Agenda Request Form

Meeting Date	Agenda Item Number
November 19, 2020	I-1

Title

2021 Legislative Partnership Priorities

Requested Action

School Board Consideration of Superintendent's Recommendation for Approval of 2021 Legislative Partnership Priorities

Summary Explanation and Background

Based upon discussion, feedback and input during the October 15, 2020 Superintendent/School Board Strategic Work Session, the Superintendent recommends the attached 2021 Legislative Partnership Priorities for the School Board's consideration and approval.

Priority Area

Organizational and Operational Effectiveness

Financial Impact

N/A

Exhibits: (List)

2021 Legislative Partnership Priorities

Source of Additional Information

Dr. Brian V. Hightower, Superintendent of Schools	770.479.1871
Mike McGowan, Chief of Staff	770.479.1871

DRAFT

2021 LEGISLATIVE PARTNERSHIP PRIORITIES

LOCAL CONTROL & GOVERNANCE

- Ensure proposed legislative initiatives strengthen provisions for the local control and management of schools (including the ability for a School Board to set its own local school year calendar, select its own delivery model and scheduling of daily recess) . . . thereby empowering local School Boards to fulfill their Constitutional mandate and corresponding responsibility to involve their local constituency, develop locally-derived educational policy and oversee continued performance improvements among their students.
- Oppose any effort to eliminate limited sovereign and official immunity . . . thereby protecting K-12 public school districts from lawsuits over day-to-day school operations (e.g., grades, discipline, classroom placements, etc.).
- Eliminate State-mandated use of schools as public polling locations during regular school days . . . thereby increasing safety and security for students, staff and buildings.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Consider providing equitable Broadband Internet access for all Georgia families by legislating and funding a multi-year implementation strategy.
- Provide high school graduates in Georgia with an alternative diploma option in the area of Career/Technical Preparation . . . thereby further ensuring students' workforce readiness skills and preparation for transitions directly into careers or secondary-level career educational opportunities.

FUNDING

- Make public education in the State of Georgia a priority by ending State "austerity reductions" of the Quality Basic Education (QBE) Act and allocate to local school districts all funding earned under the statutorily required formula.
- Hold local school districts harmless in terms of formula funding of the FY22 Budget due to declining enrollment resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Consider reimbursement of extraordinary COVID-19 related expenditures such as PPE, cleaning supplies, additional custodial/staffing expenditures, etc.
- Consider modifications and update of the QBE formula to accurately reflect inflation, true costs of transportation; and, to include a funding weight for economically disadvantaged students, funding for safety and security and increased allocations for counselors, social workers, psychologists and nurses, including additional funding for critical Social Emotional Learning initiatives . . . thereby providing support for critically-needed student services functions.
- Continue to incorporate any teacher compensation increases into the State teacher salary schedule . . . thereby communicating the State's long-term commitment to providing competitive compensation for teachers and allowing local school districts to concentrate local revenues on offsetting State-required employer rate increases in health care premiums, local share of retirement plan contributions and locally-determined benefit plans (e.g., disability, life, dental, etc.).
- Oppose the continuation and/or expansion of existing programs that directly or indirectly use public funds to pay private school tuition for students or provide tax incentives for their parents . . . thereby ensuring a solid revenue base for state funding of public education, including tax incentive programs related to alternative educational delivery models due to COVID-19.
- Preserve investment in Georgia's Teacher's Retirement System (TRS) in order to ensure the longevity of the defined benefit plan.

CHEROKEE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

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FACTS ON FUNDING PRESSURES

(impacting funding availability for classroom instruction)

COVID-19

CCSD absorbed a $23.3M austerity reduction in its FY21 Budget. If not held harmless, CCSD could see an additional shortfall of as much as $9M over the next two budget cycles due to COVID-19 related temporary enrollment declines. Additionally, CCSD has expended approximately $9M on extraordinary COVID-19 related needs this school year.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

CCSD will receive $2.2M in QBE funds for student transportation for FY21. The total budgeted cost for student transportation during this budget cycle is $22.7M.

EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT

The Teacher Retirement System of Georgia has increased the employer (CCSD) contribution rate from 14.27% (FY17) to an expected 19.81% in FY22. CCSD's annual payment to TRS on behalf of its employees for FY22 is expected to exceed $51.4M ($9.3M paid via local funds).

Due to the vision and commitment of Georgia leaders over the decades, TRS:

- Ranks in the top third of pension systems in the U.S., is actuarially sound, and has a proven record of sustainability.
- Provides a compelling recruitment and retention incentive for the education industry, supporting a life-long career path for high-quality teachers in Georgia schools.
- Positively impacts Georgia's economy and the economic success of our state, as pensions for over 128,000 TRS retirees are reinvested in local communities across the state each year.
- Affords a defined benefit plan as the last, best benefit for Georgia's dedicated teachers, who are diligently preparing the next generation of Georgia citizens.

As Georgia is recognized to be the #1 place to do business, it must also seek to be the #1 place to teach. Supporting TRS today ensures success for Georgia tomorrow.

EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE

Beginning in FY08, the State's contribution for non-certified employee health insurance premiums was reduced and then eliminated by FY12 (from over $500M statewide to $0), requiring local school districts to fully absorb the additional costs since that time. CCSD's employer contribution toward the annual cost of providing health insurance for a non-certified employee has risen from $2,000 in FY10 to $11,340 in FY21 and continuing for FY22... this cost, nearing $1,000 per month/per participating employee, represents a 467% increase.

CCSD's health insurance costs for non-certified employees are projected to be $14.5M for FY20 far exceeding and almost doubling the $7.5M cost in FY14. The extraordinary financial impact of continuing exorbitant employer contributions rates for State-mandated benefits without corresponding State funding continues to be of great concern. As such, CCSD continues to privatize custodial and grounds services and increase the use of part-time/temporary workers for non-certified staffing as cost-reduction measures.

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Cherokee County School District