Legislative Priorities 2020

DeKalb County School District Legislative Priorities
The DeKalb County Board of Education and Superintendent recommend the following priorities for the 2020 Legislative Session. The DeKalb Legislative Delegation is requested to actively support each priority along with the Governor and the collective membership of the Georgia General Assembly.

Budgeting and Funding
DCSD supports initiatives that protect and stabilize the ability of school boards to generate funding for education, and that do not restrict the ability of school boards to direct those resources to students as necessary. This substantive reform should begin with the establishment of an increased and fully funded weight for students identified as Economically Disadvantaged, much in the same manner that Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners also receive a substantive increase in assigned funding.

Adequate Funding of the Quality Basic Education Act (QBE) Formula
DCSD supports substantive reforms and revisions to the current QBE funding formula. However, it is critical that any updates to the formula are initiated with proper funding to support the formula figures. Members of the General Assembly are encouraged to discontinue austerity cuts to public education and support the full funding of the state’s funding formula for K-12 education. State funding for education should be distributed based on the actual costs for providing services and resources such as transportation, media, textbooks, technology and other equipment. In addition, the General Assembly should reexamine and modify the equalization formula to reduce the burden on districts with high rates of students on free and reduced lunch.

School Safety and Security
Establish partnerships to devise a comprehensive strategy and attain the necessary training and resources to secure schools against a full range of risks.

Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS)
Ensure a sustainable retirement program for employees under the Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS).

Annexation - School Boundaries and Abatement Process
DCSD urges the Legislature to pass legislation that separates municipal annexations from school annexations, requiring separate consideration and votes for such school annexations and prohibiting such annexations when they primarily involve commercial properties or which otherwise disproportionately deprive a school district of current or future tax revenue when compared to the reduction of expenses to such school district. Any such legislation should also provide compensation equal to the full replacement cost for any buildings or properties owned by a school district which are annexed by an independent school district.

Abatements and Other Tax Diversions
School districts should be granted representation on any development authorities which have the power to grant abatements or other tax reductions or diversions from school districts of school taxes. Further, legislation should allow school districts to limit the amount of a reduction in any single abatement or similar action as well as an aggregate limit for all such abatements and similar actions.

Mental Health Awareness & Empowerment
To partner with state and local agencies in our efforts to determine funding resources targeted to help identify and address the mental health needs of students and staff, and to assist in developing and implementing practical and appropriate mental health programs, trainings, and services.

Revise the QBE allotment to include:
1) Additional mental health staff to promote mental health wellness, identify and address student behavior that might be related to mental health issues, and provide data-driven services related to the needs of individual students.
2) Reduce the student-counselor ratio to reflect one counselor per 250 students.

College & Career Readiness
Increase funding for the college & career pipeline with a focus on creating more opportunities for work-based learning, expanding the career pathways, and expanding learning opportunities for educational enrichment and career exposure.