

CHRONOLOGY OF THE AGENDA ITEM RFP 24-187

(Speech-Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Physical Therapy)

Vacancies for therapists have increased nationally over the last few years. No single company has been able to provide enough speech-language pathologists (SLPs), occupational therapists (OTs), and physical therapists (PTs) to cover DeKalb's needs. DeKalb County School District (DCSD) has been unable to fill all vacancies when employees resign or retire. The cost incurred by these vendors, due to the increased hourly rates and number of speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists needed, contracted services are required to meet the individualized services for students. During the 2023-24 school year costs for services exceeded \$2,000,000 and 2024-25 cost was approximately \$5,053,582.07. Please note, during these school years, the District had only 9 approved vendors and there were a significant amount of vacancies not able to be filled.

The current 2025-26 cost is approximately \$8,452,470.72 (February 2025-present); this includes invoice amounts yet to be paid.

Section 504: Currently, there are no full-time speech language pathologists; 4 occupational therapists and 1 physical therapist who support students with 504 plans. The cost incurred by these vendors, due to the hourly rate and number of occupational therapists and physical therapists needed, exceeded \$100,000 for the 2023-24 school year and the 2024-25 cost was approximately \$227,031.90. The current 2025-26 cost is approximately \$106,645.60 (July 1, 2025-present); this amount does not include invoice amounts yet to be paid.

Currently, there are 53 full-time SLPs and two retired, part-time SLPs, 28 Occupational Therapists and 11 Physical Therapists who are district employees. There are currently 80 SLPs, 4 Occupational Therapists and 1 Physical Therapist contracted for services for students with disabilities. In total, there are 133 SLPs, 32 OTs and 12 PTs supporting students in the District. Additionally, there are currently no Speech Language vacancies allowing for all students with language needs are provided the support and intervention required.

It is anticipated that the number of contracted therapists for the 2026-27 school year will remain comparable to this school year. The number of contracted therapists required may be higher if the District is unable to hire employees as replacements for those who resign or retire from the District.

The chart below provides a historical perspective of the number of contracted staff from each agency required to meet student needs.

