

*Student Advisory Council*



**ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS & ATLANTA BOARD OF EDUCATION**

# **STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**ANTI- GUN VIOLENCE 10**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**REPORT**

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**2022**



# STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

Eleanor Jones, Charles R. Drew Charter School (Chair)

Ayden Leibert, Maynard Jackson High School (Vice-Chair)

Zion Byrd, Midtown High School (Communication Coordinator)

## 2022-2023 SAC Delegates

Joshua Naji, B.E.S.T. Academy

Anike Akanni-Jenkins, CSKYWLA

Mar'Quavious Clayton, B.E.S.T. Academy

Angelo Winfrey, Frederick Douglass High School

Annie Ware, Carver Early College

Sanaa Sobers, Maynard Jackson High School

Marcus Cook, Carver Early College

Kenedie Upshaw, KIPP Atlanta Collegiate

Jordan Best, Carver STEAM

Keyona Lewis, KIPP Atlanta Collegiate

Precious Davis, Carver STEAM

Tamar Echols, Benjamin E. Mays High School

Gavin Chapman, Charles R. Drew Charter School

Dipesh Aggarwal, Midtown High School

Jackson Norflis, North Atlanta High School

Kameron Smith, North Atlanta High School

Daysia Gibson, South Atlanta High School

Ja'Borris Kimbrough, South Atlanta High School

Naima Juliao, Daniel M. Therrell High School

Darlene Hermonstine, Daniel M. Therrell High School

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## SAC Advisors

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Atlanta Public Schools is committed to encouraging authentic student voice. Authentic student voice is cultivated when our students speak, advocate and lobby on their own behalf and all stakeholders respectfully listen and consider student views when making decisions that will impact them. Atlanta Public Schools believes that when we create and utilize an institutional mechanism for soliciting student voice, we further democratize Atlanta Public Schools, increase self-efficacy and engage students as active, not passive partners. The Board of Education will convene a council of high school Student Government Association (SGA) members (hereinafter, Student Advisory Council) for the purpose of establishing a formal process for including student voice in district decision making.

The 2022-2023 Student Advisory Council is made up of 24 high school students across 14 high schools ranging from grades 9-12. This council meets on a monthly basis and engages with District leaders and staff to provide needed feedback and recommendations. There are 5 Ad-Hoc Committees Academics, Schools, Operations, Equity/ABOE, and Budget/Performance. These committees work closely with the departments to strategize and implement recommendations for changes that are brought by the students.

The City of Atlanta is experiencing an unfortunate increase in crime. These crimes are happening too frequently and involve all ages, ranging from as young as 12 years of age. On November 27, 2022, 12-year-old and 15-year-old APS students lost their lives to gun violence. These young men left school for the Thanksgiving break but won't return to school with their peers. During a press conference, Mayor Andre Dickens stated that "when a 12-year-old dies in our city — on our city streets ... the whole village has a responsibility, and the whole village is impacted."

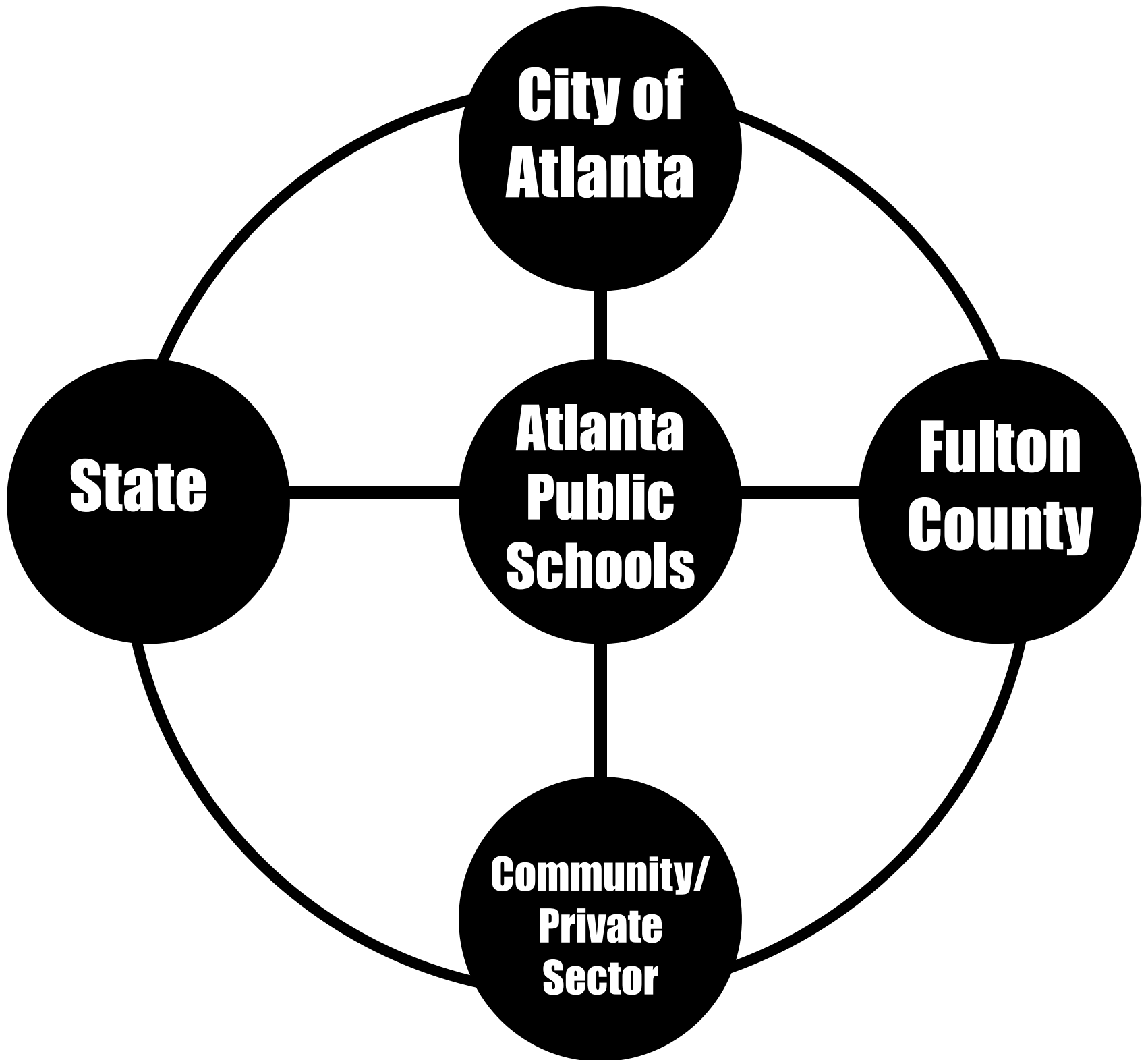
We are a part of the village and as the District's student advocates, representing the 52,000 students of APS and those two students who lost their lives, we are committed to do our part in addressing this issue. We are asking all our District, City, County, and State Official and Leaders to leave their offices and join us in the street to take a bold stance and reclaim our streets from crime.



# Recommendations

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The Student Advisory Council met with Erica Long, Senior Advisor, Policy & Government Affairs, to discuss in-depth student concerns around gun violence. Delegates were able to express their personal experiences and suggest best practices that they feel will reduce crime in our city. From this discussion, 10 strong recommendations were developed by the council. With the collaboration of entities listed below, we can address gun violence and move the City of Atlanta to a better tomorrow.





# Recommendations

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## ❖ **Implement & mandate active shooter and gun safety sessions for students and staff training in the event of an emergency**

The nation has experienced some very tragic mass school shootings that literally shook the nation at its core. We are demanding APSPD to develop a strong active shooting training for all schools to ensure that students, faculty and staff know what to do in the event of a mass shooting.

## ❖ **Increase APSPD/ security inside schools to address search and safety**

With limited APSPD/ Security presence inside of our schools our teachers and administrators are risking their lives and safety assisting with random security checks during the school day. Teachers and administrators aren't properly trained for this and should not have to interrupt instructional time to become law enforcement. We demand an increase in funding to properly staff additional law enforcement in Atlanta Public Schools.

## ❖ **Require all students to have school ID cards to enter buildings**

There have been too many cases where unauthorized individuals have made it onto our campuses and into our school buildings and classrooms. This happens easily because there isn't a proper system or mechanism to properly identify all students inside the building. We demand capabilities to print ID badges for all students and a mechanism to verify students I.D. to reduce absenteeism.

## ❖ **Partner with Atlanta Police Department to increase safety around schools**

With limited APSPD officers, we are asking for APD to continue assisting with keeping students safe once they leave school and enter back into the community. There have been cases where students are harmed walking from schools or engaging with individuals loitering around school premises. We are asking officers on their shifts if they could drive by areas just to protect the safety of students walking and at their bus stops. We are demanding stronger community policing strategies to ensure with students traveling back and forth to school. In addition, we are asking for quarterly updates regarding the partnership.



# Recommendations

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## ❖ **The increase of more attractive enrichment opportunities for afterschool**

While we agree that there are afterschool opportunities for students to participate in, we also realize that not many students find them to be beneficial. Many students don't see the value in them or don't consider them to be attractive. We are demanding for more desirable opportunities and partnerships with organizations such as the City of Atlanta, Boys and Girls Club and YMCA to be offered to elementary, middle and high schools. Some of these opportunities might include but not limited to drivers' education, financial literacy, and home economics.

## ❖ **Creation of law to increase minimum wage for the State of Georgia**

For the last 20 years, the minimum wage has been \$7.50, which is ludicrous. Through many experiences, we have witnessed many of our peers result to negative activities or sacrifice their childhood to assist their parents/self with living. Today, no one can live off that minimum wage, and it is imperative that we increase this, so we can decrease crime and increase better life experiences for all students and youth.

## ❖ **Increase personnel for afterschool programs (Community/APS)**

Many afterschool programs are limited in ways that make them ineffective and inefficient for students and families. Students are experiencing shorter hours to participate in these programs, which makes it hard for students to become invested in what is being offered. At the school level, teachers are having to teach, provide afterschool tutorial and be the instructor for these clubs and programs. As a result, students suffer from not receiving the best enrichment experience. We are asking for APS to partner with community organizations or fund more certified professionals to come and lead these programs.

## ❖ **The expansion of the Student Advisory Council and City of Atlanta Collaboration.**

The Student Advisory Council of Atlanta Public Schools are your youth that are already committed and doing the work to address many issues students face in school and in their communities. We are demanding a stronger partnership between our council and City of Atlanta that will serve as the central body to provide feedback, make recommendations and lead initiatives to promote a safe and exciting experience for youth in Atlanta. We will develop Ad-Hoc committees that will include APS, Metro Atlanta, Private Schools, and youth from other Metro Atlanta school districts to assist in this work.



# Recommendations

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## ❖ Provide funding to increase family therapist/counseling sessions

Many of our youth join gangs and display bad behavior due to the lack of love and support provided at home. Youth who join gangs are searching for sense of belonging and value and they understand that it is easier to obtain within those environments. We are demanding increased funding to enhance accessibility to family therapists and counselors to assist with restoring broken homes.

## ❖ Creation of stronger internships and work base opportunities

Youth today are participating in negative activities sometimes to simply take care of themselves. With that, we are asking for more accessible and relevant internships throughout the school year and not just during the summer. We are also asking for the creation of work-based learning opportunities so youth can receive credit while working in an environment related to their career pathway. As APS celebrates 150 years and City of Atlanta prepares for the “Year of the Youth”, we would love to have 150 opportunities to be established for our students.



# Conclusion

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“If you want to go to fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together.” Crime in our city won’t end overnight, and the reality is it will happen again. However, the Atlanta Public Schools Student Advisory Council is ready to stand arm and arm with all city, county, and state leaders to address this serious issue. This issue is not just a problem for one entity, this issues requires the support of everyone. We are demanding action, collaboration and engagement to reduce gun violence. As we move into the “2023 the year of the youth” , we look forward to being at the table to properly plan and implement initiatives that will be beneficial to all youth.