

# DeKalb County Board of Education

## 2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The DeKalb County School Board collaborates each year to establish, clarify, and adopt Legislative Priorities that align with the district's vision, mission, goals, and strategic direction. The 2026 legislative priorities reflect our unified commitment to advocating for policies that enhance the educational experience for students, improve the working conditions for educators, and protect and promote the public education system in DeKalb County, Georgia. We urge the DeKalb County Legislative Delegation to support these priorities during the 2026 session of the Georgia General Assembly and to ensure that no legislation is enacted that would hinder the Board's ability to effectively govern the school system.

### **QBE Formula**

A major overhaul of the QBE formula is needed and has been discussed for many years. However, since such an overhaul does not appear imminent, smaller and targeted reforms should be undertaken to modernize funding for pupil transportation and establish an increased and fully funded weight for students identified as Economically Disadvantaged, much in the same manner that Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners also receive a substantive increase in assigned funding. **Therefore, DCSD requests the QBE Equalization formula under O.C.G.A. Title 20, Ch. 2, Art. 6 be amended to account for the present-day costs of buses/fuel, and the significant impact of poverty.**

### **CTAE Funding**

In high school, CTAE stands for Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education, a program of study that integrates academic and career-focused skills to prepare students for immediate employment, post-secondary education, apprenticeships, or the military. CTAE programs offer students multi-year pathways in various career fields like healthcare, information technology, business, or agriculture, often including work-based learning and industry certifications to help them become "College and Career Ready". **DCSD urges the General Assembly to appropriately fund CTAE programs and incentivize private industry partnerships with high schools to help prepare our students in continuing their education after graduation or meaningful employment in the Georgia workforce.**

### **Mental Health and Counseling Needs**

Student mental health and social-emotional learning continue to be challenges in the classroom. Additional resources to support these challenges, include but are not limited to increased state funding for school counselors, psychologists, and social workers. This includes funding to meet proper ratios of counselors per student (the American School Counselor Association recommends a ratio of 1:250), and a mental health coordinator for each school district. **DCSD urges the General Assembly to appropriately fund School Counselors and other Mental Health supports.**

### **Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS)**

The State should support a sustainable retirement program for all employees under the Public-School Employees Retirement System (PSERS), especially for school district bus drivers, and custodial, maintenance, and food service personnel. The fact that there is such a large disparity between the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) and PSERS gives the appearance that there are two classes of employees. DCSD provides a significant matching to 403b (more than any other system) which is only for PSERS employees and not TRS. This makes up some of the difference. Further, some progress was made in the 2024 legislative session, with the passage of SB 105, which increased the benefit multiplier from \$16.50 to \$17.00 per creditable year of service for PSERS, for school bus drivers, custodians, maintenance personnel, and food service workers and removes the cap so the PSERS board of trustees can adjust benefits as they see fit. However, to truly make this sustainable **DCSD requests the General Assembly pass the currently pending SB 209 or similar legislation to allow employees under PSERS to participate in TRS.**

### **School Safety and Security**

Safety for our students and employees is a continuous effort. There are costs to maintain security systems; provide the statutorily required training for school administrators, teachers, and support staff including custodians and bus drivers on school violence prevention, school security, school threat assessment, mental health awareness, and school emergency planning best practices; and meet new challenges as they occur. **DCSD requests the General Assembly to continue to fund the annual categorical grant for school safety.**

### **Early Childhood Education and Literacy**

The goal of Early Childhood Education is to provide children with strategies that help them develop the emotional, social, and cognitive skills needed to become lifelong learners. For children in lower socioeconomic environments who are unable to access these programs, it can be challenging for them to enter a school system and thrive academically and emotionally. Additional support for early learning can be achieved through universal Pre-K and Pre- K3 funding, improved funding for Pre-K teacher salaries, funding for a paraprofessional in all kindergarten classrooms. Integral to this support for many of these children is tackling early literacy challenges, which can be assisted by having a literacy coach in each school. **DCSD urges increased funding for all early childhood education and early literacy programs, with a focus on children in high need communities.**