

# Becoming The Next

2020-2021



**Hollis Innovation Academy**

Dr. Diamond Ford, Principal

# Michael R. Hollis Innovation Academy is a PK-8 EL Education Expeditionary STEM school in the Atlanta Public Schools.

Hollis opened on August 3, 2016 to PK-5 students of the Vine City/English Avenue Community, and added a grade level each year until the school reached 8<sup>th</sup> grade at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year.

**766**  
Students



Hollis began as a newly formed school through an aggressive turnaround strategy to improve the academic performance of a nearby low performing school. Faced with many challenges from the outset—a new staff, a new building, adding a grade level every year for three years, and a high transient student population, with 100% of students eligible for free and reduced lunch—administration, faculty, and staff focused on prioritizing establishing a positive, affirming culture of belonging (“CREW”) and improving academic performance.

The 6 Habits of Hollis—Collaboration, Communication, Creativity, Empathy, Perseverance, and Self-Discipline—were set as the school’s “cultural compass,” guiding the daily individual, group, and school performance. These Habits have become solidly woven into the fabric of the school, and they have played—and continue to play—a large role in its evolution.

Collaboration

Communication

Creativity

Empathy

Perseverance

Self-Discipline

## #BecomingTheNext...



# Perseverance

In its first year, Hollis increased its College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) from 39.7 in 2016 to 58.6 in 2017, a drastic increase of 18.9 points. The following year (2018), when 6<sup>th</sup> grade had been added, the CCRPI for Middle School was 62.6, while Elementary School increased to 62.3.



CCRPI is the statewide education accountability system that measures schools and districts on a 100-point scale based largely on the Georgia Milestones Assessment System. The Georgia Department of Education initiated a new calculation of the index in 2019, resulting in schools' inability to draw comparisons to previous years.

**2019**

## Hollis is removed from the District Turnaround Eligible List

Hollis is named to the Governor's Office of Student Achievement "Beat the Odds" list, meaning that the school's CCRPI is higher than schools with similar characteristics in Georgia.

Hollis has been named a "Beat the Odds" school since opening in 2016.

**2019**

Hollis was approved as a Common Sense School, an honor that recognizes the school's efforts in teaching digital citizenship to young people and engaging the entire school community in this important discussion. The recognition acknowledges our school's commitment to helping students think critically and use technology responsibly to learn, create, and participate.

*"This honor is provided by Common Sense Education, part of a national nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing the trustworthy information, education, and independent voice they need to thrive in a world of media and technology."*



Hollis consistently demonstrated increases and steady growth in academic achievement, despite its existing challenges, and a full building renovation that lasted for 18 months, requiring teachers and students to relocate multiple times throughout the building.

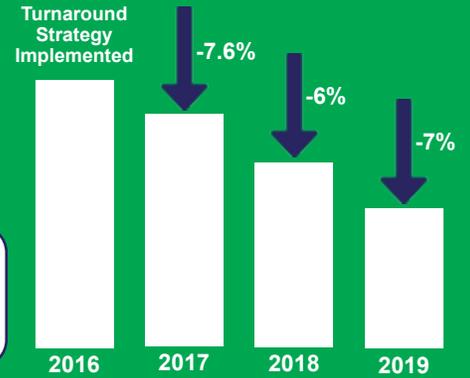


# Academic Achievement

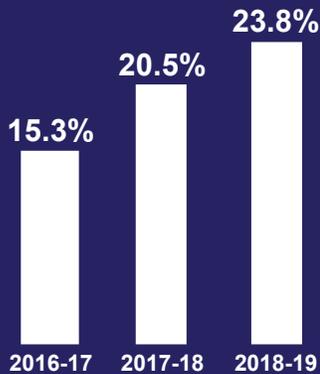
From 2016, when the Atlanta Public Schools District Turnaround Strategy was implemented, until 2019, the most recently administered Georgia Milestones Assessment System (GMAS), Hollis demonstrated a steady decrease in the percentage of students performing at the Beginning level across all subject areas: English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

**-20.6%**

**Percentage of students performing at Beginning level across all subject areas**

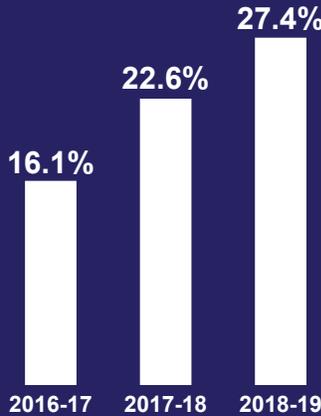


## Percentage of students scoring Proficient and Above



**+8.5%**

**English/Language Arts (ELA)**



**+11.3%**

**Math**



## Science

During the first three years (2016 - 2019), the percentage of students scoring **Proficient and Above** increased from 2.7% to 27.4%.

**+24.7%**

## Social Studies

During the first three years (2016 - 2019), the percentage of students scoring **Proficient and Above** increased from 2.7% to 14.7%.

**+12%**

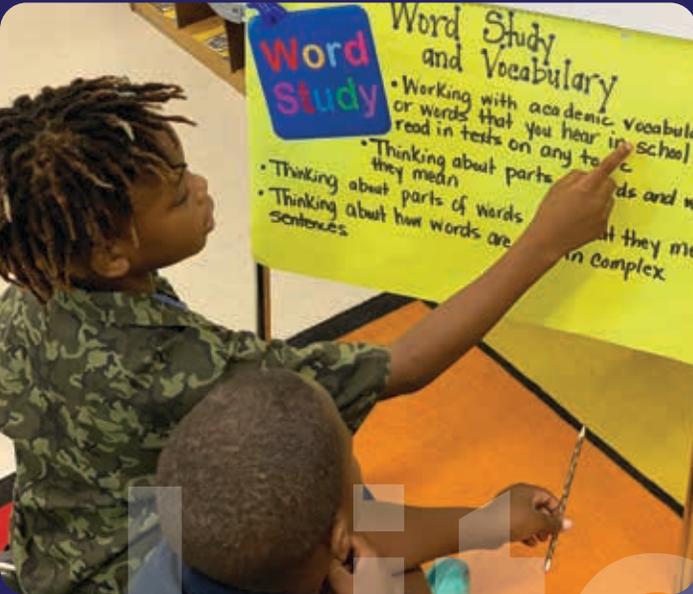
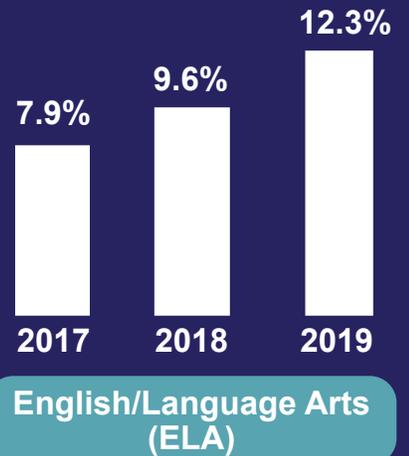
# Academic Achievement

Current 7<sup>th</sup> grade students have demonstrated an increase in scores of **Proficient and Above** in English/Language Arts (ELA) since 2017.

## Current 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Cohort

Percentage of students scoring **Proficient and Above**

**+4.4%**

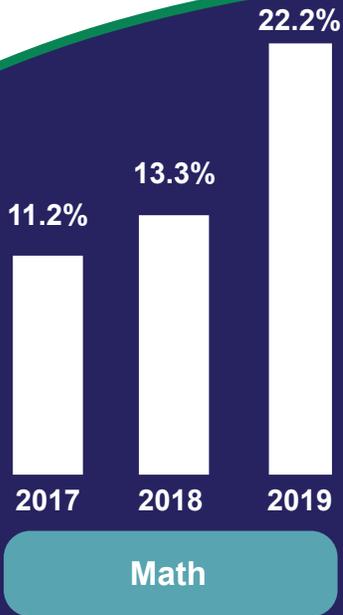


In the fall of 2019, with the philanthropic help of partners, Hollis launched a literacy initiative entitled "Camp Read-a-Lot" with the goal of creating excitement about reading, to increase motivation for both students and their parents. The kick-off event included camp-themed, literacy-based activities for parents and students, and provided literacy resources for use at home. The endeavor also supported the creation of beautiful spaces, as faculty members elaborately decorated their classrooms and adjacent learning spaces with camp-themed paraphernalia, fostering the notion among students



that learning can occur anywhere, far beyond the walls of a classroom. Through these efforts, students were encouraged to spontaneously choose a book from a shelf in a learning pod and experience the joy of reading in an appealing, engaging environment.

# Academic Achievement



Current 7<sup>th</sup> grade students have demonstrated an increase in scores of **Proficient and Above** in Math since 2017.

**Current 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Cohort**

**+11%**

Percentage of students scoring **Proficient and Above**

# Math



In the fall of 2019, through the generosity of partners, Hollis hosted “Hollis Royale: A Night of Numbers and Wins,” a fun evening focused on math for students and their families. The event included math games, useful strategies for various math concepts, and take-home resources to enable parents to recreate games at home.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Students**

Percentage of students scoring **Proficient and Above**

**+30%**

Since 2017, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students have demonstrated an overall increase in scores of **Proficient and Above** in Math.



# Academic Achievement



Science, technology, engineering, and math (S.T.E.M.) are heavily embedded within the EL Education Expeditionary S.T.E.M. Curriculum at Hollis. Students begin learning to program and code in kindergarten, and they build on this knowledge each year. A robust and growing list of partners provide support through resources, summer learning opportunities, and programming input to promote progress towards state S.T.E.M. certification.

In January of 2018, Hollis students entered the Atlanta Public Schools District Technology & Innovation Fair for the first time, and they have placed each year since. In 2020, a record-breaking 34 students placed in the competition.

In 2019, 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, Nyla and Sa'Niya, were recipients of the Honeywell STEM Challenge Impact Award at the Honeywell STEM Teacher Leadership Program (STLP) Symposium at Georgia Tech for their "Care Kit," a repository of supplies for people impacted by homelessness. The honor is awarded to a project demonstrating an exceptional and realistic impact for social good in one's home, school, or community.

In February of 2020, 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, Tamarra and Camren, won 3rd place in the Junior Division of the Honeywell STEM Challenge for their invention called "The Danger Saver," created to help prevent students from being kidnapped.

**2020**  
**34 students**  
placed in the District  
Technology &  
Innovation Fair



As a result of the building renovation completed in 2019, Hollis students now benefit from state-of-the-art S.T.E.M. facilities, where robotics, coding, and computer science are paramount.



# S.T.E.M.

# Community • CREW • Culture

Hollis prides itself on being a **community school**.

The term “Wraparound” refers to the numerous services implemented at Hollis that are designed to “wrap our arms around” our students, their families, and our community.

Hollis families benefit from the daily involvement of community-oriented organizations and services, including a school-based CARE Center, which provides comprehensive health care.



## Hollis Innovation Academy Wraparound Services



Multiple services are available to all Hollis students and their families. Staff members from CHRIS 180 are on site daily to provide mental health counseling, training, and support for children and/or families who have experienced trauma. They also work in tandem with the CARE Center staff to ensure a cohesive approach to helping families. Communities in Schools staff members are also available to students to provide guidance and surround them with a

community of support, empowering them to stay in school and succeed in life. Staff members with Atlanta

Volunteer Lawyers Foundation are available to provide free legal assistance to help families avoid eviction, ensure that residents' home maintenance needs are met, and offer other necessary services to assist families of English Avenue, Vine City, and the Atlanta University Center.



With the help of community partners like Westside Future Fund, Atlanta Community Food Bank, Peachtree

Road United Methodist Church, and Mercedes-Benz USA, Hollis hosted Community Resource Hour, a monthly event that welcomed Hollis families and members of the community to receive free food, employment resources, clothing, and more.

# Community • CREW • Culture



In 2019, Hollis was awarded the **Outstanding GO Team Award** and the **Excellence in Family Engagement School Based Award** at the Annual Atlanta Public Schools **APyeS! Awards**.

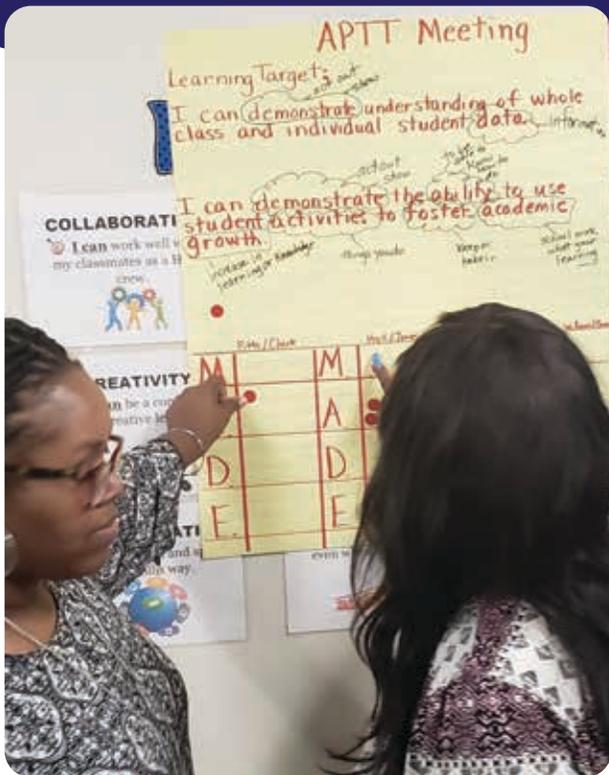
GO Teams are nine-member governance teams at every school in the district that work in a collaborative fashion with each school principal. GO Teams were designed to serve as a vital part of school improvement efforts across the district. The GO Team at Hollis promotes collaboration among parents, community partners, and teachers, and elevates parent and community voice around school initiatives.

In honor of its namesake, Michael R. Hollis—who launched the luxury airline, Air Atlanta, in 1984—Hollis operates under the philosophy that **“We are CREW, not passengers,”** highlighting the Hollis Habit of Collaboration. Collaboration among parents and teachers is a priority, and this teamwork mentality is prevalent not only throughout the curriculum, but in the framework that exists to guide the school’s daily and long-term operations.

## Collaboration & Engagement

**Academic Parent-Teacher Teams**—or A.P.T.T.—are in place for parents and teachers to monitor specific strategies for students’ academic growth and social-emotional well-being.

The **Parent Liaison** at Hollis serves to assist parents with effectively navigating the school, and to connect them to community and school resources.



**Community Job & Resource Fair**

# Pandemic Impact

2020

The COVID-19 pandemic abruptly brought the 2019-2020 school year to an end in the traditional sense, and research indicates that student learning loss may be significant due to extended virtual learning. In addition to existing challenges, now compounded by ones introduced by a global pandemic, this phenomenon known as the “COVID Slide” became apparent among the student population at Hollis. A myriad of factors played a role in the decrease in academic achievement among students across grade levels.

Students who began the 2020-2021 school year as new students to Hollis did not formally meet their teachers, other staff members, or their peers until the second semester (January and February of 2021). Others, whose families indicated a preference to continue with virtual learning, experienced an even longer delay for in-person introductions.



**New Faces**

**999  
Technology  
Devices\***

Numerous initiatives were quickly launched to address one of the biggest challenges that comes with a quick shift to virtual learning—the digital divide.

Ensuring that students were equipped with the necessary technology to continue their coursework was a major

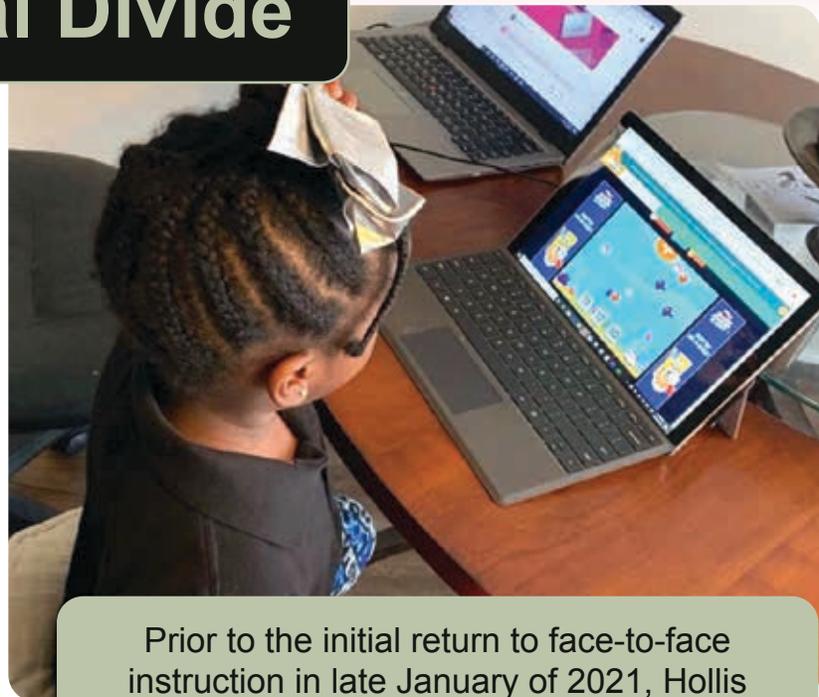
undertaking. 75% of families whose children attend Hollis have incomes that are at or below the federal poverty level. Between March of 2020 and March of 2021, 999 technology devices\* (iPads and laptops) and 169 mobile hotspots were distributed to Hollis students.

**Digital Divide**

**169  
Hotspots**

Families were also provided access to online tools like Nearpod®, a virtual white board that allows for

collaborative activities and ongoing student assessment, and Flipgrid®, which showcases student learning through their own voices.



Prior to the initial return to face-to-face instruction in late January of 2021, Hollis students had not engaged in face-to-face instruction for nearly one year.

*\*This number includes devices that were exchanged due to malfunction, damage, etc.*

# Pandemic Impact

## Attendance

With the abrupt shift from in-person instruction to virtual instruction at the beginning of the pandemic in March of 2020, Hollis experienced a drastic decrease in the average attendance rate for students.

The average attendance rate from the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year (August 2020) until January of 2021, was **74.6%**. During the same time period (August 2019 - January 2020), prior to the pandemic, the average attendance rate was **94.1%**.

**-19.5%**



Despite intense efforts to distribute technology equipment and other instructional materials during the months of virtual instruction, **25%** of Hollis students did not consistently attend virtual classes.

**25%**  
of students did not consistently attend virtual classes



## Trauma



Naturally, during a global pandemic, the physical health and safety of students and their families is a priority. With such a unique situation, mental and emotional health is also paramount, but the Wraparound services in place to adequately address trauma suffered by students were interrupted. These services—Chris 180, Communities in Schools, CREW, and regular contact with on-site social workers and counselors—allowed for daily in-person interaction and easier access to information needed to properly address situations on a case-by-case basis. Many students undoubtedly faced trauma during the course of virtual

learning, the effects of which will need attention upon their return to in-person learning.

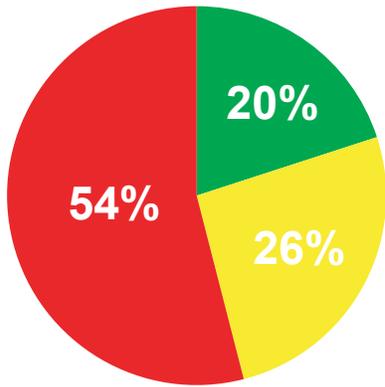
# Academic Impact

# COVID Slide

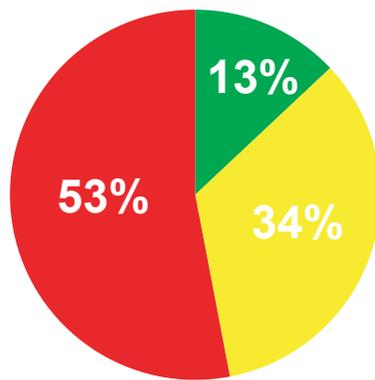
After the onset of the pandemic, with financial support from Westside Future Fund, Hollis made the decision to incorporate the iReady® learning platform for the 2020-2021 school year, in order to provide additional academic support to students receiving instruction in a virtual setting. This platform also provided individualized instruction based on each student's unique needs. In addition to iReady®, student academic performance is also regularly monitored using STAR assessments. During the pandemic, both platform's assessment results highlighted the drastic decline in academic achievement, commonly referred to as the "COVID Slide."

## iReady® Assessments

### Reading



### Math



iReady® utilizes a three-level tiered placement for assessments. Hollis students completed assessments in the fall of 2020 in a virtual setting, and initial diagnostic data showed that more than half of the students who completed the assessment scored two or more grade levels below their current grade levels.

### iReady® Assessment Tiers

On or Above Grade Level

One Grade Level Below

Two or More Grade Levels Below

Of the 81% of students assessed for reading, only 20% tested on or above grade level. Of the 77% of students assessed for math, only 13% tested on or above grade level.

## STAR Assessments

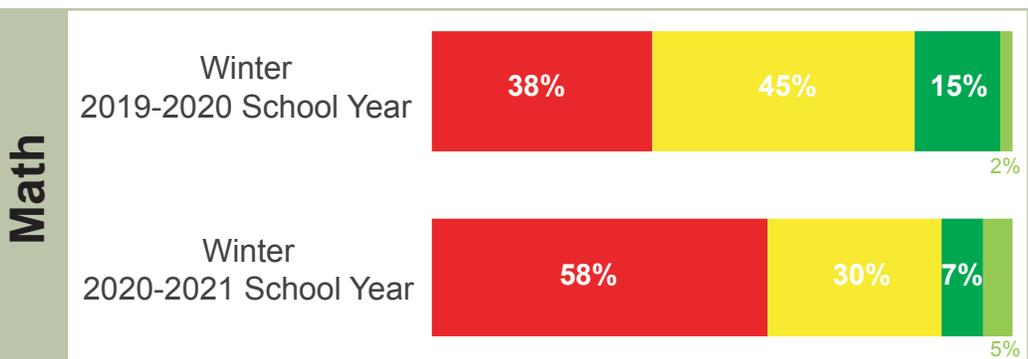
STAR assessments are designed to measure student learning in each grade and determine readiness for the next grade. All STAR assessments are computer-adaptive tests (CATs), which continually adjust the difficulty of each child's test by choosing each test question based on the child's previous response.



Near the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, more than 9 months into the COVID-19 pandemic, a noticeably higher percentage of students scored on the Beginning level in both Literacy and Math.

### Star Assessment Levels

- Distinguished
- Proficient
- Developing
- Beginning



# Plan of Action



To address the new set of challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, Hollis administration strategically developed a course of action that includes interventions to address the social-emotional needs of students, and to increase academic achievement.

## Interventions

### Extended Day

By utilizing processes set in place by the GO Team, and by taking advantage of flexibility and autonomy, Hollis is able to extend the school day by 30 minutes beginning in the fall of 2021, which will provide additional instructional time for students.

### School-wide Intervention Block

Hollis will implement built-in scheduled time during the instructional day, in order to provide students with needed interventions in math and reading.

### Remediation Pullout Classes

Along with the school-wide intervention block, an additional layer of support will be provided to students who need it. With this intervention model, students will be pulled out of the classroom to receive support.

### Looping

In order to promote innovation, deeper teaching, to support young readers in literacy, and to more effectively meet students' academic and social-emotional needs, teachers in key grade levels will begin "looping" with students, the practice of remaining with the same group of students for more than one school year. Consistent staff is essential to make this strategic process successful, which requires a strong, solid approach to faculty retention.

### Social & Emotional Learning Support

Hollis is strengthening wraparound supports to address student needs due to trauma and lack of traditional school structures.



# Persev

**“We are CREW, not passengers.”**



Because of the unwavering generosity and support of the community, the unstable and tumultuous time during the COVID-19 pandemic was made more bearable for Hollis faculty, staff, students, and their families. Partners—like Westside Future Fund, Chick-fil-A, Mercedes-Benz USA, Peachtree Road United Methodist Church, and so many others—came together in a myriad of ways to ensure that families received employment and financial assistance, food, and clothing on a regular basis,

and that students were provided with high-quality academic resources to ensure that engagement in virtual learning remained effective as much as possible.

“Pop-Up Bashes”—sponsored by partners and hosted outside for safety—became a time for students to briefly see beloved teachers, for faculty and staff members to see each other, and for families to receive the support they needed during a turbulent time. Countless supplies and materials were donated by community partners, many of whom further demonstrated their commitment by personally distributing items to Hollis families at these events.



**Our community pulled together during a traumatic time.**



# erance

Since the beginning, Hollis has always persisted in the face of challenges.

The intensity of **perseverance** and **resilience** has proven beneficial since the school's inception, and it will continue to propel it forward, even in the midst of extraordinary circumstances. With sustained commitment from partners and community members, Hollis will continue to thrive and be as innovative, united, and extraordinary as ever.

Especially in the face of adversity, Hollis remains committed to its mission to **expose students to rich experiences that will allow them to dream bigger and lead choice-filled lives**. The school, however, has never worked to fulfill this mission alone, and it is even more determined to see both the mission and vision—to **equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to tap into their talents and unique purpose**—to fruition.



**“A river cuts through rock, not because of its power, but because of its persistence.”**

*Unknown*





Michael R. Hollis Innovation Academy  
225 James P. Brawley Drive NW  
Atlanta, GA 30314

[atlantapublicschools.us/HollisInnovation](http://atlantapublicschools.us/HollisInnovation)  
404-802-8200

**#BecomingTheNext...*Innovation for Change***

## Mission

**We are an innovative school that exposes students to rich experiences that will allow them to dream bigger and lead choice-filled lives.**

## Vision

**We equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to tap into their talents and unique purpose.**



Hollis Innovation Academy is a proud part of Atlanta Public Schools.

**Through the support of philanthropic businesses and community support, Hollis Innovation Academy has become a premier school on the west side of Atlanta. The Hollis Community remains grateful for partners who are so deeply invested in the success of our students!**