schools. While the system cannot control for all reasons why families transition in and out, the system can work more intentionally to minimize these by paying attention to K-12 trajectories and policies that unintentionally lead to disruptions.
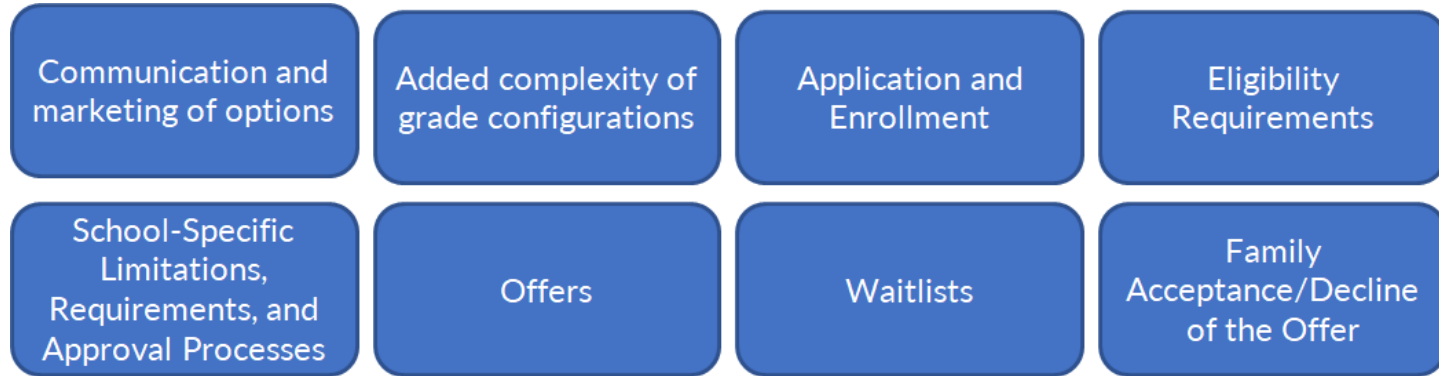
3. Revisions to District Policies to Create More Uninterrupted Transitions for Students

Questions for Consideration: How can KCPS create more seamless, uninterrupted K-12 pathways for students?

a. What policies might need to be revised to allow/encourage/support students to complete the school year at the school in which they start *(especially traditional secondary schools)*, regardless of changes to address?

b. How can KCPS increase collaboration and coherence between high schools and feeder middle schools to better support student transitions?

c. How are signature schools organized to strengthen theme coherence and K-12 trajectories? What does this mean for signature offerings that do not yet extend to high school grades? What does this mean for how schools with common themes collaborate?

d. What does all of this mean for grade configuration?

4. Equitable Access to School Options

There are barriers to enrollment in options of choice -- and there are many built-in opportunities to screen out families who are interested in KCPS schools. This further exacerbates challenges in system that already struggles to retain families.

Communication and marketing of options	Added complexity of grade configurations	Application and Enrollment	Eligibility Requirements
School-Specific Limitations, Requirements, and Approval Processes	Offers	Waitlists	Family Acceptance/Decline of the Offer

Questions for Consideration: How can KCPS revise signature school eligibility policies and application review processes to increase access and provide more students with opportunities for higher quality education?

Thank You!