

Greater Dalton

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# EDUCATION BASELINE REPORT



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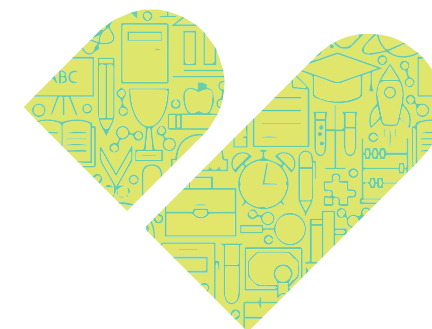
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Front cover art by Taylor Womack

# Introduction

**I**N 2016, the community began a strategic planning process to help us understand what we need to focus on to continue being a thriving, growing, competitive community. 2,220 citizens let us know what they thought of our community. We also compared ourselves to nine similar communities to see how we stacked up.


We used the data to develop the six strategies of Believe Greater Dalton: Downtown, Entrepreneurship, Economic Development, Housing, Community Pride, and Education. This report outlines the work we are doing in education.

**GREATER DALTON IS A UNIQUE COMMUNITY WITH UNIQUE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.** Greater Dalton is inclusive of the city of Dalton as well as all of Whitfield County. In our 2016 community report, participants acknowledged that Greater Dalton faces educational challenges. We recognize that a well-rounded education is the key to success for all students. We are aware that some of our students are not learning at the levels we need them to in order to be fully productive, contributing members of our community. In our education plan, we are focusing on six key areas that are proven to increase the success of every student:

- KINDERGARTEN READINESS
- EARLY GRADE READING
- MIDDLE GRADE MATH PROFICIENCY
- HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION
- POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT
- POST-SECONDARY COMPLETION

This report serves as a baseline focused on where we are today and the work that the Education Partnership will set out to accomplish. Through this work, we hope to change the dynamic of our entire community by changing the lives of the 21,000 students within Greater Dalton. **IT WILL TAKE COLLECTIVE FOCUS, COLLECTIVE WILL, AND COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT FROM OUR COMMUNITY TO HAVE A COLLECTIVE IMPACT.** The Education Partnership is committed to reporting on our progress annually. We look forward to you joining us on this journey.


Our school systems can't do this alone. By exploring data, bridging the gap between partners, and learning from each other, we believe Greater Dalton will be on a positive path that ensures every student can succeed and thrive in our community.




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Co-Chair, Education Partnership  
Shaw Industries

# What is the Education Partnership?

The Education Partnership evolved from the education strategy within the Believe Greater Dalton strategic plan. It is a collaborative effort that brings together school systems, institutions of higher education, local community members, industry, and nonprofit partners to drive the conversation toward creative solutions for our overall cradle to career effort. The goal of the Education Partnership is to improve student performance and workforce readiness using a data-driven, collective impact approach.

The Education Partnership brings together different partners to improve specific outcomes and key indicators. These partners work together on Collaborative Action Teams dedicated to using existing resources and expanding successful programs to every child in our community. The Collaborative Action Teams use data both as an accountability tool and to communicate progress.

## EDUCATION LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

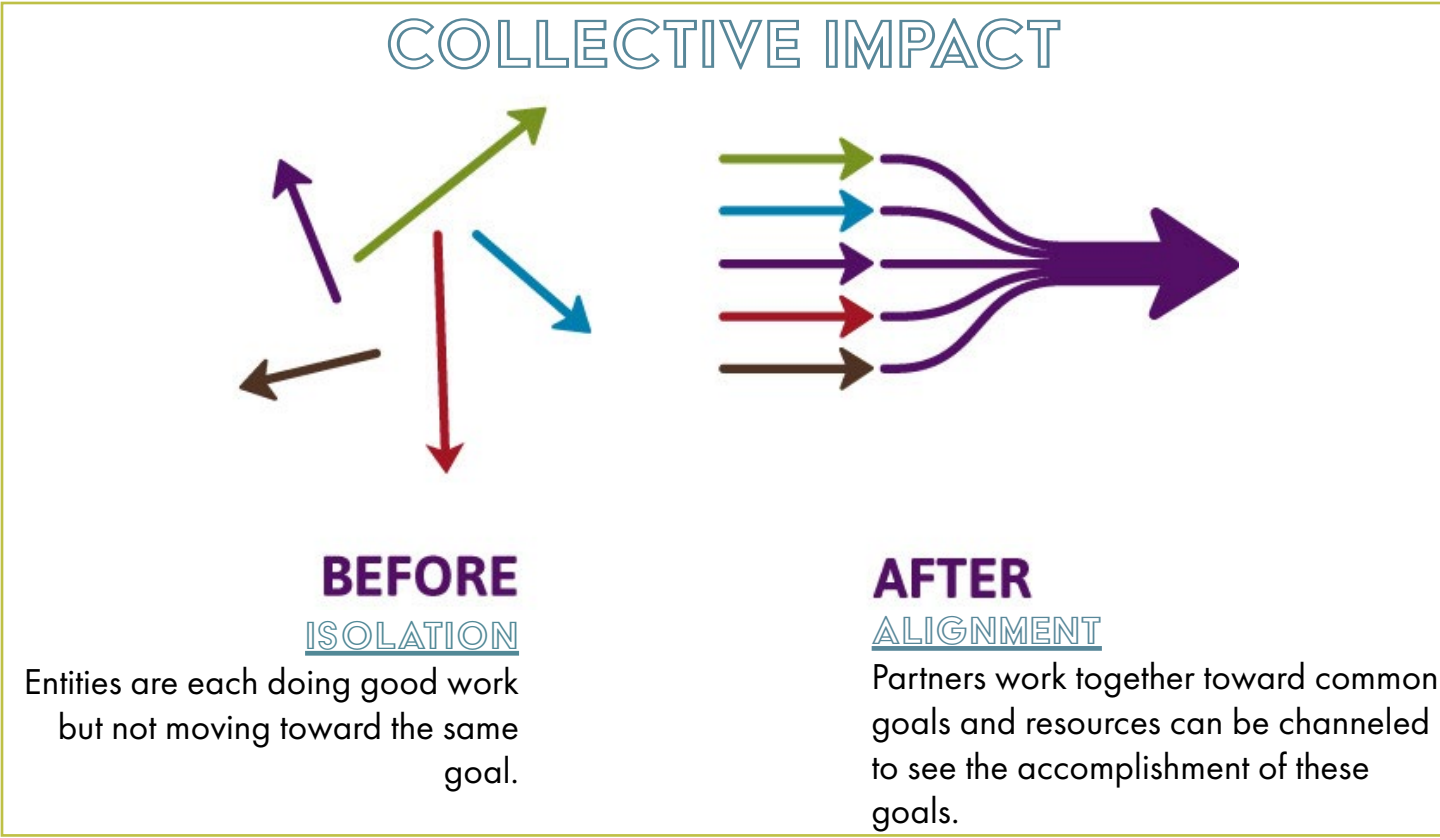
The Education Leadership Council works to understand each of the six areas of focus. Members of the Education Leadership Council meet on a bi-monthly basis to ensure the growth of our efforts. Members include representatives of the community and the organizations below. We are grateful for their time, dedication, and passion for the students of our community.





# What is Collective Impact?

Collective impact occurs when organizations from different sectors come together to solve a specific problem using a common agenda, common measures, and aligned plans for success. We believe the collective impact model offers the Greater Dalton community the best opportunity for our students to succeed at a higher level. The participants in the Education Partnership are all focused on the same outcomes. We will work toward continuous improvement in each of the six areas. **WITHOUT RELATIONSHIPS, THIS PLAN WILL FAIL. WE MUST INVEST TIME TO BUILD TRUST TO BETTER OUR COMMUNITY.** Working together toward this shared vision, we will create a thriving community where all students can achieve success, cradle to career!



## Structure

To address our challenges, we need to reflect on our current performance and build on successes.

**IT IS TIME TO TAKE A COMMUNITY-WIDE APPROACH TO EDUCATION.** The Education Partnership will work to break down walls and build a community dedicated to shared successes.

We know that working together is easier said than done. It requires continued effort and focus on a plan, collaboration, and a spirit of growth that aims to do things better for our students.

The first step of our work is to build a team formed by the leaders in our community that are doing the work. The Education Leadership Council is made up of these key leaders. Their support is crucial to overcome obstacles and build the bridge to community partners that are not yet involved.







Basing our model on proven work from other communities, including metro Atlanta and Cincinnati, we are focusing on these six critical areas. These communities have found success by building a team to identify what is working in the community and dedicated to bringing those ideas to scale.

# How We Work

A shared vision of a community education continuum, cradle to career:

- KINDERGARTEN READINESS
- EARLY GRADE READING PROFICIENCY
- MIDDLE GRADE MATH PROFICIENCY
- HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE
- POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT
- POST-SECONDARY COMPLETION

Research-based community-level outcomes:

-  Percent of students served in quality rated centers
-  Percent of 3rd graders reading at or above the grade level target
-  Percent of middle schoolers passing math state standards
-  Percent of students graduating in 4 years
-  Percent of students who enroll in a post-secondary institution within 12 months of graduation
-  Percent of students who obtain a post-secondary credential within 3 years of enrollment and 6 years of enrollment

Collaborative Action Teams composed of community leaders, parents, and specialists working together to use data and a continuous improvement process to identify and adopt programs that impact a community-level outcome.

A backbone team that provides support to the six larger teams. The backbone performs key functions like meeting facilitation, data coordination, and constant communication to keep partners informed. The backbone is managed by the Director of Education and the Believe Greater Dalton team.

Community engagement across public, private, and non-profit sectors, as well as people who will be served by the Education Partnership, with an emphasis on including people who have been marginalized in the past.

## WHAT IS A SUCCESS FACTOR?

Success factors are different factors our teams discussed as reasons students are or are not successful in a respective core area. The factors with this icon: ★ are those chosen by the Collaborative Action Teams. These factors are where we believe we can create change in our community. Some teams are still looking at data to decide where to focus and that information will be published in future reports.

# What is Greater Dalton?

The Greater Dalton area includes two public school districts (Dalton Public Schools and Whitfield County Schools), and a private system, Christian Heritage School. Because Christian Heritage uses a different form of assessment than public institutions in the state of Georgia, their data is not included in this report. The Education Leadership Council has worked closely with the administration of Christian Heritage to learn more about their school system, how they assess their students, and the impact they are having on the students of Greater Dalton. Staff from Christian Heritage are involved in different Collaborative Action Teams to help ensure success for all students. Our K-12 systems are working in strong collaboration to serve the students of our entire community, no matter which school they attend, in the best way possible.

In addition to our K-12 systems, Dalton is home to two public post-secondary institutions: Dalton State College, and the Whitfield Murray Campus of Georgia Northwestern Technical College. Each of these institutions serves our unique population of students in the area. Programs range from welding and electrical to education and chemistry.

Both institutions are deeply rooted in our work to impact Greater Dalton.

Our students come from diverse backgrounds and are more likely than students from other communities to speak a language other than English at home. These students are more likely to live in poverty or near-poverty. To gain improved results, we must continue to meet the demands of our ever-changing community.

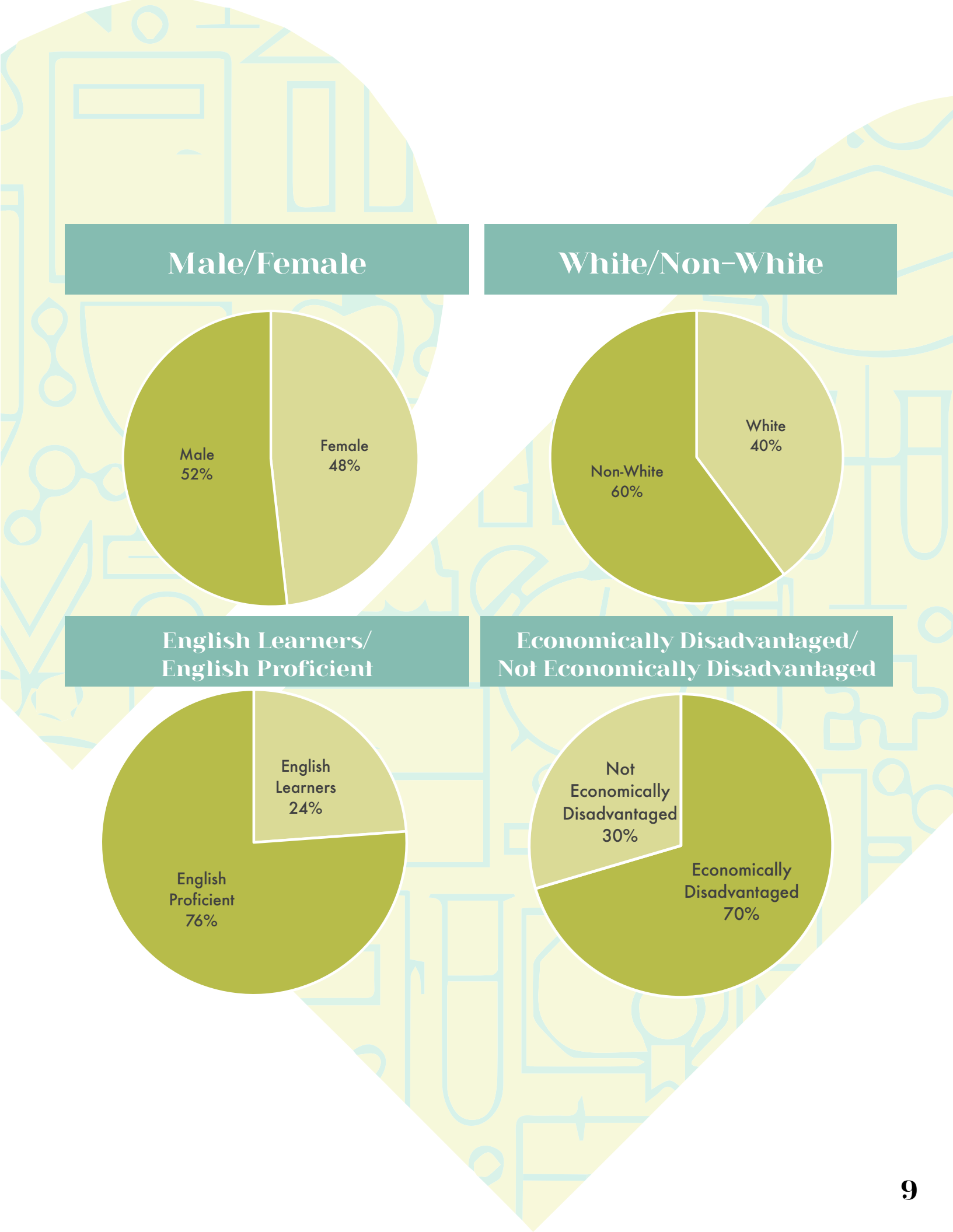
We must move towards a framework that meets the needs of all students, grounded in data-driven decision making and community-wide collaboration.

Working with the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), we are able to present community-wide data rather than district specific data in this report. This report simply would not be possible without the hard work and cooperation of the GOSA team, and we deeply appreciate their assistance.

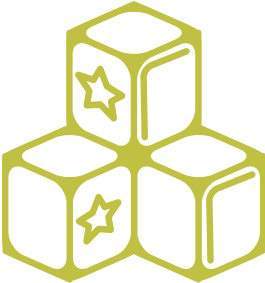


One County,  
Multiple cities/towns

K-12 Students 2018:  
20,741



# WHERE WE ARE *Today*



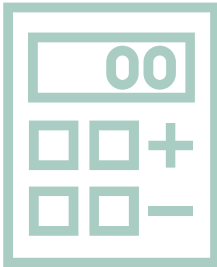
KINDERGARTEN READINESS:

**77%** OF CHILDREN IN GREATER DALTON CANNOT BE SERVED  
IN QUALITY RATED CHILD CARE CENTERS



EARLY GRADE READING:

3RD GRADERS READING AT OR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL TARGET: **43%**  
8TH GRADERS READING AT OR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL TARGET: **63%**



MIDDLE GRADE

MATH PROFICIENCY: **39%**



HIGH

SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE: **80%**



POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT RATE: **53%**

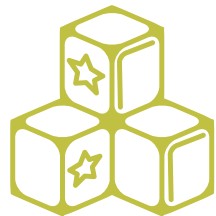


POST-SECONDARY COMPLETION:  
6 YEAR GRADUATION - BACHELOR'S DEGREE: **20%**  
3 YEAR GRADUATION - ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE: **16%**

“

Greater Dalton is a unique  
community with unique  
educational opportunities.

”



# KINDERGARTEN READINESS

## Did you know?

Quality Rated is Georgia's systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early education programs. Similar to rating systems for other service-related industries, Quality Rated assigns a quality rating to early education programs that meet a set of defined program standards.

The Department of Early Care and Learning's (DECAL) Quality Rated system helps support early education programs as they strive to reach higher levels of quality.

**77%** OF CHILDREN IN GREATER DALTON CANNOT BE SERVED IN QUALITY RATED CHILD CARE CENTERS



**15** PRIVATELY OWNED CHILD CARE CENTERS

**13** OF THOSE ARE QUALITY RATED CENTERS

**1,507** KINDERGARTENERS IN FALL 2018



## ASPIRATION

Every child is prepared for school.

## CORE INDICATORS

Number of pre-k slots for children in the Greater Dalton area and number of children who need a slot.

Number of Quality Rated centers in the area.

## CHALLENGE

There are approximately 1,700 Quality Rated child care slots available to children under age 5 in Whitfield County; only 23% of the total number of children can currently be served in Quality Rated child care centers.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

Kindergarten readiness affects future academic and life success. 90% of a child's brain development occurs between birth and age five. Children develop fundamental skills that build strong foundations for reading, counting, and social interactions before they enter a K-12 classroom. Studies show that as a child's kindergarten readiness score improves, third-grade reading and math scores also improve. In the Greater Dalton area, we do not have enough Pre-K slots for the number of children looking to register for Pre-K programs. Increasing the number of childcare and Pre-K slots will help ensure the development and success of our students in later school years and throughout life. High quality early educational experiences are important so that all children have the ability to enter kindergarten with the skills necessary to learn.

## SUCCESS FACTORS



The **GET GEORGIA READING CAMPAIGN** focuses on students from birth to third grade. Their goal is to help children in Georgia read on grade level by the third grade. For this reason, we are using their researched and proven factors to focus on children birth through age eight.

### ◦ LANGUAGE NUTRITION:

All children receive abundant, language-rich adult/child interactions, which are as critical for brain development as healthy food is for physical growth

### ◦ ACCESS:

All children and their families have year-round access to high-quality early childhood and elementary education

### ◦ POSITIVE LEARNING CLIMATE:

Providing a positive learning climate can ensure success for students in development, attendance, engagement, and academic achievement

### ◦ TEACHER PREPARATION AND EFFECTIVENESS:

All teachers of children from birth through age eight are equipped with evidence-informed skills, knowledge, and resources that effectively meet the literacy needs of each child in a developmentally appropriate manner

*\*This Collaborative Action Team is still determining the Success Factors to focus on*

Source: Success Factors from the [Get Georgia Reading Campaign](#)

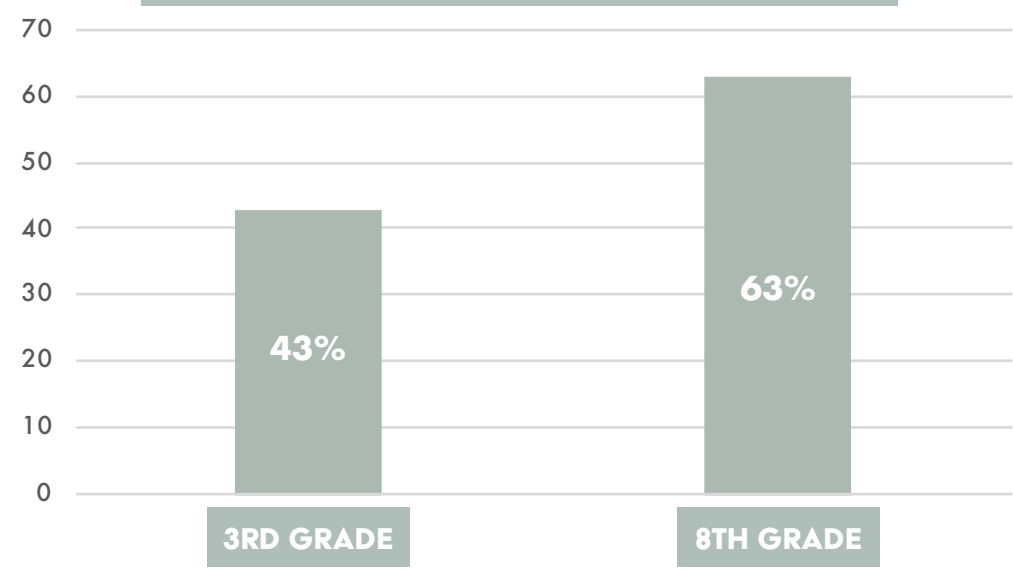
Data Points: [Georgia KIDS COUNT](#), 2018

WCS and DPS Enrollment, FY2018



# EARLY GRADE READING

## READING BY GRADE



PERCENT OF STUDENTS READING AT OR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL TARGET

\*8th grade included to show growth students make while in our schools.

## ASPIRATION

Increase reading at or above grade level by 4% each year, using the Georgia Milestones Assessment System.

## CORE INDICATORS

Reading at or above grade level target as measured by the Georgia Milestones Assessment System.

## CHALLENGE

Our students enter our schools with different challenges. If students do not have their basic needs met, they are not ready to learn in the classroom. As a community, we need to support these students both in and out of the classroom to assure they are able to learn.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

Early grade reading has long been an indicator of long-term success for children. In our community, we are working with students who are economically disadvantaged or may not be speaking English as a primary language in their home. Our 3rd grade reading scores reflect these challenges; that is why we are committed to getting our students reading on grade level as soon as possible. To reflect this goal, we are utilizing the Georgia Milestones Assessment reading at or above the grade level target. Both the 3rd grade and 8th grade scores are reflected to show the growth our students make throughout their time in our school systems.

## SUCCESS FACTORS



### ◦ LANGUAGE NUTRITION:

All children receive abundant, language-rich adult/child interactions, which are as critical for brain development as healthy food is for physical growth

### ◦ ACCESS:

All children and their families have year-round access to high-quality early childhood and elementary education

### ◦ POSITIVE LEARNING CLIMATE:

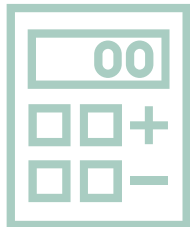
Providing a positive learning climate can ensure success for students in development, attendance, engagement, and academic achievement

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All teachers of children ages birth through age eight are equipped with evidence-informed skills, knowledge, and resources that effectively meet the literacy needs of each child in a developmentally appropriate manner

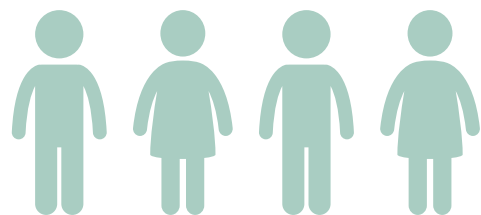
*\*This Collaborative Action Team is still determining the Success Factors to focus on*





## MIDDLE GRADE MATH

**39%** OF MIDDLE SCHOOLERS WERE PROFICIENT IN MATH IN 2018



### ASPIRATION

As a community, increase math proficiency scores by 4% each year.

### CORE INDICATORS

Percent of middle grade students (6-8th) passing state math standards as measured by the Georgia Milestones Assessment System.

### CHALLENGE

Our students are not proficient in math by the end of the 8th grade.

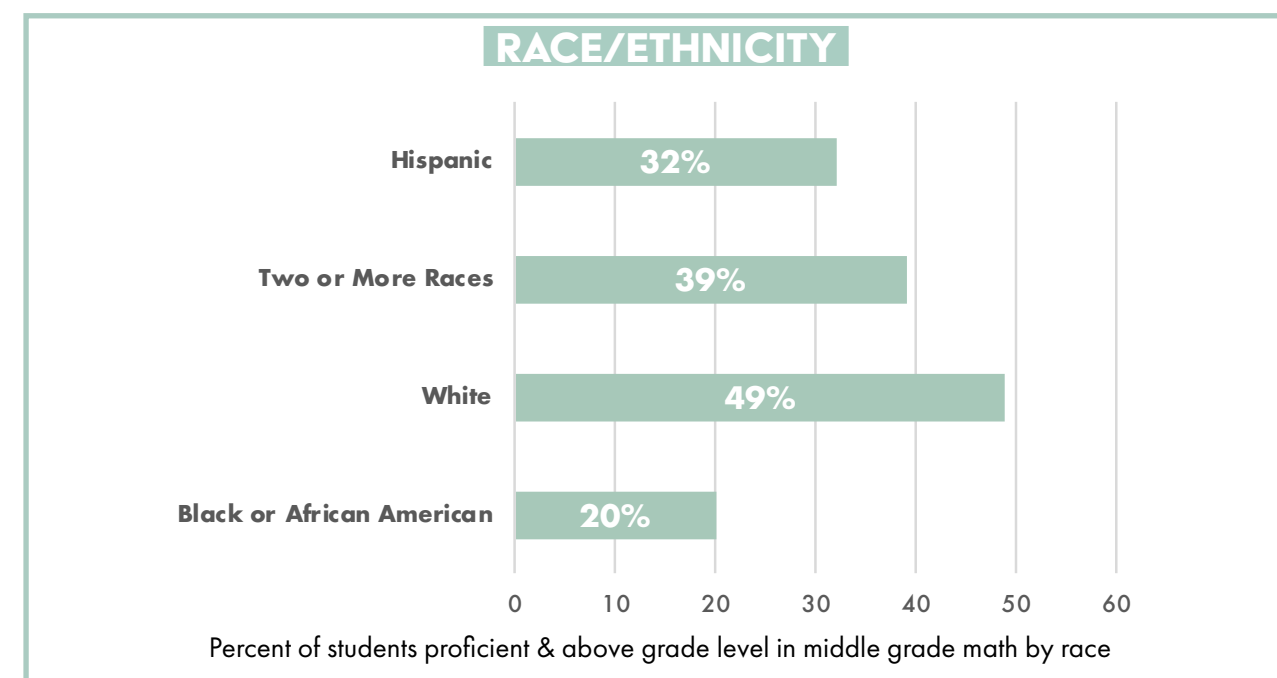
## WHY IT MATTERS:

Middle-grade math has become an important milestone for high school persistence, academic performance, college enrollment, and workforce readiness. Research shows that students who are successful at middle-grade math perform better in geometry, more advanced algebra, trigonometry, and calculus. In order to increase the portion of students graduating from high school with high-level, competitive skills, we must dramatically increase the number of students who achieve proficiency in math in their middle school or early high school years. This is proven to be a critical path to the advanced high school coursework that is the driver of high school graduation, college readiness, and post-secondary completion rates.

**32%** OF ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS ARE PROFICIENT IN MIDDLE GRADE MATH

**38%** OF MALE STUDENTS ARE PROFICIENT IN MIDDLE GRADE MATH

**40%** OF FEMALE STUDENTS ARE PROFICIENT IN MIDDLE GRADE MATH



## SUCCESS FACTORS

- ACCESS TO RIGOROUS COURSES
- SCHOOL CULTURE
- TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS
- MATH ANXIETY
- GENDER EXPECTATIONS
- RELEVANT CURRICULUM
- ★ **ACADEMIC PREPARATION**
- ★ **LANGUAGE AND LITERACY SKILLS**
- RACIAL EXPECTATIONS
- ★ **INTERVENTIONS FOR STRUGGLING LEARNERS**
- ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY



# HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

**80%** OF STUDENTS IN THE CLASS OF 2018 GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL IN 4 YEARS



## ASPIRATION

County-wide, we will increase the graduation rate by 2% each year.

## CORE INDICATORS

Percent of students graduating in four years, using the four-year cohort method of calculating the graduation rate.

\*The four-year cohort method considers the rate at which a cohort of ninth graders graduate within four years.

## CHALLENGE

Approximately 230 students in the 2018 cohort did not graduate high school.

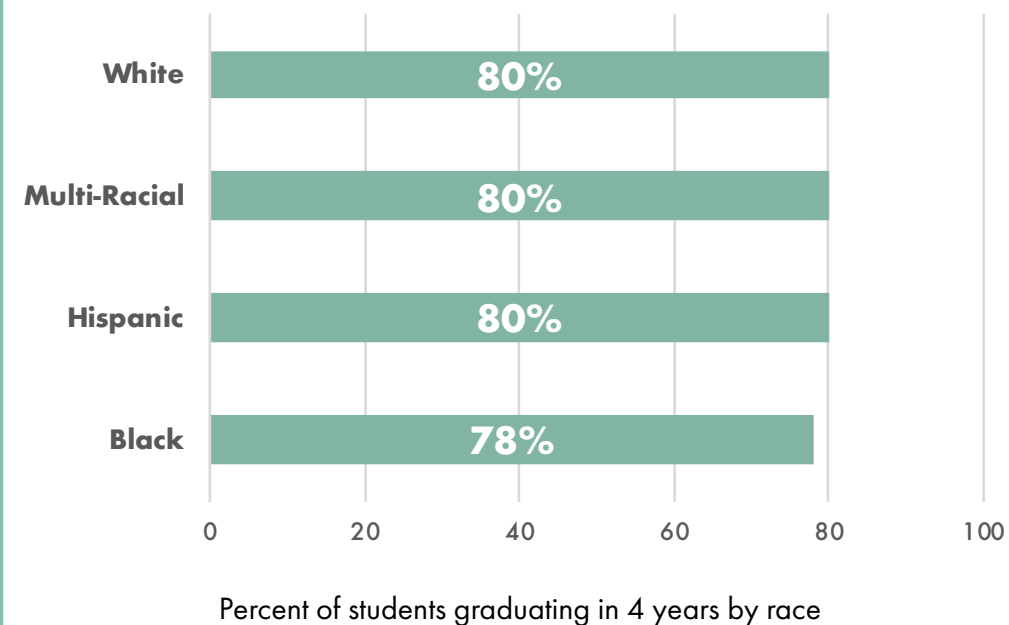
## WHY IT MATTERS:

High school graduation provides opportunities for workforce readiness, higher income, collegiate success, and other measures of personal and social welfare. High school graduation is a major indicator of earning power throughout adulthood. **ON AVERAGE, GRADUATES MAKE 26% MORE THAN THEIR PEERS WHO DID NOT GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL.** With increased high school graduation, our community will spend less on social welfare programs, and we will have improved economic outcomes for generations to come.

**82%** OF ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS GRADUATE IN 4 YEARS

**62%** OF ENGLISH LEARNERS GRADUATE IN 4 YEARS

## RACE/ETHNICITY



Percent of students graduating in 4 years by race

## SUCCESS FACTORS



### CONNECTIVITY TO FUTURE

- ATTENDANCE
- GENERATIONAL POVERTY

- FAMILY SUPPORT
- LANGUAGE AND LITERACY SKILLS
- WORKING STUDENTS

*Did you know?*

Morris Innovative High School is a unique school that tailors instructional delivery based upon the needs of students. Teachers and staff are dedicated to doing whatever it takes to empower students for success. Morris offers a variety of opportunities for credit recovery and/or credit acceleration. Classes at MIHS are smaller than normal, providing students more opportunities for individualized instruction. Teachers are willing to spend extra time with students whenever needed. Student input is encouraged when designing coursework that will be meaningful to them. The principal has an "open door" policy for students, parents, and staff to discuss ideas, problems, or concerns. Morris' mission of doing #whateverittakes drives everything they do.

Phoenix High School is a special purpose high school that addresses a myriad of individual situations. The school provides opportunities for students to participate in credit recovery, credit acceleration, and courses for high school credit. Students at PHS have opportunities for dual enrollment classes, work-based learning and career and technical education classes (CTAE). PHS has an extended day to better accommodate working students. Phoenix High School uses flexibility and online learning to meet a variety of student needs. Approximately 100 students who would otherwise drop out of school meet graduation requirements at Phoenix High School each school year.



# POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT

**53%** OF THE 2017 GRADUATING CLASS IN THE GREATER DALTON AREA ENROLLED IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION WITHIN 12 MONTHS



## ASPIRATION

Every youth can attain a post-secondary credential leading to a career.

## CORE INDICATORS

Percent of students who enroll in a post-secondary institution within 12 months of graduation.

## CHALLENGE

Approximately half of our students do not enroll in a post-secondary institution within 12 months of high school graduation.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

Post-secondary enrollment is not defined merely by those who enroll in a four-year degree program at a college or university. Post-secondary enrollment in this report includes four-year degree programs, two-year degree programs, and programs that offer technical certificates. Students must understand the impact obtaining a post-secondary credential will have on the balance of their lives. In order to achieve our community's post-secondary enrollment goals, students must also clearly understand how the post-secondary enrollment process works.

**29%** OF GRADUATES ARE WORKING IN GEORGIA BUT ARE NOT ENROLLED IN COLLEGE

**43%** OF GRADUATES ARE COLLEGE AND CAREER READY

The College and Career Ready score is the percentage of students who are likely to be successful in first-year college courses. It measures the percentage of 12th grade students who:

- enter the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) or University System of Georgia (USG) without needing remediation;
- achieve a readiness score on the ACT, SAT, two or more Advanced Placement (AP) exams, or two or more International Baccalaureate (IB) exams;
- pass a pathway-aligned end of pathway assessment (EOPA) resulting in a national or state credential; or
- complete a work-based learning program.

Students enlisting in the United States Armed Forces are not reflected in the data in this report due to no reputable source. Additionally, students who move out of state for work or college are also not counted in these numbers.

## Did you know?

High school students throughout Greater Dalton can enroll at both GNTC and Dalton State College as dual enrolled students. This means that they can earn college course credit while still attending high school. Some students can even graduate with an Associate's Degree at the same time they are graduating with a high school diploma! This program is completely free of charge to high school students and their families.

## SUCCESS FACTORS

- SOCIAL SKILLS AND FAMILY SUPPORT
- COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS
- ★ COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE
- COLLEGE APPLICATIONS
- ACADEMIC PREPARATION
- ★ FINANCIAL SUPPORT (FAFSA)
- ★ EXPOSURE TO COLLEGE
- GOOD FIT AND MATCH



# POST-SECONDARY COMPLETION

**20%** OF FULL-TIME STUDENTS OBTAINED A 4-YEAR DEGREE  
WITHIN 6 YEARS OF ENROLLING AT DALTON STATE COLLEGE

**16%** OF FULL-TIME STUDENTS OBTAINED A POST-SECONDARY  
CREDENTIAL WITHIN THREE YEARS OF ENROLLING AT GEORGIA  
NORTHWESTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE

## ASPIRATION

Increase by 2% per year the number of students completing a post-secondary credential.

## CORE INDICATORS

Percent of full-time students who obtain a post-secondary credential within three years at GNTC and percent of students earning a four-year degree at DSC within six years.

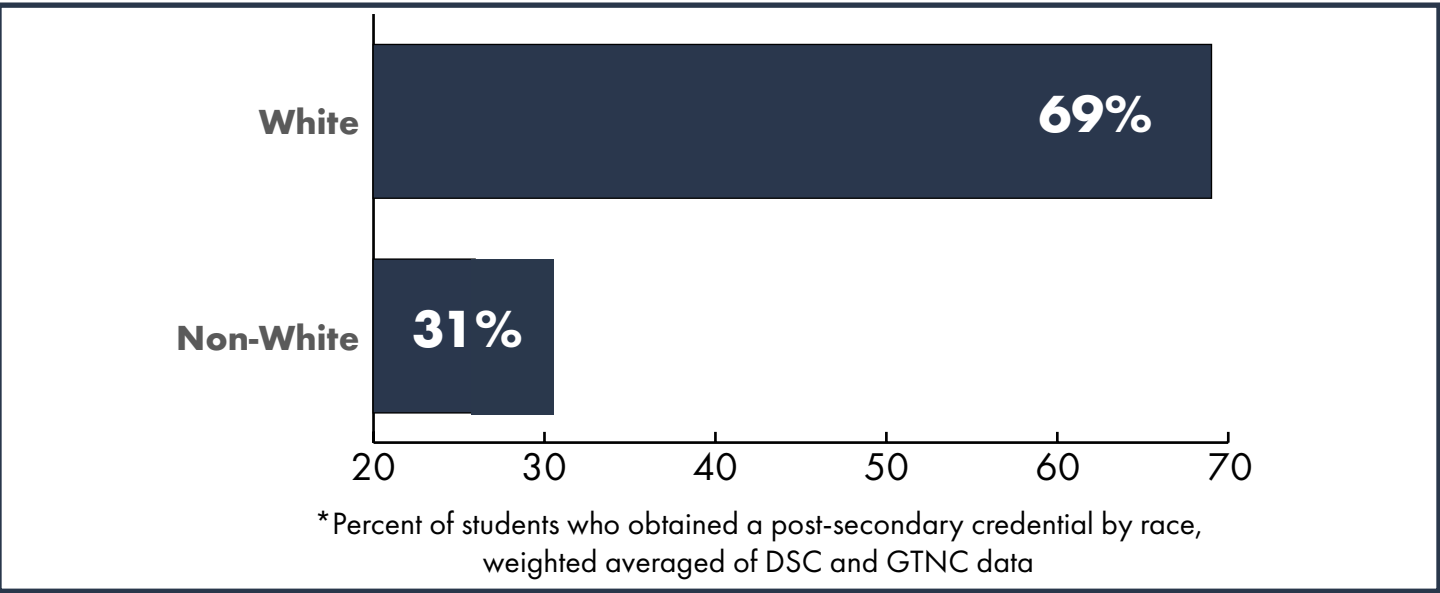
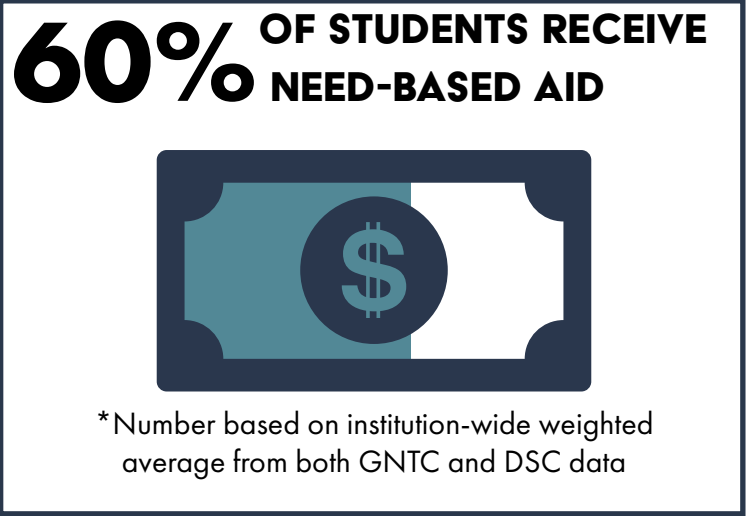
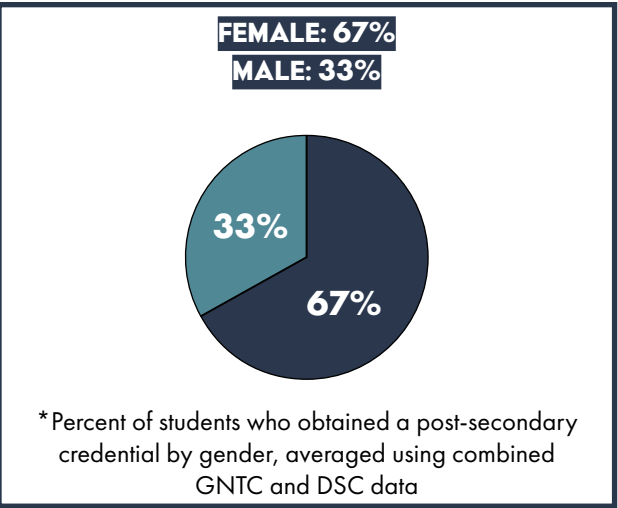
## CHALLENGE

60% of our students require need-based aid, an average including both GNTC and DSC, which is higher than most other institutions in the state. Consequently, our institutions face unique challenges to support these students.

## WHY IT MATTERS:



Completion of a post-secondary education is integral to bolstering the economic strength and overall quality of life of an individual and our community. Our industry needs candidates with a completed certificate or degree. By fostering meaningful relationships between industry partners and post-secondary institutions, our students have the opportunity to be trained by their future employer.



## SUCCESS FACTORS

- COLLEGE ENROLLMENT
- COLLEGE ORIENTATION
- APPROPRIATE COURSEWORK
- ★ FINANCIAL SUPPORT
- ★ CAREER EXPOSURE
- ★ ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL SUPPORT



# THANK YOU

**OUR SCHOOL SYSTEMS WORK INCREDIBLY HARD TO ENSURE EVERY STUDENT CAN SUCCEED, BUT THEY CANNOT DO IT ALONE.** We are excited to begin this journey of collective impact in partnership with our schools.

Without strong leadership at our educational institutions, this work would not be possible. For the last fifteen months, our institutional leaders have come together to determine the best plan for our students, no matter the school they attend. We are grateful for their time and energy to ensure success for every student. On behalf of the Believe Greater Dalton team, we would like to say thank you to Kent Harrison, Head of School at Christian Heritage; Dr. Tim Scott, Superintendent of Dalton Public Schools; Dr. Margaret Venable, President of Dalton State College; Dr. Heidi Popham, President of Georgia Northwestern Technical College; and Dr. Judy Gilreath, Superintendent of Whitfield County Schools.

The Education Partnership exists to bring community partners together at one table focusing on collective goals and a shared commitment to positively impact our students. We will continue to focus on collaboration and teamwork to execute this initiative.

In the next academic year, our collaborative action teams will identify “bright spots,” programs and initiatives in our community that show continuous improvement that we will then work to expand to all students in our community.

We are one community. Every student belongs to all of us. No matter the school system, every student is an important thread in our community. The Education Partnership will work to ensure success for all students. Thank you for your continued support of our educational aspirations.

To stay up to date on this initiative, check out [believegreaterdalton.com](https://believegreaterdalton.com). We welcome your involvement! Please email Stephani Womack at [womack@believegreaterdalton.com](mailto:womack@believegreaterdalton.com) to get involved.

By working *together*, every single student in Greater Dalton can succeed,  
from cradle to career.





GNTC | CHRISTIAN HERITAGE SCHOOL | DALTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS | DALTON STATE COLLEGE | WHITFIELD COUNTY SCHOOLS

## Greater Dalton Education Baseline Report