

Bridging the Literacy Gap through Strategic Equity

A System-Wide Progress Report on
Goal Area 1: Student Academic Success
with Equity and Access





DeKalb County
School District

2024-2029

STRATEGIC PLAN



Strategic Plan Accountability Framework Report

April 2026



The Division Highlights consist primarily of a detailed strategic summary from the DeKalb County School District (DCSD) for April 2026, outlining progress across six key goal areas. This report provides a transparent update on the focused, high-leverage initiatives undertaken to achieve our district's mission and vision. It demonstrates how our collective efforts are strategically aligned to fulfill the promises of our Strategic Plan, holding us accountable for meaningful progress in every goal area.



DeKalb County
School District

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2029 SUMMARY

GOAL AREA 1



Student Academic Success with Equity and Access

- 1.1 Increase proficiency rates in literacy on district and state assessments for all students.
- 1.2 Increase proficiency rates in numeracy on district and state assessments for all students.
- 1.3 Increase the 4- and 5-year cohort graduation rates.
- 1.4 Ensure all students have equitable access to and support for academic programs and career pathways.
- 1.5 Improve student academic growth as measured by the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI).
- 1.6 Enhance student proficiency in digital literacy skills using innovative technology.

GOAL AREA 2



School, Family, and Community Engagement

- 2.1 Strengthen family, school, and community engagement to establish clear, accessible, and relevant communication tailored to meet stakeholders' preferences.
- 2.2 Create opportunities for collaboration between the district, families, community partners, and businesses to foster partnerships to support district-wide initiatives.
- 2.3 Improve communication processes for stakeholders to ensure the flow of clear, timely, and relevant information.
- 2.4 Establish clear communication channels to effectively engage with multilingual families and provide equitable access to district and school information.

GOAL AREA 3



Recruit, Develop, and Retain Talent

- 3.1 Recruit and hire a diverse and highly qualified workforce that reflects a world-class, innovative talent pool.
- 3.2 Develop high performing staff to ensure quality teaching and learning outcomes, an innovative workforce, and visionary leaders.
- 3.3 Retain highly effective staff in critical needs positions to ensure the sustainability and efficiency of integral district programs and services.
- 3.4 Develop employee pipelines for key staff positions to ensure the long-term viability of essential programs and services.

Culture and Climate

- 4.1 Ensure all schools provide a safe, orderly, and supportive learning environment for all students and staff.
- 4.2 Implement restorative practice structures in all schools and increase the number of schools using Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) programs each year.
- 4.3 Improve student attendance by creating a positive and engaging school experience.
- 4.4 Ensure all schools have staff trained in de-escalation techniques and Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) strategies.

Mental Health and Wellness

- 5.1 Create safe and supportive environments that promote positive mental health and wellness.
- 5.2 Increase awareness of factors that can impact mental health to foster well-managed learning environments.
- 5.3 Increase mental health support staff to improve classroom behavior and peer relationships.
- 5.4 Expand staff participation in mental health professional learning opportunities.

Organizational Excellence

- 6.1 Provide clean, safe, and efficient school facilities for all students.
- 6.2 Deliver safe and efficient transportation services to all students.
- 6.3 Deliver efficient school nutrition services and healthy meals to all students.
- 6.4 Improve and maintain a secure, accessible, and equitable digital learning environment for all students.
- 6.5 Ensure excellent financial management of district resources.

GOAL AREA 4



GOAL AREA 5



GOAL AREA 6



PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

Reflective & Resilient Learner... *I Can*

- demonstrate knowledge of content, skills, and standards
- evaluate potential outcomes of my actions by reflecting on successes and challenges and making the appropriate shifts to accomplish personal and academic goals
- hold myself accountable by utilizing organization and project management to achieve growth
- persevere through productive failures and challenges to improve
- demonstrate readiness through active civic engagement, enrollment, employment, entrepreneurship, or enlistment

Globally Engaged Citizen... *I Can*

- respect different cultures, perspectives, and beliefs
- exercise compassion and empathy towards others
- explore community and global issues from the perspectives of those most impacted and develop plausible solutions
- employ a neutral and democratic process to arrive at decisions

Creative & Dynamic Learner... *I Can*

- demonstrate curiosity, originality, inventiveness, and innovative problem-solving to create new things
- dive deeply into an issue and consider multiple perspectives when addressing problems and developing new processes
- take the appropriate risks and make adjustments based on lessons learned
- evaluate information and challenge both my peers' thinking and my own
- generate questions and elaborate on ideas to identify new solutions

Effective Collaborator... *I Can*

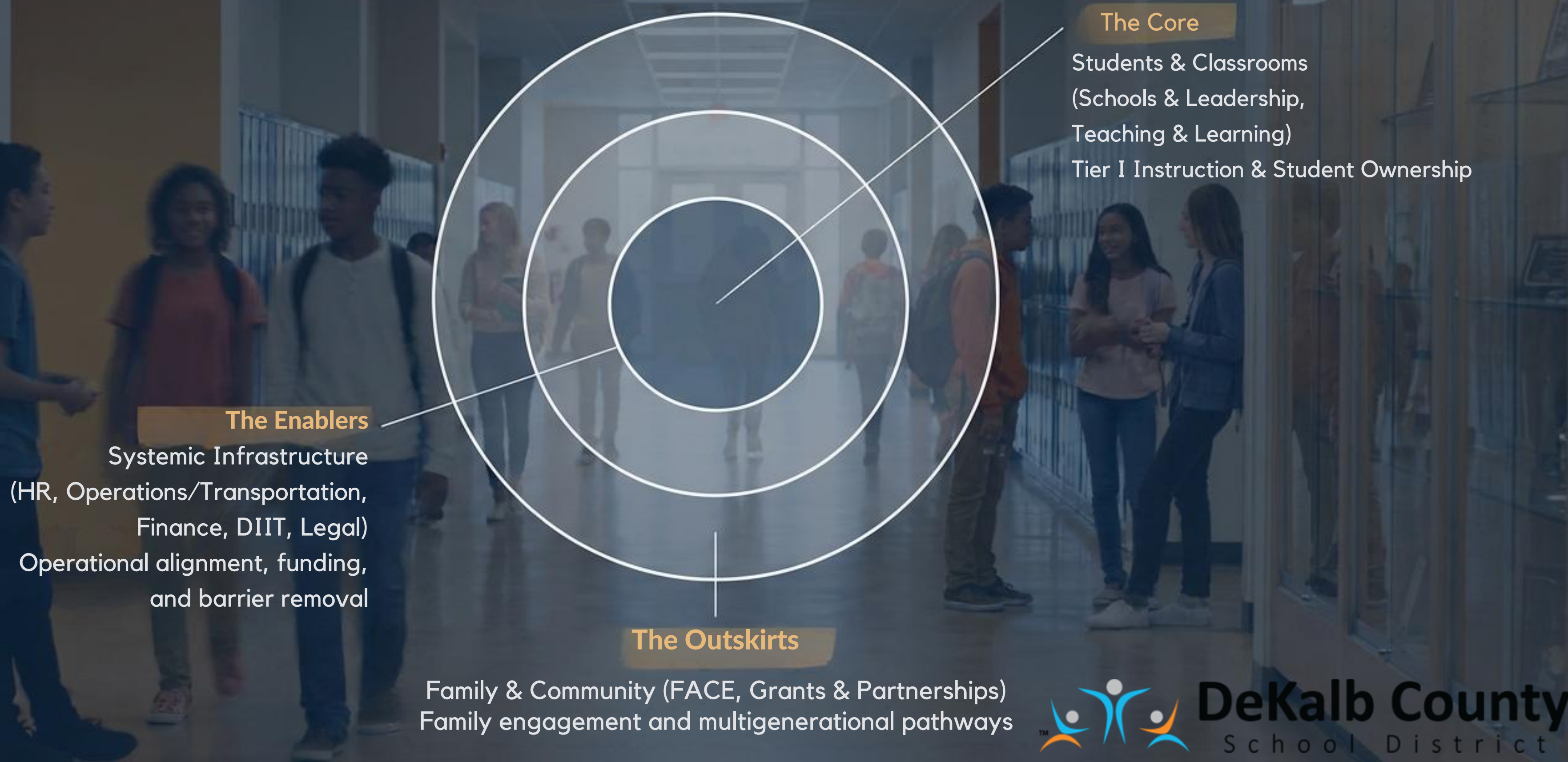
- work with a diverse group to accomplish a common goal
- give and receive meaningful feedback
- own personal responsibility for team outcomes
- value and appreciate varying opinions and viewpoints of others

Effective Communicator... *I Can*

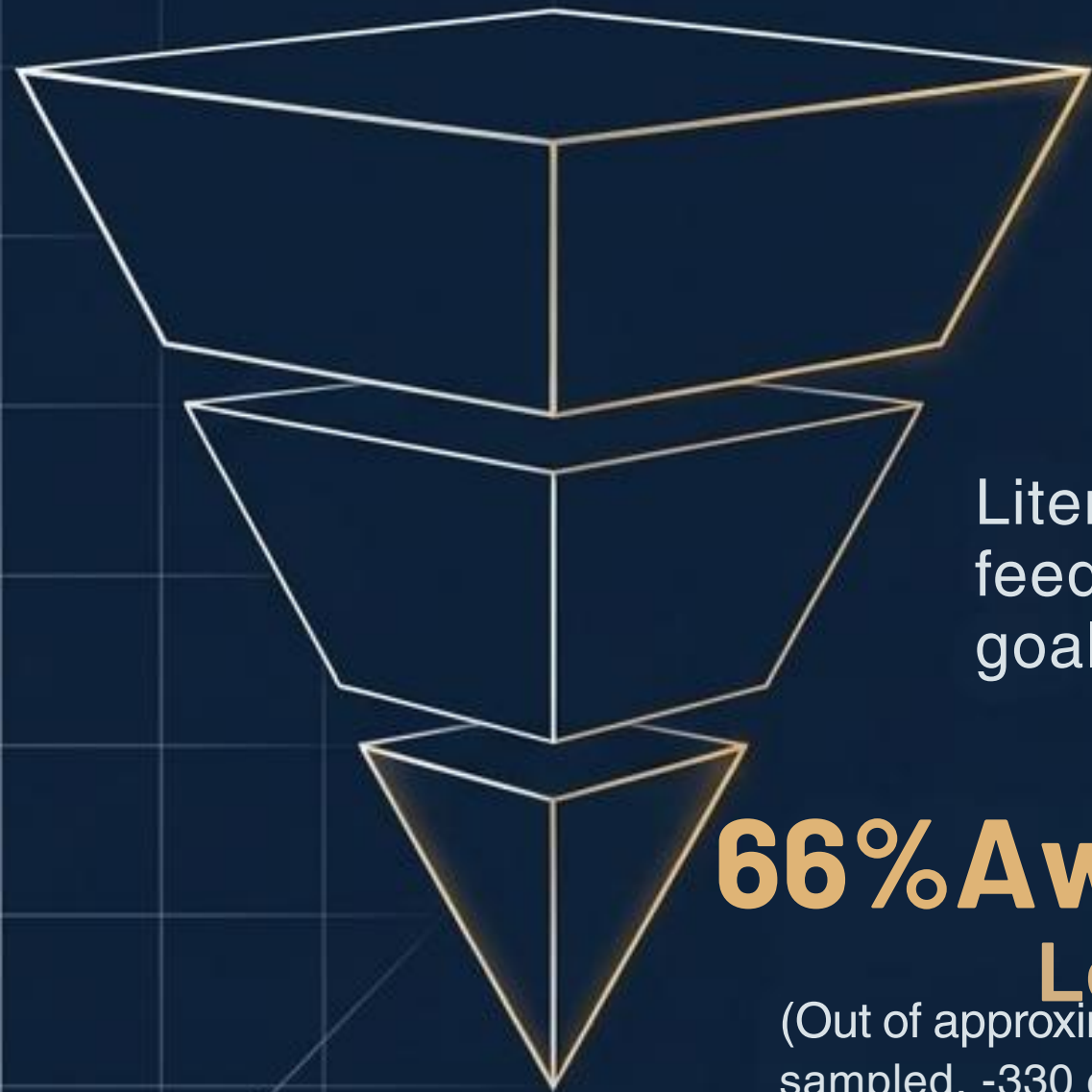
- articulate and share ideas clearly with respect
- utilize different platforms to express ideas and thoughts
- use technology effectively and responsibly
- actively listen with an open mind and respect other ideas



The Literacy Ecosystem: Ten Divisions, One Goal



Cultivating Student Academic Ownership



District Learning Walks & Targeted Questioning

Literacy-aligned feedback & student goal-setting

66% Awareness Lexile

(Out of approximately 500 students sampled, -330 can accurately identify and understand their Lexile level)



Improved climate indicators show zero discipline incidents in select locations alongside increased enrichment participation.

Data-Driven Instructional Alignment

Collaborative Calibration Visits (CCVS) climbing.

Middle schools: 47% to 79%
(9 to 15 of 19).

High schools: 63% to 86%
(14 to 19 of 22).

Fifth and final set of walkthroughs completed with Let's Read Georgia to assess 95 Phonics Core implementation.

15 of 17 schools
achieving 30+ minutes
of high-quality Amira tutoring usage.

100% completion
Of Reading CSIP Priority Areas 1 & 2 by
Title | Coordinators.



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Human Capital as an Instructional Driver



Staffing = Access

Data-informed recruitment strategies have reduced teacher vacancies to ~130, outperforming prior years and securing the candidate pipeline.



Equipping the Core

- HB307 Compliance: 3,358 K-3 teachers completing Structured Literacy Training (April 17, 2026, deadline).
- Gifted Ed PD: Face-to-Face Questioning and Feedback sessions deployed across all 7 areas, impacting both ESOL and Gifted K-5 instruction.



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Operations as an Equity Driver

Student Home

Barrier: Lack
of Transport

DCSD Strategic
Route

DeKalb Tech
(North/South) &
Approved Tutorials

Goal: 90% of middle/high schools with
after-school routes by June 2026.

Target: 20% minimum increase in
program participation.

Implementation Status: Pilot planning
underway at 7 schools (Cross Keys,
Henderson, Clarkston, Stone Mountain,
Miller Grove, McNair, Towers).

Securing the Infrastructure of Literacy



Finance

Leveraging HB 1193 (Georgia Early Literacy Act 2026).

Building FY2027 RAMP to fund one FTE K-3 literacy coach for schools >200 students (50% funding for <200).



DIIT

Tech for Littles deployed for early literacy.

100% on-time state reporting and SIS data accuracy ensuring equitable student scheduling.



Legal & Policy

DCSD Unified Literacy Plan reaches 75% completion.

OLA reviewing literacy policy drafts and advancing the Access and Opportunity Policy to the Board.



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Activating the Community Ecosystem

Read Across DeKalb

16 Horizon Elementary schools, 3,800 students impacted, 105 engagement touchpoints in March 2026.

Family Game Night

300 participants at Flat Rock ES engaging in Numeracy and STEM literacy.

Book Buddies

200 in-person students supported at Cedar Grove, Allgood, and Dunaire; 11 virtual participants successfully completed the program.

From Departmental Silos to Strategic Ecosystem

The Shift to Strategic Support

	Traditional	Strategic
Transportation	Moving students home to school.	Removing structural barriers to DeKalb Tech and academic enrichment.
Finance	Managing the district budget.	Leveraging legislative pathways (HB 1193) to fund dedicated K-3 literacy coaches.
Human Resources	Filling open job requisitions.	Driving instructional access through targeted data-informed recruitment (~130 vacancies).
Legal	Compliance and risk mitigation.	Engineering the Unified Literacy Plan and Pre-law Student Career Summer Program (CTAE).



Multigenerational Literacy Engagement



Pre-K

DeKalb Early Literacy Acceleration Initiative
\$290K grant application (Warnock/Ossoff) securing adaptive software for 2,800+ Pre-K students.



K-3

Structured Literacy & Tech for Littles
3,358 K-3 teachers self-reporting certification pathways.



Adolescent

Power BI Adolescent Literacy Data integration & expanded APSI cohorts
(78 teachers / 25 schools).



Adult & Family

DCSD Adult Education & ESL
Digital Literacy at Indian Creek, TABE assessments, and HSE completions empowering parents to support home learning.

The Blueprint for Accreditation and Success

The upcoming 2026-2027 Cognia Accreditation Engagement Review is not an administrative hurdle—it is the validation of a fully aligned, ecosystem-wide effort to bridge the literacy gap.

The Core

Systemic Enablers

Community

**2026-2027
Cognia
Review**

- Alignment Pillar 1:
Strategic Plan
- Alignment Pillar 2:
Comprehensive School
Improvement Plan (CSIP)
- Alignment Pillar 3:
Goal Area 1 Execution
(Evidence & Artifacts)

The transition from siloed operations to an interconnected ecosystem ensures we are prepared to validate positive student growth and achievement.



The 30-Day Strategic Outlook

Bridge to Summer

Partner Engagement and Media teams to finalize spring break and summer reading expansions, ensuring continuity of literacy growth.

Finalize Alignment

Complete all remaining CCVs to ensure 100% instructional alignment across all school levels.

Expand the Core

Increase District Learning Walks focusing on student discourse and drive the Lifting Lexiles campaign beyond the current 66% awareness benchmark.

District Progress Report

Culture and Climate Initiatives
(Goal Area 4)



Spring 2026 Briefing | System-Wide Transformation

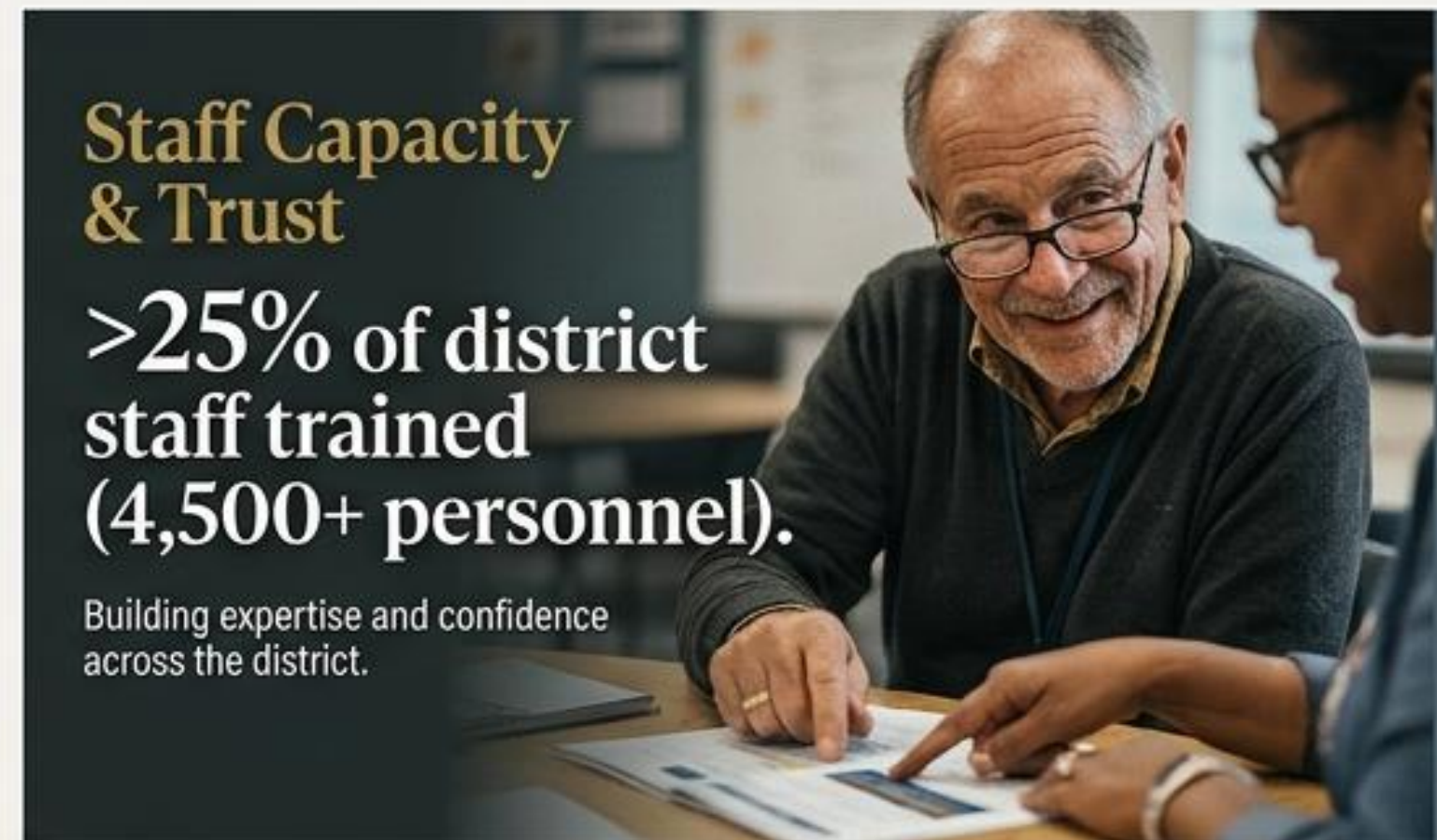


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Restorative Culture
230% increase
in restorative
resolutions.

Empowering student-led conflict resolution.



**Staff Capacity
& Trust**
>25% of district
staff trained
(4,500+ personnel).

Building expertise and confidence
across the district.



**Student Access
& Opportunity**
48 schools now
offering all 5
athletic programs.

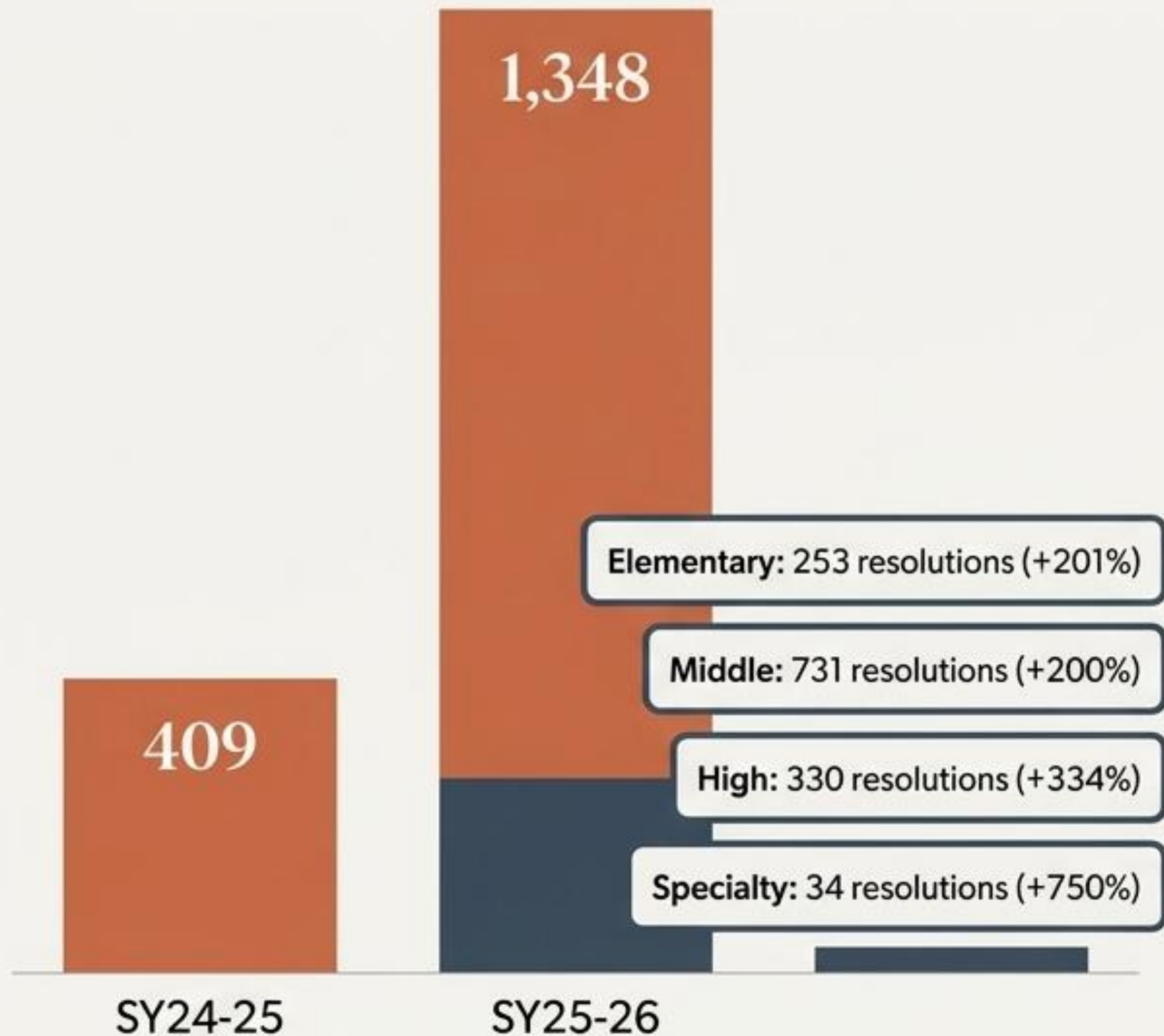
Expanding competitive sports
and participation for all.



**Operational Safety
& Efficiency**
\$400,000 annual
cost avoidance in
fleet optimization.

Improving maintenance, reducing
downtime, and extending fleet life.

Systemic Shift to Restorative Practices

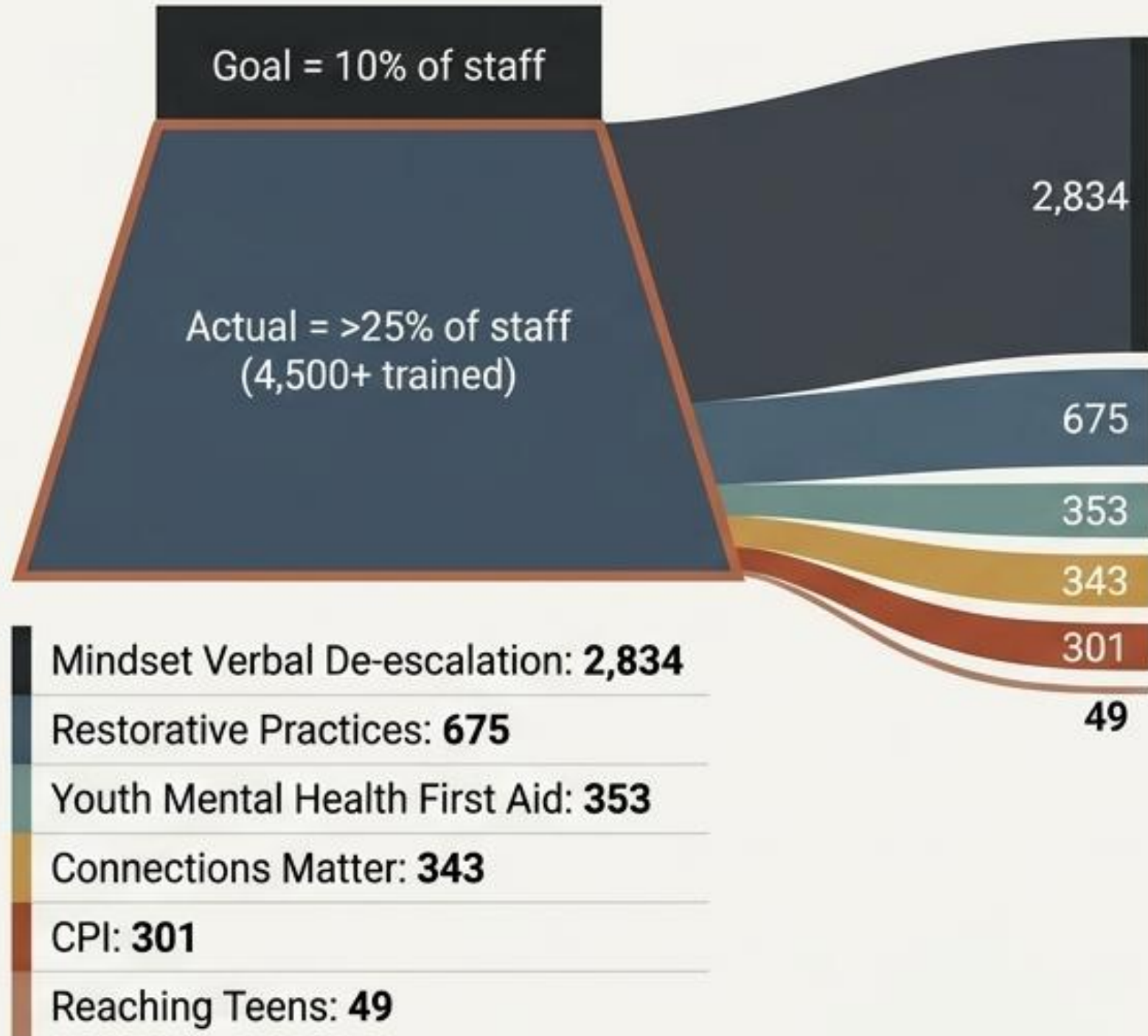


The Schools and Leadership Division has successfully expanded restorative circles as an instructional and relationship-building practice, significantly reducing exclusionary discipline and proactively addressing conflict across all school levels.



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Building Staff Capacity & Trust



System-wide improvement in HR trust and engagement metrics.

Engagement Score: 3.79 → 3.88

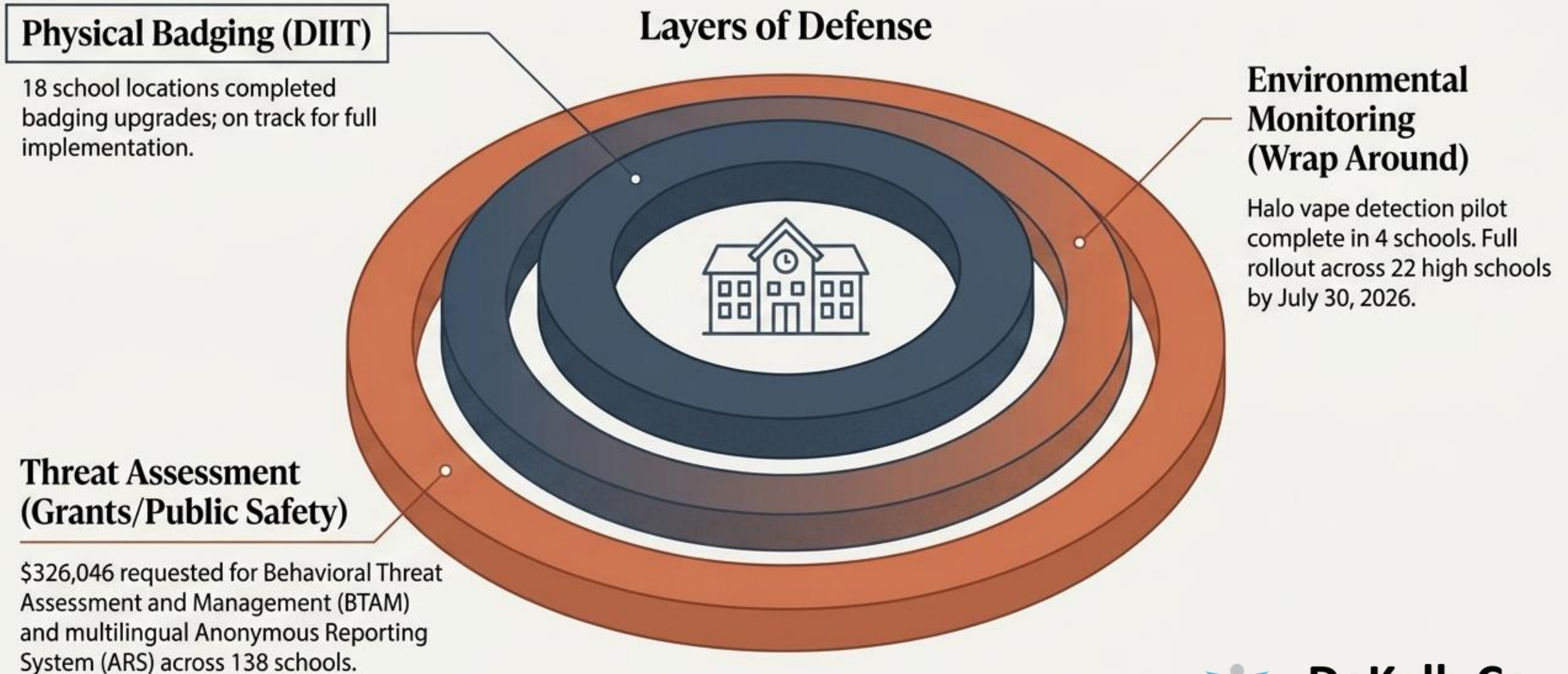
Participation: 35% → 42%

Percentile Ranking: 30th → 35th

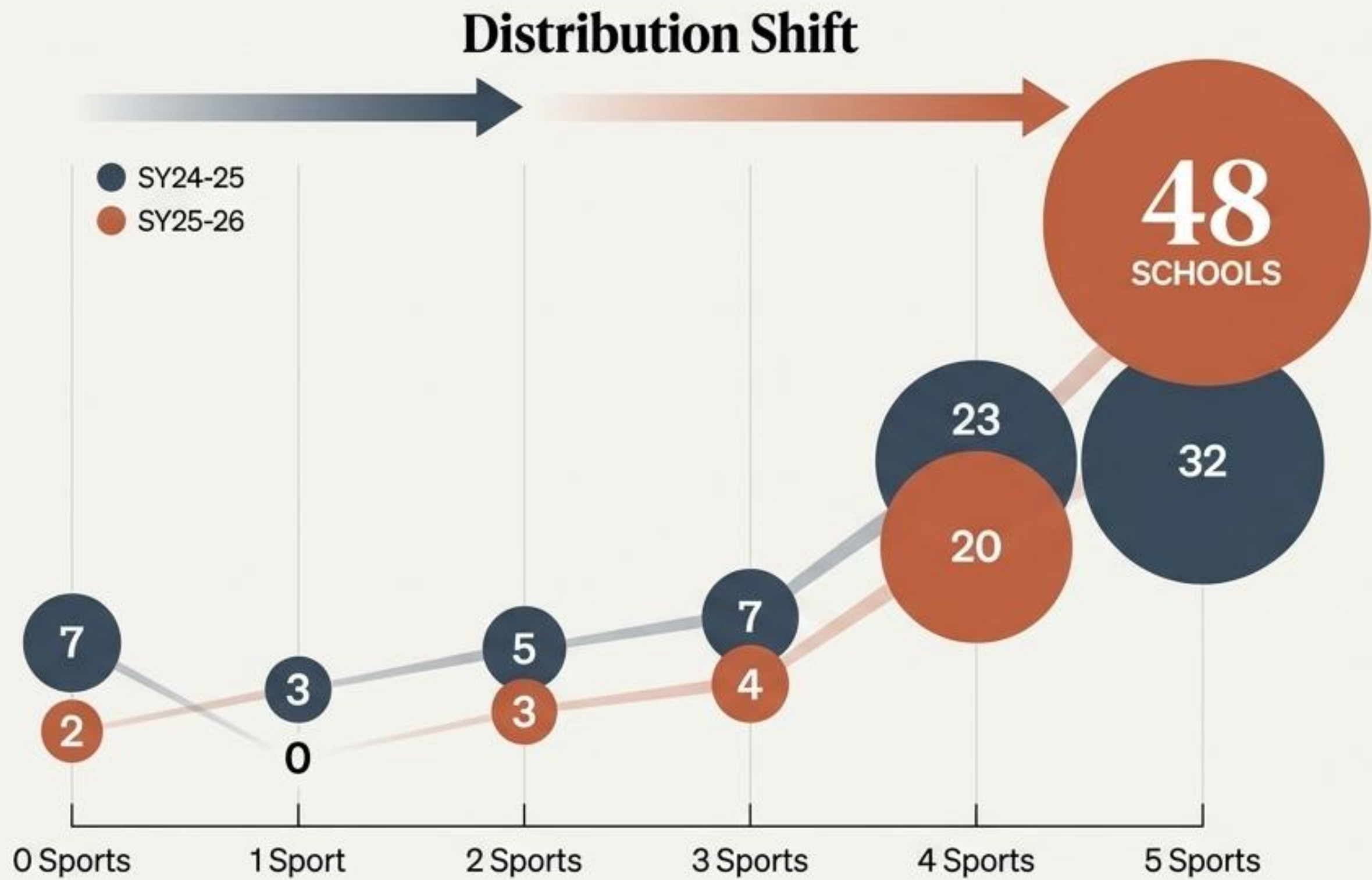


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Layered Approaches to School Safety



Expanding Elementary Athletic Opportunity



As of April 2026, all 77 elementary schools offer access to all five sports opportunities, with a 50% increase in schools participating in a full 5-sport roster.



Mentorship & Digital Innovation

The Plug ATL

Students from Columbia, Towers, Miller Grove, and MLK engaged in hands-on podcast production, video editing, and on-camera performance. Supported by ongoing elementary partnership talks with the Kappa League.



Capture the Flag

DIIT hosted a live cybersecurity event at Columbia High School with industry guest speakers. 989 district users engaged in active phishing reporting and digital citizenship awareness.



Community Connectedness and Resource Equity



Indian Creek Unity Fest

**1,000+ Attendees
(March 29, 2026).**

Extended standard 4.1 beyond the school building, fostering trust and belonging through cultural exhibits and community resources.

Mobile Teacher Resource Hub **\$500 Teacher Allowance.**

Events at Salem, Stephenson, and Tucker Middle Schools, alongside the Empty Stocking Fund, reduced resource gaps and educator stress by outfitting classrooms through June 2026.



DeKalb County
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Operational Excellence: The Fleet Context

A man with grey hair, wearing a dark jacket over a light blue shirt, stands with his right hand resting on the hood of a yellow school bus. The bus is parked in front of a building. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Aging vehicles represented just 22% of the fleet, but generated nearly 48% of total maintenance expenditures.

Fleet Services executed a disciplined asset lifecycle management strategy to remove **84 high-cost, unsafe buses** from Montreal, Panthersville, and AIC.

Disposal was strictly triggered for units exceeding 15 years, 175,000 miles, or repair costs over 30% of replacement value.



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The Fleet Optimization ROI



	The Aging Fleet (Before)	The Optimized Fleet (After)
Annual Maintenance Cost	\$9,200 per bus	\$4,800 per bus (48% Reduction)
Route Interruptions	96 annually	41 annually (57% Reduction)
Fuel Efficiency	5.6 MPG	7.1 MPG (27% Improvement)
DOT Inspection Failures	14% failure rate	6% failure rate (57% Reduction)

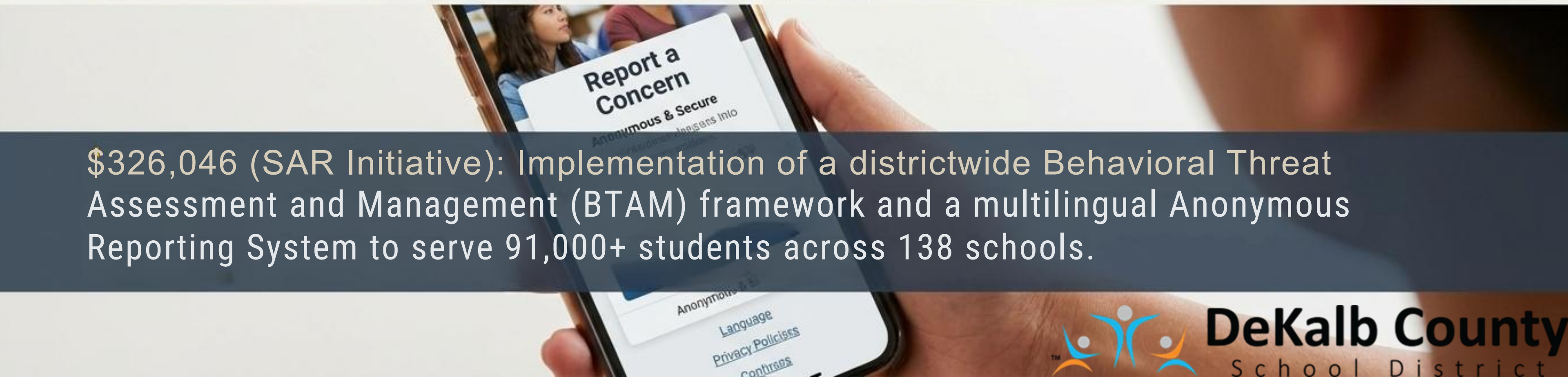


**\$400,000 Annual Maintenance Cost Avoidance +
\$145,000 in Estimated Annual Fuel Savings.**

Securing the Future: Strategic Grants



\$405,000 (DOJ COPS Technology): Equipping the priority fleet with REI HD6-600 high-definition mobile surveillance systems. Provides comprehensive interior visibility and live-view emergency capabilities to protect students and drivers with factual evidence.



\$326,046 (SAR Initiative): Implementation of a districtwide Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) framework and a multilingual Anonymous Reporting System to serve 91,000+ students across 138 schools.



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Synthesis: A Culture of Care and Excellence



Progress in Goal Area 4 proves that systemic transformation occurs when physical safety, operational discipline, and human empathy are engineered to work together.



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