GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FIRST 60 DAYS REPORT

UNDERSTANDING GPCS THROUGH LISTENING AND LEARNING



DR. ALEXANDRA ESTRELLA

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A MESSAGE TO THE GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMUNITY

Dear Gwinnett County scholars, families, and community members,

Over the past 60 days, I have welcomed students back to our schools and continued listening to the people closest to the work. As the school year began, my focus moved from understanding the organization to gaining a clearer view of the daily experiences of our students, staff, and families.

School visits, the launch of the Superintendent's Transition Team, and the first phase of the Listening and Learning Tour have brought me into conversation with stakeholders across our community. They have shared their perspectives with honesty, pride, and a deep commitment to the future of Gwinnett County Public Schools.

One message has surfaced again and again: relationships matter. Students spoke about trusted adults who support them, challenge them, and connect them with opportunities. Those relationships help students feel known and valued. They also shape how students learn, grow, and thrive.

GCPS offers a broad range of programs, experiences, and pathways. Stakeholders have asked whether every student has equal access to those opportunities and the support needed to pursue them. Schools must open doors, not limit them. Excellence for all must guide our decisions and our work.

The Superintendent's Transition Team has reinforced another lesson. Excellence requires strong leadership, coherent systems, and consistent practices. Feedback gathered through the Entry Plan is helping us identify where the district works well and where greater alignment will improve the experience of students, staff, and families.

Each school visit has shown me the dedication behind GCPS. I have seen educators create meaningful learning experiences, staff members solve problems, and students take pride in their schools. Families and community partners have also spoken with care and candor about what GCPS does well and where we need to improve.

In the coming weeks, I will continue the Listening and Learning Tour. The perspectives shared through this process will help shape the district's future and inform our next Strategic Plan.

Thank you for your partnership, trust, and support. Together, we will build on GCPS' strong foundation, expand opportunities for every student, and keep students at the center of every decision.



Sincerely,

Dr. Alexandra Estrella

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dr. Alexandra Estrella continued implementing her Entry Plan, deepening her understanding of students, schools, and the systems that support them. The launch of the Superintendent's Transition Team and the first phase of the Listening and Learning Tour expanded opportunities for stakeholders to share their perspectives on the strengths, challenges, and aspirations that define GCPS. Dr. Estrella and the GCPS cabinet visited 83 schools since school opened, and through these conversations with stakeholders, have heard consistently-expressed pride in the district and a strong belief in its potential. Students, staff, and families also raised important questions about how learning opportunities are experienced across the system. While participants consistently highlighted the breadth of opportunities available to students, many wondered whether all students have equal awareness of, access to, and support in taking advantage of those opportunities.

Student voice provided particularly valuable insight. Conversations with students underscored the importance of belonging and the critical role relationships play in their educational experience. Across schools and grade levels, students spoke about the lasting impact of trusted adults and the ways those relationships influence engagement, motivation, and success. Many also described how teachers, counselors, coaches, and other caring adults help students discover and access opportunities, highlighting the connection between relationships and equitable access.

Feedback gathered through Entry Plan events and surveys reinforced the importance of leveraging the district's strengths while continuing to build the coherent systems that drive excellence at every level of the organization. The Listening and Learning Tour will continue throughout the next reporting period. The insights gathered will inform the Transition Team's short- and long-term recommendations and help shape the development of the district's next Strategic Plan.

FIRST 100 DAYS IN CONTEXT

Days 1–30

Listen, Learn, and Build Relationships

- Engage educators, staff, leaders, and community partners
- Identify strengths to preserve and opportunities to strengthen
- Begin to build understanding of GCPS today

Days 31–60

Engage Schools, Families, and Communities

- Visit schools and engage students and families throughout Listening and Learning Tour
- Assess supports, operations, and stakeholder needs

Days 61–100

Establish Priorities and Build Alignment

- Synthesize key themes and feedback
- Identify key priorities and begin developing measures of success
- Strengthen alignment around a shared direction for GCPS

STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED

Throughout her pre-work and first 60 days, Dr. Estrella met with a broad range of stakeholders to gain a comprehensive understanding of the district, its operations, and the community it serves.

District Departments, Leaders, and Staff Members

- Administrative Assistants
- Assistant Principals
- Bus Drivers
- Cluster Superintendents
- Directors
- Educators
- Executive Directors
- Fine Arts Educators
- Human Resources
- Paraprofessionals
- Principals
- Research, Evaluation, and Assessment
- School Nutrition
- Teaching and Learning

Community Members and Educational Partners

- Accelerate
- ALMA Advisory Group
- Community School Partners
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Families and Parents of GCPS
- Future School Fund
- Gwinnett Board of Health
- Gwinnett Chamber
- Gwinnett County Association of Teachers
- Gwinnett Technical College
- Higher Education Partners
- Latin American Association
- Learn4Life Leadership Council
- Metro RESA
- NAACP
- Ohana Solutions
- Partnership Gwinnett
- Students
- The Children's Cabinet
- University of Georgia College of Education
- White Board Advisors

Government and Civic Leaders

- City Council Members
- City Managers
- Community Leaders
- Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners
- Gwinnett Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Explore Gwinnett
- Mayors
- Regional Partners
- State Representatives
- Governor's Luncheon with Brian Kemp
- United Way of Greater Atlanta

STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED (cont.)

Dr. Estrella met with a broad range of invested community members and organizations at one-on-one meetings and events in addition to internal GCPS meetings.

Community Events and Engagements

- Book Mobile Visits
- Coalition Luncheon
- Community School Meeting: Rockbridge ES
- Community School Meeting: South Gwinnett HS
- Fluency in Math and Literacy Salon Dinner
- Harbins-Alcovy Small Area Plan Meeting
- Moxie Awards
- Summer High School Graduation
- Summer Leadership Conference
- Youth Entrepreneurship Program

Broadcast Media

- 11Alive (NBC)
- Atlanta's Morning News
- CBS Atlanta
- Good Day Atlanta (FOX)
- Hispatlanta
- Telemundo
- Univision
- WANF 46
- WSB TV (ABC)
- WSB AM (Radio)

Other Publications

- Gwinnett Daily Post
- Gwinnett Magazine
- Korea Daily Atlanta
- The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

TRANSITION TEAM UPDATE
AUGUST 11, 2026 MEETING

Executive Summary

On August 11, 2026, the Superintendent's Transition Team held its kickoff meeting, convening over 195 parents, students, educators, staff, national experts, and community members across five subcommittees to begin developing recommendations for Superintendent Dr. Alexandra Estrella's transition plan. The Team is co-chaired by Stan Hall, President & CEO of Explore Gwinnett and Gas South District, and Belisa Urbina, CEO and co-founder of Ser Familia.

The five subcommittees — Culture & Climate; Operations, Facilities & Finance; Academics; Human Resources & Talent; and Community Engagement — reviewed district data, shared key noticings and wonderings, explored emerging questions, and identified initial focus areas for further consideration. In parallel, three student focus groups gathered input from 25 students across 24 schools. This report presents a summary of subcommittee findings, cross-cutting themes, and outstanding data needs. It also outlines the community engagement strategies and tools designed to broaden stakeholder participation in advance of the Transition Team's meetings on September 22 and November 12, 2026. The report concludes with recommended actions and next steps to guide the work ahead.

ACADEMICS

Review curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student outcomes to identify strengths and opportunities, and recommend improvements that ensure all students access to rigorous, relevant learning experiences.

OPERATIONS / FACILITIES / FINANCE

Review facilities, transportation, budgeting, and resource allocation to improve efficiency and long-term sustainability while aligning resources to support student learning and district priorities.

HUMAN RESOURCES / TALENT

Assess strategies for recruiting, developing, and retaining high-quality staff across all roles, and recommend improvements to strengthen the educator pipeline and ensure all schools are well-supported and effectively staffed.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATIONS

Evaluate communication and engagement with families, students, staff, and the community, and recommend strategies to strengthen trust, transparency, and inclusive stakeholder participation in district decision-making.

SCHOOL CULTURE & CLIMATE

Examine school climate, safety, belonging, discipline, engagement, and absenteeism trends to recommend strategies that support positive, inclusive environments and improve student well-being, attendance, and success.

Co-Chairs



Stan Hall

President & Chief Executive Officer, Gas South District, Explore Gwinnett, Gwinnett Convention & Visitors Bureau



Belisa Urbina

Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Ser Familia, Inc.

Key Takeaways, Priority Questions, and Data/Evidence Needed

ACADEMICS

Key Takeaways

- It will be helpful to explore disaggregated data in order to better understand student experience
- GCPS has genuine strengths, impressive outcomes, and rich resources to build on
- Inconsistency of outcomes is unacceptably consistent by student demographics

Priority Questions

- Where are the high quality Tier 1 practices and other bright spots that we can model and share across the district?
- In what ways can we leverage professional learning to ensure that all staff are prepared to meet the diverse needs of all learners?

Data/Evidence Needed

- Student voice
- School-level and cluster data sets

OPERATIONS / FACILITIES / FINANCE

Key Takeaways

- Need for additional resources. The district's budget is not keeping pace with costs.
- Continue using the results from program evaluations to inform decisions/budgeting.
- Continued with targeted support for specific schools/ programs.

Priority Questions

- Are there additional opportunities to generate revenue (e.g., increase Pre-K enrollment, facility use fees)?
- How do the district's staffing data compare to neighboring districts (e.g., retention)?

Data/Evidence Needed

Provide additional context on data (i.e., what is average/ ideal?).

HUMAN RESOURCES / TALENT

Key Takeaways

- Less discrepancies between title and non-title for retention.
- Reduced vacancies numbers and increased retention rates.
- xfat Recommendations were approved.

HUMAN RESOURCES / TALENT (cont.)

Priority Questions

- What are the salary and growth opportunities for paras?
- What more disaggregated information for retention for general ed, special ed, and support personnel?

Data/Evidence Needed

To close the feedback loop using disaggregated data for retention by school.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATIONS

Key Takeaways

- High participation rates from staff and students; Low participation rates from parents and families
- Communication and language accessibility
- Survey fatigue and understanding how trust has been eroded

Priority Questions

- How welcoming is the environment? (i.e. District, schools, etc.)?
- What does authenticity look like for stakeholders?

Data/Evidence Needed

Cluster data by demographics and school levels

SCHOOL CULTURE & CLIMATE

Key Takeaways

- Student Experience (how are students understanding and experiencing culture and climate, grade 12)
- Survey frequency, content and fatigue (language access, efforts to increase participation, incentives, delivery model)
- There is a need for more detailed data sets (segregated by grade span, cluster, subpopulations)

Priority Questions

- How can we effectively implement advisement and SEL programs?
- How will we intentionally build capacity of those individuals who are directly responsible for building engagement and belonging?

Data/Evidence Needed

Gather more feedback from students / what are some of the barriers?

LISTENING & LEARNING

As part of her Entry Plan, Superintendent Dr. Alexandra Estrella launched a districtwide Listening and Learning Tour to gather perspectives from students, staff, families, and community members across Gwinnett County Public Schools. The Listening & Learning Tour includes in-person meetings, virtual meetings, and surveys. The feedback collected through these sessions will be shared with the Superintendent's Transition Team and used to inform both short- and long-term recommendations, as well as the development of the district's next Strategic Plan. In addition, the key-takeaways and themes will be shared with the GCPS community. Visit the Listening & Learning page to view live survey updates.



SESSION OVERVIEW

Each Listening and Learning session is structured as a one-hour collaborative conversation.

Sessions begin with opening remarks from Dr. Estrella before participants engage in facilitated table discussions. Participants work together in small groups to identify and prioritize GCPS's greatest strengths and opportunities. They then share their top three GCPS strengths and opportunities for growth with the larger group, allowing common themes and unique insights to emerge across table groups.

STUDENT VOICE AT THE CENTER

Student voice is a central component of the Superintendent's Entry Plan. For the first time, students from across the district are coming together to engage in structured conversations about the future of GCPS. Students representing every GCPS high school, along with Gwinnett Online Campus, the International Transition Center, GIVE Center East, GIVE Center West, Buice Center, and Oakland Meadow School, are participating in collaborative discussions focused on the district's strengths and opportunities for growth.

In addition, all students in grades 4–12 will have an opportunity to share their perspectives through the EES survey.



LISTENING & LEARNING

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

The Listening and Learning Tour is one of many opportunities for stakeholders to contribute their perspectives. Throughout the Superintendent's Entry Plan process, we are committed to creating many meaningful opportunities for stakeholders to engage. Additional feedback opportunities include:

- Student voice survey for students in grades 4-12 during the EES window
- Ongoing engagement and feedback opportunities with principals, assistant principals, and district leaders throughout LDI and LDII meetings
- Regular updates and conversations with cluster superintendents
- Continued stakeholder surveys and engagement opportunities

If you have not yet participated, we encourage you to attend a Listening and Learning session and share your perspective.

Virtual Listening and Learning Sessions are scheduled from September 8–31.
RSVP here to take part in a virtual session.
Learn more here about the Listening and Learning Tour.

Participation Snapshot:
As of August 28, 2026

- **1260+** individuals have registered to attend a Listening and Learning session
- **500+** students are expected to participate in student sessions and focus groups
- **600+** stakeholders have completed the Listening and Learning Survey

  For live survey updates, click HERE.

WHAT WE'RE HEARING



"I think it's very important for her to hear the voices of students that have been going here and hearing their concerns of how things have been going before her... Thank you so much for even considering the fact that we have voices, we have concerns that we actually care about what's going on in our schools. Just thank you so much for actually willingly listening."

Jazlyn, Archer High School student

"We wanted to learn about the direction of the school district. We collaborate with the schools in many different areas, and, uh, we just wanna make sure we continue that good relationship. We're interested in the new programs and initiatives that Dr. Estrella is rolling out, and, uh, we wanna be here to work with the schools and support them in whatever way we can."

Charles Pace, Executive Director, Gwinnett County Public Library

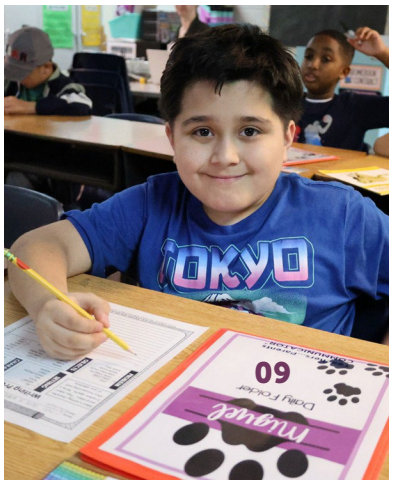


PRE-ENTRY: Understanding the Table of Organization, Operating Rhythm, and How Work Moves Through GCPS

Status Key: ✓ Completed ● In progress ■ In planning

Orientation to the District Operating Model	
Activity	**Status**
Review GCPS Divisions and Teams structure and current leadership assignments	✓
Engage in town halls across all Board Districts to connect with key stakeholders to gather insights and understand community priorities.	✓
Request current Table of Organization charts by division and major departments	✓
Identify critical cross-functional dependencies (Schools, Learning, Operations)	✓
Create an internal "Who Does What" map: division purpose, key services, decision rights, escalation paths	●





PRE-ENTRY: Understanding the Table of Organization, Operating Rhythm, and How Work Moves Through GCPS

Status Key: ✓ Completed ● In progress ■ In planning

Cabinet and Senior Leader Familiarization	
Activity	**Status**
Schedule structured 60–90 minute preentry interviews with each cabinet leader and key senior leaders	✓
Use a consistent interview protocol: • Mission and core services to schools • Current priorities and initiatives underway • Decision rights and approval pathways • Performance measures and reporting routines • Risks, urgent issues, and stabilization needs • Strengths to protect, bottlenecks to remove	✓





PRE-ENTRY: Understanding the Table of Organization, Operating Rhythm, and How Work Moves Through GCPS

Status Key: ✓ Completed ● In progress ■ In planning

Department Function Reviews	
Activity	**Status**
For each major division and key departments: • Confirm scope, responsibilities, and staffing model • Clarify how work enters the department • Identify prioritization method and service standards • Review how support is delivered to schools • Review current metrics: what is tracked, how often, and how it is used • Identify top 3 recurring barriers schools experience with this department	✓





PRE-ENTRY: Understanding the Table of Organization, Operating Rhythm, and How Work Moves Through GCPS

Status Key: ✓ Completed ● In progress ■ In planning

Meeting Structure and Operating Rhythm	
Activity	**Status**
Inventory standing meetings: • Cabinet meetings • Cross-divisional leadership meetings • Principal, cluster, or network meetings - Instructional leadership teams - Operations coordination meetings - Budget and staffing meetings - Safety and crisis management meetings	✓
Document for each meeting: • Purpose and decision scope • Attendees and roles • Agenda structure and expected outputs • Decision documentation method • Action tracking and follow-up expectations	✓





PRE-ENTRY: Understanding the Table of Organization, Operating Rhythm, and How Work Moves Through GCPS

Status Key: ✓ Completed ● In progress ■ In planning

Communication Flow and Information Dissemination	
Activity	**Status**
For each major division and key department: • Identify primary channels used for internal and external communication • Map message flow: who initiates, who reviews, who approves, and who distributes • Review how urgent updates, policy guidance, and initiative expectations are communicated • Identify feedback loops: how questions are received, routed, answered, and tracked • Confirm translation and accessibility practices for family communications	✓



PRE-ENTRY: Understanding the Table of Organization, Operating Rhythm, and How Work Moves Through GCPS

Status Key: ✓ Completed ● In progress ■ In planning

Initiative Intake, Governance, and Implementation	
Activity	**Status**
Reduce initiative overload and strengthen follow-through. • Map how initiatives enter the system (Board priorities, compliance, grants, department work, partners) • Review how initiatives are screened for alignment and capacity • Identify current implementation supports and monitoring expectations • Review what schools are currently being asked to implement, and by whom • Identify duplications, competing timelines, and unclear ownership	✓
Facilitated two Board retreats to strengthen governance effectiveness, clarify roles and communication expectations, and align on governance practices and operating norms.	✓





PRE-ENTRY: Understanding the Table of Organization, Operating Rhythm, and How Work Moves Through GCPS

Status Key: ✓ Completed ● In progress ■ In planning

Early Risk Scan and Stabilization Priorities	
Activity	**Status**
Identify what must be steady from Day 1. • Safety readiness and consistency (procedures, staffing, training, communications) • Staffing pipeline and critical vacancies (time-to-hire, onboarding, retention risks) • Transportation and operational reliability (service standards, escalation, response times) • High-attention topics likely to surface early (enrollment, placement, redistricting, policy concerns) • Budget constraints and near-term decision points	●

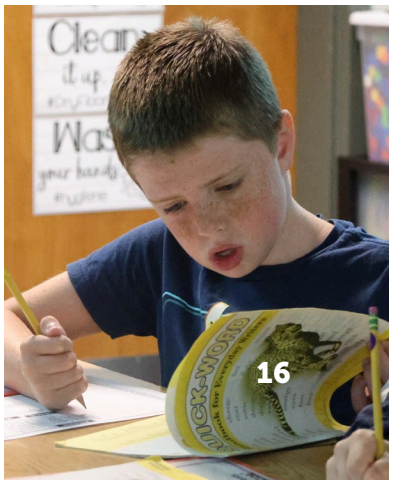


DAYS 1–15: Stabilize, Align, and Set the Operating Rhythm

Status Key: ✓ Completed ● In progress ■ In planning

Activity	Status
Establish board and cabinet operating norms.	●
Confirm districtwide non-negotiables: safety routines, instructional time, respectful culture, and consistent communication.	●
Launch a public entry hub: listening calendar, feedback pathway, and weekly updates that stakeholders can count on.	✓
One-page operating memo: how we will work together (cadence, escalation pathways, decision timelines).	●
Public 100-day calendar and feedback pathway.	●





DAYS 16–30: Listen with Structure, Be Visible in Schools, and Identify Immediate Actions

Status Key: ✓ Completed ● In progress ■ In planning

Activity	Status
Conduct a Listening and Learning Tour across clusters and communities, aligned to themes already raised through district engagement.	●
Complete school visits using a consistent set of look-fors	●
Hold staff reality-checks with teachers, principals, and support staff to identify barriers that slow schools down.	●
Convene a Board retreat to develop, align on, and approve a Governance Team Communication Plan that clarifies roles, decision-making norms, and communication expectations.	✓
30-day summary: what I am hearing and what I am seeing, including strengths to preserve and barriers to address.	✓
Stability actions list (5 to 7 items) with owners and timelines.	●





DAYS 31–45: SAFETY, OPERATIONS, AND TRUST CHECKS THAT FAMILIES WILL FEEL

Status Key: ✓ Completed ● In progress ■ In planning

Activity	Status
Complete a safety implementation review: Evolv consistency in high schools, middle school rollout readiness, training, staffing, and daily procedures.	✓
Complete an operational reliability review: work order response timelines, building readiness, transportation reliability, and school-facing customer service routines	✓
Publish a clear, family-facing update: what stays consistent, what is improving, and how concerns are addressed.	✓
Safety implementation brief (internal): gaps, fixes, and a 30-day action plan	✓
Family-facing safety and operations update (plain language, translated access, clear timelines)	✓



DAYS 46–60: ALIGN TO THE BLUEPRINT, SIMPLIFY, AND SHOW EARLY WINS

Status Key: ✓ Completed ● In progress ■ In planning

Activity	Status
Build a Blueprint-to-execution alignment map: what continues, what is refined, what stops, what must be strengthened, and what is missing.	●
Strengthen attendance as a shared operating practice: reinforce school attendance teams, clarify escalation supports, and differentiate support to high-need schools	✓
Begin budget clarity work tied to staffing stability: explain how investments protect classroom impact and support retention.	●
Public-facing Blueprint alignment summary	●
Two to three early wins with simple measures (examples: attendance team implementation checks, faster service response, consistent safety entry routines)	✓







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