

20  
21

# YEAR IN REVIEW

PURPOSE BUILT SCHOOLS ATLANTA



INNOVATING SCHOOLS.  
INSPIRING MINDS.



PURPOSE  
BUILT  
SCHOOLS  
ATLANTA



"Our fight is in our classroom every day. We must tell the truth to our students about their inherent value, no matter what society tells them to the contrary. We must lead with our heads held high, as we set the culture and the tone for this world, as we have for thousands of years."

*- Luqman Abdur-Rahman  
Principal, Price Middle School*

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# Looking Forward With Purpose

A Message From Greg Giornelli, President & CEO

I am so grateful for the incredible resilience of our scholars and staff and all that we have accomplished together in 2021. Despite some extraordinary challenges, our staff has continued to provide our students with high quality, culturally relevant project-based instruction within a safe and loving environment.

While many of our scholars' needs have changed over the pandemic, much has stayed the same. I'm grateful for the robust list of partners that provide a range of services to help students overcome both academic and nonacademic barriers.

Over the past five years, thousands of scholars have made meaningful and significant individual and collective gains. Our schools grow stronger every year, and the families who entrust their children to a Purpose Built school each day have increased access to support and resources.

The 2021-22 school year has been full of signs that our model is working. Since we began working with Carver STEAM in 2018, the school's graduation rate has improved overall by 10.6 percentile points. This is the largest improvement in graduation rate of any high school in the district over this three-year period. Out of 426 high schools in the state of Georgia, Carver STEAM is ranked 26th in terms of growth over this same timeframe.

This is just one of many milestones indicating that this slow, yet steady, growth is inching us that much closer to fulfilling our mission of graduating empowered change agents who create positive, long-lasting impact in their own communities. There is still work to be done, but we gladly pause to celebrate all the hard work and achievements of 2021.

With gratitude,  
Greg Giornelli

*"The 2021-22 school year has been full of signs that our model is working."*



Carver STEAM has achieved the largest improvement in graduation rate of any high school in the district since 2018.

# Our Model

By combining the best of traditional public schools with the best of charter schools, we offer a proven model designed to put all students on a trajectory for success through college and in their careers.

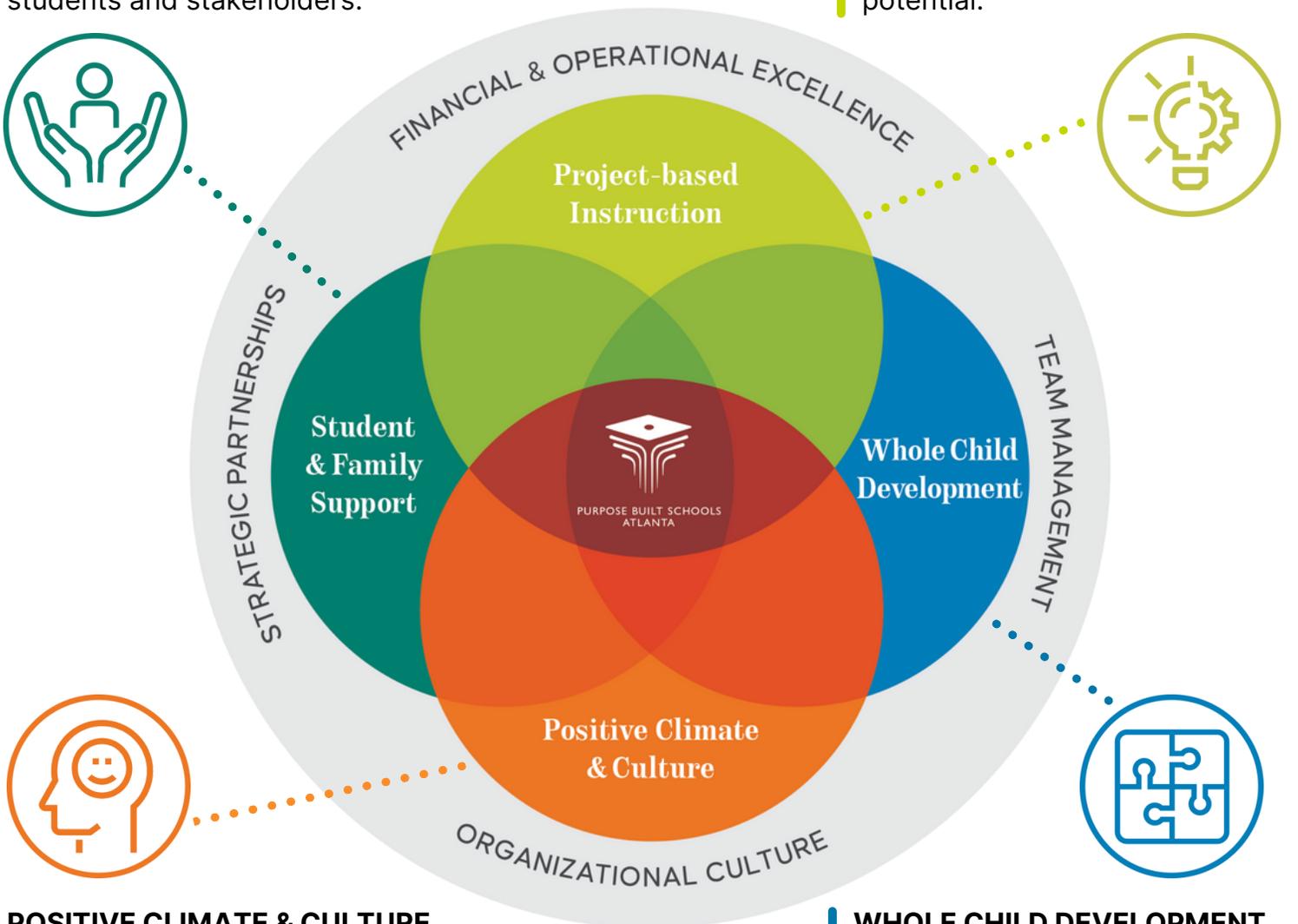
## STUDENT & FAMILY SUPPORT

Our schools and communities are stronger together, and we build bridges to parents, students and stakeholders.



## PROJECT-BASED INSTRUCTION

A rigorous, culturally relevant curriculum helps students love learning and achieve their potential.



## POSITIVE CLIMATE & CULTURE

Our students come to us with unlimited potential, and we are committed to helping them unlock that potential.



## WHOLE CHILD DEVELOPMENT

We believe in a holistic approach, with enrichment opportunities, social-emotional learning, and wraparound supports alongside relevant and authentic project-based instruction.



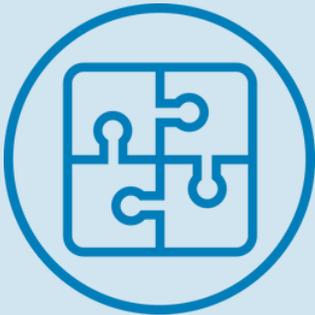
# Our Model In Action



## PROJECT-BASED INSTRUCTION

Students tackle real-world topics that impact their every day life, such as:

- How do we use force and motion to stay healthy?(Thomasville Heights, Kindergarten)
- How do we combat food deserts in urban communities? (Slater, 1st Grade)
- How can I use my voice to discover a new way of thinking about a social issue I care about? (Carver, 9th Grade)



## WHOLE CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Through a new photography program at Price Middle School, students are exploring the artistic side of taking everyday photos. The 100cameras partnership provides 15 students with free cameras and training to become great photographers as they take shots to raise money for their school.



## POSITIVE CLIMATE & CULTURE

Parks are essential for healthy communities. That's why The Trust for Public Land developed the Community Schoolyards program--and Price Middle School is one of the newest sites to be selected for improvements that will make our outdoor spaces better suited to students and the entire community. Price students are participating in the planning process to design and beautify their campus.



## STUDENT & FAMILY SUPPORT

Faith-based institutions are part of the fabric of our community. We recognize the challenges faced by students, families, and communities can be wide and deep, and so we purposefully partner with the faith leaders who support our students, families and neighborhoods. We launched the Faith Engagement Initiative this year to connect schools with local faith leaders.



# Our Focus on Equity

Our goal at Purpose Built Schools is to create life-changing opportunities for students and families. We do that by explicitly identifying and dismantling the systems of racism that are barriers to those life-changing opportunities.

We believe we can remove the barriers of systemic racism from within our schools, and it's already working. We know that we are at the beginning of a long journey, and even with our initial successes, we don't expect sustainable change to happen overnight.

But the critical work of addressing these systems plays out daily in the way Black students and families experience the educational system through their neighborhood school. And we can start doing something about it right now.



## **How we're mitigating the negative impacts of systemic racism in our schools:**

### **CULTURALLY RELEVANT PROJECT-BASED INSTRUCTION:**

Through project-based learning, students explore racial justice and equity and develop real-life solutions to make change in their communities.

### **OUT-OF-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING FOR STUDENTS:**

Our students explore a wide range of interests through out-of-school program thanks to partnerships such as Bearings Bike Shop, Boys & Girls Club of Metro Atlanta, and Tango Flight.

### **ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT CLOSE GAPS:**

We offer robust enrichment programs, including dance, chess, robotics, environmental science, urban farming, band, and art, designed to narrow the opportunity gap.

### **FAMILY SUPPORT & COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION:**

We are committed to helping families to remain in place even while neighborhoods change, through partnerships that provide supports such as mental and physical health, housing quality, affordability and stability, food access, and employment opportunities.

### **RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AS THE BASIS FOR STUDENT CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE:**

Our discipline system is rooted in the proven principles of restorative justice, and our teachers participate in a wide range of trauma-informed professional support.

### **A DEEP COMMITMENT ON A PERSONAL LEVEL:**

We partnered with Potential Unleashed Consulting to ensure that every Purpose Built Schools employee has the opportunity to pursue their own equity journey and examine how their personal habits, attitudes, beliefs and expectations can impact and influence their own role in breaking down systemic racism.

# Academic Recovery

Our students, like students across the state and nation, inevitably experienced a learning gap due to the pandemic and school closures. In addition to working with partners to provide families the support they need, Purpose Built Schools has an aggressive, multi-pronged recovery plan with a wide range of initiatives and services to address the gaps.

After exactly 12 months of virtual classes, Purpose Built Schools reopened our school doors in March 2021 for in-person learning. Our recovery strategy focuses on three priorities:

1

## ENGAGING PROJECT-BASED LEARNING INSTRUCTION

To improve the quality of our culturally relevant project-based instruction, we have purchased state-of-the-art flat screen panels for every classroom, “Smart Boards.” We also added a Technology Instruction Coordinator to provide ongoing professional development to teachers – ensuring that we integrate the Smart Boards into classroom instruction.

2

## SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT

We’ve expanded the number of counselors and social workers on site at our schools and provide services such as individual/group counseling, behavior support, individual/group skill building, and staff training on trauma-informed care.

3

## SMALL GROUP INTERVENTIONS

We invested in the following tools, resources, and practices to ensure our students get additional individualized and small group instruction:

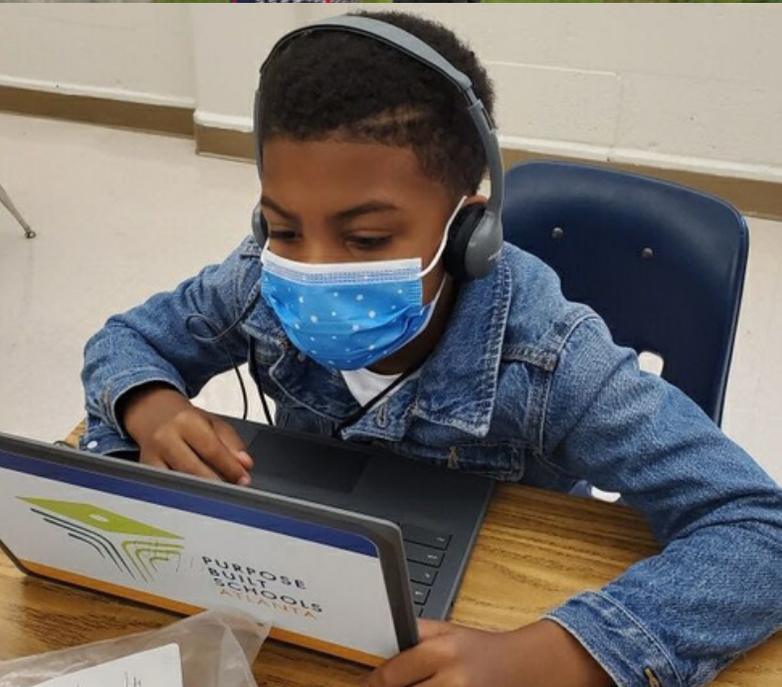
- adding a 75-minute intervention block to the school day schedule, supported by the addition of 8 intervention paraprofessionals.
- increased high dosage tutoring, including an expanded partnership with the Schenck School.
- new Literacy Coordinator and Math Coordinator positions.
- individualized learning plans for students.



*The next three years will be all about academic and social emotional learning (SEL) recovery for our students. Preliminary data shows that academic gaps are significant.*

# Lessons Learned

Our schools have learned some important lessons about education and community during the pandemic.



- 1** We bridged a piece of the digital divide, providing computers and internet access to all students and families.
- 2** We improved our project-based instruction and showed that a project-based learning approach – rooted in what is going on in students’ lives right now – can truly engage students and drive academic growth.
- 3** We learned new ways to engage both caregivers and community stakeholders, with record attendance levels at parent-teacher conferences and in our PBL showcases.
- 4** We identified creative and innovative ways to meet critical needs of our families, especially through a comprehensive grocery distribution program and mental health outreach.
- 5** We built a stronger organizational culture through improved staff communication and professional learning communities.
- 6** Our teachers gained a generation’s worth of knowledge and expertise by using interactive instructional tools to engage our students in new ways.
- 7** We refined our data strategies, leveraging best practices for student intervention and targeted personalized learning, acknowledging that this kind of analysis is more important than ever.
- 8** We committed ourselves to equity within our organization. Instead of avoiding conversations on race and equity, we placed them front and center in a time when our students and staff needed it most.
- 9** We supported one another through what seemed like tragedy after tragedy. We lost parents, siblings, friends, and even colleagues. Still, we came to work with heavy hearts and a collective purpose to stem the suffering of our students and give them the structure they need and the education they deserve.

# Farming in South Atlanta

Our school farms are engines for social change in the community. The two neighborhood urban farms at Thomasville Heights Elementary School and Price Middle School empower Purpose Built students to be change agents in their own communities by showing them the value of creating their own food systems and ecosystems and providing their families and neighborhood with healthy, accessible food.

## What's new on the farms?

Price Middle School students built their very own farm in 2021. Slater Elementary School's new food co-op program provides families at Slater with fresh food each week.

## Why should communities have the opportunity to grow their own food?

Growing your own food creates food integrity, which is knowing where your food comes from, knowing you can access it, and trusting that it will be healthy and good for you and your family.

## How does the farm help mitigate the effects of systemic racism?

By enabling people to grow their own food, we're tackling a symptom of systemic racism head on. The farm in Thomasville Heights serves as a community hub and ensures a Black agricultural legacy, which is a critical element of breaking down barriers put in place by systemic racism. The farms also provide paid internships for Carver STEAM Academy students and connects them with students from other communities throughout Atlanta.

## Our Farm Partners

- The Paideia School
- COR
- Urban Recipe
- CARE



# Our Partners

We are so grateful for our incredible partners. Here are a few of them in action.

**COR** hosted a weekly market for students and families across the cluster of schools, even throughout the pandemic. COR works with students at Carver STEAM Academy to help remove non-academic barriers to learning, including behavioral health services and wraparound family care. The team is located on site, which allows them to develop meaningful relationships integral to addressing and moving through trauma and enhancing student success.



**URBAN RECIPE COLLABORATIVE** launched a food co-op at Slater Elementary School. Families receive boxes of locally grown food, including the fresh fruit and vegetables grown in the Thomasville Heights Elementary School farm. The Grassroots Growers Alliance grows food specifically for the families of this coop. As a cooperative, families contribute any way they can, whether that is by dividing food, packing boxes or more.



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF METRO ATLANTA** runs after-school enrichment programs on-site at Purpose Built Schools, a bold departure from its club-model, that allows for broader impact in our communities. They also provided learning pods for approximately 70 students in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.



**CARE** distributed cash cards to help ease the financial burden of relocation for families forced to move while the Forest Cove Apartments are rebuilt. Thanks to support from APD Urban Planning Management, residents at Forest Cove Apartments were given cash cards with \$500-\$1,000 to spend on essential relocation costs such as furnishings, household goods, transportation, and supplies. In total, the initiative put more than \$100,000 directly into the hands of residents to support their relocation.



**THE PAIDEIA SCHOOL** partners with Thomasville Heights Elementary School to create a thriving urban farm that benefits the community. Paideia supports the THES Farm through mentorship and a close partnership that involves the sharing of knowledge, seeds, tools, materials and volunteers. This enables the two schools to continue to learn and grow together and feed our communities.



# Our Impact

In five years, across four schools that comprise the highest poverty feeder pattern in Georgia and that serve a population that is nearly 100 percent students of color, student achievement has improved year over year. Our schools are some of the most-improved in Georgia.

Purpose Built Schools has reduced suspensions by 32 percent, lowered transiency by one fifth, and more than doubled caregiver attendance at parent conferences.

It's no accident that at the same time, three of our four schools have increased student achievement by more than 93 percent of all schools in Georgia.

Carver STEAM has increased its graduation rate by 10.6 percentage points in the three years since APS partnered with Purpose Built Schools Atlanta to run Carver STEAM in 2018. This is also the largest improvement in graduation rate of any other high school in the district over this three-year period.

By the end of 2021, Carver STEAM seniors had secured more than \$1 million in college scholarships, well on their way to achieve our goal of \$2 million by May 2022.

suspensions  
since 2016  
**32%**

graduation rate  
since 2018  
**10.6%**

family engagement  
since 2016  
**100%**

**\$1 million**  
college scholarships  
(and counting!)



***Achieving a dream:  
Carver STEAM  
graduate excels in  
special education  
program***

When Purpose Built Schools Atlanta took over the operation of Carver STEAM Academy in 2018, Shadonna Newsom was 18 years old, but only had three completed credits to her name. At the time, it was difficult to see a path forward to graduation. But Purpose Built Schools overhauled the special education program, renaming it Team Excel to overcome the stigma of special education and reflect the positive trajectory of students. Together with Shadonna and her mom, Team Excel created an intensive action plan for Shadonna to defy all odds: go from just three credits to a high school diploma. Shadonna was a proud graduate of the class of 2021, achieving her biggest dream. Just three years ago, this felt like an unachievable goal.

# Our Leadership

An important element of student success is to see people like themselves in leadership roles, and students must feel comfortable having open dialogue about the challenges they face. Our team reflects our school and neighborhood populations: Purpose Built Schools' staff are 91 percent Black; we have four dynamic, amazing Black principals; and our organizational leadership is 70 percent Black.



**PURPOSE BUILT SCHOOLS ATLANTA**



**THOMASVILLE HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**



**SLATER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**



**PRICE MIDDLE SCHOOL**



**CARVER STEAM ACADEMY**