

Academic Report – September 2025

Chief Dr. Triscilla Weaver

Access and Opportunity

A & O Policy

This month, we completed the A&O Policy draft in collaboration with Marissa Key and Shakina Champion. The draft will be presented to the Policy Review Committee at their October convening. We held sessions with the A&O Steering Committee and the Superintendent's Advisory Committee to discuss the audit findings and share the policy for feedback. We are collaborating with other divisions and departments to share the policy with external stakeholders. We are currently scheduled to meet with the PACs on November 12th and the Superintendent's Exceptional Education Advisory Committee on November 18th.

A & O Learning Series & Playbook

We selected The Leadership Academy as the partnering vendor for the co-creation of the Learning Series and Playbook. All documents were submitted for contracting purposes and we have a meeting scheduled with them for Thursday, October 2nd, to discuss the project timeline.

Other Activities

Dr. Outler and I attended Reality Checks for Horizon schools and Areas.

Dr. Outler met with Chris Key and the Student Engagement team to begin designing the purpose, aims, and selection criteria for the Student Board of Education. The purpose of this group is to amplify the voices of students—particularly those who have been traditionally underrepresented in Student Government or other student advisory bodies.

Support was also provided for elementary track and flag football, Athletics Media Day, the School Expo, and SAP community meetings.

Executive Director Myss Johnson-Jelks

Athletics

The DeKalb County School District athletics program has been actively engaging student-athletes and coaches across multiple sports this season. The inaugural middle school flag football season successfully launched with thirteen participating teams, providing students with an exciting opportunity to develop skills, teamwork, and sportsmanship. Middle School and High School basketball coaches participated in a district-wide training and strategy session designed to align coaching practices and prepare for the upcoming season.



The district also hosted the middle school volleyball championship at Miller Grove High School, highlighting the talent and dedication of student-athletes. On the same day, elementary schools from Areas 1, 2, and 3 competed in the track championship, promoting healthy competition and school pride among younger students. Additionally, DCSD set up a table at the School Expo to share information about athletic offerings, further increasing awareness and participation in district programs. The Open Competitive Dance registration period is currently underway, offering students the opportunity to participate in structured dance competitions.

To ensure safety and compliance, district staff visited all pools in preparation for the upcoming swim season. The monthly athletic liaison meeting brought together school-level and district-level sports administration staff to discuss the forthcoming seasons and program updates, featuring a presentation from the president of GADA on best practices for athletic directors. Collaborative discussions were also held with Northside and Source Fitness to assess and improve the status of athletic trainers across the district.

Finally, the district successfully hosted Winter Sport Media Day, celebrating student-athletes and generating excitement for the upcoming season. These initiatives collectively demonstrate DCSD's commitment to fostering athletic development, ensuring safety, and promoting engagement across all grade levels.

[Winter Media Day Video](#)

Director Brandan Lane

Athletics

The Athletics Department remains committed to continually improving programs for student-athletes, with a strong focus on transparency, safety, and operational excellence. In September, we advanced the development and implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to guide both internal and external stakeholders, ensuring consistency and accountability across all athletic programs. I also actively pursued sponsorships and partnerships to help offset financial costs while rebranding the department to foster a positive public image. Meetings with companies and vendors enabled us to explore opportunities to strengthen resources and enhance the student-athlete experience. Our partnership with Northside Hospital continues to provide comprehensive athletic trainer coverage at all athletic events across our 19 high schools, underscoring our commitment to student safety and well-being. In addition, weekly safety meetings with the Public Safety Department and our Executive Director provided opportunities to review athletic events, address challenges, and prepare for highly attended competitions. This month also marked a historic milestone as our department hosted its very first Media Day for high school athletes in flag football, basketball, and wrestling, creating an exciting platform to showcase student-athletes and elevate school spirit.

Collaboration with Operations and Facilities has also remained a top priority, as we worked weekly to improve athletic venues and ensure safe, equitable opportunities for all participants. This month, I attended both a professional development conference and an AI and technology integration conference, gaining valuable insight into how innovative tools can enhance district

operations, athletics, and facilities management. Beyond these initiatives, I prioritized presence at both district and non-district athletic events to support student-athletes, coaches, and athletic coordinators. I also attended coaches' meetings to strengthen communication and provide guidance. Collectively, these efforts reflect the department's mission to continuously grow, rebrand, and position athletics as a model of safety, opportunity, and excellence.

Director Kina M. Champion

School Innovation

Charter Schools

The SY25-26 objective for School Innovation is to address 100% of the findings and recommendations from the Georgia authorizer standards evaluation by June 2026. This will be accomplished through the development and implementation of a comprehensive action plan that includes clearly defined tasks, timelines, and designated responsible individuals. Progress will be monitored through quarterly check-ins and documented in a final report that summarizes the actions taken and the outcomes achieved. Over the past month, we have made significant progress. Specifically, we have unpacked and prioritized the findings from the final evaluation report and drafted both the 2025–2026 school year action plan and accompanying data collection protocols. Additionally, we held debrief meetings with authorizers from Atlanta Public Schools, Fulton, Clayton, Gwinnett, Cobb, and Savannah-Chatham to discuss evaluation outcomes and next steps. We also participated in the quarterly Georgia Local Authorizer convening and initiated development of a new training module titled *Charter Schools 102: Georgia Charter School Authorizer Standards*.

Principal Advisory Councils

The SMART A-O goal for Principal Advisory Councils (PACs), as identified in the Access and Opportunity audit, is to strengthen governance structures by June 2026 through the development of standard operating procedures and the delivery of at least twelve professional learning sessions. These efforts are designed to build the capacity of principals and PAC members in inclusive decision-making and leadership centered on access and opportunity. During the past 30 days, the district successfully ensured that 100% of schools secured a full slate of PAC candidates by the September 5 deadline. Over 800 parents/guardians and teachers declared candidacy for the elections held from September 17 to 24. Congratulations to all newly elected PAC members!

Executive Director Sarita Smith

Student Assignment

September marked the official launch of our programs and activities. We initiated SAP committee meetings, supported IT in tracking school seat availability, hosted onboarding and training sessions for the new lottery systems and began school visits.

SAP is off to a strong start, and we plan to develop as many of our preliminary recommendations as possible by January. During a recent recap meeting, we reviewed proposed changes, shared the

updated timeline with its rationale, outlined the data provided to the committee, and reaffirmed our charge moving forward. At the next meeting, the committee conducted a thorough review of program placement within DCSD. The overwhelming consensus was that programs should be housed in neighborhood schools. In October, the committee will review all programs that fall outside of this guidance and determine whether criteria exist to justify placement in a separate facility.

We are also excited to roll out our new school choice software, **SchoolMint**, on October 1. Throughout September, our team dedicated significant time to training on the platform, collaborating with IT to import and export data, defining data fields, and ensuring system connectivity. Multiple applications and parent scenarios were tested in the sandbox environment to ensure a smooth launch. The new system will provide families with a more streamlined and user-friendly application experience.

Communication and engagement remain central to our work. We have made extensive efforts to share the outcomes of each SAP meeting broadly, with targeted outreach to PACs, PTAs, school leaders, faith-based organizations, community centers, and historically marginalized families.

In addition, the Student Assignment team has begun conducting school visits, and the SAP team will expand this effort in October to include schools where SAP meeting outcomes, scenarios, or recommendations could have a direct impact.

Director Dr. Char-Shenda Covington

Student Assignment

In September, the Student Assignment team undertook a strategic transition from our previous vendor to a more user-friendly platform, informed by feedback from a diverse array of stakeholders—a commitment to accessibility, operational efficiency, and responsiveness to stakeholders guided this shift. To ensure a seamless rollout, the Collaboration Team, comprised of Student Assignment, IT, and vendor representatives, met multiple times each week to address technical integration, user experience, and communication protocols. This cross-functional coordination enabled us to anticipate challenges and proactively support families and staff during the transition. In parallel, we produced six targeted commercials to highlight the district's diverse program offerings, reinforcing our commitment to informed school choice and equitable access.

September also marked the successful hosting of our 2nd Annual School Expo, a cornerstone event designed to engage families, showcase district programs, and foster community connection. Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, affirming the value of the event in promoting transparency and choice. However, several areas for improvement were identified, particularly around communication and accessibility. Not all stakeholders were aware of the availability of interpreters, nor were hard copies of maps and school locators readily accessible to all. Additionally, the need for advanced registration options was noted. In response, the Student Assignment team is implementing enhanced communication strategies to overcommunicate key supports, ensure equitable access to materials, and streamline registration processes—demonstrating our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement and stakeholder-centered

service delivery.

Interim Executive Director Dr. Latashia Searcy

Student Mentorship & Partnerships

FACE Advocates

FACE Advocates continue to receive weekly support visits from the SMP team, with a focus on collecting data on mentees in the areas of behavior, attendance, and grades. Each day, FACE Advocates remain committed to helping their mentees “secure the bag” by providing consistent guidance and support.

During the September PLO, FACE Advocates participated in two professional learning opportunities. The first session, *Practical Ways to Press Reset in the Moment Using SEL Strategies to Help Students and Teachers*, was facilitated by Mrs. Kimberly Sampson, Professional Learning Facilitator, and provided practical strategies for using SEL to support both students and teachers. Additionally, FACE Advocates received training on the new Domo Dashboard, led by Dr. Kirsten King-Fulton from the Accountability Department, which consolidates data into a single platform, enabling them to monitor mentee progress more effectively.



We are also excited to announce the kickoff of our first Facetime Activity for the 2025-2026 school year, in partnership with Strategic Media Enterprises, and in collaboration with SWD HS and Lithonia HS. Through this initiative, students will gain hands-on exposure to various career pathways, including acting/auditioning, filming, photography, engineering/editing, podcasting, casting, directing, scriptwriting, hair and makeup, music production, and more.

MBK/OSK

In the SMP department, we are guided by the words of John Ship: “Every child is one caring adult away from being a success story.”

We are excited to share that the number of MBK/OSK chapters has grown for the 2025-2026 school year. The number of elementary chapters increased from 26 to 44, middle school chapters from 17 to 20, and high school chapters from 18 to 25. This expansion creates more opportunities for underrepresented students to engage in meaningful mentoring experiences.



Leader in Me

Leader in Me schools are working to complete the MRA, which provides critical stakeholder input and serves as a key data source in



setting this year's goals for our *LiM* schools. We are finalizing preparations for the October 8th new staff training on the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Dr. Cunningham attended the School Expo held at College Park Elementary and looks forward to using the insight gained from the session to collaborate with our *LiM* teams and in preparation for the Dunwoody Elementary Expo to be held later this Fall.

Chief Dr. Candace Alexander

Accountability and Research

Portrait of a Graduate Academic Walks

In September, we continued our weekly Portrait of a Graduate Academic Walks, visiting additional schools across the district. Each visit allowed us to observe classrooms through our established look-fors — from clear learning goals and student tasks to evidence of learning, discourse, and classroom culture. These visits continue to affirm the strength of our teaching force and highlight opportunities where additional support can make a difference. Each week strengthens our alignment among instruction, accountability, and professional learning, ensuring that every student has access to rigorous and engaging instruction.



Accountability Clinic

This month, our division hosted an Accountability Clinic to equip school leaders with tools and strategies to monitor progress and take timely action. Principals and instructional leaders engaged in collaborative data analysis, scenario planning, and peer coaching designed to translate data into next steps. These sessions help build confidence and capacity at the school level, ensuring a proactive approach to problem-solving throughout the year.

Employee of the Year Recognition — Mr. Joseph Benford

September was also a time to celebrate our own. Mr. Joseph Benford, Coordinator II in Research, Data, and Evaluation, was recognized as Employee of the Year. His leadership has strengthened our data systems, improved evaluation processes, and supported accountability efforts across the district. His dedication and integrity embody the values we strive to uphold as a division.

Annual Title I, Part A Conference: Excellence Reimagined

I had the privilege of attending the Title I Conference in support of our Federal Programs team. This event highlighted best practices in Title I implementation, celebrated strong family and community engagement, and reinforced our commitment to equity. It was inspiring to see the work happening in our schools to ensure that resources are used effectively to meet the needs of all students.

Reality Checks

This month also included Reality Check sessions, which provided opportunities for school teams

and central office leaders to step back, reflect on progress, and address obstacles. These candid conversations are essential to staying focused, refining our approach, and maintaining momentum toward our district goals.



Pathway to Excellence Brick Wall Installation — Fernbank Science Center

The month also featured the Pathway to Excellence Brick Wall Installation Ceremony at Fernbank Science Center. This symbolic event recognized the contributions of stakeholders and partners whose support has laid the foundation for student success. Seeing the brick wall come to life was a powerful reminder of our shared commitment to building pathways of excellence for every scholar.

Saturday School Choice Fair

On Saturday, September 27, 2025, I had the privilege of joining families, educators, and community members at the annual DCSD School Expo. This vibrant event showcased the wide range of opportunities our district offers, including International Baccalaureate, Montessori, dual language immersion, and theme schools, while giving families the chance to connect directly with principals, teachers, and staff. The energy was inspiring as students and parents explored programs, enjoyed food and music, and engaged with Superintendent Dr. Devon Q. Horton and members of the Board of Education. The day underscored our commitment to choice, access, and opportunity and reinforced that at DCSD, every school is a great choice.



Press Conference & Recognition — Graduation Rates

September concluded with a district press conference to recognize our record-setting graduation rates publicly. This celebration honored the dedication of teachers, leaders, families, and students whose efforts made this achievement possible. Sharing this success with the community generated renewed energy to continue closing gaps and expanding opportunities for every student.

Executive Director Dr. Myisha Warren

Federal Programs

Annual Title I, Part A Conference: Excellence Reimagined

The Title I, Part A Annual Conference was held on September 10, 15, & 17, 2025, at Southwest DeKalb High School. Special thanks to Mr. Brandon Thompson, Principal, for hosting us again this year. The targeted audience for this year's conference was Principals, Bookkeepers, Academic Coaches, Parent Liaisons, Title I Facilitators, and other support staff.

The sessions were as follows:

General sessions:

- Are You Audit Ready? (*Federal Program Leadership Team*)
- Every Dollar, Every Student, Every Success (*Title I Staff*)
- Mission Possible: Coordinating Parent & Family Engagement for Optimal Impact (*Title I Staff – Parent Center Facilitators*)

Breakout choice sessions:

- Oh, the Places You Can Go: Professional Learning Travel (*Title I Staff*)
- Level Up Your Learning (*Title I Staff*)
- Pathways to Professional Growth: A Strategic Approach to Job-Embedded Learning Opportunities (*Title I Staff*)
- Against All Odds: Using Data-Driven Instruction to Enhance Student Achievement (*Robert Shaw ES, FY24 Title I, Part A National Distinguished School*)
- We can do WHAT with Title I Funds? Innovative Uses of Title I Funds to Support Strategic School Initiatives (*Curriculum & Instruction Music, Art, & Physical Education Coordinators*)
- Blow the Whistle: Leveraging Coaching Practices to Strengthen Teacher Capacity (*Curriculum & Instruction Academic Coach Coordinators*)

The three days were exciting and invigorating and participants left with a wealth of knowledge and resources to support student achievement. This was evident in the positive feedback responses.

We are excited to see the implementation in FY26 and beyond.

Parent & Family Engagement (PFE)

Title I Fall 2025 Parent & Family Engagement Workshop: "Leveling Up with Lexile"

On Saturday, September 13, 2025, the Title I Parent Center Facilitators presented an informative and collaborative workshop at Allgood Elementary School that was designed to empower parents and other stakeholders with information, strategies, tools, and resources to support their child's reading development and comprehension skills, by learning about Lexile Measures and Ranges of students. Additionally, how to track a scholar's college and career readiness using the standardized data on the MAP Student Progress Report, the Georgia Milestones Individual Student Report, and the GADOE/DCSD Stretch Lexile Bands. Soar with SORA was also presented as a literacy and reading resource for DCSD students, which may be used at home and at school.

Approximately 65 parents and stakeholders were in attendance. Positive feedback was received from participants!

This event was jointly developed with Curriculum and Instruction ELA and Education Media departments.

Books were donated by Scholastic, Inc.

Title I & Title II Updates

Coordinators, Accounting Associates, and Budget Specialists continues to work with schools to:

- Close open purchase orders
- Process summer travel reimbursements
- Provide ongoing training and technical assistance

Director Dr. Felicia Rhone

Assessment and Accountability

NWEA MAP Growth

During the Fall window from August 11–22, students in grades K–10 participated in assessment administration. Reading assessments (K–10) included 48,453 participants, Math assessments (K–10) included 49,004 participants, Language Usage assessments (grades 3–10) included 32,459 participants, and Science assessments (grades 3–8) included 23,572 participants.

NWEA support personnel are actively working to ensure the programs filter is available in MAP, allowing administrators to analyze data to support special populations more effectively.

On August 29th, a MAP Growth session was held for new school leaders, with 25 participants including new assistant principals, school testing coordinators, and principals. Additionally, coordination of MAP Growth support was provided from September 2–5, 2025, to assist schools in integrating MAP Growth data into their school improvement plans. Participants in this session learned how to apply MAP Growth data to identify priorities, monitor progress, and strengthen continuous school improvement planning. Attendance was mandatory for school principals, along

with two additional support personnel from each building.

MAP Growth to Support School Improvement Plans

- **Sept. 2nd** | 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM | Area 1 Elementary School Leaders
- **Sept. 2nd** | 12:30 PM – 3:30 PM | Area 2 Elementary School Leaders
- **Sept. 3rd** | 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM | Area 3 Elementary School Leaders
- **Sept. 3rd** | 12:30 PM – 3:30 PM | Middle School Leaders
- **Sept. 4th** | 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM | High School Leaders
- **Sept. 4th** | 12:30 PM – 3:30 PM | Horizon School Leaders
- **Sept. 5th** | 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM | Specialty School Leaders
- **Sept. 5th** | 12:30 PM – 3:30 PM | District Level Leaders

Georgia Milestones EOC September Mid-Months

The Fall 2025 GMAS EOC MMs window opened on Monday, September 15. During the September week of the administration, students had the opportunity to clear grades of Incomplete, Test Out of Algebra C&C, Biology, or U.S. History, or retest in the EOC subjects. STCs were reminded that a test out opportunity for American Literature is no longer available due to the phasing out of the test associated with that class. Students who need an American Lit test must test no later than November 2025, the last time that test will be offered. The new test for ELA, Literature & Composition II, will have a Test Out opportunity starting in March 2026.

In addition to the 713 sessions scheduled in August, 600 sessions were scheduled in September across the high schools in the district. A total of 1,313 sessions have been planned so far for mid-months. 902 of those sessions have been completed. The next mid-month administration will be October 6-10, 2025.

WIDA ACCESS for ELL and WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELL

The WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS administration window will open on January 7, 2026, and close on February 27, 2026. School Test Coordinators will be trained on Tuesday, November 18, 2025. The revised Kindergarten WIDA ACCESS training module becomes available in the WIDA Secure portal on September 29, 2025. School test coordinators, EL teachers, and test examiners will begin to complete the required WIDA ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS training modules upon availability.

PSAT 8/9 and PSAT/NMSQT

The PSAT 8/9 is scheduled for administration on October 8 to all 8th grade students in the district. 6th and 7th grade students have the opportunity to submit payment to take the test. Dr. S. McTier led a virtual preview workshop with all STCs on August 26.

The PSAT/NMSQT is scheduled for administration on October 8 to all 10th grade students in the district. 9th and 11th grade students have the opportunity to submit payment to take the test. STCs were to attend a webinar training with College Board on August 28.

Dr. McTier and Mrs. Wright held a follow up pre-administration training on September 18 to ensure STCs have been adequately prepared. At this time, STCs should have ordered any additional needed tests for grade 6, 7, 9, and 11 and began the process of validating and registering students.

AMIRA Assess

The district Amira window closed on September 12. There are 25,876 K-3 students.

- 25,015 – Completed Amira Assess online
- 163 – Completed the paper/pencil version
- 182 – Students were in progress and needed to complete testing
- 33 – Students need to be reassessed
- 460 students had not been assessed for various reasons

Students with special needs that are beyond the scope of the assessment and could not complete the test. These students have IEPs that recognize them as MOID or SID/PID and are often non-verbal. These students were offered the paper/pencil alternate but still could not complete the test.

82 Students who did not test due to other issues (no teacher, new student, not in the system, chronic absenteeism) have been told to assess.

Although the district window is closed, students are still expected to complete Amira Assess. Unlike other state-mandated assessments, House Bill 307 is designed to identify and support students at risk of not achieving grade-level reading proficiency or showing characteristics of dyslexia. Timely and complete assessment is critical to ensure early intervention and support.

Amira ISIP Data Training for Building Administrators – Julie Robinson, Amira Professional Learning Facilitator, showed all building administrators how to access their data, and what reports are most valuable now that the test has been administered.

3 sessions were held:

- Tuesday, September 23 from 10:30 - 11:30
- Tuesday, September 23 from 1:00 - 2:00
- Wednesday, September 24 from 9:00 - 10:00

Eighty (81) administrators attended the virtual sessions. Unfortunately, due to internet outages, some administrators could not participate in the Wednesday, September 24th session. To assist with this, Julie will share a recorded session with us to share with those who were unable to attend.

District Benchmarks

High schools operating on a block schedule administered district benchmark assessments from September 2–12, 2025. Student participation varied based on course enrollment. The performance data is as follows:

- **Literature & Composition (Multiple Choice):** 1,072 students assessed
- **Literature & Composition (Constructed Response):** 1,418 students assessed
- **U.S. History:** 1,276 students assessed
- **Algebra C&C:** 814 students assessed

The traditional schedule benchmark window is scheduled for September 29–October 10, 2025.

To support School Test Coordinators, the Assessment Administration Department and Renaissance Learning hosted virtual professional learning sessions titled:

- Getting Started with DnA
- Online Assessment Administration and Reports

These sessions were designed for both new and returning STCs and covered:

- Building item banks and flexible assessments
- Sharing district benchmark assessments
- Setting up and monitoring online test administrations
- Analyzing data using Benchmark Participation Reports

Additional training will be scheduled in October to support Academic Coaches, Teachers, and Administrators with developing assessments (CFAs) and analyzing reports.

Director Dr. Rebecca Braaten

Research, Data, and Evaluation

Accountability Clinic

At the September Accountability Clinic, the following topics were shared by RDE:

- How to download 2025 assessment data from the SLDS platform
- Update on 2025 CCRPI scores
- 2026 CCRPI changes based on policy implications
- 2023 and 2024 Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) cut scores
- 2026 Full Academy Year calculations
- Introduction to Infinite Campus Analytics and Custom Data Visualization dashboard location

Research Review Board

The department processed ten (10) research applications during the fall research cycle. Of the ten (10); five (5) were for doctoral dissertation studies, four (4) were external agency studies, and one (1) was a local school study. Four (4) of the studies submitted MOUs.

The Research Review Board (RRB) met on Friday, September 19, 2025, to discuss the review findings of the ten (10) applications/proposals. Of the ten (10), four (4) were approved, one (1) was approved by the school's principal (local school study), and five (5) are still under review. The pending proposals require additional information from the prospective researchers in response to questions from the RRB.

Reality Checks

In September, Reality Checks were facilitated for all Horizon elementary, middle, and high schools. Additionally, Reality Checks were held for Area Middle, Area High, Area 1, and Area 2.

Surveys and Online Forms

The department processed twenty-three (23) electronic online document requests during September. Of those twenty-three (23), nine (9) were Grow by Level Data observation forms, seven (7) were online registration/application forms, six (6) were an event/training feedback survey, and one (1) was a stakeholder survey. The electronic online documents were requested by the following divisions/departments:

- Access & Opportunity (Athletics)
- Accountability & Research (Federal Programs)
- Community Engagement & Innovative Partnerships
- Curriculum & Instruction
- Legal Services
- Schools & Leadership (Professional Development)
- Wrap Around Services

Data Requests

During September, the department completed twenty-four (24) data and dashboard projects supporting both internal and external stakeholders. These projects encompass a diverse range of data types, including attendance, discipline, student demographics, academic performance, and assessments at local, state, and national levels.

In September, interactive dashboards were developed and deployed to Curriculum and Instruction to evaluate student progress on the 2024–2025 Georgia Milestones assessment.

Interim Chief Penny Mosley

Curriculum and Instruction

Portrait of Graduate Walks



The Portrait of a Graduate Walks highlighted the exceptional work of our teachers and students across DeKalb. Classrooms were alive with evidence of the six graduate competencies—communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, cultural awareness, and character—woven into daily instruction. Teachers demonstrated intentional planning and rigorous engagement strategies that gave students meaningful opportunities to apply their learning in authentic ways. These walks not only celebrated the excellence already present in our schools but also reinforced our shared commitment to preparing every DeKalb graduate to thrive through the 4Es—enrollment, enlistment, entrepreneurship, and employment.

DeKalb Chamber of Commerce

On September 10, 2025, Dr. Penny Mosley, Interim Chief Academic Officer, represented DeKalb County School District as a panelist at the DeKalb State of Education & Workforce Development event hosted by the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce. The gathering brought together leaders from business, education, and government to explore how classrooms can be more closely connected to careers and the evolving workforce. During the panel discussion, *Bridging Education and Industry*, Dr. Mosley highlighted DCSD's efforts to equip students with the skills outlined in the Portrait of a Graduate, emphasizing the importance of academic rigor, career readiness pathways, and strong partnerships with industry leaders. The event highlighted a shared commitment across sectors to ensure that every student is prepared to thrive beyond graduation while contributing to the economic vitality of DeKalb County.

Superintendent's Staff Advisory Council

On September 17, 2025, Dr. Penny Mosley participated in the Superintendent's Staff Advisory

Council, serving as a panelist to address key questions on curriculum and instruction. Dr. Mosley provided insight into three critical areas: strategies to raise student interest in reading and strengthen literacy outcomes while engaging families as role models; approaches to balance teacher autonomy with curriculum guidance while ensuring professional learning is hands-on, relevant, and effective; and the district's plan for curriculum and technology resources, including BrainPOP, IXL, and science of reading training, to support high-quality instruction. This engagement offered an opportunity to share the Division of Curriculum and Instruction's priorities directly with staff representatives, reinforcing transparency and collaboration in advancing student achievement.

Reality Checks

Reality Checks began in September and will continue throughout October, providing schools an opportunity to reflect, share strategies, and plan next steps. Discussions centered on key areas including attendance, discipline, gifted education, MAP growth (reading and math), Amira, 95 Core Phonics, and math data. As a result of these sessions, Curriculum & Instruction (C&I) and Schools & Leadership are collaborating to provide additional literacy support for elementary Horizon teachers. Schools also benefited from exchanging effective practices with peers and receiving valuable feedback from division leaders and their teams.

Looking ahead, we are excited to partner with schools on collaborative Tier 1 instruction and resource adoption walkthroughs to strengthen instructional outcomes and student success.

Early Intervention Program (EIP)

During the month of September, schools across DeKalb County School District completed the process of identifying students eligible for the Early Intervention Program (EIP) using multiple sources of data. Principals and instructional teams notified parents of eligibility decisions and began providing services to address instructional gaps in reading and mathematics. Schools selected from the four approved EIP models—Augmented, Self-Contained, Pull-Out, or Innovative—to best meet the needs of their student populations. By initiating services early in the school year and aligning interventions with state and district expectations, schools are ensuring that students receive targeted support with fidelity. Coordinators continue to provide professional learning and ongoing guidance to help teachers implement effective practices, reinforcing the district's commitment to closing achievement gaps and accelerating student learning.

Deputy Chief Dr. Sean R. Tartt

Curriculum and Instruction

Academic Coaches

September was a month of clarity and collaboration as the Academic Coach Senior Coordinators deepened support for coaches and schools while reinforcing the systems that drive instructional improvement. We observed growing fidelity with the PLC framework across schools, as academic coaches continued to anchor their work in consistent structures for collaboration and data-driven planning. Based on these findings, we are considering the inclusion of Professional Learning

Facilitators in future Collaborative Learning Sessions to further clarify the distinct role of the coach in PLCs and to strengthen understanding of how PLCs differ from collaborative planning. These efforts reflect our commitment to building coherence and ensuring that coaches are equipped to lead sustainable instructional conversations.

The team also expanded its visibility and impact through professional learning opportunities across the district. A major highlight was presenting at the Title I Conference hosted at Southwest DeKalb High School, where we provided principals with clarity around the expectations of the academic coach. Each principal left with a copy of the DCSD Coaching Playbook, reinforcing alignment across schools. In addition, we continued onboarding new academic coaches, equipping them with the tools and support necessary to begin their roles successfully. Ongoing school visits allowed ACSCs to provide differentiated, on-site support, ensuring that coaches remain confident in their responsibilities and consistent in applying the district's vision for coaching.

Instructional priorities also advanced meaningfully this month. Team members engaged in STEM walks, while also collaborating with area leaders during Reality Checks. The team reviewed K–12 ELA benchmarks, previewed Module 2 of the ELA curriculum, and met with the ELA Senior Coordinator and the Director of Literacy to examine improvements made to the modules. This ensured that feedback from the field continues to inform district-level decision-making. Together, these efforts reflect our unwavering commitment to equipping academic coaches to support teachers, foster high-quality instruction, and sustain a culture of continuous improvement.

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	12	0	12
Area Elementary 2	16	0	7
Area Elementary 3	14	2	5
Area Middle Schools	43	3	23
Area High Schools	29	5	20
Area Horizon	66	4	41
Area Specialty	9	1	7
Totals	189	15	108

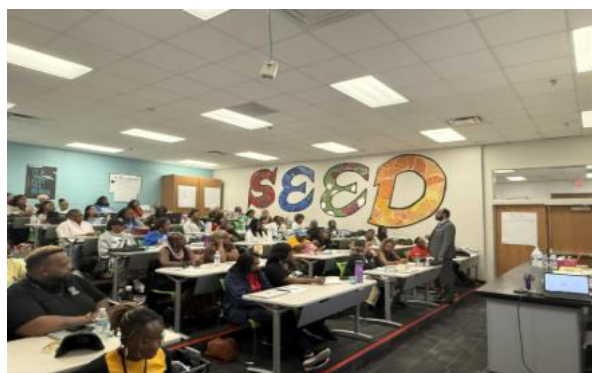
DCSD Coach Up

We are excited to prepare for the launch of the new DCSD Coach Up Pipeline! This coaching pipeline is for teacher leaders who want to learn how to effectively coach, mentor, and support teachers toward improved outcomes. Teacher leaders who are selected will participate in a yearlong extensive professional development that will teach the art of coaching. Participants will learn how to effectively read and review data, support teachers in real time, provide palatable coaching feedback, and increase the overall productivity of staff.

The cross-collaborative team will meet during the week of September 9 through October 3 to plan the content and modality of the program. The ultimate goal is for teachers to be better prepared to serve as an academic coach and experience a greater level of success with supporting staff upon initial entry into the role.

Academic Skills Centers

In September, staff from all 23 Academic Skill Center (ASC) sites participated in annual training sessions held on September 19 and 26. In collaboration with Imagine Learning, the Division of Curriculum and Instruction provided targeted support for ASC staff. The first session focused on ASC expectations, scheduling guidelines, and the overall purpose of this academic support. The second session emphasized practical application, including logging in, grouping students, pulling reports, and strategies for enhancing student learning. Across both sessions, participants were actively engaged, posed thoughtful questions, and provided valuable feedback.



Student Success Skills Backpack

We are excited to launch the second cohort of elementary, middle, and high schools participating in the Student Success Skills Backpack (SSSB) initiative bringing the total to more than 40 schools engaged in this important work! In September, three virtual principal support sessions were held on September 23 and 25, facilitated by Senior Graduation Innovation Coordinator Curry and Deputy Chief Tartt. During these sessions, cohort two principals gained a deeper understanding of the SSSB initiative and heard valuable insights from cohort one about their experiences and lessons learned.

Looking ahead, we are preparing for the October 9, 2025, session, where all site teams will gather at AIC for in-depth work sessions. This convening will focus on aligning efforts with the district's Portrait of a Graduate through the lens of the Student Success Skills Backpack, ensuring every school is equipped to support student growth and success.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Rose Prejean-Harris

6-12

The Curriculum and Instruction team continues to work with our area office to provide continuous training and support for our secondary school leaders and teachers. Each team has identified

three major focus areas for the year:

- ELA- New Standards Training, Text Domain (emphasis on Multimodal text), and Practices Domain
- Math- Instructional Learning Plans (ILPs), Academic Discourse, and Mathematical Modeling (Secondary)
- Science- Three-Dimensional Science Classrooms, Science and Engineering Practices, and Sensemaking Tools
- Social Studies- Literacy as a Gateway to Inquiry, Knowledge Building through Disciplinary Literacy, and Communicating Understanding with Civic Purpose
- Health and Physical Education- Active Engagement and Movement Opportunities, Skill Progression with Modeling, and Critical Thinking and Decision-Making
- Fine Arts- Monitoring for Student Mastery, Creation and Design of Pre and Post Assessments, and Closing of Lessons with Checks for Understanding
- Music- Music Literacy, Creative Thinking, and Coherence and Continuity of Music Programs
- World Languages- Implement ACTFL's Guiding Principles in Instructional Practices, Development of Meaningful Task, and Effective Feedback for Student Language Growth

With this targeted focus, the teams are helping to advance literacy and numeracy strategies in alignment with our strategic plan goals.

Acceleration Academies

DeKalb Acceleration Academy's Tucker site is now open, generating excitement among students, with a ribbon-cutting event scheduled for Monday, September 22, 2025, attended by AA Network Executives and DeKalb County Schools' Administration. Coaching efforts have focused on maintaining core academy structures during a leadership transition, while also developing strategic skills in the interim director. As of September 29, enrollment stands at 162 GCs, with 13 scheduled and 27 awaiting orientation, plus 150 in the pipeline and 73 applications in progress. Academically, 51 courses have been completed toward a September goal of 85, and since January, 315 courses totaling 157 credits have been earned. The team has also welcomed a new Math teacher and a School Counselor!

Director Dr. Lynn Angus Ramos

Literacy

Curriculum Updates

The 2025-26 school year is the implementation year for the new Georgia English Language Arts (ELA) standards. As the first nine weeks ended, C&I reviewed feedback from classroom teachers and worked to revise Module 2 for grades K-8 and Module 3 for high school. The writing team worked in person on a Saturday to ensure consistency and clarity in the revision goals.

Additionally, clarity was added around writing instruction and writing tasks. The DCSD Benchmarks were written in-house by the C&I team this year, and efforts were made to align the test design to the Georgia Milestones EOG and EOC when possible, including an Interpreting and Constructing Texts (ICT) writing task. Professional learning for Lead Teachers of Special Education (LTSE), MTSS coordinators, Academic Coaches, teachers, and administrators is underway as well.





Great News!

Our instructional module "Weekly Planners" have been refreshed to better support you and your students.

Expectations Overview	Improved look to the standards-expectations overview page
Clear Expectations	Expectations listed with guidance and bundled when appropriate.
Page Numbers	TE (Teacher Edition) and SE (Student Edition) page numbers are listed with guidance.
Teaching & Learning Frames:	Lessons are framed around a simple, consistent structure. → (Structure the Text(s)) → Engage with Text(s) → Construct to Apply Learning
Daily Snapshot (K-5)	A quick summary of each day's teaching and learning is highlighted in the upper right corner.
Step-by-Step Guidance	Instruction moves in a logical, teacher-friendly sequence daily.
Easy Activity Key	Tier 1 Resource → added to extend and deepen mastery of the expectation(s) → added to extend mastery with constructing texts
Writing Every Week	Each grade now has weekly writing tasks connected to the GAAS three writing traits.
Helpful GoDOE Links	Direct connections to GoDOE resources for quick access.

Literacy Updates

The district has officially launched implementation of the 95 Phonics Core Program to strengthen foundational literacy instruction across DCSD elementary schools. Monthly training sessions for Area Coordinators have begun to ensure consistent support and alignment. In partnership with Metro-RESA through the Let's Read, Georgia initiative, implementation walks have started in 16 elementary schools to observe and support classroom practices. These walks utilize a walkthrough tool housed in the Grow platform, allowing for structured data collection. The district will review walkthrough data regularly with Metro-RESA to guide instructional decisions and professional learning. This collaborative effort reflects our commitment to high-quality literacy instruction and continuous improvement.



As part of our ongoing commitment to literacy, the district is collaborating across divisions to share evidence-based strategies that support all learners. Two groups of teachers, coaches, and coordinators recently presented at the DCSD English Learners Conference, focusing on how to scaffold and support EL students using Tier I curriculum and resources. Another group of educators led a Title I parent session, highlighting the power of read-alouds and introducing SORA, a



free online platform available through the DeKalb Public Library for accessing audiobooks. Parents learned how to ask meaningful questions during reading to build comprehension and engagement. These efforts reflect our belief that literacy is a shared responsibility between schools, families, and communities.

Director Lummie Baker

Educational Media and Instructional Materials

DeKalb County Public Library (DCPL) Library Card Sign-up Month

During the month of September, school library media centers around the district, in partnership with the DeKalb County Public Library, provided students and their families with the opportunity to sign up for a library card and take advantage of the free and reduced-price resources offered by DCPL. Library card month ends on September 30th but DeKalb County residents, DCSD employees and students can register at any time at their local branch.

Expanding Instruction with Digital Resources

On September 9th, Health and Physical Education (HPE) teachers across the DeKalb County School District (DCSD) participated in a dynamic virtual professional learning session focused on enhancing instruction through digital tools. Hosted by the Educational Media coordinators in collaboration with HPE Coordinator Charlcye Henderson, the session introduced educators to a suite of digital resources designed to enrich classroom experiences and support student learning.

Teachers explored platforms such as PebbleGo, PBS Learning for Teachers, Britannica ImageQuest, and GALE, gaining insights into how each tool can be leveraged to support standards-based instruction, student engagement, and differentiated learning. The session emphasized practical applications and encouraged educators to integrate these resources into their daily teaching practices to foster deeper learning and digital literacy.

Teacher-Librarian Beginning of the Year Meeting and Vendor Fair

Teacher-Librarians (TLs) attended an in-person Beginning of the Year Meeting hosted by the Department of Educational Media at the AIC on September 12, 2025. The purpose of the meeting was to kick off the 2025-2026 school year. During the session, TLs reviewed and discussed school library programming initiatives, key updates, and explored resources to support the school library media program's space, resources, and services. The meeting also provided an opportunity for collaboration, sharing best practices, and aligning efforts to ensure that students and staff have access to high-quality instructional support and learning resources throughout the year.

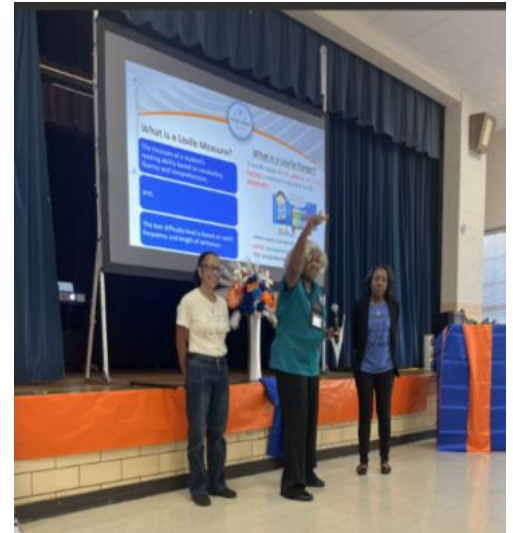
Following the professional learning sessions, the TLs participated in the annual Vendor Fair. This year's theme was *Beyond the Bookshelf: Tools, Text, and Tech*. The purpose of the vendor fair is to connect TLs with educational resource vendors, extend professional learning opportunities, and provide peer networking to enhance school library programming, digital literacy, and instructional support across the district. The vendors included the Family Engagement Department, allowing TLs access to the mobile impact hub; Fernbank Science Center; the DeKalb County Public Library; OverDrive/Sora, Beanstack, and many others.

Leveling Up with Lexiles

On Saturday, September 13th, the Title I Parent and Family Engagement (PFE) event, *“Leveling Up with Lexile”* was hosted at Allgood ES. This event brought parents, community stakeholders, and educators together to focus on the importance of literacy and understanding Lexile measures.

Teacher-Librarians Connie Dowdy (Freedom Middle School) and Hillary Harris Wimes (Wadsworth Magnet) led engaging sessions that demystified Lexile scores and highlighted how families can support literacy development at home. A key feature of the event was their OverDrive/Sora resource presentations, which introduced families to the district’s digital reading platform that is also connected to thousands of digital resources available through the DeKalb County Public Library. Attendees learned how to access audiobooks and eBooks, how to use read-aloud strategies, and how to utilize questioning techniques to build comprehension and foster a love of reading.

This event underscored DCSD’s commitment to literacy as a shared responsibility between schools, families, and the community.



Director Doryiane Gunter

Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE)

Arabia Mountain High School Students Recognized by Georgia Public Broadcasting

Two Arabia Mountain AV/TV Film students recently had their article and video package published by Georgia Public Broadcasting! The article engages readers and viewers in the students’ perspective of the district’s recent Disconnect to Connect initiative. Click the link to read the article and see the video: <https://bit.ly/4nnPDEx>.

AV/TV Film Pathway Students Attend Film Festival

On Thursday, September 25th, 135 students from 15 high school AVT&F programs attended the Morehouse College Human Rights Film Festival. Students took part in a panel discussion featuring independent filmmaker, Christian Nolan Jones, a DeKalb County graduate. This opportunity in collaboration with DeKalb Entertainment Commission is one of the first pieces of preparation for our DCSD Student Film Festival.

STEM/STEAM Professional Learning

Our STEM/STEAM department continues to engage in new learning opportunities for teachers and leaders to collaborate with DCSD departments to improve instruction and expose students to hands-on-learning experiences. On September 18th STE(A)M leaders participated in the first

STE(A)M Lab with the DCSD Sustainability Team. Teachers were introduced to unique opportunities to support introducing Sustainability into their classrooms and schools.

Director Vacant

K-12 Teaching and Learning

Mathematics Professional Learning and Planning

This month, professional learning and planning efforts in mathematics focused on strengthening instruction, supporting diverse learners, and building leadership capacity through cross-divisional collaboration. Lead Teachers of Special Education (LTSE) engaged in sessions that addressed overlaying accommodations and modifications to ensure student success in mathematics, while academic coaches participated in *The Coaching Edge: Turning the Math Playbook into Wins*, sharpening their ability to guide teachers and use data to drive instructional improvements. At the elementary level, teachers explored the effective implementation of number routines to build a strong foundation in numeracy. In addition, educators engaged in targeted planning sessions and pilot initiatives, including geometry support at Stephenson High School and math tools pilots at Tucker and Stone Mountain Middle Schools. Collectively, these professional learning experiences provided practical strategies and resources to enhance mathematics teaching and learning across the district.

Science Professional Learning and Planning

Middle school science teachers participated in a professional learning session on September 25 at Southwest DeKalb High School as part of the Accelerate8 Initiative, which is designed to expand opportunities for course acceleration in middle school by preparing educators to teach high school-level physical science content in grade 8. During the session, teachers engaged in professional conversations around instructional strategies and conceptual understanding, designed and utilized scientific models to explore real-world phenomena, and connected learning activities to the competencies assessed on the 6–12 Broad Field Science Certification Test. These experiences deepened teachers' content knowledge, strengthened their capacity to implement three-dimensional science learning aligned with the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE), and reinforced effective pedagogical approaches. By preparing for certification, participating teachers are positioned to gain credentials that allow them to teach high school-level physical science in grade 8, directly advancing the Accelerate8 Initiative's goal of increasing early access to advanced science coursework.

Schools Earn Ability to Offer International Skills Diploma Seals

Cross Keys High School and Southwest DeKalb High School have been approved to offer the International Skills Diploma Seal (ISDS), joining Druid Hills High School and Martin Luther King Jr. High School. The ISDS, awarded by the Georgia Department of Education, recognizes graduating seniors who complete internationally focused coursework, participate in global activities, and demonstrate readiness to engage in a diverse, interconnected world. With four schools now offering the ISDS, DeKalb students have expanded opportunities to be recognized for their multilingual abilities, intercultural skills, and global leadership.

World Language Professional Learning

World Languages teachers participated in online professional learning sessions focused on boosting student output through success criteria. Separate sessions were held for elementary, middle, and high school teachers, where participants learned how to break down learning targets into scaffolded success criteria tailored to their students' needs. This work supports the ultimate goal of increasing language proficiency by providing students with clear steps for success and more opportunities to demonstrate growth in the target language. The session recording is now available as part of the district's growing library of professional learning videos.

Collaboration in Action

On September 9, 15, and 17, 2025, our Fine Arts, Health & PE, World Languages, International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement, Science, and Social Studies Coordinators presented *"What Can We Do with Title I Funds? Innovative Uses of Title I Funds to Support Strategic School Initiatives"* during the Title I conference. Our team shared creative and compliant ways to leverage Title I funds beyond traditional academic resources. We showcased how federal funding can support fine arts, world languages, health, PE, and advanced academic pathways to enhance core instruction in math, science, social studies, and ELA. Sample CSIP action steps and actionable strategies to enrich learning across the curriculum were provided to the participants.

Director Janetta Greenwood

Fernbank Science Center

Outreach and Single Visit Programs

In September, Fernbank Science Center successfully launched its single visit and outreach programs for the new school year, with strong participation across both planetarium and classroom experiences. Approximately 1,700 students visited the planetarium for engaging, curriculum-aligned shows, while another 380 students took part in single visits and 6,877 students participated in outreach programs that brought hands-on, standards-based science learning directly to classrooms.

Program Data - September

- Outreach Program Contacts: 6,877
- School Planetarium (# of students visited): 1,712
- Single Visits Contacts (to FSC or Community Partner Sites): 380

Scientific Tools & Techniques (STT) and Students of Advanced Research (SOAR)

On Wednesday, September 10th, STT students participated in a special Community Day as part of the Captain Planet Foundation's Green Heart Challenge. Students worked collaboratively to refine their project ideas, engage with community partners, and explore real-world environmental issues. The day emphasized problem-solving, teamwork, and authentic connections between classroom learning and community impact. By meeting with mentors and discussing local

challenges, students were able to deepen their understanding of sustainability while developing actionable solutions that will guide their ongoing Green Heart Challenge projects.

On Thursday, September 11th, Fernbank Science Center hosted an in-person STT Parent Open House, welcoming families to learn more about the program and meet instructors. The event provided an opportunity to share program goals, expectations, and highlights while also giving parents valuable insight into the experiences their students will have this year. In addition, information about the SOAR program was shared, generating significant interest and excitement from families eager to explore advanced opportunities for their students. Overall, the evening was a great success in strengthening parent engagement and building momentum for both STT and SOAR.

School Master Gardener Program

The second session of the School Master Gardener Program was held at Fernbank Science Center on September 26th, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., twenty teachers representing seven schools participated.

This session emphasized strategies for integrating weather and climate standards into garden-based lessons, conducting hands-on soil testing, and developing a school herbarium. Teachers received one of the program's core texts, *The Growing Classroom*, and will implement a weather-focused lesson from the book with their students before the next class meeting.

Participants also worked in the greenhouse to maintain their fall crops and took ready-to-plant seedlings back to their schools for student planting activities.

In addition, site visits were conducted with the participating schools to support planning for their capstone projects.

Community Engagement

Fall into STEM

On Saturday, September 13th Fernbank Science Center hosted **Fall into STEM**. 685 guests participated in this event. During the event, participants engaged in hands-on science and STEM activities focused on horticulture and seasonal change. Some of these activities included learning about carnivorous plants, creating seed spheres for planting, designing a one square foot garden plot, and analyzing seasonal animals. Participants had the opportunity to view free planetarium shows that focused on ecology, life in space, and seasons.

Cosmic Conversations

On Thursday, September 18th, Fernbank Science Center relaunched its *Cosmic Conversations* series, drawing strong community attendance and engagement. Guests enjoyed an evening of thought-provoking discussion with our featured speaker, paired with opportunities to explore the



Exhibit Hall and Observatory. The event provided an accessible platform for connecting the public with current topics in astronomy and space science, while also encouraging dialogue and curiosity. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many guests staying afterward for stargazing and the optional 8:00 PM planetarium show.

Planetarium Sound Bath

On Friday, September 19th, Fernbank Science Center hosted a Planetarium Sound Bath. The Sound Bath sold out in advance, reflecting the growing popularity of this unique program that blends science and wellness. Guests experienced a calming, meditative journey under the dome, accompanied by immersive 10K visuals and resonant live sound. In addition to the sound bath, attendees were able to enjoy free access to the Exhibit Hall and Observatory, extending the evening into both exploration and relaxation. This program continues to attract new audiences to Fernbank Science Center, offering a fresh way to connect the community with the planetarium, science engagement, and beyond.

DeKalb Schools Educational Foundation (DSEF) Pathway to Excellence Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

On Thursday, September 25th, Fernbank Science Center hosted the **DeKalb Schools Educational Foundation Pathway (DSEF) to Excellence Ribbon Cutting**. This event celebrated the installation and grand opening of a brick pathway that includes dozens of engraved bricks from generous donors to the DSEF. Guests listened to distinguished keynote speakers that focused on the pathway's commitment to providing access and opportunity for students across the district. The Pathway to Excellence is located at the front of Fernbank Science Center and navigates through the Fernbank Science Center Discovery Garden.

DCSD School Choice Fair

On Saturday, September 27th, Fernbank Science Center participated in the DCSD School Choice Fair to showcase our high school programs to prospective families. With the theme "Fernbank Science Center is WILD for Science," our team brought reptiles and animals that drew strong interest and created meaningful engagement with students and parents. Families were eager to learn more about our unique STEM opportunities, and the event served as an excellent platform for increasing awareness of Fernbank's programs while sparking excitement about science learning.

The NETwork ATL and YMCA 7th Annual eSTEAM Fair

On Saturday, September 27th, Fernbank Science Center participated in The NETwork ATL and YMCA 7th Annual eSTEAM Fair at the Arthur Blank YMCA. This event is designed to inspire families through hands-on science, technology, engineering, arts, and math experiences. Our team brought robots and interactive STEM activities that captured the curiosity of both students and parents, sparking meaningful conversations about science and education. The fair provided a valuable opportunity to extend Fernbank's outreach into the community, connect with new audiences, and reinforce our role as a district leader in innovative STEM learning.

Partnerships

Georgia Aquarium

During the month of September, schools began participating in Georgia Aquarium Partnership programs. 8 schools participated in the Aquanaut Express, Georgia Aquarium's mobile classroom. 11 outreach programs that reached 364 students were provided and 603 students attended instructor-led field trips at the Georgia Aquarium.

Ocean Guardian schools (6 schools in year 2 of implementation and 4 new schools in year 1) continued to receive support from the collaborative team of DCSD Science Coordinators, Fernbank Science Center Instructional Specialists, and the Georgia Aquarium. The visits included tailored support that assisted schools with ongoing or initial implementation, field trip identification and instructional guidance aligned to the individual school's NOAA Ocean Guardian program goals. Examples of the support that was provided include but are not limited to: planning a pollinator habitat garden, garden site mapping, and watershed instructional engagement and learning opportunities.

Director Monique Kimbell

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Professional Learning for MTSS Specialists

The Division of Curriculum and Instruction delivered a series of professional learning opportunities in September to strengthen the capacity of MTSS Specialists. The month began with the virtual session *"I Have Data, Now What?"* on September 8, which guided specialists in pulling data from benchmark reports, identifying lowest deficit skills, and conducting collaborative data digs using the reading tracker. Optional follow-up sessions extended this learning, providing additional support around analyzing benchmark data to identify students in need of intervention. Together, these efforts helped specialists build confidence in making informed instructional decisions that directly support student growth and ensure timely, targeted interventions.

Additional professional learning expanded throughout the week of September 11. Elementary MTSS staff participated in Pre-K Tiered Support training with Dr. Lindstrom and Dr. Rhodes, while secondary staff engaged in the Adolescent Literacy Academy with Dr. Lynn Angus Ramos. On September 12, nearly 60 specialists joined the New MTSS Academy session, which reinforced foundational learning and strengthened implementation practices. Collectively, these experiences deepened the capacity of MTSS teams to meet the diverse needs of students across grade levels and reinforced their critical role in advancing equitable access to learning.

Later in the month, during the week of September 22, MTSS Specialists participated in grade band meetings focused on state dyslexia reporting, development of behavior plans aligned with district templates, and use of the behavior tracker. Teams also conducted behavior data digs to ensure students requiring additional support received appropriate layered interventions. In addition, specialists reviewed the district's early warning indicators system and partnered with 504 contacts to confirm that students with 504 plans were receiving the necessary intervention supports. These

collaborative structures further strengthened MTSS implementation and advanced the district's vision of *Every Child. Every Tier. Every Day.*

Professional Learning for District Leaders

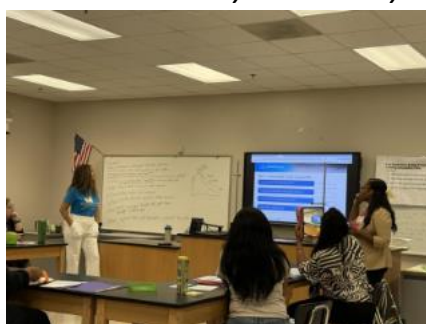
Professional learning sessions in September were strategically designed to build school-level capacity and strengthen leadership alignment around MTSS. On September 5, the team presented *Supporting Every Learner: English Language Learners in Georgia's MTSS Framework* at the DCSD ESOL Conference, providing leaders with tools to better support multilingual learners within a tiered system of supports. On September 18, middle school principals engaged in *MTSS Specialist Roles & Responsibilities by Tier*, a session that deepened their understanding of how specialists deliver instructional support at each intervention level. These opportunities built on earlier sessions in August, where principals and assistant principals received targeted training on HB 307 and Amira implementation, ensuring readiness for early literacy screening and compliance with state requirements. Collectively, these professional learning experiences equipped leaders with the knowledge and tools needed to monitor fidelity of MTSS implementation and guide their schools in aligning interventions with district expectations, reinforcing the district's commitment to equitable and effective support for every student.

Amira Implementation

To ensure the successful implementation of Amira, the Division of Curriculum and Instruction provided asynchronous Amira Academy modules to approximately 1,300 K–3 teachers. These modules prepared teachers for the first administration of the Amira ISIP assessment while also building familiarity with Amira Tutor. The Division also supported the completion of the BOY Amira Assess administration and offered two optional K–3 MTSS Specialist support sessions during the week of September 15. In addition, optional virtual Amira support sessions were made available to the MTSS team on September 15 and 17. These layered supports reinforce fidelity of implementation and position teachers and specialists to use data effectively in support of student achievement.

Leadership & School Support

In addition to training and professional learning, the Division of Curriculum and Instruction provided direct support to Tier 4 schools to strengthen MTSS implementation and promote equity in service delivery. These actions ensure that school leaders and teams are well-positioned to advance the district's commitment to equitable access and high levels of learning for all students, while also upholding the MTSS core beliefs of *Every Child. Every Tier. Every Day.*



Director Keatra Wright

FLEX Academy

Enrollment September 2025

In alignment with Goal Area I, Student Academic Success with Equity and Access, FLEX Academy continues to support Area High Schools and Area Horizon to deliver Innovative Educational Opportunities that empower students to earn credit toward graduation.

Session I of **FLEX Beyond the Day** has been successfully completed. This initiative provides extended learning opportunities beyond traditional school hours, supporting academic growth and enrichment.

We are excited to be currently assisting **274 seniors** with meeting graduation credit requirements, ensuring they stay on track for successful completion of high school.

Literacy Initiative

In alignment with our Literacy Initiative, FLEX Academy launched the **FLEX Virtual Book Club**, which meets weekly. Students select from **three distinct clubs** based on their interests and Lexile levels, fostering a love for reading and peer discussion in a virtual setting. Currently, there are 64 students led by three teachers.

Family and Student Engagement

On September 17th, FLEX Academy participated in an informative session for 10th and 11th grade parents at Tucker High School during Parent Night. The presentation highlighted FLEX's academic offerings, enrichment opportunities, and support systems designed to help students thrive in a flexible learning environment.

On September 27th, FLEX Academy actively engaged with families and community members to showcase our programs and answer questions about enrollment and student support during our School Expo.

Chief Dr. Kermit Belcher

Information and Instructional Technology

Executive Director Dr. Kyia Clark & Manager III Terri Webb

Information and Innovation & Instructional Technology

Introducing our DCSD ViewSonic Cohort: It's More Than a Board



With ViewSonic interactive boards in all of our DeKalb County School District's classrooms, it is imperative that we demonstrate to our teachers and students that these flat panels are more than just a board. On September 29th, 2025, Instructional Technology partnered with ViewSonic Education to launch our first DCSD ViewSonic Training Cohort. This cohort provides training to a select group of elementary, middle, and high school teachers throughout the district. This cohort is designed for teachers to gain professional development while building user fluency and enhancing the use of features that support accessibility and learning for all users. We are eager to collaborate with our educators while bridging the digital divide for our Digital Dreamers.

IGNITE U Professional Learning Series: Empowering DCSD Educators Through Technology



The IGNITE U Professional Learning Series has officially launched for our DCSD educators for the 2025-2026 school year. This professional learning series consists of personalized learning pathways that are associated with digital tools that are within our DCSD Ecosystem such as AI, Microsoft, Google Workspace, Canvas, Adobe Express, and Common-Sense Media. IGNITE U is designed to support educators in integrating meaningful technology into their instructional practices. Teachers are using IGNITE U to create and align their goals with the Georgia Teacher

Keys Effectiveness System which is used to evaluate teacher performance while promoting professional growth. The ultimate goal of this program is to equip our educators with learner-driven experiences that accommodate the various needs of our Digital Dreamers while promoting innovation across the classroom.

Director Eric Logan & Manager Dr. Shanique Worthey

Information and Network Security

Managed Detention and Response (MDR) Update

The project kickoff with the service provider was held on September 23rd to begin onboarding for transition to the new MDR service. Key areas of focus during this kickoff:

- Collect and review prerequisite items and requirements
- Review SOW, scope of work and timelines
- Identify resources on both sides who will work on the project
- Confirm prerequisites items and tasks requested

Following the project kickoff, a six-week project plan has been established, targeting completion by mid-November 2025. We are now providing the service provider with the necessary technical documentation and allocating dedicated personnel to begin the engagement.

Asset Discovery & Visibility Proof of Concept

Post-Proof of Value (POV) discussions with the vendor regarding implementation have concluded, and a pricing quote has been provided. A formal review and funding request will be initiated in early 2026 to ensure resource availability and prevent overlap with the new MDR project.

Documentation Review and Updates

As part of the ongoing development of the Cybersecurity and Data Protection Program (CDPP), the service provider consulted with identified subject matter experts (SME) within DIIT to document existing workflows and procedures.

DCSD Passphrase Requirement Updates

The Passphrase Task Force has made significant strides in securing our digital environment. Using targeted metrics, we identified employees who had not voluntarily updated their passphrases and strategically grouped them by school and department. A staggered rollout began in the first week of September, with users receiving an email notice three days prior to being prompted to update their credentials at login.

Key Outcomes:

- The Help Desk remained stable, allowing us to increase weekly rollout volume.
- As of September 30, 2025, 10,854 employees have successfully updated their passphrases.
- We are on track to complete the final two groups by October 2025.

This initiative supports the Strategic Plan Goal Area of Organizational Excellence, specifically Tenet 6.4: *Improve and maintain a secure, accessible, and equitable digital learning environment.*

Resources such as Cyber Smart Essentials, Cyber Smart Central, And Cyber Smart Insights have been created to assist with the education, training, and awareness of passphrase best practices. For questions or support, employees are encouraged to contact the Cyber Smart team at cybersmart@dekalbschoolsga.org.

Cyber Smart: Security Awareness Training

Cyber Guardians (DCSD Employees)

This month our Cyber Guardians engaged with phishing awareness content across all Cyber Smart resources. 203 participants actively used our Cyber Smart Essentials Canvas course, earning badges while watching videos and reading materials. We also collaborated with the Communications Department to produce four videos launching Cybersecurity Awareness Month (General Awareness, Women in Cyber, Mr. Logan's Path to Cyber Leadership, and Entrepreneurs in Cybersecurity). These videos highlight career pathways aligned with the DCSD PUSH Plan's 4 Es: *Enrollment, Employment, Enlistment, and Entrepreneurship*, and support our Portrait of a Graduate initiative.

A KnowBe4 phishing simulation was deployed on September 1st. We are analyzing baseline data to identify frequent clickers and determine the next steps for targeted training. We will continue implementing KnowBe4 simulations to reinforce our security posture and culture.

- 9,803 emails delivered
- 3,053 opened
- 1,273 clicked
- 322 attachments opened
- 2 replies
- 0 QR codes scanned



Cyber Champions (K–12 Student Ambassadors)

We now have eight school-based Cyber Champions facilitators! We held our first Cyber Champions Showcase on September 16th! From there, Fatoumata Bagayoko, a senior in the Engineering pathway at Arabia Mountain HS, was selected and delivered an engaging phishing lesson at the September Parent Tech Café.

Cybersecurity Awareness Month

October 1st kicks off Cybersecurity Awareness Month! Our Cyber Guardians and Cyber Champions will celebrate with weekly interactive games, activities, and videos that focus on general awareness and data privacy through our Cyber Smart resources and can be accessed year-round. Our Cyber Champions will also participate in the Georgia Leaders of Educational Technology (GLET) Cybersecurity Awareness Poster Contest.

Chief Champion Michelle Dillard

Schools and Leadership

In September there was a laser focus on the new ELA standards. Principals, APs, and teacher leaders were provided professional learning at PLO and ALO where they received content around instructional planning, instructional strategies, and assessment. Several resources were provided for the implementation of the new ELA standards. Leaders have been charged with redelivering the content to teachers.

Leaders participated in multiple Leadership Development opportunities with the September Think Tank, Accountability Clinics, NWEA training, and Principals' Learning Opportunity. Leaders concluded the book study for Guiding Coalitions. Our executive leaders welcomed several divisions to our Leadership Learning Opportunity to share updates from DIIT, HR, MTSS, and 504. Area Superintendents and Executive Assistants had our final professional learning session with Dr. Gorman to build leadership capacity. The Schools and Leadership Division partnered with several other divisions to relaunch our Job Alike Content Collaboration meetings for the year.

Area Reality Checks Progress

During September, reality checks were successfully completed for Horizon Area, Area 1 Elementary Schools, and Area 2 Elementary Schools. The reality check process for the remaining areas is scheduled for completion in the upcoming month.

Division Partnerships

In alignment with the DCSD Strategic Goal Areas, the Division of Schools and Leadership partnered with the following divisions this month:

Access and Opportunity with Athletics and Elementary Track and Field, as well as for the School Expo held on Saturday, September 27th.

Accountability and Research for the Accountability Clinics, NWEA training for leaders, District Plan of Support meeting with GADOE, Reality checks, Assessments, and the Title I Conference.

Community Engagement, Innovation and Partnerships in the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the Brick Path at Fernbank Science Center and the Press Release for our increase in the overall district Graduation Rate!

Curriculum and Instruction for launching Core 95 training, Amira training, Teacher Leader meetings, and ELA standards implementation.

Finance for Time and Attendance training for bookkeepers to understand updates with Munis.

Student Services for the ESOL Conference as well as Specially Designed Instruction and Compliance modules.

Wrap Around Services for the Counselor Keys overview for principals and Post-secondary PUSH plan implementation.



Superintendent Dr. Beth Kyle

Area 1 Elementary Schools

September was a busy month in Area 1. The team started digging into learning walks, professional learning, and coaching support for teachers. We are partnering with other Divisions to collaborate on intensive teacher support while they meet state and district guidelines, as well as improving instructional outcomes for students. The team completed their first reality check for the year. We have continued with a bi-weekly plan with me sessions for content, special education, and ELL teachers. The team has also been training academic coaches, teacher leaders, and LTSEs with intensive sessions on the new math and ELA standards and how they can be instructional leaders within their buildings.

Highlights from schools include several schools earning a grant from the DCSD Foundation. To support the new ELA standards, Cary Reynolds rolled out a school podcast. ([Listen here](#)). John Lewis Elementary unveiled their first mural dedicated to honor their namesake. Vanderlyn, Austin, Montgomery, and Kingsley have hosted great Portrait of a Graduate visits with district leadership.

Superintendent Terri D. Brown

Area 2 Elementary Schools

For September, the Area Superintendent and Executive Administrators focused on meeting individually with principals and content coordinators to discuss goals for the year and complete pre-conferences for evaluations. Goals discussed connected directly to school-based data and plans to support teacher and staff development through professional learning and feedback with coaching.

Area 2 Elementary's partnership with MRESA for mathematics training continued so that teachers could be supported with how to implement number routines, instructional learning plans, and the Concrete-Representational-Abstract (CRA) sequence of instruction. All training sessions with MRESA are grade-specific and unit-based. 13 out of 16 schools received support from the Area team with a focus walk that focused on the use of the Instructional Learning Plans and student engagement.

For Georgia's new ELA Standards, our Area 2 ELA Coordinators have supported teachers with grade-specific "Plan with Me" sessions focused on the instructional shifts with strategies and the use of Fall MAP data to plan small group instruction with strategy groups. Additionally, teachers in K-3 were supported with pulling their Amira reports and planning small group instruction. The Area 2 team conducted focus walks with 13 out of 16 schools, side-by-side with administration, and provided feedback and support with the ELA implementation.

Area 2 Elementary supported district-wide learning for principals, assistant principals, academic coaches, and teacher leaders for the New ELA standards by leading a professional development session on instructional strategies, evidence documents, and Wonders/MyView resources.

The Area team also planned CCV visits for October and Reality Checks sessions with each school.

Superintendent Ateshia Lester

Area 3 Elementary Schools

During the month of September, Area 3's focus was being intentional with the new ELA Standards. During our monthly principals' learning opportunity, leaders received guidance on the new ELA standards on instructional planning, strategies and assessment. They were able to practice with their colleagues on providing effective feedback to staff members utilizing the GROW model. Also, Leaders participated in their first principals' professional learning community. Each PLC analyzed data in the ELA content and participated in instructional rounds at the host school.

The Executive Administrator supported leaders by ensuring Core 95 was being implemented across all schools. Area 3 ELA Coordinators conducted ELA-focused classroom walks across schools and facilitated mini-lesson professional learning sessions for the new standards. Area 3 Math Coordinator conducted math-focused professional learning and coaching across all schools, modeled instructional strategies, and supported unpacking Integrated Learning Plans (ILPs) for grades K-5. Climate and Culture Coordinators work focused on student attendance interventions, behavioral support, restorative practices, and resolving facility and parent complaints through school visits and collaborative meetings with principals and staff.

All Elementary Schools had successful Grandparent Activities. Bob Mathis hosted Real Men Read for Georgia Reads Day. Allgood hosted the district's parent engagement initiative on Lifting Lexiles. Barack Obama and Cedar Grove Elementary were identified as Title I Reward Schools. Redan ES and Princeton ES were selected as DeKalb Schools Educational Foundation, Inc. grant recipients!

Please utilize the [link](#) to view Area 3 in Action.



Superintendent Bridgette Allen

Area Middle Schools

During the month of September, the Middle School Area demonstrated a strong commitment to academic achievement, school culture, and student support across the district. Through cohesive collaboration, the team participated in several key district initiatives, including the Think Tank Session, MAP Growth Workshop, CCV Calibration Meeting, Accountability Clinic, and the Portrait of a Graduate academic walk with the Superintendent. These engagements, along with the Area Fall Reality Check and Mid-Month Check with the Area Superintendent, served as touchpoints for reflection, progress monitoring, and alignment with district goals. This intentional work has underscored the team's shared commitment to impactful leadership and accountability.

The Executive Administrators played a pivotal role in coaching school leaders during ELT Walks, Reality Checks, and observation and feedback sessions focused on ELA and math. They, along with the Area Superintendent and other professional learning facilitators and coordinators, provided professional learning focused on instructional planning, instructional strategies, and appropriate assessments to support principals in understanding the new ELA standards. Additionally, they co-facilitated learning opportunities for principals focused on MAP and GMAS data, provided feedback through Level Data, launched Principal Professional Learning Communities (PPLCs), facilitated Reality Checks, and provided overviews for CCVs and collaborative learning walks. Their work also included supporting job-alike meetings, ensuring that area team members remained focused on student outcomes and instructional effectiveness.

The Math Coordinators worked to strengthen instructional practices and build teacher capacity across all grades. Through classroom observations, they provided immediate feedback and modeled student-centered instructional strategies. Their collaborative approach included co-observations with the academic coaches and the EL Coordinator. They served as active participation in PLCs to ensure consistent instructional alignment. Similarly, the ELA Coordinator supported instructional growth through PLC collaboration, classroom observations, feedback, and professional learning sessions designed to deepen content knowledge and improve pedagogy.

The Special Education Coordinator held meetings with several principals and Lead Teachers for Special Education (LTSEs) to review the Special Education Principal's Monthly Report and support the balance of instruction and compliance. In addition, the coordinator completed training on High Leverage Practices to enhance the quality of instructional support for students with disabilities. The EL Coordinator focused on building instructional capacity through targeted feedback from classroom observations, coaching sessions, and specialized support to multiple schools. The coordinator also facilitated Ellevation training and developed supplemental documents to support effective EL instruction.

The Culture and Climate Coordinator conducted meetings offering tailored feedback to support each school's improvement goals. They led professional learning in de-escalation strategies and customer service training for all clerical staff, facilitated successful restorative circles, and conducted Culture and Climate Walks using the Level Data platform. Additional monitoring included reviewing school websites to promote community engagement, monitoring attendance and discipline data, and participating in attendance and culture and climate team meetings. The coordinators also led virtual support sessions with middle school assistant principals to promote collaboration and build capacity with best practices as well as district and area initiatives. Furthermore, the Mental Health Coordinator delivered impactful student presentations on vaping and mental health, promoting wellness and proactive behavioral awareness.



MS Area – Learning, Growing, and Winning Together



September also brought recognition and celebration across several middle schools. Tucker Middle School and Redan Middle School were recipients of grant funding in acknowledgment of their innovative practices. Miller Grove and Tucker Middle Schools were recognized by Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) for being the first schools to revitalize their program and having 100% trained reinforcing positive school culture. Additionally, Chapel Hill Middle School was honored at the PTA dinner for its exceptional engagement with families and the community.

Overall, the intentional support provided in September reflects a united effort focused on equity, accountability, and academic excellence across the Middle School Area. The collaboration among all continues to drive progress in instruction, climate, and student well-being, ensuring a holistic approach to school improvement and student success.

Superintendent Dr. Thomas Glanton**Area High Schools**

September marked a continued strong start to the school year, with high schools gaining traction in instructional priorities, culture-building, and student engagement. Leaders focused on establishing routines, fostering collaboration, and identifying early trends to guide support.

Culture and Climate efforts included Imagine Learning – Edgenuity sessions to enhance platform use, with extended learning options explored. Two pilot schools also partnered with the DeKalb Voter Registration Office and the John Lewis Foundation to support student voter registration.

In ELA, new communication channels were launched—newsletters, resource repositories, and collaborative meetings—to share instructional expectations and updated standards from GaDOE and the district.

Mathematics support expanded through a centralized Math Hub, offering resources and PD tools. Area leaders visited PLCs to reinforce curriculum alignment and data-driven instruction.

Access and Opportunity efforts balanced compliance and instructional leadership, ensuring support for students with exceptionalities. For multilingual learners, targeted PD through ELlevation emphasized rigorous, scaffolded instruction aligned to ACCESS goals.

Whole Child support continued through Culture and Climate-led review meetings, connecting mental health, attendance, discipline, and school culture to student success.

As we move into October, we carry forward the energy, focus, and commitment that defined September. Together, we will continue to lead with purpose, elevate instruction, and create learning environments where every student is seen, supported, and empowered to succeed.

Superintendent Dr. Derrica Boochee-Davis**Area Horizon Schools****Leadership Development**

Executive Administrators and Coordinators consistently engaged principals through leadership walks, pre-conferences, and MAP data talks. Progress monitoring notes show a focus on ensuring leaders are prepared to use CSIP goals, STAP priorities, and the District Plan of Support (D-PoS) to drive improvement. Several EAs facilitated Plans of Support meetings and embedded coaching on lesson planning, differentiation, and equity-based instructional strategies. Principals were guided to strengthen their leadership teams, deepen PLC practices, and align school improvement work to district timelines.

Instructional Support

Instructional monitoring centered on literacy and mathematics. The ELA team launched the Horizon ELA Support Plan, which provides quarterly pacing, instructional non-negotiables, and monitoring systems to strengthen Tier 1 fidelity. Coordinators emphasized implementation of 95 Phonics across elementary grades and conducted virtual and in-person training with over 140

staff. Professional learning also included Gender Responsive Strategies and Science of Reading practices, with ongoing coaching to support teachers in applying strategies in daily instruction.

In mathematics, coordinators conducted instructional walks, PLC push-ins, and classroom modeling to support the use of ILPs, concrete-representation strategies, and effective work periods. Short professional learning cycles are planned to address recurring needs in lesson execution and data-driven grouping. EL support teams updated the Horizon EL Dashboard, completed reclassifications, and provided training on scheduling sheltered classes, ensuring compliance and instructional quality. Special education coordinators addressed vacancies, compliance timelines, and delivered professional learning on specially designed instruction and co-teaching, while also providing direct support for behavior intervention and IEP amendment processes.

Student Support & Well-Being

Monitoring reports highlight persistent challenges around student behavior and attendance. Coordinators worked alongside principals to develop individualized attendance action plans, review discipline data, and strengthen MTSS and PBIS practices. Special education reports emphasized the need for additional teacher training in behavior management, particularly in programs serving students with intensive needs. Mental health support focused on staff wellness, trauma-informed practices, and prevention initiatives such as vaping education. Coordinators also engaged in cross-functional collaboration with district content specialists to ensure aligned supports for LTSEs and case managers.

Culture & Climate

Culture and Climate Coordinators convened multidisciplinary teams—including counselors, social workers, behavior specialists, and PBIS coaches—to align supports with CSIP culture and climate goals. Key initiatives launched this month included Student Ambassadors, Safety Patrol, and Mentoring Programs, designed to strengthen student engagement and leadership. Facility walkthroughs documented pressing issues with HVAC systems, safety/security, and food service equipment, with work orders escalated for district response. Transportation delays were noted as a continuing barrier for some schools and remain a priority for follow-up. Celebrations across reports highlighted strong community engagement at the start of the year and a smooth opening of schools despite operational challenges.

Summary

Horizon schools are benefiting from targeted coaching, professional learning, and structured monitoring systems. Leadership is being reinforced through data-driven coaching and CSIP alignment; instruction is advancing with a clear literacy and math focus; student supports are deepening around attendance, behavior, and wellness; and culture and climate initiatives are laying the foundation for safe, supportive schools. While needs remain around staffing, facilities, and compliance, the collective work of EAs and coordinators reflects a strong commitment to equity, coherence, and student achievement across the Horizon Area.



Superintendent Dr. Michelle Jones

Area Specialty Schools

The focus for September in the Specialty area has been Special Education, 504 students, and MTSS. Our team visited each school to review the students who are being served in these special programs. We got to see the new 504 dashboard of Infinite Campus in action and being used by the 504 chairs! We got to meet the new LTSEs for each building and see how students are progressing with their IEP goals. We interacted with the MTSS specialists and reviewed the tiers. We were able to see the connections between those receiving Tier 3 interventions and who may need to be considered for eligibility for Exceptional Education. Our school staff completed the Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) modules and the compliance modules this month. Our next step is to support schools who may need assistance. In alignment with our focus for the month, on September 10th, our area hosted the LTSEs around the area for an opportunity to bond together and hear from key leaders in the Exceptional Education department. They were able to hear about content, FTE, and even mental health. We also hosted multiple ELA Planning Sessions to support ELA standards implementation by assisting with lesson planning.

This month we participated in our quarterly Charter Collaborative hosted at Silver Hill. Time together with our charter schools allows for district leaders to share updates or mandates. We heard from the Office of Federal Programs and Exceptional Education. The new process for Site Reviews was reviewed as well.

We celebrated the Title I Reward schools from our Area: Robert Shaw and Margaret Harris. We are proud of their work! We also recognized two schools who earned grants: Kittredge received the DSEF grant and Marbut received a grant from the Atlanta Falcons organization. Fernbank Science Center hosted the Brick Ceremony and DeKalb Schools Education Foundation (DSEF) grants.

We continued to welcome new staff to the Specialty Area with a special name card and goodie bag. We also had new staff members to join our area. Our new HR talent acquisition manager Cathy Harris and assistant Cshaquoia Wiggins joined us. Elizabeth Andrews added two new campus supervisors and Margaret Harris had a new campus supervisor to join.



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

On September 16, our district GSLA team engaged in professional learning with the Governor's Office of Student Achievement. Together, we defined our guiding purpose collectively as a group:

DCSD Leadership Development Purpose Statement

Our purpose is to build a system that attracts, develops, and retains high-quality internal and external leaders who create equitable learning environments, foster collaborative cultures, and drive instructional excellence—ensuring that every student is prepared for success as a lifelong learner and responsible global citizen.

The DeKalb Principal Pathway (DPP)

On Saturday, September 20, Leadership Development team, Champions Faison and Anthony, facilitated Session 4 of DPP Cohort #2. Candidates engaged in professional learning to support their Instructional Change Project via the CSIP, explored Leadership Identity through *Clifton Strengths* and *True Colors*, and deepened their reflection as instructional leaders.

On September 8, The Board of Education recognized 14 DeKalb Principal Pathway (DPP) Cohort #1 candidates for their successful completion of the accelerated program.

The DeKalb Leadership Institute (DLI)

On Saturday, September 20, DLI Cohort 1 participated in professional learning facilitated by Champions Russ and Fairweather, with a focus on leadership identity and its application to the assistant principal role. Candidates engaged in real-world leadership scenarios to practice living out the district's HPRIDE values and explored how the Six Essential Systems connect to their daily responsibilities. They also interpreted their CliftonStrengths assessment results through the *seed-to-garden* metaphor to distinguish between talents and strengths, and collaboratively built a Cohort Strengths Wall, which revealed collective strengths in *Executing, Building Relationships, and Strategic Thinking*. To deepen self-awareness, participants integrated multiple frameworks—CliftonStrengths, True Colors, and Compass Points to reflect on their leadership identity and determine meaningful next steps in their leadership journey.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Leadership Development is supporting the implementation of PLCs in our district by serving and leading the work of the DCSD District Guiding Coalition. On September 4th, the DCSD District Guiding Coalition met to review and design our next steps to support schools in the PLC process. The September agenda had a focus on the following: Finalizing the DCSD Guiding Coalition's Mission, Vision and Purpose Statement, norms and collective commitments. As a committee we also worked on establishing and setting SMARTAO goals. Lastly, we developed a yearlong implementation timeline for expectations of school-based PLC Guiding Coalitions.

During the September Area Principal's Learning Opportunity (PLO), principals that are representing each area on the DCSD PLC Guiding Coalition delivered the expectations and timeline guidance document to other school-based leaders in their areas.

Performance Coaches Supporting Principals/Assistant Principals

The Leadership Development team of Performance Coaches is working side-by-side with school leaders, providing hands-on support that directly strengthens instructional leadership and student outcomes. Their coaching is focused on the implementation of the Six Systems, guidance for PLCs, and instructional best practices that elevate teaching and learning. In September alone, Performance Coaches logged more than 650 hours of on-site coaching, a reflection of the district's deep commitment to equipping leaders with the tools and strategies necessary to drive success across schools.

Area Principal's Learning Opportunity (PLO)

On September 18, Leadership Development supported the design and logistics of the Principal Learning Opportunity (PLO), where principals engaged in professional learning facilitated by the district area teams. The session centered on the new ELA standards and featured small-group workshops on Instructional Planning, Instructional Strategies, and Appropriate Assessments. Each workshop emphasized concrete *look-fors* to help principals recognize and support effective instruction in their schools. In addition, principals serving on the DCSD PLC Guiding Coalition shared key content and updates from their September session, providing guidance to strengthen school-based implementation of PLC practices.

Performance Coaches Training

On September 11, Leadership Development facilitated the monthly Performance Coaches Team Training, which focused on the Three Big Ideas of PLCs—*Focus on Learning* (academic performance), *Culture of Collaboration* (transforming school culture), and *Focus on Results* (data-informed decisions). Throughout the session, coaches engaged in realistic principal coaching scenarios designed to refine how they provide support, feedback, and guidance to school leaders. They also shared meaningful insights from their school-based observations, which are now shaping the design of upcoming content for the 1st- and 2nd-Year Principal Academies. This ongoing cycle of practice, reflection, and design helps ensure that our coaching and professional learning remain relevant, responsive, and impactful for school leaders.

New Principal's Academy (2nd Year)

On September 10, Leadership Development provided professional learning for second-year principals designed to deepen both instructional and operational leadership. Principals explored their Leadership Compass and reflected on how their leadership style can be leveraged to effectively implement the Six Essential Systems. In addition, they engaged in targeted training on TKES: Planning for Successful Implementation and Monitoring and All Things Finance, which highlighted best practices to ensure successful execution of required protocols.

New Principal's Academy (1st Year)

On September 25, Leadership Development provided professional learning for 1st-year principals. The session featured principal testimonials that validated and affirmed the leadership journey, offering authentic perspectives from experienced leaders. Participants also engaged in activities focused on shaping the academic vision and reflecting on and integrating their own vision for leadership. In addition, principals received training on restorative practices and gained important updates from Purchasing and Human Resources, ensuring they are equipped with both the instructional and operational tools needed to lead effectively.

Assistant Principal's Academy

In collaboration with the District Area Teams, Leadership Development facilitated professional learning for assistant principals, intentionally aligning the content with what principals received during their recent PLO. Assistant principals engaged in sessions focused on the new ELA standards, participating in interactive workshops on Instructional Planning, Instructional Strategies, and Appropriate Assessments. Each session emphasized concrete look-fors that assistant principals can use to identify and support effective instruction in their schools. In addition, participants received follow-up training on Restorative Practices, further strengthening their capacity to lead positive school culture and climate.

New Assistant Principal's Consortium

On September 9, Leadership Development, in collaboration with current district leaders—including assistant principals Brad Daniell (Kittredge ES) and Samone Bowers (Stone Mountain HS), as well as principal Dr. Erika Simpson (Chapel Hill ES)—facilitated professional learning for 1st–3rd year assistant principals. The content was intentionally differentiated by school level and years of experience to ensure relevance and impact. Across grade-level bands, participants engaged in learning around MAP data analysis and action planning and a Six Systems overview. In addition, Champion Russ worked with Year 1 APs on *Maximizing Time for TKES Evaluations*, while Champion Fairweather guided Years 2 and 3 APs through *Aligning Your Calendar for Greater Impact*.

MIRACLES- (New) Principal/Assistant Principal Hiring Slate

Leadership Development has launched a new MIRACLE for the 2025–2026 school year with the creation of a Principal/Assistant Principal Hiring Slate. Beginning in October, this initiative will move into its initial phase, which includes designing a rigorous application process, conducting pre-screening performance assessment events, and developing pre-qualifying hiring modules. Currently in the design stage, this work represents a significant step toward strengthening the district's leadership pipeline, and updates will be shared as the process continues to take shape.



Executive Director Ayana S. Smith

Professional Learning

In September, Professional Learning Facilitators and Coordinators focused heavily across the district on professional learning, PLC and Guiding Coalition support, instructional planning, and mentoring. Key initiatives aligned with strategic goals Area 1 (Student Academic Success with Equity and Access) and Area 3 (Recruit, Develop, and Retain Talent) included coaching new teachers and TAPP candidates, enhancing field experience programs, and supporting educators with resources, training, and collaboration. These efforts aimed to strengthen instructional practices, support teacher retention, and build leadership capacity across schools.



NTO (New Teacher Orientation/Network)

The New Teacher Orientation and NETwork initiatives provided robust support to new educators across the district. Over 190 participants attended the September NETwork Seminar focused on instructional planning using student data. In addition, over 80 Teacher Support and Coaching Specialists (TSCs) gathered for monthly training that introduced the GROW coaching model. Virtual tools were also developed to streamline communication, offer resources, and provide tech support during sessions—ensuring smooth onboarding and continued development for new teachers.

Field Experience (Student Teaching)

Field placement efforts expanded significantly, with 355 placement requests across the district. Mandatory orientation sessions were held to introduce candidates to district policies and expectations. Chelonnda Seroyer also strengthened partnerships with local universities, including Georgia State, Georgia Southern, and the University of Phoenix, to align supervision standards and better support teacher candidates during their placements. These steps are aimed at building a strong foundation for future educators entering DeKalb classrooms.

Teacher Academic Preparation and Pedagogy (TAPP)

Support for TAPP candidates continued in full swing, with classroom visits, coaching, and collaboration with school leaders. Candidates received guidance on classroom management, planning, and instructional strategies. Leaders like Nicole Durham and Tamara Ross observed PLCs and guided coalition meetings while also supporting their TAPP participants. Michelle Thompson checked in with both first and second-year TAPP teachers and coordinated with HR to identify

provisionally certified educators for additional support opportunities. This hands-on mentoring helps ensure TAPP teachers grow and thrive in their roles.

Chief Dr. Norman C. Sauce, III

Student Services

In September, Dr. Sauce remained highly engaged across the district through a variety of impactful initiatives, meetings, and school visits. He began the month by joining Superintendent Horton and colleagues on Portrait of a Graduate school visits and continued his leadership presence through the Curriculum Steering Committee, Personnel Steering Committee, and weekly Quad meetings. Throughout the month, he conducted biweekly check-ins with the Executive Director of Early Learning and Pre-K Programs, launched evaluation pre-conferences with direct reports, and participated in the DSCD audit universe review and SAP Internal Committee meetings. His commitment to advancing programs was evident as he recorded a district gifted commercial, attended the “Lead by Example” session advocating for gifted education, and supported the Saturday administration of gifted identification assessments. Dr. Sauce visited Stone Mountain High and Middle Schools, John Lewis Elementary for a mural unveiling, Tucker High and Middle Schools, and Margaret Harris Comprehensive School, while also participating in Reality Check sessions across Horizon Area middle schools. On September 11, he presented on behalf of Superintendent Horton at the DeKalb Association of Realtors Annual Membership Meeting and later hosted a successful “Check-in with the Chief” at MLK High School, where staff across Student Services engaged deeply with the division’s vision. Additional highlights included participating in the Exceptional Education Parent Education session on transitions, meeting with Finance and Early Learning regarding the Pre-K 4 grant and collaborating with the CDC on special education records. He also attended the Exceptional Education Parent Advisory Council meeting, the Pathway to Excellence Brick Wall Installation at Fernbank Science Center and contributed to media outreach with Rough Draft Atlanta. Rounding out the month, Dr. Sauce celebrated 2025 graduation rates at a district press conference at Lithonia High School, presented at the monthly Cabinet MIRACLES Workshop, and continued shaping district direction through the Curriculum Steering Committee. The Division of Student Services leaders proudly represented at the School Choice Expo on September 27, underscoring the strength and collaboration of the division.



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

“Check-in with the Chief” @ Dr. MLK, Jr. HS-
[@dekalbcoschools.bsky.social](#) Student Services teammates gave insightful, candid, & actionable feedback on improving our collaboration across departments to elevate conditions for scholars. Thank you, Dr. Hemphill & Student Ambassadors for hosting!



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

Fernbank Science Center Brick Installation Ceremony hosted by DeKalb Schools Education Foundation- thank you to all donors & supporters of
[@dekalbcoschools.bsky.social](#) Foundation. Your generosity enhances & broadens the impact of learning experiences for each of our scholars! #TheDeKalbDifference



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!



During the month of September 2025, Dr. Sauce visited the following schools: Stoneview Elementary School, Lithonia Middle School, Shadow Rock Center, Stone Mountain Middle School, Cary Reynolds Elementary School, Montgomery Elementary School, John Lewis Elementary School, Hambrick Elementary School, Stone Mountain High School, Elizabeth Andrews High School, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. High School, Tucker High School, Tucker Middle School, Margaret Harris Comprehensive School, and Lithonia High School.



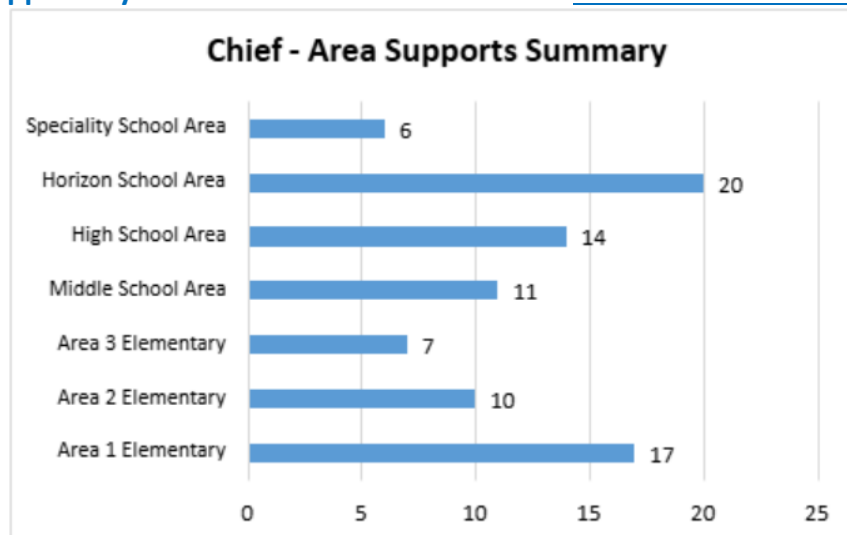
Dr. Norman C. Sauce III

@drnormancsauce3.bsky.social

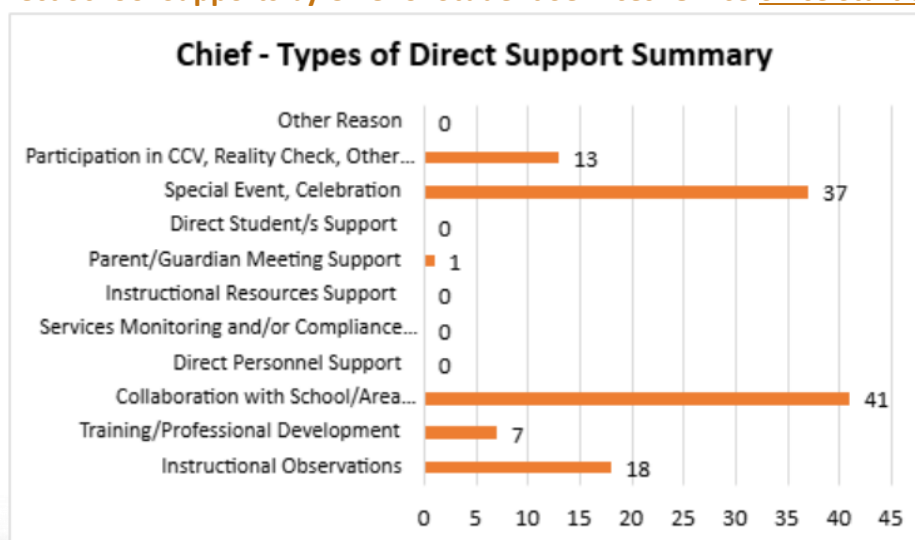
Another stellar day of Reality Checks with Horizon Area & Area 2 Elementary teams - plus Principals of Dresden, Fairington, Flat Rock, Montclair, Panola Way, Stephenson, & Shadow Rock Elementary Schools! Our scholars get the B.A.G. (Behavior, Attendance, Grades)! 🎉 @dekalbcoschools.bsky.social



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



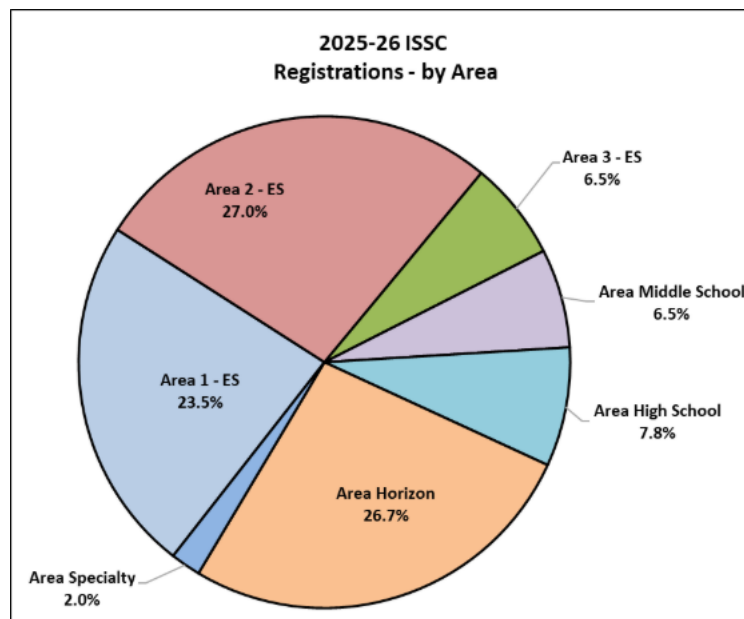
Executive Director Dr. Evelyn Hall

English Learners

Registration & Interpretation

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.

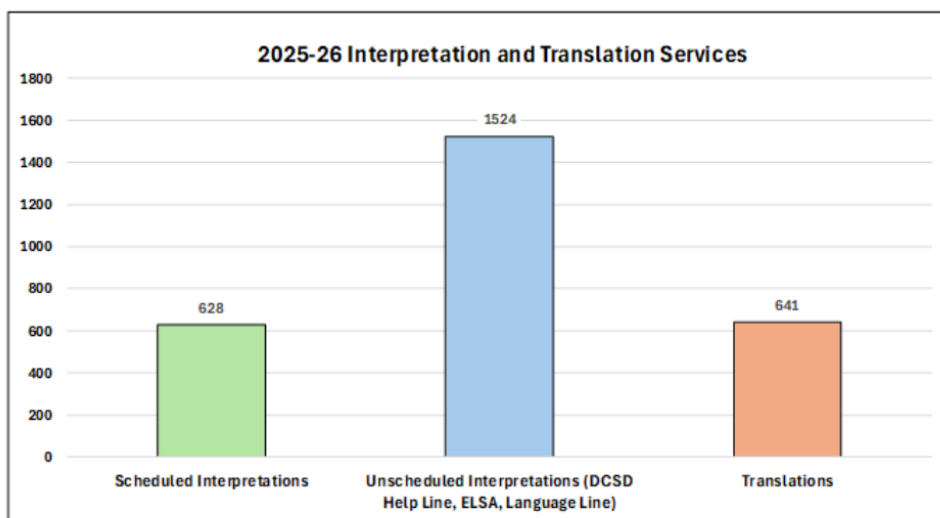


Area	Students
Area 1 - ES	177
Area 2 - ES	203
Area 3 - ES	49
Area Middle School	49
Area High School	59
Area Horizon	201
Area Specialty	15
Totals	753

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 **2,793** language services to PHLOTE families.

Interpretation and Translation Report through August 2025



The graph above shows the number of each type of interpretation and translation service requested for the 2025 - 2026 school year

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

LAS Links Assessment

The LAS Links allows teachers to progress monitor the English language development of newcomer students and identify areas of support and acceleration. As part of the Intensive English (IE) program for newcomers, students in the Intensive English program grades 4-12 participate in the LAS Links progress monitoring for students' growth in English language proficiency.

2024-2025 LAS Links Assessment windows		
1 st Window: August 11 th – 22 nd	Intensive English Grades 4-8	Successfully completed ✓
2 nd Window: December 8 th – 19 th	Intensive English Grades 4-12	Scheduled
3 rd Window: March 16 th – 27 th	Intensive English Grades 4-12	Scheduled

Students in the Intensive English program in grades 4-8 who have been enrolled in US schools for one calendar year or scored a 2.0 or higher on the LAS Links meet the requirements to transition to the general ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) classes in October.

The LAS Links aligns with DCSD Strategic Plan: Goal Area I: Student Academic Success with Equity and Access and DCSD M.I.R.A.C.L.E.S. Framework for Continuous Improvement:

- M - Motion Towards Equity
- I - Improved Instructional Core

Professional Learning: Fall 2025 ESOL Book Studies

The EL Department offers a variety of EL focused professional learning opportunities (in-person and virtual sessions), including workshops, trainings, and book studies each semester for Teachers of English Learners, Administrators, and support staff.

The following book studies will be offered in both fall and spring semester:

- Teaching and Supporting Intensive English Students Book Study (6 part-series)
- Strategies for Unlocking English Learners' Potential Book Study (5 part-series)
- Co-Teaching for English Learners Book Study (6 part-series)

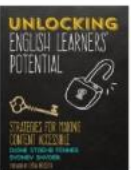
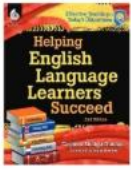
- **New!** Long-Term Success for Experienced Multilingual Learners (5 part-series)



English Learners Department

Fall 2025 - Virtual Book Studies



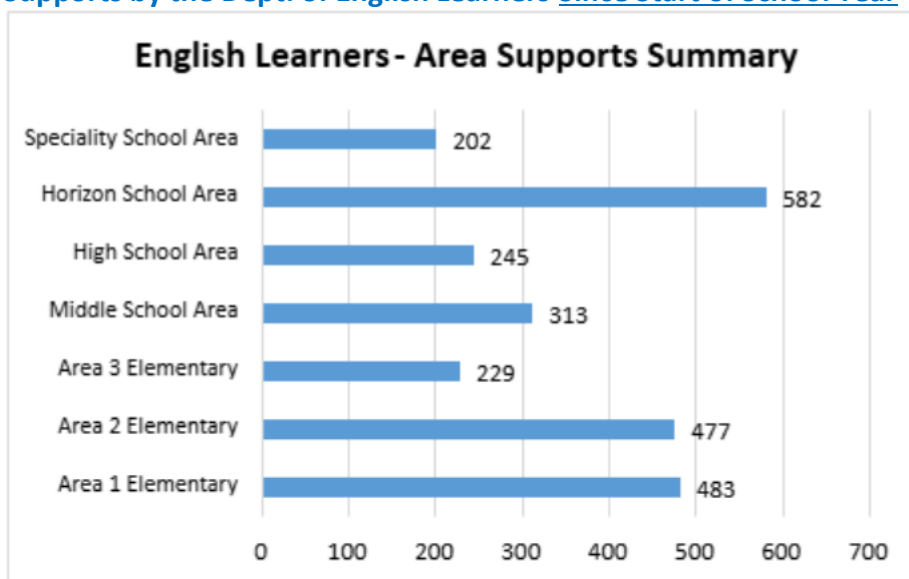
Long-Term Success for Experienced Multilingual Learners • ES/MS/HS #9548 First Session: Tuesday, September 9th ES/MS/HS - 4:15-5:15 Description: This book study is for all teachers of English learners in DeKalb. This book includes actions that foster the conditions for long-term ELs (LTEs) to reach the highest grade-level content and language proficiency; specific strategies with try it-out prompts to encourage implementation; and templates and anchor charts for structuring lessons. 	Co-Teaching for English Learners • ES #9531 • MS/HS #9532 First Session: Monday, September 8th ES - 3:15-4:15 MS/HS - 4:15-5:15 Description: This book study is for all co-teachers of English learners who collaborate and teach via the Push-In Model. This session will provide participants with guidance on how to collaboratively plan, instruct via specific models, and assess ELs. 
Unlocking ELs' Potential • ES/MS/HS #9511 First Session: Thursday, August 28th ES/MS/ES - 4:00-5:00 Description: The focus of this book study is to support teachers of English learners with evidence-based strategies that focus on language development, academic discourse, and advocacy. 	Helping English Language Learners Succeed • ES/MS/HS #9553 First Session: Thursday, September 15th ES/MS/HS - 4:15-5:15 Description: In this book study, ESOL teachers will explore four framing questions that target classroom best practices and approaches that support listening and speaking, vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and writing. 

Note: Teachers cannot repeat the same book study in consecutive school years.

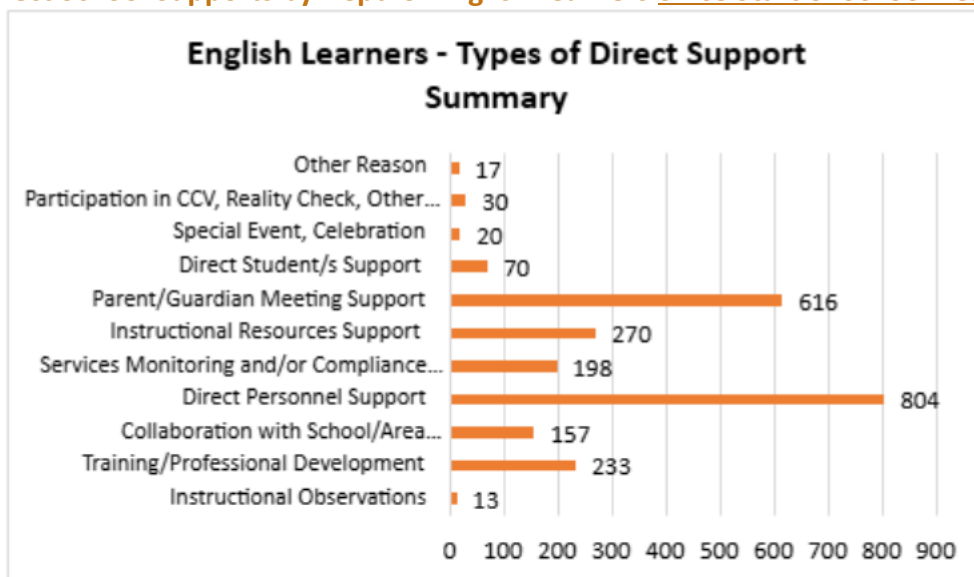
These opportunities align with the DCSD Strategic Plan: Goal Area I: Student Academic Success with Equity and Access, Goal Area III: Recruit, Develop, and Retain Talent and Goal Area V: Organizational Excellence, and the DCSD M.I.R.A.C.L.E.S. Framework for Continuous Improvement:

- 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

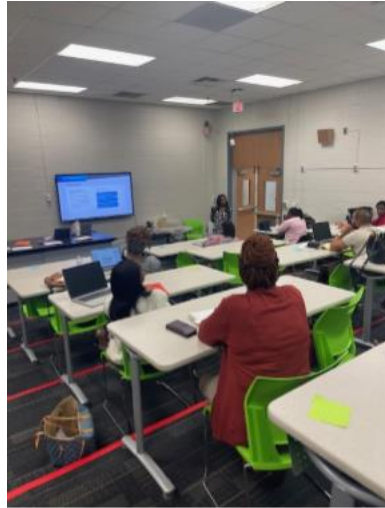
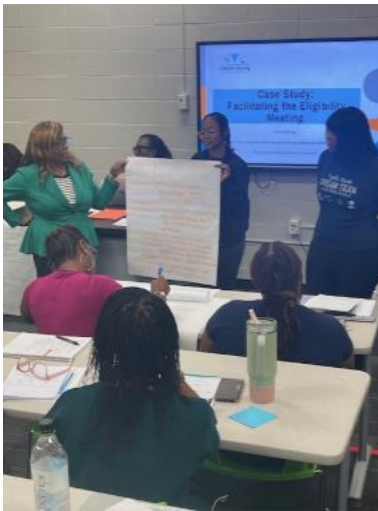
Professional Development and Instructional Support

- The Office of Special Education facilitated professional learning opportunities during the month of September with a total of 151 educators in attendance yielding a 96% survey satisfaction rating. Professional Learning topics covered several topics such as Read to Reach: Specially Designed Instruction for ELA and Reading, Autism 101 and Enhancing Teaching with AI Tools.

- We are excited to announce the extension of efforts for professional learning that aligns with teacher and school staff schedules. A MIRACLES priority for the 25-26 school year initiated the release of 8 Asynchronous modules on Specially Designed Instruction. Module 1 of 8 was released on September 8, 2025 and to date approximately 1,527 verified staff have completed the first module.
- In collaboration with the Office of School Psychology, the Office of Special Education facilitated an “On the Road” calibration with school psychologists to review Child Find responsibilities, timelines, and professional relationships with LTSEs and MTSS Specialists.
- The Office of Psychological Services has been dedicated to empowering educators through professional learning opportunities that highlight the vital role school psychologists play in supporting students. Through workshops, educators have explored topics such as manifestation determinations meetings, the MTSS process, and the various supports provided by school psychologists. On September 24th, Senior Coordinator Kimberly Franklin and Lead School Psychologist Dr. Alva Archibald facilitated training to 50 new LTSEs and provided an in-depth look at special education eligibility categories and compliance requirements. To date, 55 professional development workshops have been conducted with a total of 2,586 participants. These sessions have created space for meaningful dialogue, practical strategies, and shared understanding – helping staff feel more confident in addressing both instructional and behavioral needs. With each workshop, we continue to build a stronger community of educators who are better prepared to meet students where they are and ensure they thrive.
- The Section 504 and Hospital Homebound (HHB) Department continues to ensure equitable access to education by empowering leaders, supporting staff, and strengthening partnerships across the district. September 2025 was marked by targeted professional learning, leadership engagement, and collaborative opportunities designed to enhance service to students and families.
- On September 13, 2025, representatives from the Section 504 Team participated in the *Fall into STEM* event at Fernbank Science Center. This community engagement opportunity allowed the team to connect with families, highlight the district’s commitment to equity and access, and share the joy of STEM education.



- On September 17, 2025, the team hosted two monthly Question & Answer virtual sessions, providing 504 Chairs with real-time guidance and a forum to share best practices. The New 504 Chair Academy followed on September 18, 2025, offering foundational training to build knowledge and confidence for those newly appointed to the role.
- On September 23–24, 2025, four sessions of the September 504 Chair Academy were held at Redan High School under the theme *Empowering the 504 Chair: Building Knowledge, Skills, and Relationships*. Topics included customer service excellence, leadership in service, meeting etiquette, Child Find, facilitating effective meetings, navigating the K12 platform, and handling priority cases. Work sessions allowed Chairs to apply strategies and collaborate with peers, fostering both skill development and relationship building.



- The team also engaged district leaders and families. On September 23, 2025, Dr. Watina April, Senior Coordinator, presented at the Superintendent's Exceptional Education Parent Advisory Council, and on September 24, 2025, she provided an overview of the new K12 Section 504 platform at the DCSD Leaders Learning Opportunity meeting. These engagements ensured alignment and transparency across the district.



- On September 10, 2025, the Specialty Area Team visited Shadow Rock Center and EagleWoods Academy for Student Support Focus Walks. The purpose of these walks was to review the Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in the areas of compliance/service delivery, student engagement/support and observed strengths. In addition, data/progress monitoring was discussed, and observations were held in the classrooms for the students in which the IEPs were reviewed. Both GNETS programs were provided with a summary report that included recommendations to align with the CCV documentation in the fall.



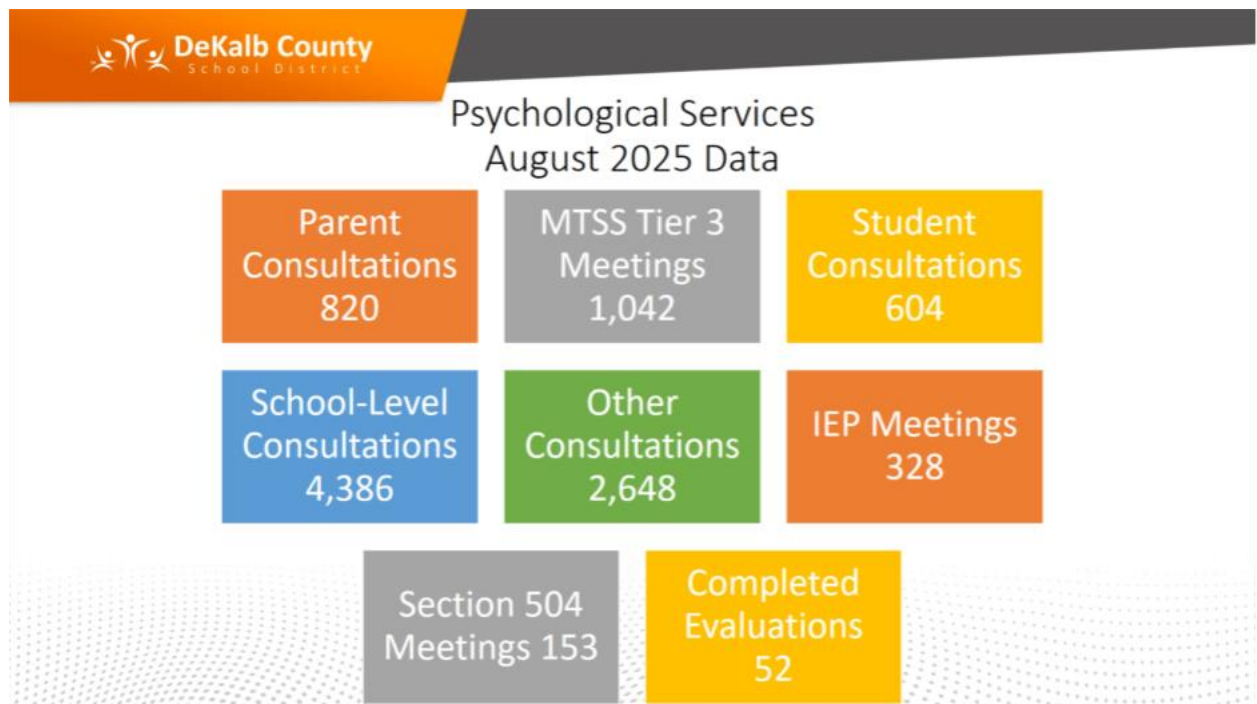
- September was a busy month for both the Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS) and the Materials Production Center. The Center provided support and material for almost six hundred individuals as well as multiple DCSD Departments and Divisions. GLRS provided eleven in-person training sessions including multiple SDI Training opportunities, AI as an SDI Tool, Autism Basics, and Classroom Management. GLRS also kicked off the Georgia Teacher and Provider Retention Project (GATPRP) program for special educators new to DeKalb County with six Se-six educators attended these sessions!
- On Saturday, the 13th, Terri Jenkins, Director for GLRS and Deborah Greaves collaborated with the English Learner Department at the English Learners Conference.



Department Highlights and Celebrations

- The Dekalb-Rockdale GNETS Program received the designation of Operational for Positive Behavior and Supports (PBIS) for the 2024-2025 school year. The following criteria are reviewed for Operational status: percentage of students at tier 1 for office discipline referrals, percentage of ISS days per 100 students, and percentage of OSS days per 100 students. For total number of office/discipline referrals, EWA had a score of –25.61 in comparison to FY 24. For the total of OSS days with EWA, the percentage change was –87.01 in comparison to FY24. We are truly pleased with our results and will continue to increase outcomes in the area of behavior/wellbeing.
- The Office of Psychological Services has been diligently working to support the students, families, and educators through direct services, consultation, and resources that promote academic, social, and emotional success. In August, our school psychologists' efforts reflected the meaningful impact of this work – demonstrating both the depth of support provided and the strong partnerships built across schools. The data below highlights the great strides accomplished last month as we continue fostering success for the students we serve.

DeKalb County Schools	
Avondale Elementary School	
Bob Mathis Elementary School	
Browns Mill Elementary School	
Cedar Grove Elementary School	
Chamblee Middle School	
Chapel Hill Elementary School	
DeKalb-Rockdale GNETS	
Dresden Elementary School	
Druid Hills Middle School	
Eldridge L. Miller Elementary School	
Evansdale Elementary School	
Montclair Elementary School	
Princeton Elementary School	
Ronald E McNair Discover Learning Academy Elementary School	
Tucker Middle School	



- During the month of September, the Parent Engagement team **visited 12 elementary, middle, and high schools** to educate Lead Teachers for Special Education (LTSEs), MTSS Coordinators, and school counselors about the availability of resources offered through the Parent Engagement team. This brings the **total number of school visits to 48** since the beginning of the school year. These visits focused primarily on Horizons Schools and schools located in the Elementary and Horizon Areas. In addition to school visits, the team provided direct support to families through approximately 100 **one-on-one parent support phone calls and emails**.

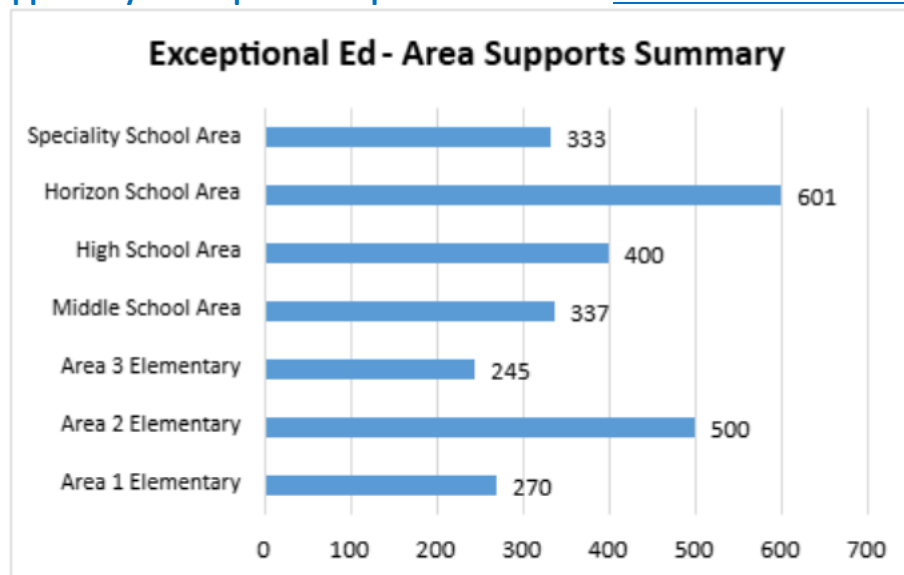
September Parent Education Empowerment Resources and Support (PEERS) Outreach Events

- The Parent Educator Team proudly represented Exceptional Education on September 13th for the first time as a vendor at the DCSD District PTA Conference, held at Stephenson Middle School. During the event, the team engaged with PTA presidents and parent leaders from across the district, providing valuable information about Exceptional Education services, available supports, upcoming events, and parent-focused resources. Approximately **38 local PTA units** attended, representing a diverse mix of elementary, middle, and high schools.
- On September 18th, our Parent Educator Team hosted a virtual PEERS parent session was held focusing on transition supports. A total of **480 parents registered, and 85 attended**. The session featured speakers from the DCSD Transition Team, and survey feedback from parents was overwhelmingly positive.
- On September 23, 2025, The Superintendent's Exceptional Education Parent Advisory Council (SEEPAC) meeting was held providing parents with an overview of our parent services including upcoming Parent Education Empowerment Resources and Support (PEERS) virtual, digital and in-person parent engagement events. We also highlighted the progress made to improve communication, parental education and access to information over the course of last year.

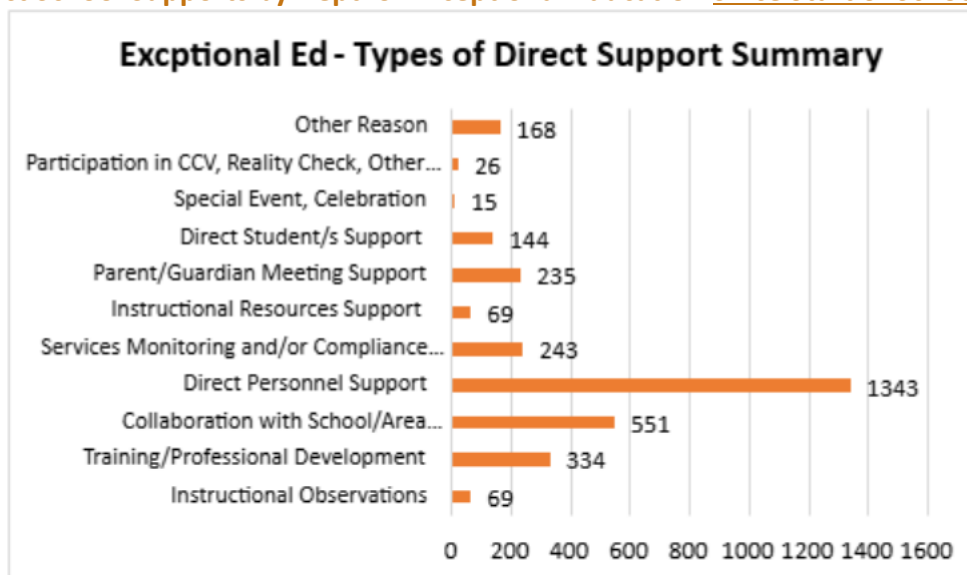
Upcoming Parent Engagement Opportunities

- **September:** Release of Issue 6 of the Exceptional Education Parent Newsletter.
- **October 23:** Virtual PEERS session focused on Parent Rights and Dispute Resolution.
- **November 1:** The 3rd Annual Exceptional Education Parent Engagement Fair.
- **December:** Release of Issue 7 of the Exceptional Education Parent Newsletter – Holiday Edition.

Direct School Supports by the Dept. of Exceptional Education Since Start of 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 auditing student files, attending MTSS meetings, visiting schools, and support staff members with newly developed instructional non-negotiables and program enhancements for the 2025-2026 school year. Our Pre-K (3&4) students and staff members received onboarding training on the Waterford supplemental resource platform during the month of September.

Instructional learning targets and anchor charts that are aligned to the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards was deployed to all Pre-K (3&4) lead teachers and paraprofessionals to utilize within every instructional setting as an instructional tools and safety nets for our young scholars. **A Progression Standards-Based Common Formative Assessment**, (CFA) is currently being piloted with a focus group of teachers and students within Canvas via a 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. Additional pilots will be administered to determine the next steps and scale for PL training for staff members and assessment administration to students. Georgia United Credit Union will be partnering with the Dekalb County School District's Department of Early Learning and Pre-K Programs to expand our Financial Literacy initiative across all Pre-K (3&4) classrooms during the 2025-2026 school year. A program will be held at the Early Learning Center on Wednesday, October 8th to support the check presentation to expand the initiative. Our new initiative called the **Cradle Through Kindergarten Campaign** will launch this year with our **Faith Leaders' Summit** that scheduled for Friday, October 10th. Dr. Phillips attended the **John Lewis ES – Mural Unveiling Program** on Monday, September 8th. Also, Dr. Phillips helped to facilitate the virtual Waterford parent meeting on Thursday, September 25th for our district stakeholders. The (SOR) professional learning session #1 concluded on Wednesday, September 10th. Additional training sessions will continue to occur during the months of October 2025 – May 2026 on Science of Reading – Phase II.

Professional Learning Opportunities

The Early Learning/Pre-K Department has worked diligently during the month of September to offer support to our Pre-K (3&4) staff members with frontloading instructional non-negotiables, auditing student files, attending MTSS meeting, processing class orders, etc. Additional professional learning (PL) opportunities for current Pre-K (3&4) teachers and paraprofessionals will be offered in the months of October 2025 – May 2026 on via the topics of Science of Reading – PL Phase II on Oral Language, Phonological Awareness, and Vocabulary. The 1st session of the (SOR) training session took place on Wednesday, September 10th and the Waterford onboarding training sessions took place on Tuesday, September 16th – Thursday, September 18th. The 2nd (SOR) training session will take place on Wednesday, October 1st. These excellent (PL) opportunities for staff members are aligned with the DCSD Strategic Plan and the DCSD MIRACLES Framework for Continuous Improvement.

Department Highlights

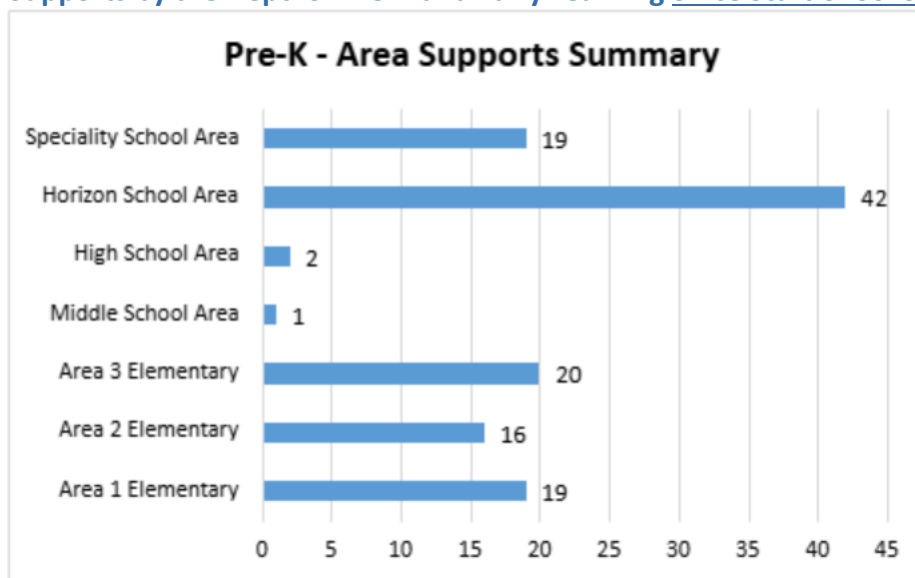
The Department of Early Learning and Pre-K Programs will launch the Waterford supplemental resource across the district to all Pre-K (3&4) beginning on Wednesday, October 1st. This program enhancement was Board approved at our August meeting and onboarding training for teachers took place on Tuesday, September 16th – Thursday, September 18th. A virtual Waterford parent meeting was held on Thursday, September 25th for district stakeholders. This wonderful instructional resource supports various content areas ranging from Literacy, Math, Social Studies,

and STEAM. Additionally, this instructional resource provides a platform that support teachers and paraprofessionals with planning a plethora of instructional activities that are age appropriate and aligned to the GELDS standards and Frog Street Curriculum that's embedded within their weekly lesson plans. Also, Pre-K (3&4) lead teachers and paraprofessionals will continue to receive PL training centered around the Science of Reading (SOR) – Phase II on the topics of developing a deeper understanding of Oral Language, Phonological Awareness, and Vocabulary development with young scholars. The training sessions will run concurrently from September 2025 – May 2026. The DeKalb County School District will recognize GA Pre-K Week via the reading of a Proclamation at our scheduled Board meeting on Monday, October 6th. Georgia United Credit Union will continue their partnership with the Dekalb County School District's Department of Early Learning and Pre-K Programs to expand our Financial Literacy initiative across all Pre-K (3&4) classrooms during the 2025-2026 school year. A program will be held at the Early Learning Center on Wednesday, October 8th to support the check presentation to expand the initiative The Cradle Through Kindergarten Campaign will officially launch this year with our Faith Leaders' Summit that is scheduled for Friday, October 10th.

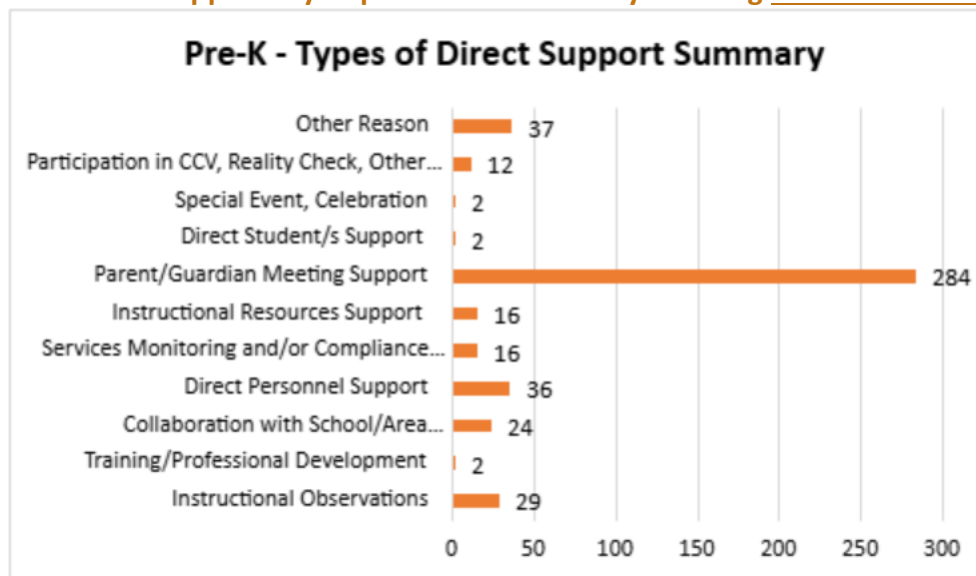




Direct School Supports by the Dept. of Pre-K and Early Learning Since Start of School Year



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

The Gifted Education Department kicked off the month of September by checking in on a few friends (students) at their respective schools (Stoneview, Lithonia HS, and Sagamore Hills) that were new to the district to see how they were settling in and seeing how we could support.



Vendors from Riverside Insights presented their findings and recommendations to the DeKalb County Board of Education Board Members during its monthly board meeting. Riverside Insights conducted a case study on DeKalb County School District's gifted screening practices being used for gifted evaluation. The data showed in their study that due to the expansion opportunities offered in the district's gifted screening process yielded significant gains for all students that were assessed with CogAT and/or IOWA increased the district's percentage for newly gifted identified students in all subgroups.

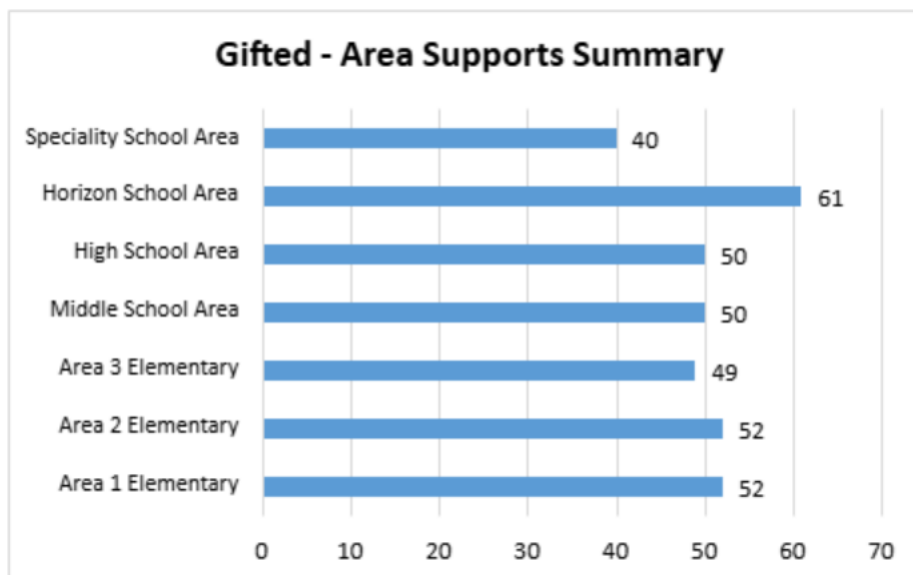
Senior Coordinator, Mrs. Donyell Atkinson along with the Assessment Department joined forces in conducting a training session entitled, *CogAT/IOWA Gifted Eligibility Assessments Workshop* on September 3, 2025 for all local school test coordinators and gifted liaisons to better understand the purpose and importance of the assessments used in the districtwide identification process to include the available Saturday Assessments Administration rollout and expectations.



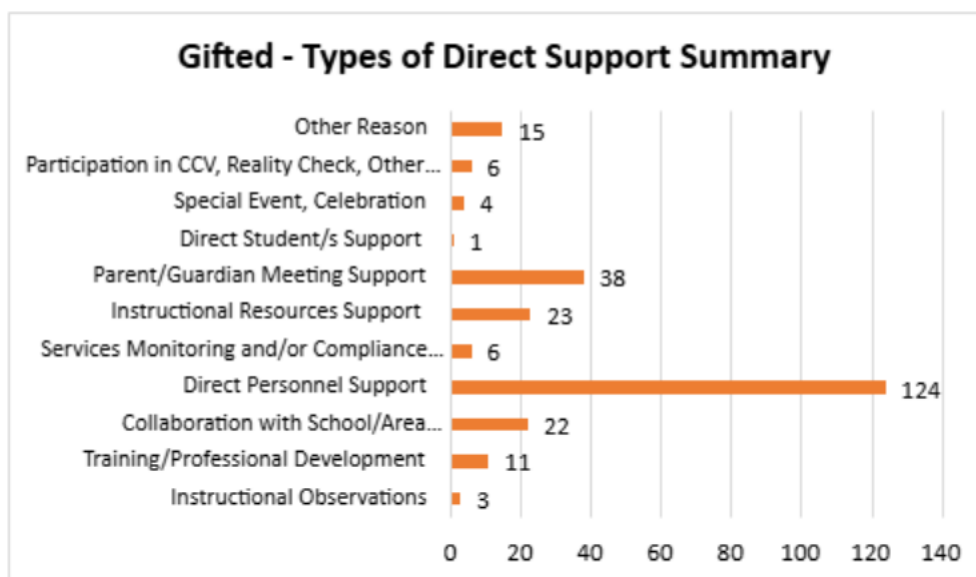
In aligning with this year's MIRACLE priority, the gifted education department debuted its first of five Lead by Example professional learning series entitled, *Advocating for Gifted Education: A Teacher's Perspective* on Tuesday, September 9, 2025. The purpose of this session was to empower educators to advocate effectively for gifted education by dispelling persistent myths, uncovering barriers, and equipping teachers with evidence-based strategies that can be applied immediately in classrooms. By centering a teacher's perspective, the session emphasizes that advocacy for gifted students is not an administrative afterthought, but an essential part of equitable instruction.

The district's gifted endorsement program officially began in September. This is a 200-hour program where teachers earn gifted certification from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC). There are currently 180 candidates enrolled in one of the six cohorts of the program. One program facilitator wrote, "My true passion lies in challenging students, inspiring creativity, and helping teachers feel confident in differentiating instruction for all learners. This course is not just about meeting state requirements; it is also about preparing students for success. It's about equipping you with tools, strategies, and confidence to create spaces where gifted students feel seen, challenged, and valued. My goal is to make this a supportive and engaging learning experience for you." One candidate wrote, "I am in Week 3 and have obtained some wonderful resources to utilize in my classroom." Another added, "The course seems exciting."

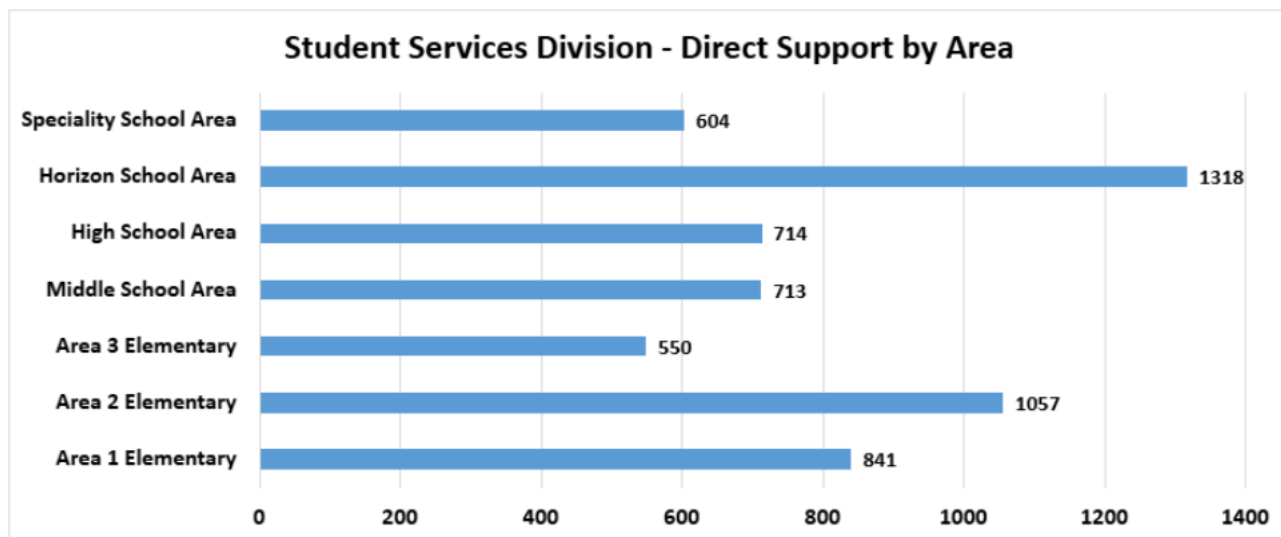
Direct School Supports by the Gifted Education Team Since the Start of the School Year



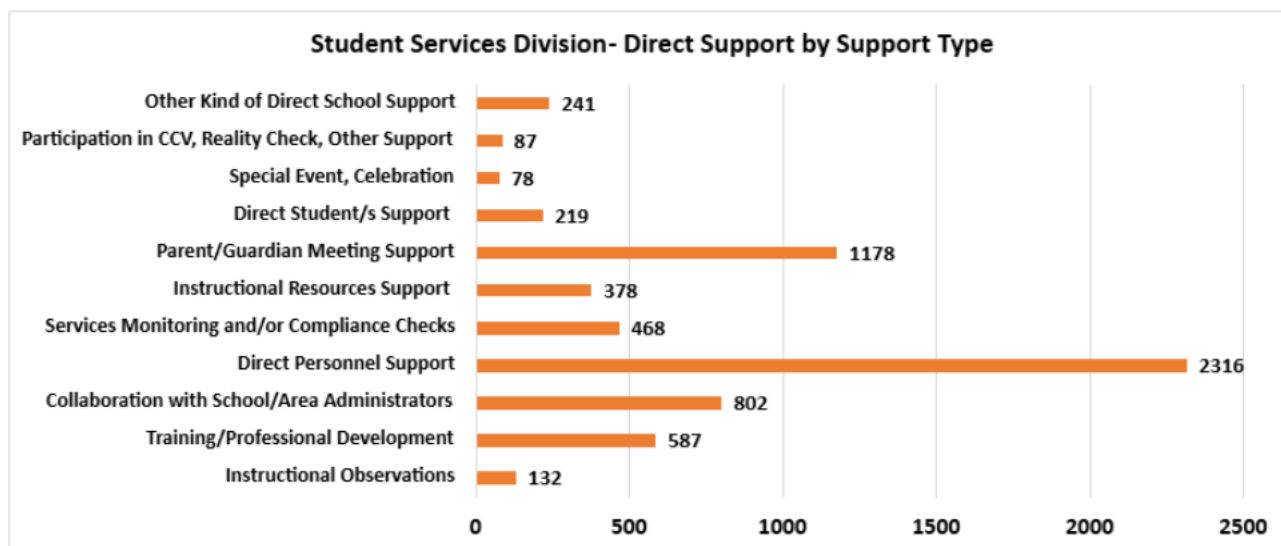
Types of Direct School Supports by Gifted Education Team Since the Start of the School Year



Direct School Supports by Division of Student Services' Personnel Since 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

DeKalb Has Made History Again

On September 30, 2025, DeKalb County School District made history for the second year in a row by increasing the graduation rate to 81.24% for the class of 2025. This represents a 5.7% increase since Dr. Horton became Superintendent in 2023, marking the highest growth in a decade. Dr. Horton and Dr. Richard Woods, State Superintendent, congratulated the District and students on their accomplishments. With targeted strategies and interventions being implemented by many staff members within the Division of Wrap Around Services, the impact was demonstrated not only through graduation rates but also in the number of students with 4E Plans (over 6,500) and the attainment of scholarships and grants (\$210 million). Various staff, including Student Engagement Coaches, Senior Advisor Liaisons, School Counselors, Post-Secondary Transition Specialists, and many other support personnel and external agencies, collaborated to help each senior meet their post-secondary options once graduating from DeKalb County School District. We are proud of the Class of 2025 and there is more yet to come!



Dr. Richard Woods, State Superintendent



Dr. B. Cunningham, previous Principal, and Mrs. Gibson, Interim Principal, Cross Keys HS

The Mural at John Robert Lewis Elementary School

John Robert Lewis Elementary School, named in honor of the late Congressman John R. Lewis, unveiled a mural dedicated to the man who got into “good trouble” while fighting for the rights of all people. The amazing mural depicted Congressman Lewis with students of all creeds and colors.

It was a delight to meet the artist, Aysha Pennerman, who designed the mural depicting John Lewis holding hands with children, celebrating his love for youth and his dedication to their future.



Artist, Aysha Pennerman



Principal McMillan, Dr. Horton, and Executive Cabinet

Brick Wall Installation at Fernbank Science Center

The DeKalb Foundation, in conjunction with the Fernbank Science Center, held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Thursday, September 25, 2025. It was attended by DeKalb County School District staff, Dr. Horton, Superintendent, Executive Cabinet, DeKalb Foundation, and other community members who contributed bricks to the wall installation. Everyone had a wonderful time enjoying the brunch and finding their brick along the beautiful walkway. The Brick Wall Installation helps raise funds to give grants to teachers and students within the DeKalb County School District. There is still room for additional brick donations, and the DeKalb Foundation is eager to explore further opportunities to provide grants.



Student Advancement Department

Twelve newly hired Senior Advisor Liaisons recently completed a comprehensive two-week training program led by our Post-Secondary Transition Specialists in collaboration with Dr. Mona Reynolds, Senior Coordinator of Student Advancement. The training focused on the four E's of post-secondary planning: **Enrollment, Enlistment, Entrepreneurship, and Employment**.

Throughout the eight-day session, participants engaged in a series of in-depth activities designed to equip them with the knowledge and tools necessary to support students in their post-secondary journeys. The training featured presentations from various key stakeholders, including members of the Senior Advisor Team, representatives from WorkSource DeKalb, and our Human Resources Division.

In addition, through a collaboration with the Social Work Department, the advisors received training on critical federal mandates, including child abuse prevention, human trafficking awareness, suicide prevention, and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

A highlight of the training was the **Post-Secondary PUSH Plan Ceremony**, during which the advisors were formally recognized with a graduation cord and certificate, symbolizing their readiness to support the Class of 2026.

To reinforce their learning, the advisors participated in two days of shadowing and conference modeling. They were also introduced to their respective school principals ahead of their campus assignments. By the conclusion of the program, each advisor demonstrated they are truly **on PAR—Prepared, Able, and Ready** to make a meaningful impact.



New Senior Advisors - September 2025



Senior Advisors Identifying Steps to College Enrollment

School Counseling

SEL Lesson Modeling by School Counseling Coordinator & Mental Health Coordinator

Counseling Coordinator Dr. Natasha Moon, in collaboration with the School Leadership Division and Mental Health Coordinator Dr. Candice Norris-Brown, delivered a vaping awareness and mental health presentation to more than 200 seventh-grade students at Cedar Grove Middle School. The presentation addressed the dangers of vaping, the rising rates of adolescent use, and how vaping products are marketed to youth through appealing flavors and disguised appearances resembling everyday items such as pens and markers. Students were also introduced to positive alternatives and encouraged to make healthy, informed decisions.



Second Step Training

Counselors Strengthen SEL Skills Through Second Step Training. More than 100 DeKalb County School District counselors participated in a virtual professional learning session on the Second Step platform, held on September 17–18, and sponsored by the Counseling Department. The training was facilitated by Zachary Trails, Client Support Specialist with Second Step, and offered in multiple sessions to ensure accessibility for all counselors.

The professional learning provided an in-depth review of the platform for returning counselors while introducing new counselors to effective strategies for integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into their daily practice. Key topics included accessing the platform through Clever, navigating SEL lessons, updates, and themes for the 2025–2026 school year, Tier II lessons and interventions, and resources designed to strengthen parent engagement. One counselor summed up the value of the training by noting in the chat, *“This was good stuff—great additional resources that will help me better support our scholars.”*



School Counselor Training- How to Enter Student Transfer Grades

Student Advancement Counseling Coordinators provided a comprehensive overview of the transfer credit entry process in Infinite Campus, outlining the required steps for counselors and data clerks, including document collection, form completion, accurate entry, and collaboration.

Step-by-step process of entering transfer credits, covering document preparation, required fields, course selection, scoring, and transcript updates, while also offering troubleshooting tips. Both emphasized the importance of running the HOPE Invalid Transcript Detail Report and generating parchment transcripts to identify and correct errors for HOPE eligibility and graduation compliance. Coordinators clarified the use of the DeKalb County School District transfer credit form for both high school and middle school counselors, emphasizing the importance of consistent documentation and the timely uploading of signed forms. The group also discussed naming conventions for transfer credits, recommending consistency between using “XFER” or spelling out “Transfer” to ensure clarity on transcripts.



COUNSELOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Counselors should review official transcripts and course descriptions to determine if the courses are equivalent to the approved courses listed in the **GA DOE Shift/Case State Funded Courses**.
- Counselor completes the **DCSD Transfer Credit Form** with awarding transfer credit details.
- Counselor will upload completed DCSD Transfer Credit Form to Person Documents for Counseling Data Clerk to enter transfer credits onto the DCSD transcript. Data Clerk can view instructions on **DCSD Transfer Credit Form and Guide** through the Adding Transfer Credits Tab.
- GPA/Academic Plan will refresh overnight in Infinite Campus.
- Once the transfer grades have been entered, the Counselor reviews transfer credit entries on the DCSD Transcript for accuracy.**



A screenshot of a Google Sheet titled "DCSD Transfer Credit Form". The sheet is divided into several sections. At the top, there are fields for "Student Last Name:", "Student First Name:", "9th Grade Entry Date:", "Current School:", "DCSD Student ID #:", and "Colort Year:". Below these is a section labeled "Transfer School Details" which includes columns for "School Year", "School Name", "Grade Level", "Semester (Terms)", "Final Grade (Numeric Grade)", "Course Name", "Course Number", "Course Name", "Course Number", "Final Grade (Numeric Grade)", and "GPA Weight". There are also checkboxes for "Semester Course was taken" and "Numerical grade student". A sidebar on the left indicates that rows 6 through 13 must be completed by Rita Givt. The bottom of the sheet has tabs for "Transfer Credit Form", "How To Use Form", "Semester Dates", "SOP - Transfer of Credits", "Adding Transfer Credits", "9th Grade Entry Date", "Updating Y Non-BOC Courses", and "Entering College". On the right side of the screen, there is a vertical column of circular profile icons for various users, including Angela P., Mimi M., Hatcher, Flyline R., BW Bridget, BP Beverly, CS Cynthia, Chantel, CK Alicia L., Caprice, WI Wanda L., GJ Gretchen, IS Isis Scott, Latoshia, Rhonda, Rhonda, Starz, SW Samir, and +24 others.

Middle School- Adding Transfer Grades

Supporting Redan High School College Fair

On September 23, 2025, Redan High School hosted a College and Career Day event from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. in the school gymnasium. Students in grades 9–12 participated in one of two sessions, engaging with over 40 colleges, universities, military representatives, and career organizations. During the event, several students were also presented with on-the-spot college acceptance letters, making the day both informative and celebratory.



Drug Prevention Presentations

Drug prevention efforts continue across the district, with 55 school counselors submitting requests through the Prevention Liaison Services Request Form to schedule services. On September 25th, Northside Hospital's Kenny Haney delivered a vaping prevention presentation at Chamblee High School, reaching all sophomore students from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

On September 23rd, three Drug Prevention Partners presented at Stephenson Middle School's PTSA meeting, including the GANG, who facilitated a "Hidden in Plain Sight" mock bedroom activity that allowed parents to practice identifying familiar hiding places for drug paraphernalia in a typical home environment. Additional drug prevention presentations are being coordinated with the DEA, with six school events scheduled in the coming weeks:

- October 9 - Smoke Rise ES
- October 10 - DeKalb Early College Academy
- October 16 - Cedar Grove MS
- October 17 - Cedar Grove HS
- October 20 - Miller Grove HS
- October 24 - Lithonia MS

Operation Recognition Veteran High School Diploma Program

Operation Recognition is a national-level veteran high school diploma program that awards honorary high school diplomas to honorably discharged veterans who did not complete their education due to military service during specific conflicts, primarily World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. The program recognizes their sacrifices and provides them with the formal education credentials they missed.

On Wednesday, September 3, 2025, Mickey Reid, U.S. Navy Veteran, Vietnam, U.S.S. Julius A. Furur, was presented with his high school diploma from Lithonia High School during a

commencement ceremony held at the Atlanta VA Clinic.

During the ceremony, Mr. Mickey Reid received a promotion and was offered full-time employment with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. He was recognized for receiving his P.U.S.H. Cord, which symbolizes meeting the requirements for graduating with his High School diploma and a viable 4E Employment Plan. Mr. Reid is also planning to attend Georgia Piedmont Technical College.

Director Denise Revels

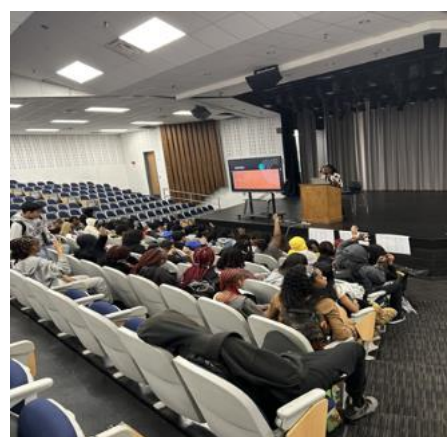
Wrap Around and Support Services

Attendance Specialist: Redan and Stephenson High School Attendance Check-in Groups

The implementation of small group attendance interventions at Stephenson and Redan High School represents a targeted and collaborative effort to address chronic absenteeism among students. The groups are organized based on student attendance data from the 2024–2025 school year, specifically focusing on those identified in Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4. Both schools facilitate monthly meetings to maintain consistency and provide ongoing support. By dividing groups according to grade level and creating structured spaces for student engagement, these interventions are designed to increase accountability while also fostering a supportive environment for students struggling with attendance.

The Redan High School intervention approach incorporates a team-based model involving multiple staff members, including the social worker, assistant principal, student engagement coach, and MTSS coordinator. With 133 students, each staff member is responsible for 10 students and two grade-level groups, with meetings occurring during the RISE period. Initially, students participated in a general session where the student attendance meeting PowerPoint was presented, followed by an opportunity for questions. Afterward, students were introduced to their smaller groups and designated leaders. The structure of these meetings emphasizes open discussions about barriers to attendance, while also incorporating motivational elements, such as snacks and competitions, to incentivize participation.

Stephenson High School has adopted a slightly different model, with smaller and more intimate groups, each comprising 56 students, led by a social worker and an attendance specialist. Students identified in Tiers 2 and 3 are pulled during their study hall period or before lunch, allowing for minimal disruption to their instructional time. Following the general presentation of the attendance PowerPoint, students are provided with opportunities for individualized, one-on-one conversations. This personalized component enables a deeper exploration of attendance barriers



and provides students with a safe space to share their concerns directly. The smaller scale of these groups allows for more effective tailoring of interventions to individual needs.

The overall goal of these interventions is to help students progress in attendance tiers, avoid placement on the high flyer list, and ultimately establish consistent patterns of school attendance. By combining structured educational components with supportive discussions and incentives, these groups aim to address both the practical and emotional barriers that contribute to absenteeism. Furthermore, creating consistent monthly check-ins establishes accountability and signals to students that attendance is a shared priority across school staff. In the long term, these efforts are expected not only to improve daily attendance rates but also to foster stronger connections between students and their support systems, ensuring that they feel equipped and encouraged to attend school regularly.

Mandated Reporter Training for DeKalb County Public Safety SROs

Lead Social Worker Katina Watts provided mandated reporter training for School Resource Officers (SROs). This professional development emphasized the critical role SROs play in protecting students and staff, while reinforcing the district's commitment to safety, accountability, and collaboration across teams.



The session addressed several key topics related to student safety and well-being:

- **Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting:** Reinforcing the legal and ethical responsibility of SROs as mandated reporters, with strategies for identifying and reporting concerns.
- **Suicide Prevention and Mental Health:** Providing guidance on recognizing risk factors, warning signs, and referral pathways to support students in crisis and address broader mental health needs.
- **Attendance and Truancy:** Highlighting the DCSD attendance protocol and chronic absenteeism as a safety and engagement concern, and its importance as an early warning indicator.
- **McKinney-Vento Awareness:** Building awareness of student homelessness, federal protections, and ways SROs can help identify and support families.

Ms. Watts emphasized that collaboration among SROs, social workers, and school staff is essential to maintaining safe and supportive schools. When professionals work together, concerns are addressed holistically, fostering trust, consistency, and more effective interventions for students and families.

The training led by Katina Watts highlights the proactive steps DeKalb County is taking to ensure that SROs are well-prepared to serve as both protectors and advocates. By equipping officers with the tools and knowledge necessary for mandated reporting, mental health and suicide prevention, attendance, and



homelessness, the district strengthens its commitment to student safety and well-being. The session reinforced a vital truth: protecting students is a shared responsibility, and **we are stronger together**.



The SAFE Center at Lithonia High School has expanded to offer haircuts to students regularly. Once parents sign the permission, a master barber offers them the haircut of their choosing. Studies show that students with high self-esteem are more likely to become engaged in school, react positively when faced with challenges, and possess a “can-do” attitude, which leads to improved academic performance.



The SAFE Center at Towers High School has had its second complete harvest, which includes okra, green beans, onions, watermelon, tomatoes, basil, cucumbers, lettuce, and eggplant. The school has also been awarded a grant from Action for Healthy Kids and the Atlanta Youth Falcons Fund, which focuses on the wellness of the whole child. This grant will provide the school with an opportunity to create practices that ensure both students and staff are healthy, safe, and engaged.



Green beans and okra from the outdoor classroom in the SAFE Center at Towers High School.

Student Health Services



School nurses received First Aid/CPR training on September 19, 2025. This critical training equips school nurses with the ability to save lives, fulfill professional responsibilities, and enhance overall school safety.

Key points for First Aid/CPR training for school nurses:

- School nurses are often the first medical responders, and CPR training ensures they can act quickly and effectively until emergency medical services (EMS) arrive.
- School nurses trained in CPR/First Aid significantly increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for students, staff, or visitors experiencing a medical emergency.
- Maintaining current certification demonstrates adherence to professional standards, provides liability protection, and ensures readiness to deliver evidence-based care.
- School nurses often serve as health leaders within schools, training, or guiding staff in emergency preparedness.

Director Dr. Darnell Logan

Student Relations

DeKalb County Juvenile Court Collaboration and Partnership

The DeKalb County Juvenile Court operates two accountability court programs that provide

intensive support and intervention for youth offenders:

Journey Program – Juvenile Mental Health Court

The Journey Program provides treatment and support for youth whose offenses are connected to mental illness. Currently, six students are receiving services through this program.

Rebound Program – Juvenile Drug Treatment Court

The Rebound Program is designed to support youth on probation in maintaining a drug-free lifestyle. At present, 10 students are enrolled in this program.

Students from both programs who are enrolled in the DeKalb County School District also receive academic and behavioral support from the district's Student Engagement Coach (Juvenile Justice). Using the Check & Connect model, the coach provides individualized academic intervention through regular monitoring of attendance, behavior, and grades.

Dr. Logan represents the school district in these accountability courts, attending four sessions each month. Rebound Court convenes on the second and fourth Tuesday, while Journey Court meets on the second and fourth Thursday.

Restorative Practices and Verbal De-escalation Training

Training Update – To Date (2025–26 Academic Year)

As of now, our district has made significant progress in strengthening staff capacity around restorative practices and verbal de-escalation. To date, **1,531 staff members** have been trained in **MindSet Verbal De-escalation**, equipping them with strategies to defuse challenging situations and maintain safe, supportive learning environments.

Additionally, **344 staff members** have completed the **MindSet Verbal De-escalation Training of Trainers (TOT)**, enabling them to serve as trainers and expand the reach of this critical skill set across schools. Furthermore, **246 staff members** have completed the **Restorative Practices Foundations two-day training**, laying the groundwork for stronger school cultures rooted in relationships, accountability, and connection.

These numbers reflect our ongoing commitment to providing staff with the tools necessary to engage students effectively, prevent escalation, and foster positive school climates districtwide.

Overview of the Disconnect to Reconnect Walk-Through Observation Form

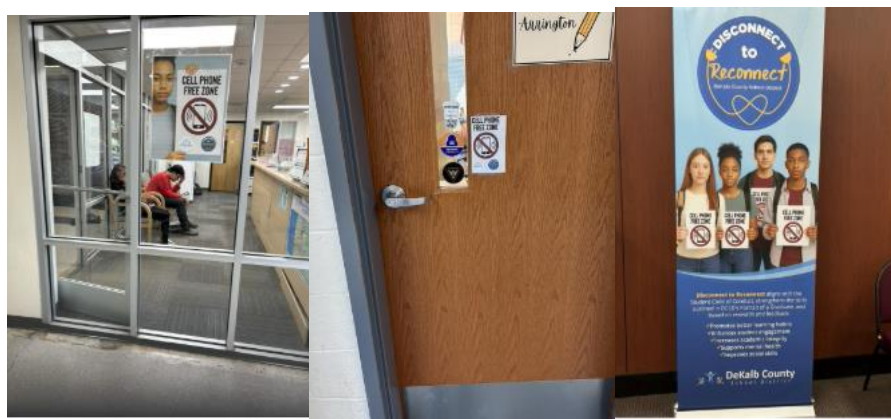
The **Disconnect to Reconnect Walk-Through Observation Form** is used to monitor schoolwide compliance with the Distraction-Free Education Act and the district's Disconnect to Reconnect



initiative. The form captures both quantitative data (e.g., percentage of compliant students, classrooms observed, and infractions) and qualitative notes on school culture, staff consistency, and student engagement.

The PBIS Team and Culture & Climate Coordinators will complete the form during monthly school walk-throughs. The collected data will be compiled into a district dashboard to track trends, identify schools that require additional support, and highlight best practices. Feedback will be shared with principals and district leadership to guide training and communication.

Over the school year, this tool will provide ongoing accountability, document progress, and measure the overall impact of Disconnect to Reconnect on reducing distractions and improving student focus.



Disconnect to Reconnect Signage in Schools

PBIS Coordinator Brandy Woolridge and PBIS District Coaches Shakira Bates-Shaw, Brian Bryant, Marcia Bryant-Cornelison, Dr. Dia Harden, Eva Landers, Kimmie Pryor, and Jason Townsend

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS)

They came, they saw, they conquered! Congratulations to Stoneview Elementary School! 🎉😊🍌

Stoneview Elementary School has been selected to participate in the PBIS Student, Family, and Community Engagement Pilot, an initiative approved by Superintendent Dr. Devon Q. Horton and funded through DCSD Grants & Partnerships. In partnership with *Saving Our Daughters*, which engages local and national celebrities such as Keke Palmer, the program will mentor and educate girls while addressing barriers to success. Stoneview's PBIS Team, along with teachers, staff, and families, will lead implementation, with the school serving as a pilot site for future expansion across the district. Special recognition is



Pictured: Dr. Keisha Battle, Principal, Stoneview Elementary School & Mrs. Marcia Bryant-Cornelison, PBIS District Coach, Department of Student Relations

extended to Dr. Keisha N. Battle, Principal; Mrs. Marcia Bryant-Cornelison, Student Relations PBIS District Coach; and Dr. Marcia Oglesby, Director of Grants and Partnerships, for their leadership in applying for this grant.

On August 21, 2025, the PBIS District Team trained more than 60 MTSS-PBIS school staff members on utilizing SWIS Drill Down and solution development strategies to analyze and address problem behaviors.

Metro RESA's Whole Child Supports Regional Meeting, held on September 4, 2025, brought together Georgia school system District Implementation Leads (DILs) with decision-making authority who support PBIS/School Climate, MTSS, Wraparound/Well-Being Services, and Teaching & Learning. During this session, participants received updates from GaDOE, engaged in collaborative planning activities, and developed next steps to support MTSS-PBIS schools under the new integrated model. DeKalb County School District representatives included Dr. Kishia Towns (Chief of Wrap Around Services), Dr. Darnell Logan (Director of Student Relations), Mrs. Denise Revels (Director of Wrap Around and Support Services), Mr. Christopher Key (Executive Director of Student Advancement), Ms. Monique Kimbell (Director of MTSS), and Brandy Woolridge (PBIS District Coordinator).

The PBIS District Team received a commitment from thirteen principals confirming their schools' participation in MTSS training: McNair Discovery Learning Academy, Evansdale Elementary, Montgomery Elementary, Henderson Mill Elementary, Dresden Elementary, Avondale Elementary, Browns Mill Elementary, Princeton Elementary, Stoneview Elementary, Bob Mathis Elementary, Woodward Elementary, Dunaire Elementary, and Montclair Elementary. This initiative directly aligns with the district's 2025–2026 PBIS MIRACLE Priority Goal to train 10 of the 60 PBIS schools on the GaDOE Multi-Tiered System of Support (GaMTSS) Tier I Team Training by June 2026, and to ensure that 75% of all schools (104 of 138) are implementing GaMTSS/PBIS by 2029.

Administrator Dr. Quentin Fretwell

Student Relations

District Due Process Hearings (DDPH):

- Scheduled: **35**
- Canceled/Withdrawn by School: **5**
- Dismissed: **0**
- Manifested: **5**
- Discipline Team Meetings (DTM): **12**

Board Appeals Presented: 0

State Appeals Presented: 0

Students Cleared to Attend DeKalb County Schools: 37