



Academic Report – August 2025

Chief Dr. Triscilla Weaver

Access and Opportunity

A & O Policy

This past month, we collaborated with Shakina Champion and Vitella Dodson to crosswalk the policy draft with the Strategic Plan to ensure there was no redundancy. The draft was condensed considerably, and it was decided that the policy should do the following: 1) state the district's A & O position; 2) commit to a cyclical process that aligns with the Strategic Plan; 3) ensure that actions are taken using an A & O lens; and 4) ensure that there is monitoring and transparency in reporting progress. We developed a timeline that would allow the policy to be submitted to the Board by November for a 'first read'.

A & O Learning Series and Playbook

We secured funding from Finance for the Learning Series and Playbook. We developed a matrix containing the bidding companies and the quotes they submitted. After reviewing the matrix and each vendor proposal, we had additional questions for The Leadership Academy and Dr. Timothy Gadson. We met with them to gain more insight into how they envisioned working with us on the projects. We will make a vendor selection no later than the first week in September.

Other Projects

In addition to these MIRACLES-focused projects, we also made progress with the rollout of the Field Trip Guidance Document. Our team presented the document to the Culture and Climate Coordinators in their collaboration meeting. There was immediate buy-in, and the next steps were determined. Erica Bowman will consult with Champion Dillard to determine how the information will be shared with the Area Superintendents and EAs. She will reach out to us if any support is needed.

Dr. Outler is collaborating with SMP as they determine the guiding principles and foundational elements for this year's MBK & OSK mentoring programs. He participated in two of their Steering Committee meetings and volunteered to speak at one of their induction ceremonies.

Finally, as a point of celebration, the proposal we submitted to present at NABSE was approved! We will have the opportunity to talk about the importance of remaining committed to the work of access and opportunity during this time.

Executive Director Myss Johnson-Jelks

Athletics

The first month of school has been off to a strong start. As we move from planning to implementation, the Athletics Department is well-positioned for a successful 2025–2026 school

year. Our focus continues to center on strengthening operations, enhancing safety protocols, and reinforcing fiscal accountability. We are finalizing updated Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), revising the Athletic Handbook, and refining stadium policies. In partnership with Finance, we have also established fiscal guardrails to ensure responsible and sustainable operations.

Throughout the month, we engaged in several key initiatives and collaborations. We met with Student Services to develop a revitalization plan for the DeKalb Silver Streaks, and I also attended the groundbreaking ceremony at Cross Keys. Work has continued with the Operations team to ensure that all facilities and stadiums are prepared for the season. In collaboration with Northside, we are maintaining our commitment to providing athletic trainers at all 19 high schools and ensuring coverage at every game. In addition, we have continued building relationships with outside companies to secure sponsorships and foster positive partnerships that support our programs.

On the athletics front, we collaborated with Atlanta Public Schools on planning for the All-Softball Game and met with school liaisons and the GHSA Executive Director to review GHSA Constitution updates and their impact on DCSD policies. We also joined Atlanta United's community soccer cohort to brainstorm engagement and exposure strategies in anticipation of the upcoming World Cup.

Director Brandon Lane

Athletics

This month, the Athletics Department has advanced several key initiatives to strengthen operations and enhance the student-athlete experience. I collaborated with three external companies to initiate sponsorship and partnership development to expand resources and opportunities for our programs. In collaboration with Northside, we are actively working to secure athletic trainers for all 19 high schools, ensuring consistent medical coverage across all high school athletic events this season. Additionally, I created and implemented Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for football, track, and basketball games in collaboration with our athletic coordinators, providing a unified framework to improve event management, safety, and efficiency. I also attended multiple coaches' meetings to support our athletic coordinators and provide necessary feedback to strengthen communication and program alignment.

Additionally, I have worked closely with our Executive Director to monitor and balance the athletics budget, identifying potential outside funding sources to offset costs and ensure long-term sustainability. Together, we have also partnered with the Operations Team and the Safety and Security Team to ensure that our athletic facilities remain up to date and that all events are safe and properly secured, in accordance with our Safety Team's guidance. Beyond these responsibilities, I attended over 20 athletic events, both within and outside the county, to provide visible support to student-athletes and athletic coordinators. These combined efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to operational excellence, student safety, and collaboration while ensuring our athletes receive the highest level of support both on and off the field.

Director Kina M. Champion**School Innovation****Principal Advisory Council (PAC) Elections**

Since July, the School Innovation team has facilitated 4 of the 12 sessions outlined in its SY25-26 SMART A-O goal for this area. In August, over 90 principals participated in two School Governance 101 trainings, reflecting strong engagement and commitment to effective school governance.

PAC candidate recruitment continues. As of August 29, 2025, the team has verified 642 candidates (475 parents and 167 teachers). Achieving full candidate slates at all schools by September 5, 2025, will require continued collaboration with Area Offices and Communications. School Innovation is updating principals and Area Offices several times per week and using district-wide channels to recruit. Next steps include ballot verification, system testing, and opening the voting window from September 17–24.

Additionally, School Innovation is exploring a potential partnership with APS, Fulton County, and LEE to launch a civic leadership cohort supporting PACs, GO Teams, and School Governance Councils.

GA Charter School Authorizer Standards

As part of our SMART A-O goal, School Innovation will address 100% of the findings and recommendations from the Georgia Charter School Authorizer Evaluation by June 2026. To achieve this, the team is developing a comprehensive action plan that includes timelines, assigned responsibilities, and quarterly progress monitoring to enhance our charter authorizing practices districtwide. Over the past month, the School Innovation Department participated in an in-depth evaluation interview, coordinated the first SY25-26 charter school quarterly collaborative meetings with school leaders, facilitated a petitioner workshop for SAIL Academy, and published the FY26 Department Services Guide.

Looking ahead, the next 30 days will focus on reviewing and prioritizing findings from the final evaluation report, finalizing the SY25–26 action plan, and establishing data collection protocols. School Innovation will also begin drafting *Charter Schools 102: Georgia Charter School Authorizer Standards*, an advanced professional learning module designed further to build the capacity of school leaders and district staff.

Executive Director Sarita Smith**Student Assignment**

The start of the school year was an exciting and productive time for the Student Assignment team. During the first week of school, our team was deployed to every school across the district to support ongoing registration needs, address challenges, and manage backend data. We were exceptionally responsive to schools without full-time registrars or those with newly hired staff, ensuring they had the guidance and support needed to get started successfully.

In the second week, our focus shifted to high-needs areas, such as Smoke Rise and Stone Mill, where we continued hands-on support. Meanwhile, the rest of the team resumed daily operations, managing Infinite Campus tasks and maintaining district-wide registration workflows. We received overwhelmingly positive feedback from school registrars and from our own team on how to enhance support next summer through our registration hubs.

School Choice & Student Assignment

Both School Choice and Student Assignment are actively preparing for the upcoming year. The School Choice team is currently training behind the scenes and collaborating closely with our new vendor, SchoolMint. We've completed platform onboarding, including an overview of the parent portal. IT is working hand in hand with us to ensure seamless data sharing and integration with the DeKalb County School District student database.

Collaboration & Strategic Alignment

This month, Student Assignment has also been working closely with HPM to align our processes with class management strategies and funding priorities. We are coordinating timelines and efforts across multiple departments—including Operations, E-SPLOST voting, and SAP recommendations—to ensure a unified approach to planning and implementation.

Director Dr. Char-Shenda Covington

Student Assignment

In August, the Student Assignment team wrapped up their summer efforts to monitor and work at the summer registration hubs and to support our local schools, ensuring that every scholar was ready for the start of school. This work included providing support, to families directly, in one of four locations as to families directly, in one of four locations, assisting with annual verifications, new student registrations, and password resets. This allowed our team to connect directly with parents. Our leadership team also met with our theme school leaders to discuss open enrollment information and trends. From these meetings, we have identified key questions and data that will need to be addressed to support future decision-making on open enrollment and to continue making it a transparent process.

Our team continued to refine the information and data displayed on our website, particularly by updating the support document for the sites we assist with to make it more accessible and helpful for local school teams. Additionally, in keeping with the district's focus on the MIRACLES framework, our team has begun laying the groundwork for future work by identifying key measures to evaluate our current school choice programs and a way to identify gaps for future programs that may need to be implemented.

Interim Executive Director Dr. Latashia Searcy

Student Mentorship & Partnerships

FACE Advocates

All FACE Advocates experienced two SMP visits in August, including one during the first 10 days of

school. Advocates collaborated with site leaders to establish their caseload for the 2025-2026 academic year and conducted introductory presentations at the August Faculty Meetings. The FACE Advocates are off to a positive start as they execute the strategies and plans detailed in the Blueprint. Professional Learning throughout August concentrated on graduation requirements and other available support services within the school that can be utilized to ensure that FACE mentees obtain the resources and services necessary to secure the B.A.G. SMP is looking forward to the proposed Fall 2025 FACETIME enrichment opportunities and the partnerships being formed with community organizations to create a comprehensive SY2026 calendar of events.

MBK/OSK

The SMP team collaborated with school principals to expand Our Sister's Keeper (OSK) and My Brother's Keeper (MBK) chapters, resulting in a 15% increase compared to the previous year. Additionally, the team engaged with Super Champions to clarify roles and set expectations in preparation for the first OSK and MBK Champion and Mentor meeting. The SMP team also convened with the Steering Committee to plan community service initiatives —OSK (Jacket Drive) and MBK (Sock Drive) —and to outline upcoming organizational events for the 2025-2026 school year.

Climate Improvement Projects

To begin the 2025-2026 school year, the Climate Improvement Project Team gathered feedback from parents, students, and community members on projects completed during the 2024-2025 school year. The CCT attended Curriculum Nights at Stephenson Elementary and Robert Shaw Theme School, with interpreters present to ensure all stakeholders could share input. This feedback was used to evaluate program effectiveness and overall school climate. The first CCT meeting of the year was then held to discuss the selection of the schools for the school improvement projects for FY26.

Level UP/CIS

During the August DCSD Board of Education meeting, Level Up (BBBSA), which will be based at Lithonia Middle School, and Communities in Schools (CIS), which will serve students at Towers HS, Columbia HS, Cross Keys HS, Stone Mountain HS, and Clarkston HS, were approved for the 2025-2026 school year. The SMP Department is excited to continue the partnership with both organizations to add another layer of school support to help our students *Secure the BAG*.

Leader in Me

SMP is working with Leader in Me schools to ensure full fidelity for the Fall Measurable Results Assessment (MRA), which will provide valuable stakeholder feedback on how well the Leader in Me processes are being implemented. Site lighthouse champions are scheduling their first meetings with their Leader in Me coaches to set SY2026 goals and engage in continuous improvement. The SMP team is working with Leader in Me to establish the 7 Principles of Highly Effective Leaders training with new staff members.

Chief Dr. Candace Alexander

Accountability and Research

1st Week of School Visits

The first week of school is always one of my favorite times of the year. I had the privilege of visiting schools across the district to welcome students and staff back to campus. These visits reminded me of why our work matters — seeing classrooms come alive with energy, teachers setting high expectations, and students beginning their journey with excitement. It was an opportunity to listen, celebrate, and reinforce that our office is here to support schools in achieving both academic and operational excellence from day one.



Portrait of a Graduate Academic Walks

I joined Superintendent Horton and colleagues in launching our weekly Portrait of a Graduate Academic Walks, designed to highlight high-quality teaching and learning while identifying opportunities for more substantial support. In each classroom, we looked for evidence of clear learning goals, student engagement with rigorous tasks, higher-order questioning, discourse, feedback, and strong classroom culture. These walks showcased how our Portrait of a Graduate competencies are coming alive in classrooms and reinforced the power of aligning instruction, accountability, and professional learning to a shared vision of excellence.



Cross Keys High School

Groundbreaking

I had the privilege of attending the groundbreaking ceremony for the long-awaited renovation of Cross Keys High School—a momentous milestone that is both long overdue and deeply symbolic. Superintendent Horton framed this ceremony as a moment of “getting a wrong right”—a commitment to equity, excellence, and the well-being of our students and families. Standing there with colleagues, community leaders, and families, I felt renewed optimism and affirmation that our investments in infrastructure are also investments in access, opportunity, and community pride. Way to bring it home, Team!





Executive Director Dr. Myisha Warren

Federal Programs

Parent & Family Engagement (PFE)

On August 13, 2025, the DCSD Title I Parent Center Facilitators successfully conducted two virtual pop-ups, engaging parents and families in meaningful ways.

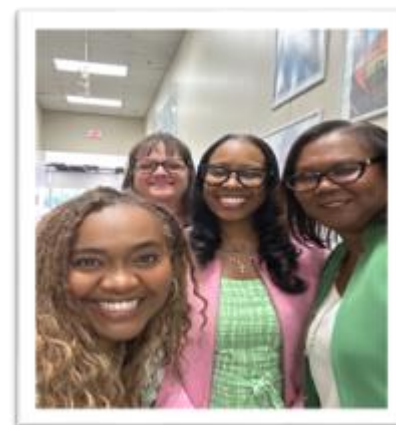
Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP)

All FY26 Title I CSIPs have been approved. Schools are now in the process of budget development with the Title I Coordinators and can begin spending based on their comprehensive needs assessment.

Title I & Title II Updates

Our dedicated team of Coordinators, Accounting Associates, and Budget Specialists continues to work diligently with schools to:

- Close open purchase orders
- Process summer travel reimbursements
- Process summer tutorial program payments
- Process district summer professional learning stipends
- Provide ongoing training



Director Dr. Felicia Rhone

Assessment and Accountability

Saturday Administration of the Gifted Assessment

The Assessment Administration Department and Student Services finalized the parent information letter, which includes the Parent Consent to Evaluate and the Saturday Gifted Administration registration form. The information will be sent to parents of students who are eligible for gifted evaluation. The letters are being translated for distribution to parents.

The Saturday Gifted Assessment administration will be offered at **15 Testing Sites. Ten (10)** sites will serve elementary students, and five (5) sites will serve middle and high school students. These schools are:

- **North:** Dunwoody ES, Huntley Hills ES, Henderson Mill ES, Henderson MS, Chamblee HS
- **Central:** Briar Vista ES, Indian Creek ES, Peachcrest ES, DeKalb Arts Academy, Stephenson HS
- **South:** Cedar Grove ES, Flat Rock ES, Marbut Theme School, Cedar Grove HS, Columbia MS

Each site will have the following staff: School Test Coordinator (1), Site Administrator (1), Test Examiners (12-14), Administrative Assistant (1), SRO Security (1), IT (1), Custodian (1), and Bus Drivers (7-8).

The testing dates for each CogAT, IOWA, Naglieri, and Torrence (TTCT) are shown in the table below:

<i>Semester 1</i>	<i>Semester 2</i>
October 25, 2025 - CogAT (PILOT)	February 7, 2026 – Naglieri & TTCT
November 1, 2025 - CogAT	February 28, 2026 – Naglieri & TTCT
November 8, 2025 - CogAT	March 7, 2026 – Naglieri & TTCT
November 15, 2025 - CogAT	March 14, 2026 – Naglieri & TTCT
December 6, 2025 – IOWA & CogAT	March 21, 2026 – Naglieri & TTCT
December 13, 2025 – IOWA & CogAT	March 28, 2026 – Naglieri & TTCT

The official training for school test coordinators, gifted liaisons, and area test coordinators will be held on Sept. 3, 2025.

Georgia Milestone EOC Mid-Month

The Fall 2025 GMAS EOC MMs window opened on Monday, August 18. STCs received in-person

training on Tuesday, August 12, to prepare for the administration. During the week of August, in the administration, students had the opportunity to clear the Incomplete or Test Out grades in Algebra C&C, Biology, or U.S. History. A test-out for American Literature is no longer available due to the phasing out of the test for that class. Students who need an American Lit test must take it no later than November 2025, the last time the test will be offered. The new ELA test, Literature & Composition II, will offer a Test Out opportunity starting in March 2026.

There were 713 sessions scheduled across the district's high schools. Four hundred sixty-six sessions will be completed at the close of the week of August. The next mid-month administration will be September 15-19, 2025.

Fall MAP Growth Assessment

The Fall MAP Growth assessment window opened for K–10th–grade students from August 11 to August 22, 2025. To support assessment administration, a MAP Growth Basics professional learning session was offered to new School Test Coordinators (STCs) on August 29, 2025. In addition, upcoming workshops will further support both school- and district-level administrators in using MAP Growth data and reports effectively.

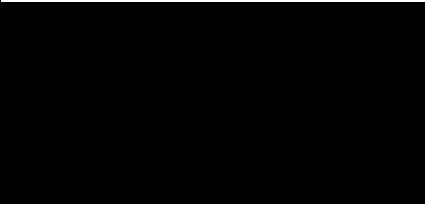
Parent and Family Assessment Fair

We are finalizing logistics for the Assessment Fair that will be combined with the Title 1 Community and Family Engagement Department's "OctoberFest" on October 4th at Redan High School. The Assessment Department will have a table available for each assessment to share information with parents. We are developing a Parent Assessment Brochure/Handbook to be distributed to parents during the Assessment Fair.

We will also hold a virtual session with parents, scheduled for mid-September, as a part of the Federal Program's new "Parent Success Academy" series. The Assessment segment with Dr. Rhone and several senior and area Assessment Coordinators to review the DCSD Assessment Calendar, an overview of all assessments, and information on the upcoming OctoberFest.

School Visits-New Area Test Coordinators

The Area Test Coordinators (ATC) visited several schools to support them with their upcoming assessments, including MAP Growth, Amira, and District Benchmark preparation. ATCs discussed the assessment training plan, technology needs, and the plan for ensuring accommodations are updated and provided for testing. Each ATC held a meeting with the principals to discuss preferred check-in times during visits and to explain the ATC's role to both the principal and the school test coordinator.

Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
Allgood ES	Redan MS	Tucker HS
Avondale ES	Bethune MS	Stone Mountain HS
Bob Mathis ES	Cedar Grove MS	Lithonia HS
Brockett ES	Lithonia MS	Martin Luther King HS
Chapel Hill ES	DeKalb Alternative	Lakeside HS
EL Miller ES	Salem MS	Miller Grove HS
Fairington	Columbia MS	Columbia HS
Flat Shoals ES	Stone Mountain MS	Chamblee HS
Idlewood ES		Cedar Grove HS
Jolly ES		Dunwoody HS
Laurel Ridge ES		Warren Tech
Livsey ES		Redan HS
McNair DLA		Elizabeth Andrews HS
Murphey Candler ES		
Oakview ES		
Oakcliff ES		
Princeton ES		
Rainbow ES		
Redan ES		
Rock Chapel ES		
Rockbridge ES		
Snapfinger ES		
Toney ES		
Wynbrooke ES		



Director Dr. Rebecca Braaten**Research, Data, and Evaluation****Cohort Withdrawal Application**

The Research, Data, and Evaluation team supported high school principals throughout the month with the Cohort Withdrawal Application update. This is the last opportunity principals have to clean up their 4-year graduation cohort before the release of graduation rates in 2025.

As part of the monitoring and support process, RDE provides application status updates to the Area High School and Horizon leadership teams. Additionally, RDE reviews each high school student list to verify 9th-grade entry dates, ensuring that all students in the application are part of the 2025 cohort. This review cycle identified eleven (11) students in the wrong graduation cohort. RDE submitted an appeal to GaDOE to remove the students from the 2025 cohort and place them in their correct graduation cohort. GaDOE approved all eleven (11) appeals.

Research Review Board

The department processed seven (7) research applications during August. Of the seven (7), three (3) were for doctoral dissertation studies and four (4) were external agency studies. Two (2) of the studies submitted MOUs. Last month, two (2) research applications were submitted for review, bringing the total to nine (9) proposals that will be reviewed during the Fall review cycle.

The deadline to submit a proposal for a fall review was Monday, August 18, 2025. The Research Review Board will meet on Friday, September 19, 2025, to discuss the review findings and make recommendations.

Surveys and Online Forms

The department processed twenty-four (24) electronic online document requests during August. Of those twenty-four (24), twenty (20) were online registration/application forms, two (2) were event/training feedback surveys, and two (2) were stakeholder surveys. The electronic online documents were requested by the following divisions/departments:

- Access & Opportunity (Athletics)
- Accountability & Research (Assessment Administration, Federal Programs, RDE)
- Chief of Staff (Audits & Compliance)
- Community Engagement & Innovative Partnerships (Grants & Partnerships)
- Curriculum & Instruction (FLEX Academy)
- Schools & Leadership (Leadership Development, Professional Development)
- Wrap Around Services (Mentorships & Partnerships)

Training

The department held four (4) collaboration sessions on July 30, August 1, August 15, and August 22, 2025. RDE staff were trained on the following topics:

- Cohort Withdrawal Application monitoring and completion
- CCRPI Content Mastery calculations
- DKES Orientation
- Full Academic Year (FAY) calculation
- Batch processing- new folders
- How to identify students in an incorrect cohort
- Survey/Form documentation process
- Batch processing- file name changes
- Grow by Level Data platform overview

School leadership support sessions were facilitated at the following school locations.

- Cross Keys High- interim principal on July 29, 2025
- Panola Way Elementary- school leadership team on August 28, 2025
- Dresden Elementary- school leadership team on August 29, 2025

Data Requests

The 2025–2026 academic year is underway, and the Research, Data, and Evaluation Department is actively fulfilling data requests to support our district’s students and leaders. During August, the department completed sixteen (16) data and dashboard projects supporting both internal and external stakeholders. These projects encompass a wide range of data types, including attendance, discipline, student demographics, academic performance, and assessments at local, state, and national levels.

In August, interactive dashboards are being developed to track student progress on the 2024–2025 Georgia Milestones assessment and to monitor student mobility and school climate. Our team continues to collaborate closely with district and school leaders, program directors, and administrators to develop data tools and resources that will support ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programs and initiatives throughout the school year.

Chief Stacy E. Stepney

Curriculum and Instruction

First Week of School Visits

During the first week of school, Superintendent Dr. Horton, Champion Dillard, Mr. Palmer, and I visited 35 schools. I observed students actively engaged in reading, writing, listening, and speaking from day one. Students and staff displayed a strong sense of school pride, with new branding visible as you entered the buildings, hallways, and shared spaces, such as the cafeteria. Teachers welcomed students with creative, meaningful lessons that demonstrated their commitment to high-quality teaching and learning. For instance, third graders were already immersed in phonics instruction on day three using the 95 Phonics Core Program, showing their eagerness to grow as readers. The readiness and enthusiasm of the leaders, educators, and students set a positive tone for the year ahead.



Principals' Learning Opportunity (PLO) and Assistant Principal Academy

On August 21, 27, and 28, the Division of Curriculum and Instruction met with over 400 school and district leaders from all elementary, middle, and high schools. The focus was on English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics instructional priorities for the year, including planning lessons using the new ELA standards, mathematics instructional learning plans (ILPs), and instructional frameworks; differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students; and using data effectively to plan.

Lead Teachers of Special Education (LTSEs) Collaborative Meeting

On August 29, 2025, the Division of Curriculum and Instruction facilitated professional learning sessions for LTSEs to explore the Canvas curriculum, new K-12 ELA instructional modules, mathematics standards, and resources in Georgia Inspire. The coordinators supported the LTSEs with registering for the Curriculum Community and Georgia Inspire during the session to ensure that all participants could actively engage in the learning activities and access the resources.

Georgia Seal of Biliteracy Awarded to 94 Graduates

The DeKalb County School District submitted the names of fifty-four students in April 2025 who qualified for the Georgia Seal of Biliteracy. During the retroactive reporting period in August 2025, an additional forty students qualified for the Georgia Seal of Biliteracy. To be eligible for the Georgia Seal of Biliteracy, students must have completed the high school English requirements with a 3.0 or above. Students must also pass the Advanced Placement (AP) French, AP Spanish, AP German, or AP Latin exam with a score of 4 or higher, or the world language International Baccalaureate exam with a score of 5 or higher.

The Georgia Seal of Biliteracy recognizes high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing, in one or more languages. These students fill a need for employers who require a workforce with qualified language, biliteracy, and global cultural skills.

Deputy Chief Dr. Sean R. Tartt

Curriculum and Instruction

Academic Coaches

The month of **August** was both purposeful and inspiring for the Academic Coach Coordinators as we advanced our efforts to prepare and support academic coaches for the new school year. We continued progress on our Miracles Priority, the *Coach Up Pipeline*, by working collaboratively to determine and refine the module topics, establish a development and implementation timeline, and develop criteria for interested candidates.

A significant highlight of the month was the **Academic Coach Academy** held on August 22, 2025, at Arabia Mountain High School, where coaches gathered for a day of differentiated professional learning tailored to their needs as identified through surveys, school visits, observations, the DCSD Coaching Program, and input from the C&I team. Coaches were inspired to “*believe*” through a powerful keynote address by Mr. Jason Adair with SREB. Following the keynote, participants engaged with the DCSD Coaching Playbook, reviewed expectations for their work, and learned how to capture their impact using the Instructional Coaching Tool. They also reviewed the August calendar at a glance, the checklist of key focus areas, and the academy dates for the year. Coaches were introduced to the Tiered System of Support and its key components and engaged in area-specific updates with their assigned ACSCs. Coaches identified support needs based on their content groups and grade bands. They further explored the PLC framework and Guiding Coalition, learning how to establish norms for effective collaboration. To close the day, a dedicated session for new coaches (0–2 years of experience), the NEW AC Academy, focused on *Managing the Work* using the Playbook and a *Big Rocks/Little Rocks* demonstration. In addition to the Academy, the ACSC team presented at LLO to highlight the role and work of the academic coach, stressing the importance of ensuring that 80% of coaches’ time is dedicated to supporting teachers and

clarifying that ACSC is the first line of support. We also attended PLO and area breakout sessions to align with area expectations, provided on-site technical assistance to academic coaches with differentiated support, and participated in the CIT and Annual Review for the two Tier Four schools, including on-site visits to lend direct guidance. To strengthen collaboration and consistency across roles, we also engaged in job-alike meetings with our colleagues.

Positions

Currently, there are 204 academic coach positions. The chart below provides the number of coaches, vacancies, and new coaches by area.

Area	Number of Coaches	Number of Vacancies	Number of New Coaches
Area Elementary 1	13	2	13
Area Elementary 2	16	1	7
Area Elementary 3	14	2	5
Area Middle Schools	41	4	21
Area High Schools	31	1	20
Area Horizon	63	7	38
Area Specialty	8	1	7
Totals	186	18	111

DCSD Grading Protocol

During the August administrators' meeting, Chief Stepney, Deputy Chief Tartt, and members of the Curriculum and Instruction team convened with Principals and Assistant Principals to review and discuss the district's grading protocol. Administrators were introduced to Superintendent Horton's MIRACLE framework, which serves as a guiding principle for academic excellence. It was emphasized that the Divisions of Curriculum and Instruction and Schools and Leadership have been tasked with implementing targeted support for both teachers and administrators. These supports are designed to ensure accurate grade posting, promote equitable distribution of grades across categories, optimize the use of Infinite Campus reports, and enhance communication with stakeholders throughout report periods. The overarching objective is to foster student success through consistent grade monitoring and to support timely credit attainment.

Academic Skills Centers

The Academic Skills Centers at all 23 sites have been actively preparing to ensure a strong start for students this school year. Deputy Chief Tartt and Senior Innovation and Graduation Coordinator Curry partnered with Interim Area Superintendent Boochee-Davis and the Horizon Area to provide new principals with a clear understanding of the expectations and structure of an Academic Skills Center. Tutors have been collaborating with site administrators to develop class lists, build schedules, and verify that all necessary technology is functioning correctly. Local administrators have also been instrumental in updating individual tutor groups based on MAP assessment data from the August testing window, enabling targeted, data-driven instruction from the outset.

In addition, the Division of Curriculum and Instruction has supported schools in verifying Imagine Learning access, ensuring that staff and students have up-to-date credentials and full platform accessibility. These coordinated efforts reflect a strong commitment to academic excellence and equitable support for all learners. In September, all staff will come together for training and collaboration to strengthen and elevate the support we provide to our students. We are excited about the comprehensive academic assistance our students will receive and look forward to a successful and enriching school year.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Penny Mosley

P-5

Curriculum Community

During professional learning opportunities for principals and assistant principals, the Curriculum and Instruction team emphasized the critical importance of the Curriculum Community in driving instructional excellence and coherence across the district. The platform, housed in Canvas, continues to serve as a central hub for both instructional planning and professional learning. Teachers and leaders can self-enroll to access a wide range of resources, including Curriculum-at-a-Glance (CAAG) documents, instructional modules, and differentiated microlearning opportunities designed to strengthen readiness and instructional clarity.

Principals and assistant principals were reminded that the platform is not simply a repository but a dynamic tool for ensuring fidelity to standards-driven instruction, leveraging high-quality instructional materials, and monitoring alignment to expectations. As a result, the Curriculum Community remains an essential structure for sustaining consistency, promoting shared accountability, and advancing teaching and learning across all grade bands.

House Bill 307 & Amira

In alignment with the Georgia Early Literacy and Dyslexia Act (House Bill 307), DeKalb County School District is utilizing Amira as its universal screening tool to identify reading challenges and characteristics of dyslexia in grades K–3. The first assessment window opened on August 25 and will continue through September 8, providing critical data to guide instruction and intervention. Schools will use Amira results, along with additional data sources, to develop tiered reading plans that ensure targeted support for students at risk. To strengthen implementation, school administrators and MTSS specialists engaged in professional development sessions during August focused on effective screening practices, data analysis, and compliance with HB 307 requirements. Together, these efforts reflect the district's proactive commitment to early identification, timely intervention, and equitable literacy outcomes for all students.

Early Intervention (EIP)

During August, schools across the DeKalb County School District have been actively using multiple sources of data—including universal screeners, formative assessments, and classroom performance measures—to identify students eligible for the Early Intervention Program (EIP). The

EIP is a state-funded initiative that provides early, focused instructional support to students in kindergarten through grade five who are performing below grade level in literacy and mathematics. Based on these data reviews, principals and instructional teams are determining which of the four approved EIP models—Augmented, Self-Contained, Pull-Out, or Innovative—best meet the specific needs of their student populations.

By using data-driven decision-making and aligning interventions with state standards and district expectations, schools are ensuring that EIP services are delivered with fidelity. Coordinators are also providing professional learning and ongoing support to help teachers implement effective practices. These efforts collectively strengthen the district's commitment to closing achievement gaps and accelerating student learning.

95 Phonics Core Program

The district has launched the 95 Phonics Core Program (95 CORE) as the primary Tier I phonics curriculum in grades K–5, marking a significant step in strengthening foundational literacy instruction. Teachers have completed vendor-led training sessions and now have access to materials through Canvas, including teacher editions, lesson slides, and student resources. Professional learning sessions have also been made available to ensure readiness.

During the August Principal and Assistant Principal Learning Opportunities, building leaders received clear next steps for supporting program implementation. Leaders were guided to deepen instructional readiness, expect–inspect–and celebrate teacher implementation, and use specific look-fors for August and September to monitor fidelity of instruction. These look-fors included attention to scheduled time, pacing, and the consistent use of teacher and student materials during phonics instruction. This initiative underscores the district's strategic priority of elevating literacy outcomes by ensuring all students build strong decoding and phonics skills essential for long-term reading success.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Rose Prejean-Harris

6-12

Acceleration Academies

The new Tucker site officially opened for students on Monday, August 18, and staffing adjustments will be made at McNair High School based on family demand. During the leadership transition, critical academy structures were maintained, and the interim director developed strategic skills to meet student needs and boost achievement. As of August 15th, enrollment stands at 118, with 11 students scheduled for orientation the week of August 18, and a goal of reaching 130 fully enrolled students by the end of the month. There are an additional 219 in the pipeline and 56 applications in progress. Academically, 253 courses have been completed and 126.5 credits earned as of July. The team will also be welcoming an on-site Math teacher on August 25th!

Director Dr. Lynn Angus Ramos

Literacy

Curriculum and Professional Learning Updates

The 2025-26 school year is the implementation year for the new Georgia English Language Arts (ELA) standards. After many weeks of collaboration with classroom teacher leaders, the new ELA standards-aligned Curriculum-at-a-Glance (CAAG) documents and module plans are posted to Canvas with a feedback link that will be part of the revision loop during this installation year. In August, Curriculum and Instruction presented at the Principals Learning Opportunity, the Assistant Principal Academy, and the district-wide LTSE Academy to ensure that school leaders have a high-level understanding of the connections among the new GaDOE standards, the DCSD Curriculum-at-a-Glance and Unit Modules, and the Tier I resources.

Literacy Updates

In collaboration with the Data, Research, and Evaluation Department, C&I reported structured literacy professional learning completion data to the Georgia Department of Education, as required by House Bill 307 for grades K-3. DCSD is at 88% completion for kindergarten teachers, over 80% for grades 1-3 teachers, and over 80% for grades 4-5 teachers, who completed training as a district requirement (see chart below for all data). Teachers in grades K-5 who did not complete the state-approved pathways will work with their administrators to complete them as part of their TKES evaluation. That requirement will be shared by Area Superintendents, along with a suggested pacing guide for completion by May of the 25-26 school year.

Category	K	1	2	3	4	5
# Completed by grade	355	407	333	1047	261	274
# In-Progress by Grade	5	14	5	19	6	6
# Not Complete by Grade	39	67	51	168	44	43
District % Completed	88.97%	83.40%	85.60%	84.85%	83.92%	84.83%
District % In-Progress	1.25%	2.87%	1.29%	1.54%	1.93%	1.86%
District % Not Started	9.77%	13.73%	13.11%	13.61%	14.15%	13.31%

Director Lummie Baker

Educational Media and Instructional Materials

Beginning of the Year Professional Learning

Both Teacher-Librarians (TLs) and Library Media Assistants (LMAs) participated in professional learning sessions focused on skills-building, reading promotion, and instructional collaboration. A total of 95 LMAs attended the July 24, 2025, meeting and professional learning sessions at Fernbank Science Center. On July 29, 2025, 109 TLs participated in the new ELA standards professional learning session.



Georgia United Foundation's School Crashers – Clarkston HS

Clarkston High School (CHS) used its Georgia United Foundation School Crashers® grant to transform its school library media center into a hub for reading enthusiasm, where students can study independently or in small groups, participate in whole-class collaborative instructional lessons, or check out and unwind with a good book. The redesigned layout and updated space include comfortable, modern, and flexible furniture and seating from Ernie Morris, along with durable new vinyl flooring from Mohawk Flooring. Special thanks are extended to the many individuals who volunteered to assist with the well-deserved, transformative makeover.

Director Vacant

K-12 Teaching and Learning

As we kicked off a new school year, August was filled with energy, collaboration, and a strong focus on instructional excellence. Here's a look at what the Senior Content Coordinators in the Teaching and Learning Department accomplished this month:

- Supported schools by providing essential tools and resources such as curriculum guides and pacing calendars to support school-level professional learning.
- Created professional learning videos to review the instructional focus for the year and guide teachers through the instructional framework.
- Recreated benchmark and unit assessments based on achievement level descriptors to a higher number of questions that are at the level of proficient, thus creating another tool to measure student progress toward content mastery.

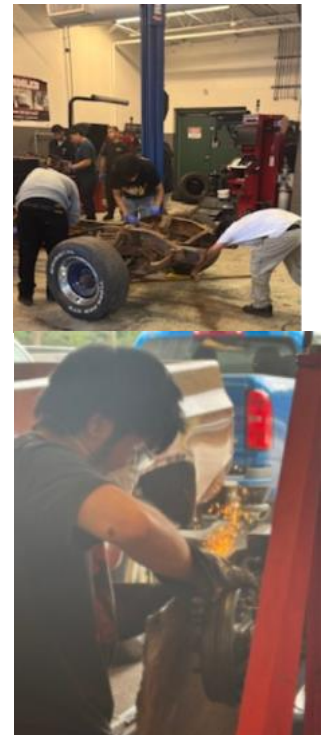
In addition, the department focused on establishing norms and processes for collaboration with other divisions that support instruction, aligned with the strategic priorities identified in MIRACLES.

Director Doryiane Gunter

Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE)

DeKalb High School of Technology North and South Automotive Students Engage in Industry Training

During the week of August 18th through August 22nd, automotive students at DeKalb High School of Technology North and South participated in immersive, hands-on training experiences alongside professionals from leading industry partners, including Jim Ellis Automotive and Carey Ford.



This collaborative initiative provided students with the opportunity to work side-by-side with seasoned technicians and service experts, gaining real-world insights into automotive technology and repair. Through direct mentorship and practical engagement, students enhanced their technical skills and deepened their understanding of high-demand career pathways in the automotive industry.

Director Janetta Greenwood

Fernbank Science Center

Program Data

- Outreach Program Contacts: 2,430
- Public Planetarium Tickets Sold: 1,219

Scientific Tools & Techniques (STT)

Scientific Tools & Techniques is a program for 9th-grade students that provides hands-on research experiences in biology, environmental science, and related STEM fields. This fall, 88 students are enrolled in the program, representing 10 DCSD high schools: Cedar Grove, Clarkston, Columbia, DeKalb Early College Academy, Dunwoody, Lakeside, Lithonia, Stephenson, Stone Mountain, and Towers. Families are invited to the Open House on September 11 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. Students are making steady progress in their Biology and Environmental Science modules and have begun developing projects for the 2026 Captain Planet Green Heart STEM Challenge, demonstrating early engagement with authentic scientific inquiry.

Students of Advanced Research (SOAR)

Students of Advanced Research is a program for 10th–12th graders that emphasizes independent research, leadership, and advanced STEM skill development. This semester, we have representation from four DCSD high schools: Dunwoody High School, DeKalb Early College Academy, Clarkston High School, and Stone Mountain High School. Students are preparing to design independent research projects that will culminate in presentations to peers, educators, and community partners, fostering both scientific literacy and communication skills.

Outreach and Single Visit Programs

Scheduling for outreach and single-visit programs is now complete for the Fall 2025 semester, and all schools have received their program schedules. Horizon Schools were prioritized and scheduled first to ensure access for all DCSD students, followed by the rest of the district. Demand for programs increased significantly compared to the past two years, reflecting both intense interest and confidence in Fernbank Science Center's program offerings. This year, requests were received from 106 schools across the district: 67 elementary schools, 23 middle schools, and 16 high schools. Requests came from all seven district areas, with powerful representation from Horizon (24 schools) and Specialty (19 schools). These programs will enable thousands of students to engage in hands-on, standards-based STEM learning experiences that enrich their classroom instruction.

School Master Gardener Program

Fernbank Science Center has officially launched the School Master Gardener Program for the 2025–2026 school year, engaging 22 teachers from 7 schools/centers: Clarkston High School, Coralwood Center, DeKalb School of the Arts, Henderson Mill Elementary, Indian Creek Elementary, Oak Grove Elementary, and Stone Mountain Middle School. The program provides training and resources to help teachers integrate horticulture, environmental science, and hands-on gardening into classroom instruction and school communities. Supported by Fernbank educators and master gardeners, participants will establish and sustain school-based gardens that connect science curriculum to real-world agricultural and environmental applications. This initiative advances district goals in STEM education, sustainability, and community engagement by equipping teachers to create authentic, project-based learning experiences that deepen student understanding of plant science, ecology, and nutrition while fostering environmental stewardship.

Community Engagement

Saturday, August 2 – Kids on the Move for Success Community Day

Fernbank Science Center provided a hands-on STEM activity at the Kids on the Move for Success (KOTMFS) Community Day 2025, a free, family-friendly event focused on connection, education, and empowerment. The event brought together families, educators, seniors, youth, and community leaders around shared values of literacy, STEAM education, health and wellness, and family engagement. Fernbank provided a STEM activity that allowed the community to explore hands-on science in a fun and supportive environment, aligning with the event's mission.

Saturday, August 16 – A2ces Health and Wellness Event at My Sister's House

Fernbank Science Center participated in the A2ces Health and Wellness Event at My Sister's House, an overnight shelter for women and children experiencing homelessness. The purpose of the event was to provide uplifting and engaging activities for shelter clients. Fernbank provided a STEM activity designed to inspire curiosity and bring joy to participants through interactive science learning.

Saturday, August 23 - Great Southeast Pollinator Census

On Saturday, August 23rd, Fernbank Science Center welcomed hundreds of visitors for the Great Southeast Pollinator Census. Participants gathered in the Discovery Garden to count hundreds of pollinators as part of this important citizen science project.

The event featured hands-on pollinator activities and interactive learning stations. Attendees explored the wonders of sustainable gardening through innovative tools like 3D printing and aquaponics, gaining insight into how technology and ecology can work hand in hand.

Partnerships

Georgia Aquarium

In August, schools began submitting requests to participate in the Georgia Aquarium Partnership programs. We are excited to share that we have received over **307 program requests** and are currently finalizing bookings with our aquarium partners.

Director Monique Kimbell

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Laying the Groundwork for Impact

In August, the MTSS Department focused on strengthening capacity and providing targeted guidance to schools in preparation for the new year. Several optional support sessions were held to address key priorities, including compliance with House Bill 307, navigating the RTI modules in Infinite Campus, and implementing adequate behavior supports. These sessions offered practical strategies to improve documentation, enhance intervention practices, and ensure consistent data-based decision-making across schools.

The department also partnered with DCSD Student Health Services to engage in districtwide hearing and vision training on August 6 and 13. This collaboration equipped MTSS Specialists with the knowledge and protocols necessary to support timely screenings, particularly for students requiring Tier 3/SST consideration, and further strengthened cross-departmental alignment.

Additionally, approximately 50 MTSS Specialists with 0–3 years of experience attended the MTSS Academy, themed *“Foundation First: Understanding and Building MTSS Capacity for Impact.”* This professional learning experience provided foundational knowledge, high-leverage strategies, and leadership skills designed to ensure early-career specialists are equipped to lead MTSS implementation with fidelity. Collectively, these efforts increased staff confidence, built collaboration across departments, and reinforced the department’s mission of supporting every child, every tier, every day.

Director Keatra Wright

FLEX Academy

Enrollment August 2025

FLEX Academy is thrilled to support Area High Schools and Area Horizon to deliver Innovative Educational Opportunities that empower students to earn credit toward graduation. This partnership reflects our shared commitment to expanding access to flexible, high-quality, district-aligned curriculum tailored to meet the diverse needs of today’s learners.



We are proud to announce that as of August 29, 2025, 217 students have been registered in FLEX Academy, and an additional 420 students are enrolled in FLEX Beyond the Day, demonstrating strong interest and engagement across our programs. Students from every DCSD high school are represented, showcasing the widespread impact and reach of our initiative. Registration continues for FLEX Beyond the Day.

Student Support

We are dedicated to supporting all learners, including those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), 504 Plans, and English Learner (EL) accommodations. Our inclusive approach ensures that every student has the tools and support they need to succeed in a flexible learning environment.

Our program welcomes the collaboration with the Division of Diverse Learner Services to provide ongoing academic support for students enrolled in the Incarcerated Youth Program, ensuring equitable access to learning resources and personalized interventions. We also implemented Student Success Skills Backpack—a comprehensive online module designed to equip FLEX students with essential skills for post-secondary readiness. This will include digital citizenship and communication skills.

Family and Student Engagement

On August 22, 2025, we successfully conducted an online orientation for FLEX Academy students and families, with over 120 participants. The session focused on program expectations, digital learning tools, and strategies for academic success in a virtual environment.

FLEX Academy continues to expand its reach and impact through innovative programming, strategic partnerships, and a commitment to student-centered learning. The integration of support services and readiness tools ensures that all students—regardless of background—are prepared for success beyond graduation.

Chief Dr. Kermit Belcher**Information and Instructional Technology****Building a Stronger Digital Foundation for a Future-Ready DeKalb**

The DeKalb County School District is advancing its technology infrastructure through a bold, multi-phase initiative outlined in the 2025 Network Modernization Plan. This districtwide effort is designed to upgrade systems at more than 140 sites with faster, more secure, and scalable solutions that strengthen both instruction and operations.

As part of this modernization, upgrades are underway across core areas, including structured cabling, switches, wireless access points, and centralized systems. The district has also completed a major firewall upgrade and is expanding bandwidth capacity to enhance security, reliability, and performance further. Additional layers of redundancy and advanced monitoring are being implemented to maximize uptime and ensure resilient connectivity across schools and administrative sites. These improvements create a durable digital backbone that positions DeKalb to meet the growing demands of digital learning while maintaining safe, stable, and future-ready environments for students and staff.

Powering Learning with One of the Nation's Largest Device Replacements

To support evolving classroom needs, the DeKalb County School District has successfully deployed one of the largest student and staff instructional device replacements in the nation. New Chromebook distribution began in the summer and was completed districtwide in the first week of school in August.

This refresh provides every student and educator with an updated instructional device that enhances instruction, sparks creativity, and promotes collaboration. The initiative reflects DeKalb's commitment to digital equity, ensuring all learners and staff have reliable, high-performance technology available for teaching and learning. With these new devices, classrooms are better equipped to engage students, enable innovative instructional practices, and ensure consistent access to digital tools that prepare learners for success in an interconnected world. This investment is a key part of DeKalb's vision to create a future-focused educational environment where technology empowers excellence.

Deputy Chief Office of Technology Glenn Melendez**Website Modernization**

As part of our website modernization initiative, we've conducted an in-depth scoping process to ensure the new platform aligns with the evolving expectations of our community. Key features will include a user-focused design, an intuitive Content Management System (CMS) for streamlined updates, multi-language support, compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to ensure accessibility for all users, and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to make important information easier to find. These enhancements will deliver a dynamic, user-friendly website that reflects our district's commitment to innovation and excellence.

To gather valuable insights, we launched a digital survey in October 2024 to collect feedback on website functionality and design. Additionally, focus groups were held in November 2024. The input from these efforts plays a crucial role in shaping our modernized website.

As of August 2025, migration of legacy content has been completed, and all designs have been finalized. The web team is now conducting a final review of content with divisions ahead of a September 2025 launch. We remain on track to launch the new website platform no later than Q3 2025.

Data Governance Program

The district's vision for data governance is to establish a data-driven ecosystem that drives academic success by empowering educators, supporting personalized learning, informing targeted interventions, advancing equity, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement through data-informed decision-making.

During this reporting period, we finalized work correlating student outcomes with several digital learning resources used across our schools to ensure that our investments in educational tools are driving student success.

Our analysis is clear – use of digital resources, as prescribed by the product, has, in most cases, yielded improved student outcomes. We have reviewed the findings with district leadership and will close out this initiative by August 2025. Next steps will be developing real-time monitoring capabilities to more closely track utilization of digital resources as they are deployed.

Manager III Natalie Terrell

Project Management Office

District-Wide Records Digitization Program

The proof-of-concept is progressing as planned and remains on schedule for completion in early September 2025. The HR box collection phase has been completed, while processing, scanning, and client reviews are actively underway.

The team has finalized the collection of *Student Records* and initiated the collection of *Finance Records* at the Records Center. Additionally, discussions are underway regarding the pickup of additional *Student Records* from the Sam Moss Warehouse and *Finance Records* from AIC.

Parallel to these efforts, meetings have commenced between the district's IT team and the business partner's IT team to address records retention and database integration within the program's application. Meanwhile, Legal and Audit & Compliance have updated the district-wide records retention schedule, which HR is now using to finalize retention guidelines for all HR record categories. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have also been drafted. They are under review for all HR documents. This process will be carried forward to all divisions' documents.

Key Metrics

- Total HR Boxes Collected: 3472
- Total Student Records Boxes Collected: 4008
- Total Finance Boxes Collected: 609
- Boxes Approved for Processing: 3202
- Boxes Scanned in Totality: 5022
- Boxes in Client Review: 2740
- Boxes Accepted: 669 (number is being validated)



Executive Director Dr. Kyia Clark & Manager III Terri Webb

Information and Innovation & Instructional Technology

Ignite U Professional Learning Series

The Instructional Technology Department is rewriting the story of educator development through its adaptive and innovative Ignite U Professional Development Series for the 2025–2026 academic year. This initiative isn't just a training program—it's a movement designed to elevate teaching, empower educators, and ensure every student thrives in a classroom led by a prepared, passionate professional.

Digital Dreamers Hub – Student Skills for Success Backpack & Student Digital Literacy Training

Instructional Technology is embracing the digital divide by enhancing student engagement and empowering our Digital Dreamers through the new Digital Dreamers Hub! This virtual space is a visionary initiative designed to bridge the digital divide and equip every learner with the tools, training, and confidence to thrive in a tech-driven world. In partnership with Curriculum and Instruction, the Student Skills for Success Backpack is a toolkit packed with essential digital competencies, soft skills, and personalized learning supports, enabling students to create a portfolio of their learning.



Digital Learning for Leaders

The **Digital Learning for Leaders** initiative is a cornerstone of DCSD’s commitment to cultivating visionary, tech-savvy administrators who can lead with innovation, equity, and impact. As classrooms evolve into dynamic, tech-rich environments, school leaders must be equipped to guide instructional transformation. Digital Learning for Leaders is designed to:

- **Build digital fluency among principals, assistant principals, and district leaders**
- **Support strategic integration of technology into school culture and instruction**
- **Foster data-informed decision-making and personalized learning pathways**
- **Promote equity through access to digital tools and inclusive practices**

Digital Learning for Leaders is tightly aligned with DCSD’s strategic goals:

Goal Area	Leadership Impact
Student Success with Equity and Access	Leaders ensure equitable tech access and support mastery of learning standards through digital tools
Stakeholder Engagement	Leaders foster community partnerships and digital communication with families
Staff Effectiveness	Leaders cultivate a tech-forward professional learning culture for teachers and staff

Director Eric Logan

Information and Network Security

Managed Detection and Response (MDR) Update

At the August 11th board meeting, the selection of a new provider for the district's Managed Detection and Response (MDR) service was presented and formally approved. Our team is now completing the necessary documentation and contractual agreements to begin the onboarding process promptly. In parallel, the current provider has been officially notified that the district will not renew its contract, as we transition to a new partner to strengthen our overall security framework.

Asset Discovery & Visibility Proof of Concept

An evaluation was completed to assess its ability to enhance network visibility and fortify our security posture. The product provides a continuous inventory of all connected assets, which is critical for defining the district's attack surface and enabling data-driven risk prioritization. Discussions are now underway with the vendor regarding implementation and pricing to develop the recommendation proposal.

Documentation Review and Updates

A project has been initiated with a service provider to review and update all IT procedures formally. The initial phase involves information gathering, where the provider will interview DIIT personnel to understand the specifics of the DCSD IT environment. This initiative will ensure our updated procedures are aligned with a standardized cybersecurity framework. The outcome will be a comprehensive, standardized document that consolidates these procedures, while allowing for certain documents to remain separate or serve as appendices.

DCSD Passphrase Requirement Updates

The Passphrase Deployment Plan is a key priority under the MIRACLES Framework, aimed at enhancing digital privacy and security across the district. Our Cyber Guardians (DCSD employees) were given until September 1, 2025, to update their passphrases voluntarily. To ensure consistent enforcement of the updated passphrase requirements with minimal user frustration and to reduce the potential burden on the Help Desk, the Passphrase Task Force will use data to prompt users who have not updated their passphrases by the deadline to do so in a staggered rollout, with an estimated completion in October 2025. Resources such as Cyber Smart Essentials, Cyber Smart Central, and Cyber Smart Insights have been created to assist with cybersecurity education, training, and awareness of best practices. For questions or support, employees are encouraged to contact the Cyber Smart team at cybersmart@dekalbschoolsga.org.

Cyber Smart Essentials: Security Awareness Training

Security awareness is being driven through a multi-tiered strategy involving Cyber Guardians (DCSD employees) and Cyber Champions (K-12 student ambassadors), with a strong emphasis on proactive education and engagement.

Cyber Guardians

- **Training Platform:** Staff are encouraged to self-enroll in the Cyber Smart Essentials course on Canvas, which covers monthly topics such as phishing, password security, and AI.
- **Recognition & Engagement:** Completion badges and newsletter features are used to incentivize participation.
- **Phishing Campaigns:** Internal campaigns are being organized via KnowBe4, with efforts to group users by school or department for targeted training.

Cyber Champions

- **Student Leadership Model:** The Cyber Champions initiative empowers K–12 students to lead cybersecurity efforts in classrooms, PTA meetings, district-wide Parent Tech Cafes, and other district events.
- **Facilitator Recruitment:** Teachers are recruited as facilitators and supported with customizable flyers, recorded presentations, and a centralized SharePoint hub. The following schools have confirmed Cyber Champion Facilitators for the 25-26 school year:

- Arabia Mountain HS- LaWanda Williams
- Columbia HS- Damika Davis
- Elizabeth Andrews HS- Heather Leiberman & Ragin Prunty
- Henderson MS- Velnita Sims
- McClendon ES- Ashley Osby
- Narvie J. Harris ES- Tyler King
- Princeton ES- Heather Gillingham

Chief Champion Michelle Dillard

Schools and Leadership

August means Back to School! Our schools welcomed students and families back to the buildings for Open House in preparation for the first day of school and a new school year. We are grateful for the visibility and assistance provided by Cabinet members, Board members, and Division leaders with the opening of schools. The Division of Schools and Leadership team was dispatched to all schools to support the first week of school visits. Focused on instruction, the area teams provided various training and planning sessions to help our teachers.

This month, we sharpened the saw for staff by participating in Initiative One's Think Tank for leaders, hosting new teachers at the NETwork meeting, and attending professional learning. Our executive leaders received training this month with Dr. Pete Gorman of The Forum for Educational Leadership. This assisted the team with topics such as accountability, coaching, and feedback. Our leaders participated in the August Principals' Learning Opportunity (PLO), where they received curriculum updates, reviewed the implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs), and met with their area cluster schools. Leaders presented the Guiding Coalitions Book Study, chapters 3 and 4. We announced and recognized the Principals of the Year:

- Area 1 ES- Avis Mooneyham
- Area 2 ES- Shawna Pickett
- Area 3 ES- Carolyn Benson
- Area Middle Schools- Antoine Rhodes
- Area High Schools- Keith Jones
- Area Horizon Schools- Michael Alexander
- Area Specialty Schools- Laura Neely

We partnered with the following divisions this month for district initiatives to advance our strategic goal areas:

The **Division of Access and Opportunity** is responsible for enrolling all students and for monitoring the enrollment and registration processes across all schools.

The **Division of Assessment and Research** will complete MAP testing and begin the Amira Dyslexia Screener.

The **Division of Curriculum and Instruction** will distribute Core 95 instructional materials, provide support sessions for implementation of the new phonics program, train leaders in the PLO, and host Curriculum Nights for Elementary Schools.



The **Division of Human Resources** will hire new principals and train new leaders with TKES and LKES.

The **Division of Wrap Around** to train the ISS paras in Restorative Practices and launch a new robust program for In-School Suspension.

The **Division of Instruction and Informational Technology** with Device Distribution for students and staff.



The **Division of Student Services** provides training for new and returning LTSEs for the Bootcamp, the EL Master Plan resulting from the EL Audit, and the Special Education Disproportionality Discipline Training.

We are excited to begin this year, Soaring to New Levels and New Heights!

Superintendent Dr. Beth Kyle

Area 1 Elementary Schools

August was a busy month, welcoming over 7,300 scholars into our buildings. Teachers and staff jumped right in, creating welcoming environments for both new and returning students. Area team members were out in schools, ensuring that at least one staff member was on site each day to assist with whatever was needed to kick off the year for parents and students. Schools quickly integrated back-to-school rituals and routines with getting to know each other and the school activities,



along with MAP and AMIRA testing. Principals also participated in the following chapters of the Guiding Coalition book study. APs and principals received a presentation from special education and a refresher on School Mint. Some special school events this past month include the Dunwoody Cluster, which held its “All Roads Lead to Dunwoody” cluster football game. Montgomery was honored by the Georgia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (GAHPERD) for their outstanding achievements in the Kids Heart Challenge Program during the 2024-2025 school year.

In addition to the start of the school year, site visits, the area team has been busy supporting the schools. Coordinators have been leading professional learning sessions on CSIP improvement strategies, the new ELA standards, and on starting the year with a favorable climate and culture. EAs have been meeting with principals to review their expectations, conduct LKES orientation, and help them craft their annual goals. EAs have also been facilitating CSIP meetings with principals and the area team, so the team is clear on what support the school needs this year to meet its CSIP goals. Dr. Kyle and the EAs also concluded the hiring process for the new principal for Ashford Park, and the candidates are scheduled to meet with Dr. Horton shortly.

Superintendent Terri D. Brown

Area 2 Elementary Schools

Area 2 Elementary welcomed students, families, faculty, and staff back to School throughout August! The Area 2 Support Team engaged teachers and leadership teams in “Plan with Me” sessions to learn how to teach the New ELA Standards using DCSD high-quality resources. Direct support for literacy by Area 2’s ELA Coordinators also included reviewing and using Core 95 phonics materials for each school. For mathematics, support continues for implementing the Concrete-Representational-Abstract (CRA) strategy using the Instructional Learning Plans from Georgia’s Department of Education. Principal support included a review of the Instructional Shifts for the new Reading-ELA Standards and Number Routines for mathematics.

Both the Area Superintendent and Executive Administrators completed Leader Keys Orientation and developed the agenda for all pre-conferences. The Principal Expectations Document was also reviewed in an activity during Area 2’s Learning Opportunity.

Area 2 Elementary leaders also joined our superintendent for a “Portrait of a Graduate” visit at Jolly Elementary.

The Area also moved forward with the process to staff a new principal for Hambrick Elementary.

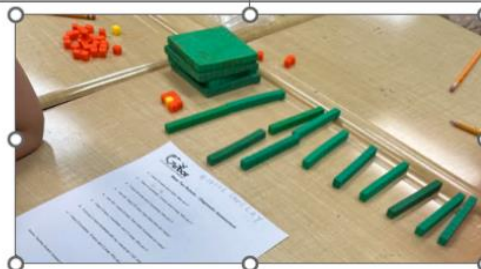
The Area 2 Support Team met to debrief August’s progress and plan for September’s monthly focus: implementation of new ELA Standards, student engagement with Instructional Learning Plans, Professional Learning Communities (PLC) Collaborative Team Meetings, and IEP/ILP implementation for both Students with Disabilities and the English Speakers of Other Languages programs.



Area 2 Elementary August Highlights



Professional Learning Communities Underway!



Sample of Concrete Representational Abstract (CRA) with Instructional Learning Plans for Mathematics

Superintendent Ateshia Lester

Area 3 Elementary Schools

Area 3 kicked off the new school year with our shared mantra: **Leading, Learning, Lifting—I can. I will. I must!** Principals honed in on one of our goals: Enhancing Principal Leadership & Instructional Knowledge by participating in our book study on Guiding Coalition to unpack the impact of having a strong team to lead the work of the PLCs in each building. Also, leaders received training on the Grow Level Platform to share feedback and coaching with teachers. The Executive Administrator worked with each building team to analyze GMAS data to identify our students for intervention and acceleration. The Area 3 Math Coordinator has completed 75 Math Usage Walks while supporting teachers in implementing the District Initiatives. The ELA Coordinator has conducted ELA Focus Walks in all schools and continues to assist teachers with lesson planning utilizing the new ELA Unit Planner and resources. The ELL Coordinator has been helping teachers unpack ACCESS Data and develop support strategies. The SWD Coordinator has been supporting teachers by creating student learning profiles for their scholars to deepen understanding of each child's learning needs. Climate and Culture Coordinators worked with new teachers on classroom management strategies and with leaders on monitoring attendance and discipline data for each school.

Congratulations to Dr. Carolyn Benson on being named Area 3 Principal of the Year. All elementary schools held successful curriculum nights. Redan ES was the recipient of a \$ 20,000 grant for a Reading Room, and Columbia Elementary will receive coats for all scholars from T.J. Maxx.



Superintendent Bridgette Allen

Area Middle Schools

As we began the school year, the Area Team worked diligently to support the successful opening of 16 middle schools. Through intentional collaboration and targeted support, the team ensured that school leaders and instructional staff were prepared to meet their students' needs from day one.

Leadership development remains a central focus. Principals engaged in leadership development opportunities provided by both the district and the area. A virtual area session specifically focused on instruction and compliance for English Learners and Special Education students. Additionally, the Executive Administrators of Schools led the principals in facilitating a book study on *The Guiding Coalition*, designed to strengthen guiding coalition teams and the work of professional learning communities. A MAP data talk was held with the area team to support data-informed planning, and implementation walks focused on Extended Learning Time (ELT) provided valuable insight into how schools are maximizing time for student learning. Observations of leadership team meetings offered opportunities for targeted coaching and support for principals.

In mathematics, our coordinators supported professional learning communities by implementing a structured collaborative team meeting agenda to guide instructional planning. They conducted classroom observations and provided feedback to strengthen instruction, while also leading professional learning sessions to reinforce high-impact strategies aligned to curriculum goals.

The English Language Arts Coordinator worked closely with teachers to support instruction aligned with the new ELA standards. Through professional learning communities, educators received guidance on unit planning, instructional practices, and practical implementation strategies to ensure that students receive rigorous and engaging instruction across all classrooms.

In special education, principals received prioritized information to better support and evaluate Lead Teachers of Special Education (LTSEs), ensuring clarity and consistency across schools. Monthly meetings with Special Education Content Coordinators were established to promote collaboration and share best practices. Additionally, professional learning was delivered on co-teaching strategies, strengthening instruction, and helping schools build effective partnerships between general and special education teachers.

To support English Learners, the English Language Coordinator provided professional learning focused on individualized learning plans, appropriate accommodations, and integrating language objectives into daily instruction. Coaching sessions addressed the varied instructional needs of English Learners, and school visits included data reviews with principals and classroom observations to align instructional strategies with student needs.

The Culture and Climate Coordinators supported schools by attending attendance meetings to help address absenteeism and support student engagement. They also led training on de-escalation strategies, equipping staff with tools to maintain positive learning environments and manage student behavior with empathy and care.

The Mental Health Coordinator supported schools by assessing needs and preparing resources focused on pressing issues, including vaping prevention, mental health first aid, staff wellness, and trauma-informed practices. This support will help schools strengthen their efforts in fostering a safe and supportive environment for students.

Lastly, the middle school area hosted a virtual webinar titled *"Meet Us in the Middle"* to engage staff from all schools in understanding "The MS Way," embracing H-PRIDE, and serving as ambassadors for their schools. The session also focused on school climate, creating memorable middle school experiences, strengthening PLCs, and elevating instructional practices. Together, the Area Team demonstrates a commitment to supporting schools through meaningful collaboration, strategic coaching, and data-driven decision-making. These collective efforts are laying the foundation for continued growth and achievement across all middle schools in the area.



"Learning, Growing, and Winning Together"

Superintendent Dr. Thomas Glanton

Area High Schools

As we welcomed students and staff back for the start of the 2025–2026 academic year, August marked a month of renewed energy, focused preparation, and foundational progress across our high schools. With the launch of new instructional initiatives, targeted professional development, and early assessments, our schools have laid the groundwork for a year of academic excellence and student growth.

To build a supportive climate and culture, the High School Area centered its efforts on the **WHOLE Child Initiative**, which leverages data, shared goals, and aligned supports to ensure that our scholars are safe, supported, engaged, healthy, and challenged within the broader community. This holistic approach continues to guide our efforts to create inclusive and empowering learning environments.

In **English Language Arts**, the rollout of new standards was prioritized through collaboration and goal-setting within Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). These collaborative efforts led to the development and review of both a **Common Formative Assessment Playbook (Module 1)** and **District Benchmark Assessments**, ensuring instructional alignment and clarity across schools.

Special Education provided comprehensive support across high schools and programs, focusing on compliance, instructional coaching, and student services, and additionally emphasizing collaboration, problem-solving, and proactive communication, reinforcing our commitment to compliance and the success of students with disabilities.

As part of our commitment to **access and opportunity**, the Multilingual team supported aligning **ESOL resources** with the new ELA standards. This work ensures that all multilingual scholars have equitable access to rigorous academic content and the tools they need to succeed.

Throughout August, our **Mental Health support** focused on mindfulness and wellness. High schools received mental health and self-care resources through dedicated check-in sessions, reinforcing our commitment to the emotional well-being of both students and staff.

August set a strong foundation for the academic year, with high schools demonstrating commitment to instructional excellence, student engagement, and operational readiness. Early indicators show promising trends in attendance, classroom rigor, and staff collaboration. As we move into September, our focus will remain on sustaining momentum, addressing emerging needs, and ensuring that every student is supported in their journey toward success. We appreciate the dedication of our educators, leaders, and families in making this a productive and inspiring start to the year.

Superintendent Dr. Derrica Boochee-Davis

Area Horizon Schools

The Horizon Area began the 2025–2026 school year with a strong focus on instructional alignment, leadership coaching, and systems readiness across all 33 schools. The team worked collaboratively to ensure a smooth school opening and that structures for instruction, culture, and compliance were firmly in place.

Leadership Development & Data Use

Executive Administrators provided coaching through leadership walks and team meeting observations, aligning feedback to CSIP goals and the District Plan of Support (D-PoS). District and area Continuous Improvement Team (CIT) meetings offered opportunities to review MAP Fall projections and refine monitoring tools, while MAP data talks anchored planning and ensured instructional priorities were data-driven.

English Language Arts (ELA)

The Horizon Team advanced literacy support through planning, professional learning, and system-wide alignment. Teachers engaged in Gender Responsive Strategies, Part I, which introduced background research, classroom observation data, and structured opportunities for educators to reflect on engagement, collaboration, and instructional practices. This session laid the groundwork for Part II, scheduled in September, which will emphasize practical classroom strategies and clear expectations for implementation.

The team also prioritized strengthening the implementation fidelity of 95 Phonics across Horizon schools and in collaboration with DeKalb County Schools. This work included virtual training sessions that reached over 140 participants, job-embedded coaching, collaborative planning, and classroom modeling to ensure the resource is consistently and effectively applied in Tier 1 instruction.

A significant milestone this month was the creation of the Horizon ELA Support Plan, which provides principals and academic coaches with a clear roadmap for guiding literacy instruction from August through May. The plan outlines quarterly scope-and-sequence pacing aligned with district expectations and assessment windows, identifies essential standards and instructional non-negotiables, and describes strategies for modeling lessons, guiding planning, and co-teaching to build teacher capacity. It also integrates steps to maximize use of the curriculum platform, establishes a professional learning cadence through PLCs, PD sessions, and job-embedded coaching, and sets up monitoring systems for lesson plan reviews, learning walks, and student work analysis. Notably, the plan also addresses teacher overwhelm by prioritizing core instructional components and scaffolding implementation in manageable stages.

This comprehensive approach to literacy represents a significant step forward for the Horizon Area. It ensures that teachers are supported with consistent guidance, that principals and coaches have clarity about their monitoring roles, and that students benefit from a coherent, high-quality instructional experience. Principals also requested the development of an ELA Literacy Block Expectations PL, which will further reinforce this work by providing clear look-fors and consistent expectations across all classrooms.

Mathematics

Instructional walks revealed a need for stronger ILP implementation, effective work periods, and greater use of concrete models. Coaching cycles were initiated, and short PD sessions will be launched in September to model best practices. The team also supported PLC structures, encouraging deeper CFA analysis and more intentional lesson planning.

English Learners (EL)

Support for English Learners centered on compliance and instructional capacity. Reclassification paperwork is underway, schedules are being spot-checked, and an updated EL Horizon Dashboard is guiding differentiated support. Coordinators delivered professional learning on standards and scheduling while clarifying interpreter protocols for schools and families. Streamlined communication remains a need to reduce repeated requests for schedules and staff lists.

Special Education

Special education support focused on compliance and capacity-building. Coaching was provided to new lead teachers, vacancies were addressed, and professional learning on SDI and co-teaching was delivered. Support for behavioral needs was prioritized, and staff requested additional training in behavior management and lesson planning.

Culture & Climate

The Horizon Team convened multidisciplinary meetings to strengthen attendance, discipline, and engagement systems. Schools are implementing initiatives such as Student Ambassadors, Safety Patrol, and Mentoring Programs. Facility walkthroughs revealed HVAC, equipment, and security needs, and transportation delays remain a challenge.

Opportunities & Needs

Key needs include establishing ELA Literacy Block expectations, strengthening Math ILP execution, accelerating EL compliance, expanding special education training, and resolving facilities and transportation issues. Principals also need district clarity regarding Amira training requirements.

Immediate Next Steps

In September, the Horizon Team will finalize D-PoS action steps, deliver ELA Literacy Block PL and Gender Responsive Strategies, Part II, and conduct Math ILP PD cycles with in-class modeling. Weekly EL dashboard updates will track reclassification progress, while special education efforts will focus on IEP timelines and co-teaching. Culture and climate support will continue, facility work orders will be escalated, and principals will receive a guidance memo clarifying expectations for Amira, Progress Learning, and EL documentation.



Superintendent Dr. Michelle Jones

Area Specialty Schools

The Specialty Area Team was fully engaged this month, helping staff with the school opening. The focus for this month was Literacy. We celebrated scholars who completed the summer reading challenge and encouraged them to continue reading. The Specialty Area Support Team conducted literacy walks in 18 of our schools. We provided specific, actionable feedback so leaders and teachers have clear next steps. In our schools, we have welcomed 167 new staff to the Specialty area with a welcome apple sign and a goodie bag.

The International Student Center completed Phase I of its renovation, and Robert Shaw completed its Culture Improvement renovation. FLEX Academy hosted First Semester Orientation for students and parents with over 120 participants. Our elementary schools hosted Curriculum Nights the last week in August to share the new ELA curriculum expectations and resources.

We welcomed Margaret Harris and Elizabeth Andrews to the Specialty Area. We recognized and celebrated Dr. Laura Neely, Principal at Kittredge Magnet School, as the Principal of the Year for our area. Ms. White, Math Teacher at Wadsworth Magnet School, was recognized by WXIA-TV for their MADE in DeKalb segment regarding STEM.

Three of our schools received the John Hancock Banner Award from GADOE for cursive writing: Robert Shaw Theme, Marbut Theme, and Narvie J. Harris, all traditional theme schools. Robert Shaw has been featured on news outlets for their work with cursive writing and being the first school in the state to receive the banner. Our Specialty Area schools were among the top schools for their GA Milestones scores, with at least three grade levels having 100 percent proficient or higher in Mathematics.

This year, we are Soaring with the Cs: Culture, Content Mastery, and Coaching!



Interim Executive Director Mike Kelly**Leadership Development****Governor's School Leadership Academy**

On August 28th, our district GSLE team engaged in professional learning with the Governor's Office of Student Achievement. Together, we clarified the purpose of our leadership development work. We also analyzed our Gallup Strengths to understand team dynamics better and leverage individual talents. This session strengthened our foundation as we continue designing impactful leadership development programs for our district.

The DeKalb Principal Pathway (DPP)

On Friday evening, August 22, 2025, Leadership Development facilitated Session 3 of the DeKalb Principal Pipeline (DPP) Cohort #2. Candidates engaged in professional learning on the dangers of making false assumptions, explored the principles of transformational leadership, and began designing their rigorous on-site Change Project that will drive improvement in their schools. To extend this learning, each participant will be paired with a performance coach who will provide feedback and coaching at their work locations between monthly professional learning sessions, ensuring consistent support as they grow in their readiness for the principalship.

The DeKalb Leadership Institute (DLI)

On Friday evening, August 22, 2025, Leadership Development facilitated Session 3 of the DeKalb Leadership Institute (DLI) Cohort 1, where candidates engaged in activities around social constructs and identity to reflect on how their personal leadership values shape decision-making, and then stepped into a "Day in the Life of an AP" simulation. Through this experience, they practiced prioritizing the daily workload and responding to real-world challenges while exploring the assistant principal's critical role in organizational management—learning to strategically manage time, people, facilities, and funds. Candidates also received guidance and expectations for their 2025–2026 Field Experiences, which will allow them to shadow district APs to apply these lessons in practice as they continue developing their leadership identity and readiness for the AP role.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Leadership Development will partner with Solution Tree throughout the school to build the capacity of our DCSD PLC Guiding Coalition. Leadership Development, in collaboration with Professional Learning and Area 2 Superintendent Beth Kyle, has planned the launch of the DCSD PLC Guiding Coalition for the 2025–2026 school year on September 4, 2025. As a planning team, we provided PLC Guiding Coalition training to principals during their August PLO and to assistant principals at the August AP Academy. This professional rollout is designed to ensure clarity, context, and consistency for schools as they develop their PLC Guiding Coalitions. Throughout the year, Leadership Development will partner with Solution Tree to continue growing the capacity of our DCSD PLC Guiding Coalition.

First Days of School

The Leadership Development team was all hands on deck to kick off the school year. Each member of our team was assigned to schools during the first week to assist wherever needed, ensuring staff, parents, and students had a smooth start. Together, our team logged over 400 hours supporting schools with student arrival, tagging, registration, supervision, lunchroom monitoring, and dismissal. It was truly an excellent start for both our team and the schools we serve.

District Principal's Learning Opportunity (PLO)

Leadership Development supported the design and logistics of the August 21st Principal Learning Opportunity (PLO). Principals engaged in professional learning focused on: Curriculum & Instruction standards for ELA and Math, Developing effective school-level PLC Guiding Coalitions and Human Resources updates. In addition, principals collaborated in Area Cluster groups to design meaningful parent and family engagement opportunities.

Performance Coaches Training

On August 28th, Leadership Development held a monthly team training session focused on strengthening our coaching practice. The session included principal coaching scenarios to refine how we provide support, feedback, and guidance to school leaders. It also included insights from Performance Coaches on the needs observed in schools and with leaders. This valuable input will inform the design of the 1st- and 2nd-Year principal Academies, ensuring our support remains relevant and impactful.

Assistant Principal's Academy

Leadership Development provided assistant principals with professional learning aligned to the content principals received at their PLO. Assistant Principals engaged in professional learning focused on: Curriculum & Instruction standards for ELA and Math and supporting effective school-level PLC Guiding Coalitions. Our goal is to build AP capacity across all leadership standards, ensuring they are fully prepared to support principals in every aspect of school leadership. Through our AP framework, assistant principals are engaged in the full scope of school leadership alongside the principal, without being limited to narrow or isolated roles.

Principal Hiring/Interviewing Process

Leadership Development has been actively supporting area superintendents in the selection of school leaders by participating in the interview process for all principal vacancies across the district. This collaborative effort helps ensure a rigorous, consistent approach to identifying and recommending highly qualified candidates who align with the district's vision and leadership framework, while also strengthening the pipeline of instructional leaders prepared to drive student success.



Executive Director Ayana S. Smith

Professional Learning

In August, the Professional Learning Department launched the school year by strengthening relationships with school leaders, supporting PLC implementation, and delivering impactful professional learning aligned to Strategic Goal Area 3 (Recruit, Develop, and Retain Talent) and Miracles Tenet I (Improved Instructional Core). Professional Learning Facilitators equipped teachers with strategies to enhance instruction and reignite passion through sessions on unpacking the new ELA standards using the KUD protocol, designing assessment-aligned questions (with 90% of participants reporting high satisfaction), and presenting the CCRPI Predictive Model to Academic Coaches. PLC support focused on guiding schools in establishing team norms, creating SMARTIE goals, and applying the 12 key steps for effective implementation. Targeted work at Tucker Middle, Jolly, and Hambrick Elementary supported culture shifts and deepened instructional focus. Additionally, professional learning sessions included “Amplifying Academic Discourse with Talk Moves” and “One Size Does NOT Fit All: Differentiating with Tiered Activities.” At the same time, facilitation of the TSS/TSC Bridge Course for Academic Coaches continued. Beyond PLCs, the department expanded its impact through mentorship and equity work, continuing the 8th-grade boys’ mentorship program at The Museum School and joining the district’s OSK/MBK steering committee.

Teacher Academy for Preparation and Pedagogy (TAPP): The annual TAPP Academy Update oriented first- and second-year candidates, mentors, and field supervisors on expectations for the year. Supervisors shared clinical requirements, mentors registered in Task Stream, and 2025 completer T. Rosillo inspired attendees with quotes. School visits were conducted, and introductions to the program were held with administrators and candidates.

Field Experience: In August, 267 teacher candidates from 26 universities were placed in 81 schools with GAPSC-approved cooperating teachers. University partnerships ensured background checks were completed, with placements beginning in late August. Spotlight schools—Stoneview ES, Druid Hills MS, Lakeside HS, and Austin ES- welcomed multiple candidates. Next steps include orientations, cooperating teacher sessions, and professional learning.

NETwork/NTO: The first NETwork Seminar of SY25, *“Ready, Set, Go: A Year of Professional Growth,”* was held on August 19 at the AIC. New educators connected with DCSD partners through a scavenger hunt, explored the Digital Ecosystem, and joined breakout sessions where facilitators modeled strategies aligned to TKES/TAPS standards. In addition, nearly 70 new hires participated in the Off-Cycle New Teacher Orientation, where they reviewed key district expectations, resources, and support systems, while also engaging in activities to build community as part of the DCSD NETwork Induction Seminars.

Notably, the release of the 2024–25 GMAS proficiency scores showed significant gains in science across grade bands, with 10 of 12 intensively supported schools by Science Professional Learning Facilitators and Science Coordinators, improving proficiency by 3–23% and projected CCRPI scores increasing by 2–13 points!



Chief Dr. Norman C. Sauce, III**Student Services**

Dr. Sauce began the month of August with his regular bi-weekly check-ins with each department leader, followed by participation in a School Readiness Meeting. He officially kicked off the 2025–2026 school year with a series of school visits across elementary, middle, and high schools. He also participated in the first week-of-school debrief sessions with the Superintendent and Chiefs from each division. Throughout the first week, Dr. Sauce remained engaged in his standing weekly Quad Meetings and celebrated the district’s summer graduates at the Graduation Ceremony held at Georgia Piedmont Technical College. In the second week of school, Dr. Sauce presented items on behalf of the Division of Student Services at the Board of Education meeting on August 11th. He continued his bi-weekly leadership team meetings, during which two team members presented findings from *The Advantage* book study. Additionally, he attended a School Year 2026 budget development session with Finance and participated in an in-person leadership meeting with the Exceptional Education Department to discuss legal updates.

Dr. Sauce represented the Division at the “Disrupting the Literacy Crisis” Luncheon Event, hosted by the United Way of Greater Atlanta. He also joined the Virtual Middle School Principals Meeting, delivered a data presentation, and remained consistent with his cabinet meetings, Quad team meetings, and bi-weekly Superintendent discussions. He also participated in the Strategic Plan Goal Area 5 Sponsor Meeting. Later in the month, Dr. Sauce attended the Student Assignment and Exceptional Education Leadership Collaboration Meeting, the PLC Guiding Coalition Kickoff at Tucker Middle School, and a Principals’ Learning Opportunity. He also began conducting evaluation conferences with his team.

In partnership with the Superintendent and colleagues, Dr. Sauce joined the “Portrait of a Graduate” school visits, observing two schools per day to review instruction and school culture. He also engaged in planning discussions regarding Saturday administration of Gifted Identification Assessments. Other notable engagements included Dr. Sauce’s participation in the Miracles Workshop, where Student Services shared departmental priorities, and a meeting on Utilization Visualizations. He also collaborated with the Athletics Executive Director on the DeKalb Silver Streaks, a program designed to empower students with physical disabilities through self-esteem building, leadership, teamwork, and a sense of belonging. Dr. Sauce concluded the month of August with two significant events: attending the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Cross Keys High School and participating in the LTSE Academy. In total during the month of August 2025, Dr. Sauce visited more than 40 different DeKalb County schools.

Dr. Norman C. Sauce III
@drnormancsauce3.bsky.social

I joined a model data team meeting today @ Lithonia HS- with Principal Dr. Mulanta Wilkins & admin team. Student-specific discussion on success criteria for grad monitoring, course progression, attendance, behavioral factors, classroom conditions, & family circumstances. Bravo, Bulldogs!



Dr. Norman C. Sauce III
@drnormancsauce3.bsky.social

Cross Keys HS modernization ground breaking ceremony demonstrates @dekalbcschools.bsky.social mission for access & opportunity for each scholar to aspire towards their dreams in befitting facilities. Thank you, Board, Supt. Horton, local officials for setting it off right! #TheDeKalbDifference



Dr. Norman C. Sauce III
@drnormancsauce3.bsky.social

A little early morning drizzle couldn't stop us from sending our @dekalbcschools.bsky.social buses to start the day off right: smiles, high fives, and positive vibes - with Superintendent Dr. Horton and team! First day of school is going to be magnificent! #TheDeKalbDifference



Dr. Norman C. Sauce III
@drnormancsauce3.bsky.social

Day 2 hitting @dekalbcschools.bsky.social streets! Pre-K reading circles, PLC practices, defined procedures, scholars' prior knowledge- on full display! Thank you, Montgomery ES, Pleasantdale ES, John Lewis ES, Jolly ES, Stone Mountain HS, Peachcrest ES, Bob Mathis ES- for stupendous visits!



Dr. Norman C. Sauce III
@drnormancsauce3.bsky.social

@dekalbcschools.bsky.social Day 4: active learning, safe supportive classrooms, family engagement, teacher collaboration, smiling & scholars! Thank you, Huntley Hills ES, Oakcliff Theme School, Montclair ES, Clarkston HS, Rockbridge ES, Wadsworth Magnet & Rainbow ES for invigorating visits!

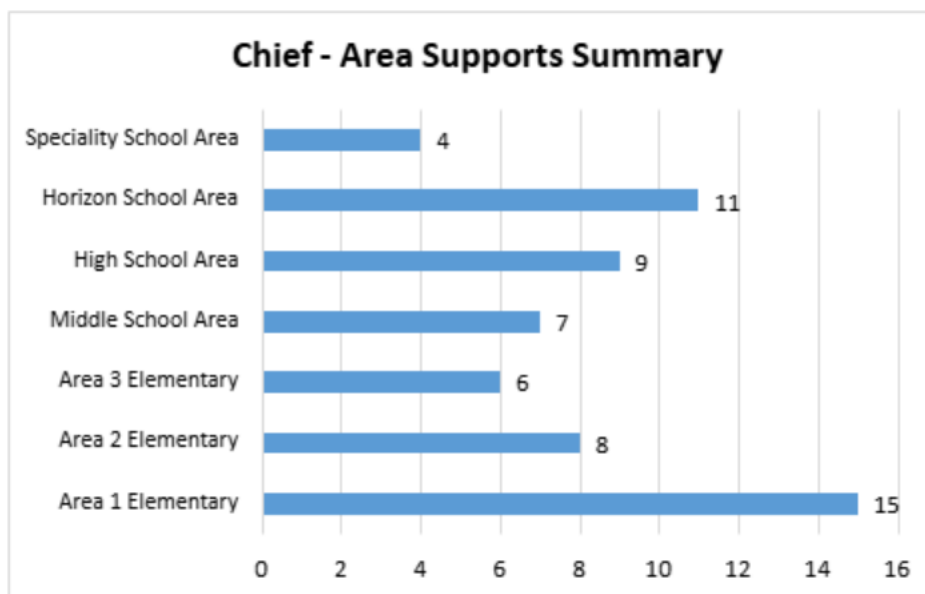


Dr. Norman C. Sauce III
@drnormancsauce3.bsky.social

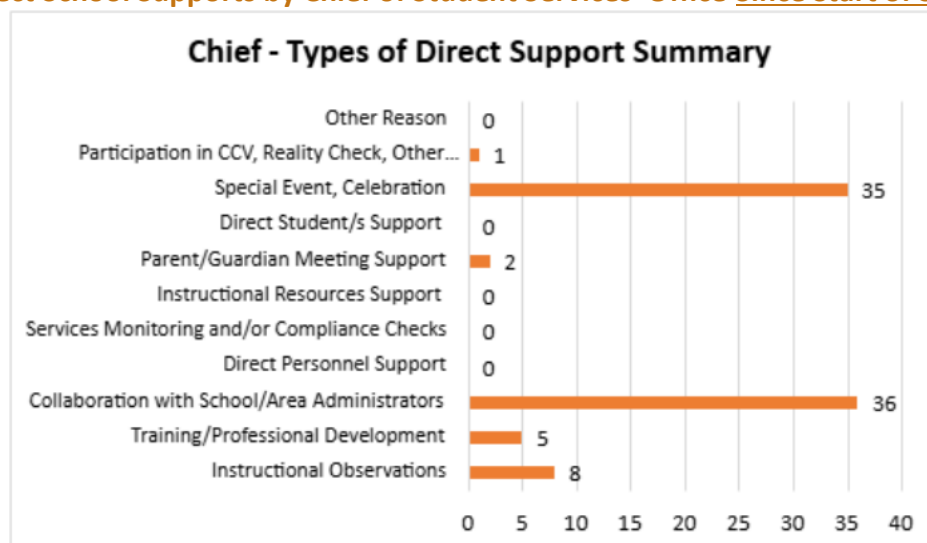
@dekalbcschools.bsky.social First Day: engaged scholars, prepared passionate educators, buildings ready for learning, visible & accessible leaders- & that's just the schools I visited! Thank you Dunwoody ES, Ashford Park ES, Idlewood ES, Toney ES, Henderson MS, Redan HS & Southwest DeKalb HS!



Direct School Supports by Chief of Student Services' Office Since Start of School Year



Types of Direct School Supports by Chief of Student Services' Office Since Start of School Year

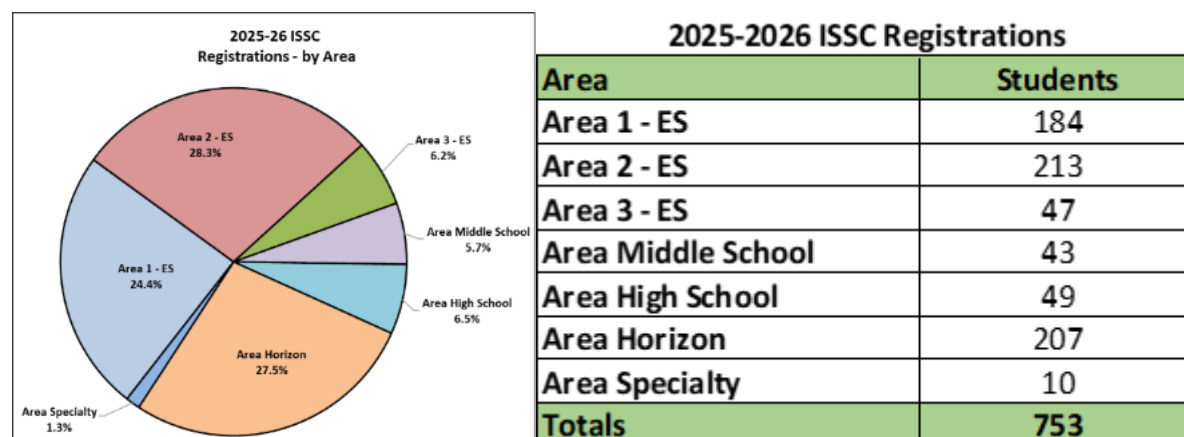


Executive Director Dr. Evelyn Hall

English Learners

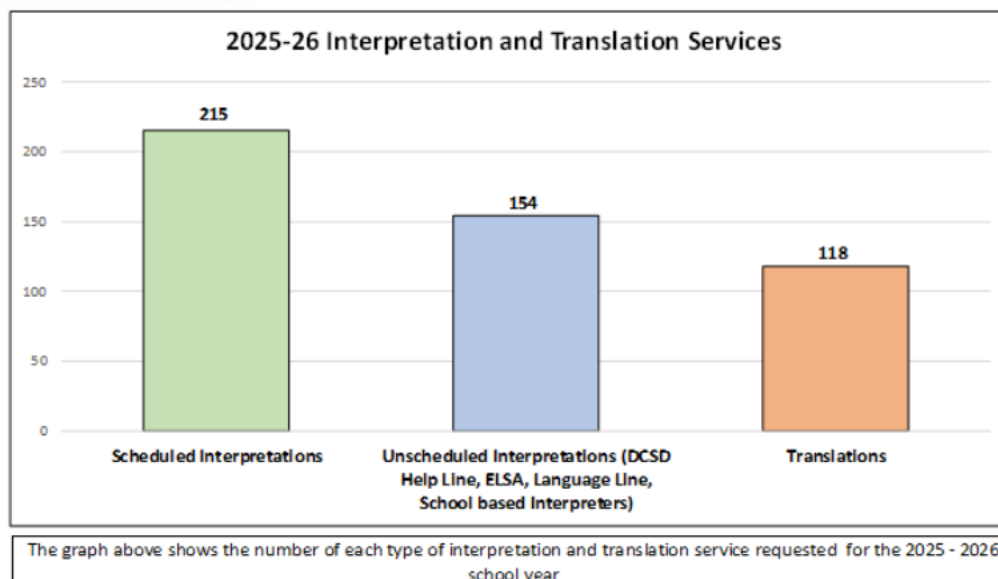
International Student Screening Center Registration

The International Student Screening Center (ISSC) continuously registers and screens students throughout the school year. This month, the ISSC has registered and screened **753** English learners.



Interpretation & Translation Services

The International Student Screening Center (ISSC) provides interpretation/translation services during registration and at local schools for families with a Primary Home Language Other than English (PHLOTE). This month, the English Learners department provided **344** language services to PHLOTE families.



Interpretation, translation, and registration services align with DCSD Strategic Plan: Goal Area II: School, Family, and Community Engagement, and the DCSD M.I.R.A.C.L.E.S. Framework for Continuous Improvement:

- M - Motion Towards Equity
- C – Commitment to Accountability

ESOL Teacher Pre-Planning and Professional Learning

The English Learners Department is providing **10 professional learning sessions** to **1,111 teachers, administrators, and DCSD staff** this month. The sessions supported participants with ESOL instruction, compliance, curriculum resources, and expanding their expertise to better serve English Learners during the 2025-2026 school year.

Date	Title
7/29	ESOL General Meeting (Secondary Session)
7/30	ESOL General Meeting (Elementary Session)
7/30	VHL Bridges & Engage Resources Training
7/30	VHL Connect Resources Training
7/31	New Teacher Support Series - Policies & Procedures
8/7	EL Accommodations Training
8/7	LAS Links Administration Information Session
8/12	New Kindergarten WIDA Screener Training
8/12	LAS Links Support Hours
8/14	New ESOL Teacher Home Language Survey Training
8/19	WIDA Screener Online Training



Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP):

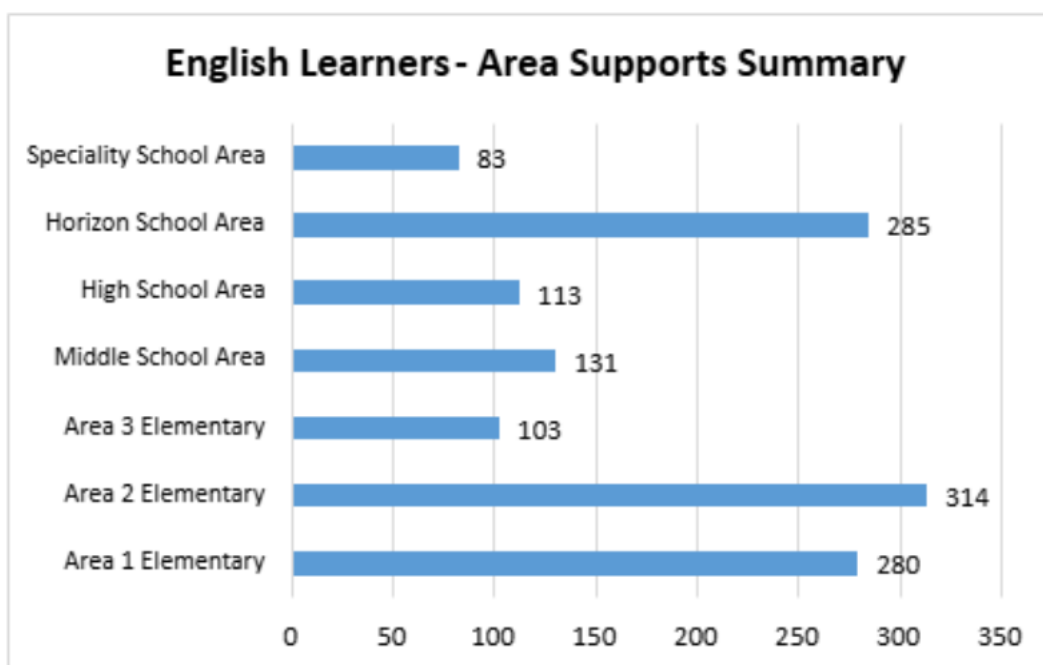
The English Learners Department is pleased to announce the *Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol* (SIOP) professional learning (PL) opportunities for 2025-2026. These engaging opportunities allow participants to learn the SIOP instructional framework and gain valuable strategies to make content comprehensible to learners as they develop academic English in the content areas.

Course	Description	Dates
<i>Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Workshop</i>  2-day In Person PL Room 2 -- AIC	This PL introduces the 8 SIOP components and 32 features of the SIOP instructional framework. Participants learn valuable teaching and learning strategies to make content comprehensible for ELs. This is a 2-day in person workshop.	● 8/21-8/22 (Thurs. & Fri.) ● 9/25-9/26 (Thurs. & Fri.) ● 10/23-10/24 (Thurs. & Fri.) ● 11/6-11/7 (Thurs. & Fri.) ● 1/15-1/16 (Thurs. & Fri.) ● 2/26-2/27 (Thurs. & Fri.) ● 3/19-3/20 (Thurs. & Fri.)

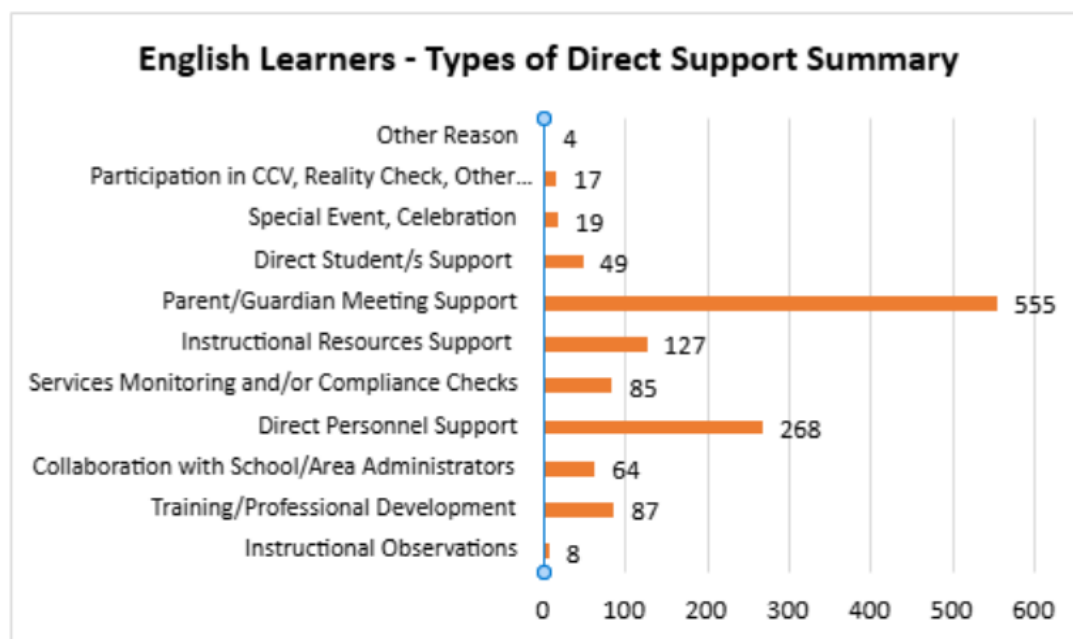
These opportunities align with the DCSD Strategic Plan: Goal Area 1: Student Academic Success with Equity and Access; Goal Area 2: School, Family, and Community Engagement; Goal Area 4: Culture and Climate; and Goal Area 6: Organizational Excellence, and the DCSD M.I.R.A.C.L.E.S. Framework for Continuous Improvement:

- M - Motion Towards Equity
- I - Improved Instructional Core
- R - Relevant and Rigorous Course of Study

Direct School Supports by the Dept. of English Learners Since Start of School Year



Types of Direct School Supports by Dept. of English Learners Since Start of School Year



Executive Director Kiana King

Exceptional Education

Building Strong Foundations for Student Wellbeing

On **August 21**, **GNETS** leadership attended the **Georgia Multi-Tiered System of Supports (GaMTSS) Professional Learning Event** at Middle Georgia State University in Macon. This session focused on developing a comprehensive health and physical education program as the foundation for student wellbeing. School teams explored how to foster both academically supportive classrooms and safe, healthy environments, reviewed Georgia's Physical Education standards, and received valuable resources to strengthen **Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention** efforts in schools.



Extending Support Across Our Schools

As part of our commitment to ensuring equitable access and services for students with disabilities, **special education staff completed 1,109 school visits in August**. These visits provided direct support to educators, administrators, students, and families, with each one documented in the SY26 Student Services Division Direct School Supports Log to ensure **transparency, accountability, and alignment** with district-wide goals.

To strengthen classroom practices and outcomes for students with disabilities, the **Office of Special Education** provided a series of professional learning opportunities throughout August, on topics such as *Understanding Specially Designed Instruction and Assessing Special Education Teachers, Classroom Management and Culture Through the Instructional Lens, Adding SDI to the Co-Taught Setting with a Dab of H-PRIDE, and Classroom Management*. These sessions reached LTSEs, administrators, special education and general education teachers, and paraprofessionals—equipping them with **tools and strategies to better serve students every day**.

We are excited to share a significant advancement in our work to support **Section 504-Protected Students** within DeKalb County School District. In partnership with **K-12 Solutions Group**, the Section 504 Office has adopted a new 504 Platform fully integrated within Infinite Campus. To prepare for this full launch, **Professional Learning for 504 Chairs** was held on **August 12 and August 14** at **Redan High School**, with **111 participants** in attendance. The training, *Understanding Your Role as 504 Chairs & Beginning of the Year Expectations*, helped ensure that leaders are well-equipped to implement the new system with fidelity.

Additionally, this month, the Office of Special Education delivered **targeted support to 14 identified schools** and trained Area School administrators on student discipline for students with disabilities. The training emphasized:

- Understanding protections under **IDEA** and **Section 504**
- Using **restorative and trauma-informed approaches** to behavior management
- Reducing **disproportionate discipline outcomes** for students with disabilities
- Building **school-wide systems** to support positive behavior and inclusive practices
- Strengthening **collaboration across teams** to meet student needs

Empowering Leaders Through Coaching

On **August 18**, **GLRS** launched the first **Instructional Coaches Institute** of the FY26 school year. Fourteen area coordinators and instructional leads engaged in expert-led sessions on effective coaching strategies, step-by-step processes for coaching cycles, and received tools and resources that can be immediately used in classrooms.

Metro East GLRS hosted the first session of the **Georgia New Teacher and Provider Retention Program** this month, welcoming **16 early-career teachers (0–3 years)** from DCSD ATSI schools. Participants will receive training, coaching, and support throughout the school year. Notably, **100% of program completers from the past two years remain in ATSI schools as special educators**, demonstrating the program's success in building and retaining strong teachers.

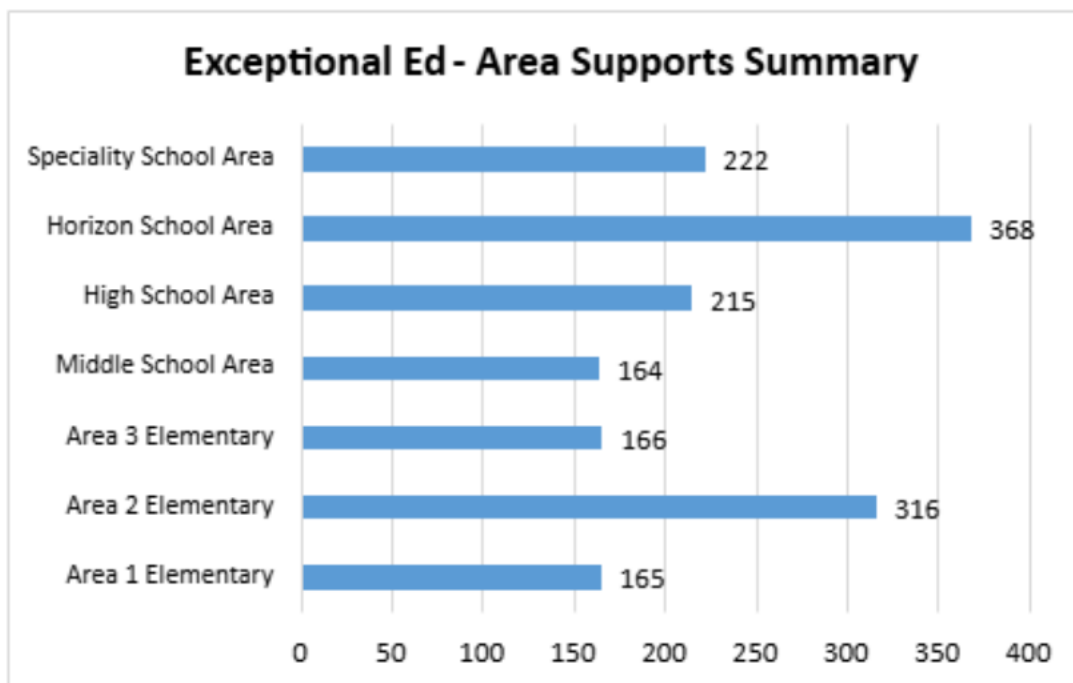
Expanding Psychological Services

This school year, we are excited to welcome **eight new school psychologists, four new school psychology interns, and eight practicum students** to the Office of Psychological Services. Together, this growing team brings a range of experience from early career to over 10 years in the field. Additionally, the internship and practicum program launched the week of August 25 and represents the **largest group of graduate students ever supported in our district**. Most of the students come from Georgia State University, with one doctoral student from the University of Georgia.

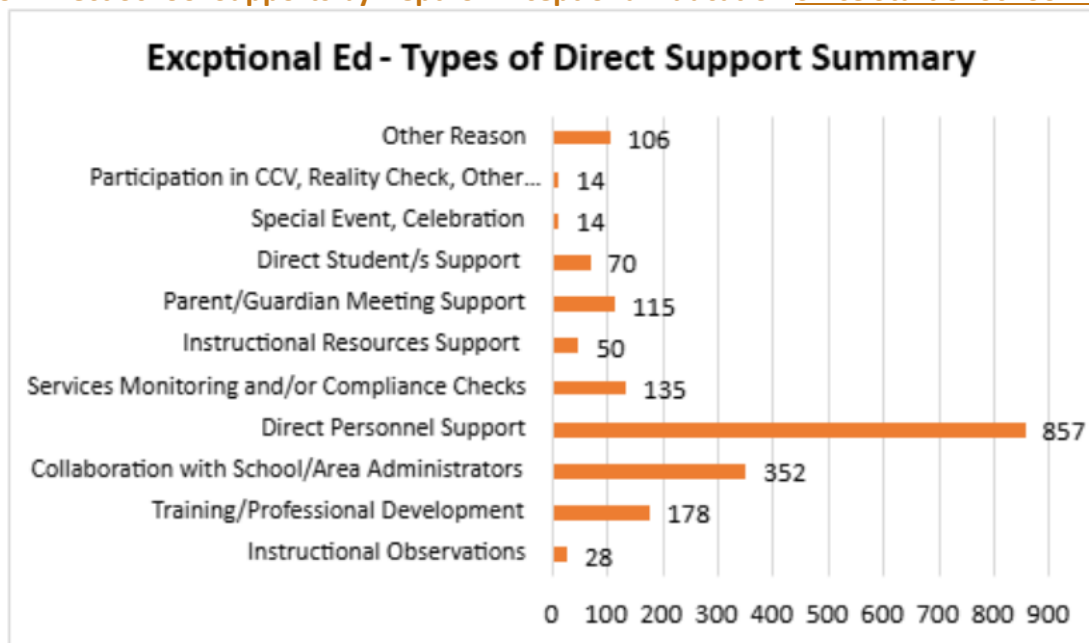
GNETS Discipline Data: A Positive Two-Year Trend

At **Eagle Woods Academy (EWA)**, discipline referrals have **dropped by nearly half** over the past two school years, according to SWIS data. While October and March have traditionally shown higher referral counts, the trend has consistently moved downward.

Direct School Supports by the Dept. of Exceptional Education Since the Start of the School Year



Types of Direct School Supports by Dept. of Exceptional Education Since Start of School Year



Executive Director Dr. Zack Phillips**Early Learning and Pre-K**

Dr. Phillips and members of the Department of Early Learning and Pre-K Programs have been working diligently to support staff during the 1st month of school by developing newly established instructional non-negotiables and program enhancements for the 2025-2026 school year. Our Pre-K (3&4) students and staff will use the Waterford supplemental resource during the 2025-2026 school year. Instructional learning targets and anchor charts aligned to the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards will be deployed and utilized in every instructional setting as instructional tools and safety nets within the early learning arena. **A Progression Standards-Based Common Formative Assessment (CFA)** is currently being built in Canvas, in partnership with the Division of Curriculum and Instruction and Instructional Technology, to assess and monitor our young scholars' learning progressions throughout the academic school year. Our new initiative, the **Cradle Through Kindergarten Campaign**, will launch this year with our **Faith Leaders' Summit**, scheduled for Friday, October 10th. Dr. Phillips participated as a panelist for the United Way of Greater Atlanta and the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce – Disrupting the Literacy Crisis: Birth – 3rd Grade Strategies, Investments, and Collaboration Power Lunch on Wednesday, August 13th. Also, Dr. Phillips participated in the Pre-K (BFTS) Director's training session at Georgia Piedmont Technical College on Wednesday, August 20th. Professional learning sessions are being planned for current Pre-K (3&4) teachers and paraprofessionals during September 2025 – May 2026 on Science of Reading – Phase II and the Waterford supplemental resource instructional platform.

Professional Learning Opportunities

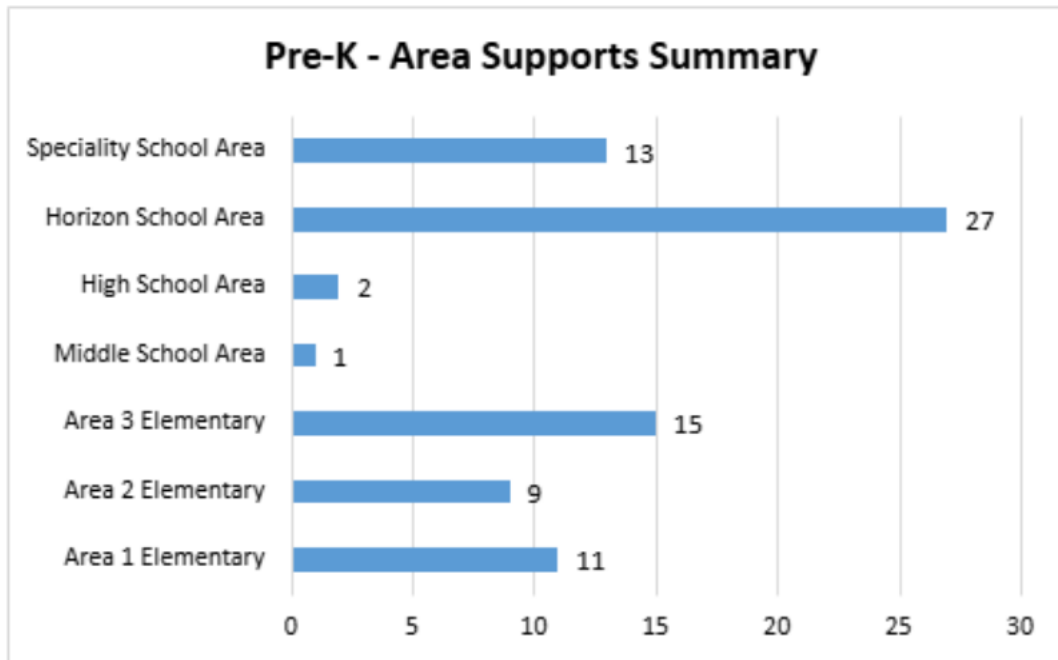
The Early Learning/Pre-K Department has worked diligently in August to support our Pre-K (3&4) staff by frontloading instructional non-negotiables, student files, warm-body counts, etc. Additional professional learning (PL) opportunities for current Pre-K (3&4) teachers and paraprofessionals will be offered in September 2025 – May 2026, covering the Science of Reading – PL Phase II on Oral Language, Phonological Awareness, and Vocabulary, as well as the use of the Waterford platform. The 1st session of the (SOR) training session will take place on Wednesday, September 10th, and the Waterford onboarding training sessions will run currently for 3 hours on Tuesday, September 16th, and Thursday, September 18th. These excellent (PL) opportunities for staff align with the DCSD Strategic Plan and the DCSD MIRACLES Framework for Continuous Improvement.

Department Highlights

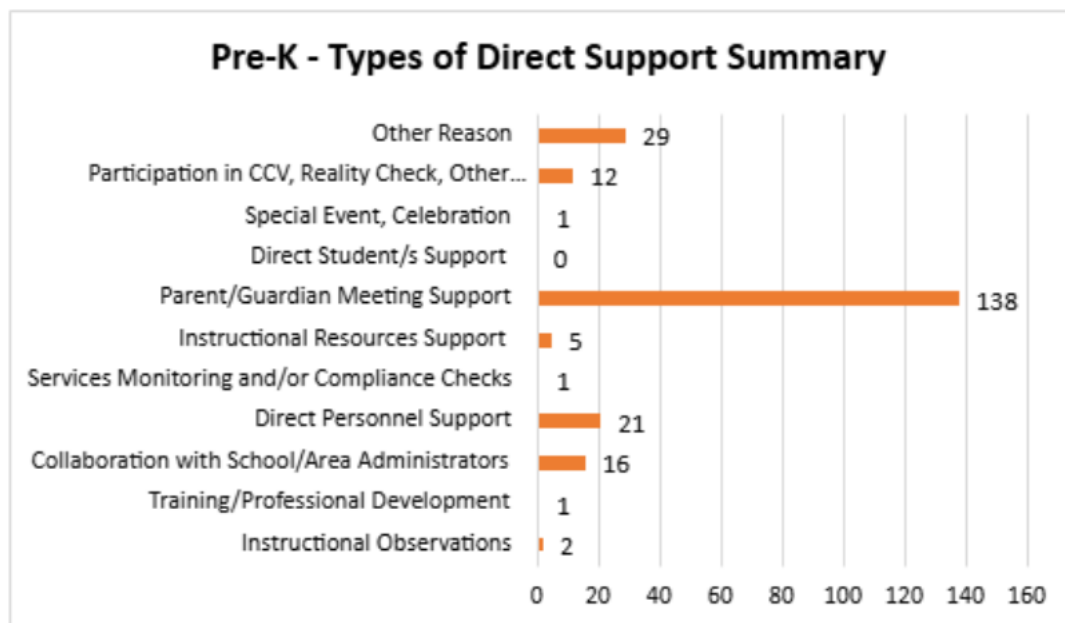
The Department of Early Learning and Pre-K Programs will be expanding the Waterford Supplemental Resource across the district to all Pre-K (3&4) classes during the 2025-2026 SY. The Board approved this program enhancement at our August meeting, and onboarding training for teachers will take place from Tuesday, September 16th, to Thursday, September 18th. Students and staff are expected to start using the platform on Monday, September 29th. This excellent instructional resource supports various content areas, including Literacy, Math, Social Studies, and STEAM. Additionally, this instructional resource provides a platform that supports teachers and

paraprofessionals in planning a plethora of age-appropriate instructional activities aligned with the GELDS standards and Frog Street Curriculum, which are embedded within their weekly lesson plans. Also, Pre-K (3&4) lead teachers and paraprofessionals will receive PL training, centered on the Science of Reading (SOR) – Phase II, on developing a deeper understanding of Oral Language, Phonological Awareness, and Vocabulary development with young scholars. The training sessions will run concurrently from September 2025 to May 2026. The Cradle Through Kindergarten Campaign will officially launch this year with our Faith Leaders’ Summit on Friday, October 10th.

Direct School Supports by the Dept. of Pre-K and Early Learning Since Start of School Year



Types of Direct School Supports by Dept. of Pre-K and Early Learning Since Start of School Year



Senior Coordinators Donyell Atkinson and Kristen Drake

Gifted Education

Professional Learning Opportunities

The Department of Gifted Education is offering online, asynchronous professional learning modules on Canvas for district teachers. To date, forty teachers have completed *Asynchronous Newsela Courses for All Gifted-Certified Teachers*. Teachers were offered a choice of courses addressing English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Writing. Teachers explained how they will use *Newsela*, an online instructional resource, in the classroom. Additional online modules will be added throughout the school year.

The district's local schools' gifted liaisons will have the opportunity to enhance their instructional leadership capacity to support gifted learners by participating in at least three of the five Lead by Example professional learning series, which will kick off on Tuesday, September 9, 2025.

Instructional Resources

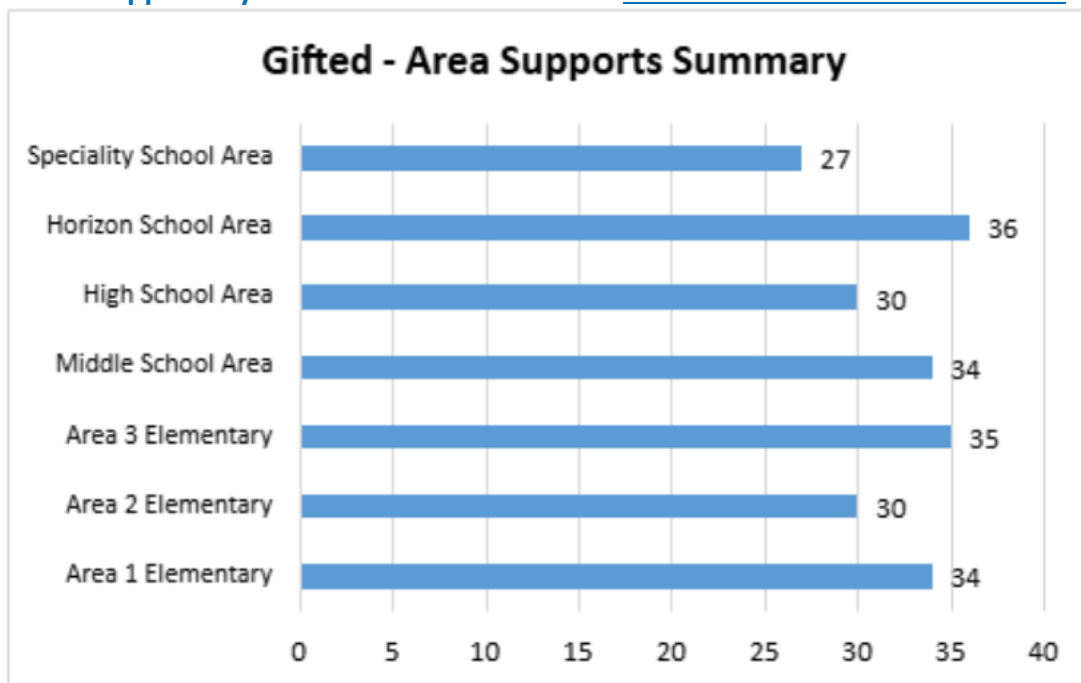
Critical thinking books are available for checkout in every school library. Teachers are encouraged to view these reproducible instructional resources, which can be uploaded to Canvas.



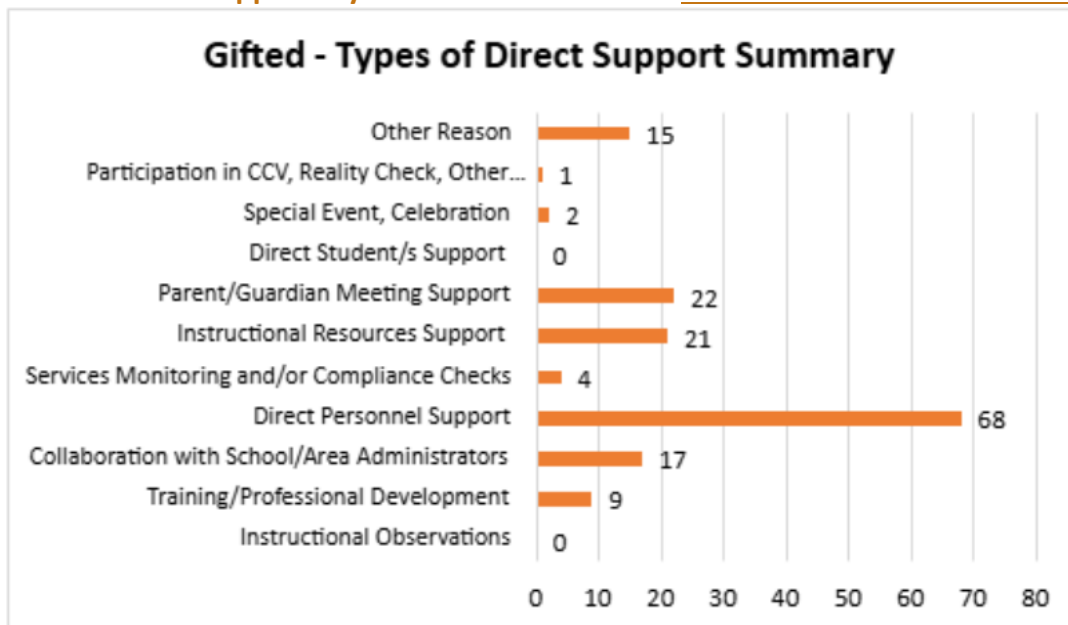
Gifted Endorsement Program

The DeKalb County School District's Gifted Endorsement Program application process began this week for interested certified teachers. Over 200 teachers expressed interest in the program, which is a 200-hour commitment. Teachers will complete four courses that address the characteristics of gifted learners, instructional strategies, and assessments. Participation in these courses offers teachers an opportunity to conduct a case study of a gifted student and reflect on how best to meet the student's needs. This also fosters a culture of collaboration and the application of research in the classroom. Teachers who complete the program will receive the gifted in-field endorsement on their teaching certificate from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC).

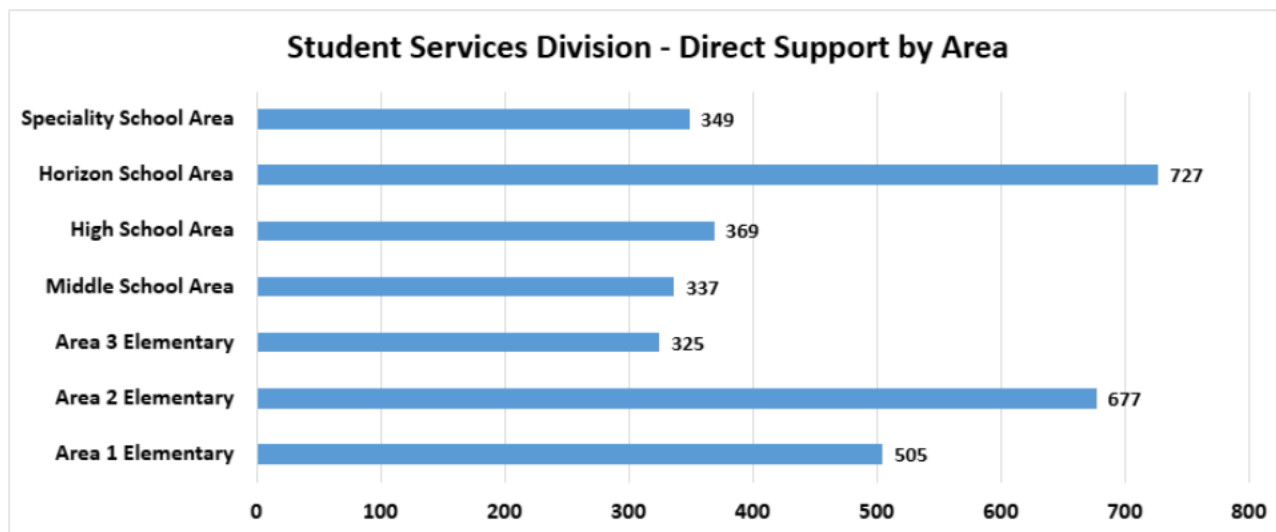
Direct School Supports by the Gifted Education Team Since the Start of the School Year



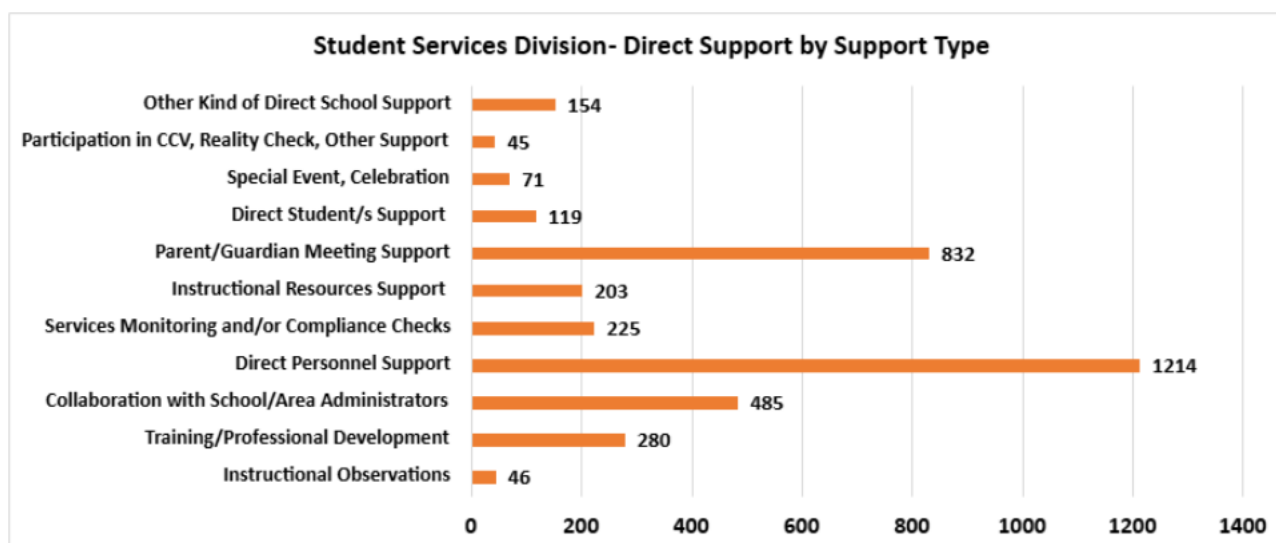
Types of Direct School Supports by Gifted Education Team Since the Start of the School Year



Direct School Supports by Division of Student Services' Personnel Since the Start of the School Year



Types of Direct School Supports by Division of Student Services' Personnel Since Start of School Year



Chief Dr. Kishia Towns

Wrap Around Services

First Week of School

The first week of school was an extraordinary time for many students, both those coming to school for the first time and those returning for their very last year of high school. It was exciting to visit so many schools throughout the week. The administrators, staff, and other community stakeholders were available to greet the students to ensure they had a trusted adult in the building to receive help when needed. While visiting more than 30 schools throughout the week, staff demonstrated love, care, and exhilaration when each student walked through the door. The Division of Wrap Around Services is delighted to welcome the students back to the DeKalb County School District and wishes them a successful 2025-2026 school year!



Grandparent volunteers at Cedar Grove ES



Principal Williams and 5th grader, Joshua P.



K-9 Dutch on the job at Clarkston HS

Summer Graduation

The DeKalb County School District hosted the Summer Graduation at Georgia Piedmont Technical College on Friday, August 8, 2025. Staff, students, friends, and family were in attendance to salute the 142 graduates who achieved this great honor. For some, it was an early start to post-secondary options, and for others, it was a delayed gratification where their hard work and dedication truly paid off. As a part of the Class of 2025, these students may be a part of the highest graduating class in the history of DeKalb County School District. The Division of Wrap

Around Services is exceptionally proud of the accomplishments of the summer graduates and wishes them all the best in their future adventures.



Mrs. Pierce (Board Chair) and Dr. Hogan (Board Member) in attendance at the Summer Graduation

Critical Issues Forum

On Thursday, August 14, 2025, Dr. Darnell Logan and Dr. Kishia K. Towns had the pleasure of attending the Critical Issues Forum, **"Cell Phones & Teens: Exploring Policies & Practices in Georgia Schools,"** at Emory University. Several educators, students, parents, policymakers, and researchers convened to explore the impacts of adolescent cell phone use, promising practices and district-level innovations, and opportunities for evidence-based policy development. The featured speakers included members of the House of Representatives, the Georgia Senate, the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, State Superintendent Richard Woods, Dr. Dani Fallin, Dean of the Rollins School of Public Health, and other agency representatives. This was timely, given the new Distraction-Free Education Act (House Bill 340), which requires all K–8 public schools in Georgia to implement policies prohibiting student access to personal electronic devices during the instructional day by January 1, 2026. It also aligns with Rule 2: Electronic Communication Devices in the Code of Student Conduct. Students are prohibited from accessing or using personal electronic communication devices (e.g., cell phones, smartwatches, headphones, tablets) during the instructional day. All devices must be powered off and secured in designated storage at the beginning of the school day. Exceptions apply only when required by law or as



specified in an Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, or documented medical plan. Upon DeKalb County School District Board of Education approval, lockers will be installed in all middle schools during the 2025-2026 school year. The DeKalb County School District is disconnecting to reconnect to enhance learning, engagement, and the well-being of all students.



Southwest DeKalb High School



Dr. Towns, Senator Parent, Dr. Wimberly, & Dr. Logan

Executive Director Christopher Key

Student Advancement

School Counseling

On Tuesday, August 26, 2025, the Department of Student Advancement proudly hosted the annual **PROBE College Fair** at Georgia Piedmont Technical College—an exciting opportunity for students to explore postsecondary options and engage directly with college representatives. This year's event was a tremendous success, bringing together 84 colleges and universities from across the country. Held in a vibrant and collaborative setting, the fair welcomed approximately 978 students from 23 high schools across the DeKalb County School District. Students had the opportunity to ask questions, gather information, and make meaningful connections with admissions representatives—many for the first time. The event supported our district's commitment to college and career readiness, helping students take informed steps toward their future. The strong turnout and enthusiastic participation made it clear: DCSD students are focused, driven, and ready for what's next.



Director Denise Revels

Wrap Around and Support Services

Student Health Services

Hearing and vision screenings are a critical part of school health services, helping to identify students who may need additional support to succeed in school. The Annual Hearing and Vision screening training took place on August 1, 2025, for school nurses. Consultant nurses and the audiology department led the training, and the day was split into two sessions. During the morning session, over 50 elementary school nurses participated and were greeted by Dr. Devon Horton. The nurses were allowed to engage with Dr. Horton, ask questions, and receive positive feedback. Following the morning session, the interaction with Dr. Horton was described as "rewarding and hopeful," highlighting a strong, collaborative relationship between the superintendent and the nurses. Over 30 middle and high school nurses attended the afternoon training.

The Hearing and Vision training with updates and best practices is part of the ongoing professional development required for school nurses to perform student health screenings. In the spirit of collaboration, the Hearing and Vision Trainings were extended to 70+ educators and specialists, including MTSS, LTSE, & Psychologists, to create a more comprehensive approach to supporting students.



Prevention/Intervention

The Division of Wrap Around Services, with the assistance of the Culture and Climate Coordinators, has provided extensive professional development in Restorative Practices and MindSet Verbal De-Escalation to strengthen school climate and support across the district.

- Restorative Practices Training: A total of 85 principals completed a one-day overview session. In comparison, 41 in-school suspension staff/paraprofessionals and 152 assistant principals completed a two-day training, bringing the total to 278 staff members trained.



- **MindSet Verbal De-Escalation Training:** Training was provided to 349 administrators (principals and assistant principals), 1,177 certified teachers, ISS and support staff, custodial staff, and campus security personnel, for a total of 1,526 staff members trained.

Through these efforts, the Division has equipped nearly 1,804 educators and staff across the district with critical tools.

Moving forward, additional training is being scheduled, and the Division continues to collaborate closely with Culture and Climate Coordinators to reach new staff members and any remaining groups who have not yet completed training. Staff in schools are receiving both training and ongoing support to strengthen implementation and ensure consistency across the district, ultimately helping schools reach their goals of safer, more inclusive, and restorative learning environments.



After School Care Program (ASCP)



The After School Care Program (ASCP) is in full swing for the 2025-2026 School Year. 13 new programs have been added to our elementary schools! Our partnership with Right at School (RAS) brought on nine new elementary schools, and four new traditional ASCP elementary schools have been added. The RAS representatives met with the principals of their nine schools and had supplies delivered to the schools. RAS will officially start its programs in October. All of our traditional ASCP schools opened their doors to our scholars by 8-18-25. Toney ES opened with 13 registered scholars, Stone Mountain ES opened with 28 registered scholars, and DeKalb Arts Academy opened with 166 registered scholars. All school staff members completed DECAL Background Checks to comply with DECAL's childcare regulations. ASCP is ready for a year filled with exploration and excitement!

School Social Work

Strengthening Supports Together: 2nd Annual Social Work Open House

The School Social Work Department proudly hosted its 2nd Annual Open House, bringing together staff and community partners to strengthen connections and support student success. This year, we welcomed School-Based Mental Health Partners, Georgia United Credit Union, and Voya Financial, who shared valuable resources for students and families.

The event aligns with the district's Strategic Plan Goal Areas 2 and 5:

- Goal 2: School, Family, and Community Engagement – Created opportunities for collaboration, helping social workers build relationships that directly enhance school services.
- Goal 5: Mental Health and Wellness – Increased awareness of factors that impact mental health, equipping social workers with tools to foster supportive and well-managed learning environments.

The Open House was particularly impactful for School Social Workers. It expanded their professional networks by providing direct access to partners and resources, and offered practical guidance from mental health experts on supporting student well-being. The event reinforced social workers' roles as liaisons, connecting schools, families, and the broader community. It emphasized the holistic approach of school social work, showing how addressing mental health, social-emotional needs, and self-care can contribute to academic success. This collaborative gathering empowered social workers to better support students, ensuring they are not only present in school but also fully prepared and equipped to succeed.



Threat Assessment Model Training

Selected School Social Work team members, alongside Public Safety representative, Lieutenant Smith, participated in the “Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model” event, which featured expert speakers in the fields of threat assessment and targeted violence prevention. The presentations emphasized the critical importance of using a behavioral threat assessment approach that engages stakeholders across the community to prevent targeted violence in K–12 environments. Participants also gained insight into Georgia’s school safety law and best practices for implementing comprehensive threat assessment protocols in schools.

This event is significant for school social workers and school-based staff because it equips them with the knowledge and strategies needed to identify, assess, and mitigate potential threats before they escalate. By understanding risk indicators and collaborative intervention strategies, social workers can play a pivotal role in fostering safe and supportive learning environments.

This effort directly supports the district’s Strategic Goal Area 3: Culture and Climate, promoting safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments for all students and staff. By incorporating threat assessment practices into daily school operations, the district reinforces its commitment to proactive prevention, school safety, and the overall well-being of the entire school community.

Director Dr. Darnell Logan

Student Relations

Disconnect to Reconnect Implementation

Status Update: Three Weeks into 2025–26 School Year

The *Disconnect to Reconnect* initiative officially launched at the beginning of the 2025–26 school year. Schools received comprehensive implementation folders that included:



- Downloadable and printable posters for display throughout schools
- Communication letters are designed to be shared with parents, staff, and the broader school community
- Suggestions and classroom strategies to support implementation with fidelity
- A PowerPoint voiceover presentation for delivery to staff during professional learning sessions or faculty meetings

Early Observations

Within the first three weeks of implementation, schools have reported a noticeable reduction in students visibly using cell phones during the school day. This shift has contributed to a positive change in school climate and environment, with fewer distractions observed in classrooms and common areas.

Next Steps (Beginning September 2025)

- Beginning in September, the district will collect monthly data through school walk-throughs to monitor fidelity of implementation and its impact on student engagement and climate.
- The RFP for wall-mountable cell phone lockers in middle schools has been finalized and will be presented to the Board at the September board meeting, seeking vendor approval for installation.

Student Discipline/Student Reintegration

Clear overview of the Department of Student Relations workload for August:

District Due Process Hearings (DDPH):

- Scheduled: 13
- Canceled/Withdrawn by School: 1
- Dismissed: 4
- Manifested: 1

Discipline Team Meetings (DTM): 0

Board Appeals Presented: 0

State Appeals Presented: 1

Students Cleared to Attend DeKalb County Schools: 72

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS)

On July 22, 2025, more than 120 MTSS Specialists participated in the MTSS-PBIS Integration Opening Session during MTSS J.E.T. Setting Professional Learning Week. The training, led by Brandy Woolridge (PBIS Coordinator, DCSD) and Benjamin Moore (GaDOE GaMTSS Program Specialist), focused on the GaDOE MTSS-PBIS Whole Child Supports Model, highlighting a unified approach to academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports. Participants received an overview of PBIS implementation in DCSD, including key components, expectations, district supports, and proactive strategies to address Tiered behaviors and improve student outcomes.

In preparation for the rollout of the ISS Intervention Program in middle and high schools, the PBIS District Team conducted training for 120 Assistant Principals on July 29, 2025, and for 25 ISS Paraprofessionals on August 1, 2025. The sessions outlined the program's goals, systems, protocols, facilitator responsibilities, classroom schedules, and resources. High school ISS Paraprofessionals also completed RethinkEd SEL Training led by Dr. Roberts, Director of Partnerships.

On August 21, 2025, the PBIS District Team trained more than 60 MTSS-PBIS staff on using SWIS Drill Down and solution development to analyze and address problem behaviors. PBIS Coordinator Brandy Woolridge and District Coaches Brian Bryant and Eva Landers also met with PBIS principals to review their roles, GaDOE/DCSD PBIS requirements, team membership, system artifacts, and upcoming PBIS and SWIS staff trainings.