

EDUCATION

The Challenge

Education is the root of all economic development. Metro Atlanta’s public-education system is critical to the region’s long-term development as a world-class place to live and work. We must have good schools producing a home-grown workforce for the metro Atlanta region to maintain and grow economic vitality.

For 25 years, the Metro Atlanta Chamber (MAC) has been the door the business community walks through to get involved in improving education at Atlanta Public Schools. Led by Dr. Beverly L. Hall, the 2009 National Superintendent of the Year. APS is core to the metro Atlanta region. The Atlanta Board of Education was also recently honored with the Council of Urban School Board of Education (CUBE) 2009 annual award of Urban School Board Excellence.

In the last decade, we have extended our focus beyond APS to the 15 school-system region including APS. This region educates almost half of the state’s student population and has the largest school system in Georgia -- Gwinnett Public Schools. The area has experienced improvements in the last decade on SATs and high school graduation rates, lending to favorable comparisons with regions we compete with for new businesses and relocations.

History of Chamber Leadership

Our focus on APS has produced tangible results:

- MAC **created EduPAC** to recruit, screen and endorse school board candidates; 80-100 percent of EduPAC endorsed candidates have been elected in the past 16 years; MAC’s attention to improvements to the Atlanta Board of Education in the past 16 years led to the board being distinguished as the **best urban school board** in the nation in 2009.
- MAC led school **charter improvements** that resulted in the system’s attorney and CFO reporting to the superintendent – not the board.

Our focus on the 15 school-system region includes frequent dialogue with school superintendents who have asked for our help in areas including:

creating effective school boards

- In 2008, MAC launched the **Commission for School Board Excellence** at the request of the State Board of Education when the Clayton County Public Schools was losing its accreditation. The commission advocated for changes to state law to make school boards more accountable. This legislation passed during the 2010 session.

teacher recruitment and retention

- MAC worked with corporate human resources officers to identify best practices in **recruiting and retaining teachers**.

career preparation

- MAC conducted a **survey of employers** in the metro region to determine the gap between what students are learning and the education they need to get good jobs.

2010 Call to Action for the Metro Atlanta Region

To strategically improve education metrics in the metro Atlanta region and Georgia, we support:

- utilizing Atlanta Partners for Education flagship programs – Principal for A Day, A+ Awards and State of Atlanta Schools – to **heighten awareness** of Atlanta Public Schools reforms and progress, and create public-private partnerships that **support student achievement**
- **measures to recruit and retain** the most effective teachers for the region

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