ATLANTA SPEECH SCHOOL ANNOUNCES PLANNED RETIREMENT OF COMER YATES IN 2028; BOARD BEGINS LEADERSHIP TRANSITION PROCESS

ATLANTA, GA — The Board of Directors of the Atlanta Speech School today announced that Comer Yates, Executive Director since 1998, will retire in May 2028 at the conclusion of the 2027-2028 academic year. By announcing the transition nearly two years in advance, the Board and Yates are providing time for broad stakeholder engagement, thoughtful planning, and a comprehensive search for the School's next leader.

For nearly three decades, Yates has advanced the Atlanta Speech School's mission of bringing deep reading to each and every child so they can find their voice to determine their own future and make the greatest difference in the lives of others.

"I have the best job in the world," said Yates. "For nearly thirty years, I have had the privilege of working alongside colleagues who choose to be here because they are committed to making the most difference in the lives of children.'

I am confident about the path forward because I know what this commitment to children and families has made possible. The work that begins on this campus now reaches hundreds of thousands of children. For almost ninety years, the Atlanta Speech School has held to the conviction that each child deserves the chance to find their voice. That promise, larger than any one person, lives in the people and purpose of this School. It will continue to guide this School long after any of us are here."

Under Yates's leadership and through the work of its staff, partners, and supporters, the Atlanta Speech School reached several significant milestones:

- **One Mission, Four Schools:** Deepened a distinctive educational model encompassing the Katherine Hamm Center, Stepping Stones Preschool, the Anne & Jim Kenan Preschool, and the Wardlaw School, serving children from birth through sixth grade, including children who are deaf or hard of hearing, have speech or language delays, or have dyslexia.
- **Expanding Professional Capacity:** Established the Rollins Center for Language & Literacy—today the nation's foremost center for advancing language and literacy—for educators committed to ensuring every child is taught to read. Today, the Rollins Center's online adult learning platform, Cox Campus, is the only free platform accredited by both IACET and IDA, reaching more than 430,000 members across all 50 states and 138 countries.
- **Reaching the Full Continuum of Literacy:** Traditionally, the Science of Reading has been applied primarily beginning in kindergarten. The Atlanta Speech School and its Rollins Center take a broader view, addressing the full continuum of learning—from prenatal development through the development of deep reading.

"Comer's influence extends far beyond our campus," said Katie Post, Chair of the Board of Directors. "Under his direction, the School strengthened its role as a leader in literacy, language, and learning while remaining steadfastly focused on each child on campus. He has challenged our community and the broader field to affirm every child has a right to literacy and self-determination.

We are deeply grateful for his stewardship and his unwavering commitment to the children, families, and communities this School serves."

The Board of Directors has established a Search Committee and engaged BoardWalk Consulting to conduct a national search for the Atlanta Speech School's next Executive Director, set to launch in early 2027. The Board will engage staff, families, donors, and partners throughout the process as it develops a leadership profile and identifies the person best positioned to shape the School's next chapter.

"The Atlanta Speech School is exceptionally well positioned," said Post. "We are fortunate to have the time to approach this transition thoughtfully. The mission and values that have always defined the Atlanta Speech School will guide the next Executive Director as they help lead the institution into the future."

About the Atlanta Speech School
Founded in 1938, the Mission of the Atlanta Speech School is to bring deep reading to each and every child so they can find their voice to determine their own future and make the greatest difference in the lives of others. Guided by a vision of Literacy and Justice for All, the School effects transformative change in the lives of children through research-backed practices, advocacy, and partnerships so that each child at the Atlanta Speech School and every child beyond the campus can acquire the language and literacy foundation essential for deciding their own future. Through its four schools, the Rollins Center for Language & Literacy, Cox Campus, and Learning Hub, the Atlanta Speech School serves children, educators, and communities locally and around the world.