

DeKalb County Public Schools: Comprehensive Access & Opportunity Audit

Presentation to Board of Education

May 2025

Audit Framework



What is Educational Access & Opportunity?

Educational Access & Opportunity (A&O) means ensuring all students have the resources, support, and pathways they need to succeed and reach their full potential, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Educational A&O is....

- Providing each student with individualized resources
- Providing all necessary support to meet desired expectations
- Demanding academic rigor and necessary resources
- Providing each student with the opportunity to receive the full benefits of education

Educational A&O is not...

- Removing necessary resources from students
- Lowering expectations
- Reducing academic rigor
- Engaging in segregation or providing any programming that allows one race but not another or otherwise separates students, faculty, or staff based on race

What is an Access & Opportunity audit?

An access and opportunity audit is a study of an institution's policies, programs, and practices, in pursuit of **educational access and opportunity for all students.**

Slide 3

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Add a slide after this with team pics and PCG role

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Public Consulting Group LLC

Who is PCG?

At PCG, we address **problems with solutions that matter.**

- *Clients include state agencies, municipalities and school districts*
- *Education contracts in 49 States, plus 22 of the 30 largest US districts*
- *Our team members are former school, district and state education leaders.*

Since 1986, we pride ourselves on being the **leading public section management consulting firm** that partners with education, health and human services agencies to improve lives.

PCG's Role

- PCG serves as an **objective third-party** in conducting the audit.
- As such, PCG makes **independent decisions** about research design, protocol development, sampling, and analysis methodology.

PCG Project Team



Ana Archibald



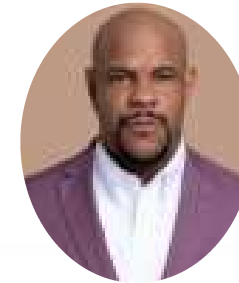
Cassandre Davis, Ed.D.



Lenworth Williamson



Lauren Monz



Paul Wilson



Rita Lulo Abinader



Audit Methodology



Mixed Methods Research Design

Quantitative Analysis

PCG analyzed a range of quantitative data items, including:

- Student, teacher, and administrator demographics
- Georgia Milestones results
- Graduation rates
- Participation in advanced coursework and SAT & ACT tests
- Theme & magnet school enrollment
- Disciplinary referrals
- School funding
- School enrollment and capacity
- School building age

In our quantitative analysis, PCG disaggregated data by student demographic subgroups.

Qualitative Analysis

Phenomenological Approach: Researchers use the phenomenological approach to grasp the stakeholder experience and the meaning making of the experience (Creswell, 2013).

Qualitative Coding: PCG used ATLAS.ti to code qualitative data. PCG's analysis was guided by six key focus areas. These categories serve as a consistent coding framework, allowing PCG to identify themes, understand stakeholder perspectives, and align findings with audit goals.

Case Study Approach

Case Study Approach: Researchers use case studies to investigate an unknown, contemporary issue or to find a better understanding of a process in which several variables are pertinent to the case (Glesne, 2010). Case studies rely “on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (Yin, 2003, p.17).

Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson.
Glesne, C. (2010). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Allyn and Bacon
Yin, R.K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



Data and Document Review

PCG conducted a review of pre-existing data and documents within each research focus area. Data and documents included:

Organizational Leadership	Instructional & Programmatic Opportunities	Professional Learning & Growth	Resource Distribution	Family Engagement	School Climate
- Strategic plan - Student handbooks - Organizational charts - DCSD reports - Administrator & staff surveys - District demographics	- School parent/student handbook - School choice options - Code of student conduct - Course and programs by school - Extracurricular options - Student assessment outcomes - Graduation rates - IEP assignment - Enrollment at theme and magnet schools - Staff, parent, student, admin survey	- Professional development offerings - Professional development self-assessment process - Staff, parent, admin survey	- Federal, state, and local per pupil expenditures - Construction & building financial documents - Budget book - Donation transactions for all schools - Teacher certificate and years of experience - Staff, parent, student, admin survey	- Family engagement framework - Family & community empowerment & grants/partnerships - Staff, parent, student, admin survey	- Previous climate surveys - School-based activities and events - Staff, parent, student, admin survey - Bullying data - Discipline data

Stakeholder Engagement and School Visits

Survey

PCG conducted a **survey of middle and high school students, families, instructional staff, and school administrators**. The family survey was offered in 16 languages.

Stakeholder	Responses
Middle and High School Students	16,891
Families	1,653
Instructional Staff	4,737
School Administrators	320

Interviews

PCG conducted **individual and small group interviews** with district leaders and staff.

Stakeholder	Individuals Engaged
District Leaders and Board Members	20
District Staff	42

Focus Groups

PCG conducted **in-person and virtual focus groups** with district stakeholders.

Stakeholder	Focus Groups	Individuals Engaged
Students	8	100
Families	8	58
Staff	64	8

School Visits

PCG conducted **classroom visits**. Classrooms and schools were selected by PCG and located across all 7 districts.

	Number Visited
Schools	34
Classroom	68



Priority Recommendations



Priority Recommendations

Based on the findings of this Access & Opportunity Audit, PCG recommends DeKalb County School District prioritize the following items for immediate implementation and focus:

- 1. Districtwide Access & Opportunity Vision**
- 2. Access & Opportunity Accountability Framework**
- 3. School-Based Access & Opportunity Integration**





Recommendation 1

Districtwide Access and Opportunity Vision

Slide 11

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Review the remainder of the slides and see what we want to highlight/cut - [@Davis, Cassandre]

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Priority Recommendation: Districtwide A&O Vision

1. Set and communicate a clear vision for access and opportunity across DCSD.

- Define and communicate a comprehensive access and opportunity vision to all stakeholders.
- Include how the vision will be enacted upon by each stakeholder, i.e., staff will use instructional strategies based on student needs; administrators will create programs based on student needs, etc.
- Clearly communicate the connection between access and opportunity, academic achievement, and social emotional wellness for each student.
- Engage a diverse range of stakeholders to contribute to and build the shared vision, including students.
- Make the access and opportunity vision statement highly visible in district's communications and materials in multiple languages.



Priority Recommendation: Districtwide A&O Vision

Related Findings

There is a lack of shared understanding of access and opportunity.

- Among board members, district staff, school leaders, teachers, and families, there is **confusion about what access and opportunity means in practice**, which was indicated in respective focus groups and surveys.
- Despite strong district-level vision regarding access and opportunity, **implementation varies widely** across schools and departments, as noted by school leaders and district staff in respective focus groups.

"We need more messaging across the district so it travels down to everyone, so everyone understands what it means."

- School Leader

There is a gap in perception between students and staff.

- **While 78% of administrators believe the curriculum reflects diverse cultures, only 47% of students agree** that the "curriculum reflects diverse perspectives", according to administrator and student survey data, indicating a gap between leadership perceptions and student experiences. Students consistently express that **instructional materials and classroom discussions lack multicultural representation**, as reported in student focus groups and open-ended survey responses.
- **67% of student survey responses across DCSD** report that their teachers **have high expectations** for them, compared to **81% of staff** reporting having high expectations for every student regardless of background. Student survey responses vary by student race/ethnicity.



A blue-tinted photograph of children in a science laboratory. In the foreground, a young girl with curly hair and safety goggles is smiling and looking at a beaker. To her left, another child is also wearing safety goggles and working with a beaker. In the background, several other children are visible, some wearing safety goggles. The scene is set in a laboratory with various glassware on a table.

Recommendation 2 Access and Opportunity Accountability Framework

Priority Recommendation: A&O Accountability Framework

2. Develop and implement a districtwide access and opportunity accountability framework.

- Establish **specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) key performance indicators to track progress towards the district's access and opportunity vision**. These KPIs should go beyond traditional academic metrics and include measures related to resource allocation, access to advanced coursework, disciplinary outcomes, participation in extracurricular activities, student support services utilization, and stakeholder experience.
- Develop robust systems for **collecting and interpreting disaggregated data related to the identified indicators** ensuring data accuracy, security, and accessibility. Implement processes for analyzing this data to identify disparities, monitor trends, and understand the impact of implemented initiatives on different student groups.
- Establish a schedule for regularly reviewing the collected data and reporting on progress towards the access and opportunity goals. This reporting should be transparent and shared with all stakeholders, highlighting both successes and areas needing improvement. These reports should **inform ongoing adjustments to strategies and resource allocation**.
- **Embed the access and opportunity accountability framework within existing district evaluation processes for schools and administrators**. This ensures progress towards access and opportunity outcomes is a valued component of performance and defines clear expectations and responsibilities at all levels of the organization.



Priority Recommendation: A&O Accountability Framework

Related Finding: Georgia Milestones

There are large gaps in the Georgia Milestones proficiency rates between student demographic groups in 2024.

Proficiency rates are defined as the percent of students receiving a *Proficient Learner* or *Distinguished Learner* score.

In the table below, **positive numbers** indicate the number of percentage points this demographic groups scored **higher than the District average**. **Negative numbers** indicate the number of percentage points this demographic group scored **lower than the District average**.

Student Groups	In comparison to...	
	ELA All students, grades 3-8 2023-2024	MATH All Students, grades 3-8 2023-2024
Students with IEPs	-24	-18
English Learners	-25	-16
Economically Disadvantaged Students	-8	-8
African American or Black Students	-5	-7
Asian Students	+12	+22
Hispanic Students	-12	-9
White Students	+40	+42
Multiracial Students	+21	+16
Female	+4	-2
Male	-4	+2

Across both ELA and Math, **White, Asian, and Multiracial students score higher than the district average**, while all other subgroups score lower, with **students with IEPs, English Learners, and Hispanic students scoring the lowest** of the subgroups.

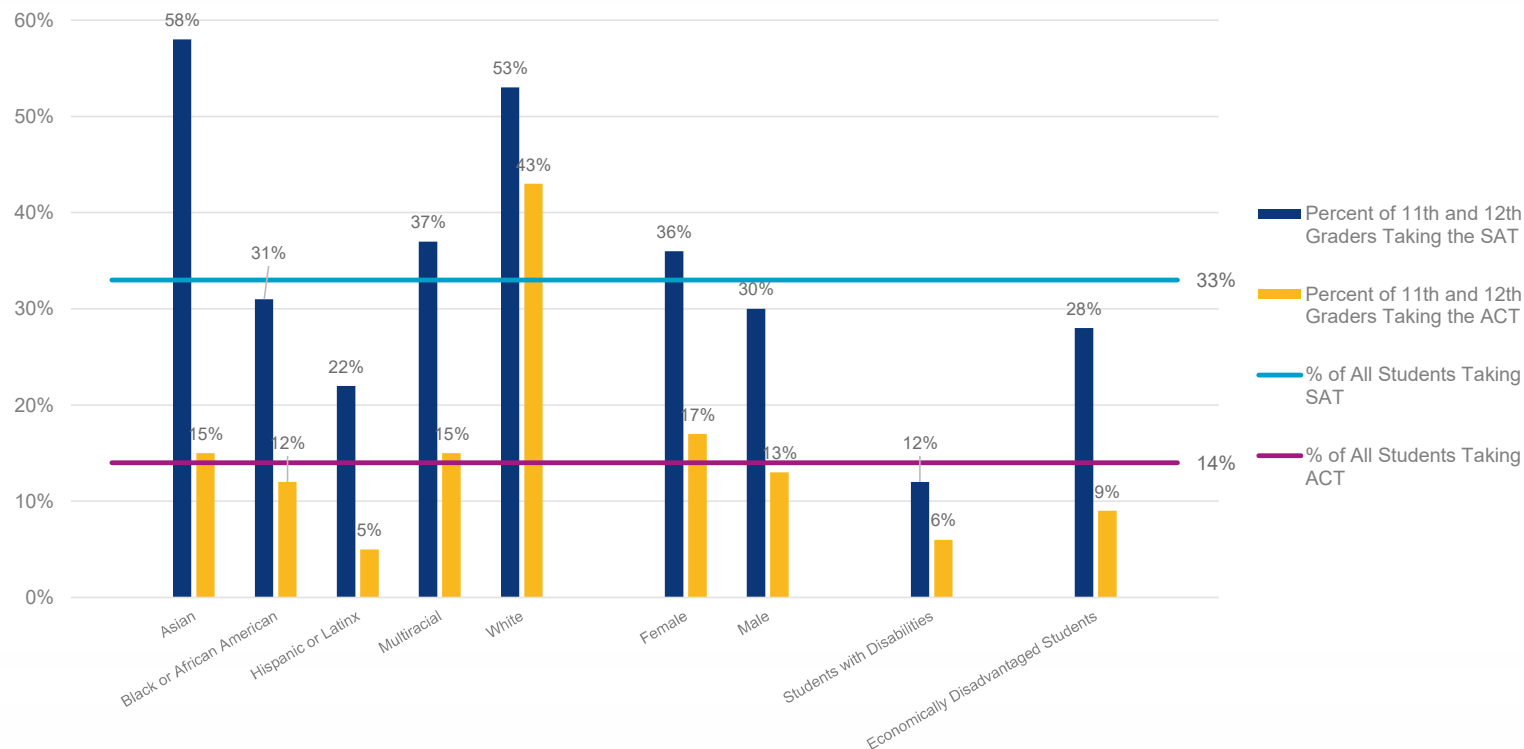
Note: Additional Georgia Milestones gap analysis data is included in the Appendix.
Data retrieved from <https://gaawards.gosa.ga.gov/analytics/saw.dll?Dashboard>.



Priority Recommendation: A&O Accountability Framework

Related Finding: SAT and ACT

SAT or ACT Test Takers, 2022-2024



Hispanic Students and Students with Disabilities are significantly underrepresented in SAT and ACT test takers, with 33% of students in the district taking the SAT but only 5% of Hispanic Students taking it. White and Asian students, however, are overrepresented in both tests.

Note: Data provided by DeKalb County School District, "2022-2024 ACT_SAT Summary".



Priority Recommendation: A&O Accountability Framework

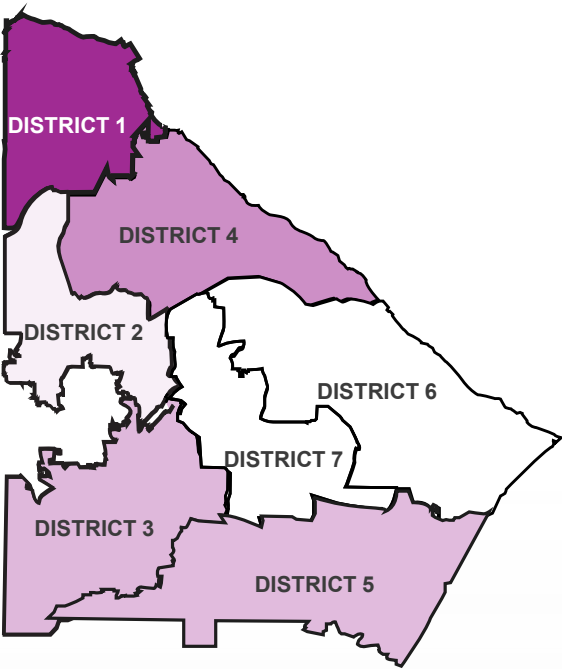
Related Finding

There is not equal access to advanced and specialized learning opportunities across the district: Advanced Placement course offerings are **disproportionately** available in different areas of the district.

A total of 1,655 AP courses are offered during the 2024-25 school year across DCSD. Of those courses, **34% were offered at schools in District 1 (North)** and **5% were offered in Districts 6 and 7 (Central)**. The percent of students enrolled in AP courses follow this trend as well.

Board District	Number of AP Courses	% of AP Courses
District 1	564	34%
District 2	120	7%
District 3	241	15%
District 4	330	20%
District 5	234	14%
District 6	83	5%
District 7	83	5%
TOTAL	1,655	100%

Note: Data provided by DeKalb County School District, "Course and Programs by School".



Slide 18

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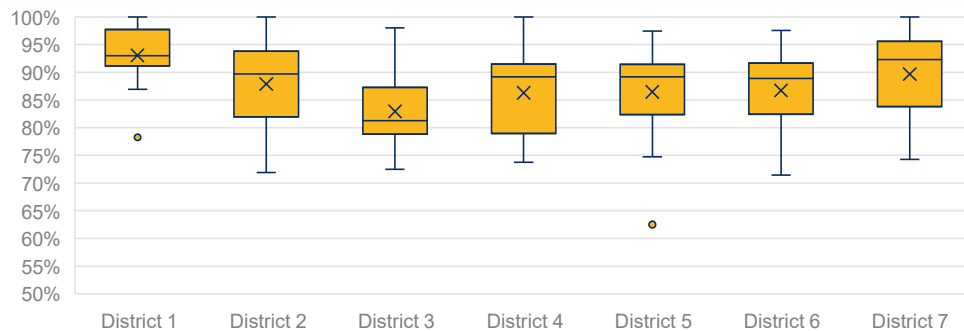
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Priority Recommendation: A&O Accountability Framework

Related Finding: Teacher Credentials

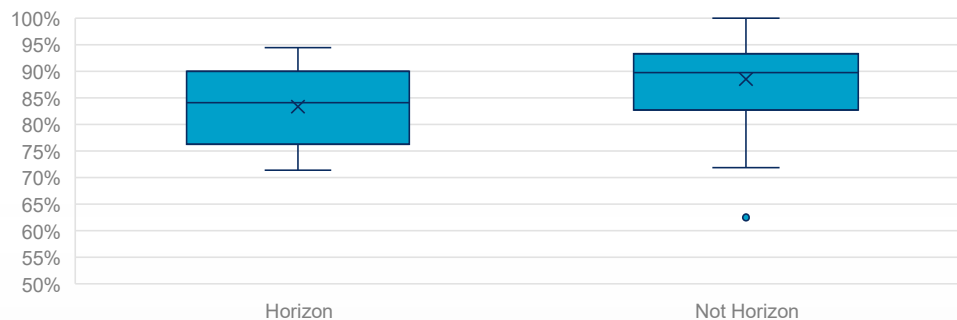
Percent of Teachers with Full Professional Credentials by Board District



Across the district, 87% of teaching staff hold full professional credentials.

District. There is some variation across Board Districts. On average, **schools in Board District 3 have the lowest percentage of teachers with full professional credentials** (mean of 82%, median of 81%). On average, **schools in Board District 7 and 1 have the highest percentage of teachers with full professional credentials** (mean of 90% in District 7; median of 93% in District 1).

Percent of Teachers with Full Professional Credentials by Horizon Designation



Horizon. Horizon schools have a **somewhat lower percentage of teachers holding full professional credentials**, with a mean of 83% (compared to 88% at non-Horizon schools) and a median of 84% (compared to 90% for non-Horizon schools).

Schools in **Board District 3** have the lowest percentage of teachers with full professional credentials.

Horizon schools have a lower percentage of teachers with full professional credentials.

Source: Data provided by DeKalb County School District, "Years of Exp. Teachers and Paras"

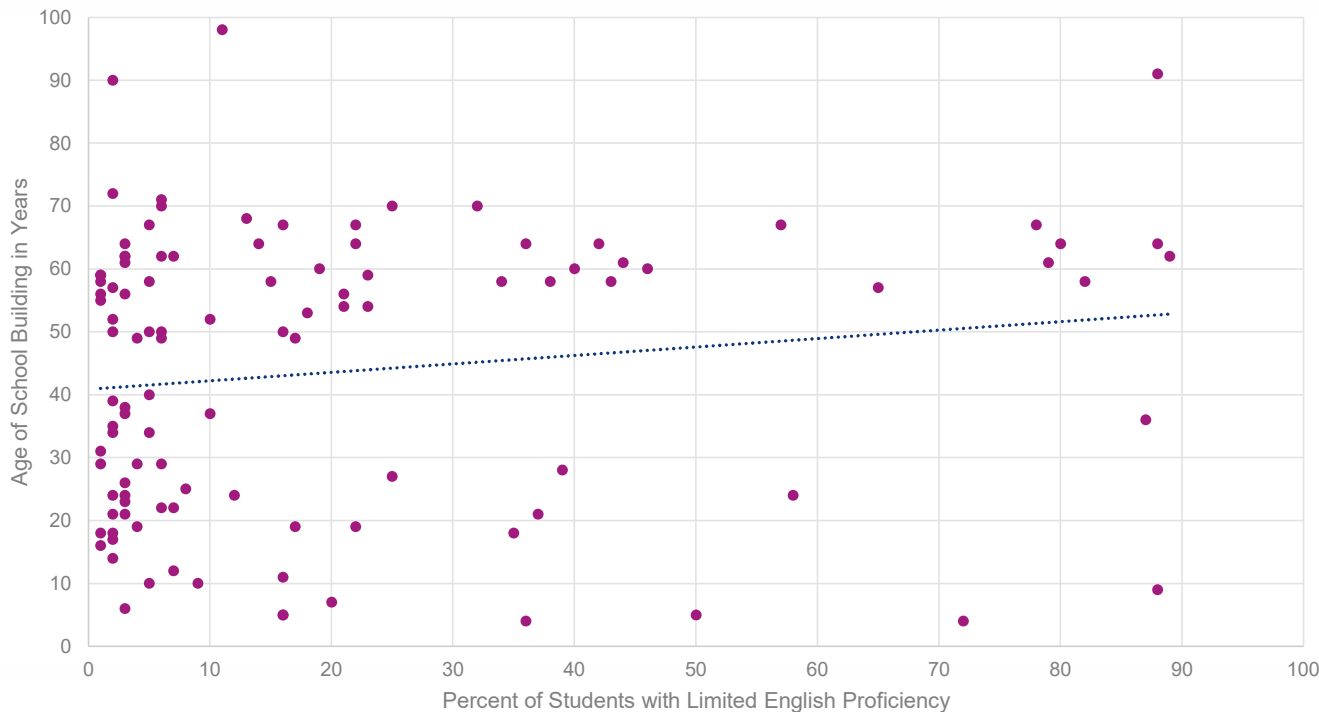
Source: Georgia Professional Standards Commission, "502-2.02 Classification." Retrieved from <https://www.gapsc.com/rules/current/certification/505-2-.02.pdf>



Priority Recommendation: A&O Accountability Framework

Related Finding: Age of Facilities

Age of School Building by Percent of Students with Limited English Proficiency



PCG analyzed the age of school building by various student body demographics, including race, percent of students with disabilities, percent of economically disadvantaged students, and percent of students with limited English proficiency. PCG found the **strongest correlation between age of school building and percent of students with limited English proficiency.**

Schools with higher percentage of students with limited English proficiency tend to be older buildings.

Source: Data provided by DeKalb County School District, "Building-Age Renovation," "Enrollment_by_Subgroup_Metrics_2022-23_2023-12-15_18_54_53"



Recommendation 3

School-Based Access and Opportunity Integration

Priority Recommendation: School-Based Access & Opportunity Integration

3. **Support school-based access and opportunity integration through an Access and Opportunity Liaison (AOL) program.**
 - Designate a specific **individual (liaison) at each school site who will serve as a champion and point person for access and opportunity initiatives**. This role will involve building awareness, facilitating communication, coordinating efforts, and supporting the implementation of district-wide and school-based strategies to promote access and opportunity.
 - Clearly **outline the responsibilities of the Liaisons**, which may include collaborating with the district's Access & Opportunity Office, building an A&O team of school leaders and staff, analyzing school-level data related to access and opportunity, identifying and addressing barriers to all students' participation, engaging families and the community, and serving as a resource for students and staff.
 - **Equip the Access and Opportunity Liaisons with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources** to effectively fulfill their roles. This includes initial training on topics such as access and opportunity frameworks, implicit bias, culturally responsive practices, data analysis, and facilitation skills, as well as ongoing professional development and networking opportunities.
 - Ensure that the Access and Opportunity Liaison program is **aligned with and integrated into existing school improvement plans and initiatives**. This prevents the program from operating in isolation and ensures that efforts to promote access and opportunity are embedded within the broader school culture and improvement cycle.



Priority Recommendation: School-Based Access & Opportunity Integration

Related Findings

There is a need for increased structures of professional learning related to access and opportunity.

- Additional mandatory training is requested by district staff and instructional staff. Specific topics include **student mental health, how to teach a diverse student body, implicit bias, de-escalation, and cultural diversity.**
- Currently, there is not a system or practice to monitor and evaluate staff participation in professional learning, and the successful implementation of that learning.

Lack of trust and a need for relational repair

- In focus groups and surveys, families and district staff note that there is long-standing mistrust from some families toward DCSD, including school leadership and district leadership. While some note that progress is being made, they still express a desire to see continued progress to rebuild trust.



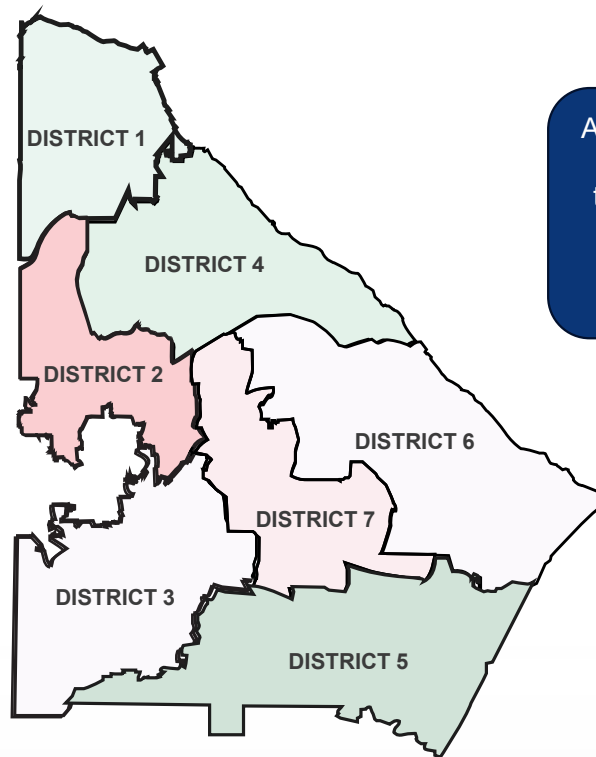
Classroom Visits

Classroom Culture & Environment

DeKalb County School District - Access & Opportunity Audit

On average, in classroom visits across the district, PCG observed **10 of 27 best practices related to classroom culture and environment**.

Classroom Culture and Environment	
Total Available Core Practices	27
Board District	Average Number of Core Practices Observed
Board District 1	10.6
Board District 2	6.4
Board District 3	9.1
Board District 4	11.1
Board District 5	11.6
Board District 6	9.3
Board District 7	8.4



As it relates to best practices related to classroom culture and environment, there is **significant variance across Districts**, from 6.4 best practices in District 2 to 11.6 best practices in District 5.

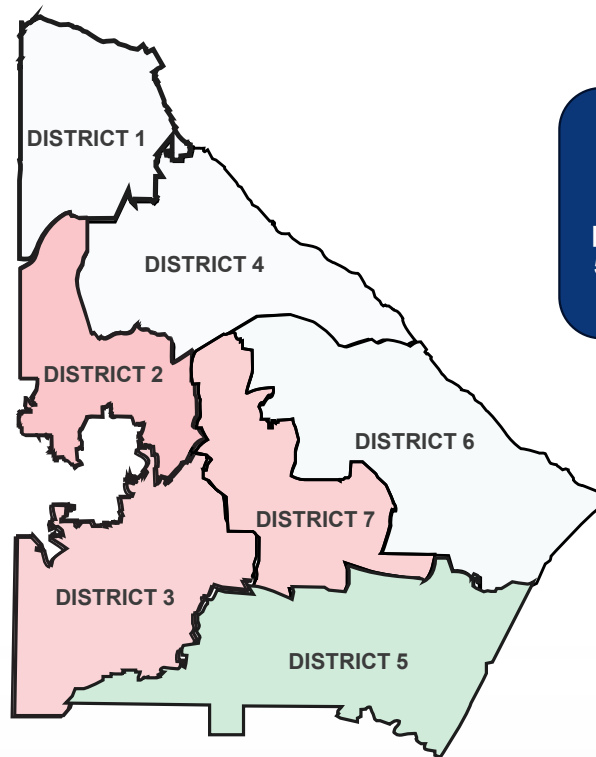
Classroom Visits

Student Relationship Building

DeKalb County School District - Access & Opportunity Audit

On average, in classroom visits across the district, PCG observed **4 of the 15 best practices related to student relationship building**.

Student Relationship Building	
Total Available Core Practices	15
Board District	Average Number of Core Practices Observed
Board District 1	4.6
Board District 2	2.8
Board District 3	3.2
Board District 4	4.4
Board District 5	6.3
Board District 6	4.7
Board District 7	3.2



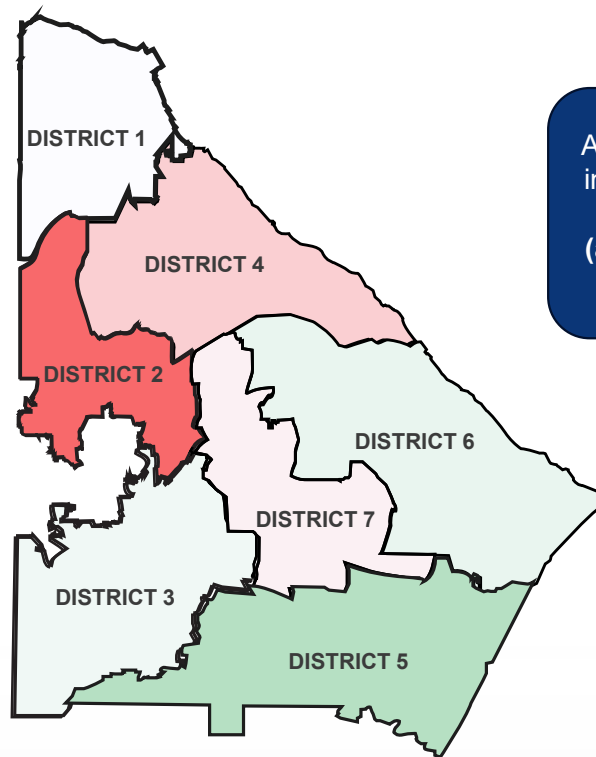
As it relates to best practices related to student relationship building, PCG observed the **greatest number of practices (average of 6.3) in District 5**, and the **fewest (average of 2.8) in District 2**.

Classroom Visits

Instructional Strategies

On average, in classroom visits across the district, PCG observed **2 of the 8 best practices related to student relationship building**.

Instructional Strategies	
Total Available Core Practices	8
Board District	Average Number of Core Practices Observed
Board District 1	1.9
Board District 2	1.2
Board District 3	2.1
Board District 4	1.7
Board District 5	3.3
Board District 6	2.3
Board District 7	1.8



As it relates to best practices related to instructional strategies, PCG observed the **greatest number of practices (average of 3.3) in District 5**, and the **fewest (average of 1.2) in District 2**.



Conclusion and Next Steps

Conclusion and Next Steps

In PCG's review of DCSD, PCG recognizes the **tremendous amount of work and effort DCSD leadership, staff and families have put forth to increase access and opportunity for all students** within the district.

DCSD has demonstrated the following:

- Commitment to achieving access and opportunity as demonstrated in the district's Strategic Plan, MIRACLES framework, and leadership actions.
- Designation of a district team dedicated to advancing access and opportunity through action planning, awareness building, and information sharing.
- Capacity to work towards access and opportunity through school and district-based staff and district-wide initiatives, such as investment in increased translation services, effective SAT test-taking campaigns, expanded opportunities for Gifted designation, the Student Assignment Projects, and others.
- Persistence in understanding experiences of each student and family of DCSD through several surveys and opportunities for feedback and dialogue.

In its full audit report, PCG made **34 recommendations** that will help DCSD make progress in the area of access and opportunity. At this time, PCG recommends and believes DCSD is ready to implement many of the plans initiated by DCSD and the recommendations shared in the audit.

