



**ADDENDA**  
**CLARIFICATION OF ISSUES/CONCERNS**  
**RAISED WITHIN THE**  
**ADVANCED SPECIAL REVIEW TEAM REPORT (DECEMBER 17, 2012)**

The DeKalb County School District (DCSD) is providing the addendum document to provide clarification on several issues and concerns raised by AdvancED in the Special Review Visit Report on December 17, 2012.

**TEXTBOOKS**

**Issue: District textbook purchases, deliveries, inventories, replacements and repairs.** Curriculum and Instruction staff at the request of the Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction proactively conducted an internal audit of the district's existing textbook inventory and related purchasing, delivery, and inventory processes during the Spring Semester of 2012. The audit resulted in a thorough report, complete with a recommendation to replace the existing manual textbook management system with an electronic asset management system that is compatible and comparable to *Destiny*, the district's library media management system. The report was provided to the former superintendent for review and support. Additionally, monies to cover the cost of a new instructional materials/textbook asset management system were proposed by the Deputy Superintendent inclusion into the FY13 budget during the budget process with the Superintendent and senior staff.

Curriculum and Instruction staff responded to questions posed to DCSD Board of Education Members (BOE) by the State Board of Education (GADOE) at their January 2013 hearing about textbook concerns raised in the December 2012 report in three steps.

Step one, the Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction together with the Chief Financial Officer presented an overview of the district's current textbook purchasing, delivery, and inventory processes as well as addressed questions about the textbook lease and related questions as they pertained to the December 2012 AdvancED/SACs report and the KPGM audit. The overview was presented at a Called Board Meeting and included a PowerPoint presentation and an Executive Summary of textbook board agenda items and purchases for fiscal years 2011 through 2013. See Textbook Executive Summary dated January 21, 2013.

Step two, Curriculum and Instruction staff compiled a binder that included specific examples related to the information presented to DCSD BOE in the PowerPoint and Executive Summary at the Called Board Meeting. The binder was presented to the State

Board of Education (GADOE) at the February hearing in response to questions they had at the January hearing. Additionally, the Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and Chief Financial Officer attended the February hearing and presented an overview of the district's current textbook purchasing, delivery, and inventory processes as well as addressed questions about the textbook lease and related questions as they pertained to the December 2012 AdvancED/SACs report and the KPGM audit.

Step three; Curriculum and Instruction staff resumed efforts to move forward with the spring 2012 Internal Textbook Audit Recommendations. Staff has researched a variety of textbook management systems and narrowed the choices to three for consideration by a district focus group. The focus group consists of school and district staff that is charged with reviewing and recommending one management system for purchase and implementation during the 13-14 school year. The three vendors invited for review by the focus group include: *Hayes Software Systems* (Austin, Texas), *Follett Software - Destiny Textbook Manager* (McHenry, IL) and *Book Systems, Inc.* (Huntsville, AL).

The focus group will provide each vendor with a comprehensive overview of the district's existing textbook management system so that each company can provide a needs assessment with recommendations and a cost analysis for the district. Additionally, staff will lead the focus group and vendors on a tour of our warehouse and distribution system so the vendors can gather information about our existing textbook management system operational processes and determine if existing components can be used in a new comprehensive system. The work of the focus group will be complete by May 1, 2013. The focus group will use a rubric to document criteria used during the vendor selection process. Pending completion and approval of the FY14 budget, the focus group's findings and recommendation will be brought forward as an agenda item for purchase and implementation during the 2013-14 SY.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

### **Issue: Providing Qualified Technical Support Staff**

The Division of Information Technology (IT) eliminated ninety-two positions and changed job descriptions to align with the needs of the district to improve technical support. The eliminated positions were filled through a process of a technology aptitude test and verbal interview process. The scores were weighted and 66 of the 92 positions were filled with qualified technicians.

We changed the support model to a dispatch model that allows for a Birdseye view of our technical support staff. We have a model that includes service level agreements and team leads that drive outstanding customer service and service ticket closure.

We have included customer satisfaction surveys that are emailed to users after service tickets are resolved. This allows us to monitor our service offerings in real time to make immediate adjustments if needed.

We have mandatory professional development days for our technicians so their skillset remains current to address the speed in which technology rapidly changes.

**To address the concerns regarding the district failing to provide modern fully functional technology:**

We conducted an assessment of the technology within the district and conducted a technology survey to solicit information from our school and support staff.

Through SPLOST we have begun to address technology needs which include our wireless infrastructure needs. To date we have implemented wireless in over 30 schools since January and are on pace to complete 7 schools a week.

We currently have over 1800 classrooms without active boards that we plan to address. During the week of April 22, 2013, a Request for Proposal (RFP) was published on the state website and in the local newspaper for Active Boards. We call this our 21-century initiative. We plan to begin the installation of the boards this summer with a tentative completion date of December 2013.

Through our technology assessment, we found that the majority of our computers are 5 years or older. We plan to put the district on a technology replacement schedule where computers will be replaced every 3 to 4 years. This exceeds the states replacement cycle. They consider a modern computer to be 5 years or lower. The rollout plan date to be taken to the board for consideration is July 2013. This will help to address the inequities that exist.

In October the District purchased access to join Microsoft's Enrollment for Education Solutions. This allows DCSD to always have the latest software for our staff and students to use.

We implemented a technology committee that consists of parents, teachers and administrative staff to constantly make sure we are in line with their needs and also for their valuable input as we plan for major initiatives.

We have begun testing on a new financial system that is being piloted in our schools and among district level personnel to gauge its effectiveness.

In April we rolled out an electronic contract process for all contracts to be signed by staff electronically. This was successful with over a 93 percent completion rate.

We are currently in the process of completing a RFP for a new Student Information System. This will allow parents greater access to their student's grades and attendance and work more efficiently for our staff. We have started to input all parent information

into our old system to provide them immediate access to student's grades and attendance. The completion date is August.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

**HR policies and practices are not communicated clearly in writing or verbally.**

The Division of Human Resources created the following:

- Employee Handbook
- Employee Informational Seminars
- Standard Operating Procedures

Please see a brief synopsis of each.

### **Employee Handbook**

The Division of Human Resources provided an electronic link for the new Employee Handbook to all district employees on December 20, 2012. This was the first organized District handbook to be created in more than 15 years.

The handbook provides information on employment services, benefits, certification, compensation and classification, leaves and attendance, personnel records and key policies and procedures.

Employees were able to access the handbook by holding down the CTRL key and clicking on the following link: <http://www.dekalb.k12.ga.us/www/documents/human-resources/dcsd-employee-handbook-final.pdf>

All employees are responsible for understanding the contents contained in the handbook, as well as all policies and administrative regulations of the District.

### **Employee Informational Seminars**

The Division of Human Resources held a series of "**Human Resources Made Easy**" informational seminars. The seminars were facilitated by Human Resources Professionals and were designed to provide an overview of a number of Human Resources functions.

#### **Topics included:**

- Workers' Compensation
- Employment Policy and Procedures
- Certification
- Compensation & Classification

- Payroll
- Insurance Benefits
- Family Medical Leave & Leave Without Pay
- Legal Affairs & Code of Ethics
- Retirement

**Dates of the Seminars:**

- Thursday, January 17, 2013 at 4:00pm
- Thursday, February 21, 2013 at 4:00pm
- Monday, March 18, 2013 at 10:00am

**Standard Operating Procedures**

The Division of Human Resources developed a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to clarify Human Resources related operational guidelines and practices. SOPs are user-friendly real-time resources designed specifically for Principals and Department Administrators to promote consistent application of Human Resources related processes and procedures. Administrators were directed to click on the following link: <http://staffsvc.hr.dekalb.k12.ga.us/esop>. Examples of topics covered include:

**Death Notification Form**

There is a form and procedure that exist. Please complete in the event of an employee's death.

**Fair Labor Standards Act**

There is a District practice regarding volunteering, compensatory time and overtime pay. Please review this document to stay in compliance. Non exempt employees should leave immediately after their eight hour work period. Non exempt employees should sign in and out for lunch.

**Providing an Employment Reference**

STOP- before giving a reference, please check Panel L301. See the SOP for more details.

**Reasonable Suspicion**

Do not send an employee home if you have a reasonable suspicion that they are under the influence.

**Scheduling and Highly Qualified**

Reiterate that ALL teachers must be HiQ. If a person is only certified in math, they should not teach science.

### **Time Off for Voting**

See the procedure. We are not required to allow employees time off during their scheduled work hours to vote.

### **HR policies and procedures, including salaries have been implemented in an inconsistent manner leading to distrust and suspicion across the school district.**

In an effort to provide an equitable wage and salary program for all 13,800 staff members, the District underwent an Organizational Restructuring and Staffing Study in the fall of 2011. From this study, administrative compensation practices were established. With the assistance and guidance of Karaton Services, LLC, job classifications as well as an aligned salary structure were developed to establish both internal and external equity within the District.

Our compensation philosophy is to pay wage and salary rates, which are sufficient to attract, motivate, and retain a highly qualified and competent work force. Our goal is to provide employees with a total rewards package that is competitive with other school districts. Though an employee's pay is usually the most visible part of compensation, DeKalb County Schools' total rewards package includes a number of great benefits.

In the massive overhaul of our job classification and salary development process, we reduced 380+ job titles to 17 classifications, refined in 2-3 levels. We also converted from 91 salary schedules to one central office salary structure with delineating conversion charts. The Division of Human Resources developed and published our first ever Compensation and Classification website. This website [www.dekalb.k12.ga.us](http://www.dekalb.k12.ga.us) provides additional detailed information regarding our compensation practices, salary and pay ranges for all positions, frequently asked questions and an explanation of our total rewards package.

This level of transparency has been key to reducing the number of concerns relative to our compensation and salary structure.

### **Current policies, processes & practices do not clearly demonstrate how the system hires qualified support staff. This is by not performing a thorough background check. This does not support the district's purpose and direction for providing services in all schools and programs.**

The District has amended our CBC practices to ensure applicants are thoroughly checked and cleared prior to employment.

Prior to February 2012, applicants were hired, received their employee ID badge and were allowed to report to the work-site prior to the CBC and fingerprints being cleared. Effective **February 8, 2012**, all new hires, including substitutes, must **clear security (CBC)**

**through the Department of Public Safety PRIOR to reporting to the work-site.**

Employee identification badges are not provided until the HR authorization session.

**Evidence from interviews raised questions about the District's and school leaders' use of a formal, systematic process to determine the number of personnel necessary to support the District's and schools' purpose, programs and continuous improvement.**

Due to the state's economy, there have been significant cuts to the education budget. As a result, the net effect to the DeKalb County School District has been a substantial decrease in funds provided by the State, which has resulted in less funding to operate the school District. Over the last 5 years, employees in the DeKalb County School District have felt the impact of these cuts as extreme economic conditions have forced the District to make several tough choices.

Not only have employees been subjected to no step increase, cost of living adjustments, and furloughs, the District have also implemented 3 separate reductions in force since 2009. As personnel cost accounts for close to 85% of our general fund operating budget, cuts have been imminent.

Moving forward, Senior Staff may have school level personnel involved when determining what cuts would be the least impact on classroom instruction.

### **Nepotism**

The DeKalb County Board of Education is scheduled to approve a new Policy BHB-Nepotism on May 6, 2013 to provide and inform stakeholders of the District's prohibition of favoritism, cronyisms and nepotism in hiring practices by any employee of the District.

Employees are strictly prohibited from initiating or participating in any decisions providing a direct benefit to a relative or a person with whom they have a personal relationship. Therefore to the extent practicable, the District will make all hiring and promotion decisions based solely on individual qualifications and merit.

It is inappropriate for District employees, administrators, the Superintendent, and Board members to unduly influence employment decisions based on familial or personal relationships. If an employee is found to have asserted undue influence in the employment decisions based on a familial or personal relationship, the employee may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Upon approval of this policy, the Division of Human Resources will implement a process in an effort to educate all District employees, inclusive of the Board of Education and Superintendent:

Item	Action	Timeline
HR Employment Application	Applicants are asked to disclose any relative relationships in the application	Daily
Relative Disclosure- Phase I	All central office employees will be required to complete BHB- Exhibit I	May 2013
Training to all Leadership Personnel during Summer Leadership Conference	All leadership personnel will be trained on the Standard Interview Process	June 2013
Hiring Authority Attestation Form	All administrators will be required to complete BHB- Exhibit III. Programmatically change PATS system to ensure that Hiring Authority certifies each selection in accordance with BOE BHB policy	June 2013
BHB- Required Policy	During preplanning require training- during annual policy training	August 2013
Relative Disclosure- Phase II	All school based employees will be required to complete BHB- Exhibit I	August-September 2013
Quarterly listing of all newly hired employees at the Coordinator level of above disclosing relatives	List will be provided to the Superintendent	August 2013

Any appearance of impropriety or a conflict of interest may be referred to the District's Ethics Hotline at 1-888-475-0482 and will be a cause for an immediate investigation by the District.

**Interviews indicated that there are questions about the system's and school leaders' use of a formal systematic process to determine the number of personnel necessary to support the District's and school's purposes, educational programs, and continuous improvement. Ex: elimination of 200 paraprofessionals**

See response to Concern 4.



## **UTILITY COSTS**

We have significantly reduced our vulnerability in utilities costs. We have achieved our best budgeting year, in at least five years, for utility budgeting.

Electricity: We budgeted \$15,575,000 and will stay within budget. We increased monitoring of our billing, improved collaboration with our Georgia Power liaison, and taken energy conservation measures (such as controlling thermostats, 4-day summer work weeks to meet our goal. It is possible that we will return a small surplus.

Natural Gas: We budgeted \$3,000,000 and will meet budget. We have worked successfully with Gas South to monitor our usage and billing. It is also possible we will return a small surplus.

Water and Sewer: We budgeted \$3,000,000. There was an 11% rate increase this year but we still expect to budget given our conservation measures. These measures include: installation of new, low-flow toilets through SPLOST dollars, water-control flushing devices for current toilets and controlling timers on field-irrigation systems.

Sanitation: We budgeted \$2,000,000 and we will meet budget. We need to replace and add more solid waste compactors to reduce expenses for next year.

Energy Manager. This position is a currently vacant. With budget approval, the hiring of a dedicated energy manager would benefit the entire utility program as well as help us implement green (i.e. recycle) initiatives with the students and schools.

**The district's current policy and procedure associated with drawing attendance zones as well as closing or opening new schools is poorly constructed and ineffectively administered. The result has been community outrage, confusion and feelings of abandonment.**

The controversy of zoning and community relations had more to do with following the policy process rather than the policy itself (our policy is modeled from Fulton County). The recent controversy in the fall of 2012 was due to the awkward use of a reporting process (the "proposed school organization," which is a state construction reporting document) to create zoning changes rather than using the district redistricting policy and process. We learned that we must use the right tool to discuss zoning issues. Additionally, zoning changes were done well in the 2010-11 years but the 2012 actions made it appear we were moving away from this agreement.

## **PAST BUDGET PROCESS CONCERNS**

### **Budget processes were unclear and inconsistent.**

At the onset of building the FY2012/2013 budget, there was no CFO on board. The former superintendent wanted to wait until a CFO was hired. The CFO started in May 2012, two months prior to the beginning of the new fiscal year. Therefore, the budget process was completed in a two-month span when normally there is six months allotted to build and adopt a final budget.

The current budget process for FY2013/2014 includes a detailed budget timeline highlighting dates for Board action and also three public hearings to gain input from all stakeholders.

Additionally, the first meeting of the Board and public was used to set parameters and guidelines for administration to use when developing the budget. This process is different from past budget practices.

### **Fiscal Oversight Problems**

- 1) Severe under-budgeting of items
- 2) Providing no budget for commonly yearly expenses

In building the FY2012/2013 budget, a thorough multi-year analysis of all line items was used to properly budget for projected expenses. Approximately \$40 million was reallocated to cover line items that were under-budgeted in the past. The same process will be used each year going forward in the budget building process.

## **LEGAL FEES**

The budget development process is underway for the next year's FY2014 budget. There will be a major reduction in legal fees in the budget. Eliminating excessive legal fees is one of the major objectives in within the five goals of the Interim Superintendent's 90-Day Plan. Before any legal fees are paid, the superintendent reviews all invoices. There will be a restructure of legal services for DCSD and a review of legal firms.