



PROGRESS + PURPOSE

The Road to 2026

MERIDIANCHARTERSCHOOLS.ORG



YOU
BELONG
HERE



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Dear Meridian Community,

As we begin a new school year, we are filled with energy, optimism, and a deep commitment to accelerating student growth across our schools. Over the past two years (SY24–SY25), we have engaged in thoughtful reflection on our collective efforts—celebrating what’s working, identifying areas for improvement, and sharpening our focus for the road ahead.

In July 2025, Meridian Charter Schools launched a new academic model grounded in the **5Essentials framework**, a research-based approach developed by the University of Chicago Consortium. This model focuses on five key areas proven to drive student success: strong leadership, collaborative teacher culture, meaningful family engagement, supportive school environments, and high academic expectations. These elements don’t just predict strong schools—they define them. We’ve also added a sixth core element: Continuous Improvement—reflecting our belief that every child deserves a school that is always striving to get better.

Our decision to anchor the Meridian Model in the 5Essentials reflects our belief in research, action, and shared responsibility. While we acknowledge the external challenges our communities face, we are focusing our efforts on what we can shape directly—the day-to-day experiences that shape our students’ lives.

With feedback from school leaders across the network, we’ve developed six **Guiding Principles** to steer this work—Continuous Improvement, Effective Leaders, Collaborative Educators, Ambitious Instruction, a Supportive Environment, and Involved Families and Community Engagement. These principles and our collective vision are outlined in our Progress and Purpose Report, which captures the progress we’ve made and the bold path we’re charting for SY26 and beyond. These Guiding Principles represent a collective strategy—and we’ll continue to refine them together throughout the year.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to our learners and our collective work ahead. Together, we’re building schools where every learner belongs and every learner thrives.



Dr. Joanne M. Tanner

Chief Executive Officer | Superintendent
Meridian Charter Schools

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRINCIPALS



Marivenus Garcia

CICS NORTHTOWN ACADEMY

At CICS Northtown Academy, we are making meaningful progress by bringing the Meridian Guiding Principles—Continuous Improvement, Effective Leadership, Collaborative Educators, Ambitious Instruction, Supportive Environment, and Involved Families & Community Engagement—to life in every conversation, decision, and action with our students, families, and colleagues.

The momentum we're experiencing is fueled by the positive energy of our community and strength in the partnership we're building together. Through purposeful collaboration with all stakeholders, we can give our students more opportunities.



Jacob Morgan

CICS RALPH ELLISON ACADEMY

As a father and high school principal, I want what every parent wants—for their child to thrive in school and beyond. That means supporting our students' academic growth while also nurturing their emotional well-being, sense of purpose, and vision for the future.

James Baldwin reminds us, "Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them." If we want students to become compassionate, resilient, and responsible adults, we must model those qualities every day. Our Meridian Guiding Principles will focus our collective effort and accelerate growth in our schools and for our students. When we pour into the whole child now, we're planting seeds that will yield strong, thoughtful leaders for generations to come.



Dr. David A. Lewis

CICS WRIGHTWOOD ELEMENTARY

The CICS Wrightwood Team has demonstrated remarkable progress by living out our guiding principles in every classroom, hallway, and community space. Through continuous improvement, effective leadership, and collaborative teamwork, we've created a culture of belonging, ambitious instruction, and unwavering support that uplifts every scholar.

Great things are truly happening here because of your commitment—and every student, staff member, and family partner is seen, known, truly valued, and appreciated.



Every Student
***BELONGS* HERE,**
Every Student
***THRIVES* HERE.**

THE MERIDIAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

By prioritizing these actionable domains, Meridian is committed to creating school environments where students feel supported, engaged, and equipped to succeed. Based on multiple rounds of feedback from school leaders, we established six **Guiding Principles** to shape and define our collective work.

This document outlines our reflections and collective work from SY24 and SY25 and our commitment to continuous improvement, effective leadership, educator collaboration, ambitious instruction, establishing supportive environments, and strengthening family and community engagement for SY26 and beyond.

INVOLVED FAMILIES & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In schools with **Involved Families & Community Engagement**, the entire staff builds strong external relationships. Educators believe the best intentions of families and understand that family involvement looks different for everyone.

At Meridian, we actively engage families and community members, fostering collaboration, trust, and shared responsibility to ensure every student's growth and success. Together, we create a network of support that empowers learners and strengthens our collective impact.



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Continuous Improvement in schools is a process of constantly striving to enhance educational practices, student outcomes, and the overall school environment. It involves a proactive, systematic approach to making incremental changes that build upon successes and identify growth opportunities.

At Meridian, it is our responsibility to foster continued growth in pursuit of equitable, high-quality, and research-based educational experiences for all students.



SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

In schools with a **Supportive Environment**, the school is safe, nurturing, demanding, and supportive while respecting the unique racial, linguistic, and cultural identities of students.

At Meridian, we cultivate a culture of care that is personalized and connected to the identity of the students we serve. It is our responsibility to create, provide and design access points to opportunities in and outside of our school community.



EFFECTIVE LEADERS

In schools with **Effective Leaders**, principals and educators work together to implement a shared, aspirational vision. In our schools, people, programs, and resources are focused on a vision for sustained improvement.

At Meridian, visionary leadership is rooted in a deep sense of purpose that aligns actions with long-term goals and core values.



AMBITIOUS INSTRUCTION

In schools with strong **Ambitious Instruction**, classes are challenging and engaging. The instruction is clear, well-structured, and encourages students to build and apply knowledge and critical thinking skills. When combined with a supportive environment, ambitious instruction has the most direct effect on student learning.

At Meridian, it is our responsibility to design and deliver ambitious instruction that challenges minds, inspires growth, and drives academic excellence for every learner.

COLLABORATIVE EDUCATORS

In schools with strong **Collaborative Educators**, all staff collaborate to promote professional growth.

At Meridian, educators are at the heart of the school community, influencing everything from culture to academic outcomes to overall success.





DATA DRIVEN, CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

OVERVIEW

As we prepare to accelerate the growth of student outcomes, we have engaged in thoughtful reflection on our strategic efforts to date (SY24–SY25). This reflection has allowed us to assess what’s working, identify areas for improvement, and chart a course for more intentional and effective action moving forward.

With a continued focus on academic equity, we are committed to ensuring that every student experiences a rigorous, engaging, and supportive school environment that fosters meaningful academic and personal growth.

In July of 2025, Meridian Charter Schools launched the Meridian Principles, grounded in the 5Essentials framework. The 5Essentials is based on over a decade of research by the University of Chicago Consortium, which identified key organizational and cultural factors that consistently influence student achievement. Using research to determine our Guiding Principles, these collective efforts chart a new path for Meridian Charter Schools.

The 5Essentials research found that the presence of strong leadership, collaborative teacher culture, meaningful family engagement, supportive school environments, and high academic expectations were common traits among successful schools—regardless of demographics or socio-economic status. Just as importantly, the absence of these elements was a strong predictor of school underperformance. We selected the 5Essentials as the foundation of our improvement efforts not only because they are grounded in compelling evidence, but also because they represent areas that are within our locus of control. We focus our improvement efforts on what is possible through collective effort.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

DEFINING THE MERIDIAN WAY

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



COMMUNITY MEMBERS...

- Demonstrate collective efficacy—shared beliefs about what is possible for all students
- Use data-driven decision making to enhance continuous improvement efforts
- Develop strategic plans & progress monitoring
- Use student-centered decision making to inform efforts
- Seek to understand and respond to the root cause of issues
- Monitor and maintain equitable and high quality, research-based practice

EFFECTIVE LEADERS



MERIDIAN LEADERS...

- Serve as the primary Instructional Leaders of the school community
- Model shared leadership, embed opportunities for voice and distributive leadership
- Set ambitious goals for high-quality, equitable instruction
- Establish and nurture mutually trusting and respectful relationships
- Advocate for professional advancement and manage resources for sustained program improvement
- Create an environment for safe and innovative learning/risk taking

COLLABORATIVE EDUCATORS



MERIDIAN EDUCATORS...

- Are active partners in school improvement
- Are dedicated and invested to the growth and success of the school community
- Are focused on professional development and reflective practice
- Believe that school improvement is a shared responsibility
- Believe that success is a collaborative effort where we hold ourselves and each other accountable

AMBITIOUS INSTRUCTION



AMBITIOUS INSTRUCTION AT MERIDIAN IS...

- Delivered with a deep understanding of our students —their strengths, needs, and lived experiences
- Research based and thoughtfully curated to meet the needs of students
- Defined, well-paced, and aligned across grade levels with clear expectations for success
- Interactive and encourages students to build and apply knowledge

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT



AT MERIDIAN SCHOOLS, STUDENTS...

- Are respected, incorporated, and celebrated for their intersectional identities in and outside of the classroom
- Feel safe in and around the school
- Have access to expansive opportunities
- Find teachers trustworthy, respectful, and responsive to their academic needs/goals and social-emotional growth
- Have close relationships with adults who serve as key mentors throughout their educational experience
- Are well-supported in planning for high school, college, and other post-high school experiences

INVOLVED FAMILIES & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



AT MERIDIAN SCHOOLS, WE...

- View families as partners in helping students learn and achieve success
- Value parents' input and involvement in their child's success
- Value parents' active voice and engagement in advancing the school's mission
- Build systems to strengthen accessible community resources

Guiding Principles: Data Driven, Continuous Improvement



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

SY24-SY25 PROGRESS

A comprehensive structure for strategic data analysis was established to drive ongoing decision-making, reflection, and course correction at all Meridian Charter Schools as part of our continuous improvement efforts.

01

Development and implementation of strategic plans at each school site, aligned with change management principles and focused on high-impact instructional and culture priorities

02

Transparent data sharing systems instituted across all schools—progress toward academic and culture goals is publicly shared with leaders on a weekly basis to build collective ownership and inform next steps

03

Cross-campus leadership collaboration has been fostered through shared learning around data analysis protocols, trends, and strategy refinement

04

A culture of accountability and responsiveness has been built by linking data conversations directly to changes in practice, resource allocation, and coaching priorities



SY26 PLANNING

To deepen the impact of our data-driven leadership and foster a culture of continuous improvement, systems are being strengthened to ensure data meetings are timely, rigorous, and focused on advancing instructional and cultural equity.

01

Development and implementation of strategic plans at each school site, aligned with change management principles and focused on high-impact instructional and culture priorities, has been strengthened through improved progress monitoring, increased leadership collaboration, and deeper use of school-level data

02

A school-specific data dashboard will be updated and distributed at least four school days prior to each monthly Data Analysis Meeting to allow for pre-meeting review and internalization by participants

03

All Principal-Led Monthly Data Analysis Meetings will occur in collaboration between School and Meridian Leadership to support consistency, identify network-wide trends, and provide strategic thought partnership

04

A network-level data review will take place monthly to assess progress toward Strategic Plan priorities and adjust network-wide practices as needed

Meetings will include regular student work analysis protocols to ensure instruction is aligned to grade-level standards and that all students are receiving access to rigorous, equitable content

HIGH-LEVERAGE INDICATORS:

- Attendance and chronic absenteeism rates
- Exclusionary discipline practices
(e.g., suspension and referral rates)
- Curriculum implementation & standards alignment
- Student on-track rates
- Multilingual learner language acquisition
- IEP compliance and service delivery
- Benchmark interim assessment data
- Subgroup performance
- Additional focus areas will be introduced based on emerging needs



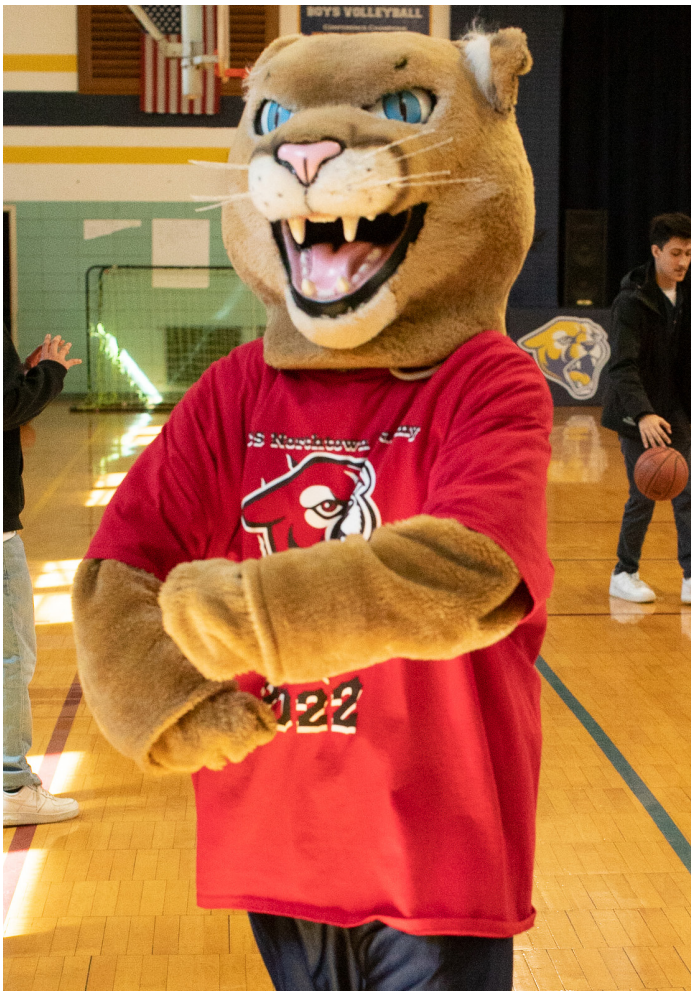
IN 2024

100%

OF MERIDIAN SCHOOLS EARNED A

COMMENDABLE

ISBE RATING



**CONGRATULATIONS
CICS NORTHTOWN ACADEMY**

RANKED
#32

of the Best 50
Non-Selective Public
High Schools in Chicago

RANKED
#10

in Niche's 2025
Best Charter Schools
in Illinois

Guiding Principles: Data Driven, Continuous Improvement



EFFECTIVE LEADERS

SY24-SY25 PROGRESS

Past efforts have centered on strategic planning, rigorous data monitoring, and the continuous refinement of instructional practices, all aimed at driving meaningful and sustained improvements in student outcomes.

- 01 1:1 coaching meetings with Principals weekly
- 02 Principals lead Instructional Leadership Team meetings
- 03 Daily attendance emails shared publicly
- 04 Quarterly data deep dives held in collaboration with network and school leadership teams to review interim assessment performance and update strategic coaching plans accordingly
- 05 Development of Individualized Professional Growth Plans (PGPs) for all school leaders, aligned with instructional priorities, coaching feedback, and leadership development areas
- 06 School leaders provide opportunities for ongoing feedback through walkthroughs with teachers and students and organizing Wildchats with Network Leadership

SY26 PLANNING

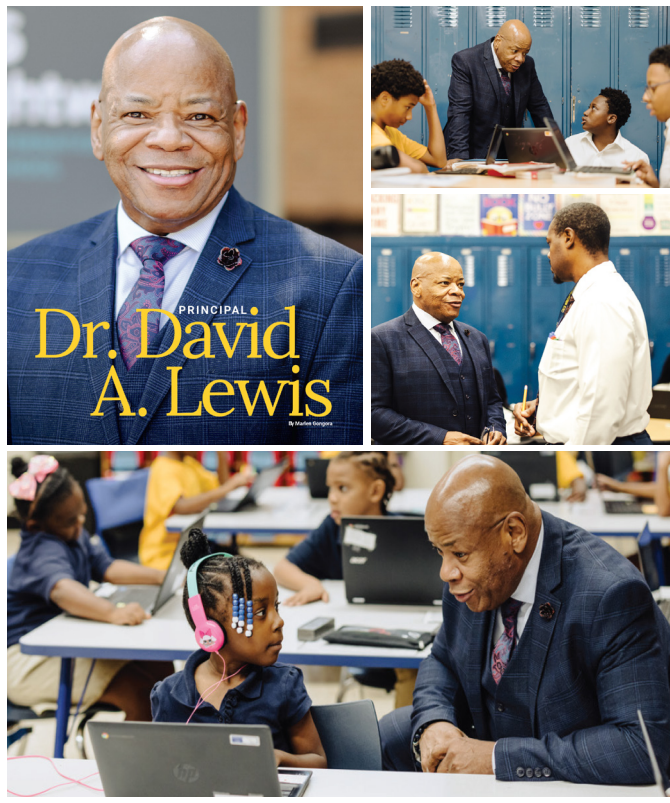
The focus is to deepen the impact of our coaching and leadership development systems by anchoring all support in real-time data, clearly defined success metrics, and a consistent evaluation framework.

- 01 Instructional data analysis embedded in 100% of leadership coaching meetings to ensure practices remain responsive to student performance and aligned to strategic goals
- 02 Full implementation of Individualized Professional Growth Plans (PGPs) for all school leaders, aligned with instructional priorities, coaching feedback, and leadership development areas
- 03 Use of a standardized evaluation rubric for school leaders to ensure transparency, consistency, and alignment with leadership competencies and school improvement priorities
- 04 Ongoing leadership performance conversations informed by the rubric, classroom observations, coaching data, and school-level outcomes
- 05 Development and implementation of comprehensive scope and sequence across content areas to ensure instructional coherence, vertical alignment, and clear learning progressions
- 06 School leaders expand access to opportunities for ongoing feedback through walkthroughs with teachers, students, and families, and in partnership with Network Leadership, create space for meaningful reflection on the Meridian Guiding Principles

HIGH-LEVERAGE INDICATORS:

- Percentage of lessons aligned to priority and power standards to ensure focus on essential content
- Coaching action step completion to measure follow-through and impact
- Observation ratings using a shared instructional rubric to reinforce consistent expectations
- Student growth on interim assessments to connect coaching efforts to academic outcomes
- Lesson plan quality checks to support planning rigor and instructional readiness
- Teacher internalization of the scope and sequence to ensure deep understanding of content progressions and alignment to instructional priorities





**GRACING THE COVER OF
CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS'
SCHOOL LEADER MAGAZINE**
DR. DAVID A. LEWIS

With a daily focus on leading with humanity,
Dr. Lewis makes students and staff alike feel
truly valued and appreciated.



CICS Northtown Academy
Well Organized on University
of Chicago's 5 Essentials

6/7
past years



CICS Ralph Ellison
Academy

+55pts
Increase in Principal:Teacher
Trust on Upbeat Survey



CICS Wrightwood Elementary
Outperformed City & State
Averages in

**ELA Growth
& MATH Growth**

Guiding Principles: Data Driven, Continuous Improvement



COLLABORATIVE EDUCATORS

SY24-SY25 PROGRESS

Efforts aimed to strengthen professional development by more intentionally aligning it with grade-level instruction, effective small group practices, and the implementation of rigorous, standards-aligned content.

01

Each school develops and shares an annual PD cadence, aligned to school goals and shared with staff to promote transparency and alignment

02

The Upbeat Survey was administered twice per year to measure staff engagement and commitment to the school community

03

At CICS Northtown Academy, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) professional development, led by the Special Education team each quarter, equipped staff with inclusive planning strategies that increased student access to rigorous content and improved differentiation practices across classrooms

04

At CICS Northtown Academy, SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) training, led by the Multilingual Learners team, supported teachers in designing and delivering language-rich, content-embedded instruction

05

Cross-campus learning walks were implemented to allow staff to observe best practices and reflect on instructional alignment as a community

06

Teacher-led professional development and Wildchats at CICS Wrightwood have empowered teachers to share expertise, grow in their careers, collaborate with other educators, and shape school-wide instructional practices

07

At Ralph Ellison, we strengthened our professional development by collaborating with teachers to create instructional strategies aligned to ACT readiness—this consistent focus leading to more targeted interventions and increased instructional coherence across classroom

SY26 PLANNING

To strengthen instructional quality and educator growth, we will implement a structured, responsive professional development system grounded in student data and aligned to each school's strategic priorities.

01

Launch of network-led professional development for support staff, focused on aligning Tier I and Tier II student services across campuses

02

Implemented a yearlong professional development scope and sequence at each school, with weekly campus-based sessions focused on instructional priorities, student work analysis, and targeted practice aligned to academic data and school-specific strategic goals

Weekly campus-based PD sessions will emphasize instructional priorities, student work analysis, and targeted practice aligned to school goals

03

Quarterly updates to the PD scope and sequence will allow flexibility to address emerging learning needs and instructional trends

04

PD planning and reflection will be tied to teacher evaluation data and student achievement metrics, reinforcing the connection between educator growth and student outcomes

HIGH-LEVERAGE INDICATORS:

- Expansion of co-teaching models across campuses, with PD and coaching dedicated to building effective general education and special education partnerships
- Cross-role collaboration protocols will be embedded into professional learning, ensuring that educators, student services teams, and support staff work together to address whole-child needs
- Collaboration between classroom teachers and student support staff to drive responsive instruction and intervention
- Professional development plan adjustments informed by school-wide data trends, demonstrating responsiveness to emerging needs
- Implementation of co-teaching or collaborative instructional models, monitored through schedules, observations, and team reflections



Getting Past Stuck:

LAUNCHING THE EQUITY FELLOWSHIP AT MERIDIAN

The Equity Fellowship at Meridian Charter Schools is a professional learning community focused on addressing systemic racism in our schools and across the district that negatively affects student learning and outcomes. Participants explore racial equity resources and strategies to improve the educational experiences of Black and Brown students.

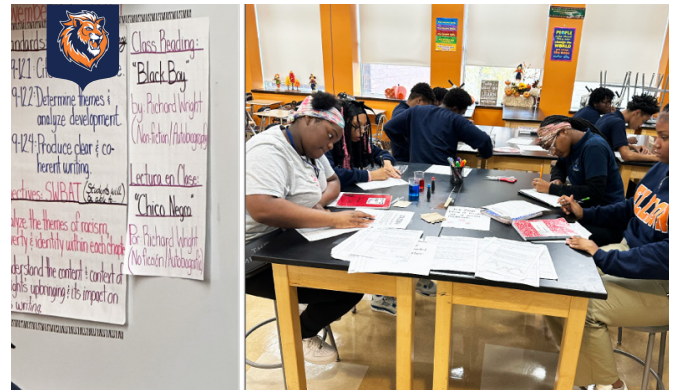
Our program aims to help educators understand how to cultivate racial equity in their schools, develop the capacity to advance it, and disrupt systems where racism persists.



CICS Wrightwood Elementary Hosts

PEER POWER DAYS

Teachers have the opportunity to visit one another's classrooms, observe and give feedback aimed at improving practice.



Back to Basics:

CICS RALPH ELLISON HOST NETWORK LEARNING WALK

CICS Ralph Ellison is focused on implementing clear systems to enhance the educational environment, freeing up instructors to focus on what matters most to student outcomes

**Collaborative Educators
is the Strongest Indicator
on the 5Essentials Across
all Meridian Schools**

Collaborative, Certified & Committed Teachers

95%

MCS Average for
Certified Teachers

90%

Certified Teacher
Retention

Guiding Principles: Data Driven, Continuous Improvement



AMBITIOUS INSTRUCTION

SY24-SY25 PROGRESS

For High Schools, with the transition to the ACT assessment last year, staff engaged in targeted practice to deepen their understanding of the ACT standards and conducted curriculum alignment exercises to identify gaps and make necessary instructional adjustments. For Elementary, a similar focus remained targeting curriculum usage, alignment, and progress monitoring.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>01 Curriculum audits were conducted to evaluate instructional materials for quality, cultural relevance, and standards alignment</p> | <p>05 UDL-focused PD sessions, led by the Special Education team, helped educators reframe lesson design to meet the needs of diverse learners</p> |
| <p>02 Adopted ACT-aligned Power and Illinois Priority Standards to prioritize foundational content and build vertical alignment across grade levels</p> | <p>06 SIOP training, facilitated by the MLL team, supported teachers in building lessons that included language objectives, scaffolds, and academic vocabulary to make complex texts accessible</p> |
| <p>03 Implemented small group instruction and personalized tools like IXL, providing targeted support to address individual learning needs</p> | <p>07 Began expanding co-teaching models to support students with disabilities and multilingual learners in general education classrooms—ensuring high expectations and full access for all students</p> |
| <p>04 Administered interim assessments, including i-Ready and ACT-aligned diagnostics, to monitor progress and inform data-driven instructional planning (Academic Approach)</p> | <p>08 Drafted Instructional Vision, grounded in feedback from school leaders and classroom observations across campuses; including a set of guiding principles that articulate what high-quality instruction looks and sounds like at Meridian, with a focus on grade-level access, cultural relevance, and student engagement</p> |

SY26 PLANNING

To deepen the impact of our data-driven leadership and foster a culture of continuous improvement, systems are being strengthened to ensure data meetings are timely, rigorous, and focused on advancing instructional and cultural equity.

PLANNED ENHANCEMENTS INCLUDE:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>01 All content areas will implement quarterly-aligned Power Standards that serve as non-negotiables for instruction, emphasizing state-tested skills, foundational knowledge, and complex performance tasks</p> | <p>05 Launch of the Instructional Vision that will anchor our approach to teaching and learning across the network. Key components of the Instructional Vision include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear definition of rigorous, grade-level instruction across disciplines • Expectations for culturally responsive teaching and classroom environment • Integration of UDL and language supports across all planning and delivery • High-impact instructional moves grounded in real-time student data • A shared commitment to reflection, collaboration, and continuous improvement |
| <p>02 Writing will be embedded across the curriculum, fostering critical thinking and communication in all disciplines</p> | <p>06 Quantitative data usage, including i-Ready, ACT-aligned interims, and classroom assessments, will drive instructional decisions at every level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will analyze student work and assessment results to adjust instruction, with support from leadership and coaching • Data dashboards will track Power Standard mastery, identify gaps, and guide timely reteaching and enrichment |
| <p>03 All unit and lesson plans will undergo pre-review by school leadership to ensure alignment before delivery, supporting instructional readiness</p> | |
| <p>04 School leaders and ILTs will be trained to lead data-driven instructional planning cycles, linking data to targeted action steps, coaching moves, and PD sessions</p> | |



At Meridian Charter Schools,
Ambitious Instruction has been rated

STRONG OR VERY STRONG

4/5

On University of Chicago's
5 Essentials Surveys from SY17-25

MERIDIAN CHARTER SCHOOLS SAW ACTIVE GROWTH

100%

of Teachers Agree that the Principal
at their School Communicates a Clear
Vision for Teaching and Learning at
CICS Wrightwood

+42_{PTS}

Increase in Instructional
Leadership on Upbeat Survey at
CICS Ralph Ellison Academy

98%

Graduation Rate at CICS Northtown
Academy, Outperforming CPS
and Charter Averages



CICS NORTHTOWN ACADEMY NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

The NHS enshrines four
pillars at its heart:

- Scholarship
- Service
- Leadership
- Character

Guiding Principles: Data Driven, Continuous Improvement



SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

SY24-SY25 PROGRESS

Over the past two years, we have taken measurable steps to strengthen the conditions for a supportive school environment.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>01 Launched targeted mentoring programs, including a CICS Wrightwood site-based initiative to increase student belonging and adult-student connection</p> <p>02 Facilitated weekly leadership and bi-annual staff “WildChats” to foster responsive, reflective leadership practices, and ensure alignment across campuses around climate and student support priorities</p> <p>03 Expanded college and scholarship support with stronger advising systems and intentional FAFSA/application coaching</p> <p>04 SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) training, led by the Multilingual Learners team, supported teachers in designing and delivering language-rich, content-embedded instruction</p> <p>05 Reviewed exclusionary discipline practices across campuses quarterly, including suspension and referral data, to identify patterns of disproportionality and inequity</p> <p>In response, schools began implementing alternative approaches such as restorative practices, reflection spaces, and re-entry protocols to promote accountability, support student growth, and minimize lost instructional time</p> | <p>06 Established an Equity Fellowship, creating space for school-based teams to investigate and act on equity gaps</p> <p>Fellowship participants engaged in a cycle of root cause analysis, collecting qualitative and quantitative data to identify systemic barriers, define a problem of practice, and implement site-specific action plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic absenteeism • Increasing student engagement by reducing time spent outside of class • Strengthening staging structures to ensure stable and effective instruction <p>07 CICS Ralph Ellison Academy partnered with Communities In Schools (CIS) to provide integrated student supports that address barriers to success both inside and outside the classroom</p> <p>They also partnered with True Believers Community Connections, an organization dedicated to empowering youth and families through community engagement, mentorship, and supportive services; through this partnership, REA established a referral system that connects students to mentoring, leadership development, and wellness resources aligned to their individual needs</p> |
|---|---|

SY26 PLANNING

We are committed to continue to invest in building safe, affirming school environments that empower every student to succeed.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>01 Launch the MTSS Attendance Initiative, grounded in real-time data, early intervention systems, and a shared network framework for Tier I-III responses</p> <p>02 Expand the mentoring and adult-student relationship framework, including group mentoring, peer leadership, and affinity space development</p> <p>03 Formalize the Advisory program, with a clear instructional scope and sequence, defined outcomes, and staff training aligned to student engagement, SEL, and post-secondary readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin network-wide implementation of the Advisory vision, including a planning template, aligned weekly objectives, and guidance on SEL integration, post-secondary planning, and relationship-building | <p>04 Continue to norm roles and practices for counselors and social workers across campuses, including intervention protocols, caseload expectations, and collaboration with instructional teams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define and operationalize the role of student services, including the unique but interconnected responsibilities of deans, social workers, and counselors in supporting student growth, engagement, and success <p>05 Use school-level climate data to drive action planning, professional learning, and responsive systems improvement</p> <p>06 Strengthen and scale restorative practices including consistent use of reflection spaces, structured re-entry processes, and staff training on relational approaches to behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline data will be reviewed regularly to monitor impact, ensure equity, and adjust supports as needed |
|--|--|



Collectively, Meridian
Charter Schools has served

**35,000
Students**

over the last 20+ years

930

College Credits Earned

**Based on data from 2025*

11TH & 12TH

Graders Earned an Average of
2 College Credits per Student*

**Based on data from 2025*

500:1

Students to Social Worker,
4x Better than the National Average



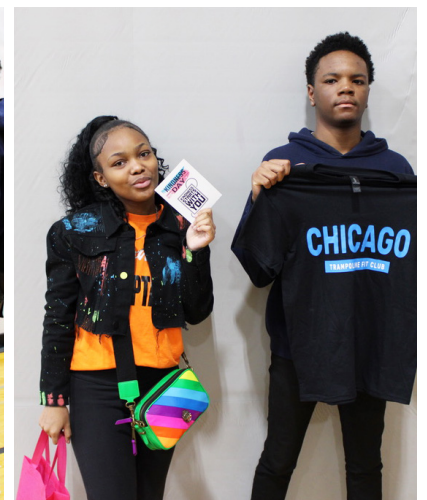
CHARACTER EDUCATION AT CICS WRIGHTWOOD ELEMENTARY

Each month, the school teaches and actively models a specific character trait. Additionally, our Wildcat Week Ahead messages include information and support around mental health and wellbeing for staff.



MENTAL HEALTH FAIR AT CICS RALPH ELLISON ACADEMY

Project REACH conducted a Mental Health Awareness Fair at CICS Ralph Ellison Academy.



Guiding Principles: Data Driven, Continuous Improvement



INVOLVED FAMILIES & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SY24-SY25 PROGRESS

Intentional efforts were made to remove barriers and increase family access, voice, and involvement.

01

Began sending all core school-wide and network communications in multiple languages, increasing accessibility for families who speak languages other than English

02

Led and supported the Bilingual Advisory Committee (BAC) at CICS Northtown Academy, creating space for Multilingual Learner (MLL) families to engage in programming, advocacy, and feedback

03

Partnered with the Special Education team to create new systems of communication and transparency for families of students with disabilities, including:

- Quarterly Special Education Newsletters
- Family communication regarding IEPs/504s, transition planning, post-secondary planning, and inclusive practices

04

Held regular engagement events such as **Pearls of Wisdom, Tied to Greatness, Culture Fest, honors ceremonies, Grandparents Day, and Student Shadow Days** to build community and celebrate students

05

Launched the Meridian Monthly newsletter, providing families and community partners across all schools with consistent updates, highlights, and opportunities to get involved

06

CICS Wrightwood re-established the PTA, formalizing a structure for family leadership and school collaboration, and providing support with arrival, dismissal, lunch, and as needed throughout the day.

07

Engaged families and stakeholders with the Board of Education, inviting public comment and providing updates on network initiatives and student experiences

08

Family contributions and donations have supported community events in collaboration with our school and locally-owned businesses

SY26 PLANNING

We are committed to deepening partnerships with families and community stakeholders through inclusive, consistent, and culturally responsive practices.

PLANNED ENHANCEMENTS INCLUDE:

01

Continue expanding translation access, ensuring all key communications are available across all campuses

02

Strengthen the role of the Special Education team in family engagement, including co-hosted events, clearer service roadmaps, and consistent two-way communication

03

Deepen collaboration with BAC, using feedback to inform instructional practices, MLL programming, and school-based decision-making

04

Define and publish a Meridian Family Engagement Framework, outlining expectations for communication, family partnership, and feedback loops

05

Enhance collaboration between student services and families, including counselors, deans, and social workers working together to ensure wraparound supports are family-informed

06

Increase the visibility and voice of families in governance and leadership, including participation in board sessions, committees, and feedback forums

07

Build out a yearlong calendar of high-impact engagement events, celebrating cultural heritage, student achievement, and shared milestones

08

Expand enrollment access through SEVIS certification, which enables Meridian to serve international students with F-1 visas, including children of parents studying in the U.S. on student visas—strengthening our commitment to inclusivity and global access to high-quality education

MERIDIAN CHARTER SCHOOLS IS PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY:

- 17** Community Partners
- 8** Local and City Colleges
- 150** Colleges and Universities Support our college fairs



AT CICS NORTHTOWN ACADEMY

OVER 50% OF STUDENTS

ARE MULTI-LINGUAL LEARNERS WITH 49
LANGUAGES SPOKEN



OUT OF 45 SCHOOLS, CICS RALPH ELLISON
ACADEMY WAS RECOGNIZED FOR

BEST PROGRAM & BEST REPORTS



Pearls of Wisdom

EMPOWERING YOUNG WOMEN THROUGH CONFIDENCE & LEADERSHIP

The Pearls of Wisdom event at CICS Wrightwood marks a significant rite of passage for 8th-grade girls as they transition into upperclassmen.

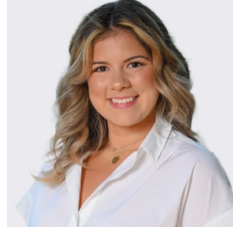
Thank You to Our Contributors



David Alfafara
Director of Human Resources
Meridian Charter Schools



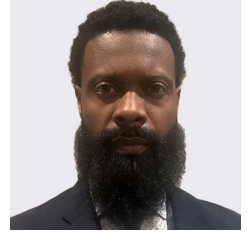
Sarah Allworth
Special Education
Coordinator
Meridian Charter Schools



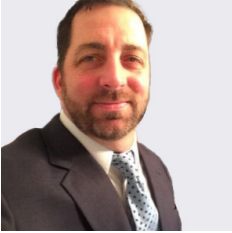
Maria Carolina Bastos
Deputy Chief
Education Officer
Meridian Charter Schools



Valencia Bush
Assistant Principal
CICS Wrightwood Elementary



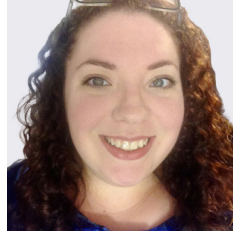
Dennison Cordell
Assistant Principal
CICS Ralph Ellison Academy



Jim Fusco
Assistant Principal
CICS Northtown Academy



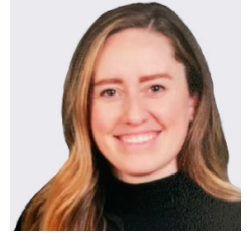
Marivenus Garcia
Principal
CICS Northtown Academy



Rebecca Glaser
Multilingual Education
Coordinator
CICS Northtown Academy



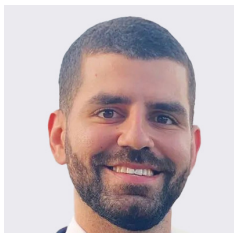
Daniel Goodwin
Assistant Principal
CICS Wrightwood Elementary



Kira Haley
Special Education Manager
Meridian Charter Schools



Jazmyne Jackson
Special Education
Coordinator
Meridian Charter Schools



Ariel Kattan
Instructional Coach
CICS Northtown Academy



Katherine Kreiling
Engagement and Partnerships
Coordinator
Meridian Charter Schools



Dr. David A. Lewis
Principal
CICS Wrightwood Elementary



Eileen McBride
Instructional Coach/Athletic
Coordinator
CICS Northtown Academy



Luke McShane
Managing Director of
Continuous Improvement
Meridian Charter Schools



Jacob Morgan
Principal
CICS Ralph Ellison Academy



**Dr. Rashida
Restaino-Daniels**
Assistant Principal
CICS Ralph Ellison Academy



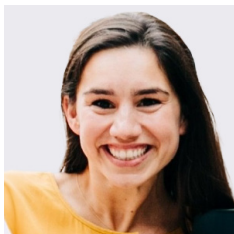
Jose Santiago
Assistant Principal
CICS Northtown Academy



Kelly Smith
Chief Education Officer
Meridian Charter Schools



Dr. Joanne M. Tanner
Chief Executive Officer
Meridian Charter Schools



Vicki Tsirtsis
Chief Operating Officer
Meridian Charter Schools

