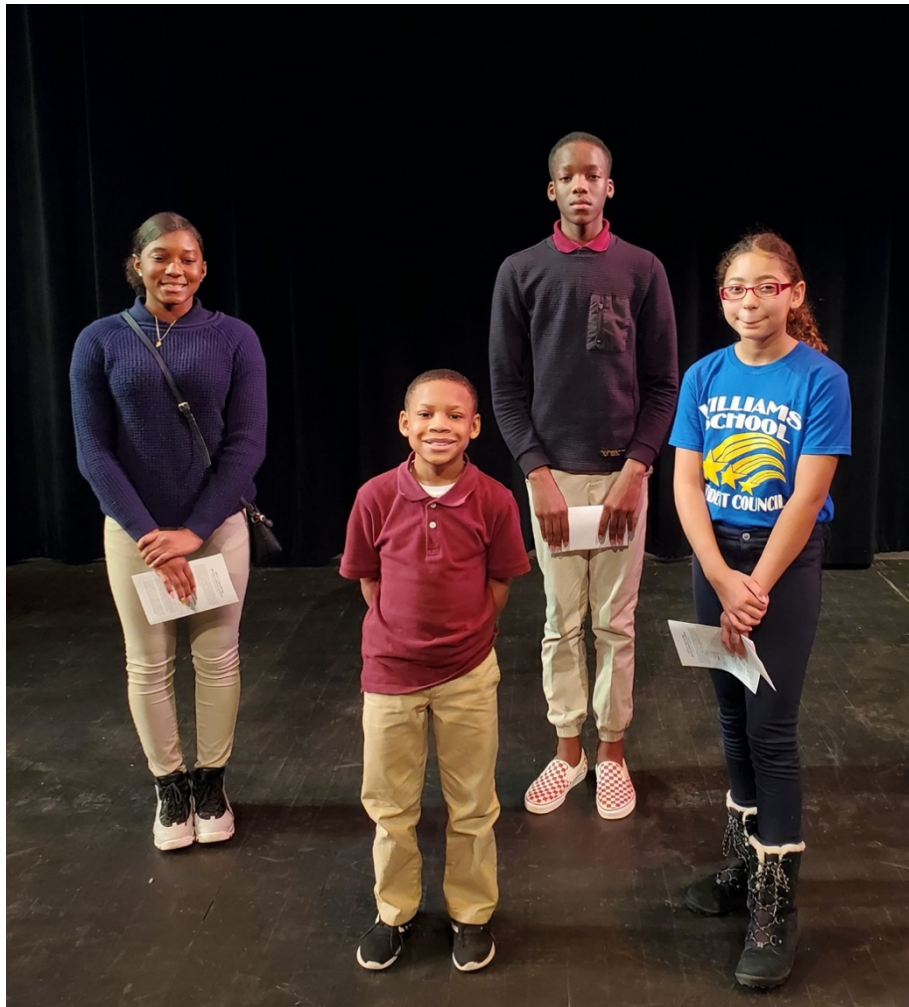




Gary Community School Corporation
Doing What is Best for Students - Today - Tomorrow - Everyday

The Path Forward



A Road Map for the 2020-21 and 2021-22 School Years

Released August 2020

GarySchools.org

OVERVIEW

Gary public schools have an extraordinary history. We produced the Jacksons, NBA players, NFL players, and generations of professionals that served our community, our state, and our country. Our graduates created the steel that built America.

Not all of our history made it into our present, however. We know of no school district in the United States that has shrunk more than ours. In 1964, our schools served [47,376 students](#). Fifty-five years later, we served [4,850 students, a drop of 90 percent](#).

Researchers have come up with many reasons for this transformation, but we're not researchers. We're educators, and our responsibility is to make sure our students – regardless of how many we have – get the best education possible. We believe that as go our schools, so goes Gary. As our schools improve, students will come back to Gary, families will come back to Gary, and Gary will continue to grow as a thriving community.

Many factors go into school improvement – it is the work of educators, to be sure, but not educators alone. What follows is our plan to continue to drive the improvement we need, focusing on the next two years. It calls on the central office to do its role, for teachers and principals and school-based staff to do their role, and for the community to do its role. We must go forward together.

If we expect the community to have a voice and pitch in, we owe the community a plan, and that's what you'll see below. The Path Forward is a roadmap for the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the first of these two years is starting out differently, but we still have a responsibility to help our students make progress, so this plan lays out our priorities in academics, engagement, fiscal, and operations, and how you can measure whether our efforts are paying off.

We established these four pillars at a community meeting in May 2020, and we spent the summer collecting feedback from students, educators, and Gary residents about how we should move forward in each of these areas. Overall, we heard from more than 100 people, and we're grateful for their feedback.

The final plan is below. We hope you'll review it now and come back to it later. This is not a plan we are publishing and then never mentioning again. To the contrary, **every three months we will share a public progress report that shows how we are doing in each of these four areas.** The plan, and the progress reports, will be available on [GarySchools.org](https://garyschools.org) and in every school's main office.

Ultimately, Gary's history is extraordinary, and we believe Gary's future can be, too.

INTRODUCTION

Dear Gary Schools Community,

I'm well aware of Gary's past, but I prefer to focus on Gary's future, and I believe the future is bright. As you will see below, my team and I have an ambitious plan to improve Gary schools.

As part of this plan, every student is receiving a Chromebook with high-speed internet access. School buildings are being renovated and modernized. And – if the November 3, 2020 operating referendum passes – every teacher will receive a very, very overdue raise.

Together, the November referendum and the additional steps outlined in this plan will also help us reach a widely held goal: being in position for state control to end.

Please join us. Look for ways to support your child's teacher and school. And hold me and my team accountable. Review the progress reports we will share every three months. If you see me in the community, ask how we're doing, and ask how we can improve. We will be better together.

Strong, resilient, and built for education – that's Gary schools.

Sincerely,

Dr. Paige McNulty
Manager
Gary Community School Corporation



ACADEMICS

WHY IT MATTERS

Academics are how well our staff is teaching and how much our students are learning. Academics are at the core of what we do.

We believe each student is unique. Every student has unique passions and interests and skills. Every student has unique needs, and students learn in different ways. We aim to meet students where they are and to develop their skills and knowledge. We aim for each of our students to graduate from high school with the preparation they need to succeed in college and careers.

WHAT WE PLEDGE TO DO

GCSC pledges to offer students opportunities and support from pre-K through 12th grade.

GCSC pledges to offer teachers the feedback and support they deserve as professionals.



HOW YOU CAN TELL IF IT'S WORKING

We will prioritize the following categories and will publicly report information about our progress in these areas every three months. In some instances, like graduation rate, which is released once a year, or suspensions, which are not happening during remote learning, we will share data as it becomes available.

Increase the five-year graduation rate	Increase the pass rate for ILEARN and ISTEP+ state assessments (math and English language arts)	Increase the average daily attendance
Offer career and technical education pathways to students in earlier grades, and increase the number of students in career pathways at the Gary Area Career Center	Increase the growth scores for ILEARN state assessment (math and ELA)	Arrange for counselors to work with the same group of students for all of high school, which will support college readiness
Decrease the number of suspensions	Increase progress on i-Ready formative assessment (math and ELA)	Create more opportunities for students to learn about Black American culture and history

ENGAGEMENT

WHY IT MATTERS

Education is not students showing up and teachers filling their minds with knowledge. Rather education involves students *and* teachers *and* parents *and* caregivers *and* community members all playing a role. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how important families are to students' development, and how much community partners can assist us in supporting our young people. We are better when we work together.



WHAT WE PLEDGE TO DO

GCSC pledges to create opportunities for all community stakeholders to know about and share feedback on efforts to continually improve students' educational experience.

HOW YOU CAN TELL IF IT'S WORKING

We will prioritize the following categories and will publicly report information about our progress in these areas every three months:

Publish quarterly progress reports	Create Advisory Committees at each school made up of students, parents, teachers, and administrators	Hold public training sessions on Title I, federal and state grants, school finance, and school law
Post Frequently Asked Question documents after each Manager forum, which will also be broadcast on radio or TV	Share the results of an annual community survey	Offer more extra-curricular activities for students
Create three new committees – curriculum, technology, and food services – made up of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and a representative from the Advisory Board	Offer leadership training for Gary citizens focusing on different aspects of school corporation operations	Ensure teachers reach out to families on regular basis to facilitate two-way communication about their students' academic progress

FISCAL

WHY IT MATTERS

The school district's financial management led to the start of the state's involvement, and the school district's financial management is what will lead to the end of the state's involvement. Appropriately budgeting and utilizing our resources will lead to more funding going into classrooms and, ultimately, better student outcomes. If we don't get our act together, we risk our continued existence as a school district.

WHAT WE PLEDGE TO DO

GCSC pledges to responsibly balance the budget in a way that is sustainable and results in greater resources going to schools.

HOW YOU CAN TELL IF IT'S WORKING

We will prioritize the following categories and will publicly report information about our progress in these areas every three months:

Balance the budget	Adhere to the Viable Deficit Reduction Plan	Invest in teacher pay and teacher training
	Increase overall enrollment	



OPERATIONS

WHY IT MATTERS

Operations is execution and, as the saying goes, vision without execution is just hallucination. Giving laptops to every student is less helpful if students and families can't get support with technology issues. Federal grants are less impactful if funding is being misspent. Execution is critical.

WHAT WE PLEDGE TO DO

GCSC pledges to focus not just on what we do but on how well we do it, acknowledging the critical role in implementing plans, not just designing them.

HOW YOU CAN TELL IF IT'S WORKING

We will prioritize the following categories and will publicly report information about our progress in these areas every three months:



Distribute a Chromebook with internet access to every student and offer trainings for parents and caregivers and a helpline for students, parents, and staff	Decrease the number of audit findings for federal grants	Implement and provide quarterly updates on the School Improvement Fund Plan
Report on content availability and access to remote instruction through the district's network and technology infrastructure	Decrease the number of audit findings for Average Daily Membership counts	Train all school resource officers in de-escalation strategies
	Decrease the number of audit findings for the Annual Financial Report and the Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards	