

DeKalb County Board of Education

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LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2024

The DeKalb County School Board works together annually to identify, define, and adopt Legislative Priorities that support the District's vision, mission, goals, and strategic direction. Through the following 2024 legislative priorities, we collectively advocate for policies that directly improve the school experience for students, improve the working environment for education professionals, and safeguard and advance the system of public education in DeKalb County, Georgia. The Board asks the DeKalb Legislative Delegation to support the Legislative Priorities in the 2024 session of the Georgia General Assembly and ensure that no legislation is introduced that would impede the Board's ability to govern the school system.

QBE Formula

QBE Formula DCSD supports initiatives that protect and stabilize the ability of school boards to generate funding for education, and that do not restrict the ability of school boards to direct those resources to students, as necessary. This substantive reform should begin with modernizing funding for transportation and establishing an increased and fully funded weight for students identified as Economically Disadvantaged, much in the same manner that Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners also receive a substantive increase in assigned funding. **Therefore, DCSD requests the QBE Equalization formula under O.C.G.A. Title 20, Ch. 2, Art. 6 be amended to account for the present-day costs of buses/fuel, and the significant impact of poverty.**

Retired Teachers Returning to Work

Under HB 385, passed in the 2022 legislative session, retired teachers who met certain criteria were able to return to work without impacting their retirement benefits. However, this criterion includes that teachers are not eligible if they have been retired for less than one year, and that they must be teaching in a high needs area as defined by the relevant RESA. **DCSD requests that those criteria be amended to allow teachers to return sooner than one year from retirement, preferably 30 days; and to expand the high needs areas to all content areas.**

Abatements and Other Tax Diversions

School districts should be granted representation on any development authorities which have the power to grant abatements or other diversions from school districts of school taxes and standing to object to any proposed abatements. Further, school districts should be allowed to limit the amount of a reduction in any single abatement or similar action as well as impose an aggregate limit for all such abatements and similar actions. This could be accomplished by allowing the General Assembly to adopt local legislation regarding specific individual development authorities. This was recommended by a 2022 Senate study committee and originally included in SB 171, which remains pending in the Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee. **DCSD requests that the language authorizing local legislation be placed back in SB 171.**

Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS)

The State should support a sustainable retirement program for all employees under the Public-School Employees Retirement System (PSERS), especially for school district bus drivers, and custodial, maintenance, and food service personnel. The fact that there is such a large disparity between the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) and PSERS gives the appearance that there are two classes of employees. DCSD provides a significant matching to 403b (more than any other system) which is only for PSERS employees and not TRS. This makes up some of the difference. However, to truly make this sustainable **DCSD requests the law be amended to allow employees under PSERS to participate in TRS.**

Expediting of Permitting for School District Capital Improvement Projects

DCSD requests the General Assembly require municipal and county permitting offices to provide expedited service to school district applications for capital improvement projects. Specifically, require an initial response to applications within ten business days; plan revision responses within an additional five business days; and inspections to occur within two business days of any required application/plan revisions, such inspection may be conducted by a registered third-party inspector at the discretion and expense of the school district. If the local government fails to comply with the required time frames the submitted plans shall be automatically approved.

Pay increase for DeKalb Board of Education Members

The DeKalb Board of Education requests that state lawmakers consider legislation to give DeKalb Board of Education members a pay raise. The current pay level is \$18,000 plus a \$450 per diem/mtg. A pay increase from \$18,000 to \$30,000 would ensure that the position of board member remains attractive to committed and capable individuals interested in becoming future members of the board.