

DeKalb Board of Education

2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The DeKalb County Board of Education is committed to advancing public education so that all students have the tools and resources to reach their full potential. The Board recognizes the critical role of legislation and the district's strategic plan in shaping the educational landscape, and members are dedicated to advocating for policies that prioritize student learning. The Board firmly believes any education-related legislation should be carefully considered to maintain high standards, allowing educators to focus on meaningful teaching and learning. These priorities reflect the issues the Board sees as vital to the success of DeKalb County's students and school community.

QBE Formula

A major overhaul of the QBE formula is needed and has been discussed for many years. However, since such an overhaul does not appear imminent, a smaller and targeted reform should be undertaken to modernize funding for pupil transportation and establish 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, DeKalb County School District (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.**

Mental Health and Counseling Needs

Student mental health and social-emotional learning continue to be challenges in the classroom. Additional resources to support these challenges include, but are not limited to, increased state funding for counselors at a rate of 1:250, social workers at 1:400, and psychologists at 1:500, as well as a mental health coordinator for each school district. **DCSD urges the General Assembly to appropriately fund School Counselors and other Mental Health supports.**

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. Further, some progress was made in the 2024 legislative session, with the passage of SB 105, which increased the benefit multiplier from \$16.50 to \$17.00 per creditable year of service for PSERS, for school bus drivers, custodians, maintenance personnel, and food service workers and removes the cap so the PSERS board of trustees can adjust benefits as they see fit. However, to truly make this sustainable **DCSD requests the law be amended to allow employees under PSERS to participate in TRS.**

School Safety and Security

Safety for our students and employees is a continuous effort. There are costs to maintain security systems; provide the statutorily required training for school administrators, teachers, and support staff including custodians and bus drivers on school violence prevention, school security, school threat assessment, mental health awareness, and school emergency planning best practices; and meet new challenges as they occur. **DCSD requests the General Assembly to continue to fund the annual categorical grant for school safety.**

Early Childhood Education and Literacy

The goal of Early Childhood Education is to provide children with strategies that help them develop the emotional, social, and cognitive skills needed to become lifelong learners. For children in lower socioeconomic environments who are unable to access these programs, it can be challenging for them to enter a school system and thrive academically and emotionally. Additional support for early learning can be achieved through universal Pre-K funding, improved funding for Pre-K teacher salaries and funding for a paraprofessional in all kindergarten classrooms. Integral to this support for many of these children is tackling early literacy challenges, which can be greatly assisted by having a literacy coach in each school. **DCSD urges increased funding for all these early childhood education and early literacy programs, with a focus on children in high needs communities.**

DeKalb County Board of Education

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