

**Proposal to DeKalb County School District:
Custom Executive Education Program for School Turnaround Leaders
May 13, 2025**

Introduction

Located just outside Atlanta, DeKalb County School District (DCSD) is the third largest school district in Georgia, serving more than 92,000 students across 138 schools and centers. A diverse community and school district, DCSD is committed to providing high-quality professional learning opportunities to support the development of its principals so they can provide outstanding leadership in their schools to ensure students thrive and graduate prepared to enter college and the work force. To accomplish this, DCSD proposes to engage the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) to leverage its research and practical expertise in effective school leadership for the benefit of their school leaders.

Through Professional Education (PPE), HGSE offers professional learning institutes for more than 19,000 educators annually. These institutes are led by faculty, developed based on education research, and designed to transform both educational practice and leadership. Following discussions between key DCSD and PPE members, PPE proposes the **School Turnaround Leaders in DeKalb County** program, a custom institute for DCSD school leaders. The institute, which has three options for delivery, will be held in DeKalb County on mutually agreed upon dates in 2025/2026.

Proposed Program

The goal of the **School Turnaround Leaders in DeKalb County** program will be to build leader capacity to successfully lead high quality schools and teacher teams. Together with Harvard faculty and expert practitioners, participants will analyze elements critical to their leadership and design implementation plans based on their role and school context. Specific topics may include personal leadership, building school culture, understanding the importance of high instructional quality and expectations, adaptive leadership, and leadership strategy. Katherine Merseeth, Senior Lecturer at HGSE and Educational Chair of the School Turnaround Leaders and The Principals' Centre in Australia programs, will chair this custom institute. Additional faculty will be selected from HGSE and the public sector. Activities may include lectures based on current research and practice, case studies, and focused small group breakout activities during which faculty will facilitate action-planning and other means of practical application. In addition, a custom pre-program survey will be designed and sent to participants so faculty can learn more about the needs of the school and design content well suited to the context. A post-program evaluation around the content and application will also be distributed, analyzed, and shared to provide a deeper understanding of what material was most relevant, topics that may need further clarification, and areas where implementation may be more difficult.

PPE proposed two delivery options for this custom institute:

- **Option 1:** a team of HGSE faculty and staff will travel to DCSD to deliver a three-day institute. The institute will include four 90-minute faculty sessions per day, for a total of 18-hours of direct instruction. This institute will be scheduled on mutually agreed upon dates in 2025/2026.
- **Option 2:** a team of HGSE faculty and staff will travel to DCSD to deliver a three-day institute, as outlined in Option 1. Following the three days, HGSE faculty will travel to DCSD on three separate

occasions to deliver half-day follow-up learning sessions. Each of these sessions will include 3 hours of total content that extends the learning from the original three days. The follow-up sessions will be scheduled on mutually agreed upon dates in 2025/2026.

- **Option 3:** a team of HGSE faculty and staff will travel to DCSD to deliver a three-day institute, followed by three half-day learning sessions, as outlined in Option 2. In addition, we will provide five virtual coaching sessions, each 90 minutes in length, with a small team of DCSD principals to deepen their learning and support their development as senior leaders. These sessions will provide targeted support to the leaders in implementing the learning from the full-group sessions and building their overall leadership capacity.

Cost

Assuming a cohort of 150 participants, the program and registration fees for **Option 1** will be \$565,000. The price encompasses curriculum and instructional materials, as well as HGSE faculty and staff travel. The cost for the venue, A/V, food, and beverages during the institute for participants is not included.

The program and registration fees for **Option 2** will be \$665,000 for 150 participants. The price encompasses curriculum and instructional materials, as well as HGSE faculty and staff travel. The cost for the venue, A/V, food, and beverages during the institute for participants is not included.

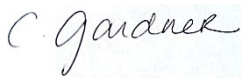
The program and registration fees for **Option 3** will be \$715,000 for a cohort of 150 participants. The price encompasses curriculum and instructional materials, as well as HGSE faculty and staff travel. The cost for the venue, A/V, food, and beverages during the institute for participants is not included.

Additional Considerations

In addition to the custom program, DCSD might consider sponsoring members to participate in established executive education programs at HGSE that address issues of concern in K-12 schools as well as leadership development more broadly. For PPE's full range of professional education programs, please visit our website at <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/ppe>.

We offer this proposal for your consideration and look forward to further discussion about ways in which we can serve DCSD.

Sincerely,



Catherine Gardner
Director, The Principals' Center