



**Executive Summary**  
**AdvancED**  
**Monitoring Visit Report**  
**May 15-17, 2013**

**Prepared by DeKalb County School District**  
**July 4, 2013**

***“Monitoring Team concluded that the district has made recognizable progress in creating the foundations to address the specifications of the eleven Required Actions.” – pg. 20***

# DOCUMENTED PROGRESS

## Superintendent

- Since the arrival of the current superintendent in February 2013, the district has focused on re-establishing the district's planning team for the purpose of effectively developing and implementing a strategic plan to guide the direction of the system. The process thus far has included the assignment of staff to research the history and success of strategic plans for the purpose of providing a broad understanding of how the district has fared in implementing strategic plans in the past. – pg. 18/19
- The superintendent of five months was ever-present throughout the visit and displayed a strong sense of pride and hope for the district throughout the monitoring activities. In stark contrast to the October 2012 Special Review Team visit, the climate during the Monitoring Visit interviews was positive, open and collegial. Critical to the success of the district will be demonstrating sustainability in newly displayed practices.
- Stakeholders appeared to be very encouraged by all progress of the new Board and administration. Likewise, staff at all levels expressed a renewed sense of hope and optimism for the district based upon the actions of the new Board and interim Superintendent. – pg. 20

## Board of Education

- Interviews with representatives from various stakeholders groups confirmed that the current governing board and Superintendent are working together to move the system forward by providing opportunities for academic excellence for students. According to evidence gathered during each previous Special Review Team visit to the district, micromanagement has been an ongoing, destructive, and central feature of the behavior of the governing body. - pg. 7
- Interviews with board members and school-based administrative personnel validated that a structure now exists to ensure that board members are honoring the chain of command when communicating with stakeholders. – pg. 10
- The vast majority of staff described a new work culture and environment in which they felt empowered to perform the jobs for which they were hired without the micromanagement and interference of board members. While encouraged by the change in culture, staff consistently communicated a deep concern regarding the ability for the district to sustain this progress when faced with the inevitable changes in Board and superintendent leadership. – pg. 20

- Board members have demonstrated their knowledge and awareness of the various components of their roles to facilitate the success of the district in ultimately strengthening teaching and learning. – pg. 7

## **District**

- Interviews with stakeholders confirmed that the district needs a comprehensive and viable strategic plan to ensure that the positive changes in the district will lead to a sustainable culture shift focusing on academic achievement. Furthermore, stakeholders acknowledge that the interim Superintendent's Ninety-Day Action Plan is a step in the right direction to establish a system-wide purpose and direction. – pg. 9
- In relation to financial issues, the district has had a dramatic turn of events related to its fiscal management. – pg. 9
- Apparently, budget projections had swung out of the red and into the black in a very short period of time. The sudden change in the financial forecast resulted from the availability of unexpected fiscal resources to support the district's drastic need to improve academic and instructional programs. At this point in time, the Board has limited its fiscal role to budget and strategic oversight, thereby empowering the superintendent and district staff the autonomy necessary to manage financial resources to meet the needs of the district's students. – pg. 9
- The district has taken significant steps to address the need for a strategic planning team. Consistently, interviews with various stakeholder groups revealed their ability to reference the Superintendent's Ninety-Day Action Plan and the failure of past efforts to successfully implement the district's strategic plans. The district outlined a chronology of strategic planning efforts following the AdvancED Special Review Team visit from January 24-26, 2011. – pg. 18
- In preparation for the Monitoring Visit, the Monitoring Team completed an extensive review of evidence that included various documents and artifacts provided by the DeKalb County School District. These documents and the intensive interview process validated that the newly configured Board has made progress in designing a framework to guide execution of its roles and responsibilities within the context of professional and collegial decorum and behavior. Another significant aspect of the Board's focus has been a deliberate effort to avoid undermining the authority of the superintendent and helping to create a culture supportive of district leaders in managing the day-to-day operations of the system and schools. – pg. 20

## REMAINING CHALLENGES

### Board

- However, while the Board is showing promise in creating a culture based on mutual respect and shared responsibility, its ability to sustain this effort and institutionalize these highly functional norms over a period of time will be the true test of its success. – pg. 3
- The short term appointment of six members of the current Board, the possibility of judicial intervention in the composition of the current Board and the short-term commitment of the interim superintendent left the Monitoring Team with serious concerns about the sustainability of the progress observed during the visit. – pg. 3
- The district's development of a more comprehensive plan should identify the skills and resources that the Board needs so that it can more effectively focus on the needs of students. The Required Action calls for the district to establish a plan that will build and sustain a professional and collegial decorum among board member and between the Board and superintendent... pg. 3
- Of more immediate concern may be the upheaval that may result from impending legal rulings by the Georgia Supreme Court and the Georgia Office of State Administrative Hearing. – pg. 4