



## District Operations Report – January 2025

### Chief H. Eric Hilton

#### Office of Legal Affairs (OLA)

The Legal Department's high-level priorities for the month continued to track the Miracles goal for the department. The legal review was completed in a timely manner for the January board meeting agenda items. We are on track to complete the February 2025 board agenda items following established deadlines. TregoEd continues its work on revisions to the contract administration processes, focusing on recommendations for appropriate signing authority, recommended updates and changes to the process with the wind-up meeting, and recommended conclusions expected to be complete by the end of February. We have identified qualified candidates for the positions of legal counsel, exceptional education, and office specialist to the chief legal officer.

Employment offers are pending. The OLA has been actively advising the district on the changing legal environment related to immigration enforcement in Georgia public schools. OLA attorneys also lead the reconstituted administrative policy review committee and successfully completed a planning meeting focusing on human resources (HR) policy review. Finally, the OLA participated in operations, finance, HR, and legal affairs steering committees.

### Executive Legal Director and Title IX Coordinator Marissa Key, Esq.

#### Employee Relations and Title IX

The OLA continues collaborating with HR to revise identified policies and create supporting regulations for review and presentation to the board. A meeting is scheduled to discuss how the waivers (Strategic Waivers School System [SWSS]) can be used during the HR revision process.

The federal government has rescinded the 2024 Title IX regulations; therefore, the 2020 regulations must be implemented nationwide. We have redefined the Title IX structure to engage the local schools in the processes where appropriate. Identified positions have received role-specific training to support the effective implementation of the new process and federal compliance. We will provide multiple role-specific training sessions and hands-on training to support the Title IX staff. In addition to role-specific training, we will train departments whose duties and responsibilities are essential to effectively implementing the Title IX process.

We are monitoring bills presented during the Georgia legislative session. Training will be provided during the summer Leadership Conference.

## **Legal Director Ginton Darien, Esq.**

### **Risk Management and Workers Compensation**

The Risk Management Team continues its work on insurance review. The team is taking the necessary steps to adhere to the Ashley Wilson Act (the “Act”), effective Jan. 1. This Act requires that any nurse or school resource officer employed by the district, who experiences a traumatic event resulting in post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), be eligible for the benefits provided under the Act. A qualified professional must diagnose the PTSD. Workers’ compensation does not cover the new benefits required under the Act. We have submitted the insurance proposal, signed by the superintendent, to the Georgia School Board Association and are awaiting additional information.

In addition, the Risk Management Team is continuing its work with the Operations Department regarding the property appraisals received from the district's insurer, Alliant. The Operations Team has suggested that we utilize the services of the district’s real estate contractor. We have obtained approval of this recommendation by the chief operating officer and are working with Dudley Thomas Spade.

These property appraisals are for 25 district facilities. Based on those appraisals, the district is only 11.97 percent (i.e., \$100,115,324) underinsured. With assistance from Dudley Thomas Spade, the team is reviewing the appraisals and updating the *Statement of Values* and other documents. The district’s total insured value under its property insurance policy renewed in June 2024 is \$4,214,395,368.00. The premium for the property insurance policy was \$3,335,010.44.

With respect to workers’ compensation, we are working on the annual “Self-Insurer’s Payroll Report.” The State Board of Workers’ Compensation requires this report. The report is due March 1. In addition, we are completing the annual requirement by the State Board of Workers’ Compensation for filing board form WC-26 for year-end 2024. This contains information regarding medical-only claims and annual payments on indemnity claims. The report is due March 1, 2025.

## **Senior Legal Counsel Chasity Middlebrooks-Cody, Esq.**

### **Employee and Student Relations**

The fall Legal Symposium for Central Office leaders was completed on Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2024. Due to the demand for legal training on rapid changes in federal law, we will divide our content into sections based on the federal changes that directly impact the Department of Education (ED) and DeKalb County School District (DCSD). Specifically, we will provide prompt virtual and in-person training for priority schools and other identified locations. Additionally, we will maintain a training schedule to capture changes as they occur in the federal government to

ensure the district's compliance. This is a targeted effort to ensure accuracy, efficiency, and effective implementation across the district. The OLA will work with all DCSD departments, locations, and entities to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local laws and policies.

We will present the content initially intended for the spring Legal Symposium during the Summer Leadership Conference to accommodate the local schools' testing schedules and provide specialized training for school-based leaders. We will capture the most recent legal updates and provide specialized content for each OLA specialty area.

We continue to monitor the effectiveness of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) mediation tool as a mitigation method. Approximately fifty percent of employees who file EEOC Charges of Discrimination against the district are open to mediation as a form of resolution.

### **Legal Counsel Imani Redd, Esq.**

#### **Contract Administration**

In December 2024 and January, the Contracts Administration Team reviewed over 200 contracts and prepared 10 agreements for various departments. The team holds weekly meetings to review contracts, address urgent issues, and improve contract administration processes.

We've created a centralized internal file to organize form agreements and begin updating them. The team is also establishing processes for board agenda items to streamline board directives that require an agreement and ensure agreements are properly executed and entered into the Municipal Uniform Information System (MUNIS) on time.

Additionally, we hold monthly meetings with the Operations Department and Solicitation Team to review open agreements and discuss upcoming renewals.

Moving forward, the team will continue training bookkeepers and department staff on submitting agreements via Doc Express and on the DJE BOE policy related to purchasing. We will also work with all departments and schools to further streamline the contract administration process. Furthermore, we are developing a unified process for board agenda items that require a contract across departments.

### **Legal Counsel (Vacant)**

#### **Exceptional Education**

## Chief Operating Officer Erick Hoffstetter

### Division of Operations

The Division of Operations has much to celebrate, from effectively managing inclement weather closures to completing another successful **MIRACLES** presentation. We've made remarkable strides transitioning to the **Kroger Building**, ensuring a smooth and efficient move. Additionally, we successfully wrapped up the fiscal year (FY) 2026 personnel position discussion and organizational chart, setting the stage for continued growth and efficiency.

Looking ahead, the first cohort of the **Carl Vinson School** operations implementation is set to begin Feb. 13, marking a significant milestone. We also received valuable feedback from the **Smoke Rise Informational Session** and the **Miller Community Meeting**, reinforcing our commitment to collaboration and continuous improvement. Exciting progress is on the horizon!

## Deputy Chief Operations Officer Antwyn Brown

### Division of Operations

The division is making strides in creating a positive experience for staff. Our additional HR staff dedicated to the division assists in recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and retention. Initial results are favorable.

The division has also created its professional learning plan. It is excited to participate in the Inaugural Cohort of the School Operations Personnel Certificate Program sponsored by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (University of Georgia). Members of the senior leadership are also participating in the Capital Outlay Institute, Human Resources Institute, and Planning, Budgeting, and Funding Institute, all of which are sponsored by the Georgia School Superintendents Association. Additionally, several staff members have obtained various certifications through the International Sanitary Supply Association/Association of Physical Plant Administrators (ISSA/APPA) and other industry-sponsored learning.

Introducing this deliberate training will yield substantial results for the division and the school district, positively impacting students, staff, and the community.

## Executive Director Keith Ball

### Capital Improvements and Facilities

As we move into 2025, we are excited to announce a new Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax for Education (E-SPLOST) capital improvement management partnership with Hoar Program Management (HPM). Over the next four months, we will transition from our current partnership with ACERM, a joint venture with Corporate Environmental Risk Management (CERM) and Architecture, Engineering, Construction, Operations, and Management (AECOM), who have worked with the district for over a decade. We are grateful for that professional partnership and

hope the best for both firms moving forward. This spring, HPM will be tasked with planning and managing all existing and future E-SPLOST projects. Executing the current construction schedule, facility assessments, and prioritization will drive our capital projects. Welcome, HPM!

On the facilities side, I want to thank our team for their daily efforts and extra effort during severe weather. Hurricane Helene, this past fall, is currently estimated to be the most catastrophic hurricane in the history of the United States. Although DeKalb was spared the worst of the wind and rain, the preventative work ahead of the storm, site management during the storm, and post-storm cleanup allowed all DCSD facilities to open on time. In January, we had two major snow events coupled with freezing temperatures. Again, our facilities team was on the roads and onsite to address snow, ice, and heating issues that severely stressed our aging infrastructure. The repairs caused by severe winter weather will continue even when the snow and ice are gone. The team is working to get all 140 facilities and 16 million square feet (about half the area of Central Park in New York City) back online so our 92,000+ students and staff can execute the mission of leading, teaching, and learning.

### **Executive Director Raymond Stanley**

#### **Fleet and Transportation Department**

On Jan. 13, our school board approved the purchase of the first 25 electric buses for the school district. We are excited about this opportunity afforded by the Environmental Protection Agency, (EPA) to purchase a total of 75 electric buses. The DCSD Fleet and Transportation Department was awarded the Clean School Bus Grant of \$20M and the Clean School Bus Rebate Award of \$8.7M. This grant and award agreement is to replace existing school buses with clean and zero-emission school buses. The expected outcomes include removing 76,322 gallons of diesel fuel from use each year. Our district and community will benefit from improved air quality, reduced energy waste, and reduced dependence on fossil fuels, contributing to a more sustainable energy system. While additional funding will be needed to support the infrastructure of charging stations and electric buses, we look forward to serving our students and community with reliable bus transportation while protecting our environment. This is a win for all stakeholders.

### **Executive Director Connie Walker**

#### **School Nutrition Services**

##### **DeKalb County School Nutrition New Employee Training**

Orientation for Nutrition Employees (ONE) is an instructor-led course taught to all new school nutrition employees within the first full year of employment. The ONE fulfills the Georgia Board of Education (BOE) requirement for 30 hours of new employee training and the School Nutrition Association (SNA) Level 1 Certification. New employees are required to complete the course during the first year of employment.

The ONE provides basic training to newly hired employees in school nutrition. The 30-hour, five-week program (three hours twice per week) includes training in sanitation, safety, meal pattern requirements, quantity food production, nutrition, school nutrition history and philosophy, merchandising, teamwork, and customer service skills. The goal is for the employee to utilize the skills learned on the job as they serve our students.

Dekalb School Nutrition Services provides this annual training three times per year to new employees. Dekalb School Nutrition Training Manager Jacqueline Bailey trained 29 new employees during school year (SY) 23-24 and 17 employees since the beginning of SY 24-25. They provide employees with the instructional materials needed to engage in the course. Once they complete the course, all participants will earn the ONE Certification recognized throughout Georgia.



### Director Bernando Brown

#### Student Transportation

The Transportation Department took swift and strategic action to ensure safe travel during severe winter. The Emergency Response Team was activated, mobilizing key personnel to assess road safety and operational readiness. Critical pre-trip inspections ensured wheels had proper traction, heating systems functioned efficiently, and buses were pre-warmed for student comfort. Leadership conducted proactive route inspections, identifying and addressing hazards before buses hit the roads.

Real-time weather monitoring and close coordination with the DeKalb Emergency Management Agency allowed immediate route adjustments, ensuring smooth and secure transportation. These decisive measures kept our fleet operating safely despite challenging conditions.

Actions taken:

- 1. Emergency Response Team activation:**  
Transportation leadership and select drivers mobilized to evaluate and prepare for safe operations.
- 2. Pre-trip inspections:**
  - Wheels inspected for traction
  - Heating systems checked
  - Buses pre-warmed for student comfort
- 3. Road condition assessments:**  
Transportation leadership conducted route inspections to identify and mitigate hazards.
- 4. Real-time monitoring:**  
Ongoing evaluation of weather and road conditions ensured prompt adjustments to routes.

#### 5. Coordination with DeKalb Emergency Management Agency:

Maintained communication for updates on weather and road safety.

These actions ensured our fleet prepared to transport students safely. The Transportation Department remains committed to thorough road safety preparation, real-time monitoring, and adaptability to support safe travel. Student safety and well-being remain our top priority, and we appreciate your trust in our team as we navigate even the most demanding winter weather conditions.

#### Director Bobby Moncrief

##### Facilities Services

The Facilities and Maintenance Department is springing into action as we prepare for the end of the school year! Our team works closely with principals to ensure a smooth transition, providing support as they finalize preparations. During testing, we are committed to maintaining a safe and productive environment for students, allowing them to focus and perform at their best.

Our team has been working hard at addressing facility needs, with **1,456** new work orders received and **1,276** work orders successfully completed. As we move into summer, we remain dedicated to keeping our schools in top shape, ensuring that buildings and grounds are ready for the upcoming academic year!



- New epoxy floors in restrooms at Browns Mill Elementary School (ES)
- Teacher lounge makeover at Miller Grove
- New hot water heater installed at Miller Grove High School (HS)
- New robotic floor machine
- New flooring installed at Fairington ES

## Director Keith Singleton

### Business Services

#### 2025: A Catalyst for Growth in Business Services

In 2025, Business Services will expand its capabilities by focusing on our three core areas:

#### 1. **Supply Chain**

Our primary initiative is implementing a warehouse management system to efficiently organize and account for all property within DCSD. This system will integrate with MUNIS, providing immediate visibility into our assets and streamlining inventory management across the district.

#### 2. **Sustainability**

Sustainability will be at the forefront of procurement and project management processes. We will integrate sustainability metrics, ensuring our goals—such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and eco-friendly sourcing—are embedded into purchasing and operational decisions.

#### 3. **Shared Services**

To enhance collaboration and operational efficiency, we aim to centralize key financial functions under one unified umbrella, including accounting, printing services, payroll, and facility rental. This approach will improve coordination within our division, as well as with finance and our vendors.

2025 will mark a transformative year as we drive meaningful progress in these focus areas. We want to thank our employees for all their hard work in 2024 and look forward to 2025.

## Director Hans Williams

### Planning and E-SPLOST/ Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Programming

#### Capital Improvement Management Transition

With a new capital improvement program manager set to begin in June, preparations are underway to ensure a seamless transition of all capital improvement projects and critical functions. This multi-month process will prioritize continuity, ensuring that key operations remain unaffected as administrative responsibilities shift.

#### Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) Capital Outlay Reimbursements

The department is actively working on the certificate of completion documents for projects seeking reimbursement, along with necessary modifications to past applications. These efforts will help secure final reimbursement payments from GaDOE while refining the district's reimbursement strategy. Adjustments include removing discontinued projects (primarily





sprinkler installations) and resetting timelines for older projects that are now moving forward. These projects will be resubmitted in the next reimbursement application this fall, optimizing funding opportunities for the district.

## Chief of Staff Elijah Palmer

### Chief of Staff Updates

#### H-PRIDE Visits Update

This month, we successfully completed 12 H-PRIDE school visits, bringing our total to 137, with only two schools remaining. These visits have been instrumental in allowing Superintendent Horton to assess each school's academic performance and social-emotional climate firsthand. More importantly, they provided a platform for principals, teachers, student representatives, and community members to voice their needs and discuss the additional support the central office team can provide. As chief of staff, I took these insights back to our division chiefs, ensuring that immediate adjustments were made where possible while incorporating long-term needs into capital projects or MIRACLES priorities with clear timelines for sustainable change. These visits have reinforced our commitment to providing targeted support directly impacting student success and school improvement.

#### Saving Our Students (SOS) Update

In January, the DCSD focused on Human Trafficking Prevention Awareness Month as part of the SOS movement. Throughout the month, we held designated days where students and staff wore all black to honor and recognize those impacted by human trafficking. To close the month, we hosted an awareness event during the Southwest DeKalb versus Tucker basketball game, providing students and parents with informational materials to educate and empower our community. This initiative is just the beginning, as we aim to build momentum each month by addressing critical issues affecting our scholars. We are committed to fostering awareness and proactive solutions to protect and support our students by continuously engaging our schools and families in meaningful conversations.

#### Audit Updates

Finalizing the firm for our follow-up to the E-SPLOST audit marks a critical step in strengthening the financial and operational integrity of DCSD. After Plante Moran's audit concluded last summer, their findings highlighted key areas requiring immediate attention, including the need for stronger systems and structures, effective personnel training, a more user-friendly procurement process, and a well-defined records retention calendar. In response, we engaged in a thorough procurement process to identify the right firm to assist us in addressing these recommendations and ensuring compliance with best practices.

In addition to this follow-up audit, we are launching a comprehensive P-Card audit. This initiative will review every purchasing card issued within the district to enhance transparency and accountability. By conducting this audit, we aim to reinforce our commitment to responsible financial stewardship and reassure our BOE and community members that district funds are

being managed with integrity. These efforts reflect our dedication to continuous improvement, operational efficiency, and fiscal responsibility, ensuring our processes align with the highest accountability standards.

### Public Safety Personnel Update

The DCSD continues prioritizing safety by significantly strengthening our public safety team. We are proud to announce that all 76 elementary school associates (ESAs) have been hired, ensuring every ES in the district has dedicated support on campus. Additionally, we have successfully hired 17 new school resource officers (SRO) this year, bringing our total to 73. This effort aligns with our goal of ensuring every middle and high school has a permanent SRO, with select high schools receiving two officers based on data-driven needs.

Beyond SROs, campus supervisors are now in place at our middle and high schools to assist with daily safety and security operations, further reinforcing a strong, structured environment for students and staff. To enhance emergency preparedness, we are expanding the implementation of Centegix crisis alert badges across additional schools and buildings in the district. This expansion extends to our charter school partners, who will participate in the initiative through a reimbursement agreement with DCSD, ensuring a unified approach to crisis management.

These efforts reflect our unwavering commitment to the safety of all students, staff, and community members within DCSD. By continuously enhancing our security measures and investing in personnel and technology, we create a safer learning environment where students can thrive.

### Director of Strategic Management

Vacant

### Director Joel Thibodeaux

#### Internal Audits and Compliance

#### Update on Third-Party Engagements

#### **Operations and Division of Information and Instructional Technology (DIIT) Assessments –**

Conducted onsite visits and management interviews with DIIT, operations, and finance during January, with more onsite visits planned for School Nutrition Services and DIIT in February. HR is scheduled for virtual engagement during February as well. Initial data collection is complete. Internal teams are responsive and engaged as the engagement progresses.

**Purchasing Card Audit –** We are working with Forvis Mazars to finalize the master services agreement and intend to get the engagement kicked off in February.

**E-SPLOST Follow-Up –** We are working with CliftonLarsenAllen, LLC to finalize the master services agreement to comply with Georgia state law. Pre-audit activity will be underway within the next two weeks, pending execution of the services agreement.

### Fleet Operations Assessment

Management responses containing detailed corrective actions have been re-submitted to Internal Audits. They will be reviewed with operations executive leadership in preparation for presentation at the initial Audit Committee meeting. Completed assessments of fuel and maintenance, and reports will be provided and reviewed with management soon. Internal Audits will seek to identify the planning and implementation of a comprehensive fuel management plan and fleet maintenance process, after which an audit and control framework can be designed and implemented so that proactive, continuous monitoring can occur.

### School Audit Plan

School audits are back underway beginning the first week of February to complete all HS audits before the start of the 2025-2026 school year. Over the semester break, we revised school audit procedures to streamline engagements and focus on the highest-risk areas of local school accounting and finance. Additionally, we are working proactively with school leadership to schedule engagements and staff interaction to mitigate interruptions in daily instructional and school management activities. Reports from the field state that school administrators and staff are better prepared and available as these engagements commence.

### Athletics Audit

The Athletics Department staff engaged in interviews and requests for documentation. The executive director of athletics has supported these efforts, making staff and information available to the lead auditor. We continue to survey the new structure, new roles, and increased objectives of the Athletics Department as student engagement has moved beyond high schools into the lower grade levels. Financial roles continue to be identified, and audit procedures will be developed as Internal Audits fully understand current operations.

### Bookkeeper's Survey

Internal Audits and Compliance is developing a survey for distribution to district school bookkeepers to gather information on challenges brought on by unforeseen impacts of implementing financial and timekeeping system improvements. Survey results will be shared with executive management for consideration and possible procedural changes at the school level.

### Executive Director Tracey Whaley

#### Public Safety Recruitment and Retention

Public Safety continues to work towards recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff:

- Since July 2024, we have hired 17 SROs, and most are assigned to their permanent schools.
- Three of the 17 SROs are currently in training.
- Five SROs have been recommended to HR and are currently being processed.

- We have hired 76 ESAs, and all positions are filled.
- We hired six campus supervisors, placing us near full capacity.
- The steering committee has approved two additional 12-month campus supervisor positions, and a request has been made to have the positions posted.

#### Technology Integration

- Mobile Pro Systems – Public safety has also set in place two Mobile Pro Systems security trailers, one placed at Martin Luther King, Jr. HS’s bus parking lot and the other at Godfrey Stadium’s bus parking lot. These systems enable the lots to be monitored live to protect parked vehicles.
- Facial Recognition – Public Safety and IT are currently collaborating to meet with vendors to discuss their facial recognition capabilities.
- Evolv systems are currently in place at each county football stadium.
- Evolv Conveyor Pilot – Public Safety collaborated with Tucker HS to demo an Evolve conveyor system, and data was gathered from those who used it to determine its effectiveness.
  - The system is now being demoed at McNair HS (Feb. 4 to Feb. 6).

#### Active Shooter Drill

Public safety leadership is currently coordinating and planning a countywide Active Shooter Drill where we will host all county law enforcement and public safety agencies.

- The first leg of the drill commenced with a tabletop exercise hosted at the Administrative and Instructional Complex (AIC) Nov. 19, 2024.
- Tabletop number two took place Dec. 19, 2024.
- The countywide drill will take place Feb. 19.

#### Visitor Management System

We have coordinated two safety-centric pilots of visitor management systems, which will serve as visitor checkpoints in our schools.

- Piloted Raptor visitor management at Ashford Park ES and Tucker Middle School (MS).
- Currently using Centegix visitor management at 44 DCSD schools.

#### Department Training

Conducted the following training sessions for all full-time security and police staff in January:

- Mental and Emotional Management for Employees.
- Cultural Awareness and Implicit Bias.

### District Employee Training

Public Safety personnel conducted the following safety-centric training for district personnel:

- Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (AIC and east campus for school social workers).
- Five classes hosted 478 attendees.

### Centegix Updates

Public Safety is currently collaborating with the Legal Department to have Centegix installed at the following locations:

- Silver Hill Building
- Fernbank Science Center

Public Safety is currently collaborating with Charter Services and the Legal Department to have Centegix installed at the following charter schools under the DCSD contract with Centegix:

- The Globe Academy (two locations)
- The Museum School
- The Tapestry School
- Dekalb Preparatory Academy

The following Charter Schools have yet to respond to the offer of Centegix sent by Charter Services or have declined to service:

- Leadership Preparatory Academy
- Dekalb Perseverance, Accomplishment, Triumph, and Honor (PATH)
- Dekalb Academy of Technology and the Environment (declined)

### Executive Director Carolyn Lloyd

#### Board of Operations

The board office is excited to join the Board of Education as it receives the Georgia School Board Association's Quality School Board Award during its annual conference on Dec. 11-13, 2024.

We also celebrated our outgoing board members, Mrs. Anna Hill, Mrs. Vickie B. Turner, and Dr. Joyce Morley. These board members were honored during the Dec. 9 BOE meeting.

The board and district hosted State School Superintendent Richard Woods on Dec. 12 to recognize the district for its exceptional literacy and math proficiency advancement.

The board's Annual Legislative Luncheon was rescheduled to Thursday, Dec. 19, from noon to 1:30 p.m. in the board office. During this time, the board shared its legislative priorities with the DeKalb delegation members.

New BOE members will be sworn in on Jan. 7 in the board office. Those new board members are Tiffany Hogan, District 5; Andrew Ziffer, District 1; and Awet Eyasu, District 7.

The board office continues to work each month in service to the BOE, superintendent and the district.

## Chief Financial Officer Byron Schueneman

### Division of Finance

A few accomplishments from the Division of Finance are:

- Successful processing and printing of over 30K W-2s originating from CrossPointe and MUNIS.
- First year of processing 1099s inclusive of school activity account (principal account) activity. This added 200 or so more 1099s, and the reporting was more inclusive than in years past.
- The FY23 audit engagement with Mauldin and Jenkins concluded, and an exit conference was held Jan. 29.
- December 2024 monthly financials were rerun using the MUNIS Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) tool and compared/contrasted to the existing reporting format. The MUNIS ACFR format is generated directly from the general ledger, aligns better with our annual financial reporting, and includes a balance sheet. Finance will migrate monthly financials to the new tool starting with the January financials, which will be presented at the March board meeting. Additional board training is planned on the new financial format at the next mini sessions.
- Travel reimbursements for mileage will now be paid out of payroll as a non-taxable item and directly deposited with your payroll check. This took effect for the Jan. 31 paycheck. This huge win will save the district from printing and mailing physical reimbursement checks.

Finance continued to plug away on various other projects. More details are below.

- The FY24 audit engagement with the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts (DOAA) is underway and scheduled to be wrapped up in late April, with a report by late May.
- MUNIS
  - Time and Attendance
  - Grant accounting module – to maintain grants/donations greater than \$5,000 that are not state or federal.

Now that we have a solid grasp of our financial reporting, audit progress, and W-2 processing, we will focus on the FY26 budget development and close out FY25 with a bang.



## **Deputy Chief Financial Officer Lauren Scott**

### **Division of Finance**

Employee Access is up and running! Employee Access features the same great tools as Self Service, with added features, including the paycheck simulator and the ability to update direct deposit information.

2024 W2s were printed and mailed on Jan. 30! All employees can view and download a PDF copy by logging into the Employee Access portal for MUNIS W2s and WebPay for Crosspointe W2s. W2s are also being mailed via USPS.

## **Director Regina Bagley**

### **Budget**

#### **FY2026 Budget Development**

The budget team is analyzing division FY2026 budget requests. The review and approval of FY2026 additional funding requests are forthcoming and will conclude the development of division budget requests for the upcoming school year.

#### **Position Control Audit**

Phase III of the position control audit is ongoing and targeted for completion in February. The team is communicating findings with the HR Team for system updates. The position control audit is approximately 70 percent complete.

#### **Allovue Manage Implementation**

The Budget Team has launched Allovue Manage! Principals were trained and provided training aids. Once position data is updated in MUNIS, principals can expect accurate information on the platform.

## **Comptroller Lance McConkey**

### **Audit Updates**

#### **FY23 Audit**

The FY23 audit is complete, audit report was released, and an exit conference was held on Wednesday, Jan. 29. Mauldin and Jenkins will present the results at the Feb. 10, board meeting.

#### **FY24 Audit**

The Business Services Team has begun working with the DOAA to provide audit request information. As of Jan. 31, 54 financial requests have been received. Twenty-six request items have been fulfilled and accepted by DOAA as complete, and another 20 requests have been fulfilled. Additionally, DOAA will be auditing the following federal programs – Elementary and

Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER), English Language Acquisition, Special Education, and Student Support and Academic Enrichment. The DOAA has committed to audit completion by April.

#### Financial Reporting Procedure Updates

Team members participated in five days of training over the MUNIS ACFR module through Oct. 2024 to January. The team configured the module and received hands-on experience developing financial statements through the module. Monthly financial statement generation has been tested in the module and beginning with the January financial statements, all future financial statements will be produced from this module. This training aligns with Finance Miracle – Financial Reporting Module.

#### MyRetirement Manager Platform Expansion

Finance coordinated an additional meeting, including HR and DIIT, to receive information on available updates and improvements. Fully implementing the MUNIS payroll module allows consideration of opportunities that will improve data submission and the end users' experience. Also, an internal meeting was held to discuss which updates and improvements all divisions wanted to implement from the information received from the vendor. Next steps are continuing meetings to work on the updates and improvements. Next steps will continue in February. The focus on these tasks aligns with Finance Miracle – MyRetirement Manager Expansion.

#### Director Milton Hall

##### Allotments

Members of the Resource Allocation/Methodology Plan (RAMP) Committee are in the final stages of revising and/or developing a funding model to more adequately support the special programs offered in our district as well as developing a set funding model to support DCSD's non-traditional schools, specifically, DeKalb Alternative School and Elizabeth Andrews HS. We continue to meet each Wednesday as this initiative is aligned with the Finance Miracle for Allotments.

The Office of Allotments collaborated with Operations and Planning, School Choice, School Nutrition Services, English Learners Department, and the Special Education Department on initial allocations for FY26 based on the most recent full-time equivalent (FTE)/quality basic education (QBE) earnings for FY25 and anticipated enrollment using current data. During our annual allotment meetings the week of Feb. 10-14, the Office of Allotments will confirm final allocations with all local DCSD schools and centers.

## Executive Director Carla Smith

### Vendor Services

#### Equal Level eProcurement Marketplace

Due to snow days, the DCSD eMarketplace training for school and department requisitioners was postponed; however, we are now back on track. We received valuable feedback from the requisitioners, which sparked detailed discussions and prompted changes to a few procedures.

The software is scheduled to go live in February, and we will continue to provide extra support for any requisitioners who may need it.

#### Finance Wednesday Refresher Session

The HR Team, led by Beonka Anthony, discussed Substitute Services. Topics included substitute expectations such as professional dress, signing in and out, and work hours. She also covered the different substitute agreements and data entry in MUNIS. The bookkeepers could ask questions related to these topics and beyond.

#### Employee Expense Travel Reimbursement

We are excited to announce an update to our travel reimbursement process. Starting in January, all employee travel reimbursements will be paid directly into their bank accounts via direct deposit with the payroll pay dates. This change streamlines the reimbursement process, providing faster and more convenient access to travel reimbursements. We successfully processed 170+ reimbursements in January.

## Chief Dr. Yolanda Williamson

### Chief Dr. Yolanda Williamson and Strategic Partners Manager Tanya Arrington

#### Division of Community Engagement and Innovative Partnerships (CEIP)

In February, the Division of CEIP undertook significant initiatives to enhance community engagement. The team focused on refining the strategic plan, engaging with community stakeholders through various advisory councils, and organizing educational events that strengthened community relations. Key activities included closing out H-PRIDE visits, preparing for Academic Walks, soliciting feedback via ThoughtExchange, and facilitating community meetings.

The division met to review, rewrite, and update the strategic plan, focusing on goal areas 2.1 a, b, c, and 2.4 a, b, c. Moving forward, the team will convene every Thursday to discuss ongoing work, ensuring alignment with our goals, performance objectives, and strategies.

In addition to finalizing the H-PRIDE 2024-2025 visits, preparations and scheduling for the Academic Walks, set to begin in March, were initiated. Two ThoughtExchanges were created and distributed; one targeted all principals to gather feedback on the new organizational structure within DCSD, while the other comprehensive exchange solicited feedback from all school staff, disaggregated by area, regarding their first semester experiences.

The final two Atlanta Falcons Fridays were hosted at Fernbank and Briar Vista Elementary Schools. This interactive program allows hundreds of students to interact with Freddie the Falcon and his staff in a high-energy pep rally-style show as he guides students through Atlanta Falcons messaging and slogans to create community hype around the season.

In fostering community alliance, the Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council assembled for its third meeting, where participants contributed to the Access and Opportunity Audit. The council's feedback was crucial, setting the stage for the final meeting on March 12.

Simultaneously, the Superintendent's Staff Advisory Council will convene on the same day, followed by the Superintendent's Exceptional Education and Bilingual Advisory Councils in the subsequent weeks.

In addition, the division facilitated two virtual community meetings with the Idlewood/Smoke Rise community to discuss attendance boundary planning. Several hundred attendees participated across both meetings, and recordings of these sessions will be featured on a banner on the DCSD website. Additionally, links to the meetings and answers to questions that could not be addressed due to time constraints were made available for the community's review.

Finally, In collaboration with other divisions, CEIP is meticulously planning the upcoming State of the District event.

## Deputy Chief Jennifer Caracciolo

### Communications

- Provided communications coverage for: BOE Oath of Office, BOE New Officers, 12 H-PRIDE visits, Helen Ruffin, Spelling Bee, SOS Human Trafficking, NAACP MLK Parade, Tech Fair, 24-25 Teacher of the Year (TOTY) spotlight, Falcons Thursday/Friday, Dr. Jefferson retirement, and January Difference Maker visits.
- DSTV: Weekly Student Assignment Project meetings, DeKalb Acceleration Academies Military, National History Day, IDEA training, recorded season two of The Lunchroom, Smoke Rise and Idlewood Parent Information meetings; produced a new edition of Te Escucha.
- Communications support for Inclement Weather Days, Immigration communication, State of the District events and sponsorships; updating content on division and department websites and planning for switch to Finals site; school letters from Superintendent Horton.
- Social media posts (215+) for each – FB, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Bluesky; multiple school messengers sent and hosted a number of Zoom meetings for divisions/departments.

## Press Secretary Dr. Donald Porter

The press secretary's office serves as the primary point of contact for all news media inquiries and actively participates in many direct and indirect support functions across DCSD divisions. A monthly summary of these activities for January 2025 includes:

- Wrote and distributed media releases
  - Jan. 16, DCBOE Welcomes New Chair and Vice Chair
  - Jan. 20, DCSD Announces Asynchronous Learning for Tuesday, Jan. 21
  - Jan. 21 DCSD Announces Second Asynchronous Learning Day on Wednesday
  - Jan. 22, DCSD Extends Asynchronous Learning Day to Thursday
- Provided daily media summary reports to board members
- Provided daily news distribution stories via critical mention
- Edited and/or rewrote school letters to families
  - Jan. 14, Miller Grove HS Social Media Post – Lockdown
  - Jan. 14, Cedar Grove HS Medical Emergency – Student
  - Jan. 14, Montgomery ES Outgoing Assistant Principal Letter
  - Jan. 14, Huntley ES Incoming Principal Letter
  - Jan. 15, Lithonia HS Letter – School Lockdown
  - Jan. 16, Oakview ES – Lockdown

- Jan. 17, DHHS Parent Response RE Sewage Overflow
- Jan. 23, Principal Transition Letter – TEMPLATE
- Jan. 23, Chapel Hill ES Principal Transition Out
- Jan. 28, Cedar Grove HS Lockdown – Escaped Juvenile
- Jan. 28, Towers HS – Physical Altercation-Lockdown
- Jan. 29, Fairington ES – Student Passing
- Jan. 29, Browns Mill ES Interim Principal Introduction
- Jan. 29, Rowland ES New Interim Principal Letter – Calhoun
- Jan. 29, Chapel Hill ES Introduction Letter – Simpson
- Jan. 29, Murphy Candler ES Interim Principal Introduction Letter – Pounds
- Jan. 30, Chamblee HS – Lockdown Drill
- Jan. 30, Panola Way ES – Lockdown-Police Activity in Area
- Jan. 30, Lithonia HS – Evacuation-Fire Alarm
- Jan. 30, Redan HS – Lockdown-Police Activity in Area
- Jan. 30, Towers HS New Interim Principal Letter
- Jan. 30, Stoneview ES New Interim Principal Letter
- Jan. 30, Rock Chapel ES New Interim Principal Letter
- Jan. 30, Oakview ES Principal Introduction
- Jan. 30, Stephenson HS – Lockdown-Bomb Threat
- Edited and rewrote web stories
  - Jan. 13, DCSD Welcomes Four New Board Members
  - Jan. 21, DCSD TOTY – Smoke Rise Pre-K Teacher
  - Jan. 31, DCSD Spelling Bee Winner
- Wrote and distributed district statements
  - Jan. 22, Immigration Status and ICE Raids
  - Jan. 23, DCSD Remote Learning Rationale and Expectations
  - Jan. 24, Recent Principal Changes Statement
  - Jan. 27, Kingsley ES – Heating Issues
  - Jan. 29, Coralwood School Sibling Preference Statement
  - Jan. 29, Kingsley ES – HVAC Update/HVAC Repairs Complete
  - Jan. 31, Kroger Building Purchase

## Director Marcia Oglesby

### Grants and Partnership

The Grants and Partnerships Department provided support for the following grant and partnership initiatives to support various departments and schools.

- The GEAR UP grant was submitted on Feb. 3, in collaboration with Georgia State University and Student Advancement to request federal funding to increase access to college and career readiness programs and experiences. Partners were secured to support the grant project. If awarded, the district will receive \$2,560,000 annually during each year of the seven-year grant period to implement the grant project which will include personnel to assist with the implementation of the grant.
- Michael Harris attended the Georgia Commute Options and PROMOVE meeting led by Mr. Quintin DeGroot. The commute options and opportunities will support the Teacher Quality Partnership grant participants obtaining free or reduced cost transportation.
- The Grants and Partnerships Team in collaboration with Student Mentoring and Partnerships and Georgia State University worked diligently to submit the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant. Unfortunately, due to unexpected circumstances, the grant was not submitted by the 5 p.m. deadline on Jan. 30. We are available to meet to discuss the lessons learned from this grant project.
- The IMPACT AID survey responses were submitted to the U.S. Department of Education on Jan. 31. The second group of survey responses will be submitted prior to the April 1 deadline. If approved by the ED, the district will receive funds to support various programs and initiatives.
- The Clean School Bus Rebate application was entered and submitted into the Environmental Protection Agency's grant portal on Friday, Jan. 31, to request funding to replace 25 diesel buses with 25 electric buses in collaboration with the Transportation Department, finance, and the World Resource Institute.
- Grants and Partnerships is participating in the planning of Education Week which will be held during the week of March 24 through 29, in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce's Education Committee and the DeKalb County government.

The following items will be submitted for approval as board agenda items prior to the board submission agenda items deadline to be presented during the March board meeting:

- Martin Luther King Jr. HS was awarded a donation valued at \$26,500 during the College Football Playoff Foundation's Extra Yard for Teachers event held on Saturday, Jan. 18, to create a virtual reality classroom. Professional learning for teachers is also included in the award. The agenda item is being prepared for approval to present to the board during the March board meeting.

- State Farm will donate furniture to the district to support Student Advancement and Wrap Around Services.
- Donors Choose – (\$1,000 Donors Choose gift card to Stone Mountain HS and \$1,400 donation to Kelly Gooden to purchase sensory tools for Toney ES students to create a de-escalation space).
- Columbia MS was awarded the Georgia Teachers Initiative grant in the amount of \$2,500 to help improve learning outcomes and make a measurable impact on the lives of students.
- Arabia Mountain HS was awarded the Georgia Teachers Initiative grant in the amount of \$2,500 to help improve learning outcomes and make a measurable impact on the lives of students.

### **Program Administrator Dr. Damienne Denham Shabazz**

#### **Adult Education**

##### **GED/ESL Enrollment**

Currently, we have 380 participants in the DCSD GED/ESL program. This program serves DCSD families and county stakeholders at five locations: Administrative Instructional Complex (AIC) Elizabeth Andrew HS (EAHS), Goodwill Industries (community partner), Sequoyah MS, Cross Keys HS and McNair HS Safe Center. For FY25 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025), we have a total of 16 graduates from the DCSD GED program to date. While we host a rolling enrollment model, our recruitment and retention strategy includes two main orientation and registration sessions, one in the fall and spring. Our spring orientation and registration event will take place Feb. 10 and 13, in the AIC boardroom.

##### **Integrated Education Training (IET)/Workforce Development**

One of our MIRACLES strategic goals is to increase community and business partnerships in order to facilitate workforce training opportunities for our GED participants. This goal aligns with the Office of Adult Education guidelines for IET within the GED framework. We have successfully developed a partnership with DCSD HR for operations named the First Choice Program. This innovative program was developed to create an opportunity for Adult Education participants to earn a certification in custodial technician trade or ServeSafe management, ultimately leading to employment within the district to fill gaps in these critical areas. Currently, 19 employees in the Custodial Trades and School Nutrition Departments are participants who have completed the custodial tech and ServeSafe IET program through the DCSD GED Program. During FY25, 15 participants have earned their credentials, and are in the process of interviewing for employment. We are onboarding a new cohort of qualified participants for third quarter starting Feb. 10.



## Executive Thurman Green, III

### Foundation Oversight

The Foundation conducted the following up of meetings with organizations from the Oct. 31, 2024, Presentation Day: Decide DeKalb (Jan. 15), CT3 (Jan. 24), Hands On Atlanta (Jan. 29), and Learn 4 Life (January 30). The purpose is to streamline opportunities that best positions the Foundation to acquire funding to support various district initiatives.

The Doraville Chamber of Commerce held its inaugural Breakfast and Business event to highlight opportunities and challenges that currently exist. The primary issue discussed was transportation. In addition, Oglethorpe University is conducting an Empowering Entrepreneurs Zone event on Monday, Feb. 10. This is geared towards supporting the business community and entrepreneurs of the following cities: Brookhaven, Buckhead, Chamblee, Doraville, Dunwoody, Sandy Springs and Peachtree Corners. As the Foundation continues to build out fundraising strategies and network, these events serve as potential sources for engagement and fundraising.

Georgia Power, Grants and Partnerships and the Foundation met on Jan. 31, for discussion of partnership alignment. Georgia Power would like an impact report to highlight their partnership with DCSD. In addition, the Foundation shared details related to the 2025 State of the District event on Thursday, March 27, from 5:30 p.m. – 8 p.m. This event serves as the official introduction of the DeKalb Schools Educational Foundation, Inc as well as Dr. Horton providing a detailed overview of how the district has progressed within the past year. Georgia Power was given details to review as a potential sponsor for this event.

DeKalb County Commissioner Michelle Long Spears' donation of \$50,000 will arrive to the Foundation in the week of Feb. 3. This donation supports environmental education field trips for the 18 DCSD schools within Commissioner Long-Spears' District 2. This donation was approved by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners on Nov. 12, 2024. It is the first major donation of the newly certified DeKalb Schools Educational Foundation, Inc.

The Atlanta Civic Collaboratory extended a presentation opportunity to the Foundation on Tuesday, Feb. 4. The presentation will focus on specific needs such as community partnerships, fundraising, new board members prospecting and items shared by the Wrap Around Services Division (Marta Cards for DeKalb Alternative School students, medical support for immunizations, After School program for Dunaire ES, and food sponsor for teacher professional development for Lunch and Learns). The Collaboratory offers specific commitments to move their project forward – in the form of funding, introductions, expertise or elbow grease.

## Manager Marcia Coward

### Family Engagement

The second semester is off to a strong start as we launch *Let's Read and RISE DeKalb*, a transformative literacy initiative engaging 10 schools and 250 families. This comprehensive program fosters meaningful literacy engagement by equipping families, schools, and

communities with the tools needed to bridge literacy gaps and promote lifelong reading success. In collaboration with the Division of Curriculum and Instruction, including our literacy director and educational media director, we are committed to driving impactful changes for our scholars. Through accessible resources, interactive training, and community-centered events, this initiative strengthens literacy-rich home environments and empowers parents with effective strategies to support their children’s academic journey.

#### Key Objectives:

- Increase literacy awareness and engagement within families and communities.
- Provide parents with practical strategies to support reading development.
- Host interactive literacy events to encourage reading at all levels.
- Expand literacy support through collaboration with schools, libraries, and community partners.
- Measure impact through surveys and data collection.

#### January Milestones

**Family and Community Engagement Dashboard:** We launched the pilot phase of our *Family and Community Engagement Measuring Tool* in 10 schools. This innovative system tracks engagement through both quantitative (attendance and participation) and qualitative (parent and community feedback) data, offering valuable insights to enhance outreach and support.

**Cross Keys Lunar New Year Festival:** In response to student requests, we partnered with Cross Keys HS to plan and implement the district’s first *Lunar New Year Festival*. This overwhelmingly successful event provided Asian students with a platform to celebrate and share their cultures. Due to its enthusiastic reception, this festival will now be an annual celebration of diversity in DCSD, featuring student and community performances, cultural activities, and traditional Asian cuisine.

**New Digital Equity Partnership with Compudopt:** We are thrilled to announce our partnership with *Compudopt*, which will provide digital literacy training for students. Upon completing a five-week program, participants will receive a laptop and two years of free internet access. Additionally, 250 computers will be distributed to families participating in *Let’s Read and RISE DeKalb*, ensuring greater access to technology and learning resources. With these initiatives, we continue to strengthen family and community engagement, celebrate cultural diversity, and provide equitable access to education and technology—laying the foundation for long-term success for our students and families.

## Chief Human Resources Officer Tasha Mills-Davis

### Human Resources

The HR team is in the early stages of evaluating an HRMS system to enhance HR operations while integrating with MUNIS to ensure accurate and translatable data. We aim to improve system functionality while maintaining a seamless hiring process across the district. We will continue to assess solutions that align with the district's needs and provide updates as the process progresses.

### Deputy Chief Jason E. Kennedy

#### HR Core Team

The HR Core Team has officially launched and held its first meeting, marking the start of an important collaborative effort to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations. Key areas of focus have been identified, and work has commenced on the following initiatives:

- Establishment of team leaders
- Formation of sub-groups:
  - HR ticketing system
  - MUNIS SOP updates
  - ORHR process enhancements
  - IBEX monitoring
  - Internal MUNIS training
  - DCSD: HR website updates

### Director Tracy Harris

#### Talent Acquisition

We are excited to announce the launch of the **DCSD Transfer Process**, designed to provide certified and classified employees with the opportunity to explore new positions within our district. This initiative supports professional growth and allows our talented staff to find roles that align with their skills and aspirations. The district will sponsor the Spring Job Fair at Martin Luther King, Jr. High School on Saturday, March 29. Finally, the opening of the HR Call Center was a huge success. During the center's first week in operation, the team answered over 500 stakeholder calls.

## Director Carina Harrigan

### IGNITE

The IGNITE team is developing a new pipeline to the classroom by engaging high school students who aspire to become educators. Identified students will be offered an early contract and participate in a weeklong professional development session each summer with a stipend. Upon graduation and certification, they will secure a teaching position in their respective content area, strengthening our long-term talent strategy.

## Director Chuck Nwagwu

### Total Rewards

We have begun planning this year's retirement celebration. The event is scheduled for June 4 at the Georgia Tech Conference Center. We have some recommendations to move the celebration to May, while the school year is still in session, to encourage greater participation from retirees who may be less inclined to return after the school year ends. We will continue evaluating this suggestion and will provide updates as planning progresses.

## Director Janitrea R. Sebree-Kelly

### Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS)

The HRIS team is actively preparing for the rollout of the Gallup Survey in March. As part of this effort, we are developing a comprehensive communication plan to ensure all divisions are informed of key milestones, including the survey timeline and the anticipated availability of results. Our goal is to promote transparency and engagement across the district, ensuring that stakeholders understand the purpose of the survey and how the insights will be utilized to support continuous improvement.

## Performance Evaluation Coordinator Kismet Sims

### Evaluations Team

The Evaluations Team is preparing for another TKES/LKES training to support the increasing number of newly appointed interim principals. Additionally, we are developing our PL calendar for the winter and spring. We focus on helping teachers better understand their evaluation processes while addressing common questions and concerns.

For our leaders, we continue to emphasize the importance of effective commentary as we see opportunities for growth in this area across the district. Strengthening this practice will enhance feedback quality and support professional development at all levels.

### **Senior Investigator Jamel Crawford**

#### **Employee Relations Team**

The Employee Relations Team is working to review and update our progressive discipline policy. As part of our commitment to fostering a positive and supportive work environment, we thoroughly evaluate the existing policy to ensure it remains aligned with both best practices and the needs of the DeKalb County School District.