Update on the Comprehensive Review of Special Education, Pre-K through Grade 12
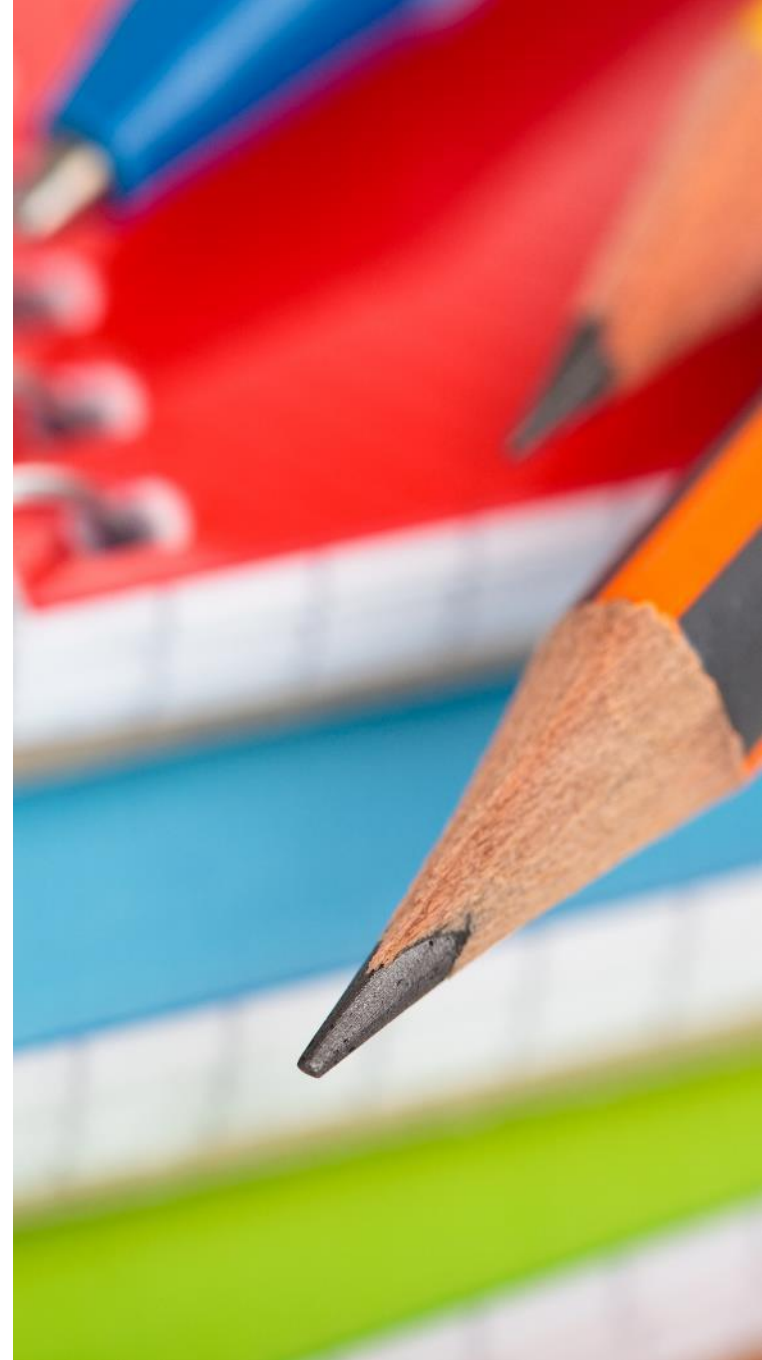
Alexandria City Public Schools

June 21, 2018

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Essential Questions

1. What are the Project Goals and Timeline?

2. What are the High Level Commendations and Recommendations?

3. What are the Next Steps?

PCG Education Team

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A Collaborative Approach To Program Reviews

- Our reviews are **collaborative** by design, and we work side-by-side with districts to help define the challenges, specify goals and develop effective, outcome-driven strategies.

- We help answer **essential questions** about student progress and program effectiveness, pinpoint specific areas of strength, and identify improvement targets.

- Our review approach is **multidimensional**, emphasizes the participation of multiple stakeholders, and includes both quantitative and qualitative data collection. It is grounded in our experience and research in best practices.

Results Driven Accountability

Our aim is to continue to strengthen district culture by leading the way with accountable solutions that support:

➢ Enhanced collaboration

➢ Compliance

➢ Greater efficiencies

➢ Continuous improvement efforts in special education with measureable academic and functional outcomes

Triangulated Approach

Outcome Analysis
- *Student Population and Program Placement Trends*
- *Student Achievement Trends*

Organizational & Program Analysis
- *Data, Policy & Practice Review*
- *Program Analysis*
- *Staffing Analysis*
- *Financial Review*

Research & Practice Literature
- *Findings and recommendations grounded in current literature and aligned to evidence-based, industry best practices*

Guiding Questions

The following questions guided our analysis for ACPS:

- To what extent do the **instructional services** ACPS offers meet the needs of students with disabilities within the Division?

- To what extent is ACPS meeting the needs of students with disabilities and their families in the area of **compliance with state and federal regulations**?

- To what extent does ACPS utilize its **human capital resources** to provide adequate services for students with disabilities to support student learning outcomes?

- To what extent has ACPS's school and division leadership fostered an instructional program and school/division **culture that supports meeting the unique educational needs of students with disabilities**?

- To what extent do ACPS's **internal and external communication practices** foster collaboration among staff and families in support of students with disabilities?

Data Collection Methods

Evaluation Areas	Interviews & Focus Groups (2 days onsite)	Surveys (4 surveys)	File Review (2 days)	Data, Policy, and Practices Review	School Observations & Student Shadowing (16 days onsite)
Instructional Services	X	X	X	X	X
State and Federal Requirements	X	X	X	X	
Human Capital	X			X	X
Supporting Culture and Climate	X	X	X	X	X
Communication Efforts	X	X	X	X	

Timeline – Phases of the Project

Phase 1: Project Initiation (June 2017)
- Project kick off
- Project plan and timeline

Phase 2: Customizing the Approach (July-August 2017)
- Agreed upon metrics of success
- Discussion of the PCG protocols, tools, data request, and activities
- Submit formal data request to district

Phase 3: Collecting and Analyzing the Data (September 2017 - March 2018)
- Stakeholder Kick-Off
- Acquisition of Available Data and Artifacts
- Focus Groups and Interviews; Student File Review Focus Group
- School Visits, Classroom Observations, and Student Shadowing

Phase 4: Developing Useful Reports (April – August 2018)
- Conduct analysis
- Provide written report

Phase 5: Committee and Subcommittee and Implementation (June-October 2018)
- Day long work session followed by Steering Cmte. and Subcommittee work
- Presentation to school board and other stakeholders

Phase 6: Check In Support (2018-19 school year)

- Gap analysis and implementation guidance

Review Outcomes
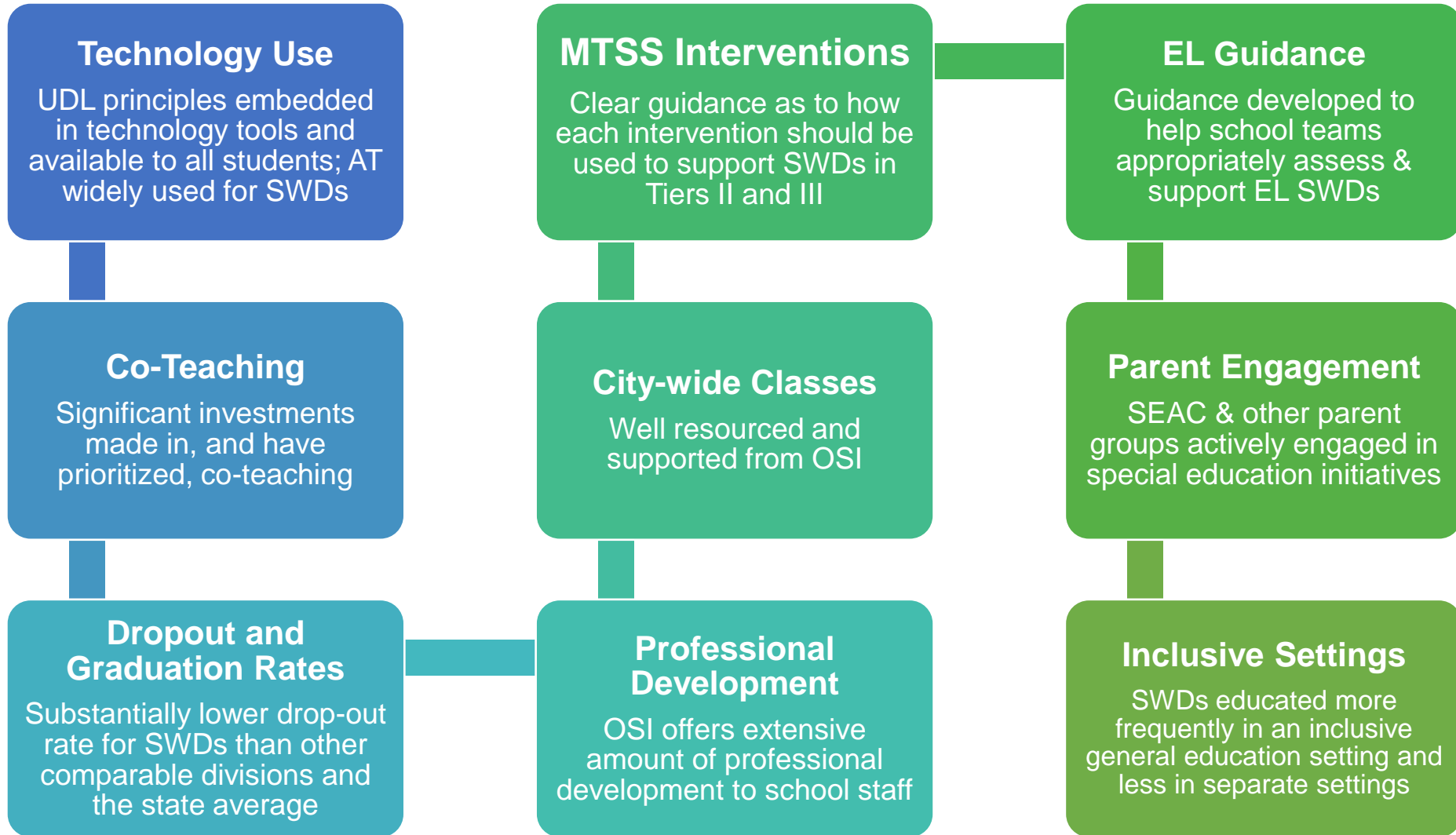## Recommendations and Implementation

Written Report

- ✓ Assess quality of programs

- ✓ Recommend efficiencies

- ✓ Determine possibility of budget cuts that do not undermine service quality, or compliant practices

- ✓ Identify best practices

- ✓ Designed to be user-friendly and foster use of data

- ✓ Include executive summary for broad dissemination

Implementation Planning

- ✓ Day long work session
  - ACPS Steering Committee and Subcommittees
  - PCG team

- ✓ Develop strategic roadmap for implementing recommended processes
  - Timelines for strategy adoption
  - Implementation plan analysis

Commendations/Areas of Strengths

Technology Use
UDL principles embedded in technology tools and available to all students; AT widely used for SWDs

MTSS Interventions
Clear guidance as to how each intervention should be used to support SWDs in Tiers II and III

EL Guidance
Guidance developed to help school teams appropriately assess & support EL SWDs

Co-Teaching
Significant investments made in, and have prioritized, co-teaching

City-wide Classes
Well resourced and supported from OSI

Parent Engagement
SEAC & other parent groups actively engaged in special education initiatives

Dropout and Graduation Rates
Substantially lower drop-out rate for SWDs than other comparable divisions and the state average

Professional Development
OSI offers extensive amount of professional development to school staff

Inclusive Settings
SWDs educated more frequently in an inclusive general education setting and less in separate settings

High Level Recommendations

Recommendation Categories

1. Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

2. Special Education Referral, Assessment, and Eligibility Practices

3. Academic Optimism, Rigor, and High Expectations

4. Inclusive Practices

5. Specially Designed Instruction and Targeted Interventions

6. Leadership and Accountability

7. Inter-Departmental Collaboration

8. Staff Recruitment, Retention, and Morale

9. Fiscal

10. Culture, Equity, and Parent Engagement

1. Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Actions	*Build on the MTSS process & curricular frameworks to develop/implement a unified and clear structure for **academic achievement**, **positive behavior**, and **social/emotional learning** for ALL students that incorporates a **universal design for learning*** *Continue to invest in **division-level and school-level training**, and capacity building to scale up and **improve fidelity of implementation***

2. Special Education Referral, Assessment, and Eligibility Practices

Actions	
	- *Develop a* **systematic data analysis process** *for analyzing special education referral, assessment, and eligibility practices in order to develop meaningful strategies to affect change*
	- *Monitor* **data trends over time** *to determine patterns, use these data to: inform improvement strategies and consistency and appropriateness of practices (specifically for students in high-risk areas* **to prevent over-identification***)*

3. Academic Optimism, Rigor, and High Expectations

Actions	*Build a system-wide culture of **academic optimism and high expectations** for ALL students* *Create an **unrelenting expectation regarding instruction** that clearly communicates to schools, and the broader community that a key focus of the Office of Specialized Instruction is to ensure that students with disabilities make significant progress, to the extent possible, in the general education curriculum, receive rigorous standards-aligned instruction, and experience the high quality delivery of interventions, differentiation, accommodations, modifications and specially designed instruction in every class*

4. Inclusive Practices

Actions	- **Build upon ACPS's commitment to co-teaching** *by continuing to provide professional development and coaching to improve collaboration and implement high yield co-teaching models* - **Establish policies and procedures** *that clarify school level non-negotiable scheduling strategies, responsibilities for actively supervising and evaluating teaching teams for consistency and high quality practice, and institutionalizing high yield co-teaching expectations*

5. Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) and Targeted Interventions

Actions	- *Use a variety of **quantitative and qualitative assessment data** to determine if interventions and SDI are being implemented with fidelity and use these data to determine the extent to which students with disabilities division-wide **are increasing** their achievement, social/emotional development, and positive behavior under the current configuration SDI & interventions* - *Assess the **fidelity of implementation** and **effectiveness of SDI and targeted interventions for EACH student with a disability** by analyzing data* - *Provide teachers and IEP teams with **ongoing training** so that they have the tools necessary to determine progress on IEP goals* - *Review guidance and tools currently in use **to establish expectations** regarding regular data collection, problem-solving, and changes to instruction necessary to support student achievement and social/emotional growth*

6. Leadership and Accountability

Actions	- *Develop a multifaceted set of actions to specify how ACPS will incorporate* **measures of accountability for schools and central office leaders** *that are designed to ensure the delivery of a world-class education for all students* - *Develop measures to drive* **key strategies** *for positive changes in behavior, processes, and culture, while* **encouraging continuous improvement and innovation**

7. Inter-Departmental Collaboration

Actions	
	- *To leverage their collective resources and support to schools, **strengthen the collaboration** between OSI and other departments, specifically: 1) Human Resources, 2) Student Services, Alternative Programs, and Equity, 3) Elementary and Secondary Instruction, and 4) English Language Services.*
	- ***Establish standing cross-functional work groups** to meet on a regular schedule to jointly address Division processes and drive success in practices.*

8. Staff Recruitment, Retention, and Morale

Actions	
	- *Improve the Division's human capital system by:* ▪ ***devoting more time and resources to intentional recruitment***, *including performance measures in the application and selection processes,* ▪ *providing new teachers, related service providers, and paraprofessionals with opportunities to build their skills and* ***gradually assume increased responsibility***, ▪ *offering* ***new staff opportunities and time to grow***, *and,* ▪ *implement* ***professional learning systems*** *that support continuous growth*

9. Fiscal

Actions	- *Analyze allocation of personnel to ensure staff who support students with disabilities are **employed in sufficient numbers** and that **adequate resources are available** to meet student needs*
	
	- *Continue to ensure that special education funding for schools and central office, takes into consideration:*
	  ■ *the severity of student needs and types of support services needed*
	  ■ *implementation of a full continuum of service delivery models*
	  ■ *coaching support needed for school-based staff, and*
	  ■ *compliance with special education legal requirements*

10. Culture, Equity, and Parent Engagement

Actions	- *Identify and provide **systemic supports necessary for all students who are struggling in school*** - *Strengthen links between school and home to help **culturally and linguistically diverse parents** help their children learn and gain equal access to all ACPS educational programs and services* - *Enhance parent and community engagement by creating **warm, respectful and welcoming environments** and be flexible in accommodating spectrum of family needs* - *Respond to the **strengths in the diversity** to create a culture that promotes the **successful inclusion and integration of students with disabilities** and other underserved, at-risk and economically disadvantaged students*

Summary

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Supporting ACPS 2020

Recommendations — **ACPS 2020 Goal Area Alignment**

- MTSS
- SWD Eligibility
- Academic Expectations
- Inclusive Practices
- SDI & Interventions
- Leadership & Accountability
- Inter-Department Collaboration
- Staff Recruitment, Retention & Morale
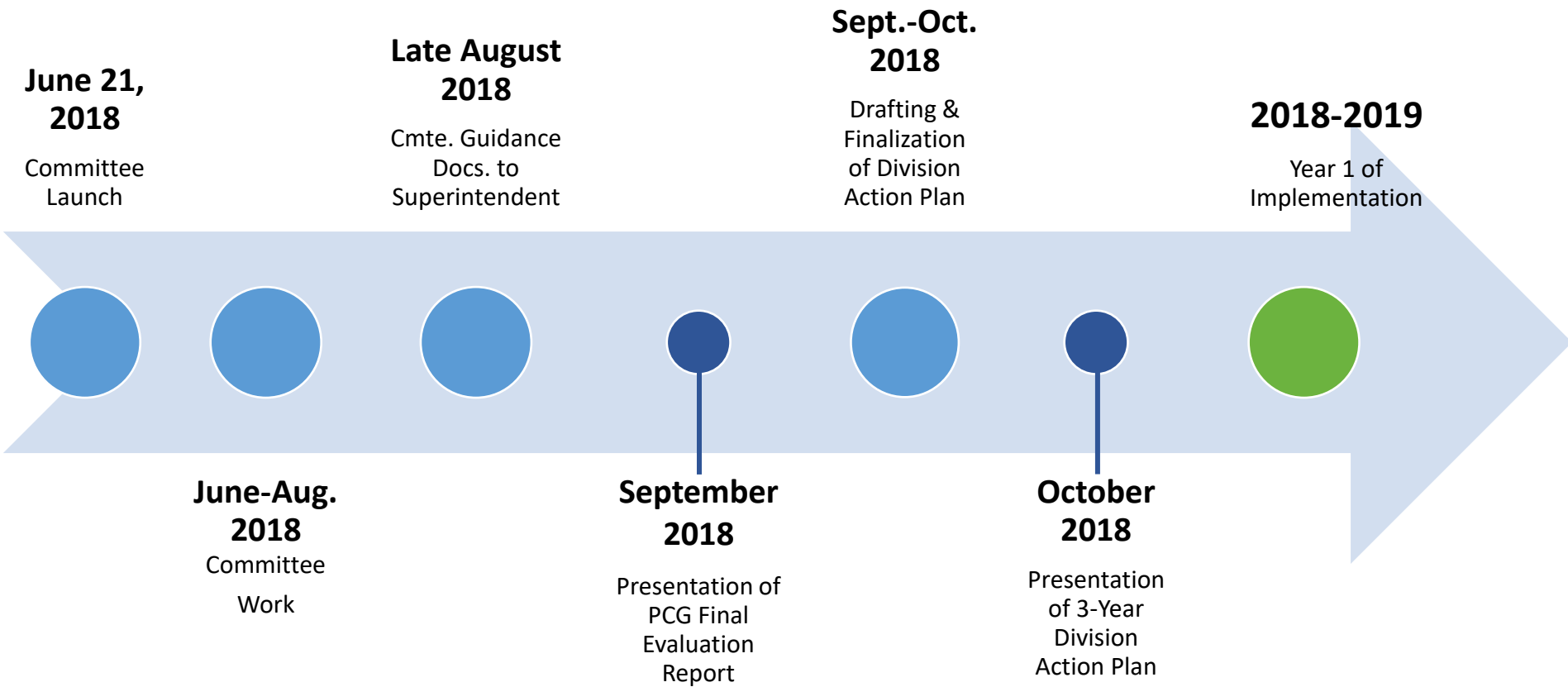- Fiscal
- Culture, Equity & Parent Engagement

- The recommendations put forward **directly align** with, and will continue to **strengthen**, the *ACPS 2020* Strategic Plan across all goal areas.

Next Steps

- **<u>OBJECTIVE</u>**: Bring together leaders in this work with differing perspectives across the organization to create guidance documents on how best to implement the recommendations from the evaluation over the next three years.

- Steering Committee of 9 Members Representing Various Stakeholders

- Four Subcommittees Topics (Recommendation #)
  - MTSS & Referral Process (#1, #2)
  - Teaching & Learning (#3, #4, #5)
  - Supporting Teaching & Learning (#6, #7, #8, #9)
  - Culture & Climate (#10)

- Subcommittee Membership of 36 Stakeholders (Inclusive of Steering Cmte.)
  - Teachers (Specialized Instruction & General Education) and Student Support Teams
  - School-Based Administrators
  - Parent Resource Center (PRC)
  - Family and Community Engagement (FACE)
  - Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
  - Specialized Instruction, Early Childhood Special Ed., English Learners, Curriculum Design, Human Resources, Student Services, Accountability, Budget

Timeline

June 21, 2018

Committee Launch

June-Aug. 2018

Committee

Work

Late August 2018

Cmte. Guidance Docs. to Superintendent

September 2018

Presentation of PCG Final Evaluation Report

Sept.-Oct. 2018

Drafting & Finalization of Division Action Plan

October 2018

Presentation of 3-Year Division Action Plan

2018-2019

Year 1 of Implementation

ACPS Communication Plan for Evaluation Results

- School Board updates
- Link on homepage website as soon as published
- SEAC Discussion and Involvement in Next Steps
- Discussion at principals' meeting
- Discussion at school staff meetings
- ACPS Express and Insider
- PTAC Discussion
- English, Spanish, Arabic, and Amharic Facebook and ACPS Twitter
- Parent Resource Center video posted on website with transcripts translated in Spanish, Arabic and Amharic
- PTA coffee morning meetings
- Create formative structure to update stakeholders on implementation progress throughout life of plan

PUBLIC CONSULTING
GROUP