

CHRONOLOGY OF THE AGENDA ITEM

Board Agenda Item Title: Memorandum of Understanding with Georgia Aquarium, Incorporated (in an amount not to exceed \$418,080)

Background/Details

The DeKalb County School District began an official partnership with the Georgia Aquarium, Inc. through the Memorandum of Understanding approved by the Board of Education on Monday, June 10, 2024, for the period of July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025. The partnership was renewed July 14, 2025, for the period of August 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026.

During the 2024–2025 academic year, the partnership served 36,331 students across 107 schools. By May 2025, 15,509 students participated in instructor-led field trips at the Georgia Aquarium alongside teachers, while outreach programs extended learning opportunities to 9,737 students. Virtual learning experiences engaged an additional 3,806 students, further increasing access to marine science education districtwide. From January through May, the Aquanaut Express mobile learning lab visited 37 schools and served 7,279 students. In June 2025, 126 students participated in the Marine Mavericks and S.T.A.R.S. Camps hosted at Fernbank Science Center. Additionally, approximately 3,000 students engaged in the NOAA Ocean Guardians Program across six selected school sites, supporting environmental literacy and stewardship initiatives.

The 2025–2026 academic year reflects expansion in both reach and depth of programming. As of May 15, 2026, the partnership served 47,404 students across 114 schools, representing an increase of more than 11,000 students and seven additional schools in one year. Instructor-led aquarium field trips increased to 16,689 student participants, while outreach programming expanded to 10,597 students at 48 schools through 181 instructional sessions. The Aquanaut Express nearly doubled its impact, serving 15,018 students across 47 schools. In June 2026, 100 students participated in the Marine Mavericks Camp in partnership with the Georgia Aquarium, and the NOAA Ocean Guardians Program expanded to ten selected school sites, engaging an estimated 5,000 students in conservation-focused learning experiences.

Contract Term

The new MOU is effective August 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027.

Scope

The DeKalb County School District will collaborate with the Georgia Aquarium, Incorporated throughout the 2026-2027 school year to promote science education and increase awareness of career and post-secondary opportunities in STEM fields. Students in grades K-12 will gain access to opportunities that explore careers in marine science and empower them with the knowledge to address socio-environmental issues that impact their communities.

Program Type	Unit	Total
Instructor Led Programming	138 schools	\$276,000
Aquanaut Academy (classroom)	20 Schools	\$10,080
GA Outreach Programs	75 (3 hour) programs	\$41,250
Aquanaut Express	93 programs	\$60,750
Professional Development		\$30,000
Project Total		\$418,080