



District Operations Report – February 2025

Chief of Staff Elijah Palmer

Chief of Staff Updates

MIRACLES Workshop #7 Update

On February 24, DeKalb County School District (DCSD) held its 17th MIRACLES Workshop, bringing together division leaders for a full day of rigorous discussion, strategic reflection, and celebration of progress. This session was a testament to our commitment to continuous improvement, as each division stepped forward to provide high-level updates on their priorities, demonstrating the strides being made across the district.

One of the key highlights of this workshop was the celebration of six completed priorities for the month—each a significant milestone in our journey toward excellence. These achievements underscored the collective effort of our leadership teams and their unwavering dedication to executing the district’s strategic plan.

Dr. Horton and I remained deeply engaged throughout the day, asking probing questions to ensure all priorities aligned with our 2024-2029 strategic plan. Our goal was to challenge our leaders to think critically about their work, reflect on their progress, and openly discuss any barriers that may have hindered their ability to reach their goals. This open dialogue fostered accountability and allowed us to collaborate on solutions to drive sustained success.

The dedication of our teams was evident as the session extended beyond its usual timeframe, running from 8:30 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. Despite the long hours, the energy in the room remained high, and the level of engagement never wavered. Every division showed up prepared, demonstrating their commitment to moving the district forward.

MIRACLES Workshop #7 was another step toward ensuring we meet and exceed expectations. As we continue this journey, we remain focused on the guiding principle of *Disrupting for Excellence with New Levels and New Heights*.

Audits Update

Over the past several months, I have worked closely with our Director of Internal Audits and Compliance to strengthen financial oversight and accountability across the DCSD. As we continue refining our systems and ensuring transparency, two critical audits are underway to provide a comprehensive assessment of key financial processes.

The first is the **Purchasing Card (P-Card) audit**, which **FORVIS** is conducting. This audit is essential in evaluating the district's procurement practices, ensuring that purchasing cards are used responsibly and in accordance with established financial controls. By proactively assessing this system, we aim to reinforce fiscal discipline and mitigate any potential risks related to expenditures.

Simultaneously, we are advancing the **Educational Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (E-SPLOST) follow-up assessment**, a crucial step in validating the implementation of recommendations previously provided by **Plante Moran**. This assessment will be conducted by **Clifton Larson Allen, LLP**, ensuring that all corrective actions from E-SPLOST IV and V have been executed effectively. Given the significance of these capital projects in shaping the future of our schools, it is imperative that we validate compliance, enhance transparency, and uphold the integrity of our financial stewardship.

Interim Director Pamela McCloud

Organizational Effectiveness

The strategic planning process continues to be underway with Insight Education Group. We continue to conduct bi-weekly meetings with the Insight Education Group consultant to review our entire plan, structure, and drill down to look at the performance objectives we are focused on this year for each goal area. At our March 10 Board of Education (BOE) meeting, I provided an overview of the goal structure, key performance indicators (KPI)/SMART goals of where we want to be five years from now, goals for the year, and progress updates. Our first BOE Strategic Plan update occurred Nov. 11, 2024.

Next Steps:

- Goal area teams will continue to work on implementing strategies to meet the Year-1 goals for the selected performance objectives.
- Goal area sponsors will continue to attend MIRACLES meetings monthly to share progress on implementation.
- Progress towards Year-1 goals will be shared with the board and community at the June board meeting.

Director Joel Thibodeaux

Internal Audits and Compliance

Departmental Management

Internal Audits and Compliance is securing a new senior compliance auditor to supervise and manage divisional and departmental audits. Once this position is secured, we expect current delays to clear, and the department will return to efficient operations and acceptable project completion rates.

The department has also been informed that the internal auditor position has been reclassified. The Human Resources Division (HR) has confirmed that an additional meeting is warranted to communicate impacts on current employees and the expected starting compensation for new hires. There are currently two budgeted vacancies we expect to fill once this information is communicated.

Fleet Operations Assessment

Internal Audits met with the Center for Effective School Operations (CESO) to discuss the initial findings of the fleet audit related to procurement, disposal, and inventory management and a limited-use report on fuel management and vehicle maintenance. CESO is currently assessing DCSD's Operations and Information and Instructional Technology (DIIT) Divisions, and Transportation/Fleet Management is a part of the scope. The purpose of the collaborative discussion was to provide objective internal information regarding fleet operations to give additional direction to issues that may not have been covered in interviews and prior audits.

Athletics Audit

Internal Audits and Compliance is nearing the end of the interview process, which has been held up due to scheduling availability. We expect a significant increase in the progress rate as new management and program structures are documented and analyzed. The next expected progressions are the flowchart of the revenue process and revenue recognition and how it advises budgeting. We will then be able to re-engage the executive director of athletics to advise on revenue projection, which is critical to formulating the departmental budget.

Bookkeeper Survey

Internal Audits and Compliance recognizes that a significant amount of the district's budget and workforce is engaged through the work of the school bookkeepers. We have begun authoring a survey designed to measure the complexity and challenges to the bookkeeper position for district management to consider ways to mitigate the high risk associated with the level of work assigned to the position and how, in aggregate, it impacts the majority of district staff and funding. This surveying project will include a formal online survey, focus groups engaging a cross-section of school bookkeepers selected by survey responses, and interviews with individual bookkeepers with varying levels of job satisfaction and professional experience. We intend to complete this project by June 2025.

Update on Third-Party Engagements

Operations and DIIT Assessments (CESO) – This engagement is underway and ongoing. The data collection process is complete. The most significant progress over the past 30 days has been the engagement with School Nutrition Services. Interviews with Dr. Connie Walker and key staff members covering procurement, warehouse operations, program management, and free lunch compliance were completed, along with a series of school visits to evaluate service delivery.

Purchasing Card Audit (Forvis Mazars) – Scheduling project kickoff for the week of March 10. The expected length of the engagement is eight weeks.

ESPLOST Follow-Up (CLA) – The initial planning meeting was held on March 4. Relevant internal staff has been identified and contact information has been shared with the CLA Principal. We expect the initial requests for data and meetings with staff to be communicated shortly with live engagement to begin during the week of March 17.

Executive Director Tracey Whaley

Public Safety Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment and Retention

Public Safety continues to work towards recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff:

- Since July 2024, 22 school resource officers (SRO) have been hired, and most have been assigned to their permanent schools.
- Five of the 22 SROs are currently in training.
- Four SROs have been recommended to HR and are currently being processed.
 - Hire date of March 17
- The steering committee has approved five additional campus supervisors, and interviews are currently being conducted to fill those positions.
 - 2 AIC
 - 1 WBBC
 - 2 Silver Hill Building

Technology Integration

- Facial Recognition – Public Safety (PS) and Information Technology (IT) are currently collaborating to meet with vendors to discuss their facial recognition capabilities.
 - A joint panel from PS and IT met with Salient Technologies on March 11.
- Evolv Conveyor recommendation has been made, and quotes have been received from the vendor.

Active Shooter Drill

On February 19, PS conducted a countywide Active Shooter Drill where we will host 12 law enforcement and public safety agencies from throughout DeKalb County.

- The drill was successful, and the district received positive media coverage.

Visitor Management System

Centegix Visitor Management System has been recommended, and quotes will be gathered to determine the equipment cost for the start-up.

District Employee Training

PS personnel conducted the following safety-centric training for district personnel:

- PS will conduct Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events training for the following district personnel:
 - Browns Mill ES on March 19
 - Student Services Employees – Psychologists on March 19

Centegix Updates

PS is currently working to have Centegix installed at the following locations:

- Silver Hill Building
- Fernbank Science Center (FSC)
- The Globe Academy (two locations)
- The Museum School

Request for approval to have Centegix installed at the following charter schools will be on the April BOE Agenda:

- DCSD Central Office – 2175 Park Lake Drive
- The Tapestry School
- Dekalb Preparatory Academy
- Dekalb PATH

The following charter schools have either declined or failed to reply to district communication about the availability of Centegix for charter partners:

- Dekalb Academy of Technology and the Environment (declined)
- Leadership Preparator (no word back)

Executive Director Carolyn Lloyd

Board of Operations

Board Appreciation Week was acknowledged during the BOE meeting on March 10, where board members received proclamations from the superintendent and Governor Brian Kemp. The board office is preparing for the upcoming board meeting scheduled for April 21, and the board retreat is set for April 30 and May 1.

On March 20, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Board Member Pierce will facilitate a virtual town hall titled "*District 3: Dialogue with Deirdre and District Leaders*," providing a platform for community members to express their thoughts and concerns.

Additionally, the Consortium of State School Boards Associations National Conference will occur in Atlanta from March 20-23, with several board members planning to attend.

The board office remains dedicated to supporting the BOE, the superintendent, and the district monthly.

Chief H. Eric Hilton

Office of Legal Affairs (OLA)

Overview and Summary of Activity for the Office of Legal Affairs

The OLA's high-level priorities for the month continued to track the MIRACLES goals and progress towards completing the goals presented at the monthly MIRACLES Workshop. MIRACLES goals for the OLA include specific goals related to contracts administration, Title IX compliance, legal training for DCSD personnel, risk management and workers' compensation, district policy review, districtwide legal advice and compliance, and legal department administration. The OLA also participated in DCSD steering committees for the Division of Operations, HR, and Finance. The OLA completed the legal review of all board agenda items for the March board meeting and is tracking to complete the review of the April board agenda items per established deadlines. The OLA completed the review of recommended revisions to the contract administration processes to improve efficiency, focusing on recommendations for updates to internal policies, practices, and procedures. The OLA has been heavily involved in reviewing and analyzing changes to federal laws, rules, and regulations. OLA attorneys also continued work on policy review committees. The OLA interfaced and coordinated with outside counsel on litigation matters, legislative affairs, and annexation issues. Finally, the OLA Legal Team collaborated on numerous matters and responded to districtwide legal requests in a timely manner.

Executive Legal Director and Title IX Coordinator Marissa Key, Esq.

Office of Legal Affairs

State Legislation

March 6 was Crossover Day for this legislative session. We continue to monitor the legislative session for new legislation that could impact the district. Training on new legislation will occur during the summer Leadership Conference.

Policies

The OLA continues collaborating with HR to revise identified policies and create supporting regulations for review and presentation to the board. We are also collaborating with the Board's B Policy Committee to complete the review and revision of the Policy Manual B policies.

Title IX

Identified school-based and area office personnel have completed role-specific training to support the effective implementation of the restructured Title IX process. Additional hands-on training is being offered throughout the remainder of the school year.

Open Records

As of March 7, 2024, the Open Records Team has received approximately 800 production requests for school year (SY) 2024-2025. This dedicated team has a 97 percent closure rate with 3 percent pending requests.

Legal Director Glinton Darien, Esq.

Risk Management and Workers' Compensation

Liability Claims

As of May 2024, the Liability Team has received approximately 180 claims. This team handles, among other things, school bus accident claims. Of those claims, approximately 51 have been closed.

Workers' Compensation Claims

As of May 2024, the Workers' Compensation Team has received approximately 780 claims. This team handles claims submitted by employees injured on the job. Of those claims, approximately 586 have been closed.

Document Retention Management

The OLA will review updates and legal requirements concerning document retention in Georgia. We will collaborate with Information Technology (IT) on document retention management. This involves formulating a plan for transferring documents to electronic storage and document destruction in coordination with the IT chief.

Insurance Matters

We are continuing our work with Dudley Thomas Spade. This work relates to reviewing various property appraisals in conjunction with updating the district's statement of values. An update is needed for the district's property insurance policy. This review involves the district's insurance broker, Epic, as the appraisals were received from the district's property insurer, Alliant.

Risk Management

The OLA has been meeting with Gartner representatives regarding the development of a risk assessment framework utilizing the Gartner Strategic Tool. That plan identifies and prioritizes the district's risks and then creates objectives to reduce costs and losses. As an additional step, the plan then develops a means of managing and monitoring risk exposure. The goal is also to develop a plan for the mitigation of losses.

Senior Legal Counsel Chasity Middlebrooks-Cody, Esq.

Employee and Student Relations

Training and Legal Compliance

The OLA continues to work with all DCSD departments, locations, and entities to review documents and provide various forms of support to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local laws and policies.

The spring Legal Symposium will take place on March 20. The symposium will cover federal, state, and local laws and policy updates that may impact various aspects of education. The target audience is school-based leaders, but all DCSD leaders can attend, subject to space availability.

Employee Relations

The OLA continues to work with HR to address employment complaints and personnel matters. For SY24-25, the OLA has responded to each charge of discrimination reported to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Currently, charges remain relatively low, and the district has a 98 percent dismissal rate with the EEOC. As pending matters close, we anticipate that the dismissal rate will increase. The OLA strives to promptly and efficiently resolve legal issues impacting personnel.

Student Relations

The OLA continues working with the Department of Student Relations to provide support regarding student discipline matters. The OLA is working with the department to review and revise the Code of Student Conduct for SY25-26. Additionally, the OLA is reviewing the current discipline practices and procedures to ensure legal compliance and efficient monitoring for areas of mitigation.

Parent and Student Matters

The OLA continues supporting local schools as they respond to legal matters impacting student enrollment and parent concerns. The current review period for legal documents that impact student enrollment and require district action is 48 hours.

Legal Counsel Imani Redd, Esq.

Contract Administration

Contracts Management

In February, the Contracts Administration Team reviewed over 100 contracts and prepared 20 agreements for various departments. The team holds weekly meetings to review contracts, address urgent issues, and improve contract administration processes.

Training Management

The Contract Administration Team will continue training bookkeepers and department staff on submitting agreements and the DJE Board Policy related to purchasing. Additionally, we will continue to hold monthly meetings with the Operations Department and Solicitation Team to review open agreements and discuss upcoming renewals.

Chief Operating Officer Erick Hoffstetter

Division of Operations

DCSD's Operations Division, under the leadership of Chief Operating Officer Erick Hoffstetter, has reported significant progress and achievements in its February update. The newsletter, themed "[Month of Care](#)," highlighted the division's commitment to empathy and collaboration in leadership.

The Transportation Department has successfully filled over 45 vacant positions, ensuring a smooth transition for new hires in the Fleet Department. This achievement is part of the division's broader efforts to enhance student transportation services. Additionally, finalizing a grant for electric buses marks a significant step towards sustainability.

A recent board retreat provided an opportunity to align the Operations Division's goals with broader board initiatives. This alignment reinforces a shared vision for the future and underscores the division's commitment to transparency and community engagement. Collaboration with Student Assignments for the Sequoyah Middle School (MS) community meetings further highlights this dedication.

Deputy Chief Operations Officer Antwyn Brown

Division of Operations

I participated in reviewing job descriptions for many current and forthcoming job announcements to ensure appropriate personnel alignment within the Division of Operations' mission as we seek to foster a safe, supportive, and engaging learning environment for all students. I also participated in the Deportation Incident Committee meeting to provide thought partnership regarding appropriate protocols for government-mandated immigration reform efforts. This cross-divisional meeting is designed to streamline the multifaceted (educational, public safety, and cultural) challenges and barriers students and staff face given the immigration reform efforts mandated by the federal government.

I participated in the Sam Moss Service Center parking lot assignment meeting. This meeting was to ensure that staff is taking a proactive approach to adjusting to the added pressure to the parking access at our site due to the recent sale and occupation of our longstanding overflow parking location. The work of this committee is ongoing until additional permanent parking is secured at the newly purchased Kroger building. I have discussed and provided ongoing direction and input regarding the HR/Operations' staff talent acquisition strategic training initiative for divisional executive directors, directors, and supervisory staff. I have continued to lead the Operations Division's initiative in providing constructive feedback to internal candidates not selected for positions they applied for. I supported Operations' executive management staff with our monthly steering committee presentation and MIRACLES framework presentation. I engaged our staff proposal to provide California Wildfire Relief. The staff consisted of former and retired municipal firefighters.

I participated in the follow-up Fleet Audit meeting to identify additional information needs with the Office of Internal Audit (OIA). I also facilitated a dispute resolution meeting to ensure the standardization of community engagement responses arising from the School Assignment process community town hall inquiries. I also facilitated a dispute resolution meeting within School Nutrition Services regarding local school reporting management oversight and responsibilities. I participated in the bi-monthly school kitchen equipment inventory meeting to assess the needs and conditions of the district's kitchens.

I attended a preliminary meeting with Mr. Hofstetter and Hoar Program Management (HPM) to discuss the immediate transition plan for DCSD's program management services.

I participated in a guided tour and inspection of the newly acquired Kroger building with the Division of HR to determine suitability.

Finally, I participated in the Georgia School Superintendents Association HR training in Macon, GA, and the inaugural meeting of the School Operations Personnel Program Cohort through the UGA-Carl Vinson Institute of Government.

Executive Director Keith Ball

Capital Improvements and Facilities

As we move into spring, the Operations Division is diligently preparing for a remarkably busy and productive summer work season. This includes significant renovations, modernizations, additions, and new construction at Champion MS, Cross Keys High School (HS), Dresden Elementary School (ES), and Sequoyah MS/HS, just to name a few. We have 58 summer calendar days to make magic happen before the students and teachers return for SY25-26.

Schools undergoing major renovation, modernization, or addition will be provided with a guidance and support document to ensure personal and district assets are appropriately secured, stored, or removed. This new, consistent approach will provide the much-needed clarity schools have asked for in preparation for capital projects.

This spring, we are excited to share the new Facility Project Request guidelines with principals and building leads. A similar process was in place before COVID-19 and has been revised and resurrected to provide a means for principals to enhance their campuses and buildings in support of student learning. This process will complement general work orders and significant capital projects and support the priority of providing safe, clean, and efficient schools and facilities.

A note of gratitude to all the hard-working team members in the Operations Division who have worked from first light to overnight to provide safe, clean, and efficient schools and facilities.

Executive Director Raymond Stanley

Fleet and Transportation Departments

The Fleet and Transportation Departments are excited to report that we have added five bus drivers and four diesel mechanics to our team over the past 30 days. We give special thanks to our Operations/HR Recruitment and Acquisition Team for their assistance with recruiting and hiring applicants for these positions. The addition of bus mechanics has led to an increase in our fleet availability. Our current small bus availability percentage is 76 percent, big bus availability is 75 percent, and support vehicle availability is 97 percent.

Fleet Assistant Director Dr. Chandra Carter and Data Specialist III Cynette Payne are doing a tremendous job with professional development for our bus mechanics. Upcoming training courses include effective communication and Ron Turley Associates (RTA [fleet maintenance software]) training. Over the past 30 days, mechanics have also received additional training on bus lifts. Our goal is continued growth for all mechanics, leading to increased productivity.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to these achievements. Their hard work and dedication are greatly appreciated, and we look forward to continued success as we strive to enhance our fleet operations. Together, we will keep moving forward and making a positive impact.

Executive Director Connie Walker

School Nutrition Services

Clue In to School Breakfast

National School Breakfast Week (NSBW) campaign encourages students to try school breakfast and more families to take advantage of the healthy choices available with school breakfast. DeKalb County Schools will celebrate NSBW March 3-7. School nutrition professionals and students will be encouraged to show their enthusiasm for school breakfast from March 3-7, as the district celebrates NSBW with special menus, activities, and more.



Busy weekday mornings make it challenging for many families to find time for a healthy breakfast. Fortunately, all DeKalb County Schools offer nutritious breakfasts, with fruit and low-fat or fat-free milk, to ensure students fuel up for learning every school day.

The 2025 NSBW campaign theme, “Clue In to School Breakfast,” reminds the entire school community that school breakfast provides a healthy and energizing start to the day for students. Studies show that students who eat school breakfast are more likely to:



- Reach higher levels of achievement in reading and math
- Score higher on standardized tests
- Have better concentration and memory
- Be more alert
- Maintain a healthy weight

A healthy breakfast at the start of the day is a great way to ensure students are nourished and ready to learn. NSBW helps us educate parents and students about all the nutritious and delicious choices we offer.

NSBW was launched in 1989 to raise awareness of the availability of the School Breakfast Program, a federally assisted meal program operating in public and non-profit private schools and residential child care institutions since 1975. A special thanks to our amazing staff for their hard work and dedication in serving breakfast!

Director Bernardo Brown

Student Transportation

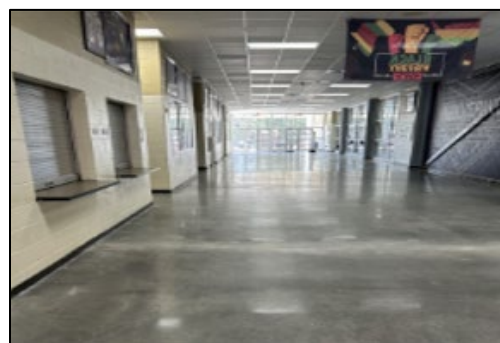
Director of Student Transportation Bernardo Brown reported on the department's ongoing efforts to enhance training and development for bus drivers. Over the past month, four training classes were held, with 21 participants, of which four have been released to transportation supervisors. The department continues assessing driver staffing needs due to attrition and focuses on professional development through various training programs. Additionally, the department works closely with HR to refine retention strategies for newly trained drivers, ensuring a stable and skilled workforce to support the district's transportation needs.

Director Bobby Moncrief

Facilities Services

Celebrating Milestones in the Operations Division – Facilities Department

The Operations Division/Facilities Department continues to make significant strides in enhancing our schools and facilities. We proudly celebrate key milestones contributing to our learning environments' safety, functionality, and aesthetics. Recent accomplishments include installing polished concrete flooring outside the Miller Grove HS auditorium, which provides a durable and visually appealing upgrade. We installed new washers at the Salem Safe Center to enhance facility maintenance and efficiency.



At Vanderlyn, removing a problematic tree has improved campus safety, while at Oakcliff, installing new restroom partitions has upgraded the overall restroom experience for students and staff. Furthermore, we successfully closed 1,848 work orders while opening 1,514 new ones, demonstrating our team's dedication to continuous improvement.



The February updates from DCSD's Operations Division reflect a commitment to excellence, innovation, and community engagement. These achievements and initiatives demonstrate the division's dedication to providing a safe, efficient, and supportive learning environment for all students.

Director Keith Singleton

Business Services

Exciting and Rewarding Business Services of Operations

Implementing the Zenventory E-commerce Operations Platform will significantly improve productivity within Business Services. This innovative system will enhance inventory management and vendor coordination, streamlining processes for greater efficiency. Additionally, we are pleased to announce that Jackie Woodfin's Payroll Team is successfully participating and providing leadership in the New Munis Time and Attendance system rollout, ensuring seamless clock-in procedures for all staff members.

Kudos to the Business Services Team for completing this year's furniture, fixtures, and equipment cycle of purchases and providing essential school desks, chairs, and cafeteria tables. We also warmly welcome Sakaita Fleet, the new Analyst III for Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), and heartfelt congratulations to Demetrius Roberts on his well-earned promotion to Logistics Tech. Our commitment to *Growing Our Own* continues as we support staff in achieving their career aspirations.

We are also excited to celebrate the expansion of Grainger into kitchen equipment, ensuring the availability of high-demand items while optimizing inventory tracking for the best pricing.

Additionally, Net 30 utilization has seen remarkable growth, now at 83 percent compared to last year's 30 percent with substantial confidence that we will reach 100 percent utilization in the near future. These advancements reflect our continued commitment to efficiency, innovation, and excellence in Business Services Operations.

Director Hans Williams

Planning and E-SPLOST/ Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Programming

Facility Planning Kickoff

Our Planning staff has officially launched the long-range facility planning process with HMP! This initiative will comprehensively assess DCSD facilities—evaluating needs, conditions, and capacity forecasts for the next decade. The first phase involves sharing existing data and establishing assessment standards, with facility assessments scheduled for late spring and early summer. By next fall, HMP will compile a report outlining current conditions and future needs, serving as a critical foundation for long-term planning and recommendations. Exciting times ahead as we work toward a more substantial, data-driven future for our facilities!

Capital Improvement Programming – Smart, Strategic Growth

With the rapid progress of capital improvement projects over the past year, Operations staff have proactively flagged the importance of maintaining financial balance and avoiding "over-commitment" of funds. While revenue projections remain strong, the best fiscal practice aligns commitments with funds received. In response, CIP staff have recommended a strategic delay in awarding specific contracts to ensure sound financial management. To keep the momentum going, the Finance Division and chief financial officer (CFO) have proposed temporarily using district general funds as a short-term bridge, ensuring projects continue without financial strain. This collaborative approach between the Division of Operations and Finance exemplifies our shared commitment to responsible stewardship of district resources.

Chief Financial Officer Byron Schueneman

Division of Finance

Finance welcomed Asheia Hines into the role of Director of Payroll this month. She brings 20+ years of payroll experience with other large corporations and government agencies. We look forward to benefiting from her experience and leadership now that the Munis transition is stable, and we analyze, tweak, and improve our business practices surrounding the payroll process.

The fiscal year (FY) 2023 financial audit has wrapped up. We are confident that sufficient corrective actions have already been implemented for three of the five findings. The corrective action plan details steps needed to address the remaining two findings prior to June 30. The fieldwork for the FY24 financial audit is roughly 75 percent complete and is going smoothly. The anticipated publication of the FY24 financial statements is in early May.

The January financial report, presented and accepted in March, is produced from a new reporting tool directly connected to Munis. The formatting closely resembles the annual financial report and provides much more detailed information than the prior format. Since this tool is directly connected to Munis, the information contained in the monthly financial statements is pulled directly from the general ledger. This helps ensure the general ledger is accurate, up to date, and reconcilable to the financials.

As we transition into the next couple of months, we will focus intensely on the FY26 budget. Our revenue projection shows only mild gains in revenues from GaDOE and our local tax digest, while we are projecting sizable increases in cost for state health benefits (to the tune of \$24M more) and TRS (approximately \$10M more). This will put a damper on districtwide cost-of-living adjustments or other significant increases to salaries. Finance will continue to monitor the landscape and be prepared for what will come.

Deputy Chief Financial Officer Lauren Scott

Division of Finance

Throughout the month, the Division of Finance has continuously focused on implementing Time and Attendance. Tyler developed a patch for the secondary approver function within Time and Attendance in late February. The patch is scheduled to be reviewed and tested March 11. Additionally, Payroll is working with our banking partner, Bank of America, to implement submitting employee garnishments via Automated Clearing House. Dekalb has been assigned a ticket number by Bank of America and will begin testing once the bank assigns our case. We look forward to having this process implemented by the end of the fiscal year.

Director Regina Bagley**Budget****FY26 Budget Development**

The Budget Team is analyzing division FY26 budget requests. The review and approval of FY26 additional funding requests are forthcoming and will conclude the development of division budget requests for the upcoming school year.

Position Control Audit

Phase III of the Position Control Audit was completed in conjunction with the February allotment meetings held with school principals. Findings were communicated with the HR Team for system updates.

Allovue Manage Implementation

The Budget Team has launched Allovue Manage! Principals were trained and provided training aids. Data has been updated, and principals should see accurate information on the platform.

Comptroller Lance McConkey**Audit Updates****FY24 Audit**

The Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts (DOAA) is completing the FY24 financial and single audits. The single audits cover the following federal programs – Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief, English Language Acquisition, Special Education, Student Support and Academic Enrichment, and School Nutrition. Fieldwork is approximately 75 percent complete and the Audit Team has a fieldwork completion deadline of early April 2025. DOAA has committed to audit completion and report release by May 2025.

MyRetirement Manager Platform Expansion

The implementation kickoff meeting was held March 6, and included representatives from finance, HR, technology, and the vendor. A project timeline was discussed, including the required deliverables each division will be responsible for providing. The team will meet weekly for the next 12-16 weeks until completion. Completion is scheduled for the end of July/early August and go-live is scheduled for September.

DebtBook Treasury and Cash Management Platform

Accounting has contracted with Debtbook to implement a treasury and cash management platform. Several meetings have taken place to work on the setup of the platform and the upload of historical data. Once implemented, the platform will provide improved data to assist in cash management, investing strategies, forecasting, and analysis of banking fees.

Director Milton Hall**Allotments****FY26 Allocations**

The Office of Allotments has finalized the FY26 allotment meetings with each school. Due to the redistricting of Idlewood and Smoke Rise ES, we are currently meeting to finalize the resources to accommodate the shift with a completion date of March 12. Notable adjustments for the upcoming year include the adjustment of allocations to support at least one full-time lead teacher for special education assigned to each school. The Office of Allotments is still working with the CFO, chief of leadership development, and the superintendent to identify what support will look like for the Horizon Schools as we enter FY26. Lastly, the Resource Allocation Methodology Plan (RAMP) Committee will resume its weekly meeting on March 19, to solidify an acceptable funding model to support our Non-traditional high schools and an acceptable support model relative to allocations for those schools offering special programs.

Executive Director Carla Smith**Vendor Services****Finance Academy Wednesday Refreshers**

The Division of Finance conducts refresher sessions for bookkeepers and other staff members responsible for managing financial matters at their locations. In February, we focused on the year-end deadline dates for requisitions, purchase orders, PCards, contracts, solicitations, budget transfers, and invoice processing. A total of 142 staff members attended the virtual meeting on Teams. During the session, we explained the importance of these deadlines and addressed questions related to their specific school, center, or department.

Chief Dr. Yolanda Williamson

Chief Dr. Yolanda Williamson and Strategic Partners Manager Tanya Arrington

Division of Community Engagement and Innovative Partnerships (DCEIP)

During March, the DCEIP continues to support Dr. Horton's *State of the District*.

To foster stronger connections with teachers and provide a platform for collaboration, sharing insights, and contributing to meaningful discussions that shape the future of our schools and community, we have established the Teacher of the Year (TOTY) Advisory Council. This council will meet with Dr. Horton and have an opportunity to voice concerns, ask questions, and share ways the district can support its instructional practices.

Two ThoughtExchanges were created to prepare for our upcoming Superintendent's Teacher of the Year Advisory meeting. So far, participants have shared comments and thoughts on topics such as student testing fatigue, truancy, chronic absenteeism, and the need for dyslexia training for teachers. The second ThoughtExchange was posed by Board Member Mr. Dacosta, who is seeking feedback and comments on renaming Pine Ridge ES and getting the community's input on school colors and a mascot.

We also held our final Superintendent's Staff and Parent Advisories for SY24-25. Both councils had an opportunity to ask Dr. Horton and the chiefs questions about the effects of the Department of Education policy changes, restorative practices, Student Assignment Project (SAP), and requirements from various academic departments like gifted services and the Pre-K and early learning programs.

As part of our strategic plan and to ensure equity throughout the district, DCEIP is securing translation and interpretation services for all upcoming meetings, including Board Chair Ms. Pierce's D3 town hall, Board Member Mr. Zimmer's community gathering, and Board Member Ms. McGinnis's Sounds of Science Event.

DCEIP is also planning Portrait of a Graduate Academic Walks where Dr. Horton and his team will get to see the great teaching and learning happening in classrooms throughout the district. This initiative is meant to celebrate the amazing work going on in our schools and find areas where we can offer more support. Academic Walks will begin in April and will start with our Horizon schools.

Deputy Chief Jennifer Caracciolo

Communications

This month, we focused on securing sponsors for the 2025 State of the District event and promoting event registration. The Foundation is launching a Pathway to Excellence fundraiser, which will be introduced at the event. Donors contributing \$100 or \$250 will have a commemorative brick placed along the front walkway of the FSC.

We successfully wrapped up support for the H-PRIDE visits and are now planning the next round of superintendent visits. The upcoming Portrait of a Graduate Academic Walks will highlight student achievements aligned with the Portrait of a Graduate framework, provide school improvement plan updates, and include classroom visits. Branding and a communications plan to support were developed.

Throughout the month, we leveraged various communication tools—including the district newsletter, social media, website, DSTV, School Messenger, and more—to share important information and engagement opportunities. Key highlights included Save Our Students Teen Dating Violence Awareness, The Lunchroom (student series), Employees of the Year, a new SAP At-A-Glance monthly video, and a spotlight on Black educators for Black History Month.

Finally, we received the complete audit from the National School Public Relations Association. Staff has reviewed the document and is developing a three-year Communications Plan based on the findings.

Press Secretary Dr. Donald Porter

Media

In February, the Office of the Press Secretary continued its focus on enhancing the district's image and reputation through strategic communications. This effort included coordinating 27 school-level letters that were either drafted or rewritten to ensure families received clear, timely, and appropriate information on issues such as weapons on campus, physical altercations, staff allegations, lockdowns, and incidents involving student or employee deaths.

Furthermore, the office conducted five media interviews, issued three formal media releases, prepared seven district statements, created four web stories, wrote two scripts for district leadership videos, addressed 32 other general media inquiries, and hosted multiple media outlets for a multi-agency active shooter training.

Together, these efforts resulted in more positive and neutral media coverage, improved public perception, and fostered a greater sense of pride within the district.

Director Marcia Oglesby

Grants and Partnerships

The Grants and Partnerships Team secured potential partners for the DeKalb Match program. A meeting will be held with Dorian DeBarr with Decide DeKalb to support the DeKalb Match program in collaboration with Mr. Chris Key and Dr. Mona Reynolds, Student Advancement. Stratix is committed to supporting DeKalb Match through its Stratix Cares program by offering career coaching that includes K-12 partnerships, philanthropy, internships, business etiquette, and tips on using social media for recruitment. Dr. Mona Reynolds was contacted to meet with Stratix to discuss the program. Additionally, college graduates with supply chain management or operational degrees can participate in an Operational Development Trainee program where

they work within all areas of the Lifecycle Management Team. Finally, through the Stratix Cares program, the organization will lead a coat drive for DCSD's students and organize and implement *Stuff the Bus* events to provide school supplies and backpacks for DCSD students.

Another resource secured for the DeKalb Match program is Independent Electrical Contractors (IEC). IEC expressed interest in partnering with DCSD to inform students about their four-year apprenticeship program. IEC can provide representatives to share information with upcoming graduates regarding their apprenticeship program.

Partnerships's Manager Michael Harris, contacted and communicated with Brand Marketing Manager Emily Giombi – Atlanta Falcons – to schedule the Falcons' school programs at Cedar Grove and DeKalb School of the Arts High Schools and Freedom, Miller Grove, and Sequoyah Middle Schools. Partnerships' Strategic Manager Tanya Arrington and Student Mentoring and Partnerships Coordinator Demetric Crittle, assisted with ensuring programs were implemented at the identified middle and high schools.

A new partnership was secured with Gas South to fund the following areas: the Innovation Solutions Laboratory, the Back-to-School Rally, and the Student and Family Engagement Centers. Grants and Partnerships will request \$75,000 (\$25,000 for each department) to support the respective programs and initiatives. Grants and Partnerships is waiting on approval of the funding request.

Jeremy Tyler, Martin L. King Jr. High School, class of 2013, and former Buffalo Bills (NFL) player is working with select elementary schools with his UChamp Foundation to allow students to engage in contactless boxing.

The Grants and Partnerships Team meets with multiple departments to support the U.S. Department of Education's Impact Aid Survey Grant Program. Impact Aid is designed to help school districts obtain additional funds for various purposes directly related to supporting the needs of students. The following departments have supported the team through the dissemination of the surveys or providing additional recommendations on disseminating the surveys: IT, Research, Data and Evaluation (Michael Shaw), Counseling/Student Advancement (Dr. Crosslin and Mr. Key), Federal Programs (Dr. Warren, Tamesha Favors, and Demetria Plunkett).

The team meets with partners and provides technical assistance as requested to support grant submissions and secure partners for programs and initiatives. The team will continue to contact potential sponsors, donors, and partners regarding funds to support the following initiatives (i.e., State of the District, New Teacher Orientation, Innovative Solutions Laboratory, Back to School Rally, Student and Family Engagement (SAFE) Centers, resources and partners for schools, Student Advancement: DeKalb Match, and other initiatives).

Program Administrator Dr. Damienne Denham Shabazz**Adult Education**

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Grant, Q3 Integrated Education Training (IET), Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) High School Equivalency (HSE) In-service, and General Educational Development (GED) Boot Camp

On January 13, the WIOA Competitive Grant opened. Members of the Adult Education Leadership Team spent the last eight weeks compiling and refining data and completing the narratives for the application. During this process, we procured letters of support from the following Community Agencies:

- Goodwill Industries of North Georgia
- WorkSource DeKalb
- DeKalb County Public Libraries
- DCSD Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE)
- DCSD Early Childhood Program
- DCSD Ed Media
- DCSD Family And Community Empowerment
- DCSD Operations

The submission deadline was March 13.

Our Q3 IET and Contextualized Adult Ed program in Custodial Tech started March 10. We have four candidates on the pathway to receiving their International Sanitary Supply Association industry certification, with the opportunity to be hired through Operations.

As we close out the month of March, we will host a professional learning opportunity for our instructors on how to complete the HOPE HSE grant application. This is critical to support our GED students during our HOPE HSE Technical Assistance Week March 24-29. We are also celebrating March Madness during this time, as we “Slam Dunk the Test”! This begins our Adult Education Boot Camp series, held on Saturdays throughout March, April, and May, from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Executive Director Thurman Green III**Foundation Oversight****State of the District**

The DeKalb Schools Educational Foundation has secured 18 sponsors for the 2025 State of the District event, with funding raised nearing \$50,000. The sponsors come from construction, real estate, legal, banking, retail trade, community engagement, cyber security, and health industries. Funding raised enables the foundation to support students, teachers, and staff of

DCSD centered around the foundation's mission to create effective partnerships that foster well-rounded students and enhance teaching excellence. This is achieved through our three areas of focus: literacy, teaching excellence, and mental health and wellness.

The foundation will also reveal an opportunity for support during the event through the Brick Walk Fundraiser. Our "Pathway to Excellence" is the DeKalb Schools Education Foundation's inaugural fundraiser! We will hold an installation ceremony in fall 2025 to celebrate and recognize support of the DCSD. The Brick Walk will be located at the FSC in support of STEAM-based initiatives.

Manager Marcia Coward

Family Engagement

February: A Month of Impact, Engagement, and Excitement!

In February, our team took on a massive mission—supporting the Redistricting Team in ensuring a smooth and informed transition for Idlewood families relocating to Smoke Rise. We left no stone unturned! From emails, texts, and phone calls to personal visits at apartment complexes, we ensured every parent was heard, informed, and reassured. Recognizing the importance of clear communication, we secured interpreters to connect with families in their home languages. The result? A resounding success! Parents expressed heartfelt gratitude for the information and the care, effort, and respect we showed them throughout the process.

But we didn't stop there! We also geared up for **Phase 2 of Read and RISE DeKalb**, taking family engagement to the next level. We handpicked **250 MVPs—Most Valuable Parents—across 10 schools**, sending them exclusive invitations to join this transformative journey. Set to launch on **March 8**, these families will meet their dedicated FACE Champions, gain powerful at-home learning strategies, and receive a **brand-new computer loaded with educational resources!** Their excitement was contagious, and we can't wait to see the impact on student achievement.

And that's not all! We also ignited the excitement for **Read Across DeKalb!** This year, our Mobile IMPACT Hub has been transformed into a **magical reading wonderland—Candyland!** Students at participating schools will experience the joy of reading with our **beloved mascot, Hootdini**, and an incredible lineup of volunteer readers, including BOE members, Superintendent Dr. Horten, district leaders, and community partners. Best of all, every student will get to **choose a book to build their home library**, reinforcing our mission: **to make reading irresistible and elevate academic success!** February was a month of action, impact, and momentum—and we're just getting started!

Chief Human Resources Officer Tasha Mills-Davis

Human Resources

Difference Maker Awards – Third Round

The latest round of Difference Maker Awards is underway, with awardees selected, schools notified, and travel plans finalized. We look forward to celebrating these outstanding individuals who make a meaningful impact in our district.

Active Student Participation Inspires Real Engagement (ASPIRE) Program Initial Meeting

The ASPIRE program is progressing, with the first meeting scheduled in collaboration with the CTAE Department. This discussion will focus on laying the groundwork regarding our partnership and aligning efforts to support our HS seniors who have identified teaching in DCSD as their career choice.

Deputy Chief Jason E. Kennedy

HR Core Team

The HR Core Team is actively holding regular meetings to advance various improvement projects, including:

- **Fingerprinting process enhancements:** Identifying ways to streamline and improve efficiency.
- **HRIS reporting for talent acquisition and total rewards:** Developing reports that provide valuable insights to support recruitment and compensation strategies.
- **Munis ticketing system optimization:** Working toward a more efficient process to address and resolve HR-related system requests.

Director Tracy Harris

Talent Acquisition

Building Community Partnerships

The Talent Acquisition Team continues to strengthen relationships within the DeKalb County community. Last month, we were honored to meet with members of the Ethiopian Community Center to enhance our engagement with the Ethiopian community and promote employment opportunities within the DCSD. As part of this initiative, we conducted a successful interview that was streamed live on the Expanded Core Curriculum YouTube channel, further expanding our outreach and visibility.

Teacher Transfer Window

The teacher transfer window officially opened on February 24, to facilitate our educator's internal mobility and career growth. This window allows current teachers to explore new positions within the district. The transfer period will remain open until March 21, ensuring ample time for interested teachers to apply for available roles.

Metro Regional Educational Service Agency (MRESA) Job Fair Success

The DCSD Talent Acquisition Team actively participated in the MRESA Job Fair on March 1, where we connected with a diverse pool of talented candidates. We are proud to report that 50 candidates signed statements of acceptance, committing to join DCSD for SY25-26. This marks a significant step forward in our ongoing efforts to attract and secure highly qualified educators dedicated to student success.

Director Carina Harrigan

Inspiring Greatness and Normalizing Innovation in Teacher Education (IGNITE)

Program Development and Strategic Partnerships

February was a month of significant progress in strengthening IGNITE's partnerships and refining key program elements. The team took part in an **NCTR Site Visit at Marian University's Klipsch Educators College**, which is now in its **eighth year of implementing a teacher residency program**. This visit provided valuable insights into residency-year enhancements and mentor supports. A highlight of the visit was the opportunity to engage in collaborative conversations with over 20 other teacher residency programs nationwide, fostering professional networking and sharing best practices. These discussions provided a rich learning experience, allowing IGNITE to examine innovative strategies for strengthening cross-organizational partnerships and intentional program design. The insights gained will directly inform ongoing improvements within IGNITE, reinforcing our commitment to continuous program enhancement and innovation.

Recruitment and Selection

February marked the launch of the early admissions process for Cohort 3, structured in three phases. Phase I involved a thorough application review, where candidates were evaluated based on their submitted materials. Phase II consisted of video interviews, allowing applicants to demonstrate their readiness for the program. Finally, Phase III culminated in IGNITE's first-ever Selection Day on February 27, where finalists participated in panel interviews, delivered mini lessons and engaged in collaborative discussions. The event was strengthened by the support of talent acquisition managers and school leaders, whose feedback and insights were invaluable in selecting the next cohort of residents. Additionally, recruitment outreach expanded through targeted efforts, including distributing materials to multiple universities—locally and out of state—and historically Black colleges and universities to ensure a diverse and competitive applicant pool.

Director R. Sebree-Kelly**Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS)****Certified/Classified Personnel Index (CPI) Cycle II**

The HRIS Team has actively participated in and will continue to engage in state reporting meetings organized by the district to ensure the accuracy and completeness of data for CPI Cycle II. In preparation for the March cycle, HRIS has been diligently assembling reports for review by our certification team and independent charter schools. Any discrepancies identified are being thoroughly discussed and corrected. This week, the CPI Cycle II state reporting cycle was successfully launched, with the HRIS Team having uploaded the initial files on behalf of the school district. We are working closely with our independent charter schools and the Student Information System to address and resolve any file errors to ensure a smooth and accurate reporting process.

Contract Distribution

The HRIS Team has successfully delivered 7,266 contracts through the DocuSign platform, ensuring a seamless distribution process. We have encountered minimal technical issues, with employees signing the documents successfully. In addition, the HRIS Team has carefully configured the DocuSign platform and initiated thorough data testing to confirm the smooth operation of the contract distribution process. This proactive approach has ensured an efficient and reliable experience for all parties involved.

Equifax Work Number

The Equifax work number is now online and fully operational. Following the recent integration of the Verifications Team under the HRIS umbrella, the Equifax verification platform has been inactive for the past couple of years. Over the last few months, the HRIS Team, in collaboration with Equifax and DIIT, has successfully restored the system. Employees and vendors can now utilize the work number to verify work experience acquired within the past year. As additional years of data are incorporated into Munis, the Equifax platform will continue providing increasing value and enhance the verification process.

Performance Evaluation Coordinator Kismet Sims/Corey Stegall**Evaluations Team**

- SuperEval, a new evaluation initiative by Superintendent Dr. Horton, is up and running! We are so excited to support learning and development in this new endeavor.
- We had the opportunity to meet and train 14 new leaders on the Leader Keys Effectiveness System. All principals successfully passed the credentialing assessment and are now ready to complete evaluations with their staff.

- Facilitated training with the DeKalb Leadership Institute on effectively developing professional learning plans for remediation to support the development of employees. The goal is to help leaders develop and retain employees.

Senior Manager Jamel Crawford

Employee Relations Team

ER Updates

- Employee Relations closed 10 cases pertaining to employee matters
- ER closed 10 grievances
- ER will post the position of a grievance specialist with hopes of hiring by March 31
- ER also presented at the testing and assessment training