



Human Resources
Division

Balancing the Scales

Strategies for Equitable Teacher Distribution
in Today's Schools

Felecia Lester, Ed.S, pHCLE

www.apscareers.org



About Me

- **28-year veteran educator** spanning classroom, school and district-level leadership roles
- Former Atlanta Public Schools **Coordinator of Teacher Quality** and **Strategic HR Director**
- Current **Executive Director of Talent Management, Career Development, and Total Rewards**

EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS

- Bachelor of Science - Middle Grades Education
- Master of Science - Middle Grades Education
- Specialist Degree - Educational Leadership
- Professional Human Capital Leaders in Education
- **Prospective** *Executive Human Capital Leader in Education*



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Discussion Framework

- 01 Introduction & Context**
- 02 The APS Challenge**
- 03 Project Overview**
- 04 Strategy in Action**
- 05 eHCLE Standards Alignment**
- 06 Results, Impact, & What's Next**
- 07 Q&A and Discussion**

APS BY THE NUMBERS

Students (Projected)

Total Enrollment:
49,575

Neighborhood,
Partner, Alternative:
39,685

Charter:
9,890

4,263 Total Teachers

3,109 Neighborhood School
Teachers

1,154 Charter (937) +
Partner (217) School
Teachers

Number of Schools

2 Single-Gender
Schools

4
Programs

59
Neighborhood
Schools

5 Partner
Schools

2 Alternative
Schools

19
Charter
Schools

Diversity²

1.1%
Asian

70.7%
Black

8.2%
Hispanic

0.3%
Indian

3.4%
Multi

0.1%
Pacific

16.1%
White

Graduates



2,908 Graduates³

\$228,947,153
in scholarships offered

Bus Routes¹



295 Bus routes

28,750 Students transported

21,215 Miles per day

Free & Reduced Lunch



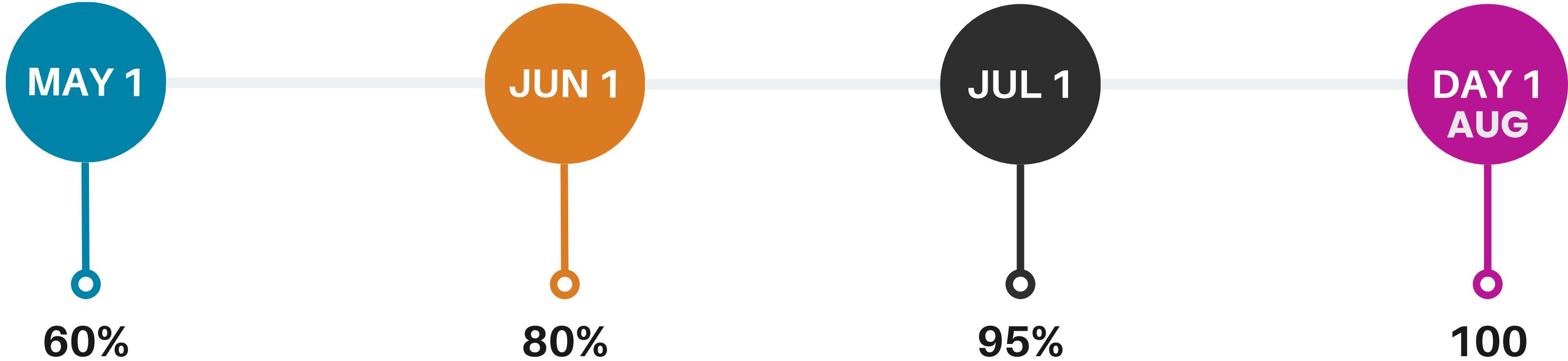
68.98%

Our Hiring Benchmarks



% VACANCIES FILLED BY KEY DATES

ROLES TARGETED: TEACHERS | PARAPROFESSIONALS | BUS DRIVERS | SCHOOL NUTRITION FRONTLINE



Why Teachers Say Yes to APS

• Financial Investments

- Highly competitive salaries
- Strategic Stipends and Incentives
- Add-on earning potential through supplemental duties

• District Perks

- Protected Planning Time
- Progressive Employee Policies
- Wellbeing Programs
- Reward and Recognition Programs
- Teacher Voice Initiatives

• Professional Development

- District-Sponsored Master's Degrees and Endorsements
- Clearly defined Teacher-Leader Growth Pathways & Roles
- Content and leadership professional learning programs

• Resources & Support Systems

- Induction & Mentorship Programs
- Best-in-class Technology
- Teacher Resource Center
- Modern Classroom and Curricula Resources



APS Day One Readiness

- **Strong Record of Success:** APS has maintained near-100% staffing levels at the start of the school year for the past 10 years.
- **Consistency Through Challenges:** Achieved full readiness pre-pandemic, sustained success during the pandemic, and continued post-pandemic recovery.
- **2024 Achievement:** This year, we began the school year with 100% of teacher vacancies filled.

Teacher Fill-Rates by School*				
ACCA 100%	Bunche 100%	Boyd 100%	BAMO 100%	Bolton 100%
Beecher 100%	Cleveland 100%	Carver Early 100%	Benteen 100%	Brandon 100%
BEST MS/HS 100%	Continental 100%	Douglass 100%	Burgess 100%	E Rivers 100%
Cascade 100%	Deerwood 100%	Finch 100%	Dunbar 100%	Garden Hills 100%
CSK 100%	Dobbs 100%	FL Stanton 100%	Hope-Hill 100%	H Russell 100%
Hank Aaron 100%	Fickett 100%	Harper-Archer 100%	Howard 100%	Hollis 100%
Mays 100%	Heritage 100%	Invictus 100%	Jackson High 100%	Jackson Elementary 100%
Miles 100%	Humphries 100%	Perkerson 100%	King 100%	Jones 100%
Peyton Forest 100%	Hutchinson 100%	Scott 100%	Lin 100%	North Atlanta 99%
Phoenix 100%	Kimberly 100%	Sylvan 100%	Midtown 100%	Smith 100%
West Manor 100%	Long 100%	Usher-Collier 100%	Morningside 100%	Sutton 100%
Young 100%	South Atlanta 100%		Parkside 100%	Tuskegee 100%
	Therrell 100%		Springdale 100%	Washington 100%
			Toomer 100%	
			VHE 100%	

*** July 29, 2024**

**"The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers."
- *Linda Darling-Hammond***

Digging Deeper into the Numbers

Our Sub-Group Data



- **Teacher Distribution Disparity:** High-poverty schools were disproportionately staffed with novice teachers, while experienced teachers were concentrated in lower-poverty schools.
- **Student Achievement Impact:** High-poverty schools with more novice teachers performed below low-poverty schools with experienced teachers, highlighting the opportunity to balance the scales.
- **Limited Success of Incentives-Only Strategy:** Initial efforts to attract experienced teachers to high-poverty schools through incentives had limited impact.
- **Need for a More Robust Approach to Teacher Talent Management:** A more strategic, targeted approach in recruitment, hiring, and placement and retention was essential to ensure equitable distribution quality educators.

Project Overview: Ensuring Equity in Teacher Distribution across High-Needs Schools

Objective:

To close the “Teacher Quality Gap” by reducing the percentage of novice teachers in our high need schools compared to the percentage of novice teachers in the district.

Key Strategies:

- **Data-Driven Intervention:** Leverage data insights to design targeted interventions, prioritize high-needs schools, and measure the impact of our efforts, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively where they’re needed most.
- **Strategic Recruitment:** Identify and attract experienced teachers to high-needs schools.
- **Targeted Retention Efforts:** Implement support and incentives to retain experienced teachers in these schools.
- **Tailored Support for School Leaders:** Empower school leaders with data-driven insights, strategic guidance, and knowledge-sharing from high-performing schools to develop effective recruitment and retention plans.
- **Strategic Stipends:** Offer financial incentives to encourage experienced teachers to work in high-needs schools.



Key Strategy

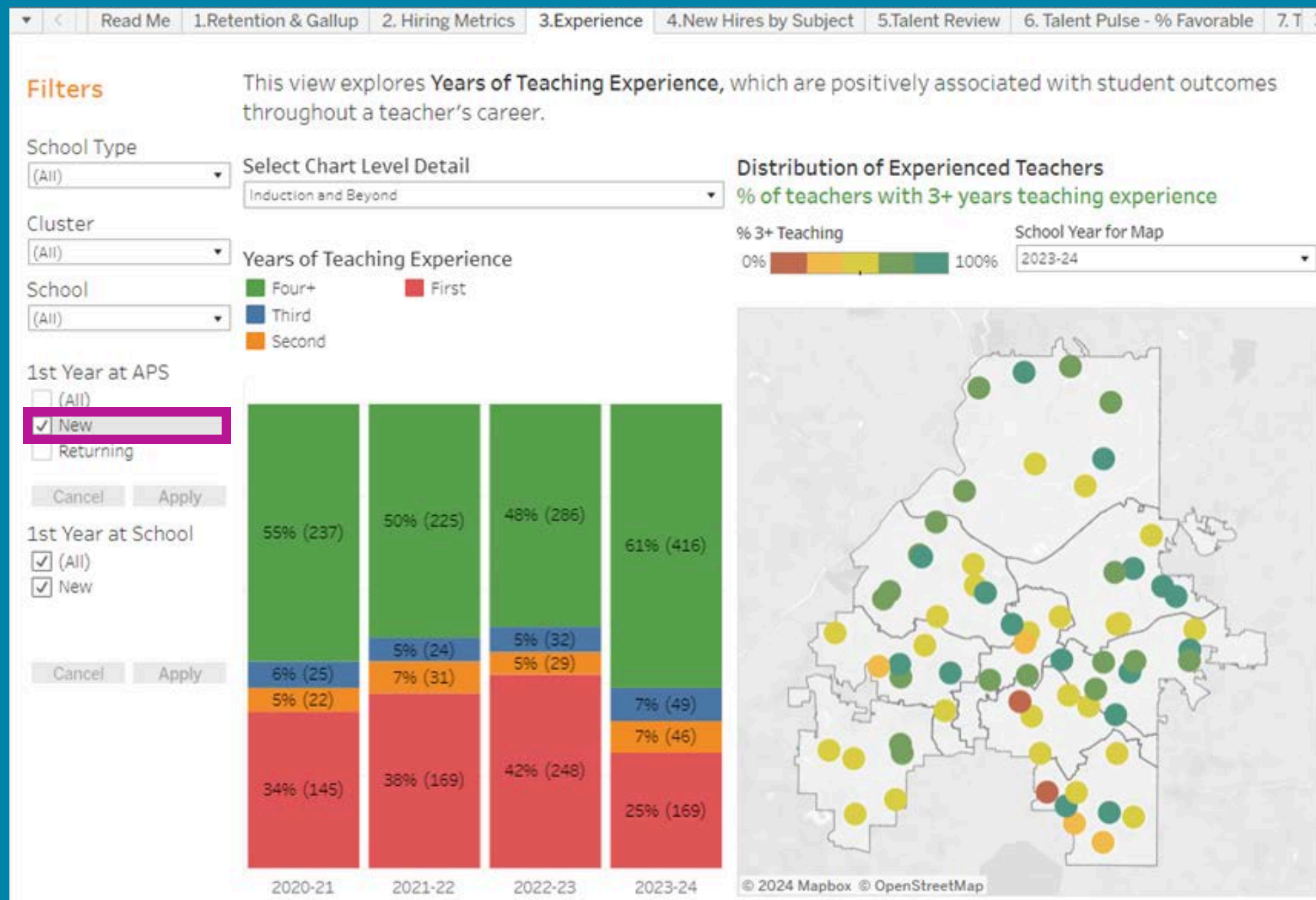
Data-Driven Intervention

Pre-requisites: Gathering and Understanding the Data

Key Strategy



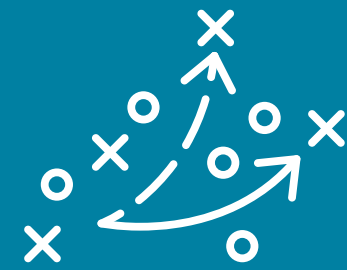
Data-Driven Intervention



School	SY24 % Exp	80%
	100%	79%
	96%	79%
	95%	78%
	95%	78%
	94%	78%
	93%	78%
	93%	77%
	92%	77%
	92%	77%
	92%	76%
	92%	76%
	90%	75%
	90%	72%
	89%	72%
	88%	71%
	86%	71%
	86%	70%
	85%	70%
	85%	69%
	85%	69%
	85%	68%
	84%	67%
	84%	67%
	84%	67%
	84%	65%
	83%	65%
	83%	65%
	83%	64%
	82%	63%
	82%	62%
	81%	50%
	80%	46%

- There was evidence in our data of disparities in the concentration of novice teachers across our high-poverty schools.
- From SY20-21 to SY23-24 APS hired an average of 46.5% in novice teachers every year
- In SY24 some APS schools had +50% in novice teachers

Key Strategy



Data-Driven Intervention

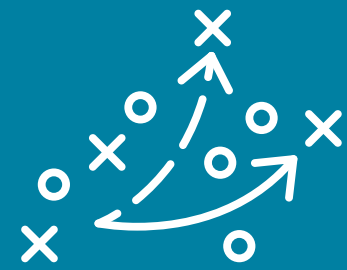
What We Know About Novice Teacher Effectiveness

- **Research Insights:**
 - Studies indicate that novice teachers are generally less effective in advancing student achievement compared to their more experienced peers, especially in high-poverty schools where experienced educators are needed most (*Sass et al., 2012; Reform Support Network, 2015*).
 - Novice teachers often need time to develop essential skills in classroom management, differentiated instructional strategies, and student engagement.
- **APS Teacher Evaluation Data**
 - APS data aligns with national trends, showing that novice teachers typically receive lower ratings in our evaluation system compared to their peers
- **Implications for High-Needs Schools**
 - Concentrating novice teachers in high-needs schools can widen achievement gaps. Equitable distribution of experienced teachers is essential to providing high-quality education for all students.

SY 2022-23 Teacher Keys Effectiveness System Ratings



Key Strategy



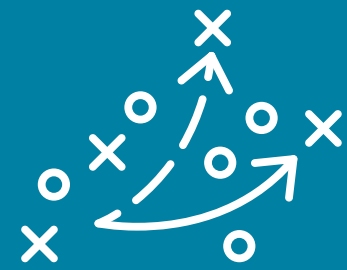
Data-Driven Intervention

Understanding our novice-teacher sub-group data we identified on overarching goal:

REDUCE THE TEACHER EXPERIENCE GAP, BETWEEN HIGH-POVERTY & LOW-POVERTY SCHOOLS THROUGH TALENT ACQUISITION, DEVELOPMENT, REWARDS, AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT.



Key Strategy



Data-Driven Intervention

Risk and context considerations

- *Would this strategic goal comprise our **day 1 readiness**?*
- *Would the **national Teacher Shortage** make our targeting an impossibility?*
- *Would **School leaders buy-in** to the vision?*
- *Would this strategy compromise the attractiveness of our **teacher pipeline programs**?*



Key Strategy



Data-Driven Intervention

Strategic Insights and Adjustments:

- **Balanced Hiring Approach:** Hiring novice teachers remained essential, but we identified a target balance to sustain the pipeline while strategically managing their placement. We leveraged student teaching opportunities to induct future hires into the APS culture early.
- **Retention and Mentorship Focus:** The strategy expanded beyond hiring to prioritizing retention and mentorship programs to grow novice teachers into effective practitioners.
- **Leadership Support and Buy-In:** Leaders were strategically supported to align with the vision, and success metrics were shared to build buy-in and position the initiative for district-wide scaling.
- **Sustainable Implementation:** The plan ensured resources were allocated to both attract experienced educators and support novice teachers, while maintaining stability across all schools, including those not targeted.



Project Team

APS HR Cluster Support Model

The Talent Management Department is organized into small teams led by HR Strategic Directors assigned to specific school clusters. This allows for tailored support and strategic engagement. As we nuanced our strategies for each cluster, we collaborated with the respective HR Strategic Directors to ensure project aligned with realities of each school.



Felecia Lester
Executive Sponsor



Jessica Peterick
HR Data Strategist
PROJECT MANAGER



Tiffany Adams
Recruiting Manager
SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT

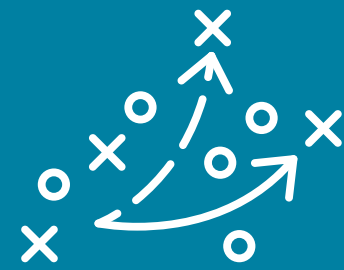


LeShandra Martin
District-level Recruiter
SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT



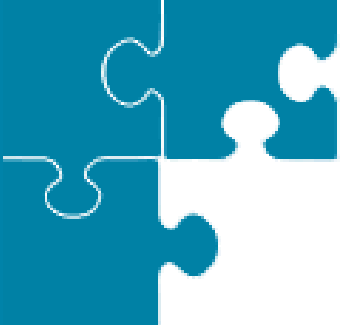
Felicia Freeland
HR Strategic Director
CLUSTER SUPPORT LEAD

Key Strategy



Data-Driven Intervention

By March we developed a SMART, data-informed goal





SY 24/25

Key HR Benchmarks

Equitable Distribution of Teachers

- Narrow the gap in the number of experienced teachers across high and low poverty schools by 5%



The complex block features a blue border. On the left, three puzzle pieces are arranged in a vertical column. The main content area contains the text 'SY 24/25' in a large, italicized font, followed by 'Key HR Benchmarks' in a large, bold font. Below this is a bullet point under the heading 'Equitable Distribution of Teachers'. To the right of the text is a circular icon containing a line graph with four data points. Below the graph icon is a horizontal line with a downward-pointing arrowhead, which then turns right and then down to point at a set of four puzzle pieces (black, orange, and green) at the bottom right of the block.

Excerpt from our Chief's June 2024 HR Talent Strategy Presentation to the Atlanta Board of Education



Key Strategy

Strategic Recruitment

Pre-requisites: Forecast Vacancies ahead of Hiring Season

Key Strategy



Strategic Recruitment

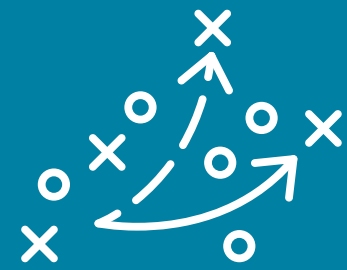
What We Did and How We Enabled It

- **Forecasted Vacancies:** Gathered data from our Incentivized Intent to Return Survey and trend analysis of recurring vacancies
- **Early Advertising:** Promoted vacancies ahead of the hiring season to attract top candidates
- **Candidate Pools:** Created pool vacancies, identified "**talent profile matches**" and offered open contracts

FEB 3	Douglass Cluster Teacher Hiring Event SATURDAY, 9AM -12 NOON IN-PERSON Fredrick Douglass High School 225 Hamilton E. Holmes Dr. NW Atlanta, GA 30318
FEB 29	APS Teacher and Operations Virtual Hiring Event THURSDAY, 4PM-6PM VIRTUALLY Virtual Event - Register via www.apscareers.org under the Job Fairs tab
MAR 9	Annual Spring Teacher Interview Day - SCHOOL SPIRIT FAIR SATURDAY, 10 AM -2PM IN-PERSON D. M. Therrell High School 3099 Panther Trail, SW, Atlanta, GA 30311
APR 11	APS Teacher and Operations Virtual Hiring Event THURSDAY, 4PM-6PM VIRTUALLY Virtual Event - Register via www.apscareers.org under the Job Fairs tab
APR 27	Dash to the Class Teacher & Operations Career Expo SATURDAY, 9AM -12 NOON IN-PERSON Fredrick Douglass High School 225 Hamilton E. Holmes Dr. NW Atlanta, GA 30318
MAY 18	APS Teacher & Operations Summer Hiring Event SATURDAY, 9AM -12 NOON IN-PERSON Site location to be confirmed

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Email: recruitmentservices@apsk12.org | Twitter: @JoinTeamAPS

Key Strategy



Strategic Recruitment

What We Did and How We Enabled It

- **High-Needs School Focus:** Gave high-needs schools first access to candidate pools and hosted school-specific job fairs
- **Proactive Engagement:** Held early job fairs, outpacing neighboring districts
- **Historic Salary Increase:** Advocated for and implemented the highest teacher salary scale increase in 15 years – *ranking APS among the highest in Georgia!*



Key Strategy

Targeted Retention Efforts

Pre-requisites: Teacher Voice

Key Strategy

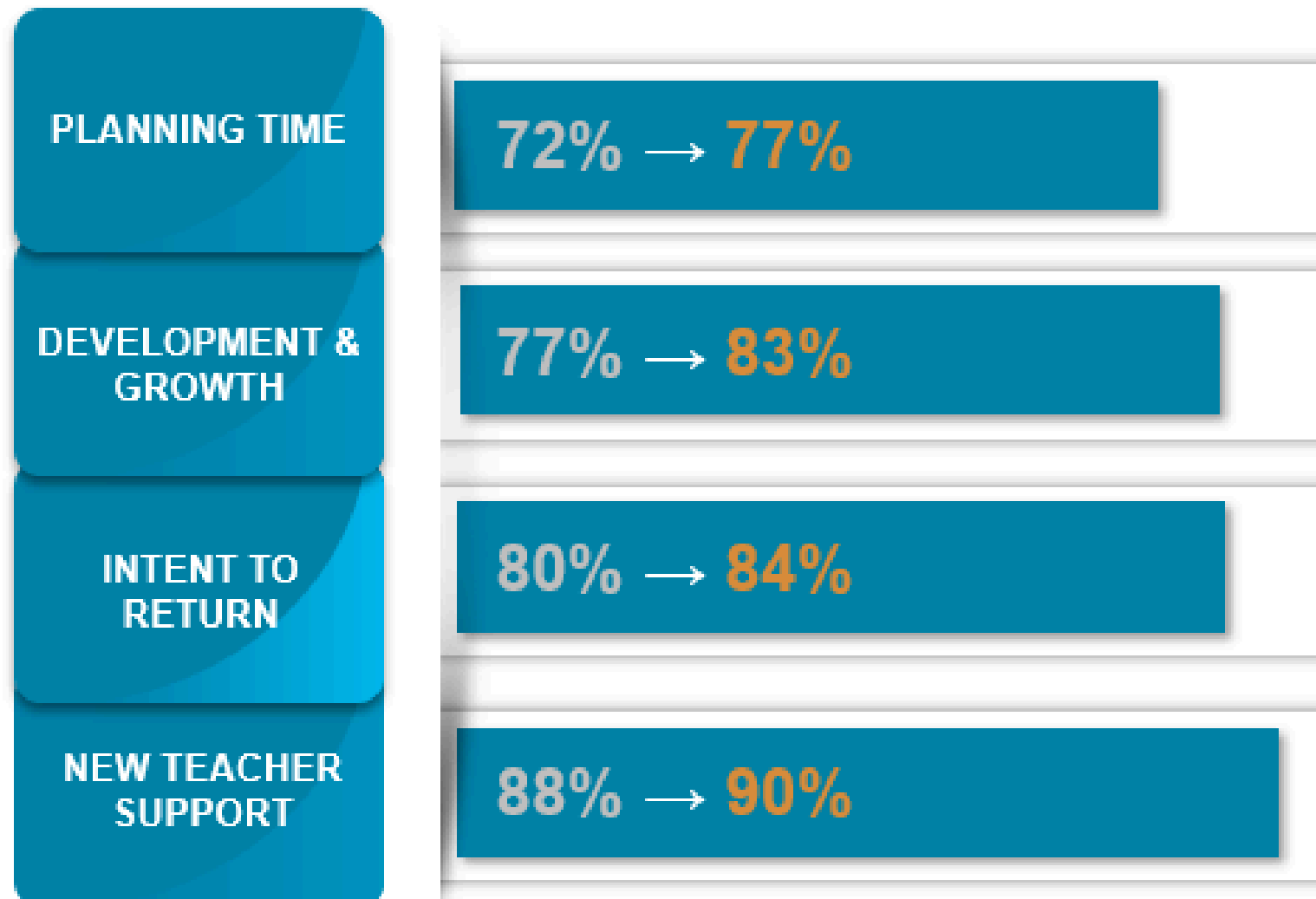
Targeted Retention Efforts

How We Gathered Teacher Voice:

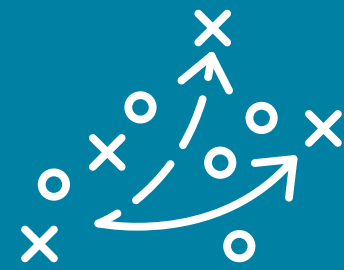
- **Talent Pulse Survey:** Combined with our incentivized Intent to Return Survey for high participation

What We Did:

- **Induction and Mentorship:** Supported 0-3 year teachers to grow in practice and advance into the experienced category
- **Differentiated Career Development:** Leveraged the 9-Box Talent Review Matrix to ensure we defined and widely promoted opportunities for growth.
- **Tackled Burnout:** Addressed teacher feedback by creating protocols for protected planning time using master schedules.



Key Strategy



Targeted Retention Efforts

What We Did:

- **Policy Updates:** Introduced mental health days, revised our dress code to promote inclusivity and allow jeans (*yes, jeans!*) with overwhelmingly positive results.
- **Early Contract Renewals:** Advanced our contract issuance timelines to get teachers their renewals well in advance
- **Historic Salary Increase:** APS teachers received an 11% average increase.

Employee Dress Code Update

- Modernizing the Employee Dress Code: Sneaker and Jeans acceptance
- Embracing principles of the C.R.O.W.N. (Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair) Act
- Create a more inclusive, comfortable, and modern working environment that supports the diverse needs of APS employees

Key Strategy

Tailored Support for School Leaders:

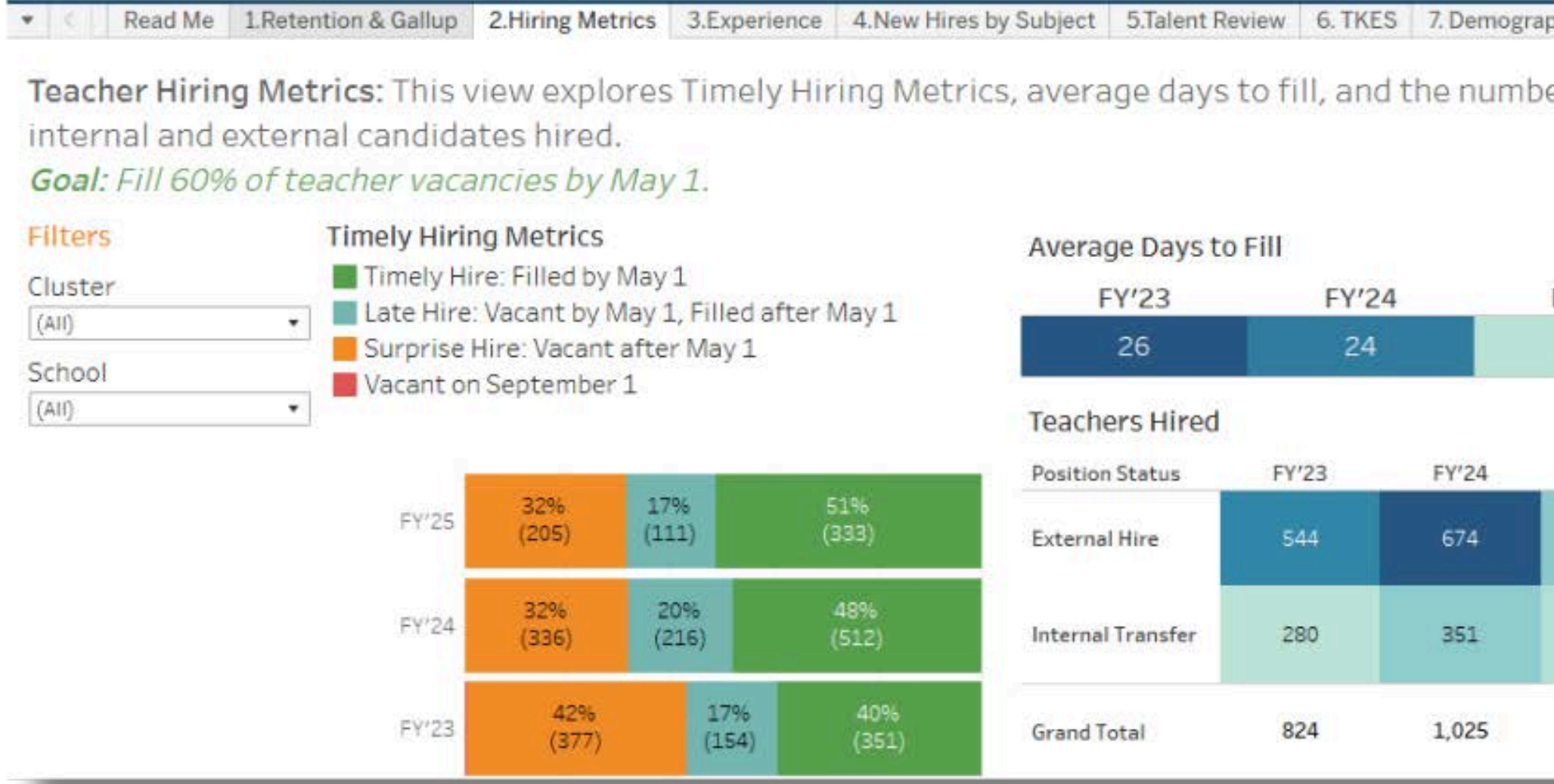
Pre-requisites: Trust, Context, and Deep Data

Key Strategy

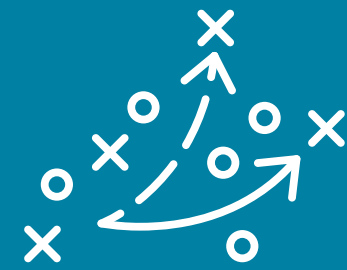
Tailored Support for School Leaders:

Strategies and Actions

- **Data-Driven Strategy Development:**
 - Provided leaders with school-specific HR metrics (**time-to-fill, recurring vacancies, retention, employee engagement, TKES, and experience**) to identify focus areas.



Key Strategy



Tailored Support for School Leaders:

Strategies and Actions

- **Data-Driven Strategy Development:**
 - Conducted in-person strategy consultations to create customized plans based on each school's unique data.
 - Offered comparative HR data in real-time **(district/cluster/school)**, via our award-winning dashboards for transparency and benchmarking.



CHECK
IT OUT
↓

Strategy
Consultation Guide



SCAN ME

Key Strategy

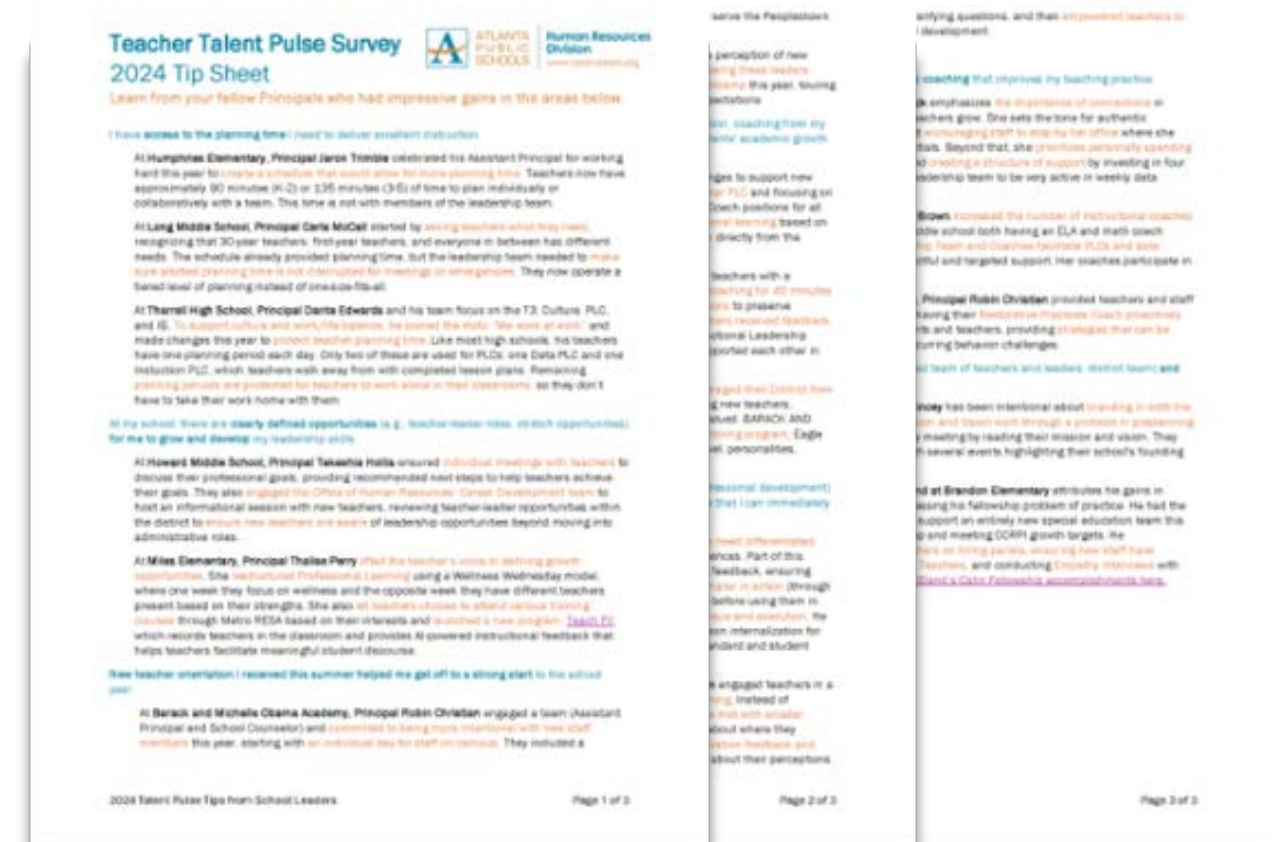


Tailored Support for School Leaders:

Strategies and Actions

- **Targeted Training and Internal Knowledge Transfer:**
 - Delivered training on leadership, human capital management, and hiring strategies at our Annual HR Summit
 - Provided leadership training for all principals to impact school culture and climate (Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement and RELAY GSE)
 - Highlighted success stories from high-performing principals through Talent Pulse Tip Sheets

- **Recognition and Reward:**
 - Introduced the HR Talent Leadership Awards to recognize and reward high-performing school leaders, fostering healthy competition.





Key Strategy

Strategic Stipends

Pre-requisite: Budget Alignment on Strategic Focus

Key Strategy



Strategic Stipends

Aligning Incentives with Impact

- **Retention Stipends:**
 - Offered financial rewards to teachers remaining in high-poverty schools
- **High-Needs Subject Stipends**
 - Provided \$3,000 bonuses for educators in critical areas, (AP instruction, special education, dual language immersion, and secondary mathematics), addressing district-wide gaps in high-need areas
- **High-Poverty and School-Specific Incentives**
 - Focused on turnaround schools with stackable bonuses ranging from \$500 to \$3,000 to attract and retain quality teachers in the most challenging environments.

**CHECK
IT OUT**
↓




SAY YES TO APS!

**SY2024-25
New Hire
Incentives**
EARN UP TO \$7,000 EXTRA!

WHY APS?
...Because we're rewarding passion, experience, and commitment to excellence at Atlanta Public Schools. And, you'll help shape the future, inspire innovation, and make a real difference every day. **Come be a part of something extraordinary!**

START YOUR JOURNEY TODAY!
 • Apply at www.apscareers.org
 • Call us at 404 802 3200
 • Email recruitmentservices@apsk12.org

Stackable Bonuses for New Teachers

HIGH NEEDS SUBJECT STIPEND	HIGH NEEDS HIRING INCENTIVE
\$3,000	\$3,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Placement (AP) Instruction • Dual Language Immersion (Spanish) • Grade 6 - 12 Mathematics • Special Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Placement (AP) Instruction • Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education • Dual Language Immersion (Spanish) • Grade 6 - 12 Mathematics • Special Education • World Language

TURNAROUND SCHOOLS INCENTIVE

\$1,000	\$800	\$500
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cont Colony ES • Dunbar ES • Hank Aaron Academy • Harper-Archer ES • Hollis K-8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Douglass HS • H. J. Russell Academy • MLK MS • Mays HS • Perkinson ES • Therrell HS • TAG Academy • Washington HS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dabbs ES • Finch ES • FL Stanton ES • JUA MS • Kimberly ES • Miles ES • Peyton Forest • Scott ES • Boyd ES • Young MS

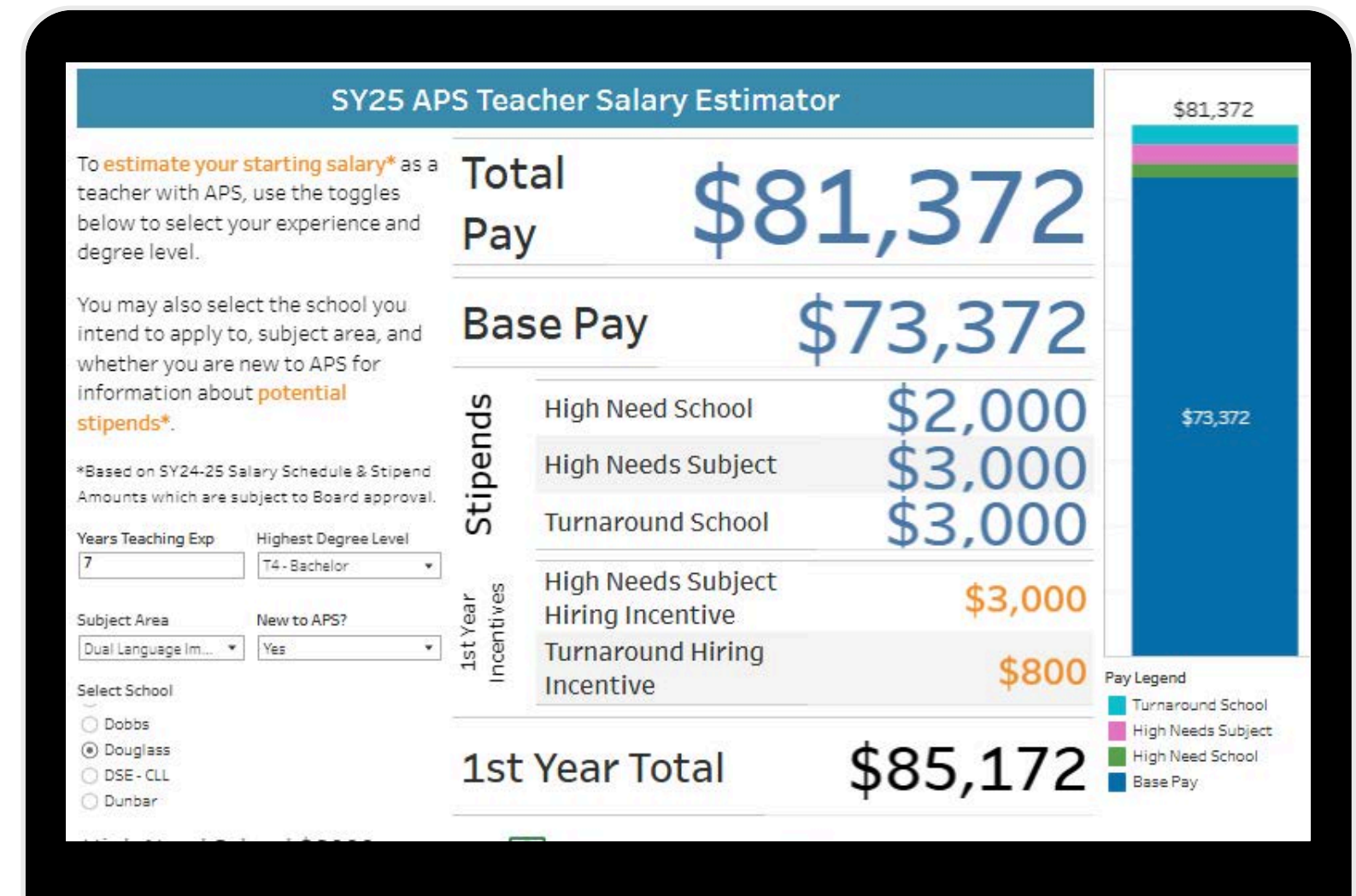
• Employees must be in active contract status without a pending resignation at the time of payment disbursements.
• Payments are distributed across two equal instalments in December 2024 & May 2025.

Key Strategy

Strategic Stipends

Aligning Incentives with Impact

- **School-Specific Incentive Budgets**
 - Empowered principals to create tailored incentives aligned with their school’s unique needs, promoting autonomy and targeted problem-solving.
- **Enhanced Visibility and Value**
 - Publicized stipend opportunities through targeted campaigns and HR dashboards, ensuring all eligible staff were aware of and motivated by the program.



CHECK IT OUT

<https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/salary>



Results & Impact

School Year 2024–2025

How did we do?

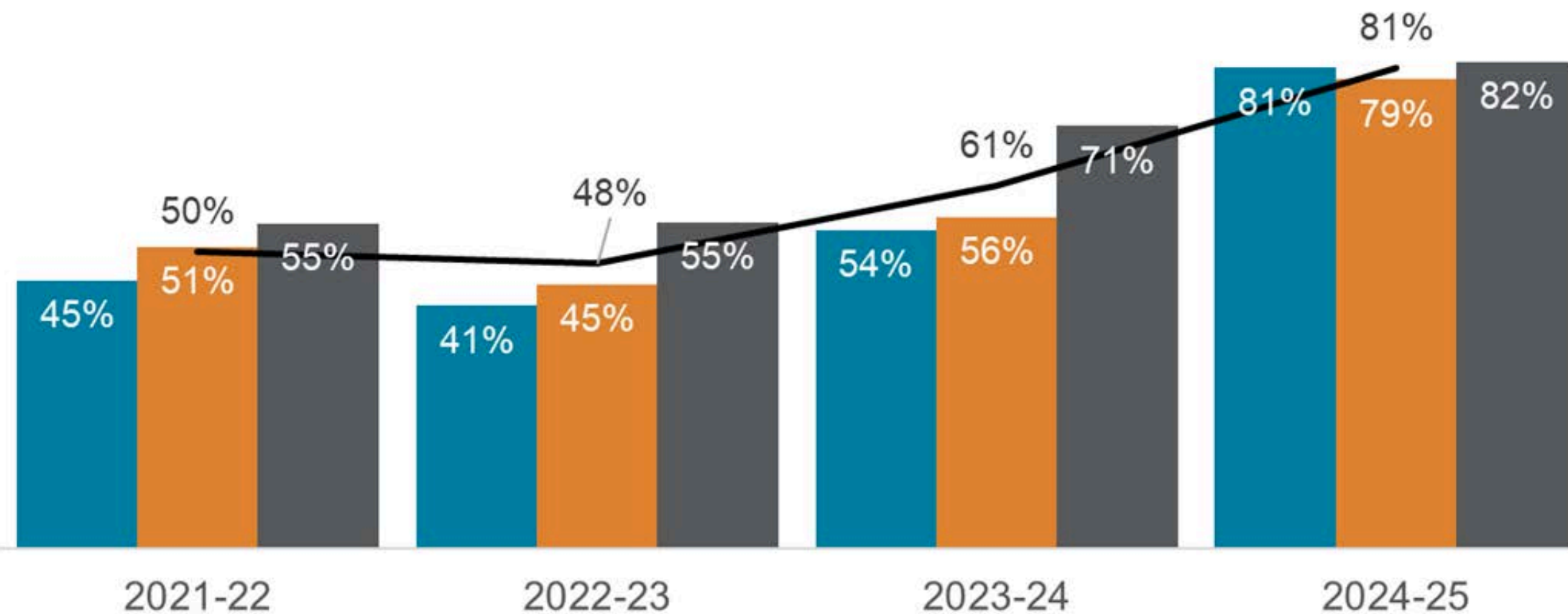
Results & Impact

How did we do?

We shattered our goals on hiring!

New to the District Teachers % Experienced by Poverty Level

■ Tier 1 High Poverty
 ■ Tier 2 High Poverty
 ■ No Poverty Incentive
 — District

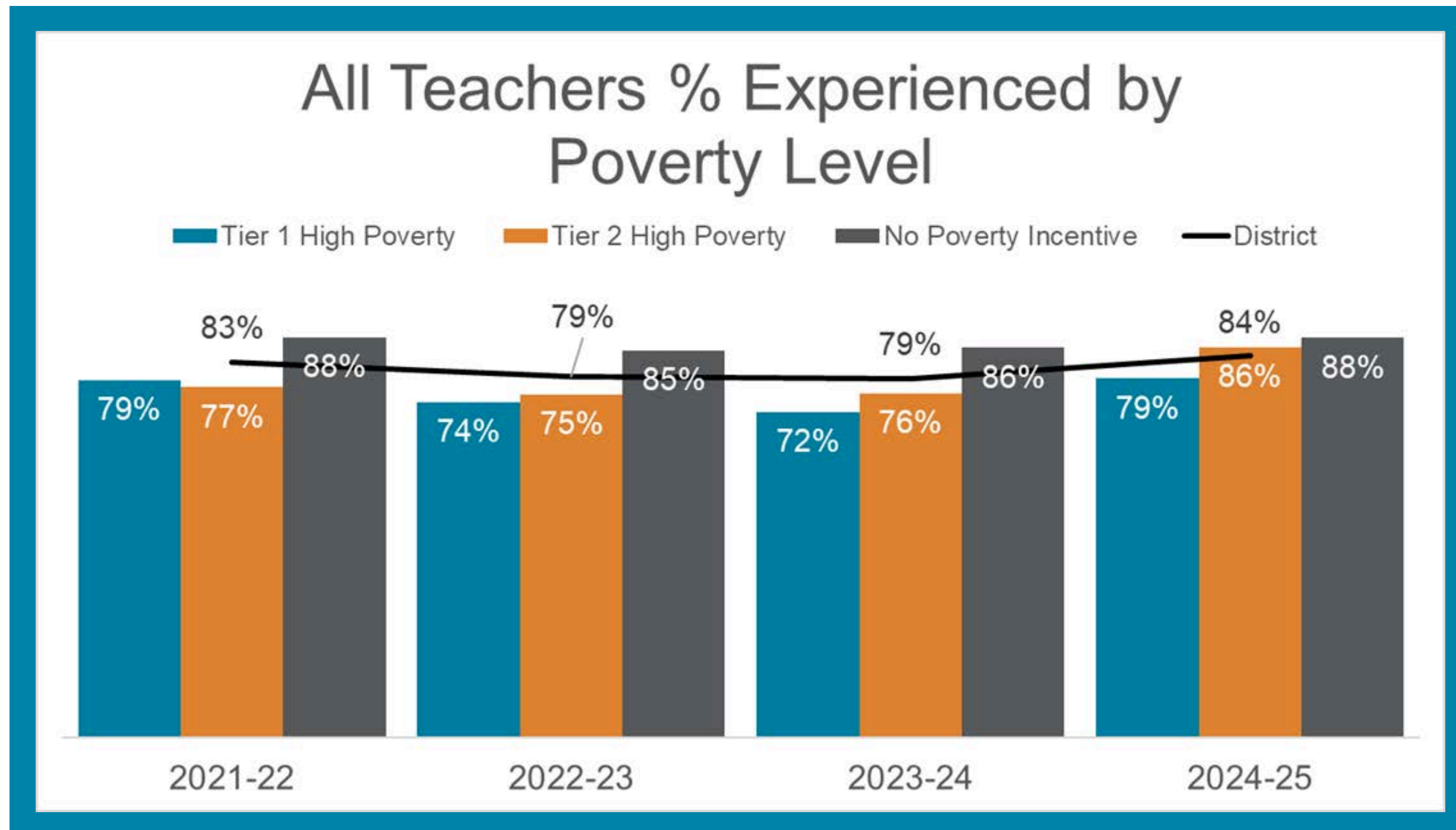


- Recall we had a goal to grow experienced hires by 5%
- Our SY24/25 Experienced hires averaged **81% across all categories**
- We reduced the experience gap among new hires between high-poverty and low-poverty schools **from 17% in SY 2023-24 to 2% in SY 2024-25.**

Results & Impact

How did we do?

We also narrowed the gap by lifting the bottom



- We grew our overall district average of experienced teachers by **5% in 1 year!**
- We narrowed the experience gap between our high and low poverty schools for all teachers **from 14% in SY 2023-24 to 9% in SY 2024-25**
- If our retention strategies continue bearing fruit, APS is well on track to breaking into the 90% range for experience teachers **district-wide**

Strategic Alignment

eHCLE Standards



HUMAN CAPITAL LEADERS IN EDUCATION EXECUTIVE STANDARDS

The executive-level standards outline the competencies that leaders in PK-12 and related organizations need to strategically manage human capital (HC) processes at the system level. In 2021, AASPA, Experience Management Institute, and a national committee of PK-12 HC leaders collaborated to create the eHCLE standards. The standards define the core HC knowledge domains along with the skills needed to improve talent practices in education.

Inherent to the daily work of HC leaders is the need to exhibit **ethical leadership, infuse diversity, equity, and inclusion** in everything they do, and adopt a **learning mindset**. These principles guided the writing of the standards and are directly and indirectly referenced throughout them.

Intended Audience: Human Capital leaders with district and/or organization leadership experience and pHCLE certification



STRATEGY	PROCESS MANAGEMENT
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the development of a coherent organizational and human capital management system (HCMS) strategy. 2. Align all HC process and practices to the strategy. 3. Adapt to external factors that influence strategy. 4. Determine the best structure and decision-making model for the organization. 5. Ensure the effective and equitable stewardship of resources. 6. Engage stakeholder groups to incorporate diverse perspectives. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Audit HCMS processes and programs to identify areas of improvement. 2. Communicate the progress of HCMS goals by collecting, analyzing, and understanding data. 3. Evaluate technology solutions to increase process efficiency, effectiveness, and equity. 4. Champion the change management process.
RISK MANAGEMENT	EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop HC policies and programs that are compliant with laws and regulations. 2. Influence the creation of data governance, privacy, and safety policies. 3. Proactively identify potential risks to the organization's HCMS and reduce risk exposure. 4. Lead the negotiation of agreements and contracts. 5. Manage the dispute resolution process. 6. Foster positive labor relations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate employee and customer experience. 2. Build the capacity of employees to provide exceptional customer experiences. 3. Incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion goals into organizational programs, practices, policies, and structures. 4. Audit policies and practices to cultivate a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture. 5. Develop partnerships to enhance services provided to students, employees, and the community.

#HCLE | HCLLeader.org



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Strategy & Process Management

- Leveraged data-driven insights to develop and implement targeted strategies for equitable teacher distribution, aligning with district goals.



Talent Acquisition

- Forecasted vacancies early, advertised proactively, and prioritized high-needs schools with candidate pools and school-specific job fairs.



Talent Development

- Deepened our investment in induction and mentorship for 0-3 year teachers, provided differentiated career development leveraging Talent Reviews, and delivered leadership training for principals.



Total Rewards

- Implemented strategic stipends for high-needs schools, retention bonuses, and subject-area incentives, along with the highest teacher salary scale increase in 15 years.



Experience Management

- Used teacher voice to address burnout, improve planning time, implement supportive policies, and build strategic relationships with school leaders to align support with their needs.



Understanding that this data-driven approach to solving HR challenges can be replicated to any almost any sub-group...

Where shall we go next?

Potential New Projects



**Strengthening Teacher
Development Pipelines**

**Leadership Development in
Central Office and Schools**

**Reduce Novice Principal
Ratios across APS**

Q&A

Let's Talk...



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Human Resources
Division

www.apscareers.org



Felcia Lester, Ed.S., p#HCLE

Thank You

Let's Stay in Touch!



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