



Academic Report – July 2025

Chief Dr. Triscilla Weaver

Access and Opportunity

This month, we finalized the **Field Trip Guidance** document, allowing us to close out **MIRACLES Priority officially**. After completing all final reviews, we submitted the document to the Senior Cabinet members. Moving forward, our focus will shift to implementation logistics—specifically, how to ensure a shared understanding of the document components among school-based leaders.

As part of our continued efforts to share the findings from the **Access and Opportunity Audit** with district and school-based leaders, we facilitated presentations for principals and assistant principals from each area during the **Summer Leadership Conference**. We also had the opportunity to present the findings to members of the **Curriculum and Instruction Division**. These engagement efforts will continue throughout July with various district-level departments.

Following the Summer Leadership Conference, our division participated in the **Access and Opportunity Division Retreat**, which offered our department the opportunity to learn alongside fellow division members. Conference facilitators guided us through learning experiences centered on deepening our commitment to **H-PRIDE**. The overarching theme, *“Who you are is how you lead,”* prompted meaningful reflection on how we can strengthen our interpersonal interactions, communication, and leadership practices.

Executive Director Myss Johnson-Jelks

Athletics

The month of June has been full of preparation for the upcoming school year. I’ve met with our Operations and Facilities teams to close out the current year and review both major projects and routine maintenance scheduled for the summer. We’ve been working diligently to complete Standard Operating Procedures and finalize major plans for Athletics for the 2025-2026 school year.

Throughout the month, we’ve hosted several camps and clinics for elementary, middle, and high school students across various sports. I also had the opportunity to attend the district Leadership Retreat, followed by the Access and Opportunity Division Retreat. These gatherings allowed our department to collaborate and grow alongside our colleagues across the division.

In addition, I attended the Athletics Facilities Summit in Austin, Texas, where I gained valuable insight and connected with professionals in the field. The experience provided fresh ideas and perspectives that will support our continued growth and innovation in Athletics.

Director Brandan Lane**Athletics**

Throughout June, I have worked closely with our partners at Northside Hospital to ensure we are ready to place athletic trainers at all 19 high schools for the upcoming school year. These efforts have included evaluating staffing models, assessing individual school needs, and making sure support systems are aligned for effective implementation. Internally, I've collaborated with our staff and Executive Director to enhance our best practices, revise and update our standard operating procedures (SOPs), and ensure our policies reflect current district priorities and compliance standards. Also, the Executive Director and I continue to collaborate with Facilities and Operations to ensure that our sites are safe and up to date, prioritizing student safety above all else.

Additionally, I attended a professional conference in Austin, where I networked with directors and educational leaders from across the country. I also participated in the district-wide leadership conference and the divisional leadership retreat, both of which provided deep insight into effective leadership strategies and priorities for the upcoming year. The insight I gained will help form improvements within our department. I've also been actively involved in multiple district-hosted athletic camps at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, helping facilitate operations and ensuring everything runs smoothly. I've also engaged with several potential community partners who have expressed strong interest in supporting our athletic programs and furthering opportunities for growth and innovation within the district.

Director Kina M. Champion**School Innovation**

In June, the School Innovation Department prioritized several key activities related to the oversight and management of charter schools. This included completing end-of-year, district-mandated tasks for schools' special education programs and state grants; responding to information requests related to the ongoing Georgia authorizer evaluation; and partnering with the Finance Department to prepare FY26 initial allocations for charter schools. Additionally, the department met with leadership from both DeKalb PATH Academy and DeKalb Preparatory Academy to review progress on their respective corrective action plans. The FY26 Department Services Guide for charter schools was revised and finalized for publication during the week of June 30, 2025. The team also collaborated with the Accounting Department to launch a new general billing system to support charter schools' buy-back services. Finally, a proposal was submitted for the 2025 Annual Convening of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA).

In preparation for the 2025–2026 Innovative Solutions Lab (ISL) cycle, the team launched several initiatives to support a successful rollout. Updates were made to the ISL website, promotional materials were refreshed, and slide decks were revised to reflect current priorities. Information

sessions were scheduled to engage prospective applicants and provide insight into the upcoming cycle. To further support applicants, the department facilitated a professional learning session for district staff on June 24, 2025, titled “Unlocking Tools for Strategic Problem Solving: Situation Appraisal.” The session was designed to help educators refine their ability to identify and define problems of practice, laying the foundation for stronger ISL project proposals. In addition, the team formally closed out all remaining projects from the 2024–2025 ISL cohorts, laying the groundwork for more impactful project proposals.

The School Governance team increased efforts to recruit candidates for the Principal Advisory Council (PAC) elections and completed final compliance checks for all schools. Preparations were also finalized for the summer orientation sessions for new principals, focused on PAC elections, compliance requirements, and expectations for meaningful engagement. Two virtual sessions and one in-person session will be offered to ensure accessibility for all attendees. Lastly, the department continued to collaborate with the leadership of Kittredge Magnet School, Freedom Middle School, and Tapestry Public Charter School in preparation for their Fall 2025 Spotlight Schools visits, which will highlight innovative practices in implementing the Six Essential Systems.

Executive Director Sarita Smith

Student Assignment

This month has been centered around preparing for the upcoming school year across multiple systems and teams. The Student Assignment team has been actively configuring the Infinite Campus and school choice systems and supporting families through the registration process.

To improve address verification, we are implementing the CLEAR system to validate family residency data. Communications were sent to families whose addresses appeared misaligned when comparing Infinite Campus and CLEAR data. As expected, this generated considerable feedback and confusion. In response, we are collaborating with the Communications, Legal, and IT departments to address concerns, clarify security protocols, and ensure the legality and transparency of this new process. We have designated this year as a data collection and support year as we introduce and refine this approach in partnership with families.

In parallel, the Student Assignment Planning (SAP) Summer Institute is concluding with strong momentum. The institute has served as an invaluable forum to test mapping concepts aligned with SAP’s guiding principles. We continue to work closely with the Operations team to prepare tools and map resources in anticipation of fall planning and reimagination work.

Our registration team has also been fully engaged—supporting schools without summer registrars, hosting centralized registration hubs, and analyzing address verification trends using CLEAR data. We held our second in-person registration meeting this month to share updates, express appreciation, and address questions. The registrars were highly engaged and expressed gratitude for the continued support.

Director Dr. Char-Shenda Covington**Student Assignment**

In June, the Student Assignment team continued its efforts to increase access and opportunity and to focus on family-centered service by launching four summer registration hubs at John Lewis Elementary, Martin Luther King Jr. High, McNair Middle, and Smoke Rise Elementary. We also provided Saturday hours at John Lewis and MLK Jr. High to help families during the pre-registration period. Additionally, we created an all-in-one Principals Playbook that succinctly outlines school choice policies and processes. The playbook will provide principals with an easy-to-use resource to guide their work and support a consistent application of enrollment procedures across schools and families.

To begin preparing for the 2025–2026 school year, the Office of Student Assignment has started transitioning from its previous lottery platform to SchoolMint, based on data and feedback from families who struggled to access and use the last platform. We have also started creating a calendar for FY 26 and, in the process of completing this task, have reflected on our planning process and identified the need for improved collaboration with our partners in the Department of Finance. We have started meeting with Talent Acquisition Managers to improve understanding and align the interpretation of the Employee Student Transfer Regulation JBCC(E). This team met a significant goal: the successful completion of our MIRACLES priorities, highlighted by aligning the lottery process with the staffing and funding planning timeline and creating summer registration hubs.

Executive Director Dr. Loukisha Walker**Student Mentorships and Partnerships**

In June, I had the opportunity to attend the DCSD Summer Leadership Conference, an energizing and reflective experience that brought together educational leaders across the district. The conference featured both internal and external keynote speakers who shared insights on leadership, literacy, district accomplishments, and the importance of aligning vision with action. Sessions encouraged leaders to examine their personal values and impact on students, staff, and the broader school community. The conference served as a meaningful space to realign goals and prepare for the upcoming school year with a renewed purpose. I also participated in the Access and Opportunity Leadership Summit, which focused on the human-centered skills necessary for effective leadership and advocacy. Key areas of growth included strategies for delivering exceptional customer service, maintaining composure and tone during conflict, practicing reflective listening, and engaging in constructive feedback conversations. These sessions not only reinforced the importance of emotional intelligence in educational leadership but also aligned with SMP's mission to support students and staff with empathy, consistency, and professionalism. SMP also worked to secure an MOU with another partner to utilize for FACETIME activities.

Additionally, we have completed multiple mural projects via our Climate Improvement Project. Because of time constraints, we asked finance for additional time to allocate to the branding projects associated with the CIP as well. They will be able to begin installation in July 2025. The MIRACLES priority associated with FACE Advocates was closed, and we demonstrated the effectiveness of FACE Advocates and the value they bring to DCSD.

Chief Dr. Candace Alexander

Accountability and Research

Learning Forward Academy – Class of 2026

In July, I traveled to Chicago for our third in-person session of the Learning Forward Academy, where we continued to refine our CCRPI Predictive Model Learning Plan through the lens of equity-centered professional learning and systems implementation. This session provided dedicated time to sharpen our theory of action, deepen alignment with the Standards for Professional Learning, and identify the types of evidence needed to demonstrate progress. I engaged with national peers and facilitators to examine strategies for sustaining change, supporting adult learning, and integrating real-time data into daily instructional decisions. The experience reinforced the strength of our district's approach to blending predictive analytics with collaborative improvement systems. It affirmed our role as a leader in using professional learning to drive instructional impact.

DCSD Scorecards

On July 17, 2025, the Division of Accountability & Research officially launched the DCSD Scorecards, providing school leaders with a powerful, transparent tool to track performance, align school improvement efforts, and engage their communities. The dashboards are designed to mirror the district's KPI framework and support data-informed decision-making at the school level. Additional enhancements are forthcoming and will be included in the January 2026 release. This launch represents a significant milestone in the district's strategy to make performance data more accessible, actionable, and aligned to its core priorities.

Accountability & Research Retreat

On July 24, 2025, the Division of Accountability & Research convened for a leadership retreat under the theme "Mission Possible: From Evidence to Impact." The retreat focused on strengthening internal alignment, reinforcing the Division's vision and core beliefs, and advancing progress on MIRACLES priorities. Participants engaged in collaborative sessions on conflict resolution, systems thinking, and division identity—grounded in a shared commitment to using data to drive equitable outcomes. A dedicated session on change management, co-led by the Chiefs of Accountability and Schools, introduced the "Leading Through Change" framework, emphasizing the six stages of sustainable change and the importance of balancing people, purpose, and process. Team members explored their default leadership styles, reflected on stakeholder needs, and identified next steps to support implementation across departments.





DCSD Convocation

On July 28, 2025, the district kicked off the 2025–2026 school year with our annual Convocation, bringing energy, inspiration, and a strong sense of purpose to staff across the district. Superintendent Dr. Horton opened with a motivating charge to lead with urgency and focus, reminding us that disrupting for excellence starts with bold, intentional action. Giano Caldwell shared a powerful personal story about the role of education in changing lives, inspiring everyone in the room to lead with heart. CEO Lorraine Cochran-Johnson followed with a message about community impact, reinforcing that schools and civic leadership go hand in hand. And DJ Nutty kept the energy high and the crowd engaged, setting the perfect tone for a new year full of possibilities.



Back-to-School Rally

On July 26, 2025, the DeKalb County School District hosted its annual Back-to-School Rally at the Administrative & Instructional Complex, welcoming families under the theme “Disrupting for Excellence: New Levels, New Heights.” The fun-filled event featured free school supplies, live entertainment, a vibrant Fun Zone, health screenings, and a variety of family resources to support a strong start to the new school year. Open to all DCSD families, the rally reinforced the district’s commitment to access, engagement, and joyful connection with the community.

Executive Director Dr. Myisha Warren

Federal Programs

Consolidated LEA Improvement Plan (CLIP)

- The final CLIP was submitted to the GaDOE for approval.

Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP)

- FY26 CSIP Approval emails were sent to 95% of all Title I schools.

Parent & Family Engagement (PFE)

New Teachers Orientation – On July 15, 2025, the DCSD Area Title I Parent Center Facilitators delivered an energetic and engaging presentation for new teachers. This year's session, titled **"From the Bench to the Big Leagues,"** used basketball references aligned with Title I, Part A compliance requirements to equip new teachers with a "Playbook for Success" in Parent and Family Engagement. The session included an icebreaker, a 3-point basketball challenge, and Fast Break Stations designed to help educators become knowledgeable and prioritize families. Our new DCSD teachers are now prepared to guide families and our scholars toward the ultimate goal – Graduation!

Title I & Title II Updates

Coordinators, Accounting Associates, and Budget Specialists met with staff from public, private, and charter schools to discuss the following items. They reviewed these items to ensure they align with the Strategic Plan and the goals set in the Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP).

- Open Purchase Orders
- Summer Travel
- Summer Tutorial Programs
- FY25 Spending Closeout
- Ongoing Training
- Planning for FY26

Additionally, the team supported the review, approval, and payment processing for tutorial and professional learning stipends.

Director Dr. Felicia Rhone

Assessment and Accountability

NAEP Assessment Dates Released for DeKalb Schools

Fourteen schools in the DeKalb County School District have been selected to participate in the 2026 administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP is the

most prominent nationally representative and continuing assessment of what students in the United States know and can do in various subjects. It is administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), within the U.S. Department of Education. Selected schools represent schools across the nation, and their participation provides an accurate picture of student performance. The NAEP 2026 administration will assess students between January 26 and March 20, 2026. The list of DeKalb schools selected for NAEP shows the assessment program for each school. Students will respond to questions in mathematics, reading, civics, or U.S. history; each student will answer only one subject's questions. State and national results will be released as The Nation's Report Card.

District School List

- Barack H. Obama Elementary Magnet School, grade 4, mathematics and reading
- Brockett Elementary School, grade 4, mathematics and reading
- Cedar Grove Middle School, grade 8, mathematics and reading
- Chamblee Middle School, grade 8, mathematics and reading
- Columbia Elementary School, grade 4, mathematics and reading
- Doraville United, grade 4, mathematics and reading
- Evansdale Elementary, grade 4, mathematics and reading
- Hightower Elementary School, grade 4, mathematics and reading
- Mary McLeod Bethune, grade 8, mathematics and reading
- Peachtree Middle School, grade 8, civics and U.S. history
- Stone Mountain Middle School, grade 8, mathematics and reading
- Toney Elementary School, grade 4, mathematics and reading
- Tucker Middle School, grade 8, civics and U.S. history
- Woodward Elementary School, grade 4, mathematics and reading

August 2025 Assessments

The following assessments are scheduled for administration to students during August. These assessments are aligned with district and state requirements and are designed to support instructional planning, monitor student progress, and ensure compliance with accountability measures.

- GKIDS – window opens August 4, 2025
- NWEA MAP – window opens August 11-22, 2025

- LAS Links – window opens on August 11-22, 2025
- FIT GA Pretest – window opens on August 11-September 8, 2025
- Georgia Milestone EOC Mid-Month – window opens August 18-22, 2025
- AMIRA Reading – window opens August 25-September 8, 2025

Professional Learning

The district test coordinators participated in summer national conferences and the GaDOE General Assessment professional learning to stay informed about state-level assessment updates, ensure compliance with current guidelines, and enhance their ability to support area and school test coordinators. The training also fostered collaboration and shared understanding among coordinators, contributing to more effective communication and problem-solving across the district.

- GaDOE State Assessment Training
- GaDOE Georgia Milestone EOC Mid-Month
- NWEA MAP Growth Fusion
- Innovative School Summit
- College Board SAT Suite of Assessments
- Amira Reading Assess

The district assessment coordinators facilitated professional learning for the new area assessment coordinators to ensure a consistent, comprehensive introduction to general assessment policies and procedures across the district. This training will strengthen alignment across all areas and enhance coordinators' capacity to support schools effectively, resulting in improved assessment administration and a deeper understanding of best practices.

- Georgia Assessment Program
- MAP Growth Assessments
- District Benchmarks

Director Dr. Rebecca Braaten

Research, Data, and Evaluation

Research Review Board

The department processed two (2) research requests during July. Both were doctoral research proposals. Three (3) proposals from the spring review cycle are still in the MOU review process. Of the three (3), two (2) were told to submit an MOU based on recommendations from the Research Review Board (RRB), and one (1) had to make edits based on recommendations from Legal.

The deadline to submit a proposal for a Fall review is Monday, August 18, 2025.

Surveys and Online Forms

The department processed twenty (20) electronic online document requests during July. Of those twenty (20), fourteen (14) were online registration/application forms, three (3) were event/training feedback surveys, and three (3) were stakeholder surveys. The electronic online documents were requested by the following divisions/departments:

- Access & Opportunity
- Accountability & Research
- Assessment Administration
- Athletics
- Community Engagement & Innovative Partnerships
- Curriculum & Instruction
- Federal Programs
- Grants and Partnerships
- Research, Data, and Evaluation
- Schools & Leadership

Training

The department facilitated four (4) Excel sessions in July.

- Ctrl + Shift + Awesome: Excel Mastery Unlocked (2 beginner sessions)- July 9, 2025
- Ctrl + Shift + Awesome: Excel Mastery Unlocked (2 intermediate sessions)- July 16, 2025

The department also offered five (5) professional learning opportunities on District PL Day, July 29, 2025. The session topics included:

- Tips for Navigating the District's Research Application Process and Submitting a Successful Research Proposal
- School Climate STAR Rating
- Unlocking Data in the District: Insights for Every School Role
- Data Detective: A Deep Dive into Real School/District Datasets
- Blueprint for Success: Part 1, Prioritizing Program Goals and Outcomes

Data Requests

As we closed out the 2024–2025 school year and prepared for the upcoming 2025–2026 academic year, July has served as a pivotal month of transition. During this time, the department completed seventeen (17) data and dashboard projects supporting both internal and external stakeholders. These projects span a wide range of data types, including attendance, discipline, student demographics, academic performance, and assessments at the local, state, and national levels.

In July, interactive dashboards were finalized to support end-of-year reporting for district initiatives and the GAlEarns professional development literacy course completion. Additionally, we provided key data to external partners such as Communities in Schools and Riverside Insights. Our team continues to collaborate closely with district and school leaders, program directors, and administrators to develop data tools and resources that will support ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programs and initiatives throughout the school year.

Chief Stacy E. Stepney

Curriculum and Instruction

Harvard's Public Education Leadership Project (PELP)

The DeKalb County School District participated in Harvard's Public Education Leadership Project held July 7-11, 2025. The PELP model, as facilitated by the Harvard Business School, Harvard Graduate School of Education, and the Harvard Kennedy School, provided opportunities for district teams to analyze and understand problems of practice directly impacting student, school, and district performance. Through collaborative learning, relevant case studies, and intra-district discovery and planning, DeKalb's team benefited from the PELP Coherence Framework, lessons learned, and experiences related to our problem of practice. The assigned facilitator guided our team through an improvement process that yielded clarity and focus as we refined the problem of practice, developed the theory of action, and mapped out the strategy implementation plan.

Problem of Practice: Equitable Access to High-Quality STEM Education

Our district lacks the coordinated system, curriculum resources, and staff capacity needed to deliver consistent, high-quality STEM learning (instruction that cultivates critical thinking, creativity, innovation, and realistic problem-solving skills) in all schools. School leaders and teachers do not have clear guidance or training to implement practical inquiry-based approaches. This contributes to low student engagement and deepens existing achievement gaps, particularly for underrepresented student populations.

Theory of Action

Suppose we design a viable standards-based STEM curriculum, provide professional learning for leaders and teachers regarding STEM and transdisciplinary practices, create STEM/AI policies and regulations, develop key performance indicators to measure student learning and school success in STEM, and leverage our community stakeholders and partners. In that case, school leaders and teachers will be equipped to consistently implement STEM transdisciplinary strategies that enhance engagement, support pathway completion, and close the achievement gaps for underrepresented students.

Harvard PELP Team: Dr. Devon Q. Horton, Superintendent; Ms. Shayna Bishop, Principal; Champion Michelle Dillard, Chief of Schools; Mrs. Janetta Greenwood, Director; Dr. Fricretia Rice, Principal; Ms. Stacy Stepney, Chief Academic Officer; Dr. Tuqwan Taylor, Principal; and Ms. Andrea Wright, STEM Coordinator

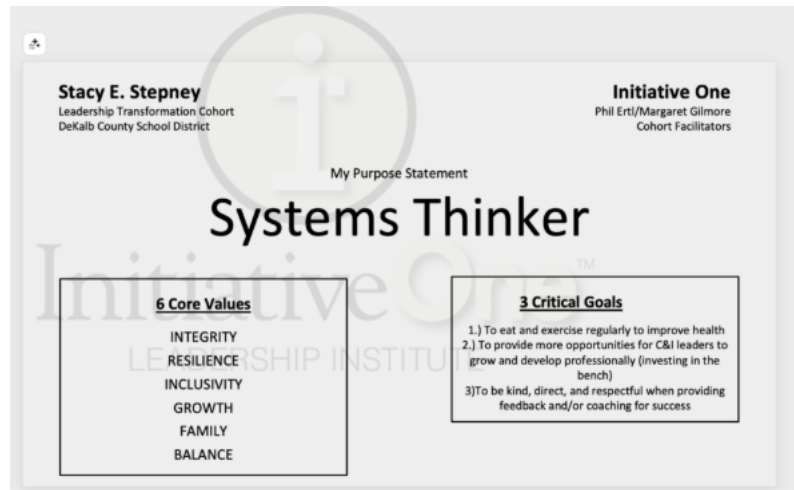


Mission Possible – July Readiness

During July, the intentional focus was on school improvement and building capacity through targeted professional development for new and returning teachers, academic coaches, and paraprofessionals. The professional development sessions facilitated during New Teacher Orientation (NTO) and on the districtwide Professional Learning Day were designed with the instructional core at the forefront – teachers’ knowledge and skill, student engagement, and academically challenging content.

Also, the 2025-2026 C and I Toolkit was updated and shared with leadership teams and teachers to guide and support districtwide and school-based processes and initiatives for school readiness. The Toolkit contains the instructional frameworks, syllabus template, lesson plan template, grading protocol, standard operating procedures, Board policies, laws, Dyslexia Handbook, MTSS expectations, weather guidelines, and other pertinent documents to foster and maintain a quality teaching and learning environment.

On July 15, 2025, Initiative One met with the Cabinet to facilitate the next session of the Leadership Transformation series. Each participant shared their purpose statement, including six core values and three goals.



On July 24, 2025, I partnered with the Division of Accountability and Research to share the Division of Curriculum and Instruction’s MIRACLES. The 30-minute presentation emphasized the importance of our interdependent relationship necessary to achieve the sixteen priorities through mutual support and collaboration.

Deputy Chief Dr. Sean R. Tartt

Curriculum and Instruction

Academic Coaches

The month of July was engaging and impactful for the Academic Coach Coordinators as we advanced several key priorities to strengthen instructional leadership and coaching support across the district. We collaborated to establish, revise, and refine the criteria for the *Coach Up! Pipeline to Academic Coaches* program, which remains a central focus of our MIRACLES priority. In partnership with the Department of Teaching and Learning, we supported the rollout planning for the new ELA and Mathematics standards by working closely with the content senior coordinators, directors, and assistant superintendents.

As a team, we finalized our Coaching Playbook, with each member reviewing an assigned component and providing thoughtful feedback. Professional learning was a priority this month as we engaged in Pdgogy.ai training through 21st Century ED to better understand the platform and plan how to support coaches in the 11 pilot schools. We also participated in Amira training to deepen our knowledge of its screener capabilities and attended Excel training to build our technical skills. During the department meeting, we received professional learning focused on PLCs and their alignment with C&I's vision for school-based collaboration. We partnered with Schools and Leadership to contribute to the development of the District Plan of Support and updated our coaching resources for the 2025–2026 school year. Additionally, we attended the GA Aquarium/Fernbank Partnership event, met with area superintendents to discuss the role and support of academic coaches, and participated in interview panels for upcoming coaching positions.

Currently, there are 205 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	11	2	11
Area Elementary 2	16	1	6
Area Elementary 3	16	2	8
Area Middle Schools	41	4	21
Area High Schools	28	4	18
Area Horizon	63	7	38
Area Specialty	9	1	7
Totals	184	21	109

AVID-Advancement via Individual Determination

During July, principals met with Ms. Culisha Curry, the Graduation Innovation Senior Coordinator, to discuss their implementation strategies and to identify the SY25-26 goals for AVID Elective classes in their school. AVID is a program that supports students in the academic middle to elevate their learning potential and success by preparing them for more challenging and academically rigorous courses that prepare them for college and career success. AVID Site Teams are refining their goals to address student needs and align with ELA and math performance targets. In addition, AVID Site Team members ensure that goal alignment and funding are clearly established to reflect the priorities outlined in their Title I Consolidated School Improvement Plan (CSIPs).

Currently, there are a total of 9 AVID schools in DCSD, 6 High Schools, and 3 Middle Schools implementing the AVID Secondary model for the 2025-2026 SY. AVID sites are allocating Title I funds to support implementation efforts in alignment with their Comprehensive School Improvement Plans (CSIPs).

Student Success Skills Backpack

We are thrilled to announce the continued growth of the Student Success Skills Backpack (SSSB) initiative, aligned with the DeKalb Portrait of a Graduate! Following a successful launch last year with 21 pilot schools representing all regions and grade levels, we are excited to welcome a second cohort of 21 additional schools. This expansion brings the total number of participating schools to 42, marking a significant milestone in our district-wide commitment to student success.

In preparation for onboarding the second cohort, representatives from the Division of Curriculum and Instruction and the Division of Information and Instructional Technology recently convened to collaborate on key components of the initiative. Discussions included refining the SSSB student and staff courses, enhancing the Canvas webpage, reviewing the implementation timeline, and sharing best practices and examples from the first cohort of pilot schools. Together, we are building momentum and deepening the impact of the SSSB by empowering students with the skills they need to thrive academically, socially, and beyond graduation.

Academic Skills Centers

Preparations are in full swing to ensure all 23 Academic Skills Center (ASC) sites are ready for a strong and successful start to the school year. In partnership with the Instructional Technology department, we are actively working to update all electronic devices and verify key program integrations, including Clever and the Student Information System (SIS).

At the school level, teams are finalizing hiring efforts, developing comprehensive schedules, and establishing clear monitoring cycles to support effective implementation. These coordinated efforts are setting the stage for a smooth launch and a productive year of academic support and student success across all ASC sites.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Penny Mosley**P-5****95 Core**

DeKalb County School District is implementing the 95 Phonics Core Program in all elementary schools (grades K–5) as part of its Tier I foundational literacy instruction. The 95 Phonics Core Program is a whole-class, supplemental phonics curriculum delivered in explicit, systematic, and sequential lessons at each grade level. Lessons are designed to build phonemic awareness, decoding, encoding, and word study skills. Through teacher-directed, structured routines—such as sound-spelling mapping, building word chains, and reading decodable text—the program helps students build strong alphabetic knowledge and fluency in a cumulative progression grounded in the science of reading. During pre-planning, all elementary teachers participated in a three-hour professional learning session to prepare for implementation. The Department of Curriculum and Instruction will provide ongoing professional learning throughout the year to support fidelity and continuous improvement as the program is rolled out.

Amira

The DeKalb County School District Board of Education has officially adopted Amira Tutor as a one-on-one tutoring resource to support K–3 students in developing foundational literacy skills. This adoption complements the district’s use of Amira ISP and further advances DeKalb’s early literacy initiatives by delivering targeted, personalized support aligned to individual student needs. In preparation for implementation, the district has begun training central office staff and MTSS specialists to establish a strong foundation of support. Throughout August, both asynchronous and synchronous professional learning sessions will be provided for school-level test administrators, principals, assistant principals, and teachers to ensure effective implementation and fidelity of use. The launch of Amira Tutor reinforces the district’s commitment to evidence-based practices and to providing equitable, early intervention for all students.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Rose Prejean-Harris**6-12****Accelerate 8**

The first Accelerate 8 cohort of math and science teachers met July 7-10, 2025. The focus of the summer intensive professional learning sessions was to begin preparing middle school teachers for high school certification so that each middle school can offer enhanced math and science courses to students starting in August 2026. The math cohort spent the week diving into high school content such as functions, algebra concepts, and calculus content. In science, the group focused on physical science content.

The Accelerate 8 cohort will continue to meet throughout the school year to receive additional coaching, build model interdisciplinary STEM lessons, and grow deeper in content knowledge.

Director Dr. Lynn Angus Ramos**Literacy****Curriculum and Professional Learning Updates**

The 2025-26 school year is the implementation year for the new Georgia English Language Arts (ELA) standards. After many weeks of collaboration with classroom teacher leaders, the new ELA standards-aligned Curriculum-at-a-Glance (CAAG) documents and module plans are posted to Canvas. On the July 29 pre-planning day, all ELA teachers in grades K-12 were asked to attend a required session providing a review of the ELA standards accompanied by an orientation to the new CAAGs and module plans. C&I coordinators facilitated the sessions with collaboration from Area ELA leads and professional learning facilitators. In total, 4,132 teachers attended, ensuring consistency of messaging around resources in Inspire and Canvas as well as expectations for instruction.

Literacy Updates

The Curriculum & Instruction team proudly participated in the DeKalb County School District's Back-to-School Bash. At our display table, we distributed free books. We shared valuable resources with families, including books, information on Lexile measures, the Portrait of an Early Reader, and engaging literacy activities that parents can use at home. It was an excellent opportunity to connect with the community and support early literacy development as we kick off the new school year.

Director Lummie Baker**Educational Media and Instructional Materials****Technology Symposium**

The 2025 DeKalb County Schools Technology Symposium was a vibrant celebration of innovation, collaboration, and forward-thinking in education, and Educational Media was proud to be at the heart of it all.

Held on Wednesday, July 16, 2025, at Ronald E. McNair Middle School, this year's symposium brought together educators, technologists, and instructional leaders from across the district to explore the latest tools and strategies shaping 21st-century learning. Educational Media played a pivotal role in the event, showcasing its commitment to empowering school library media programs and supporting digital literacy across all grade levels. The department facilitated a breakout session titled 'Empowering Digital Learning with School Library Resources'.

Participants learned about the following digital resources: Britannica ImageQuest, GALILEO, Destiny/Destiny Discover, and others. The resources shared are located in Clever, our online resource repository for students and teachers. Session attendees included district personnel from all grade levels and content areas.

Back to School Rally

The Department of Educational Media and Instructional Materials participated in this year's amazing DCSD Back to School Rally. The theme for this year's event was "Level Up for Success," and the department enjoyed providing resources to help students and families level up for success. The department hosted a table and provided a plethora of resources for students and families to help them with a successful transition back to school. The following resources were provided for students: free books, bookmarks, pencils, crayons, word puzzles, reading bracelets, bags, etc. Family resources included flyers describing the digital resources our department supports, as well as information on student Lexile Levels. The rally was a great success for our DCSD students and families.

Director Vacant

K-12 Teaching and Learning

PL Day July 2025

On July 29th, teachers and instructional staff participated in Professional Learning Day 2025. The day was filled with targeted learning that included a focus on literacy in every content area. Teachers were able to dig deeper into instructional resources, content standards, and connect these pieces to create quality learning experiences for students during the 2025-2026 school year. The content coordinators collaborated with the area content leads and professional Learning facilitators to deliver high-quality professional learning to over 6500 teachers and staff.

Dual Language Immersion (DLI)

The Evansdale DLI Summer Camp, held in June, welcomed 40 students for an enriching experience focused on French literacy development. Through engaging activities and immersive instruction, students strengthened their reading, speaking, and listening skills in French. The camp's success highlights the district's commitment to supporting dual language learners year-round.

Director Doryiane Gunter

Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE)

Career Tech Student Organization (CTSOs) Competitive Events

DCSD Students Excel at the National FCCLA Leadership Conference

At the 2025 FCCLA National Leadership Conference, DCSD students shined on the national stage, showcasing their talent, dedication, and leadership. There were 42 students and seven teachers attending this year's conference. Cedar Grove High School took home 1st Place in the *Focus on Children* event, a testament to the passion and professionalism of their Early Childhood Education (ECE) program. Redan High School earned a spot in the top 10 in the *Culinary* competition, demonstrating exceptional skill and creativity in the kitchen. Chamblee High School also placed in the top 10 in the *Job Interview* event, highlighting their students' readiness for the workforce and excellence in career preparation.

DCSD Shines at National TSA Conference

Students from DeKalb County Schools demonstrated innovation and excellence at the 2025 National Technology Student Association Conference, earning top national rankings in competitive events. Twenty students attended the conference in Nashville, Tennessee, from June 27th to July 1st. See below our DCSD results:

- **Chamblee High School** earned 1st Place in Coding and 7th Place in CAD Engineering (High School), highlighting their technical expertise and design precision.
- **Dunwoody High School** secured an impressive 4th Place in Prepared Presentation (High School), showcasing outstanding communication and presentation skills.
- **Tucker High School** placed 10th in Promotional Marketing, demonstrating creativity and strategic thinking in branding and outreach.

Community Engagement

CTAE Department Engages Families at Back to School Bash

On Saturday, July 26, 2025, the CTAE Department proudly participated in the DeKalb County Schools Back to School Bash, connecting with families and students as they prepared for a new academic year. The department shared valuable information about high-demand Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) pathways available at both middle and high schools across the district.

In addition to learning about exciting career-focused programs, families received free school supplies and enjoyed a refreshing cool treat. A special highlight came from our partners at LEGO, who generously provided LEGO kits to spark student interest in CTAE and STEAM-related activities through hands-on exploration.

Director Janetta Greenwood

Fernbank Science Center

Community Engagement – Back to School Bash

On Saturday, July 26, Fernbank Science Center proudly participated in the district's Back to School Bash to help families kick off the new school year with success. FSC staff distributed science-themed school supplies to support hands-on learning and STEM engagement at home and in the classroom. Through this outreach effort, Fernbank Science Center provided resources to over 2,000 families, reinforcing its commitment to equitable access to science education for all students.

Georgia Aquarium Partnership

The Georgia Aquarium Partnership continued during July as school and district leaders participated in the Georgia Aquarium Partnership Showcase. During the event, leaders

were immersed in an interactive exploration of the impactful STEM programming offered through the partnership. From hands-on exhibits to behind-the-scenes insights, participants gained a deeper understanding of how the collaboration supports real-world learning experiences, career exposure in marine science, and alignment with state science standards. The showcase served as a powerful reminder of the transformative potential of partnerships in education.

Director Monique Kimbell

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Advancing Tiered Support through Professional Learning

Throughout July, the MTSS Department launched a series of professional learning experiences designed to build capacity, foster collaboration, and equip educators with tools to support the whole child through a multi-tiered system of supports.

On July 15, the MTSS team presented *Tier 1 Through the Lens of MTSS* at the New Teacher Orientation (NTO) for both elementary and secondary educators. This session introduced new teachers to foundational practices for strong Tier 1 instruction, including preventative supports, data-informed instruction, and universal strategies that promote access and academic success for all learners.

From July 21 to July 25, the department hosted our annual Job Embedded Training (J.E.T.) at McNair Middle School. This week-long experience included whole group and breakout sessions featuring presenters from various departments. Topics were intentionally designed to address tiered support, cross-departmental collaboration, and the integration of practices to support the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of students. During this time, participants also received initial training on our new universal and dyslexia screener, Amira, to ensure fidelity of implementation from the start of the school year.

We also proudly launched the New MTSS Academy for specialists with 0–3 years of experience, with approximately 50 participants in attendance. The academy is designed to build foundational knowledge, cultivate problem-solving confidence, and establish a professional learning community committed to implementing MTSS with consistency and clarity across schools.

On July 29, K–3 MTSS Specialists participated in district MTSS team-led training, *From Risk to Results: Connecting Dyslexia Screening to Strategic Reading Support*, focused on the implications of the new law for early literacy support. The session guided identifying students at risk for characteristics of dyslexia, determining when to write a reading intervention plan, and understanding the requirements for parent notifications and state reporting. The training also emphasized the importance of using multiple data points to make student-centered decisions. It highlighted the use of the Amira screener as a critical tool in the early identification process.

Collectively, these July events reflect our commitment to equipping educators with the knowledge and tools needed to support every child, in every tier, every day.



Director Keatra Wright

FLEX Academy

FLEX Academy

In alignment with Strategic Goal Area I, FLEX Academy staff engaged in comprehensive planning and preparation for the upcoming academic year. The focus remained on enhancing student academic success through equitable access to virtual learning opportunities.

The FLEX administrative team held meetings to align instructional strategies with the district-wide literacy initiative and to analyze student performance and enrollment data to determine course offerings for the 2025-2026 school year, ensuring course selections reflect student needs and academic trends. We also reviewed and refined internal processes to ensure readiness for the new school year, including:

- Updated registration process in partnership with the Division of Research Data and Evaluation
- Clarified requirements to ensure equity and access for high school students across the district
- Increased accessibility to registration for families and school counselors

We engaged with the community, participating in the Back-to-School Rally. We provided information to over 100 stakeholders about Innovative Educational Opportunities in the DeKalb County School District.

On July 29, 2025, we presented to all DCSD counselors, providing an overview of programs, policies, and updated registration procedures.

Chief Dr. Kermit Belcher**Information and Instructional Technology****Modernizing Digital Foundations for Future-Ready Schools**

DeKalb County School District is strengthening its commitment to providing secure, high-performance digital learning environments for students and staff. As part of the 2025 Network Modernization Plan, the district is upgrading the core infrastructure that supports instruction and operations across more than 140 sites. With much of the existing network equipment approaching end of life, this initiative focuses on replacing outdated components —such as switches, firewalls, wireless access points, and cabling —with modern, scalable solutions.

The first phase of the upgrade is already in progress, laying the foundation for the next set of improvements. Phase Two will include stronger firewall protection, increased bandwidth, better network monitoring, and added redundancy to reduce disruptions and maintain operations. Additional efforts include enhancing Tier 3 network support and switching to a more secure, reliable wireless system. These upgrades will help DeKalb meet the rising demands of digital instruction while improving safety, speed, and connectivity across all district facilities.

Refreshing Student and Staff Devices for a New Era of Learning

As learning continues to evolve, so must the tools that support it. DeKalb County School District is taking the next step in its digital transformation by launching a districtwide instructional device refresh during summer 2025. This initiative will replace all student and staff devices with newer models designed to support modern, dynamic teaching and learning practices.

By ensuring equitable access to updated technology, the district reaffirms its commitment to empowering every student and educator. These upgraded devices will foster innovation, encourage collaboration, and enrich the digital classroom experience. With this investment, DeKalb continues to prepare students for the demands of a connected world while providing educators with the tools they need to inspire and engage.

Deputy Chief Office of Technology Glenn Melendez**Digital Resource and Technology Request Process**

DCSD reinforces its leadership in technology by integrating innovative solutions that enhance teaching, learning, and operational efficiency into its technological framework. To boost the adoption of new technology, we have improved our evaluation process to assess better and implement modern tools, ensuring they align with district goals and deliver maximum impact.

To advance this initiative, we have introduced a comprehensive evaluation rubric to standardize how we assess new technology for compatibility and seamless integration into our district's dynamic technology system. Additionally, a streamlined workflow intake process has been put in place to

ensure that all technology requests are systematically reviewed and prioritized. Users can also access a continuously updated database of approved technology solutions designed to meet various operational and instructional needs.

As of December 2024, this effort has been completed.

Website Modernization

As part of our website modernization initiative, we have conducted a thorough scoping process to ensure the new platform meets the evolving expectations of our community. Key features will include a user-focused design, an intuitive Content Management System (CMS) for easy updates, multi-language support, compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to guarantee accessibility for everyone, and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) for quick access to vital information. These improvements will create a dynamic, user-friendly website that demonstrates our district's commitment to innovation and excellence.

To gather valuable insights, we launched a digital survey in October 2024 to collect feedback on website functionality and design. Additionally, focus groups were held in November 2024. The feedback from these efforts will play a crucial role in shaping our modernized website. As of the end of July 2025, UX/UI design has been finalized, and the visual and functional design phases have been completed in line with stakeholder requirements and accessibility standards. Content migration has also been completed – all legacy content has been successfully transferred to the new platform, ensuring data integrity, service continuity, and alignment with the updated site architecture.

As we look ahead, over the coming weeks, the web team will incorporate school websites, Board Docs, and additional mission-critical sub-domains into the new website ecosystem. We will deploy direct-access links to core platforms, including Incident IQ, Frontline Education, Canvas, and Infinite Campus, streamlining access through a consolidated "Employee Portal" experience to enhance user efficiency. Our Communication division will curate homepage content to highlight district news, upcoming events, key performance indicators ("Fast Facts"), and dynamic social media integration. Finally, we will review / format content to ensure alignment with best practices in web accessibility, readability, and UX design standards.

We remain on track to launch the new website platform by the end of Q3 2025.

Data Governance Program

The district's vision for data governance is to establish a data-driven ecosystem that drives academic success by empowering educators, supporting personalized learning, informing targeted interventions, advancing equity, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement through data-informed decision-making. Our goal is to pinpoint which tools—and which usage strategies—yield the most significant returns in student learning and achievement. This evaluation will help guide future decisions around digital resource investments and instructional integration.

During this reporting period, we are continuing to advance our work correlating student outcomes with the digital resources used across our schools to ensure that our investments in educational tools drive student success. The team has analyzed specific digital resources that represent considerable investments for the district. The results are consistent: using the particular resource's recommendations yields better outcomes. Also, during this reporting period, results are being shared with the senior leadership team.

To date, we have identified several key digital resources under evaluation. Our analysis focuses on understanding how these tools are being used and identifying patterns of optimal use. We then compare these usage patterns with student performance data to assess their impact.

We anticipate completing this analysis by July 2025, which will support strategic, evidence-based decision-making in our district.

Manager III Natalie Terrell

Project Management Office

District-Wide Records Digitization Program

The proof-of-concept for the *Records Digitization* program is still in progress and on track for completion in early September 2025. Significant progress has been made in HR box collection, processing, and scanning. The majority of HR records have been collected, with only a few cleanup tasks remaining. HR and DIIT staff have been trained on the application, which is now accessible from each trained user's desktop. The team is engaged in discussions on records retention and continues to work through workflow processes. To maintain momentum, the team has also initiated the collection of student records from the Records Center.

Key Metrics

- Total Boxes Collected: 3424
- Boxes Approved for Processing: 2717
- Boxes Scanned: 2047
- Boxes in Client Review: 958
- Boxes Accepted: 9



Executive Director Dr. Kyia Clark & Manager III Terri Webb

Information and Innovation & Instructional Technology

Summer Learning Series

Throughout June, Instructional Technology offered a comprehensive series of in-person, synchronous, and asynchronous training sessions to equip educators with the skills and confidence to integrate digital tools effectively into their instructional practices.

These sessions covered a wide range of platforms and applications, including Canvas Quizzes and Mastery Paths, School Messenger, ViewSonic myViewBoard, Canva for Education and Adobe Express, Microsoft Copilot, and Google Docs. These sessions were not just about tool usage—they were about transforming teaching and learning. Teachers explored how to align digital tools with instructional goals, ensuring that technology serves as a bridge to deeper engagement and improved student outcomes.



Director Eric Logan

Information and Network Security

Compromise Assessment

On June 9th, our team was presented with an executive summary of the Microsoft Incident Response (IR) team's findings and remediation recommendations. During the engagement period, Microsoft IR was responsible for providing investigative services and threat intelligence to proactively review the environment for potential evidence of Threat Actor activity and provide hardening recommendations. During this time, the team found our environment to have a medium maturity rating. While some tools and systems are in place, the Microsoft IR team noted there is significant room for improvement. They provided recommendations and resources to help us make the necessary improvements.

Asset Discovery & Visibility Proof of Concept

After several conversations to clarify and build understanding between the vendor and the Networking team, we were able to move forward with this proof of concept. A slight deviation from the original approach was agreed upon for this proof of concept, and we are now able to begin evaluating this product and service.

DCSD Passphrase Requirement Updates

We continue planning for the rollout of updated password/passphrase requirements. Some minor changes were made to ensure the transition is as easy as possible while anticipating potential roadblocks.

Managed Detention and Response (MDR) Update

After months of evaluations, we concluded the review of potential MDR providers. A selection was made, and preparation to present to the Board for consideration began. Additionally, we met with selected providers to obtain specific technical details for the district rollout and began onboarding discussions.

Chief Champion Michelle Dillard

Schools and Leadership

July has been filled with learning and preparing for the new school year. On Friday, July 11th, leaders attended the Initiative One Think Tank together. This month, several district leaders, including the Superintendent and the Chief of Schools, attended Harvard's Public Education Leadership Project (PELP), where they worked to enhance STEM in our District. Leaders had opportunities to attend conferences to learn best practices to share.

Professional Learning coordinated and hosted the New Teacher Orientation at Ronald E. McNair Middle School. Each Area Team welcomed new teachers to DCSD.

We continued our collaboration with several divisions this month. We partnered with:

- Division of Wrap Around Services to train Principals, Assistant Principals, ISS paras, and Campus Supervisors in **Restorative Practices**.
- Division of Instruction and Information Technology for the Technology Symposium as a part of the **New Teacher Orientation**.
- Division of Accountability and Research to share with leaders the District Overview of **School Performance** and Strategic Progress
- Division of Human Resources to hire and fill remaining vacancies at schools, review updates and the new leave process, and train all administrators in the **TKES/LKES credentialing**.
- Division of Curriculum and Instruction for the **DCSD Professional Learning Day** for the training of teachers on the new ELA standards implementation.
- Division of Community Engagement, Innovation & Partnerships to support our new teachers for the **New Teacher Expo, DCSD Convocation**, and to help families for the **Back-to-School Rally**.
- Division of Operations to complete **summer cleaning** in schools, **building readiness**, and **capital improvement** projects.

To end the month, the Division of Schools and Leadership held our Summer Retreat, with all team members present, to carry out the theme of Mission Possible. Schools hosted an Open House for families.



Superintendent Dr. Beth Kyle

Area 1 Elementary Schools

July was a busy month of welcoming back our Assistant principals and onboarding new teachers. We kicked off the APs' return with our annual administrators' conference, which set the stage for the upcoming year while giving us a little fun. Assistant principals received a refresher on the new ELA standards, while principals analyzed how they spend their time and organized themselves for success. The Area One EAs and the Area Superintendent co-hosted the Schools and Leadership Retreat: Mission Possible – Agents of Impact with Mrs. Smith from Professional Learning. It was a great day focused on calibrating our work, setting the stage for change, and grounding ourselves in the vision, mission, and strategic plan. The team also developed our 2025-2026 administrators' resource handbook, revamped our administrators' SharePoint site, and began posting mad-minute support videos to assist admins and teachers with various tasks we are often asked about.

Schools hosted new teachers for orientation and welcomed back staff with flair. Many schools welcomed their Kindergarten students early with opportunities to tour the school or have popsicles on the playground, helping them start making new friends and memories. Austin held a Kick-off to Kindergarten signing day where students committed to being an Austin Eagle. Everyone is excited to start the year!! Sagamore Hills greeted Ms. Freeman with open arms during her Meet the Principal event. Principals were also very thankful for the back-to-school gift and lunch for staff during convocation.



Superintendent Terri D. Brown

Area 2 Elementary Schools

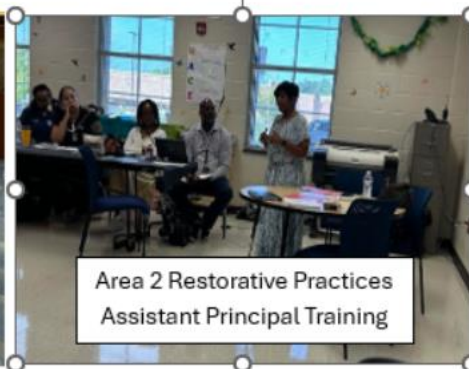
Our Area Support Team provided “Plan with Me” sessions with Unit 1 for all grade levels in both mathematics and Reading-ELA. Approximately 200 teachers, including our newest staff members, attended to plan the first two weeks of instruction. Planning included working through parts of the Instructional Learning Plans and practicing number routines for mathematics. For Reading-ELA, planning involved using the new Georgia ELA standards with our Wonders and MyView resources to work through lessons for week 1, unit 1. Sessions were led by Area 2’s Reading-ELA and Mathematics Coordinators.

Restorative Practice training took place with Assistant Principals to highlight and practice effective de-escalation techniques. Culture & Climate Coordinators led that professional development.

Area 2’s Support Team collaborated to create the year’s monthly focus, which will serve as a brainstorming session to craft the area’s professional development plan for the year, along with the key topics for upcoming Area 2 Principal Learning Opportunities.

Another focus for July was Building Readiness. Operations priorities for safety and well-being have been escalated to the appropriate personnel. Both sites with major building renovations have been visited for walkthroughs by the Area Superintendent, the principal, and contracted personnel.

We are looking forward to a fantastic start for 2025-2026!



Superintendent Ateshia Lester

Area 3 Elementary Schools

In July, the Area 3 Team's focus was on readiness for the new school year. Teachers new to the DeKalb County School District were welcomed during New Staff Orientation at McNair Middle School. The Culture and Climate team spent July working with school administrators on utilizing Restorative Practices and Mindset Strategies for our scholars. Our Executive Administrator collaborated with the leaders on the impact of staff evaluations and leveraging learning walks to improve school outcomes. Content Coordinators provided job-embedded professional learning during the district's professional learning day. Also, the Area 3 Team supported all schools during Open House. Finally, kudos to Bob Mathis for being awarded the John Hancock Award from the Georgia Department of Education.



**ELEVATE
THE DREAM**
NEW TEACHER ORIENTATION
July 14, 2025



**ELEVATE
THE DREAM**
PRE-PLANNING WEEK
E. L. Miller Elementary
July 28, 2025



**ELEVATE
THE DREAM**
OPEN HOUSE
Canby Lane Elementary
July 31, 2025



Superintendent Bridgette Allen

Area Middle Schools

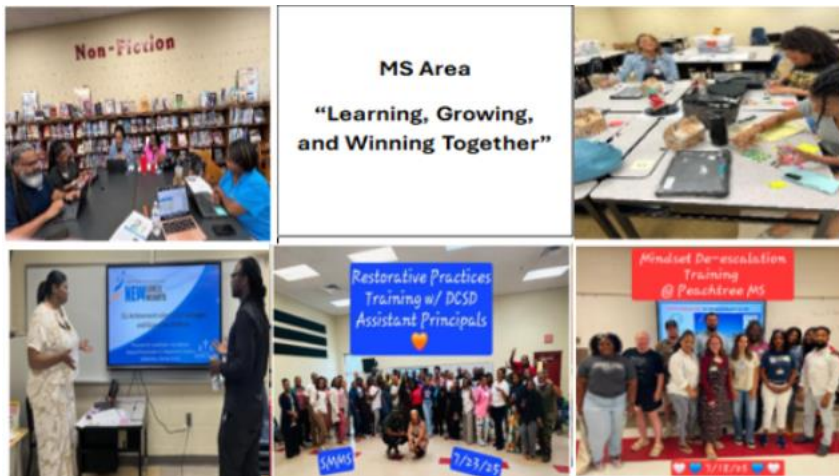
The Middle School Area has engaged in a wide range of initiatives to support schools, staff, and student success. These efforts were strategically aligned with district goals and the specific needs of middle schools. To support the successful onboarding of new staff, the Middle School Area facilitated a New Teacher Orientation to provide our new teachers and paraprofessionals with essential information to begin the school year. In addition, a principal's meeting was held to

support the implementation of English Language Arts (ELA) standards, engage in a book study focused on effective guiding coalitions, and provide support sessions to support the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), Extended Learning Time, and culture and climate team meetings.

The Middle School Area also launched professional learning opportunities to enhance English Language Learner (ELL) achievement and support the implementation of instructional learning plans. Additionally, all middle school assistant principals completed training in restorative practices, and schools received de-escalation training to strengthen their approaches to student behavior. Also, the Middle School Area launched the Middle School Messenger, a weekly newsletter to provide principals with timely information and digital resources to support their daily work. In addition, principals participated in Leaders' Lab. This initiative provided principals with individualized coaching focused on instructional leadership practices and PLCs.

Several coordinators co-facilitated professional development (PD) sessions during the district-wide PD Day and participated in multiple PD offerings throughout the day. Also, they collaborated to support the districtwide implementation of PLCs. Further expanding professional knowledge, several team members attended the Innovative Schools Summit, where they gained insights into best practices for student achievement and school improvement. Also, the team identified professional learning priorities for the year that aligned with each school's identified needs in their school improvement plans.

Additionally, the Middle School Area team actively participated in the district's Convocation at school sites, reinforcing connections with staff and school communities. Finally, to prepare for the opening of the schools, building readiness checks were conducted across all middle schools, ensuring that facilities were ready to welcome our staff, students, and families.



Superintendent Dr. Thomas Glanton

Area High Schools

Support Team

Throughout July, the Area High School Support Team engaged in planning and targeted initiatives to ensure a strong, seamless start to the 2025–2026 school year. Key efforts included launching a comprehensive Summer Bridge program to help rising 9th graders transition academically and socially into high school through orientation sessions, academic enrichment, and team-building activities.

To foster a dynamic school climate and culture, the team developed a *Principal's Playbook* with a focused integration of Restorative Practices, equipping school leaders with practical strategies to strengthen community and support student engagement.

In academics, English Language Arts (ELA) coordinators deepened their expertise in the new standards and assessments by attending specialized training sessions. Their contributions extended to district-level Unit Writing and Vetting sessions and professional development at the Special Education LTSE Bootcamp, building instructional capacity across campuses. The Mathematics team collaborated with schools to refine curriculum planning and align instructional strategies, ensuring they remain data-informed and student-centered.

The Multi-Lingual Learners (MLL) coordinator worked closely with schools to establish shared goals that align ESOL program support with each school's unique mission. Additionally, targeted training sessions prepared teachers for the rollout of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), increasing readiness for effective classroom implementation.

Special Education support included participation in the Summer Principal Learning Opportunity, on-site guidance during new teacher summer training, and co-facilitation of LTSE Bootcamp sessions covering specially designed instruction, lesson planning, and standards alignment.

In the area of mental health, the coordinator advanced preparations for the ExQ curriculum pilot by developing proposal materials and supporting back-to-school readiness efforts, contributing to a well-coordinated and student-centered start.

Collectively, these efforts reflect the team's commitment to strategic planning, professional growth, and operational excellence. As we open the new school year, we do so with clarity, purpose, and a shared dedication to creating a safe, inclusive, and academically rigorous environment where every scholar can thrive.





Superintendent Dr. Derrica Boochee-Davis

Area Horizon Schools

Throughout July, the Horizon Area Team laid a strong foundation for the 2025–2026 school year through strategic planning, intentional collaboration, and a districtwide commitment to excellence.

To strengthen area-wide instructional leadership, the team conducted strategic data reviews for every Horizon school, identifying key opportunities for academic growth. Customized school support plans were developed to address each school’s unique areas of need. These plans included concrete next steps, targeted instructional priorities, and progress monitoring tools aligned to CCRPI domains and subgroup performance.

In English Language Arts (ELA), Horizon Coordinators engaged in specialized training to deepen their understanding of the newly adopted standards and assessments. Their expertise was amplified through participation in district Unit Writing and Vetting sessions and contributions to professional learning at the Special Education LTSE Bootcamp, building instructional capacity and cross-departmental coherence.

The Mathematics team collaborated with school leaders and teachers to refine curriculum maps and align instructional practices to ensure instruction remains rigorous, student-centered, and responsive to data.

Special Education support featured prominently in July. Horizon representatives participated in the Summer Principal Learning Opportunity and co-facilitated LTSE Bootcamp sessions focused on specially designed instruction, lesson planning, and standards alignment.

The team also led a renewed focus on Restorative Practices and Mindset Training, embedding relational strategies into leadership coaching, schoolwide behavior frameworks, and culture-building protocols to foster positive, inclusive school climates.

The month culminated with a powerful showing at the DCSD Convocation and Back-to-School Rally, where Horizon Area leaders stood in full support of the district's vision. The team's presence celebrated the work accomplished and launched the new school year with unity, enthusiasm, and a shared commitment to excellence.



Superintendent Dr. Michelle Jones

Area Specialty Schools

Several leaders in the Specialty Area had an opportunity to learn at various conferences around the country during July. We attended: Model Schools, Innovative Schools Conference, Innovative School Summit, Project-Based Learning, PLCs at Work, and GAEL Summer Conference. Our leaders also rested and took much-needed vacations! Some left the country, while others traveled within the country.

Leaders also had the opportunity to present for Summer Professional Learning. Our Culture and Climate Coordinators taught multiple Restorative Practices training sessions for leaders. Teachers and leaders attended the Technology Symposium, and we welcomed our new teachers during New Teacher Orientation. Our Coordinators planned content sessions for teachers and leaders, including the LTSE Bootcamp and the DCSD Professional Learning Day.

We hosted our LTSEs for a Meet and Greet to welcome them to the Specialty Area. Fernbank Science Center also hosted leaders at the Georgia Aquarium to share the options for student engagement with the partnership. We hosted our First Area Learning Opportunity, where leaders presented on the Book Study for Powerful Guiding Coalitions. We welcomed all staff back to the buildings, and our team completed readiness walks to assess preparation for staff to return and for the First Day of School.

Interim Executive Director Mike Kelly

Leadership Development

Governor's School Leadership Academy

Our district GSA team participated in the Summer Launch on July 22nd in Dublin, Ga. Our cross-sectional team, consisting of Leadership Development, Professional Learning, Principal, and Assistant Principal, worked together to develop the DCSD Purpose Statement for our work with GSA over the next two-year cohort. We built collective commitments to growing our leadership and setting our goals to improve leaders across all levels and positions in DeKalb County.

The DeKalb Principal Pathway (DPP)

Leadership Development completed their Summer Kick-off with the DPP Cohort #2 on the evenings of July 23rd and 24th. These experienced leaders worked closely with our DPP Leads, Dr. Jermain Sumler-Faison and Mr. Sedrick Anthony. We also received support from The Leadership



Academy team. Our DPP Cohort jumped immediately into the work of their “Change Project” expectations and analysis of data from the schools that they are supporting. We are excited about having a group of six strong leaders consisting of district support Coordinators and Assistant Principals looking to become future principals in DCSD.

The DeKalb Leadership Institute (DLI)

Leadership Development completed their Summer Kick-off with the DLI Cohort #1 on the evenings of July 23rd and 24th. These teachers, school, and district support-based personnel were initiated and guided by our DLI Leads, Ms. Raifa Russ and Mrs. Kedra Fairweather. These two days of sessions engaged the 42 participants in content focused on discovering their leadership identity, understanding the AP roles & responsibilities, examining the LKES performance standards, and HPRIDE. The energy level of this cohort was phenomenal, as this teacher-to-AP pipeline is much needed in DCSD.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Leadership Development, in collaboration with Professional Learning and Area #2 Superintendent, Beth Kyle, held our first meeting for our expanded DCSD PLC Guiding Coalition 25-26 SY. This expansion added principals and leaders from each of the areas and departments as a critical part of the work of moving PLCs forward across our district. Solution Tree supported us in our efforts to start the work of this District Team in the right way. The first meeting focused on developing our purpose statement, norms, and collective commitments to our success and goals for this guiding coalition.

Mission Possible Summer Schools & Leadership Retreat

Leadership Development participated and engaged in the Mission Possible Retreat. We were able to collaborate, connect, and reflect on the impact we make with school leaders. We developed and honed our skills and knowledge around the Principal Toolkit, PLCs, School Scorecard, and Change Management. The collegiality among the team was effective in pushing the critical thinking we need to support our schools.

Principal Hiring/Interviewing Process

Leadership Development has been supporting area superintendents with interviewing for all principal vacancies in the district.



Executive Director Ayana S. Smith**Professional Learning**

In July, the Professional Learning Department played a central role in supporting new and aspiring educators through a successful New Teacher Orientation (NTO), the launch of the 2025–26 TAPP cohort, and extensive university field placement coordination. NTO welcomed over 300 new educators and paraprofessionals to the district, offering sessions on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), engaging adult learners, and foundational instructional strategies. The PL team managed registration, logistics, and facilitation, ensuring participants left equipped with tools aligned to district goals and a strong sense of community. Meanwhile, the TAPP program began its new cohort with 20 candidates engaging in coursework focused on elementary instruction. At the same time, over 250 field experience placements were confirmed in collaboration with 15 university partners, ensuring all candidates completed background checks, received district-issued badges, and were fully prepared for their school-based experiences.

Together, these efforts reflect the department’s continued commitment to educator development and a seamless onboarding experience.



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

Dr. Norman C. Sauce III began the month of July by meeting with Zack Phillips, Executive Director of Early Learning, to discuss collaborative plans involving local faith leaders aimed at strengthening and expanding early learning initiatives. Following this, Dr. Sauce participated in a review session regarding Impact Digital Resources, assessing tools and strategies to support student learning across the district. He remained active in district-wide collaboration by attending Quad meetings, working to ensure alignment across leadership sectors.

As part of his leadership duties, Dr. Sauce convened with the Division of Student Services team to prepare for the Board of Education meeting held on July 14th. His visibility across major district events continued as he visited McNair Middle School to support the New Teacher Orientation, welcoming new educators into the school community. He also took part in Initiative One, a professional learning experience for the Executive Cabinet, aimed at enhancing strategic thinking and leadership effectiveness.

A significant highlight of the month included hosting the Annual Division of Student Services Leadership Retreat. This event brought together executive leaders within the division, fostering a collaborative environment to reflect on successes, share insights, and strengthen goals for the new academic year. On July 20th, Dr. Sauce and several division leaders proudly presented at the Miracle Workshops, showcasing the transformative work being done in support of student achievement and wellness. Throughout the month, Dr. Sauce continued individual check-ins with each department head, maintaining consistent leadership visibility and accountability.

He further supported academic programming by meeting with representatives from Riverside Insights to discuss data related to the district's Gifted Program, ensuring that services and student identification processes are both equitable and effective. His commitment to data-driven decision-making was evident as he facilitated a portion of the Division of Accountability and Evaluation retreat. In addition, he conducted his regular bi-weekly check-in with Wraparound Services to monitor and support whole-child approaches that meet students' academic and non-academic needs.

Dr. Sauce remained visible and supportive of several professional learning experiences throughout the month. He visited the LTSE (Lead Teacher for Special Education) Boot Camp sessions at McNair High School, where upcoming leaders in exceptional education were preparing for the year ahead. He also participated in the district's Governance Committee meeting. He later visited the Early Learning and Pre-K professional learning session at Stone Mountain High School, continuing to champion early childhood development and foundational learning.

As the district prepared for the official start of the school year, Dr. Sauce worked diligently with leaders across the Division of Student Services to finalize plans for a smooth and effective launch. He joined colleagues at the district's Back-to-School Rally and Convocation events, helping to welcome students, families, and staff into the new academic year with enthusiasm and support. Before the first day of school, he hosted the final Bi-weekly Leadership Meeting where all

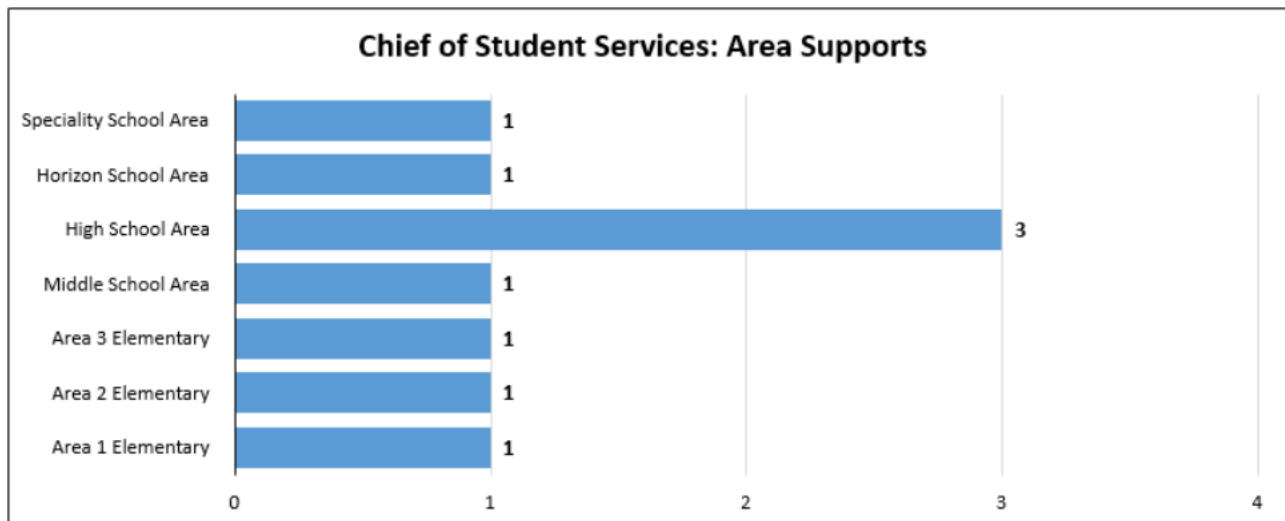
departments within Student Services gathered to provide updates, review priorities, and discuss logistics.

Dr. Sauce also remained engaged in critical safety and compliance matters by attending the Federal Law Enforcement Committee meeting, which focused on fostering safe and secure learning environments across the district. He concluded the month by attending the ESOL New Teacher Induction training, supporting the district's efforts to equip educators of English Learners with the knowledge and tools needed for success.

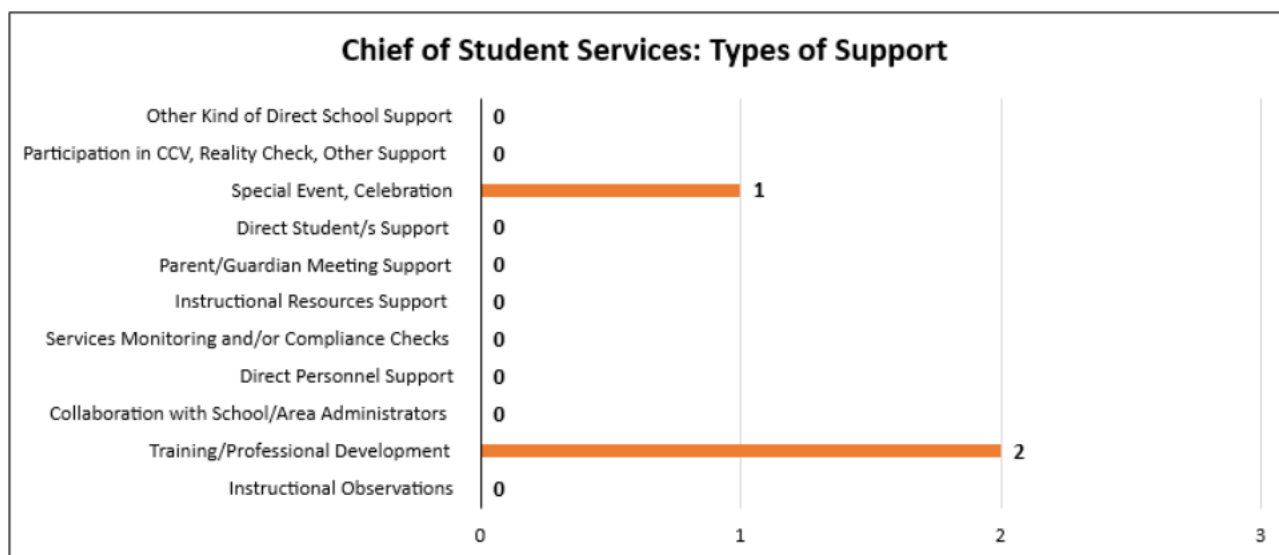
Throughout July, Dr. Sauce demonstrated steadfast leadership, a commitment to collaborative excellence, and a focus on student-centered outcomes. His strategic actions and high-level engagement across multiple initiatives have positioned the Division of Student Services for a strong and effective start to the 2025–2026 academic year.



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



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



Executive Director Dr. Evelyn Hall

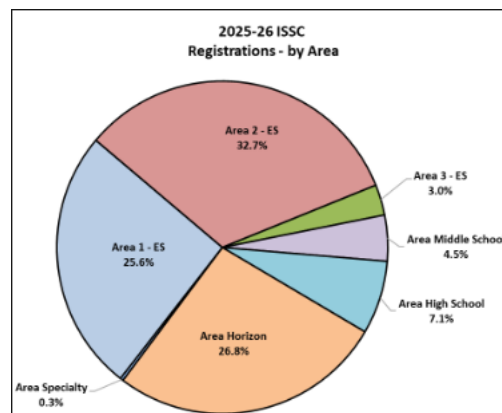
English Learners

International Student Screening Center Registration

The International Student Screening Center (ISSC) continuously registers and screens students throughout the school year. This month, the ISSC has registered and screened **336** English learners.

2025-2026 ISSC Registrations

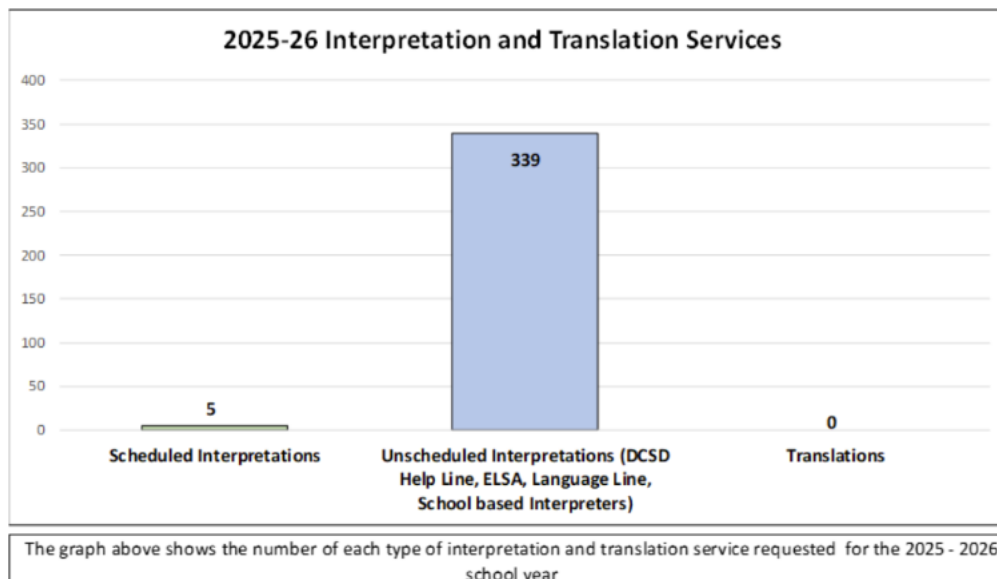
Area	Students
Area 1 - ES	86
Area 2 - ES	110
Area 3 - ES	10
Area Middle School	15
Area High School	24
Area Horizon	90
Area Specialty	1
Totals	336



Interpretation & Translation Services

The International Student Screening Center (ISSC) provides interpretation/translation services during registration and at local schools for families with a Primary Home Language Other than

English (PHLOTE). This month, the English Learners department provided 344 language services to PHLOTE families.



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

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

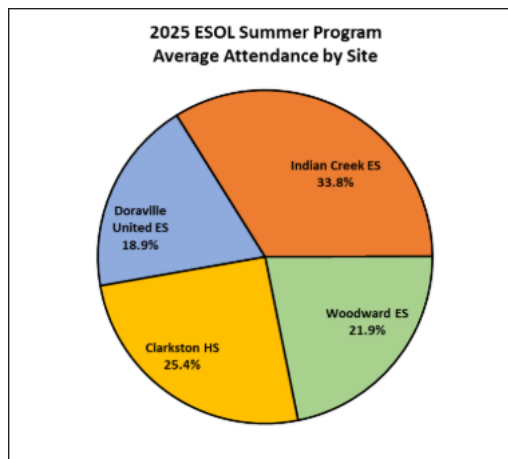
Title III EL Summer Enrichment Program

The Title III EL Summer Enrichment Program was held from June 4 to June 26 at four different local school sites. Over 1,500 students from all DCSD schools attended the summer program. The program provided English Learners in grades 1-12 opportunities to develop the academic language necessary to succeed in all content areas. Students engaged in hands-on activities that included field trips to the Georgia Aquarium and STEM activities from Hightouch Hightech and Science for Everyone.



EL Summer Site	Students Registered	Average Attendance	% of Registered in Attendance
Doraville United ES	542	287	53.0%
Indian Creek ES	1255	513	40.9%
Woodward ES	761	332	43.6%
Clarkston HS	1467	385	26.2%
Total	4025	1517	37.7%

Area Level Totals	Students Registered	Average Attendance	% of Registered in Attendance
Area 1 - ES	777	416	53.5%
Area 2 - ES	660	265	40.2%
Area 3 - ES	123	57	46.3%
Area 4 - MS	701	270	38.5%
Area 5 - HS	166	45	27.1%
Area 6 - Horizon	1231	432	35.1%
Area 7 - Specialty	367	33	9.0%
Total	4025	1517	37.7%



The Title III EL Summer Enrichment Program aligns with the DCSD Strategic Plan: Goal Area 1: Student Academic Success with Equity and Access, 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

Summer Professional Learning

The English Learners Department provided **13 professional learning sessions to 206 teachers, administrators, and DCSD staff** this summer. The sessions supported participants in expanding their expertise to better serve English Learners during the 2024-2025 school year.

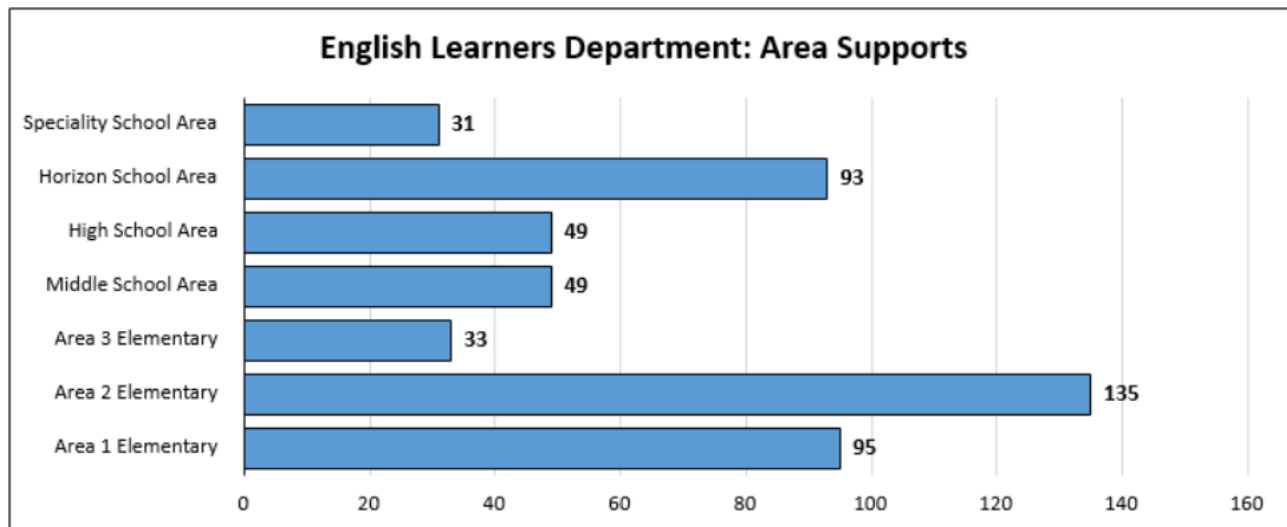
EL Department Summer Professional Learning Opportunities	
Title	Audience
ELlevation: Monitoring Instructional Language Plans	All Teachers and Administrators
Infinite Campus: EL Panels Training	ESOL teachers and Administrators
WIDA Screener Grades 1-12	ESOL Teachers
Kindergarten WIDA Screener	Elementary ESOL Teachers
GaDOE Suitcase	All Teachers Who Serve English Learners
Co-Teaching Models for ELS	Co-Teachers of English Learners
Enrolling Newcomers and Transfers	Clerks and Registrars
Differentiation, Strategies, and Scaffolding for ELs	All Teachers Who Serve English Learners
WIDA SWIRL, ACCESS for Effective Lesson Planning	All Teachers Who Serve English Learners



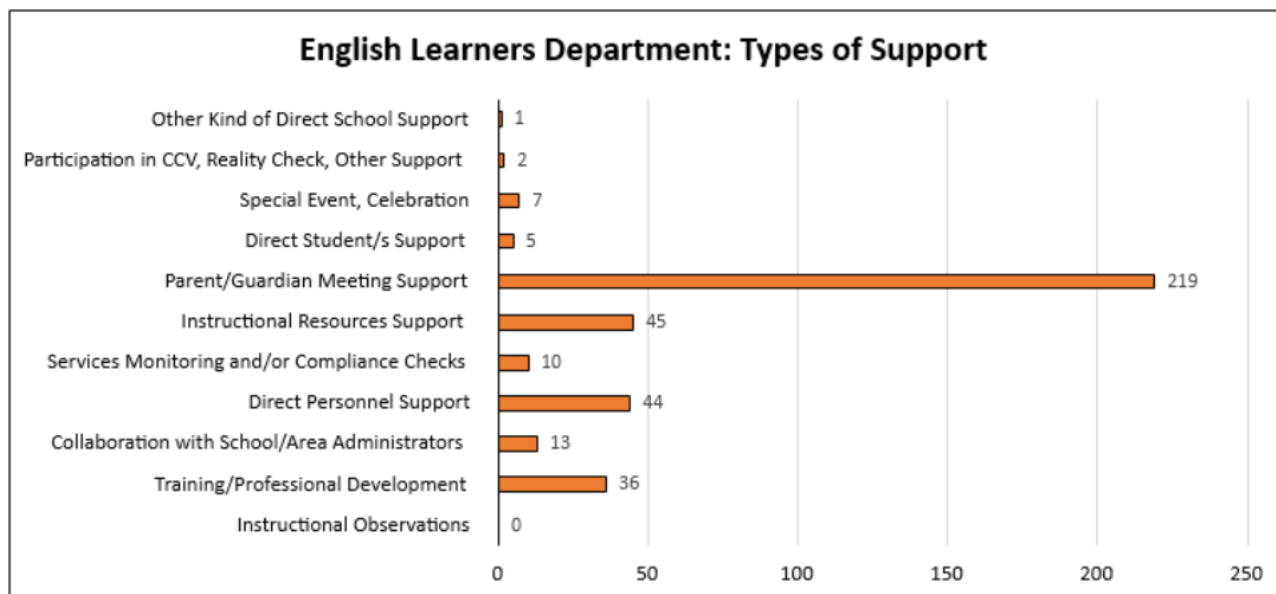
These opportunities align with the DCSD Strategic Plan: Goal Area 1: Student Academic Success with Equity and Access; Goal Area 2: School, Family, and Community Engagement; Goal Area 4: Culture and Climate; and Goal Area 6: Organizational Excellence, and the DCSD M.I.R.A.C.L.E.S. Framework for Continuous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

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

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



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



Executive Director Kiana King

Exceptional Education

Professional Development and Instructional Support

July 8-10, 2025, The Third Annual New Exceptional Education Summer Training (NEST) and Veteran Exceptional Education Summer Training (VEST) was a success with over 300 special education teachers in attendance; covering topics in the areas of instruction, behavior, and compliance.

96.9% of survey respondents expressed overall satisfaction with the three-day conference-style professional learning.

The NEST/VEST professional learning conference answers the critical need for sustained, targeted professional learning to equip educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to support students with disabilities effectively. As classrooms become increasingly diverse, many educators report limited preparation in areas essential to meeting the individual needs of students with disabilities.

Metro East GLRS program specialists provided 11 sessions during the New Special Education Teacher and Veteran Special Education Teacher Professional Development Conference, July 7-10. Session topics covered information around supporting literacy instruction for Students with Disabilities, to Autism basics, and De-escalation strategies. Over the course of the three days, over two hundred and fifty teachers attended these sessions.



Terri Jenkins, along with Talaya Parker, provided the Keynote Address for the opening of the conference. Drawing on her 43 years in public education, her words centered on lessons learned and stories heard.

Special Education leadership supported the DCSD New Teacher Orientation on July 15th and 17th, covering topics such as The Nuts and Bolts of Special Education, Case Management 101, Co-teaching, Co-planning, Co-assessing, Supporting the ID Classroom, and Specially Designed Instruction. **The NTO facilitation partnership with the Professional Learning Department afforded the opportunity to offer learning and training to special education as well as general education teachers on the understanding and implementation of federal and state laws, designing specially designed instruction, and applying inclusive and culturally responsive practices.**



As a result of the urgent need to strengthen educator and staff understanding of Child Find responsibilities to ensure all students with a suspected disability are identified, located, and evaluated promptly, Special Education collaborated and facilitated at the Division of Curriculum and Instruction's MTSS Jet Setting Training on "Supporting Child Find: Eligibility Determination and Categories".

July 23-25, 2025: Lead Teachers for Special Education (LTSEs) engaged in Pre-Planning Bootcamp in collaboration with Area Content Coordinators (Special Education, ELA, Math).



The Georgia Network of Educational and Therapeutic Supports (GNETS) team welcomed new and returning certified and classified staff members. Administrators facilitated a review of the H-Pride framework, the DCSD and GNETS Strategic Plan, and goals and expectations for the new school year! Both Eagle Woods Academy and Shadow Rock Center are fully staffed this school year. Goals for FY26 include a focus on academic growth in literacy for grades K-12 and a decrease of disciplinary referrals by 5%.



On July 31, 2025, the GNETS Program facilitated professional development sessions for our center-based and transition school staff. Sessions included Case Management 101, Mental Health and Neurodiversity, and Trauma-Informed Practices. Ms. Brown led the GNETS Address to share our goals for the new school year. Mrs. Kiana King, Executive Director, joined us at EagleWoods Academy to share greetings with our new and returning staff on behalf of the Department of Exceptional Education and Division of Student Services. We are

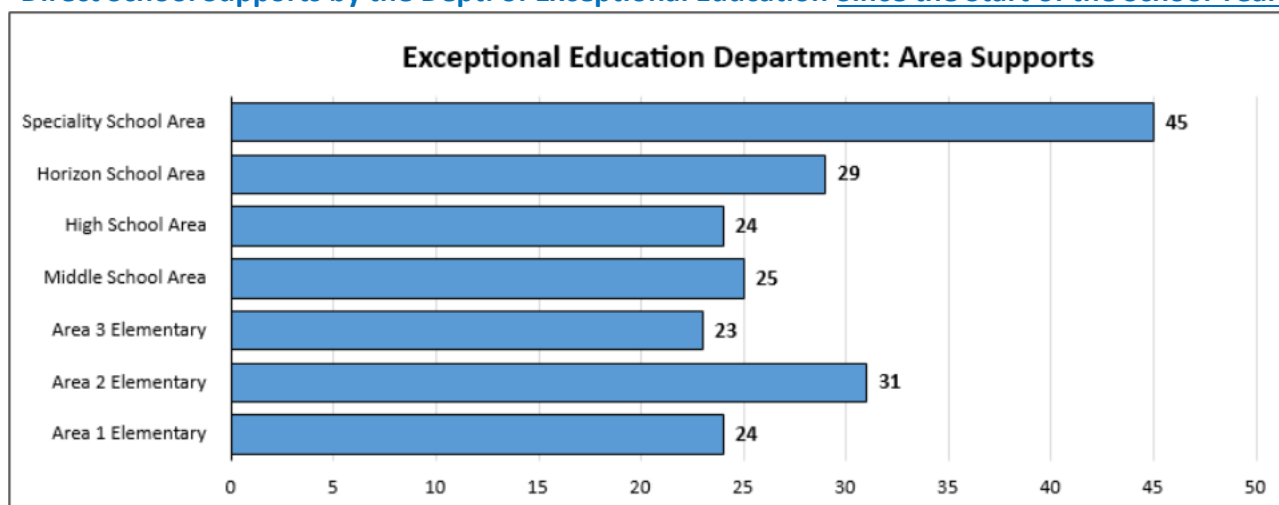
excited for this new school year as we continue to increase academic outcomes for our students.

The Office of Psychological Services had its annual retreat with the returning and new school psychologists. The theme “Boots on the Ground: Lassoing the Mission” encouraged a western-style attire for the participants as they received information regarding having crucial conversations, getting organized, evaluating smartly, and managing stress levels. The psychologists participated in multiple team-building activities aligned with the information shared.

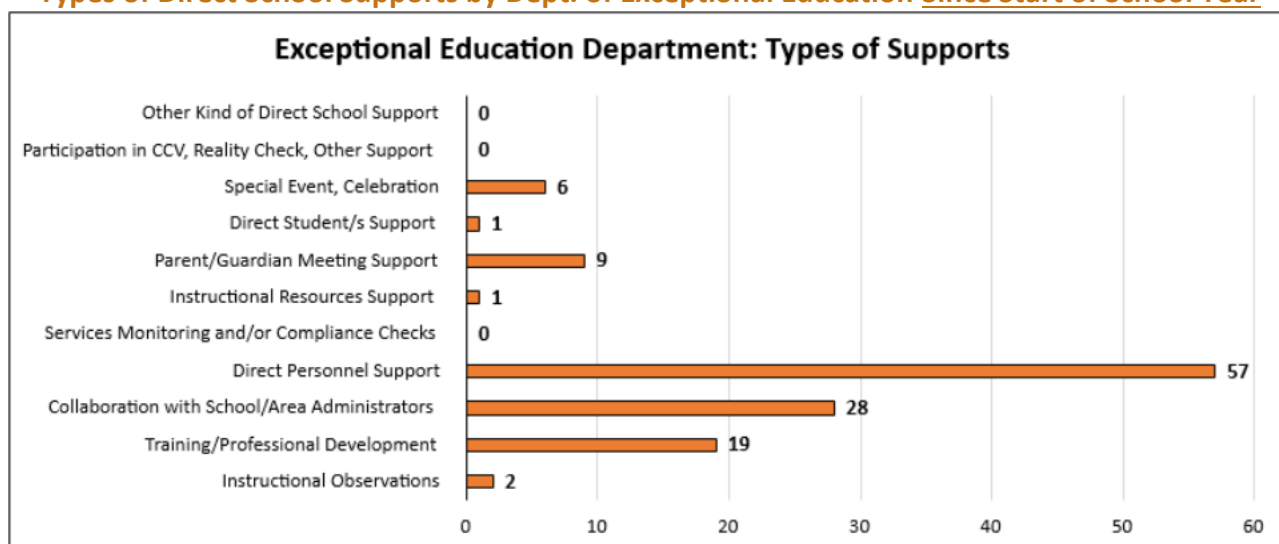


On July 28th and 31st, the 504 Team welcomed our 504 Chairs to a new school year with the very first 504 Chair Academy at Eagle Woods and Redan High School. This year’s focus is Compliance to Commitment.

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



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



Executive Director Dr. Zack Phillips

Early Learning and Pre-K

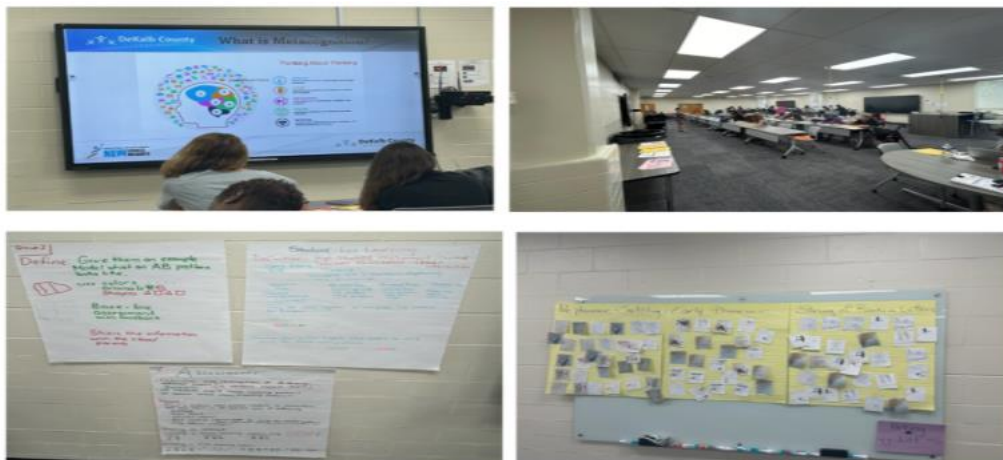
Dr. Phillips and members of the Department of Early Learning and Pre-K Programs have been working diligently to support district staff members by hosting various meetings in preparation for the opening of school. Select staff members attended the PL training sessions held at the Silver Hill Administrative Complex on Monday, July 7th, through Thursday, July 10th. Virtual Area Meetings with Assistant Superintendents, Executive Administrators, and Principals were held on

Monday, July 21st, Wednesday, July 23rd, and Thursday, July 24th. On the district's designated PL day on July 29th, Pre-K (3&4) staff members were trained at Stone Mountain HS and Emory University in preparation for the upcoming school year. Planning is ongoing to support the new Cradle Through Kindergarten Campaign initiative that will launch with the Faith Leader's Summit on Early Learning on Friday, October 10th. Dr. Phillips and members of the Department of Early Learning and Pre-K Programs participated in the Back-to-School Rally and the Convocation Event.

School Supports

The Early Learning/Pre-K Department has worked diligently during July to offer various (PL) opportunities to district employees covering several topics:

- Using Anchor Charts
- Taking a Deep Breath
- Supportive Environments
- Center Time and Prop Boxes
- Strategies for High Achievers
- Fine Motor and Writing
- Differentiation of Instruction
- Age-Appropriate Small Group Literacy Stations
- Learning Targets and Success Criteria
- BFTS Guidelines
- New Pre-K (3&4) Instructional Initiatives

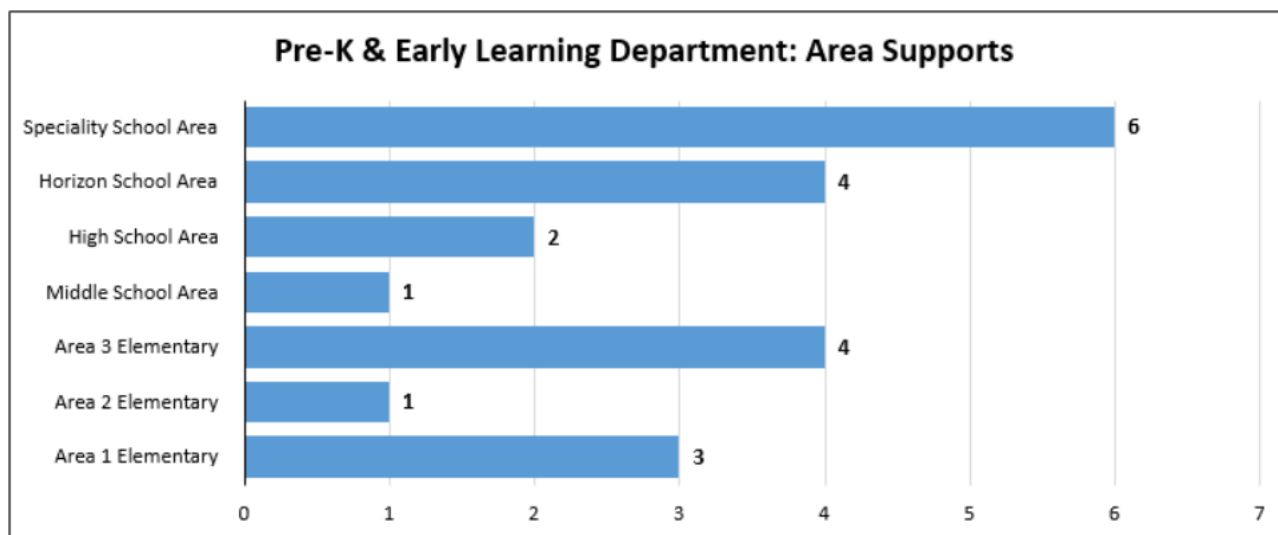




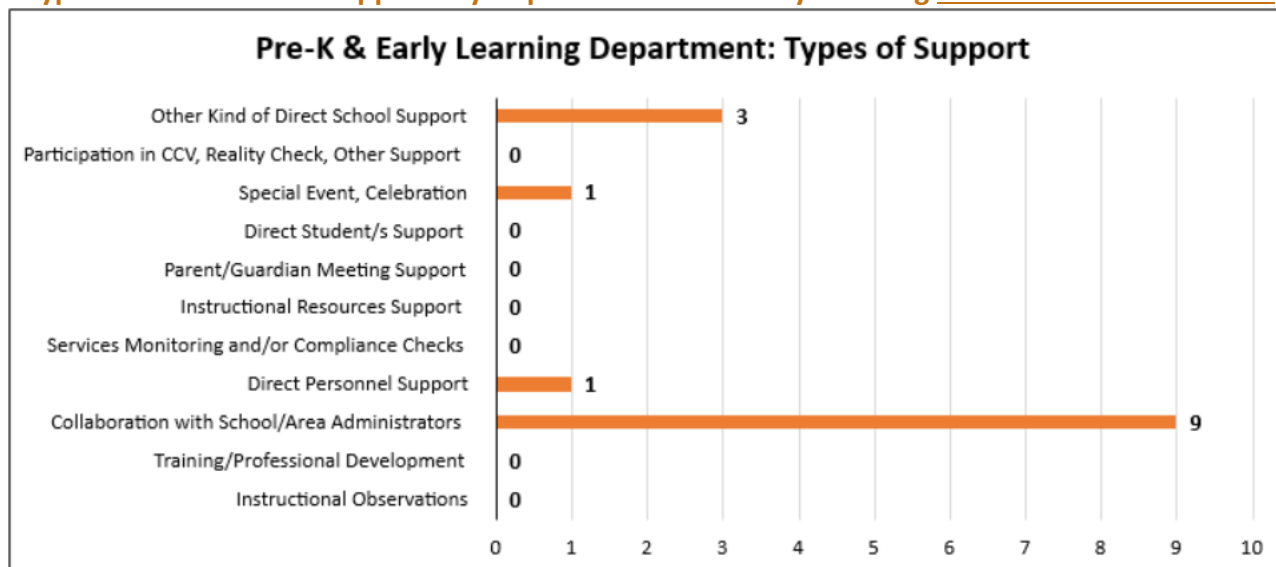
Department Highlights

The Department of Early Learning and Pre-K Programs will seek to expand the Waterford Supplemental Resource across the district to all Pre-K (3&4) classes during the 2025-2026 SY. This excellent instructional resource supports various content areas ranging from Literacy, Math, Social Studies, and STEAM. Additionally, this instructional resource provides a platform that supports teachers and paraprofessionals with planning a plethora of instructional activities that are age-appropriate and aligned to the GELDS standards and Frog Street Curriculum, which is embedded within their weekly lesson plans. Also, Pre-K (3&4) lead teachers and paraprofessionals will potentially have an opportunity to receive PL training centered around the Science of Reading (SOR) – Phase II. Upon approval, the training sessions will focus on developing a deeper understanding of Oral Language, Phonological Awareness, and Vocabulary development with young scholars. Various professional learning sessions are being planned for maximum impact throughout the 2025-2026 SY.

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



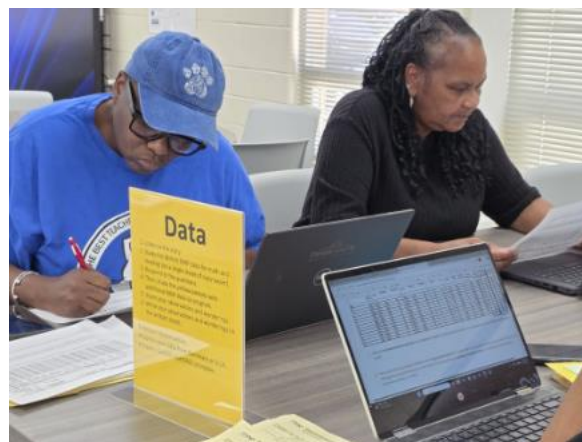
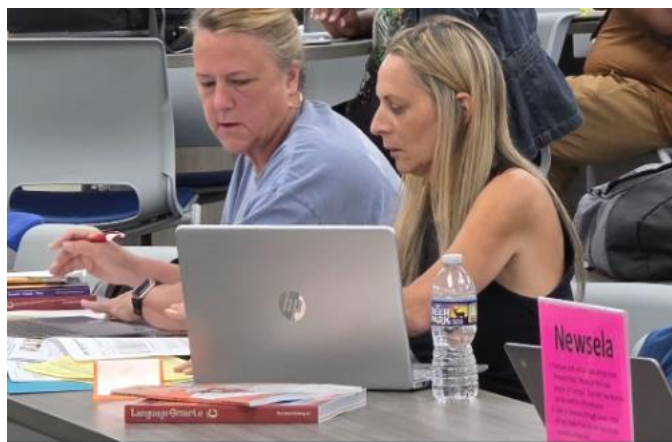
Types of Direct School Supports by Dept. of Pre-K and Early Learning Since Start of School Year



Senior Coordinators Donyell Atkinson and Kristen Drake

Gifted Education

The Department of Gifted Education continued to offer professional learning sessions in July. *New Levels with Newsela and Critical Thinking Books* were presented five times this summer with 108 participants. Teachers experienced five stations where they explored data, played a vocabulary board game, read and discussed texts, created online assignments in Newsela, and explored critical thinking books. Thanks to the Office of Federal Programs, participants were given some copies of the books from the Critical Thinking Company.

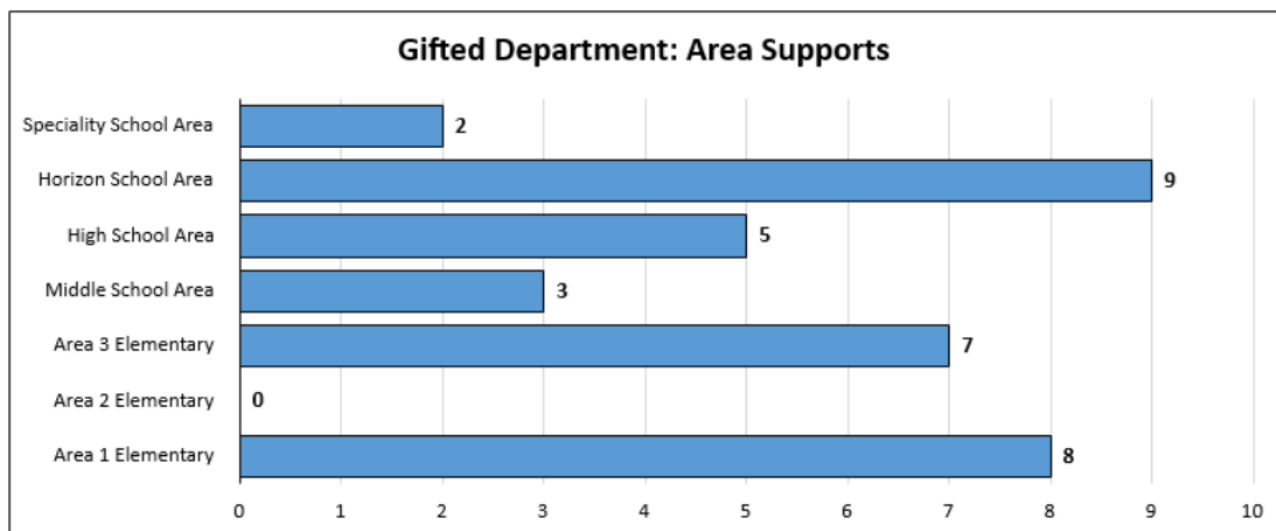


Gifted Education: Overview of Gifted and Effective Questioning was offered at New Teacher Orientation (NTO) with 118 new teachers participating. The department also provided *Newsela for Engaging, Standards-Aligned Cross-Curricular Literacy* during the DeKalb Tech Symposium, which had 18 new and veteran teachers in attendance.

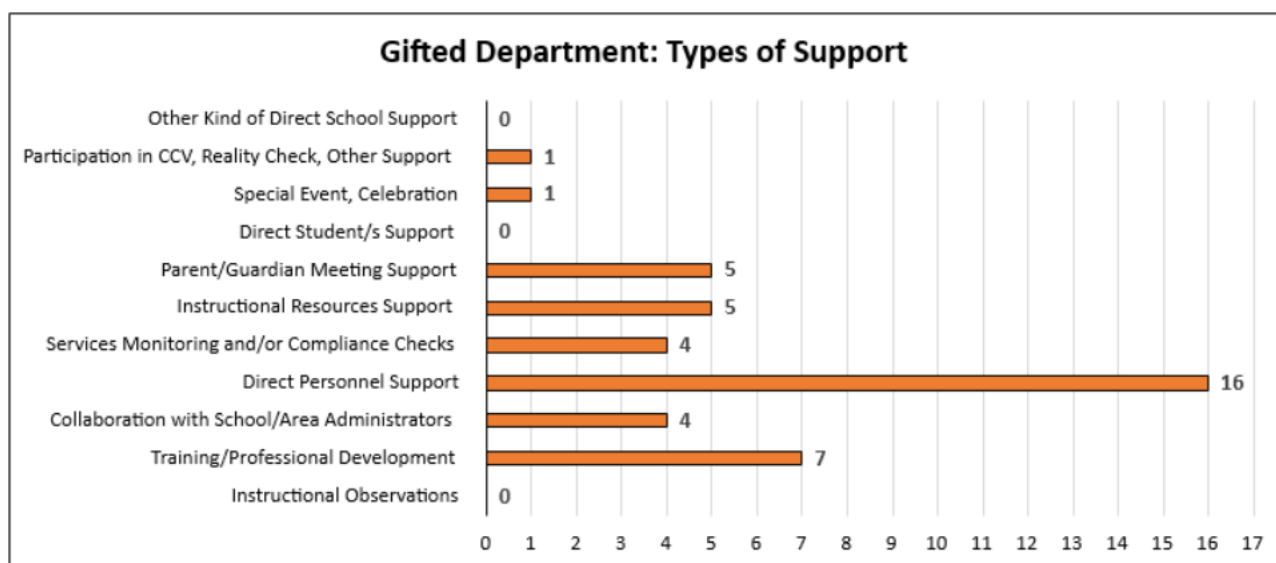


Another 107 middle school and high school teachers participated in an online course titled *Level Up Your Classroom: A Look at Newsela's Latest Innovations*. In addition, 75 teachers registered to complete *Asynchronous Newsela Courses for All Gifted-Certified Teachers*. In total, 476 teachers participated in professional learning from the Department of Gifted Education this summer.

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

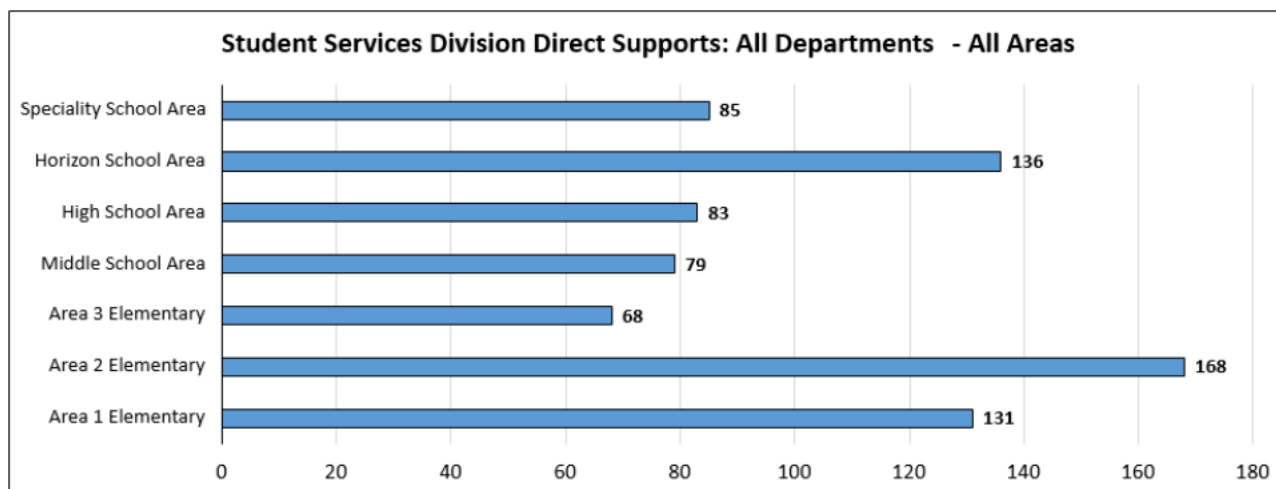


Types of Direct School Supports by Gifted Education Team Since the Start of the School Year

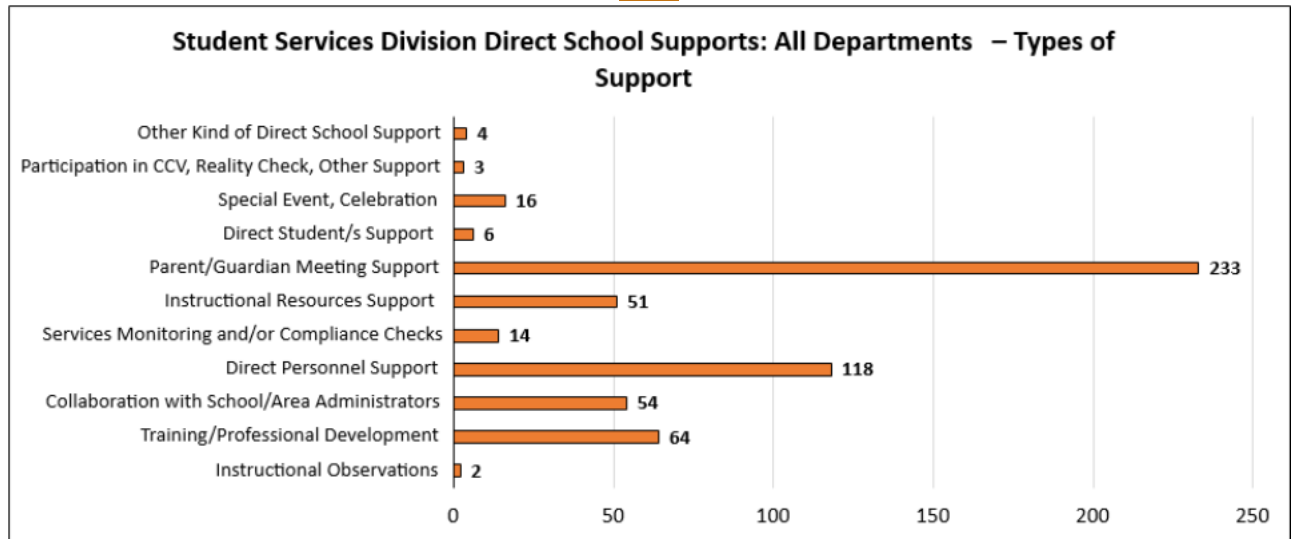


Division of Student Services - Direct School Supports Totals – Since Start of School Year

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

The Division of Wrap Around Services welcomes the students, staff, and parents back to school for the 2025-2026 school year! It is an exciting time to be a part of the DeKalb County School District. We are moving into greatness, and the division is here to support our families throughout the district with various wrap-around resources. These services are tailored to individual needs and often include mental health, counseling, academic advising, tutoring, family support, and resource coordination. It is our goal to

ensure all students are thriving at home, school, and in the community.

DCSD Back 2 School Rally

The DeKalb County School District (DCSD) Back 2 School Rally was held on Saturday, February 26, 2025, at the DCSD Administrative and Instructional Complex. It was a great day for families to access the many opportunities offered in DCSD, as well as receive school supplies, hygiene products, and underwear from the Department of Wrap Around and Support Services in the Division of Wrap Around Services. Additionally, the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) team was on deck to share how they will support staff in providing a safe, positive, and orderly learning environment in each school in the district. Overall, the rally was a hit with the students, who not only received resources for school but also received tickets for free Kona ice cups and other treats. The Back 2 School Rally was a hit, and the Division of Wrap Around Services was a tremendous addition to this event – welcome back!





DeKalb County School District Convocation

The Division of Wrap Around Services had the pleasure of hosting Convocation at the great Southwest DeKalb High School, where Brandon Thompson is the principal, along with DCSD Board Member Dr. Hogan, who welcomed the staff from Bob Mathis Elementary School, Chapel Hill Elementary School, and Southwest DeKalb High School. In conjunction with Area Superintendent Dr. Boochee-Davis and Mr. Erick Hofstetter, Chief Operations Officer, the team got the staff inspired to move to new levels, new heights for the 2025-2026 school year. While receiving motivation from the guest speaker and information on the new MIRACLES Priorities, the staff were keeping their “boots on the ground” and recognizing the Teacher of the Year and the Educational Support Person of the Year. We are proud of the new and veteran staff who have more than 38 years of service with DeKalb County School District. Welcome back, staff, and let’s move DCSD to greatness in the 2025-2026 school year!



Taking a Tour with DeKalb

The Division of Wrap Around Services had the distinct pleasure of touring the Georgia World Aquarium and the Assembly Studio during July. The Executive Cabinet, along with Dr. Horton, was granted access to the Assembly Studio in Doraville, previously the General Motors Assembly Plant. The team was toured by two outstanding interns from universities in Georgia. It was a fantastic experience to see how films are made and the scenes from several shows on television, including *The Gilded Age*, among many others. The tour ended with the team viewing a large studio where there were preparations currently taking place for a huge event that would include various important executives from the industry.



On another occasion, in conjunction with the Fernbank Science Center, the team toured the Georgia Aquarium to see all the educational opportunities available for the students of DeKalb County School District. The team was provided with a tour of the aquarium that most patrons are unable to see, behind the scenes, where fish are treated, coral is grown, and research is conducted for the betterment of the ecosystem. It was a fantastic experience, and families are encouraged to visit the Georgia Aquarium.



Executive Director Christopher Key**Student Advancement****Post-Secondary Outreach**

Post-Secondary Transition Specialists and PT Senior Advisor Liaisons were provided professional learning related to goals and priorities for the new school year. Specialists worked in July on the following projects in preparation for the new year, and the team set the plan for continued support of scholars developing their 4E Plan.

- High School Preparation- Middle School Scholar Support
- Junior Achievement Career Connection Plan
- Students With Disabilities: Life After High School
- Post-Secondary PUSH Summer Opportunities Resource Guide
- Senior Advisor Training Manual and Senior Advisor Academy Monthly Professional Learning Plan
- College and Career Event Planning and Promotion
- Post-Secondary PUSH Social Media Strategy
- HBCU Initiative
- VR (Virtual Reality) Career Planning Implementation Plan

July 29th Professional Development Overview

Hosted by the Student Advancement – School Counseling Department

On July 29th, the Student Advancement – School Counseling Department, in collaboration with other Student Advancement teams, hosted a large-scale Professional Development Series at Georgia Piedmont Technical College Conference Center. The event welcomed nearly **300 attendees** across various roles supporting student success.

A total of **314 School Counseling/Post Secondary-related personnel** participated, representing the following positions:

- **Counselor I:** 197
- **Senior Advisor Liaison:** 36
- **Head Counselors:** 33
- **Student Engagement Coach:** 20
- **Data Clerks:** 10
- **PT Counselors:** 10

- **Post-Secondary Specialists: 6**
- **Prevention Liaison: 1**
- **Graduation Coach: 1**

This Professional Learning Series provided essential annual trainings aligned with state and district mandates, including:

- **Mandated Reporter**
- **McKinney-Vento Act Compliance**
- **B.R.I.D.G.E. Law Requirements**
- **P.U.S.H. Plan Scope and Sequence**
- **School Counseling Comprehensive Program Overview**
- **DeKalb Keys to Educational Success (DKES) & Counselor Keys (CKES) Orientation**

These sessions ensured that all Student Advancement student support personnel were equipped with up-to-date knowledge, compliance training, and strategic planning guidance to support students as the school year began.

The Student Advancement–School Counseling Department proudly participated in the 2025 American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Annual Conference held July 12–15 in Long Beach, California. Our group—**Alethia Love, Shannon Crosslin, Dena McTyre, Christopher Key, and Mona Reynolds**—immersed themselves in a variety of dynamic, professional development sessions. Highlights included the **Opening Keynote by Malcolm Mitchell**, an inspiring testament to literacy’s powerful impact on student growth; the interactive **“Hatching Results Live: Quick Wins for Big Student Outcomes”**, which provided immediately actionable tools for enhancing school engagement; and **“Agents of Change in School Counseling: What’s the Secret Sauce?”**, where finalists for ASCA School Counselor of the Year shared insights on integrating data-driven practices, advocacy, and innovation into counseling programs. The insights gained will directly inform our next steps as we continue advancing equitable, student-centered counseling services in our community.



Director Denise Revels

Wrap Around and Support Services

School Social Work

SAFE (Student and Family Engagement Center) Summer Programming

The McNair High School SAFE Center, led by Chamika Simmons, in partnership with AREACH, a mental skill development organization, continues to support students in strengthening their emotional and cognitive well-being. AREACH provides Brain Hacking Workshops and Brain Training sessions that offer neuroscience-based strategies aimed at improving student mental health. With an 80% immediate improvement rate and 60–70% gains in emotional regulation and concentration within just six sessions, the program delivers impactful results.

AREACH's multidisciplinary team utilizes innovative tools such as Virtual Reality and Brain-Controlled Games (Neurofeedback) to reshape how students understand and manage their mental wellness. This forward-thinking partnership underscores McNair High School's commitment to whole-child support and preparing students for lifelong success.

As part of this collaboration, six McNair High School students participated in the 4-week "Brain Hacking with E.R. (Entertainment & Relaxation)" summer program, generously sponsored by the DeKalb County Board of Health. The program focused on equipping participants with evidence-based tools and techniques to improve self-regulation, emotional management, and focus. Rooted in neuroscience, the sessions blended mindfulness practices, relaxation strategies, and interactive brain training to promote mental and emotional development. By integrating these approaches, the program empowered students to build foundational skills that support resilience, academic readiness, and long-term well-being.



Attendance, Registration, and Homeless Liaison Collaboration

Attendance Specialists continue to engage in meaningful outreach and cross-departmental collaboration to support student attendance and the implementation of key district initiatives. Most recently, Ms. Montgomery, Mrs. Smith, and Mr. Wimberly represented the Attendance Team at the Teacher Professional Development event held at Lithonia High School. They hosted an informational table, distributing resources related to mental health and student attendance while engaging with educators from across the district to learn more about the challenges schools face in improving daily attendance.



In alignment with DCSD's focus on improving student attendance, all seven Attendance Specialists participated in the Middle and High School Registrar Training to prepare for the district-wide implementation of the CLEAR Verification System and updates to the Annual Verification process. During the training, Attendance Specialists collaborated with Registrars and school secretaries to better understand the student registration process, specifically around address verification. They discussed strategies for streamlining enrollment and reducing barriers for families.

As part of this work, Sonja Tobler, DCSD Homeless and Foster Care Liaison, attended the OLR Student Assignment meeting to provide targeted support and expertise regarding the intersection of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and CLEAR verification procedures. Although these two systems serve distinct functions, both play a vital role in protecting students' rights and ensuring enrollment accuracy. Ms. Tobler addressed specific questions from school staff about how to handle complex registration scenarios involving students in transition and shared practical solutions aimed at improving equity and compliance.

The integration of the McKinney-Vento Annual Verification process and the CLEAR Verification System offers multiple benefits. These include ensuring equitable resource allocation by preventing limited supports from being misdirected and maintaining legal compliance with federal mandates concerning residency and school enrollment. Collectively, these collaborative efforts reflect DCSD's strong commitment to serving the whole child by promoting fairness, accuracy, and access across student attendance, registration, and support services.

Director Dr. Darnell Logan

Student Relations

Prevention/Intervention & Student Relations

As part of our ongoing commitment to fostering strong, supportive school communities through Restorative Practices (Circles), 195 Assistant Principals from all grade levels participated in a comprehensive two-day training, while 95 Principals engaged in a focused one-day overview. This collective effort reflects our shared dedication to cultivating a culture grounded in empathy, accountability, and meaningful connection.

In alignment with Restorative Practices, both Assistant Principals and Principals participated in Mind Set De-Escalation Training of Trainers (TOT) to strengthen their ability to support students and staff. This summer, 131 administrators were trained as verbal de-escalation trainers. Our next session, scheduled for July 29th, will provide de-escalation training for all middle and high school campus security personnel. With these strategies and tools in place, schools are better equipped to encourage positive staff-student relationships, reduce exclusionary discipline, and create inclusive learning environments where every student can thrive.



Disconnect to Reconnect

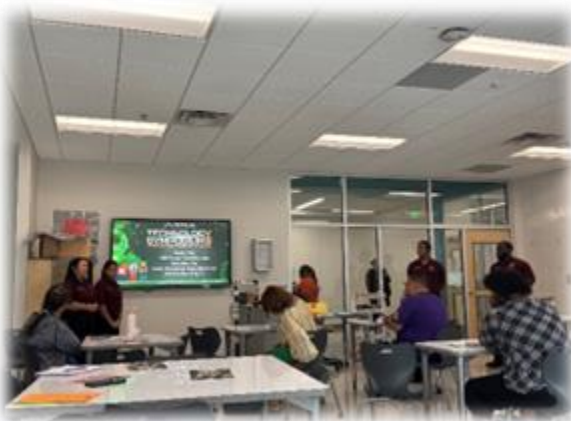
Over the summer, significant progress has been made toward full implementation. The district finalized the RFP process and selected a preferred vendor to recommend to the Board of Education in September. Additionally, extensive communication materials have been distributed to support school-level rollout, including a voiceover PowerPoint presentation for staff, printable posters for display throughout school buildings, daily announcement scripts, and a comprehensive FAQ. Public outreach has also been prioritized. Key information has been shared via email blasts, text messages, and prominently posted on the district's official website to ensure that families and community stakeholders remain informed and engaged.

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)

We are proud to announce that Brian Bryant, PBIS District Coach, along with students from Tucker High School, presented at the DCSD Technology Symposium on July 16, 2025. Their session, titled *PBIS Through Film: Bridging the Generational Gap*, highlighted the powerful role of student voice in Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

Abstract: PBIS cannot thrive without student voice! What better way to enhance implementation fidelity, amplify student engagement, and increase visibility of school-wide behavioral expectations than through film, media, and technology? By creating relatable and engaging content, students can inspire their peers to buy into PBIS and promote a positive school culture and climate through the eyes of students themselves. Congratulations to Mr. Bryant and the Tucker High School students on a job well done!



On July 22, 2025, over 120 MTSS Specialists participated in the MTSS-PBIS Integration Opening Session for the MTSS J.E.T. Setting Professional Learning Week. Brandy Woolridge, PBIS Coordinator for DCSD, and Benjamin Moore, GaMTSS Program Specialist for the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), conducted the training. The session focused on enhancing participants' understanding of the Georgia Department of Education's MTSS and PBIS Integration Whole Child Supports Model, providing a unified approach to academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports. Participants gained an overview of the PBIS framework and its implementation across the DeKalb County School District, including key components, expectations, and the district-level supports available to schools. The training emphasized how to identify and apply proactive, preventive, and intervention-based behavior systems of support at all tiers to promote positive student outcomes and address behavioral challenges effectively.

In preparation to roll out the new ISS Intervention Program in middle and high schools, the PBIS District Team conducted ISS Intervention Program Training on July 29, 2025, for over 120 middle and high school Assistant Principals, and on August 1, 2025, for 25 middle and high school ISS Paraprofessionals. The training provided participants with a clear understanding of the program's purpose and goals, an overview of ISS systems, procedures, protocols, and characteristics, and a review of the ISS Facilitator's role. Attendees also gained knowledge of the ISS classroom schedule, including the facilitation of Restorative Circles, SEL lessons, and academic support, as well as the resources available to implement the ISS Intervention Program effectively. High school ISS Paraprofessionals also participated in the RethinkEd SEL Training led by Dr. Roberts, Director of Partnerships at RethinkEd.

Administrator Dr. Quentin Fretwell

Student Relations

"Bullying Stops Here!" Awareness Campaign

- Transportation (Bus Drivers) received bullying awareness training.
- Dr. Fretwell personally trained staff at Miller Grove and Tucker High Schools.
- School Nurses and Social Workers received bullying awareness training.
- Bullying (bullying, harassment, and hazing) training and associated materials have been disseminated to assistant principals.