



Parent Councils United

State of the DeKalb County School District with Dr. Stephen Green

Questions and Answers from audience

September 24, 2015

Tucker High School

Q) I am concerned that ‘high stakes’ standardized testing that penalizes both students and teachers has become the norm. Some students come to school with issues that teachers cannot be expected to solve. It seems that instead of the government focusing on big-picture issues like poverty, violence, nutrition, and family support services, the teachers are expected to do more each year simply because what they do can be ‘measured’ in terms of testing. How can we get away from standardized testing as a main indicator of education quality or are we now stuck with this system?

A) Currently, the DeKalb County School District is adhering to the federal and state guidelines for standardized testing. On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation’s national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students. The previous version of the law, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, was enacted in 2002.

As states and school districts begin to digest the new guidelines, it looks as though Georgia will be able to revise the number of standardized tests students will be required to take. In fact, some district-level staff recently met with top

officials at the Georgia Department of Education and state legislature to express our concerns over the current Georgia assessment landscape, which requires more assessments than those required by federal mandates.

As a school district, we have conducted a thorough analysis of our assessment catalogue to effectively evaluate how best to minimize the number of comprehensive assessments required each year. This evaluation has led to a strategic plan for assessments that significantly reduces the number of hours a student sits for an assessment and makes the assessment process an integral component of the instructional process. In this case, assessments are used as an instructional tool and not a single factor of student and teacher success. This stance eliminates much stress from teachers and students, thereby allowing schools to spend more time on instructional practices.

Q) Last Monday, the BOE approved your administration's proposal for the charter system petition. It appears that it does not incorporate requirements from the state DOE. Meanwhile, DCSD is moving forward with that document at the community engagement meetings that began this week. Can you explain the reason you moved forward with a vote on a document known to need revision and are asking the public to take time to give feedback on a document that must undergo revisions? Will the public be asked to give feedback again when the document has been revised to meet the DOE requirements?

A) At the October 2015 Work Session, the Board and Superintendent agreed that concerns existed around the proposal to become a charter system. These concerns focused on the requirements and expectations for local school governance, and they were concerns that were presented by the community when the conversation around charter system status began. For this reason, the District has chosen to pursue Strategic Waiver School System (formerly IE²) status, and the Board adopted a resolution at its December 2015 meeting authorizing the Superintendent to notify the GA DOE that this was DeKalb's intent.

Q) How much is the curriculum and instruction audit costing DCSD? Will you solicit input from all the teachers about the current curriculum and their needs for instructional materials, equipment and resources?

A) At the November 2, 2015, meeting the DCSD Board voted to allow the Superintendent to contract with CMSi for the curriculum audit at a cost not to exceed \$200,000.

Yes. Teachers will be given an opportunity to provide input through an electronic survey.

Q) Will the curriculum audit include a review of documents presented to the previous superintendent regarding instructional needs and a review of action items presented to the BOE over the past few years related to the purchase of textbook and instructional materials?

A) The curriculum audit will include an examination of all current core and non-core curriculum framework, instructional materials and resources, including textbooks.

Q) What is your position on Magnet Schools? We have waiting lists in the hundreds. Can these successful programs be expanded or duplicated throughout the County?

A) The DeKalb County School District has many school choice options available for students. Magnet schools are an excellent academic option for students in the DeKalb County School District. Specific criteria is used to determine eligibility for these schools. The School Choice Open Enrollment period for the 2016-17 school year is January 11 through February 19, 2016. Parents are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to register students for school options available throughout the district. The school district welcomes the opportunity to discuss enhancement or expansion of school choice offerings, including magnet schools, for students.

Q) The curriculum and instruction budget has no line item for the instructional music programs (as opposed to marching bands) in our middle schools and high schools, so there are no funds to purchase necessary, very expensive items like instruments. Per pupil money is shared by all the fine arts classes at a school and isn't sufficient to purchase instruments like xylophones, timpani, cellos, etc. that cost thousands of dollars each. There is a small pot of money under facilities management for repairs, but not for replacement of instruments that are so old parts can no longer be found. This area has been neglected for years. If DCSD

wants to continue to have a successful orchestra, choral and band program (classes for credit during the instructional day), the C and I budget needs to reflect that. How will you address this as you develop the next budget?

A) In the FY16 budget, the Board of Education approved \$100,000 to purchase instruments and equipment. Four high schools will receive \$25,000 to replace damaged instruments and/or equipment or purchase needed instruments and/or equipment. From 2011-2012 to 2015-2016, 16 high schools have received \$25,000 exclusively to purchase music instruments and/or equipment. If the Board of Education approves the budget enhancement for 2016-2017, we will complete the high school cycle.

Mr. Roberts collaborated with K-12 music teacher leaders to conduct a needs assessment during the first semester. Based upon the findings, Mr. Roberts is preparing a recommendation for consideration during the budget cycle to include a rotation for middle schools to receive \$25,000 each over a five-year period like the high schools.

All schools may submit instruments for repair through the established procedures. Schools use approved vendors and submit the invoices to Mr. Don Roberts and Ms. Tanya Cooper. Ms. Cooper prepares the paperwork to submit to Operations for final processing and payment.

Q) A whistleblower has alleged wrongdoing by DCSD staff related to contracts and SPLOST. Is there an internal investigation of those allegations and if so, when do you expect that to be completed? Given past abuse of SPLOST funds and what appear to be possible ongoing issues, what can you say to the stakeholders who will be asked to approve a SPLOST V and trust DCSD with those funds?

A) The Board of Education has authorized the settlement of a lawsuit filed in May 2015 by a former employee alleging retaliation. The District disputed the former employee's claims, and the terms of the settlement agreement expressly deny any liability or wrongdoing by the District. During the course of the litigation, an internal investigation was conducted to address allegations of improper contracting involving bias. Although the investigation found evidence of apparent bias in one instance, the investigation also found the bias was duly recognized, reported and remediated by District staff before the contract was awarded. The contract was later re-solicited and properly awarded. As a result

of the internal investigation, appropriate personnel actions have been taken. The individual accused of improper contracting is no longer employed by the District.

Q) A Georgia statute requires 65% of a school system's total operating budget be spent in the classroom. DCSD has asked for waivers releasing them from this amount. Last year many schools did not spend all of the per pupil money so even less was used in the classrooms, yet we know teachers need resources. Three questions:

1. What are your expectations related to per pupil spending at the local schools?

A) In FY14 'per pupil' spending totaled 93.6%, in FY15 'per pupil' spending totaled 93.3%. Our expectation for FY16 is approximately 95%.

2. How does the district use per pupil money that is returned to the district at the end of the school year?

A) Last fiscal year (FY15), the district spent 98.5% of its general operating budget funds. Any unspent funds are used in the following year's budget initiatives – such as teacher pay raises in FY16.

3. What directives, if any, will you give your deputy superintendent of school leadership and operational support related to use of per pupil money and the supervision of school leadership?

A) School leadership is the first important step in creating a rigorous learning environment in the classroom. This is why Dr. Green reorganized the central office to have all five of the regional superintendents, who work with our 135 schools, report directly to me and to have assigned resources from finance, human capital, operations, and transportation so that school issues and problems can be addressed quickly and effectively. Also, Dr. Green created the Student Support and Intervention with a new Deputy Superintendent to ensure that the critical wrap-around services such as counseling, special education, safety, tutoring, and after school programs are available to students and parents in an efficient, effective manner.

Dr. Green has a laser focus on improving the quality of classroom instruction. The recent teacher and principal pay raises are the first of many anticipated investments in the classroom. Dr. Green made these pay raises effective this year. Already, the District has made state of the art technology in all of our schools. His plans are to include pay raises for bus drivers, custodians, nutrition workers, and other non-instructional personnel in the FY2017 budget.

Q) Because of a history of neglect of the Cross Keys cluster, those schools are now facing an overcrowding crisis. Will redistricting be considered to remedy the problem? Do you have a plan to address changing demographics by redistricting every so many (like 5) years? If you do redistrict, would you prefer to have attendance lines drawn in a circle (or as close as possible) to encompass the neighborhoods immediately surrounding each school?

A) Yes, redistricting is proposed to address the overcrowding concerns in the Cross Keys Cluster. The District has scheduled three public meetings, on January 14th, January 19th, and February 11th, to present proposed redistricting options based upon the feedback received from community stakeholders during its September 15th and 17th community meetings. A long-rang capital plan is currently being developed under the District’s Building S.P.A.C.E.S. Initiative to address changing demographics within the District. This plan will include a feasibility study of middle and high schools throughout the entire district, to include Regions 1 and 2, and will consider redistricting as a viable option to address such changes over the next several years. All redistricting will comply with Board Policy AD, which outlines the primary and secondary criteria for redistricting, one of which is geographic proximity.

Q) DCSD contracted with a company to chip our computers so they could be recovered in the event of a theft. Henderson Middle School had several chipped laptops stolen last winter. In response to a question at ELPC last spring, DCSD stated that if the contractor does not find the stolen items after a reasonable time, the company pays the district to replace them. Six to eight months seems like a reasonable time and school has been in session 6 weeks. When can HMS expect their replacement laptops?

A) The laptops were replaced last year. We replace them right away so instruction is not interrupted. When the company returns the equipment or releases payment, we add the equipment back to our inventory.

Q) When DCSD has security cameras installed, a theft occurs and there is clear video of the thieves, why doesn't DCSD appeal to the public for help in identifying the thieves? At Henderson Middle School, the DCSD public safety staff told us it was because it could mess up the investigation. Were the thieves caught?

A) The investigation into the theft at Henderson Middle School has produced a person of interest; however, at this time no arrests have been made. In addition, as an investigative technique the department has acquired the assistance of crime stoppers in an effort to identify the suspect in questioned.

Q) Were principals told at a leadership/principal's meeting this year to limit or reduce the number of discipline reports for certain populations of students?

A) Principals were not told to limit or reduce the number of discipline reports for specific student populations.

Following Summer Leadership, principals and assistant principals received the discipline reports for 2014-15. After discussing strategies to limit the number of OSS days, the following directives were:

- 1. All 10-day OSS needed approval from the Region Office.**
- 2. Limit OSS for VIOLENT offenses only.**
- 3. Utilize ISS as an alternative as frequently as possible**
- 4. Monitor OSS for students with disabilities.**

Q) MGT of America has been hired by DCSD to do an assessment of all DCSD facilities in preparation for SPLOST V. A recent audit of Henderson Middle School's HVAC revealed gross failures in design, installation and maintenance dating back to 2006-2007. Although extensive concerns were brought to MGT's attention during SPLOST IV assessments, MGT failed to identify or report any of the issues. That raises a red flag about their ability to accurately identify major facility needs. Please speak to this concern and how DCSD will avoid similar issues.

A) There were two assessments completed for every DCSD facility as part of its district-wide master planning initiative in preparation for E-SPLOST IV. The first assessment, conducted by Parsons Corporation, is referred to as a Facility Condition Assessment (FCA). This assessment evaluated the physical condition of each facility and its building systems (e.g. roof system, HVAC or mechanical system, electrical systems, plumbing system, various structural components, etc.) The second assessment, conducted by MGT of America, is referred to as a Facility Educational Adequacy Assessment, and evaluates the adequacy of the facility or any of its spaces as it relates to its intended educational use.

It is our understanding that the information regarding the challenges with the HVAC system at Henderson Middle School were, in fact, shared with MGT of America during a review session with community stakeholders. Shortly thereafter, this information was shared with Parsons Corporation to ensure the information was accurately reflected in the FCA report. Parsons confirmed that the information was validated and included in the facility condition report, and added some additional language to provide clarity around the issue.

Unfortunately, District staff failed to provide a copy of the modified Facility Condition Assessment Report to the Henderson Middle School stakeholders for their review during this time.

As a result, District staff has documented this lesson learned and adjusted its stakeholder engagement process to include all stakeholders in the data validation process for the FEAA as we prepare for an E-SPLOST vote in May 2016. Please visit the following link for more details:

<http://www.dekalb.k12.ga.us/www/operations/building-spaces/overview/>.

Q) From my observation, many of DeKalb's schools are stuck in the 60s with little to no improvements since then. Meanwhile, similar school districts like APS and Fulton Co. do invest heavily in the school buildings themselves. What is DeKalb's plan to renovate and improve the school buildings themselves?

A) The DeKalb County School District has over 140 facilities (more than any other school system in the State), with approximately \$2 billion in facility

improvement needs. Our average building age is over 40 years and nearly two-thirds of our \$500 million Education Special Local Options Sales Tax (E-SPLOST) revenue, collected over a five-year period, is used for replacements, additions, renovations, and/or improvements of our school buildings. The remaining portion is used for purchasing school buses, technology and computers, and life/safety and code upgrades, stadium improvements, debt service, other capital purchases and enhancements. The vote for the continuation of the E-SPLOST program for another five years is currently scheduled for May 24, 2016. This referendum will include the allocation of funds to support building renovations and facility improvements through 2022.

Q) Your public safety director has been asked about a rumor that all DCSD campus security staff (not the SROs) were given a physical fitness test in May 2014 and that some failed the test, were not retested and are still employed in those roles. Please confirm or deny this rumor. Please speak to your expectations for the fitness/training of the campus security who are placed in our schools to protect our children.

A) A physical fitness assessment was administered to the campus security officers in 2014. This was prior to the reorganization, which transferred the group to the Department of Public Safety. It is my understanding that this fitness assessment was not comprehensive and devoid of any provision that required a retest or sanctions if the employees failed the test.

The campus security officers' safety and wellness is a top priority. Presently, there is a process to tackle all aspects of security officers' wellness. This includes the School Resource Officers (SROs). For example, we are presently establishing physical fitness standards, policies, training and evaluations. This includes a compilation of law enforcement fitness standards from the DeKalb County Sheriff's Department, DeKalb County Police, the United States Air Force and the United States Coast Guard. The assessments will commence in the summer of 2016. In addition, we are exploring the best practices of other school Districts relative to physical requirements and any potential legal issues that may arise.

Q) Parents are hearing from the staff in the schoolhouse that they haven't heard

from you (Dr. Green). They are feeling unnoticed and unappreciated: they didn't receive a welcome back email/letter from you; they haven't heard anything about how you plan to engage them in conversations about the challenges/strengths they experience in the district, about the resources they need or how they will be given an opportunity to share their suggestions with you to make DeKalb a stellar school system. Two-way communication with your most valuable asset, the staff at the schoolhouse, is key. What are your plans to show them that they and their opinions are valued?

A) From his first day as Superintendent, Dr. Green has made improving classroom teaching and learning his number one, and only, priority. This is Dr. Green's passion, training and singular focus. On the first day of school, August 10, 2015, Dr. Green personally visited five schools representing each region and more than 30 schools since then. In all these and future visits, the classroom is his destination. Every Friday, Dr. Green blocks out time to visit schools, talk to teachers, meet with students and observe the level of rigor in instruction. He has participated in numerous school activities including athletic events and community outreach such as the gift giving and food distribution sponsored recently by Shaq O'Neal at Columbia Middle School. These efforts will continue.

Under Dr. Green's directive, senior staff has made more than 1,400 classroom evaluation visits. The results of these unscheduled visits have been reported directly to him and will be used to understand what the teachers and students need from the District to put rigor, relationships and relevance back into the classroom.

As you know, the Governor of Georgia has identified 24 schools that qualify for the state's proposed Opportunity School District. Dr. Green has added an additional 20 schools that are making academic progress but in need of additional resources to ensure continued progress. These resources are aimed at improving the ability of our teachers to motivate our students to achieve.

Dr. Green recently announced a major reorganization of senior staff with the sole purpose of moving resources and decision-making closer to the classroom. The centerpiece of this reorganization is placing the five regional superintendents closer to their group of schools under the direct supervision of Dr. Green and assigning to them staff from transportation, nutrition, human

resources, legal, and public safety, so problems get immediate, effective attention. A new learning management system known as VERGE is being implemented to enhanced classroom instruction.

Finally, and most importantly, all of our 6,000 teachers will receive pay raises beginning with their January 15 paycheck. Now, our teacher salaries will be comparable to metro area teacher salaries. Also, we have instituted an optional program to provide matching contributions for teachers' retirement with more than five years of experience.

Dr. Green will continue to make himself available to teachers and other school staff. He has listened to their comments, questions, and concerns over the past six months and acted. Dr. Green's commitment will continue.

Q) DCSD posted information about the charter system community engagement notices on the web site and Facebook only 6 days before the first meeting. This has been the standard operating procedure for DCSD for years and sends the messages that community engagement is not really desired. Realistically, and respectful of others' time, stakeholders need a month's notice to coordinate schedules and find babysitters. The Dunwoody meeting was on Yom Kippur. While there are other meetings scheduled, they all require those in Dunwoody to travel east on I-285 during rush hour, which is an impossible trip. This community input experience seems like "business as usual." Is this acceptable to you and if not, what will you do differently when asking for public input in the future?

A) Throughout the process of pursuing charter system status, the input of the public has played the dominant role in the drafting of the petition. In each cycle of Community Engagement Sessions, the District approached those meetings without any preconceived ideas or notions. The District sought to hear from the community and take their ideas, questions, and concerns to the table as the petition was drafted. While the Community Engagement Sessions was where the majority of the input was received, other stakeholders also sent emails and contacted the District via phone, and that input was also considered. The District will work to provide additional notification time for these types of meetings, but the community should note that they can provide input on important matters at any time.

Q) Do you plan to do a forensic audit of finances and a personnel audit to determine what resources you actually have in DCSD? If so, when? If not, please explain why you don't want that information, which the public was led to believe was common practice nationally when a new superintendent is named, especially in a district like ours with a history of corruption.

Several audits are occurring during the 2015-2016 school year including a finance and human resources audit. Both of these audits required a formal RFP process. The RFP process for the HR audit was completed December 2015. KPMG was selected and will commence the HR audit first quarter of 2016.

The RFP for the finance audit is in development and expected to be released for public advertisement first quarter of 2016. We expect both audits to be completed by the end of the school year, June 2016.

Q) Since your arrival, you have engaged the grass roots groups known as parent councils. For that we are grateful. As you may know, state law requires each school to have a local school council comprised of parents, teachers and business members elected to represent the schools. How do you plan to engage the local school councils as the advising/recommending entity they were established to be on the local and state level?

A) Parents and community stakeholders are key components in the success of our school district. The school district welcomes parental input as we continue to shape educational programming for our students. The Charter Office will work closely with local school councils to ensure an understanding of roles/responsibilities and legal compliance through monitoring and periodic training. This support will strengthen the impact that school councils can have towards school improvement and overall student success.

Q) Three years ago, SACs told the BOE to get rid of their committees (which had 3 BOE members each, but were open to the public—meaning other BOE members and stakeholders could attend and observe/participate). Now you are holding "mini meetings" with 3 BOE members at a time. The appearance is that the BOE and administration are purposefully doing work out of the

public's eye. That is not transparent and seems contrary to the intent of SAC's directive. How do you justify these mini meetings?

A) The mini-meetings are strictly information meetings to allow Board members to have a fuller understanding of a matter coming before them for a vote. As I was coming on board, several Board members shared their frustrations about having enough information soon enough in advance of a vote and not having the opportunity and/or time to ask clarifying questions for a better understanding. The mini meetings are a way to address this concern. No decisions are made and no votes are registered in these meetings.

Q) When do you plan to post positions for the Chief Legal Officer and a permanent Curriculum and Instruction person?

The Board of Education approved the hiring of an executive search firm, Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates to conduct national searches for executive administrative positions. This includes the Chief Legal Officer and the Chief Academic & Accountability Officer. The Chief Legal Officer's appointment was board approved January 2016. The Chief Academic & Accountability Officer position is still undergoing for a national search.

Q) Are you open to adjusting the school calendar to start later and end later or to go year round?

A) Each school year, DeKalb County School District convenes a group of stakeholders in accordance with Policy AEA. The Calendar Committee considers all options including a year round calendar and the first and last day for the school year. The committee then submits a calendar recommendation to the Superintendent. The Calendar Committee is in the process of submitting a two-year calendar to the Superintendent for the February Board meeting.

Q) What is an unexpected challenge that you have encountered in your first several months in your new role?

A) Nothing has been unexpected thus far.

Q) What is the IT minimum expectation for classroom teachers to have access to? In other words, even if in a trailer, should a teacher have a computer in their class? HMS does not.

A) A teacher should have a minimum of a computer and an Active Board.

Q) Lakeside HS scheduling has been for years extremely disorganized. Who helps a HS principal with class scheduling? I'd appreciate it if someone would mentor our principal to get on top of it, so students know the classes they are able to take and not continue to get rearranged (schedule changes as late as September 16).

A) All Principals and members of the administrative team are provided with support in developing a master schedule each year. This begins with the IT Department opening up lab space in the winter to begin the process of building master schedules, to the Department of Budgeting, Allotments, and Scheduling providing support as the master schedule is built to make certain that the school is maximizing its scheduling, and to the Professional Learning Department providing mentors to new Principals. While some minor schedule adjustments may occur after the school year begins, massive rearrangement of schedules for a heavy portion of the student body is not acceptable. This matter will be reviewed with the site for follow-up.

Q) Will you consider merit pay for support staff, not just for teachers?

A) Yes, the Superintendent has stated that this is part of his FY17 budget consideration.

Q) Compensation for school site webmasters is all over the board. Will you look at this?

A) We are looking at options for next year.

Q) I am concerned about the course/direction of Gifted Education. Some schools are using the pull out program, while others are getting all teachers gifted *endorsed* (not certified) and counting classroom hours as "servicing."

A) The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) requires that gifted education teachers have a gifted education endorsement attached to their Georgia Teaching Certificate. The approved direct service models are as follows:

Resource Model (K-12)

- 1. Students are “pulled out” for a minimum of 225 minutes per week.**
- 2. The teacher/student ratio is 1:23 for elementary and 1:27 for middle and high school.**
- 3. Lessons are interdisciplinary, enrichment and extension activities.**

Cluster Grouping (K-12)

- 1. Twelve or fewer gifted students may be served in a regular classroom setting.**
- 2. Differentiated curriculum in content, process skills, pacing, product and/or assessments**

Advanced Content (K-12)

- 1. Minimum of one core content class.**
- 2. 1:25 teacher/student ratio.**
- 3. Accelerated curriculum emphasizing process skills, problem-solving activities, research projects and other higher order thinking skills.**
- 4. Advanced Placement (AP) classes are included as long as the teacher is AP certified and has completed ten clock hours of the Nature and Needs of Gifted. Some IB and Advanced courses may be used to provide gifted services.**

Q) A curriculum audit was done in the mid-90s. Have you had a chance to see it, especially p. 154?

A) We are aware that a curriculum audit was done in the mid-90s that focused on the standards and the curriculum that were current at that time. However, the focus of this audit is on the alignment of the current curriculum framework and instructional resources to current curriculum and instructional standards and practices.

Q) Have you thought about reducing the counselor ratio per student so our students can receive more and better services?

A) School counselors are important resources in our schools. Ratios are monitored on a frequent basis. The District is carefully evaluating the current responsibilities of school counselors to determine which tasks, if any, can be reassigned to other personnel in the school. It is our hope that this restructuring of duties and the addition of other support staff will allow counselors to have more time to address the affective needs of students.

Q) What is the most important thing that parents of DeKalb students can do to improve our children's education and support the schools' efforts at educating our kids?

There is 30 years of research showing that parents' involvement in their children's education has a significant impact on children's academic and developmental goals (Epstein, 2001; Nye, Turner & Schwartz, 2006).

Supporting your children at home and at school are both important components. At home, you can extend their learning through activities such as reading and being a positive support for their learning. Also, you should communicate with teachers, attend meetings, volunteer in the class or school to create a rich learning environment for your child and for the school. There are also district-level volunteer opportunities with the PTA and Parent Councils, which would welcome your time and energy.

Q) You are in the unique position of having 7 direct bosses. In addition to your obvious role of uniting those that work for you, how do you see your role in working with the diverse board to unify the district leadership?

A) DR. GREEN: I see my role much like the captain of a huge naval ship. I need to use every resource at my command and every instrument on my disposal to keep the ship moving strategically and effectively in the direction of its destination. This includes keeping the Board focused on the mission. This also involves recognizing the diversity that each Board member contributes but also weaving that diversity into a single mission that advances us in the ultimate goal: improved teaching and learning and making sure our students emerge

college and/or career ready.

Q) What is the plan and timeframe for the Austin rebuild in the overcrowded Dunwoody cluster? What student capacity is the rebuild?

A) The current plan for the existing Austin Elementary School is to replace it with a new 900-seat elementary school facility at its current site, or re-build on a site in close proximity on Roberts Drive. The new school replacement project is tentatively scheduled for completion in the fall of 2018.

Q) How will teachers be supported? Elementary teachers need more planning time in order to be excited, innovative and successful.

A) This is a site-based issue, for which principals can determine the educational needs of students and how best to accommodate teachers' needs for support. Human Capital is available to work with the Curriculum and Instruction, and Professional Learning Departments to creatively resolve any concerns.

Q) What are the specific new supports being put in place for the exceptional needs students? Q) Time line for special ed changes?

Dr. Green has put a laser focus on the Special Education Department this year. Leadership in the Special Education Department has changed, as well as processes and procedures. The way we support our exceptional needs students and parents has also changed.

Action Steps to Improve Services

Currently, we are in the process of a national search for a new Executive Director of Special Education. The restructuring of the Special Education Department to date includes the following changes and initiatives:

Process:

- **The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) is serving as a critical friend body to examine the District's current structure, delivery of services and support. Through this unique partnership, regular meetings**

occur to bring together the GaDOE departments of Special Education, School Improvement and Georgia Resources Learning System with the Superintendent, Dr. Green, and the departments of Special Education and Curriculum and Instruction. We are using data to establish measurable target goals and creating a system to monitor our progress.

- The District is also preparing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to conduct an audit of the Special Education Department.

Procedure:

- Special Education Report Cards are provided to Principals and Regional Superintendents monthly with the first presented on 9/22/15. These report cards are cumulative in nature and will allow administrators to track school-level data, including the following information:
 - number of students receiving in-school and out-of-school suspension (less than 10 days and greater than 10 days),
 - current Least Restrictive Environment information,
 - number of attorney/advocate cases active in the building,
 - total number of students enrolled in special education, number of special education teachers assigned to the building,
 - graduation rate for students with disabilities based on the CCRPI score,
 - number of late annual reviews for the current month, and
 - number of late redeterminations/re-evaluations for the month.
- The RTI and 504 programs were moved under the Division of Curriculum and Instruction in order to align a continuum of identification and delivery of services. Monthly meetings with the department heads of these programs are held to discuss specific cases and appropriate courses of action.
- Bi-monthly meetings occur with the Superintendent, Office of Legal Affairs and General Counsel, to review and monitor any OCR complaints, GaDOE complaints, Due Process Hearing Requests, and IEPs involving attorneys.

- Special education complaints are tracked by school and reviewed by the Interim Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction and the Director of Special Education.
- The Administrator/Teacher Special Education Manual was revised by modifying all special education regulations and procedures as needed. The manual was made available electronically in October. Recorded webinars are being created for training on each chapter.
- An internal inventory was conducted to identify all fill-the-gap and social skills materials previously provided to schools. As a result of the inventory, all schools now have appropriate instructional materials.

Training:

- All Lead Teachers for Special Education and School Psychologists attended the legal update session.
- A live webinar focusing on the implementation of compliant IEPs was presented on 8/4/15 for all interrelated special education teachers and paraprofessionals.
- Four trainings were conducted with Principals related to discipline of students with disabilities.
- Monthly training topics have been identified for Lead Teachers for Special Education and special education department chairs at all levels.
- The Special Education Department is collaborating with the Family Engagement Liaison to increase family engagement for students with disabilities.

Q) Technology—why not start with giving students the password to the Wi-Fi?

A) DCSD no longer utilizes a wireless system that utilizes Wi-Fi Passwords. Access to DCSDs current wireless network is based on newer technology and security standards that use either an Employee ID or a DeKalb issued wireless device.

Q) Wadsworth Magnet School PTA would like the school expanded to continue through 8th grade now that they are in a big enough facility. What needs to be done in order to add the 7th and 8th grade?

A) We are aware that Wadsworth staff, school council, and families have asked about the possibility of expanding the school to grade 8 over a two-year period. There are many considerations that must be examined to determine the feasibility of this type of expansion. Some areas that are constantly reviewed include the commitment of parents, current and projected enrollment data, transportation needs, impact on neighboring schools/programs, access to middle and high school activities, adequate instructional facilities (fine arts, laboratories, lockers, athletic facilities) and instructional capacity. The DeKalb County School District continues to have dialogue regarding the expansion of educational program offerings, including Wadsworth Magnet School, for the students we serve.

Q) Chromebooks—parent training.

A) We recently added Chromebooks to our district store for schools to purchase. Check with you parent resource center for training.

Q) Hiring more highly qualified teachers and support staff for special ed.

A) The Division of Human Capital Management has already begun exploring a robust recruiting methodology that would enable hiring more qualified and effective teachers and staff. This work began with the onboarding of the new Interim Chief Human Capital Officer on Monday January 11, 2016. We are exploring creative ways to accomplish this and have the support of the Superintendent. We will communicate more details as they arise.

Q) You mentioned that you plan to have DeKalb's lowest performing schools taken off the Governor's OSD list. What specific steps will you be taking to support those schools?

A) Using the components of the district-wide 6-Step Data Protocol, the Division of Curriculum and Instruction and the Division of School Leadership and Operational Support initiated collaborations to conduct a needs assessment and to write a comprehensive plan to improve all OSD Eligible Schools that would be

aligned to the District's Strategic Plan. The needs assessment, including a comprehensive review of the data and individual school assessments, resulted in initial actions in the following areas:

- a. Professional Learning
- b. Family & Community Engagement
- c. Wrap-Around Services
- d. Operational Flexibility
- e. Organizational Design Enhancements and Support

However, upon the appointment of the new Superintendent, and upon implementation of the Superintendent's Curriculum-Instruction-Assessment-Accountability (CIA²) Task Force, the combined regional plan was revisited to ensure all the action steps were aligned with the Superintendent's intentional and prioritized focus on curriculum, instruction, assessment, and accountability. As of September 30, 2015, the components of the combined plan of action to address OSD Eligible, Priority, and Focus Schools include the following components with descriptions summarizing each:

- a. CIA² Task Force

The Superintendent's CIA² Task Force is responsible for framing the systemic work to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment, and accountability. The initial focus was the development of a Request For Proposals (RFP) for the completion of a Curriculum Management Audit. Additionally, the initial focus for the months of August and September was to ensure schools are utilizing the current curriculum as developed by the Division of Curriculum and Instruction. The focus for October and November was Rigor with the Superintendent and task force introducing the rigor meter as it the district observation teams plan to collect baseline data on rigor as observed in the classrooms. The continued focus includes that of providing principals training and tools to improve instructional rigor thereby ensuring that students perform at the optimal levels

of proficient and distinguished versus that of beginning and developing. This work is foundational and will be on-going.

b. Professional Learning

The District's Strategic Plan outlines major instructional initiatives to which the combined regional plan is aligned. The Division of Curriculum and Instruction has identified three initiatives: Math - Year 1; Literacy - Year 2; and STEM - Year 3. The schools have been tiered for support with OSD Eligible Schools identified as Tier 3 schools. Priority and Focus Schools along with Schools with a 3-year average on CCRPI below 60 have been identified as Tier 2 schools. All other schools are identified as Tier 1 schools. The tiered approach provides schools with the greatest need to have the most participation while they obtain the necessary support. Additionally, regions and schools have identified needs- or preference-based professional learning in addition to that PL provided in math, literacy, and STEM. An example of the needs- or preference-based PL includes climate and culture training.

c. Family & Community Engagement

The School District recognizes the importance of Family and Community Engagement to the school improvement process and has implemented several actions to expand the involvement of parents in the work of improving schools. The district has implemented 6 regional Parent Centers for parents to utilize and access instructional resources in support of their children and to participate in workshops. Parent training is a vital component of Family and Community Engagement. Additionally, the district is engaging parents in identifying challenges and solutions through Courageous Conversations with meetings scheduled for all regions. The school district recently implemented a pilot of Online Family Engagement On Demand or FAM-FLIX, which allows parents 24/7 access to videos in both English and Spanish that offer parents ideas and strategies as to how they might support the academic achievement of their children. Current plans are in process to implement Academic Parent Teacher Teams (APTT Model), which is an evidenced-based system that engages teachers and parents in improving their communication and interactions in support of improving student's achievement. The APTT Model will help teachers and parents focus on the relevant discussions for improving academic

performance of students. The Office of Family and Community Engagement will continue to conduct signature conferences and events such as the October 24th Parent Empowerment Conference, Title I & Title III Annual Conference, My Brother's Keeper Conference, Special Needs Conference, etc. which afford parents the opportunity to engage.

d. Wrap-Around Services

In addition to funding additional academic support to students with the District's Student Success Tutor and Georgia Milestones Mentor initiatives, the School District has identified critical positions and support that will help improve outcomes for all students. These positions and support include Post-Secondary Transition Specialists, Student Engagement Coaches, Student Success Coaches, and English Learner Facilitators. Additionally, Social Workers have been strategically assigned to schools to assist with improving attendance rates and to help provide community resources to families that express a need.

e. Operational Flexibility

The School District is working to provide preferential hiring opportunities, along with incentives and achievement stipends, for schools that are challenged in the areas of recruitment and retention. Critical to this work is the district's efforts to identify Turnaround leaders to support these schools.

f. Organizational Design Enhancements and Support

The School District recognizes the importance of high quality and high functioning human capital to improve schools. To this end, the district is committed to maximizing Full Time Equivalent (FTEs) at the most challenged schools and to identifying and mobilizing key personnel in support of the regional teams that support the most challenged schools. The schools have been grouped based upon need and similarity with current actions to include identification of external service providers and/or university partners to help provide on-going support, expertise, and professional learning to all schools identified as OSD Eligible, Priority, or Focus.

The aforementioned combined regional action plan is being monitored and supported by the District Effectiveness Team (DET). The Superintendent approved the development, identification, and implementation of the DET reflective of key team leaders that provide support to schools and to ensure district oversight and focus of the work relative to improving the district's overall CCRPI Score. The DET meets with the Superintendent twice a month to provide updates on the work and support being provided to schools and to also determine what resources should be immediately mobilized to schools in an effort to address critical needs or issues.

Q) The regional superintendents appointed to chair the CIA squared task force will be fantastic in that role, but it seems that using regionals to manage countywide initiatives could take away from their time supporting principals in their area schools. How will you address this issue?

A) The work of CIA2 directly aligns to the work of the regional superintendent in improving teaching and learning. Therefore, the work of the task force is an extension of the work they are already doing.

Q) Can we expect Wallace Foundation grant money to help fund more regional-level support staff who will directly mentor new or struggling principals?

A) The current Wallace Foundation grant is focused on supporting principals through the Regional Superintendents. In addition, the Leadership Development Department provides principals, who are in their 1st – 3rd year of experience, a performance coach who can support their growth and development. These principals also attend the New Principal Academy (1st Year) or the New Principal Academy (2nd & 3rd Year), which offers more opportunities for learning. The Regional Office also provides ongoing support to principals. Additional support is available to any principal who is struggling.

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