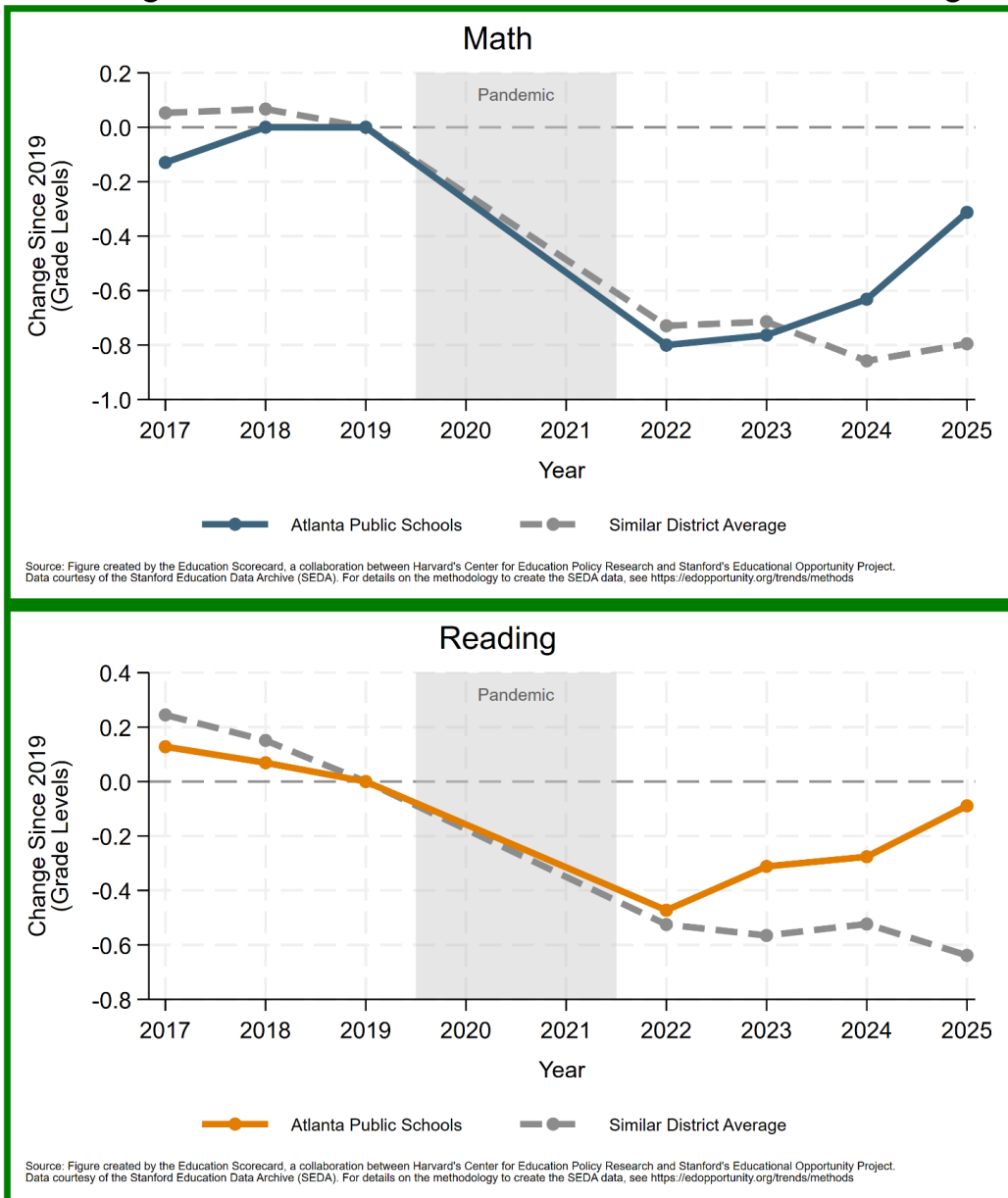


Atlanta Public Schools
Atlanta, GA

Atlanta Public Schools, GA

Rising Faster than Similar Districts in Math & Reading



Similar Districts: Muscogee County, Richmond County, Clarke County, Liberty County, Savannah-Chatham County

Student Demographics:

Total student population: 49,878

Economically Disadvantaged: 59.8%

Three largest racial demographics:

Black: 70%

White: 16.3%

Hispanic: 8.5%

Dr. Bryan Johnson, Superintendent

Nicole Lawson, Chief Communications Officer, nclawson@apsk12.org

- “It’s not just about the numbers for us, it’s bigger than the numbers. This is about kids and their future, their ability to thrive and to find their voice. And so, for us, all of those things make the work urgent and important.”
- “It’s hard to build on weak foundations, which is why we’ve focused on getting back to the basics by ensuring alignment between our instruction and the Georgia state standards. We use a combination of measures to get a holistic, ‘just-in-time’ view of student performance. This data allows us to be responsive rather than reactive, providing immediate, targeted support based on exactly what our students need at that moment.”

Background:

Atlanta Public Schools (APS) is a large, urban school district serving over 49,878 students across 87 school sites. In 2015, APS joined the growing number of Georgia districts classified as [Charter Systems](#), gaining freedom and flexibility from almost all state education laws and regulation to innovate in exchange for increased accountability for student achievement. Given this autonomy, APS leadership has tightened its focus on the instructional core, innovating to meet specific student needs while prioritizing tight alignment between core curricula and Georgia state standards across APS’ 87 school sites.

Strategies for Success:

Strengthening literacy and math instruction:

- APS has made a sustained and strategic investment in Tier 1 instruction, with a particular emphasis on literacy and foundational math. District leaders have prioritized tight alignment between core curricula and Georgia state standards. The district has committed to increasing both 3rd grade ELA proficiency and 8th grade math proficiency by [20% by 2030](#).
- In literacy, APS utilizes Benchmark Advance and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Into Reading. The district aims for teachers to implement these curricula with full fidelity, providing teachers with aligned instructional resources, pacing guides, and assessments. To ensure strong implementation, APS provides in-depth training to school leaders and instructional coaches, who then provide targeted support to teachers through structured professional learning and ongoing coaching cycles.
- Principals and Assistant Principals engage in monthly content specific professional learning aligned to the state standards to guide and support teachers in implementing instructional resources and curriculum guides.
- Instructional Coaches participate in monthly professional learning aligned to our instructional framework and state standards to prepare teachers for upcoming lessons.
- Literacy Coaches participate in monthly training aligned to the science of reading.

- Through a partnership between the Georgia Department of Education and the Atlanta-based [Rollins Center for Language & Literacy at the Atlanta Speech School](#), APS elementary ELA teachers participate in summer training in evidence-based literacy practices, including phonics instruction, language development, and early literacy intervention strategies. According to the Rollins Center, 80% of teachers who participate in their training improve their language-centered ecosystem (not specific to APS).
- APS also uses targeted ELA interventions outside of traditional instruction. For example, [Reading Futures](#) is used in select middle schools to provide an additional 30 minutes of literacy instruction during the school day, delivered by certified teachers.
- The [APS Literacy Council](#) helps to guide the district's literacy strategy. The council includes district leaders as well as external literacy experts from the community, creating a structure for ongoing collaboration between APS and entities with deep expertise in reading instruction.
- In math, APS has emphasized foundational learning. This emphasis includes providing students and teachers with access to high-quality curricula, including Carnegie Math for middle school students and C-Gage Math for high school students.
- Alongside these curricula, the district utilizes state-developed instructional materials (such as [this example](#) for math) to support teachers in designing standards-aligned lessons and assignments. APS is intentional in articulating to teachers that curricula should be balanced with individualizing instruction to meet student needs.

Learning from student data:

- APS uses a clearly defined set of assessment tools and data routines to drive instructional decisions and target support. The district administers NWEA MAP assessments twice per year (with an optional third administration) to measure student growth and benchmark performance. To provide more immediate, standards-aligned insights, APS uses [MasteryConnect](#). This system allows for assessments to be customized to address specific Georgia state standards. During the 2025-2026 school year, APS also implemented [Amira ISIP Assess](#), a new assessment to monitor mastery of foundational literacy skills.
- These tools are used together to triangulate student performance. MAP provides a broad measure of growth, while Mastery Connect identifies specific standards where students are not yet proficient. This combination allows teachers and leaders to make precise instructional adjustments. Additionally, MAP and district assessment data are used to place students into summer learning programs and determine the type of intervention they receive.
- APS has also developed a school tiering system based on the [Learning Leader Framework](#). Schools are categorized quarterly using formative assessment results and data from principal supervisors, allowing the district to differentiate support. Schools with greater needs receive additional resources, including teacher coaching, walk-throughs and feedback cycles, professional learning community (PLC) planning and support, and lesson modeling.
- Data is reviewed consistently by both building and district leaders. District leaders meet weekly with principals to review student performance, discuss instructional challenges, and identify necessary supports.
- The district also uses data to inform “just-in-time” professional development. This model tailors teacher training to current student needs rather than predetermined topics.

Summer learning:

- During the month of June, APS runs a variety of programs for students in grades K-12. All programming is free to students, and the district provides students with meals and

- transportation to help make these programs more accessible for families.
- [Power Up programming](#) is divided between grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. When students enroll in the program, their MAP scores and district assessment data are used to inform their classroom placement and promote access to individualized instruction by summer learning staff. More than half of students who attended Power Up in 2025 met their math and ELA growth goals, and among elementary students with the highest academic need, participants met growth targets at a higher rate than non-participants, especially in ELA.
 - All instruction is delivered by certified teachers. Additionally, APS sees summer programs as a way to provide more leadership opportunities to educators; teachers can apply to be summer site leaders, developing the skills needed to take on building- or district-level leadership positions in the future.
 - The Power Up programs balance academic instruction with other targeted learning and enrichment opportunities, such as STEM activities, arts programming, gifted instruction, and dual language immersion programs.

Investing in educators:

- In 2025 and 2026, APS received a [Gallup Exceptional Workplace Award](#), demonstrating its continued commitment to supporting their teacher workforce. This commitment is reflected in the district's 90% teacher retention rate.
- The district has also invested in instructional coaches for every elementary school as one strategy to both promote high-quality instruction and teacher readiness, employing approximately 110 instructional coaches in the 2025-2026 school year. These coaches provide job-embedded support to classroom teachers by modeling lessons, assisting with analyzing and translating student data, and supporting curriculum alignment and implementation. While this is just one strategy to enhance instruction at the elementary level, the district saw significant growth on the 2025-2026 Fall-to-Winter MAP assessment compared to 2024-2025 Fall-to-Winter MAP.
- APS has created formal teacher leadership roles to extend the knowledge and impact of its most effective educators. One role is Master Teacher Leaders, who offer frequent, non-evaluative support to new or struggling teachers. APS leans on Master Teacher Leaders to help reduce variability in the quality of instruction across classrooms, acting with urgency and creatively solving problems to minimize gaps in instructional quality. These teachers are identified based on classroom data and strong student outcomes and have a reduced teaching load to be able to provide real-time coaching and feedback to peers. APS recognizes that not all teachers want to become building administrators; the Master Teacher Leader position gives teachers the opportunity to grow without leaving the classroom.