

Summary of the 2023 Georgia Legislative Session

Dekalb County School District's 2023 Legislative Priorities

QBE Funding

As part of the largest ever public education budget of \$13.1 billion, the General Assembly fully funded QBE in the FY 24 budget.

School Safety and Security

- The FY 23 budget provided security grants in the amount of \$50,000 per school.
- HB 147, the “Safe Schools Act,” requires schools to conduct an intruder alert drill by Oct. 1 each year and report results of the drill to GEMA, and adds GEMA to who schools must provide their safety plans to. The bill also directs the PSC, GEMA, the Department of Juvenile Justice, and the Georgia Public Safety Training Center to create a school safety and anti-gang endorsement for certified personnel.

Speed Cameras

Several bills were considered on this issue (SB 38, SB 217, HB 301, HB 348), some removing schools from the decision-making process, some further restricting cameras – none passed.

2023 Legislative Priorities cont.

Public School Employees retirement system (PSERS) – Enhancing Retirement Benefits

- Senate Bill 105 relates to retirement benefits payable upon normal, early, or delayed retirement in the PSERS, and would increase the minimum benefit multiplier rate.
- Senate Bill 240 requires ERS to survey school districts to determine which offer Social Security benefits or an alternative qualified plan in lieu of Social Security to PSERS members.
- The FY 24 budget has a 5.1 percent raise for bus drivers, nutrition workers, and school counselors; and custodians were given a \$1000 salary supplement.

Annexation and School Boundaries

HB156 was a local bill that provides that after annexation by the City of Buford, the boundaries of the City of Buford school system shall be extended only by the adoption of a Local Act or an IGA.

Tax Abatements

SB171, is legislation to enact recommendations of the Senate Study Committee on Development Authorities, including to adopt local legislation regarding specific individual development authorities. 3

2023 Legislative Priorities cont.

Mental Health and Counseling Needs

- The FY 24 budget included \$26.9 million to fund school counselor ratio at 1:450 for all student categories
- HB 520 was this year's mental health bill, but it stalled in the Senate

College and Career Readiness

Two items were passed, SB 86, which allows eligible students participating in dual enrollment to access HOPE career grant funds for certain CTAE courses even if they have met the cap for dual enrollment courses and SR175, which creates the Joint Study Committee on Dual Enrollment for Highly Skilled Talent at Younger Ages.

Early Childhood Education

SR 144 would create the Senate expanding Early Childhood Education Study Committee.

Other Budget Highlights

FY '23

- \$50 million to the State Health Benefit Plan to facilitate a phase-in of the increased employer contribution for non-certified insurance.
- Moving the GNETS program to the QBE formula in FY 2025.
- \$977,508,409 in 'American Recovery Plan (ARP) Act' funds designated for learning loss.

FY '24

- \$50,000 for feminine hygiene grants
- \$3.5 million for dyslexia screening from SB 48 in 2019
- \$6.3 million for the cost of breakfast and lunch for reduced-paying students
- \$251,000 for Governor's Office of Student Achievement to provide personnel and operations for the Georgia Council on Literacy (SB 211) and \$749,000 for them to support the implementation of effective literacy methods, including digital curriculum for grades PreK-5 .

Other Legislation of Interest that passed

- **HB 538**, which aims to increase the number of students reading proficiently by the end of third grade. Components of the bill include a required reading assessment of all K-3 students to be given three times a year, training for all K-3 teachers in the science of reading, and the use of high-quality instructional materials for reading as approved by the State Board of Education.
- **SB 211**, establishes the “Georgia Council on Literacy.” which will include 30 members, and expire in December 2026. Its duties will include, providing a literacy outcomes report to the Governor and legislators, evaluating best practices, creating a common metric for K-12 literacy scores, and making recommendations to improve literacy outcomes.
- **SB 204**, provides certain criteria and recognition for school accrediting agencies like Cognia. The bill included some language from HB 506, regarding a process that would allow school districts to appeal accrediting reviews. Academic performance would account for at least 65 percent of the accrediting review, and financial efficiency could account for up to 35 percent of the review.
- **HB 340**, provides for daily planning periods for K-12 teachers; limits school board members from discussing certain individual personnel matters with school superintendents and school personnel.

Other Legislation of Interest that did not pass

- **HB 101**, as amended increases the cap for donations to SSOs for vouchers from \$120 million per year to \$130 million per year for 2024 and all subsequent years.
- **HB 318**, reestablishes the Office of Charter School Compliance under the State Charter Schools Commission. It was amended in the Senate to allow schools to enter into performance contracts for energy saving (HB 306) and to allow eligibility for capital outlay grants for low-wealth school systems (HB 81).
- **HB 338**, “Student Technology Protection Act,” requires filtering on school networks and devices.
- **SB 32**, known as “Alyssa’s Law,” this bill would require school systems to implement a mobile panic alert system that can connect in real-time to local law enforcement.
- **SB 208/SR 189**, allows local school systems to impose and collect development impact fees
- **SB 233**, the “Georgia Promise Scholarship Act,” provides for the establishment of promise scholarship accounts to be funded by the state in the amount of \$6,000.00 per school year for each participating student.

QUESTIONS