NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOLS

2026 LEGISLATIVE & ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

FUNDING & RESOURCES

Why this matters in NEWTON

INCREASED FUNDING; TAX PAYER RELIEF

Priority 1 - Modernize the Quality Basic Education (QBE) formula to reflect the true cost of educating Georgia's students in today's economy.

Why it matters: Georgia's public schools are operating under a funding formula built for a different time. Costs for staffing, student services, transportation, technology, and school safety have significantly increased, while student needs have evolved. Modernizing the QBE formula ensures resources keep pace with the real cost of educating students today, supports equitable access to high-quality learning environments across communities, and strengthens long-term workforce and economic competitiveness.

Priority 2 - Refine the Georgia QBE funding formula to reduce reliance on local property tax revenue.

Why it matters: Newton County continues to experience rising property values, causing annual increases in local tax bills, even as the Board of Education has reduced the millage rate to historic lows. At the same time, we must recognize the growing local burden under Georgia's "Local Fair Share" requirement, which has increased over 20%% over the past four years—effectively shifting more of the education funding responsibility from the state to local taxpayers. Despite these efforts to provide relief to our community, the cost of operating a high-quality school system rises every year. By refining the QBE formula to reduce over-reliance on local property revenue, the State can help protect taxpayers by increasing school funding and sustaining the resources necessary to serve all students well.

Priority 3 - Reimagine the school funding model to maintain sustainable school operations while reducing the property tax burden on local taxpayers.

Why it matters: Rising property values have increased the financial burden on homeowners in Newton County, while our school district and others will face the challenge of funding essential operations, including staff compensation and critical programs. By providing local Boards of Education with flexible, voter-approved funding options such as an Education Local Option Sales Tax (ELOST) - districts can reduce reliance on property taxes while maintaining stable resources for day-to-day operations.

ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

Raise the dual enrollment funding cap from 30 semester hours to at least 45 semester hours (or eliminate the cap for career/technical courses).

Why it matters: Raising the dual enrollment cap enables more students to earn meaningful college credit and industry-aligned credentials before graduation which accelerates their path to postsecondary success and high-demand careers. This is central to Newton County Schools vision for dual enrollment. Additionally, focused career and technical dual enrollment helps to strengthen the local workforce pipeline and support economic growth. As Newton County Schools continues to sharply increase student participation in dual enrollment, appropriate state support will be essential.

STRENGTHEN STUDENT SUPPORTS

Ensure adequate funding to ensure appropriate counselor-to-student ratios that allow counselors to effectively support students' needs, provide robust college and career mapping and counseling, and offer individualized academic and scheduling guidance.

Why it matters: Newton County Schools' counselors play a critical role in addressing the growing social and emotional needs of students, guiding post-secondary planning, and ensuring that students have access to personalized support. Sustaining appropriate staffing levels is essential to meet these needs and to uphold the district's commitment to student well-being and academic readiness.

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TEACHING & LEARNING

Why this matters in NEWTON

FAIR AND BALANCED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Advance legislation that enables a flexible accountability system and prioritizes a growth-based model for student achievement that uses multiple measures to assess both student and teacher performance.

Why it matters: Communities are diverse and continually evolving; however, state accountability measures often remain static. This creates imbalanced comparisons and out-of-context evaluations of performance. We therefore advocate for an accountability system that recognizes the complexities and unique realities of individual school systems and communities—and appropriately honors student progress and growth.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Advocate for measures that support and strengthen local workforce development initiatives.

(Ex. grants for school districts that secure internship commitments with local businesses in high-demand careers, incentives for districts meeting dual enrollment participation benchmarks, and other targeted programs that align education with workforce needs).

Why it matters: Newton County is home to a blend of new and legacy network of employers specializing in advanced manufacturing, logistics, healthcare, and construction. These industries rely on a skilled, career-ready workforce. Strengthening workforce development (which Newton County Schools has taken steps to do) ensures that students gain the knowledge, experiences, and credentials needed to succeed in these fields while supporting the long-term economic vitality of our region.

FORTIFY PUBLIC EDUCATION

SUPPORT FOR LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Support the elimination of negatively framed school "lists" to ensure fair, context-driven reporting of school performance.

Why it matters: Local control is important to the Newton County Board of Education because it helps keep decisions closest to the students and communities we serve. Yet in recent years, increasing state mandates - some unfunded and others that limit district flexibility - have worked against this principle. When responsibilities shift to local districts without adequate support, it strains taxpayers and pulls funding away from classrooms. Protecting local control allows Newton County to meet student needs, maintain quality programs, and manage resources consistent with the aspirations of our school district and community.

SUPPORT FOR LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Advocate for measures that expand access to mental healthcare for students by ensuring that all educators and school-based professionals are equipped to recognize and respond to the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of children.

Why it matters: Supporting students' mental health requires more than access to counselors, it depends on a network of caring, well-prepared adults across our schools. Teachers, paraprofessionals, coaches, and other staff interact with students daily and often serve as the first line of support. Providing all school personnel with targeted training in mental health awareness ensures they can recognize signs of distress, respond appropriately, and connect students to needed resources. Empowering educators in this way promotes student well-being and fosters safer, more supportive learning environments.

MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

SUPPORT FOR EDUCATOR MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TRAINING

Advocate for measures that expand access to mental healthcare for students by ensuring that all educators and school-based professionals are equipped to recognize and respond to the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of children.

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SAFETY & SECURITY

STRENGTHEN SAFETY MEASURES

Support secure, cross-district data sharing of student threat, discipline, and mental health intervention histories to ensure continuity of care and awareness when students transfer.

Why it matters: In Newton County Schools, student mobility is a reality that must be managed - with many students transferring within the district or arriving from other systems throughout the year. While HB 268 improved statewide transfer timelines, the consistency and depth of safety-related information shared between districts can be strengthened – especially regarding conduct that threatens the safety and security of a school community.