

Inspire. Achieve. Excel.



THE FIRST

DAYS

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Superintendent



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LETTER TO ALL DCSD FAMILIES AND STAKEHOLDERS

Dear DeKalb County School District Family,

It is hard to believe that it has been more than 100 days since I had the honor of becoming your DeKalb County School District superintendent.

My first 100 days have been enlightening and humbling as I engaged with our beautifully-diverse district and gathered feedback from internal and external stakeholders, all while leading and navigating through a global pandemic. Our village is strong and full of amazing champions and equity warriors including our brilliant scholars, supportive families, and committed employees who continue to give their all and thrive during this challenging season.

After engaging with stakeholders across the district, I have gathered great insight and a much deeper understanding and appreciation for how DCSD operates. I have also learned what has worked well, and identified strategies and opportunities to become exceptional.

As you review this report, you will find that I have identified strengths, opportunities, and legacy commitments—all in line with DCSD's strategic plan goals. This is critical to building a community of learners that can reach their fullest potential and we can achieve the vision for the DCSD graduate. So much has been accomplished over the last 100 days, and I believe we are well on our path to providing an excellent educational experience for every scholar.

While life as we know it has changed for many, the one thing that remains true is that DCSD scholars deserve to have a bright future, whether it is excelling at a university, developing trade skills in the workforce, or a lifetime of service in the military. Our district is committed to taking academic achievement to the next level and empowering our young scholars to inspire, achieve, and excel—no matter the pathway. I am excited about leveraging the rich history of DCSD and building a powerful legacy this community can be proud of for years to come.

As we embark on the remainder of the school year, I look forward to taking our community Onward and Upward, being a leader who cheers you on with joy and excitement and building a district that is the #1 choice for families. Thank you to the Board of Education for your commitment and unwavering support of our scholars and school district. Thank you, DCSD family, for the opportunity to lead this powerful and beautiful district.

Your #1 Cheer-leader,



Mrs. Cheryl Watson-Harris
Superintendent



BUILDING ON A LEGACY OF GREATNESS

DeKalb County School District (DCSD) was originally established in 1873 when residents raised \$4,200 to open public schools. Superintendent Jim Cherry (1947-1972) lifted the district to national status after World War II. Eleven superintendents have served in the DeKalb County School District.

DCSD is Georgia's third largest school system. The District covers 257 square miles within DeKalb County, excluding the areas served by Atlanta Public Schools and City Schools of Decatur. The District serves nearly 93,470 students, 140 schools and centers, and 15,500 employees, including 6,600 teachers. Students and parents speak over 185 languages and represent over 155 nations.

I wish to acknowledge the support and guidance I received from outgoing superintendent, Mrs. Ramona Tyson. The mark she has left on the district through her 33 years of service will never be forgotten. I truly thank Mrs. Tyson for her thoughtful transition planning as I entered this role of superintendent.

I look forward to continuing to build on the rich legacy of greatness in DCSD and preparing students for college and careers through a laser focus on rigorous, relevant classroom instruction related to each child's needs.



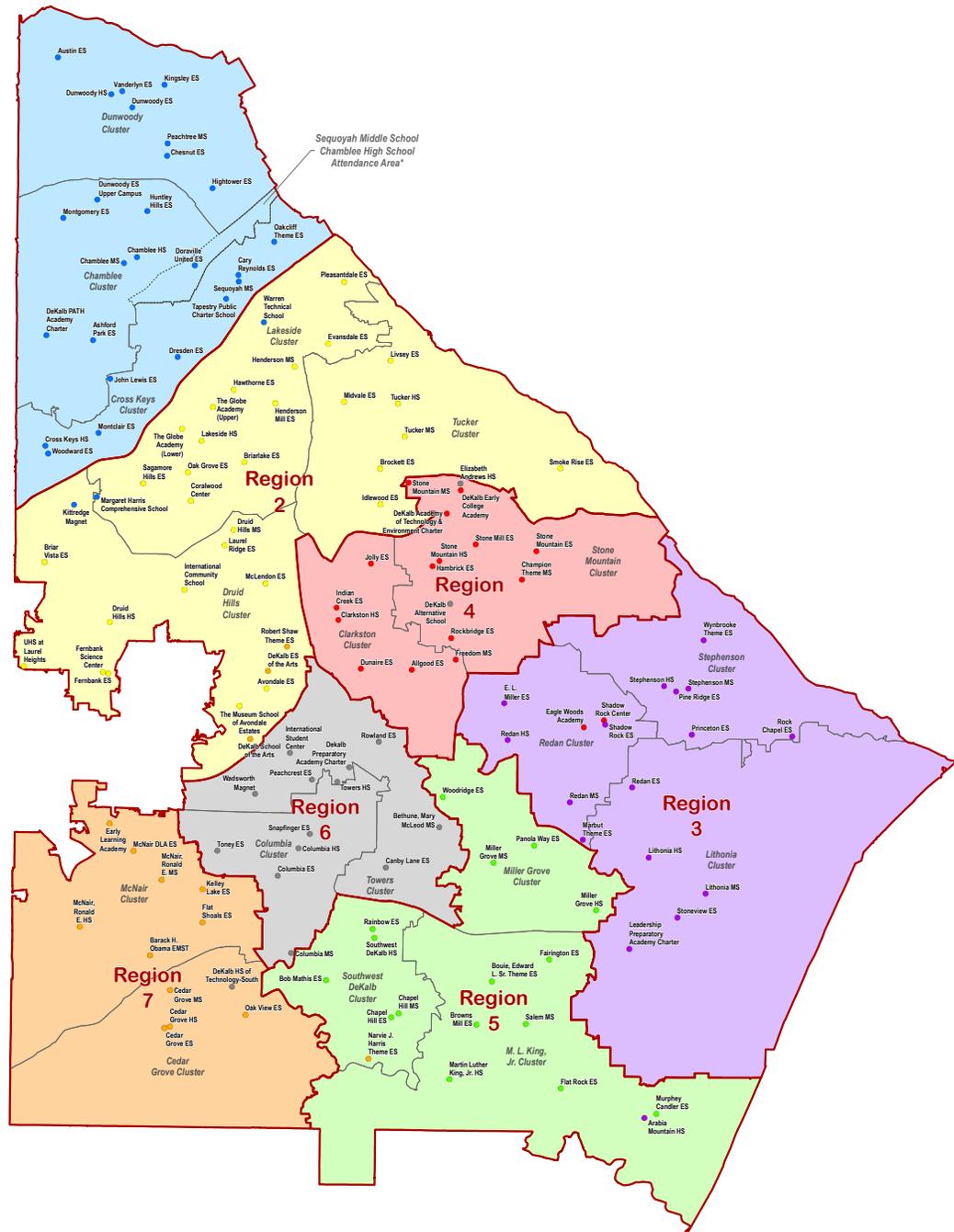


MY FIRST 100 DAYS

“

*I believe we are well on our path to providing
an excellent educational experience for every scholar*

”



Number of schools: **140**
 Elementary schools: **77**
 Middle Schools: **19**
 High Schools: **22**
 Program/Other Schools: **14**

Charter Schools: **8**
 Number of students: **93,470**
 Number of staff and employees: **15,500**
 Number of educators: **6,600**

ENTRY PLAN ACTIVITIES



Month	Key Activities
<p>July August</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Send introduction letter to staff ✓ Meet with the Board of Education Members (1-1) ✓ Schedule 1-1 interviews with principals ✓ Schedule 1-1 interviews with central office staff ✓ Send introduction letter to elected officials ✓ Send letter of introduction to advocacy group representatives ✓ Schedule focus group meeting with representatives ✓ Observe summer programs ✓ Begin to tour schools and meet staff throughout district ✓ Conduct media outlet introductions (TV, radio, print) ✓ Launched Superintendent Weekly Newsletter ✓ Increase social media presence
<p>August</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Continue roundtable discussions with a diverse group of stakeholders ✓ Host “Back to School Pull-up” and giveaway with students and families, including virtual town halls ✓ Meet with county government officials as they request meetings ✓ Lead important employee “Back to School” events such as New Teacher Orientation
<p>September October</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Take buses to schools throughout September ✓ Host “Meet the Superintendent” event for families ✓ Meet with Superintendent Advisory Council (SAC) every two months ✓ Schedule brown-bagged lunches with teachers and student groups ✓ Visit classrooms and district offices throughout DCSD ✓ Attend school team meetings like Professional Learning Communities, Data Talks (reviewing district data and insights), and Content Planning ✓ Initiate letter from students on “What I should know about DeKalb” ✓ Discuss entry plan progress at meetings throughout the county to gather feedback and make adjustments ✓ Create COVID-19 Medical Advisory Committee ✓ Continue media outlet interviews (TV, radio, print)
<p>November</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Review common themes and document observations from July through October interviews conducted with the admin team, teachers, students, families, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), and civic groups ✓ Offer 3-5 strategic plan priorities for the system ✓ Conduct “A Day in a Life” with DCSD leaders at COVID School Tours ✓ Convene meeting with internal strategic planning facilitators ✓ Continue media outlet interviews (TV, radio, print)
<p>December</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Initiate the collaborative strategic planning process including community stakeholders ✓ Convene with strategic planning team ✓ Meet with English Learners Group to discuss communication strategies ✓ Discuss 2nd Semester School Reopening plan with stakeholders ✓ Continue media outlet interviews (TV, radio, print)



STRATEGIC PLAN



As a community of learners, we are committed to excellence in everything we do-within the classroom and throughout DCSD. This continuous improvement process permeates each aspect of our Strategic Plan, and we are honored to partner with you to make it a reality for all.





OUR VISION, MISSION, AND CORE BELIEFS

Vision

To inspire our community of learners to achieve educational excellence

Mission

To ensure student success, leading to higher education, work, and life-long learning

Core Beliefs

We believe:

- In making sure every decision supports quality teaching and learning.
- In ensuring we meet every student’s academic, social and emotional needs.
 - In embracing the cultural diversity of our community as a strength.
 - In holding everyone accountable for educational excellence.

The vision of the DeKalb County School District is to inspire our community of learners to achieve educational excellence, and our mission is to ensure student success, leading to higher education, work, and life-long learning.

When I joined DCSD, my mission was to ensure that the great work being accomplished in our district aligned with our strategic plan. There is a quote by John Rohn that says, “Success is 20% skills and 80% strategy. You might know how to succeed, but more importantly, what’s your plan to succeed?”

To make the vision and mission a reality for every scholar and classroom throughout the district, whether virtual or face-to-face, we have already begun to realign our leadership team and strengthened our Regional Superintendent structure to provide an equitable distribution of resources to better serve all students. We have a child-centered approach where educating and empowering students is our “main-thing”.

In 2014, the DeKalb County School District created a five-year strategic plan through 2019. To follow that best practice, we introduced a strategic plan for the next five years from 2019 through 2024. For the last several months, our staff and families have been a huge part of the strategic planning process. The district created performance measures, targets, and initiatives to ensure success in each goal area, and create the equitable distribution of resources to accelerate student achievement for all scholars. This included creating a monitoring and data collection process as well as rigorous progress checks to keep our work on task. At the local level, on-going training sessions are offered to principals in order to support the work of aligning, refining, monitoring, and evaluating the continuous improvement efforts of each individual school. For more on the strategic plan work, please visit the DCSD website at www.dekalbschoolsga.org.

As I toured throughout our district over my first 100 days, attending virtual town halls, field days, focus groups, listening sessions, and more, I have worked very closely with our key stakeholders, discussed our objectives and procedures, and formulated this 100-Day Report based on a robust and adaptive strategic plan.

A few themes rose to the top over my first 100 days that we will address in this report including:

- Making DeKalb County Schools the top choice in education for families in our community.
- Providing high quality instruction, and focus on creating culturally responsive classrooms which prepares our students for the careers of the future.
- Eliminating the barriers to educational excellence and provide wrap around services that offer support for scholars outside of the classroom or learning environment.
- Prioritizing staff effectiveness, recruiting and retaining the highest quality staff for our students.
- Fostering a culture of transparency through improved communication and creating a coalition of support for our students from parents, community leaders, partner organizations and philanthropist.

The strategic planning process allowed my team to identify key internal and external **Strengths, Opportunities, and Legacy Commitments** that are responsible for our academic success, and that either favor or inhibit us from moving our district **Onward and Upward**.

As we address these themes and goals, we will be enabled and empowered to support our scholars in achieving academic excellence and career readiness. Collaboration is key—both internally and externally—to addressing the culture and climate in this organization.

In order to align our structure to deliver on DCSD's strategic plan, our work will be carried out in four phases over the 2020-2021 school year. In Phase One, we will focus on realigning our leadership structure to strengthen our core functions for efficiency. In Phase Two, we will work to ensure that our employees have the resources they need to effectively deliver on services to our students. In Phase Three, we will establish Standard Operating Procedures, and update policies that provide the foundation necessary to excel. Phase Four, affords us the opportunity to share a Strategic Improvement Plan with clear targets and metrics for which our families and community can hold us accountable.

Thank you to all our staff, families, and brilliant scholars, who have been transparent and shared their thoughts on how we can restore DCSD to a premiere district.





Goal Area I: Student Success with Equity and Access

- Improve student mastery of learning standards
- Provide academically rigorous courses and/or pathways
- Increase graduation rates



Goal Area II: Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

- Increase the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement experiences
- Improve opportunities for innovative stakeholder collaboration
- Improve and ensure effective district internal and external communication



Goal Area III: Staff Effectiveness

- Recruit highly qualified staff
- Develop high performing staff
- Retain highly effective staff



Goal Area IV: Culture and Climate

- Create and maintain a safe, orderly positive learning environment for all
- Establish and maintain clear and high expectations of excellence for all stakeholders
- Cultivate culturally responsive learning environments for all
- Provide support for social and emotional learning for all



Goal Area V: Organizational Excellence

- Ensure excellent financial management
- Ensure efficient use of resources



Goal Area VI: Facilities

- Improve and maintain facility conditions
- Ensure that educational facilities meet programmatic needs
- Develop and increase sustainable funding for facilities

“ I am committed to our diverse families in the DeKalb County School District. The Office of Parent and Family Engagement Family Impact Hub provides wrap-around support for parents and families such as GED training. These trainings empower families to become academic partners and more self-sufficient to provide a stronger foundation for their children to excel. ”





STRENGTHS, OPPORTUNITIES



NOTEWORTHY STRENGTHS

- District leadership reacted swiftly to the **global pandemic** with a comprehensive, holistic strategic plan of action including strong communication and maintaining our position. The district's position to follow the science and the guidelines of the CDC, DeKalb County Board of Health, and other community partners, ensured the safety of our community at large. Our plan continues to be refined as the science evolves and we learn more about COVID-19.
- The district has developed a **re-opening plan** including a phased-in approach that is based on the science and guidance from our community health partners. DCSD has provided consistent messaging around nutrition, COVID-19 safety measures, medical advisory support, transportation, and more on the reopening website at www.dekalbschoolsga.org/school-reopening/.
- The **DCSD curriculum** was developed by DeKalb teachers for students and is aligned with the District's mission to ensure student success, leading to higher education, work, and lifelong learning. Curriculum & Instruction's learning management system (VERGE), along with other instructional platforms, provides a framework to organize teaching and learning, professional development, instructional resources, instructional best practices, lesson planning and 24-7 access to the district's curriculum—all aligned to state-standards. This includes a state grant working with Georgia State University on culturally-relevant sustaining education.
- DCSD's **Social Emotional Learning (SEL)** curriculum supports students, teachers, and stakeholders by addressing the social, emotional, and learning needs of students. This includes wraparound services such as youth mental health first aid, school-based mental health programs, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), counseling, social work, and more.
- The **Digital Dreamers** is a full systemic 1-to-1 technology program that provides every student in need with access to a device, connectivity, and digital resources and tools. Through diligent planning and a commitment to excellence, DCSD delivers the best possible remote learning experience for our scholars. The "Connect a Digital Dreamer" initiative connected households in need, using funding from the general budget, grants, and donations. Currently, 96% of our students are accessing our virtual learning environment.
- **School Choice** options are available in nearly 50 schools and include Theme, Magnet, IB, Charter, and Montessori options.
- **DeKalb Early Learning Academy** is the first public early childhood learning center in DeKalb County. The academy provides hands-on learning, social and emotional development, and creative experiences for young scholars who are exposed to science, technology/coding, engineering, math, and, in their second year, a foreign language.
- DCSD has strong Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (**STEM**) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (**STEAM**) programs. With a laser focus, DCSD is a leader in STEM implementation with 28 officially-certified schools by external STEM/STEAM accrediting agencies.
- **Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE)** integrates core academic knowledge with technical and occupational skills to prepare students for post-secondary education and the workforce. DCSD offers 37,000 middle and high school CTAE students real-world experiences that prepare our scholars for tomorrow's workforce. The Communications Department has a strong, award-winning team—in charge of producing

- The district has seven schools using the **International Baccalaureate** (IB) Programme. This rigorous course of study encourages students of all ages to think critically and challenge assumptions and develop independently of government and national systems.
- The Office of Parent and Family Engagement **Family Impact Hub** provides wrap-around support for parents and families such as GED training. These trainings empower families to become academic partners and more self-sufficient so that they can provide a stronger foundation for their children to excel.
- **The International Welcome Center** strives to meet the communications needs of linguistically-diverse students and families. The Center provides stakeholders whose primary home language is other than English (PHLOTE) with the most appropriate academic and language support for newcomers and transcript evaluation for international students, which includes advisement and grade level placement.
- DCSD is a beautifully-diverse district. DeKalb students' linguistic and cultural diversity are two of the greatest assets that make us unique. Students and parents speak over 185 languages and represent over 155 nations. **DCSD interpretation and translation** staff assist with bridging the communication gap between our schools and our non-English speaking parents and students. DCSD has 26,201 students with a Primary Home Language Other Than English (PHLOTE), of which 15,111 are identified as English Learners (ELs).
- Several **communication vehicles** are utilized consistently throughout schools, regions, and the district. Having multiple channels to share with our diverse community stakeholders is key to keeping our families informed in a timely manner. While schools also have their communications tools based on their needs, multiple district communications channels at www.dekalbschoolsga.org/school-reopening/stay-informed/ continue to keep families informed, including the use of translation.
- The Communications Department has a strong, award-winning team—in charge of producing **youth and family television programming, marketing collateral, branding campaigns, video content** and promotions—that is representative of our diverse community. Whether it is celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month or creating robust campaigns for COVID-19, I Love DCSD, and Black Lives Matter Week of Action, there is creative content to engage all stakeholders.
- DCSD **Professional Development** improves the knowledge and skills of employees for the purpose of increasing student achievement. Student and staff performance increases when employees are engaged in effective professional development. The district offers multi-content professional growth opportunities through virtual, blended, and traditional engagement models.
- **E-SPLOST funding** was passed and supported by the community; therefore, we have been able to use those funds to build schools with the goal of reducing overcrowding and completing much needed projects. The district is aware of the need to address overcapacity and under-capacity schools.
- The DCSD community is comprised of a rich culture **of alumni** who are now successfully employed by the district. When our community and alumni are involved, this powerful legacy creates a strong connection and supports student achievement.

DCSD School Reopening 2020-2021

The vision of DeKalb County School District is to inspire our community of learners to achieve educational excellence. Our mission is to ensure student success, leading to higher education, work, and life-long learning. We are making this vision and mission a reality – every day, even virtually, throughout the District.

Community Partnerships

The District will continue to collaborate with community partners to provide wraparound services for students and families.

Student Support

Social-emotional support and guidance activity will be provided by school counselors, social workers, psychologists teachers and other staff through the virtual platform. Interpretation and translation support will be available for families to help navigate the academic environment.

Meal Service

Meal service will be provided for students (bus routes, curbside pick-up).

Safety and Health

Prevention tips will be shared by school nurses and school staff. Data regarding COVID19 cases will be monitored and reported to the DeKalb Board of Health for guidance.

Parent and Family Engagement

Parents, guardians and families will have the opportunity to participate in virtual empowerment workshops that will provide support while working with students in the digital space.

Technology Access

The District will provide students access to technology (Chromebooks and access points) to facilitate the learning process.

Virtual Learning/Academics

Leaders, teachers, and support personnel will participate in professional learning to reinforce readiness for distance remote learning as they prepare synchronous and/or asynchronous lessons for students that are rigorous and engaging.

Cleaning

Materials have been provided and protocol will be shared and followed for appropriate cleaning techniques, based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Georgia Department of Public Health and DeKalb Board of Health.



DeKalb County
School District



OUR FUTURE

Legacy





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By providing a “pathway to success” through support services and programs, we are working to ensure that all DCSD scholars have the tools and resources they need to become successful graduates.

”



LOOKING AHEAD TO OUR FUTURE AND CREATING A LEGACY FOR DCSD GRADUATES

As we plan for our next 100 days and beyond, our focus remains on providing a world-class education for our scholars without barriers. Several common themes were shared in my conversations with community stakeholders. These insights will serve to better develop our strategic vision and guide scholars to their “North Star” graduate pathway.

Make DeKalb County Schools the top choice in education for families in our community.

We can lift the district into greatness through our operational excellence and commitment to providing a well-rounded curriculum to every DCSD scholar. Working together with the entire DeKalb community, the district can come together to design better pathways for our scholars to be successful graduates and lifelong learners.

Our curriculum will continue to be refined to reflect the knowledge and skills our scholars need to be lifelong leaders. We will focus on STEM and STEAM development to help students enhance their critical thinking skills and recognize the intersection of art, science, technology, engineering, and math. Programs like our Digital Dreamers program will serve to expand our digital footprint while further integrating technology into the learning process.

Organizational excellence is paramount to our scholars’ success. We are working to develop a tier resolution system for district employee investigations. Additionally, I know and understand that issues may occasionally develop between principals and staff or principals and parents. Our goal is to develop a standardized process across all district regions for the handling of parent complaints against principals or educators while ensuring we provide due process to everyone involved.

Our Communication teams will continue to put a strategic PR and media plan in place to ensure that good news from around the district is shared both locally and nationally. Tools such as social media, Mail Chimp, School Messenger, and our website will allow us to readily identify and share the many great accomplishments of our scholars, educators, and staff.

Legacy Commitments

- ✔ Enhance the portfolio of DCSD schools to **create a robust cadre of innovative school options** which include the expansion of CTAE so that scholars are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow and the creation of a world-class international exchange program so that our scholars can truly be global citizens.
- ✔ Commit to achieving a **4- or 5-star academic excellence** climate rating in all regions and maintaining prestigious GOSA Single Statewide Accountability System (SSAS) and National Blue-Ribbon School of Excellence awards.
- ✔ Strengthen the 28 STEM/STEAM certified programs throughout the district and provide innovative programs that **deepen scholars and educator’s love and enthusiasm** for math and science education.
- ✔ Increase attendance rates and scholars who participate in virtual learning every day.

✔ Strengthen DCSD arts and athletic district-wide programs. Continue to create opportunities and recognize DCSD for student scholarships received and championships won.

Provide high quality instruction, focus on creating culturally responsive classrooms which prepares our students for the careers of the future.

We want to eliminate all barriers to virtual instruction, because every child deserves access to a great education through technology. Our educators and staff are committed to focusing on students' classroom learning, virtual learning, as well as social and emotional learning. A range of health and wellness services—from providing free meals to health services to athletics programs—support students physically and mentally, so they are able and ready to learn.

We will work to better understand suspension and expulsion rates, including robust breakdowns of the demographics of these students. By understanding who is impacted, we can also work to learn why and provide proactive behavioral support. We will work to establish fair practices and increase our support of teachers, providers, and staff.

Early learning and development are key to creating lifelong learners. And while our early learning program for three and four-year-olds is a model program as well as the first of its kind, we will continue to explore ways to grow this program.

Legacy Commitments

✔ Commit to **improving graduation rates** to surpass the state average. Methods to increase scores will include refining disciplinary actions such as Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS), improving student engagement and attendance rates, collaborating with Family and Parent Engagement, and supporting subgroups such as Exceptional Education and English Language Learners.

✔ **Transform the way we support disconnected youth**, improve college and career readiness for overage and under-credit students, and guide how we implement and evolve culturally-sustaining pedagogies and curriculum for 46,000 secondary students districtwide.

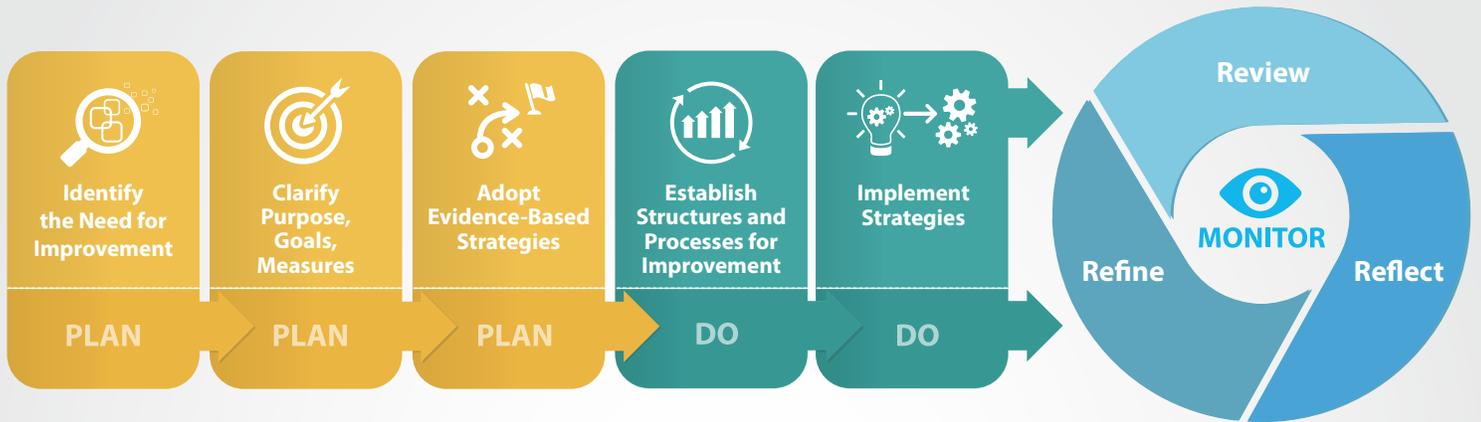
✔ Commit to **establishing a district-level methodology** (i.e. help with registration, videos, assistance with establishing emails, Infinite Campus logins, interpreters, translation, etc.) to provide support and assistance for non-English speaking families (ELs) in how they can access the schools, student information, learning materials, etc., in a timely manner, so we can increase their engagement.

✔ Developing a **school improvement framework** that consistently monitors improvement, aligns resources, and are targeted in a contextually appropriate way. Increase **data literacy and teacher proficiency** for accelerating student achievement within all sub groups.

✔ Strengthen **Regional Superintendent structure** to provide increased support, oversight, and accountability.



DCSD Continuous School Improvement System



Phase	Components	What it looks like in action
PLAN	Identify the Need for Improvement	Leaders guide collaborative inquiry and analysis of multiple data types to identify valid, data-informed priorities for improvement.
	Clarify Purpose, Goals, and Measures	Leaders facilitate the development of a compelling and purpose-driven vision supported by goals and measures that focus on maximizing learning for every student.
	Adopt Evidence-Based Strategies	Leaders ensure that research-based instructional strategies aligned to the validated needs for improvement are featured as key approaches for continuous school improvement.
DO	Establish Structures and Processes for Improvement	Leaders establish collaborative structures to clarify, confirm, and effectively manage school processes that support implementation of continuous improvement strategies.
	Implement Strategies	Leaders reinforce expectations for staff to implement improvement strategies with fidelity.
MONITOR	Review Reflect Refine	Leaders ensure systematic engagement of all staff in regular cycles to review results, reflect on processes, and identify resources necessary for supporting efforts to refine the implementation of continuous school improvement strategies. Monitoring Cycles are implemented at the school level and linked to district monitoring processes.

Eliminate the barriers to educational excellence and provide wrap around services that offer support for scholars outside of the classroom or learning environment.

The district remains committed to education parity for all students; and we recognize that our district's diversity, with families from more than 185 countries, is a pillar of strength for our community. We must create a culture of inclusion and diversity that recognizes and addresses systemic barriers to achieving academic success.

Our focus will remain on strengthening and affirming marginalized voices, especially our Black and minority scholars. We will continue to have vulnerable discussions with community partners such as My Brother's Keeper and the NAACP to discuss how we can address systemic education barriers to create future leaders. We will partner with the Board of Education so we can continue to grow programs that support and celebrate our diverse communities.

We will remain advocates for diversity and inclusion at school and at home. Through partnerships with our staff, ELL partners, and students, we can advocate for and allocate resources that better support ELL families.

Legacy Commitments

✔ **Increase student success with equity and access** by expanding School Nutrition Services so that all families have access to good nutrition. School Nutrition Services has distributed over 596,440 meals since August 17, 2020, with a daily average of 7,187 breakfast and 7,187 lunch meals.

✔ Develop an **onboarding experience for parents/guardians** that immediately connects them to our "village" through Parent and Family Engagement, Information Technology (IT), and Communications.

✔ Continue to **develop programs that educate and empower diverse students** such as Black Lives Matter Week of Action, My Brother's Keeper (MBK), and others (Hispanic, Asian, and English Speakers of Other Languages), Students with Disabilities, Gifted, 2E or Twice Exceptional (a student may be identified as Gifted, as well as having an identified disability, etc.) programs.

Prioritize staff effectiveness, recruiting and retaining the highest quality staff for our students.

To ensure we focus on quality educators and staff, we want to put evaluation tools in place that create a clear through-line for students, educators and cabinet level positions. We can accomplish this by using the Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) and the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) systems that are already in place as well as creating a new evaluation system for cabinet level positions. We want to be a district that invests in their employees, making them well-trained and highly qualified so that our scholars continue to receive top-notch instruction.

A focus on recruitment and retention is critical to ensuring world-class education. We want to implement a recruitment plan that is designed to attract and retain the most highly-qualified teachers, especially in our most vulnerable schools. We also want to ensure we have clear professional development plans aligned to the improvement priorities, which includes cabinet-level professional development focused on data literacy, and, primarily, big systems level leadership. This may include creating a formal path for growth opportunities so that each person has and understands how they can reach the next level of leadership.

Equity in our hiring and development process for educators and staff will also remain a priority. We will work to update our board policies to reflect equitable hiring practices.

Since the Human Resources team is critical in this process, we are contracting out a formal audit review of the department.

Creating grants that encourage involvement from various levels of our staff and educators. We have introduced the “Wallace Grant,” which focuses on leadership, and we want to weave that into our larger improvement strategy. We could also create a “Superintendent’s Fellowship” that would give all leaders in the system an opportunity to work on a scale-up project.

Not only would this provide them with an opportunity to inform the next level of improvement in the district, but it would also give select staff a chance to be identified as a future leader. This fellowship could target 10-12 staff members who don’t have easy access to the superintendent and encourage them to give a project capstone to the system.

The idea is to build on employee resource groups, which will allow more people to get engaged in our system by receiving professional development in their job.

Legacy Commitments

✔ The **Professional Development Institute** will expand the number of opportunities and employee groups to ensure talent identification, and more in-depth, job-embedded professional learning that equips staff with skills that are necessary to support virtual, blended, and traditional learning and work environments. In collaboration with DCSD divisions and schools, Exceptional Education will **increase the opportunities for professional development for teachers and leaders** to support scholars with disabilities, Exceptional Learners and our English Learners.

✔ Rebuild trust in the DCSD community and **create a culture and climate that allows for transparency**, particularly for staff and stakeholders who are concerned about DCSD’s future. Invest in DCSD employees’ career-physical, financial, social, and community wellbeing. Commit to working with Gallup to discover and implement culture and climate solutions. Develop fidelity and accuracy in the organization: spending the money on the things we say we’re going to spend it on and getting things right the first time, on time.

✔ Create a **transitional virtual learning plan** to identify technology tools, consistent platforms, professional development, and overall support in preparation of future disruptions in education. Improve the ability to effectively transition between face-face and virtual learning environments.

✔ Implement a **coaching and leadership pipeline** that is central to the development of school-based leaders, mid-level district leaders, and senior cabinet-level leaders within a succession continuum.

✔ Ensure staff effectiveness and **work-life balance** for all employees, lifting the hiring freeze is critical to recruit, hire, develop, and retain highly effective staff.

Foster a culture of transparency through improved communication and creating a coalition of support for our students from parents, community leaders, partner organizations and philanthropist.

We will create a clear communication plan and strategy that aligns with our strategic goals. This plan will ensure we are forthcoming and effectively disseminating essential information through various channels to create a culture of transparency. We will develop an effective strategy that will help us break down the silos and improve how we engage with our community stakeholders, including our diverse families. District and school websites will function as a main resource and will be updated frequently.

To engage all parents, we need to formalize advisory groups that equally target our English-speaking and non-English-speaking families, using a variety of effective communication channels.

We plan to work with our legislators by making sure we provide them with enough information so they can advocate what we really need in our district and county.

Improving expectations and communications with the Board will improve our relationship. We can conduct a self-assessment with the Board to engage the superintendent in a discussion around the Board Member Code of Conduct.

We need to create division and regional improvement plans that we can communicate with internal and external stakeholders as well as monitor them to ensure we're making progress.

Legacy Commitments

- ✔ Create a **comprehensive, consistent, and transparent communication** plan to ensure messaging resonates with all community stakeholders. This multi-channel internal and external strategy will include district and schoolhouse communications-translation, social media, schools and district website, text, calls, communication monitors, and email integration platforms. We commit to consistent communication and hosting stakeholder town halls to gather feedback and keep families and employees informed.
- ✔ **Deepen partnerships with Community-Based Organizations** and national partners to strengthen programming and support academic achievement.
- ✔ **Establish a Foundation which will develop philanthropic partnerships** with individuals and organizations committed to supporting the success of DCSD's brilliant scholars.
- ✔ Develop robust and capable electronic system for transmitting and retaining sensitive documentation as well as create **electronic procedures to streamline approval processes** to keep the district moving forward and adapt to a dynamic work environment, including virtual spaces.
- ✔ Increase procedures for clean audits and **transparency of budget development**, expenditures, procurement, E-SPLOST expenditures and project completion rates on our DCSD website. Ensure students have access to the resources needed to achieve academic excellence.
- ✔ Implement the **DCSD Comprehensive Master Plan**, which will inform district-wide changes in attendance areas and feeder patterns. This plan will provide a roadmap for building new facilities and improving existing infrastructure. We will establish strategic, system-wide goals for future construction expenditures, planned facilities improvements, and redistricting plans; and we will establish communitywide consensus regarding issues of optimum facility use, special programs, school choice, the number and location of new schools, and school consolidation.
- ✔ Establish **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** and set routines (e.g., new student registration, parent portal accounts, and access etc.) so that vital information is communicated as clearly and effectively as possible to all stakeholders. Effective SOPs produce work that is consistent and predictable, particularly in a large organization like DCSD.

“

“Our district is committed to taking academic achievement to the next level and empowering our young scholars to inspire, achieve, and excel.”

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VISION FOR THE DCSD GRADUATE

The North Star

The vision of the DeKalb County School District (DCSD) is to inspire our community of learners to achieve academic excellence. The essence of who we are and what we do is to ensure student success, leading to higher education, work, and life-long learning.

We are committed to our scholars and removing barriers that disrupt their pathway to their preferred future. We are one District, and we want to ensure all students succeed with equity and access.



DCSD Empowering Opportunities

DCSD offers world class programs from which scholars are able to choose to prepare them for the jobs of the future. The programs range from Theme Schools, Montessori, and Dual Language Immersion at the elementary level, to International Baccalaureate, CTAE, STEM/STEAM, Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment at secondary level.



Eliminating Barriers to Success

DCSD provides a continuum of wrap-around supports and strategies to assist students on their journey to graduation. DCSD utilizes the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), counseling and advisement, health services, parent and family engagement, nutrition, social work, psychological support, and services to address the social/emotional wellness.



DeKalb County
School District





MY THOUGHTS IN CLOSING

We remain committed to our scholars experiencing academic excellence regardless of the region they live in, the schools they attend, or obstacles they may face. By providing a “road to success” through support services and programs, we are working to ensure that all DCSD scholars have the tools and resources they need to become successful graduates.

Increasing our graduation rate to surpass the state average—and ultimately reaching 100%—is essential. Our entire community achieves more when our scholars graduate and continue on to become lifelong learners. We will achieve this important goal by guiding scholars on a pathway of educational excellence by:

- Offering extracurricular and engagement activities such as CTAE, JROTC, My Brother’s Keeper, Our Sister’s Keeper, Arts, Athletics, and our world-class sports programs that keep our scholars focused.
- Continuing to provide extensive wrap-around services such as nutrition planning, mental/social/emotional counseling and aftercare that meet students’ needs regardless of their social or economic status.
- Partnering with our business and community partners such as SCAC, GA Federal Credit Union, Publix, Office Depot, and others to provide necessary resources to scholars and their families.
- Engaging with parents and families through organizations such as Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), and the Parents Council United (PCU).

While we have a lot to celebrate, there is still significant work to be done for us to close the achievement and opportunity gaps that many of our students face. Our primary focus must remain on our scholars and their pathway to becoming proud DCSD graduates.

Together, we are on the right path to Engaging and Empowering our students as we Operate in Educational Excellence.







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COMMENTS

Listening is key to the success of this report and our school district becoming the #1 choice for our students and families. If you have any recommendations or questions that you'd like to share, please contact:

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