



District Operations Report – March 2025

Chief of Staff Elijah Palmer

Division of Operations

MIRACLES Workshop #8 Recap

MIRACLES Workshop #8 was a great success, showcasing our cabinet leaders' ongoing momentum and commitment as they presented updates on their March priorities. Each division came prepared to share progress, highlight achievements, and reinforce the shared accountability that continues to drive our district forward. The energy in the room reflected a collective focus on results and a culture of transparency.

We welcomed several principals throughout the day who joined us as special guests to observe the workshop. Their presence added a powerful connection layer between district leadership and school-based teams. Many principals left inspired, expressing how the experience gave them a deeper understanding of the thoughtful, strategic work happening at the central office. They shared words of praise and a renewed respect for the systems of accountability we've established to ensure progress across all departments.

One of the day's highlights came from the Operations Division, which proudly celebrated the completion of a major priority. The room was filled with cheers and popped confetti, symbolizing the joy that comes from execution and teamwork. These moments remind us that celebration is not only necessary but deserved.

We look forward to even more accomplishments and reasons to celebrate in April as we prepare to close out the fiscal year (FY) 2024-2025 strong. The work continues, and so does the impact.

Building an Internal Pipeline for School Resource Officers

In our continued efforts to strengthen school safety and invest in our internal talent, we recently brought together Chief Whaley from the Department of Public Safety (PS) and the Human Resources (HR) Team to discuss a strategic pipeline that would allow current campus supervisors to grow within the district and transition into School Resource Officer (SRO) roles. This initiative reflects our commitment to enhancing campus security, promoting from within, and recognizing the value of those already serving our students every day.

The proposed plan outlines a clear pathway for campus supervisors who demonstrate the necessary skills, leadership qualities, and dedication to student safety. Once approved by the Finance Department, the next 11 SRO positions will be prioritized for internal candidates who successfully complete the interview process and pass the required psychological evaluation.

This thoughtful approach supports career advancement within PS and ensures that those stepping into SRO roles already understand the culture and expectations of DeKalb County School District (DCSD).

By investing in our people and creating avenues for professional growth, we're reinforcing a culture of excellence, accountability, and trust—one that begins with those already committed to the safety and success of our students.

Interim Director of Organizational Effectiveness Pamela McCloud

The strategic plan and data highlights were presented during the March 10 board meeting for the superintendent's report. This was the second presentation of the new strategic plan (2024-2029) which provided the community with an overview, implementation plan, goal Area Teams, areas of focus for the first year, data highlights, and next steps.

Goal Area 4: Culture and climate with goal area sponsor Chief Champion Michelle Dillard (Schools and Leadership) and Chief Kishia Towns (Wrap Around Services) will provide highlights and data updates for the April 21 board meeting. All other goal area sponsors will provide a 45-day update on all performance objectives and strategies via the implementation hub for the May 12 board meeting.

Director Joel Thibodeaux

Internal Audits and Compliance

Departmental Management

Internal Audits and Compliance has filled the senior compliance auditor position by promoting Danielle Valentine to the job. Ms. Valentine had several years of government and private sector financial and auditing experience prior to joining the team as an internal auditor II in 2023.

The department also plans to add two internal auditors to the team by the end of FY24.

Fleet Operations Assessment

The final report with management responses for the procurement, inventory, and disposal scope is in final edit and will be presented at the April 29 BOE Audit Committee meeting. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the maintenance function are being developed by Fleet Operations and reviewed by Internal Audits and Compliance. A Comprehensive fuel management plan is currently under review and development by the chief of operations.

Athletics Audit

Internal Audits and Compliance is nearing the end of the interview process, which has been held up due to scheduling availability. We are expecting a significant increase to the rate of progress as the 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 collaborated with the Office of Accountability to finalize the survey and secure the platform for bookkeepers to access and provide responses. The Bookkeeper Survey has been launched and is scheduled to close on April 18. Following the survey, the Office of Accountability will facilitate focus groups for obtaining additional information from bookkeepers in the first person, adding depth to the survey findings. We expect this project to be completed by the end of May.

Update on Third-Party Engagements

Operations and Division of Information and Instructional Technology (DIIT) Assessments (Center for Effective School Operations [CESO]) – This engagement is underway and ongoing. No major milestones to report for March.

Purchasing Card Audit (Forvis Mazars) – Audit is fully underway and in the testing phase. All document requests are being met on time; therefore, the audit engagement is expected to continue along the planned timeline.

Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax for Education (ESPLOST) Follow-Up (Clifton Larsen Allen [CLA]) – Active engagement began on April 7, with initial meetings for each of the 11 findings in the Plante Moran audit report. The meetings are set up for cross-functional teams assigned to each finding. Operations, Finance, and DIIT are all engaged with follow-up meetings scheduled for the week following Spring Break.

Executive Director Tracey Whaley

Public Safety Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment and Retention

PS continues to work towards recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff:

- Since July 2024, 26 SROs have been hired, and most have been assigned to their permanent schools.
- Four of the 26 SROs are currently in training.
- Two SROs have been recommended to HR and are currently being processed.
- Campus supervisor recruitment is in process for:
 - 2 – Administrative Instructional Complex (AIC)
 - 1 – William Bradley Bryant Center
 - 2 – Silver Hill Building

Technology Integration

- Facial Recognition – PS and Information Technology (IT) are 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.

Visitor Management System

Centegix Visitor Management System has been recommended, and quotes will be gathered.

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 Elementary School (ES) on March 19
 - Student Services Employees – Psychologists on March 19

Centegix Updates

Installations have been scheduled for:

- 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 locations will be on the April Board of Education (BOE) Agenda:

- The Tapestry School
- Dekalb Preparatory Academy
- Dekalb PATH
- New Central Office
- International Community School

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 Office Update**

The next BOE meeting is scheduled for April 21. This meeting is taking place on the third Monday of the month in consideration of Spring Break.

The board and board office are proud to announce that Mr. Stephen Lucas Ngote has been honored as a *Difference Maker*; a recognition that underscores the valuable contributions of district staff. This accolade is well-deserved, and we extend our gratitude to HR for facilitating this opportunity to celebrate our dedicated personnel.

In addition, the board and district recently hosted Leadership DeKalb for its Education Day, which began at the AIC in the board room with insightful discussions among district leaders. The event included a tour for over 50 members of the Leadership DeKalb Class of 2025 at selected elementary and middle schools (MS), concluding with a panel discussion at DeKalb School of the Arts. The board values its partnerships and looks forward to further opportunities to communicate the positive advancements within DCSD to stakeholders. The board thanks Dr. Bernetta Jones and her team for their efforts in helping to make the event successful.

The board is planning its second retreat of the year which will take place from April 30 to May 1. Board retreats offer a unique opportunity for in-depth discussions, strategic planning, and relationship-building among board members and key stakeholders, going beyond the usual framework of regular meetings.

The Board "B" Policy Committee has met twice this month and is close to finalizing its review of the B policies.

As always, the board office remains dedicated to supporting the BOE, the superintendent, and the district.

Chief H. Eric Hilton**Office of Legal Affairs (OLA)****Overview and Summary of Activity for the OLA**

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 has continued its review and analysis of changes to federal laws, rules and regulations and completed presentations to the superintendent and the superintendent's cabinet. The OLA also completed training of DCSD personnel on matters related to federal enforcement and directives. OLA attorneys also continued work on policy review committees. The OLA also coordinated with outside counsel on litigation matters, legislative affairs and annexation issues. More specifically, members of the OLA visited the State Capitol to discuss several legislative priorities with elected officials. Finally, the OLA Legal Team collaborated on numerous matters and timely responded to districtwide legal requests. Legal Team members visited Chapel Hill MS and participated in Career Day to benefit its scholars.

Executive Legal Director and Title IX Coordinator Marissa Key, Esq.**Office of Legal Affairs****State Legislation**

The legislative session ends on April 4. The Governor will then have 40 days to sign or veto legislation, or he may allow it to become law without his signature. We will continue to monitor legislation during this critical period that could impact the district. Training on new legislation will occur during the summer Leadership Conference and ongoing throughout the summer.

Policies

The OLA continues collaborating with HR to revise identified policies and create supporting regulations for review and presentation to the board. Additionally, we are reviewing district policies and federal directives to identify other policies requiring revision. We are also collaborating with the board's B Policy Committee to finalize the review and revision of Policy Manual B policies and supporting regulations.

Title IX

Hands-on support is being provided to school leaders throughout the remainder of the school year. In-person, role-specific training will be provided in April to support the effective implementation of the restructured Title IX process.

Open Records

As of March 7, the Open Records Team has received approximately 898 production requests for school year (SY) 2024-2025. This dedicated team has a 96 percent closure rate with 4 percent of the requests currently pending.

Legal Director Glinton Darien, Esq.

Risk Management and Workers' Compensation

Document Retention Management

The OLA will continue its review of updates and legal requirements concerning document retention in Georgia. We will collaborate with 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

The OLA will complete an application and other documents needed for renewal of the district's Excess Workers' Compensation Insurance coverage. In addition, we will obtain an updated *statement of values*, cyber insurance application, above-ground storage tank form, and library book form needed to renew the district's property insurance coverage. The OLA will also secure updated school bus and vehicle inventory forms for insurance coverage renewal for off-road physical damage to vehicles.

Risk Management

The OLA will continue meeting with Gartner representatives regarding the development of a risk assessment framework using 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 for school-based leaders was a success. The Symposium covered federal, state, and local laws and policy updates that may impact various aspects of education. Mini training sessions are being scheduled for various departments to provide targeted guidance for compliance.

Employee Relations

The OLA continues to work with HR to address employment complaints and personnel matters. Additionally, targeted training and legal guidance on best practices and compliance have positively impacted the overall efficiency of processing employment matters. The district's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission charges and employment lawsuits remain below 1 percent. The OLA strives to promptly and efficiently resolve legal issues impacting personnel.

Student Relations

The OLA continues to work with the Department of Student Relations to provide support regarding student discipline matters. The OLA is identifying areas for support in collaboration with the Division of Wrap Around Services and the Department of Public Safety to target mitigating factors to contribute to the efficient operations of the district.

Parent and Student Matters

The OLA continues to support 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. The OLA will begin gathering data from the area offices to assess the impact of legal support in this area.

Legal Counsel Imani Redd, Esq.

Contract Administration

Contracts Management

Since the last Operations Report, 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 on 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 Hofstetter

Division of Operations

As we welcome the month of [March](#), I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible dedication and hard work that each of you brings to our team. We are truly fortunate to work alongside such talented and committed individuals. Your efforts are the foundation of our success, and I am continually inspired by the passion and perseverance you demonstrate every day.

March is a time to appreciate our progress and to recognize that our achievements are not just a matter of luck. As the saying goes, "Luck is where preparation meets opportunity." Your unwavering commitment to excellence and readiness to seize opportunities have been instrumental in our accomplishments. This blend of hard work and preparedness propels us forward and positions us for even greater success.

As we continue our journey, I encourage you to maintain this momentum. Embrace the challenges and opportunities ahead with the same determination and enthusiasm that have brought us this far. Remember, every effort you put in today lays the groundwork for tomorrow's successes.

Let's keep pushing the boundaries, striving for excellence, and being ready for the bigger and better things that await us. Let's also take the time to celebrate our collective achievements and the camaraderie that makes our team so strong. The support and collaboration we share are the driving forces behind our accomplishments.

Together, we can overcome any obstacle and turn our aspirations into reality. Thank you for your continued dedication and hard work. I am excited to see what we will achieve together in the coming months. Let's make March a month of growth, opportunity, and success.

Deputy Chief Operations Officer Antwyn Brown

Division of Operations

March has been filled with continual improvement efforts across all departments within the Division of Operations. In the spirit of support and engagement toward our bus drivers, Executive Director Raymond Stanley and I participated in an ad hoc bus ride-along based on the petitions of concerns relayed from our Drivers Monitors Advisory Committee members. Along with Director Keith Singleton, I participated in numerous workflow discussions and meetings to improve the Department of Business Services' service delivery with the 1) continual integration and expansion of Grainger warehouse storefront, 2) warehouse intake and delivery protocols, 3) vendor invoice reconciliations, and 4) Facilities Use Agreement inquiries. Chief Hofstetter and I coordinated a preliminary planning services Kickoff meeting with our new Program Management Team — Hoar Program Management (HPM). I have engaged and advised Executive Director Dr. Connie Walker regarding School Nutrition Services' pre-audit kitchen readiness, state reporting workflows, and strategic staffing plans (with members of the HR-

Operations Team). I have also advised and supported the ongoing divisional hiring efforts (recruitment and interview) and benchmarking goals of the HR-Operations Team. The division's employee engagement efforts have been continuous, as evidenced through recognition of our 1) surprise *Difference Maker* Award recipient from Fleet Management, 2) retirement acknowledgment of members of our Facilities Maintenance staff, and 3) also through the empaneling of a focus group to provide input of the staff's vision of the next fleet director. I also participated in an employee engagement session convened by Dr. Horton and Chief of Staff Elijah Palmer with members of the Facilities Maintenance Team to discuss recognition, working conditions, professional expectations, and opportunities for professional advancement. I also had the chance to participate in a continuous education opportunity with my colleague HR Deputy Chief Jason Kennedy at the Georgia State Superintendents' Association Conference in Macon, Georgia. I was fortunate to provide logistical support alongside our Transportation-Special Needs, Grounds and General Maintenance staff members during the Special Olympics event held at Hallford Stadium.

In coordination with the Department of Planning and designees from all divisional departments, we continue to survey and plan for the Sam Moss alternative parking solutions in advance of the Kroger Administrative Building site move-in. Chief Hofstetter and I also conducted a high-level furniture needs assessment walkthrough of the Kroger Administrative Building site.

Executive Director Keith Ball

Capital Improvements and Facilities

Summer 2025 Update

- Fifty-eight summer calendar days to perform the work (38 workdays, includes weekends and two holidays)
- School readiness deadline is July 25
- Eighty-six major capital projects
- Eight renovations/modernization/additions and new construction projects
- Twelve HVAC systems and/or switchgear replacement projects
- Two elevator additions
- Ten parking/paving projects
- Fifty-four security vestibule projects

All other current roofing projects, vestibules, and major system replacements will be ongoing or completed during the 58 calendar days.

The Operations Division is proud to announce the closeout of multiple projects, including three security vestibules at Briarlake, EL Miller, and Laurel Ridge Elementary Schools. The renovation project, including the major systems replacement at Laurel Ridge, is complete. Roofing projects

will be closed out this spring, including MLK Jr. and McNair High Schools. HVAC replacement in the 2014 wing at MLK Jr. HS will occur this summer. All is an effort to provide safe, clean, and efficient facilities.

Two of our largest projects in DCSD are underway at Cross Keys HS and on the current Sequoyah MS site. The project at Cross Keys HS includes heavy renovation, modernization, and an addition. The BOE approved the final Goods Manufacturing Practices (GMP) in March, fully funding this project with an estimated completion in 2028. One of the highlights of this project will be a new, state-of-the-art, multipurpose auditorium. Once the project is completed, Cross Keys will no longer need any trailers or modular units on its campus.

The GMP for the new Sequoyah MS and new HS is scheduled to go to the BOE in April. Significant site work has already begun in preparation for two brand-new, state-of-the-art facilities. The existing MS and the original Sequoyah HS will be replaced in this multi-phased project with a completion schedule for the MS in 2028.

Executive Director Raymond Stanley

Transportation and Fleet Operations

2025 DCSD Summer Programs (Transportation)

March involved planning with various divisions and departments for student transportation needs. Multiple collaborative planning meetings were held with Division of Curriculum and Instruction leaders and summer program coordinators to achieve an efficient and effective transportation plan for the 2025 DCSD Summer School. During the collaborative meetings, focus areas included trip tracker entry, providing student information (lists/spreadsheets), routing request timeline, and students routed based on Infinite Campus address and summer school sign-up link.

Collaborative meetings were also held with the Special Education (SPED) directors and coordinators to establish student information sharing and protocols to monitor transportation requests for the extended school year summer program and SY25-26 SPED transportation. Our team is delighted to support our student-athletes with safe and efficient transportation for all spring sports and events. (track, baseball, tennis, soccer, ES basketball and flag football).

Fleet (Bus Inventory Report)

School Bus Inventory – 992 (Total)

Buses by Manufacture	Number of buses	Percent of buses
Bluebird	345	35%
Thomas	328	33%
International	319	32%

Bus Lifecycle Metric	Number of buses	Percent of buses
Exceeded max life 15 plus years	309	31%
Near max life 11-14 years	123	12%
Mid-life 6-10 years	386	39%
New life (warranty) 0-5 years	174	18%

Buses by Fuel Type	Number of buses	Percent of buses
Diesel	813	81%
Compressed natural gas	1	0.1%
Gasoline	3	0.3%
Propane	175	17%

Bus Information	Number of Buses	Percent of buses
Special education (small)	301	30%
General education (large)	691	70%

Bus Camera Systems	Number of Buses	Percent of buses
Buses with cameras	557	56%
Buses without cameras	435	43%
Operational cameras	381	38%

Executive Director Connie Walker

School Nutrition Services (SNS)

School Lunch Hero Day!

The purpose of School Lunch Hero Day is to recognize DCSD's SNS for their commitment to serving DCSD's students by providing healthy reimbursable meals to students that meet the child nutrition, USDA standards for meal pattern requirements.

Between preparing delicious food, adhering to strict nutrition standards, navigating student food allergies, and offering service with a smile, DeKalb County nutrition professionals have a lot on their plate. DeKalb schools will celebrate



School Lunch Hero Day on May 12 to celebrate their hard work and commitment. School Lunch Hero Day allows parents, students, school staff, and the district to thank those who provide healthy meals to students.

School nutrition employees must balance many roles and follow numerous federal, state, and local regulations to ensure safe and healthy meals are available in schools. School Lunch Hero Day allows the district to thank these hardworking heroes for their dedication to fueling our students for success.

Director Bernando Brown

Student Transportation

Infrastructure Migration and System Access Update: Benefits to Transportation Operations

On March 14, our department completed a critical infrastructure migration. This update was part of a required initiative to strengthen the technology we rely on to manage daily transportation operations. The primary focus was upgrading our backend environment—improving security, efficiency, and overall system performance to meet the growing demands of our district.

Much of the progress occurred behind the scenes. Working closely with the Division of Information and Instructional Technology, the team began uninstalling outdated software from laptops in the conference room and desktops across the transportation building. Edulog migrated our server to the newly hosted environment as this work progressed, laying the foundation for more reliable performance.

While updates were underway, users began testing functionality on their computers as software installations were completed. Over the weekend, Edulog continued its migration efforts to ensure systems were aligned and ready for Monday's follow-up testing. This collaborative approach helped minimize disruptions and kept the project on track.

We re-tested functionality across the department. Depending on the outcome of the network installation, we planned for two different update paths:

1. Proceed with a network install based on a user list
2. Schedule manual updates for six essential offices during the week of March 17–21, with the remaining offices updated as soon as possible

One of the most impactful changes is the new ability for routers to access Edulog through the Web Application Secure Client Interface. This upgrade makes it easier for staff to work with real-time routing data. The improved connectivity between datasets means routing updates are quicker and more accurate, helping us improve service delivery across the board.

Although these changes may not be immediately noticeable to most users, the improvements are meaningful. With upgraded security protocols, enhanced server tools, and easier access to routing systems, we're now better positioned to support our schools with dependable, efficient transportation services. This migration represents a forward step in how we operate—and in how we serve our students and families.

Director Bobby Moncrief

Facilities Services

National Facility Management and Technology Conference in Baltimore

The Facilities Department is committed to delivering high-quality work to DCSD through professional training and excellent customer service. Several Management Team members recently attended Baltimore's National Facilities Management and Technology (NFMT) Conference. The NFMT is a premier educational conference and trade show for facility professionals responsible for managing, operating, maintaining, renovating, and constructing non-residential buildings. This opportunity allowed our team to gain valuable insights, explore innovative solutions, and enhance their expertise to better serve our community.

Developments in the Facilities Department

The team remained hard at work, successfully closing 1,568 work orders while strategically planning and scheduling services for 1,329 new requests. Additionally, efforts are underway to develop efficient channels for executing the new Life Cycle Plan, ensuring the proper regulation and maintenance of equipment and fixtures throughout the county. These initiatives reflect our ongoing commitment to providing top-quality service and continuous improvement.



Director Keith Singleton**Business Services****March Operational Updates**

As we move through March, several key transitions are underway to strengthen and expand our operational capacity:

- **Grainger Expansion:** We are transitioning to a full Branch operation for both MRO and Kitchen equipment through our Grainger initiative. This expansion will enhance our ability to manage and fulfill maintenance and operational needs across the district.
- **Custodial Support Update:** Southeastern will now serve as our primary supplier for custodial supplies and equipment, streamlining procurement and improving service efficiency.
- **Warehouse Management Implementation:** We are launching a Warehouse Management System through Zenventory. This system will improve inventory tracking, order accuracy, and operational visibility.
- **Staff Milestone:** After 25 years of dedicated service, Stephen Champion will officially retire on March 31. We wish “Champ” all the best in this next chapter—Godspeed to his continued success.

Director Hans Williams**Planning and E-SPLOST/ Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Programming****Facility Planning Coordination**

The Planning Department is excited to announce the Long-Range Facility Planning Process launch in partnership with HPM! This initiative is transformative, paving the way for the next decade of school capacity planning. We will identify where resources are most needed through extensive facility assessments and long-term enrollment forecasts. The initial phases include data sharing and establishing assessment standards, with evaluations set to begin in late spring and early summer. By next fall, HPM will provide a comprehensive report—forming the basis for future facilities planning and strategic recommendations!

Student Assignment Process (SAP) Coordination

In support of the SAP, our team is developing the DCSD Atlas—an innovative application designed to assist SAP Committee members in exploring the geographic and demographic landscape of the DCSD. With this tool, users can:

- Examine attendance zones and school locations
- Analyze historic and projected enrollment trends
- Assess facility conditions and age
- Review school performance metrics – College and Career Ready Performance Index

- Discover specialized programs (International Baccalaureate [IB], Magnet, Montessori, etc.)
- Study past redistricting history

This innovative resource will empower committee members to make data-driven decisions regarding the district's buildings, boundaries, and programs.

Chief Financial Officer Byron Schueneman

Deputy Chief Financial Officer Lauren Scott

Division of Finance

FY26 Budget Progress

The budget for FY26 is tight. The budget revenues come from two primary sources: the state Quality Basic Education (QBE) and local property taxes. Unlike in the recent past, the property tax digest is expected to be relatively stagnant, QBE is anticipated to grow modestly, and Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding has sunset. At the same time, we are facing more significant increases in the employer's cost for state health benefits and the teacher's retirement system, which will cost the district upwards of \$35 million more than FY25. The first budget presentation will be at the board retreat on April 30.

The millage rate-setting process will differ due to House Bill 581 and other pending legislation. We won't know more about that process until April 24. We know that the board has to provide the tax commissioner with an anticipated millage rate by May 14, so they can print with the taxpayer's reevaluation notices.

Invoice Processing and Accounts Payable

Leaders from Finance and Operations met with Tyler (Munis) to dive deeply into our invoice and accounts payable processes. During this assessment, we reevaluated how we process invoices in and outside of Munis. We were also shown ways to utilize the system to better track due dates and aging receivables. This will provide us with tools to enforce accountability and provide more transparency and data into the process as well as transition to using artificial intelligence in the future to read and help process invoices. This supports strategic goal area 6.5. *Ensure excellent financial management of district resources, specifically part c. Improve relationships with vendors by streamlining payment processing.* This will be a new MIRACLE presented for the first time in May.

Director Asheia Hines

Payroll and Time and Attendance

Edulog will not have a template to share for testing in Munis until June, and their contract will not be extended. Time and Attendance is scheduled to go live in September; therefore, a decision will need to be made as to how time will be captured for the bus drivers.

The team will need support from the Division of Information and Instructional Technology's Mallorie Robinson, Glenn Melendez, and Linda Jordan with the secondary level of approval and workflow setup to ensure accuracy and compliance.

Payroll is starting a clean-up effort for employees who have taken more leave than they had earnings (leave without pay) starting April 15. Communication was socialized by the HR Team informing those employees who have been impacted. Vacation accrual balances are scheduled to be corrected with the April 15 paycheck.

Testing for ACH setup for the child support disbursement units is underway.

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.

ClassWallet

ClassWallet is a digital platform designed to provide funding directly to classroom teachers to make purchases and track spending for education-related expenses. In the coming days, we will determine allotment amounts per classroom teacher based on FY26 budget capacity.

Comptroller Lance McConkey

Business Services

FY24 Audit

The Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts (DOAA) is completing the FY24 financial and single audits. The financial audit fieldwork is approximately 85-90 percent complete. The single audits cover the following federal programs:

- ESSER – fieldwork 100 percent complete.
- English Language Acquisition – fieldwork 100 percent complete.
- SPED – fieldwork 95 percent complete.
- Student Support and Academic Enrichment – fieldwork 100 percent complete.
- School Nutrition – fieldwork 85 percent complete.

The Audit Team has a fieldwork completion deadline of early April. DOAA has committed to audit completion and report release by May.

MyRetirement Manager Platform Expansion

The Implementation Team, including representatives from Finance, HR, Technology, and the vendor met weekly in March. A project timeline is being followed, including the required deliverables each division will be responsible for providing. Weekly meetings will continue in April, and phase 1 and 2 file testing will be completed. 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 been held to work on the setup of the platform and the upload of historical data. The implementation work is 80% complete. Once implemented, the platform will provide improved data to assist in cash management, investing strategies, forecasting, and analysis of banking fees.

Medicaid Reimbursement

Finance established a new MIRACLES project in March in collaboration with the Student Services Division and the SPED. This project will initiate and sustain the Medicaid billing and reimbursement for services provided to district students. Next, request platform demos from the available vendors to all parties involved to determine the best fit for the district. The goal is to complete this project by the end of the calendar year.

Director Milton Hall

Allotments

Redistricting and RAMP

The Office of Allotments has collaborated and concluded the allocation process to support the Idlewood and Smoke Rise ES redistricting and will continue to support them into the upcoming school year. The Office of Allotment also works with the Area Teams, principals, and the Student Information System's Scheduling Team to assist in scheduling needs to maximize funding through effective scheduling. Many may recall when we began this intense in-person support of the local schools in 2023. At that time, the Georgia Department of Education Midterm Comparison Report reflected that, as a district, we were leaving approximately \$11.4M on the table. Today, we are \$6.5M in the green. This equates to about an \$18M gain. As a reminder, this is the report that shows potential earnings stemming from program participation such as the Early Intervention Program, SPED, GIFTED, English to Speakers of Other Languages, etc.

Some other notable adjustments for the upcoming year included the adjustment in school allocations to support at least one full-time lead teacher for SPED assigned to each school. We are still working with the chief financial officer, chief of school leadership, and the superintendent to identify what support will look like for the Horizon Schools as we enter FY26 and the distribution of funds set aside for those Horizon schools.

Lastly, the Resource Allocation Methodology Plan (RAMP) Committee is in its final stages of amending the FY27 RAMP to reflect allocations or financial support for all Special Programs offered within our district that did not already have a funding source. The RAMP will also reflect a set funding model to support our nontraditional high schools.

Executive Director Carla Smith

Vendor Services

Forvis Mazars Purchase Card Audit Engagement

The Vendor Services Team is collaborating with Forvis Mazars to gather transaction reports and supporting documents for the ongoing PCard audit. All requested items, including a detailed walkthrough of policies and procedures, have been provided.

Division of Operations Purchase Card Collaboration

The Vendor Services Team, Operation's facility managers, and clerical support gathered to discuss the PCard process and address questions related to the Munis approval process and invoices. This meeting helped both divisions better understand the internal processes for approval, valid invoices, and the approval workflow within Munis.

Chief Dr. Yolanda Williamson**Chief Dr. Yolanda Williamson and Strategic Partners Manager Tanya Arrington****Division of Community Engagement and Innovative Partnerships (DCEIP)**

As part of our strategic plan and ensuring equity throughout the district, DCEIP secures translation and interpretation services for all upcoming meetings and events, such as the DeKalb State of the District, Mr. Ziffer's Community Meeting, and Mrs. Pierce's Community Dialogue. Interpretation services have been requested for the following languages: Spanish, Amharic, Bengali, Mam, Dari, Swahili, and Burmese to ensure that our community stakeholders have equitable access to the various meetings held throughout the district.

DCEIP has partnered with the 94.5 radio host on a program called "Catch A Book." This program is designed to encourage ES and MS students to develop a love for reading. The program is targeted to students in grades K-6. The first program was held at Marbut Traditional Theme School and will continue throughout meeting for the April at three other elementary schools and one MS.

DCEIP has also collaborated with Mr. Hank Steward and his foundation to host a Spring Break Enrichment Camp at Columbia MS. During spring break, the camp will bring together students from Redan, Champion, Miller Grove, Columbia, and Bethune Middle Schools to enhance their reading, math, and financial literacy skills. The Hank Steward Foundation and the DCSD sponsors the program.

Two of our board members, Mr. Ziffer and Mr. DaCosta, will hold community meetings to discuss the rebranding and name changes for the new Sequoyah Middle/High School and Pine Ridge Elementary. Campaigns are being developed to engage the community and secure support for each initiative.

Deputy Chief Jennifer Caracciolo**Communications**

March was an exciting month for the Communications Department! The team collaborated on the 2025 State of the District event, co-hosted by the district and the DeKalb School Educational Foundation. With approximately 400 attendees, the event was supported by 23 generous sponsors from local businesses and organizations. It also marked the launch of the Foundation's inaugural fundraiser, the Pathway to Excellence, a brick pathway at the FSC. As of this report, the Foundation has raised \$4,600 toward its \$10,000 goal.

We also reached a significant milestone with redesigning the district website – a brand-new template design has been created! We're excited to present the revamped site to the community this summer. Ongoing work includes updating the site map and refining existing content.

The department supported various division and district events and programs throughout March. Highlights included hosting two board member Town Hall meetings and planning for four additional board events in April. March also saw the launch of the new alumni website and the DeKalb Made campaign, which includes compelling web and video stories.

Press Secretary Dr. Donald Porter

Media/School Relations

In March, the Office of the Press Secretary focused on improving the district's image and reputation through strategic communications. Additionally, I worked to keep DCSD administrators and board members informed about reported stories involving the district's schools and other neighboring and statewide school systems through daily media monitoring reports. This effort included coordinating meeting for the 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 two formal media releases, prepared six District statements, edited/created seven web stories, wrote one script for a district leadership video, addressed 40 other general media inquiries, and provided on-site district media support at the annual State of the District.

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

Throughout March, the Grants and Partnerships Team worked diligently to strengthen district programs and initiatives, ensuring meaningful collaborations and effective resource allocation. Our efforts focused on key projects, including support for SAFE Centers, the State of the District event, Falcons School Programs, DeKalb Match, the Back-to-School Rally, and securing valuable partnerships to enhance student opportunities. Three applications were submitted to Gas South to support the SAFE Centers. The team also played a pivotal role in the DeKalb County Chamber of Commerce's Education Week, held at the Early Learning Center on March 24.

This month's major highlight is the Georgia Lions Lighthouse Foundation's generous initiative to provide all elementary school students free eye exams and prescription glasses. By offering this service at no cost to the district or schools, the Foundation ensures that every young learner can access proper vision care, removing barriers to academic success and supporting overall well-being.

In another exciting development, the Atlanta Falcons/Arthur Blank Partnership Foundation invited Mr. Lexus Luke, assistant flag football coach at Towers High School, to apply for funding to enhance the school's flag football program. With the Foundation already supporting DCSD girls flag football at Towers HS, this opportunity holds great promise for expanding athletics and student engagement.

Recognizing excellence in education, the Braves Foundation will honor the district's "Teacher of the Year," Latalia Robbins of Smoke Rise ES, at the Atlanta Braves versus Cincinnati Reds game on May 8. She will take part in the ceremonial first pitch, a time-honored baseball tradition marking the start of the game.

Additionally, the City of Stonecrest's donation continues to support 12 schools, with the Grants and Partnerships Team overseeing expenditure tracking to ensure transparency. Schools have been reminded to submit all requisitions by April 4 to maximize the use of funds for student enrichment.

March also brought expansion to the Atlanta Falcons' "Sneak Behind the Beak" shows, which will now reach two additional schools, further enhancing student engagement.

Beyond program funding and recognition efforts, the team remains committed to broader district initiatives. We will continue working with the DeKalb County Housing Authority to certify low-income housing properties while collaborating with the district's IT Department to ensure the timely distribution of the Impact Aid Survey via Infinite Campus.

Through these strategic partnerships and initiatives, the Grants and Partnerships Team remains dedicated to securing resources that uplift students, educators, and the broader school community.

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
- 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 (ISSA) industry certification, with the opportunity to be hired through Operations.

As we close out March, we will host a professional learning opportunity for our instructors on how to complete the HOPE HSE grant application. This is critical to provide support to 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

2025 State of the District

The DeKalb Schools Educational Foundation, Inc. secured \$67,750 from 23 sponsors for this year’s State of the District event. Junior League of DeKalb County and Sands Investment Group were Co-Title Sponsors (\$10,000 sponsorship level). The Junior League of DeKalb County commits to supporting five DCSD schools to expand programming geared towards mental health and wellness. Sands Investment Group commits to a one-for-one match for the Foundation’s Inaugural Brick Walk fundraiser. This fundraiser will support the development of STEAM-based programming within the district.

In addition, CEO Lorraine Cochran-Johnson deepened her commitment to DCSD, emphasizing the need for educators, community leaders, and business leaders to work in partnership to strengthen outcomes for our students. Dr. Horton highlighted in his address how the Foundation will play a pivotal role as the district seeks additional resources to provide high-quality education for DCSD students.

The Foundation continues to seek and develop partnerships with community organizations that will provide academic, extracurricular, and post-secondary opportunities to produce well-rounded students ready for success.

Manager Marcia Coward

Family and Community Empowerment

Building on Success and Expanding Impact

March was a month of remarkable achievements and momentum for the Family and Community Empowerment Department. Following the resounding success of our previous initiatives, we seamlessly transitioned into the next phase of our work, further strengthening family engagement and literacy across the district.

Read and RISE DeKalb: Phase 2 Takes Flight

- Special guest readings from BOE members, Superintendent Horton, district leaders, and community partners
- Interactive literacy experiences, including our beloved reading mascot, Hootdini
- The opportunity for every student to choose a book to build their home library, reinforcing our mission to make reading irresistible and elevate academic success

State of the District: Spreading the Power of Reading

We proudly supported the State of the District event, sponsored by the DeKalb Schools Foundation, by showcasing our Read and RISE DeKalb initiative. Although the event was STEAM-focused, we ensured literacy remained a priority by putting a book in the hands of every attendee. Each book had a special note challenging them to "Pass the Power of Reading on!" Attendees were encouraged to share the book they received with a child or read it aloud to them, reinforcing our belief that literacy is a shared responsibility.

Chief Human Resources Officer Tasha Mills-Davis

Human Resources

Hiring of New Employee Experience Manager

We are excited to announce that we have hired a new Employee Experience Manager! This key role focuses on enhancing the overall employee experience by fostering engagement, streamlining processes, and ensuring a positive and supportive work environment for all staff.

Deputy Chief Jason E. Kennedy

HR Core Team

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

The HR Core Team has begun prioritizing and preparing for the update of SOPs within the HR Department. This initiative ensures our processes remain current, clear, and aligned with operational needs.

This will be an ongoing effort, with updates made as process changes occur to maintain accuracy and efficiency across all HR functions.

Director Tracy Harris

Talent Acquisition

Recruiting and Hiring

DCSD actively participated in the Metro Regional Educational Service Agency Job Fair on March 1, where 50 *Statements of Acceptance* were secured. Additionally, the district sponsored a job fair on March 29, which saw over 700 participants and resulted in 130 job offers for teachers and paraprofessionals.

The internal transfer period was also highly successful, yielding 136 initial transfers. With the addition of the transfer fair, we were able to transfer 53 more teachers.

The district is on track to hire 25 Teach for America candidates by April 23. We also successfully placed 48 Inspiring Greatness and Normalizing Innovation in Teacher Education (IGNITE) residents during the IGNITE Horizon School Job Fair on March 26, further supporting our commitment to building a strong pipeline of educators.

Onboarding

The district will pilot the virtual onboarding platform with select candidates in April with hopes of a full rollout in May.

Director Carina Harrigan**IGNITE****IGNITE Teacher Residency – Cohort 3 Recruitment and Cohort 2 Hiring Efforts**

After an intensive and highly competitive selection process, 50 residents have confirmed acceptance into the IGNITE Teacher Residency Program. Candidates participated in rounds of interviews and performance tasks designed to assess their commitment to education, instructional potential, and ability to support student success in high-priority schools. These residents will begin their journey in June 2025, earning their Master of Arts in Teaching in elementary education, SPED, or secondary math or science. The final selection day is planned for early April.

Cohort 2 residents recently participated in the IGNITE Horizons Schools Job Fair, where they interviewed with Horizon School principals and received offers of employment. This event provided residents with an opportunity to connect with school leaders, showcase their skills, and take the next step toward securing full-time teaching roles within the district.

Total Rewards**Compensation Benchmarking Tool Identified**

The Total Rewards Team has successfully identified a compensation benchmarking tool that will support our efforts to align job titles and descriptions with current market trends. This tool will provide valuable insights to ensure our compensation structure remains competitive and equitable as we transition to the updated pay bands.

Director R. Sebree-Kelly**Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS)****Records Digitization**

We are excited to announce the official launch of the HR records digitization project with DocuFree, marking the beginning of our transition to a more organized, paperless environment. As of today, DocuFree has collected nearly 1,000 boxes of files from the AIC and Avondale locations. The pickup process will continue over the coming weeks.

Employee Data Audits

In our ongoing efforts to improve data integrity, the HRIS Team has made considerable progress with data audits within Munis. These audits have revealed critical gaps, leading to a think tank of HR personnel working together to strengthen our business processes. Meanwhile, the HRIS Team has also successfully concluded the vetting of the Crisis Prevention Intervention Cycle II personnel file, which was approved by the state a day earlier than expected.

Annual Employment Contracts

Finally, we are pleased to report the successful delivery of over 7,000 contracts via the DocuSign platform, with minimal technical issues and 95 percent of contracts signed. Our continued support for contracted employees with DocuSign-related technical issues remains a priority.

Performance Evaluation Coordinator Kismet Sims/Corey Stegall

Evaluations Team

Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) and Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) Training

The Evaluations Team wrapped up March by training 15 principals on LKES and trained 10 assistant principals on the TKES.

DeKalb Keys Training

The Evaluations Team met with the 206 academic coaches to discuss the evaluations process, as well as discuss how coaching supports the continuous improvement of teacher performance. The coaches raised several questions. Therefore, a future session was discussed with the academic coach coordinators.

Evaluations and Operations

The team is working with the Operations Division to determine efficient ways to provide support.

Senior Manager Jamel Crawford

Employee Relations Team

Department Updates

The Employee Relations Team presented the code of ethics for educators to the staff of Idlewood ES. We also presented the code of ethics to staff during the Georgia Alternate Assessment testing meeting. Employee Relations is currently updating the Progressive Discipline Model and getting trained on the Georgia Applicant Processing Service. Employee Relations has posted a grievance specialist position and looks forward to interviewing and hiring a well-qualified candidate.