

Dunwoody Townhall Q & A's - Part 2

1. Considering the vast teacher shortage, how is DeKalb County, Dunwoody cluster monitoring, assessing, and ensuring that the children are receiving the best instruction possible. If not, how is that teacher or their performance being improved?

Principals are doing learning walks on a regular basis. They then provide feedback and hold coaching sessions for the teachers based on the data.

2. What do you think attributes to the reason for the decline in school ratings? Other schools, i.e. Buford Middles & Trion Middle continue to have a 10/10 rating.

Without specific information on the rating scale being referenced and schools in question, I will respond with assumptions. Great Schools (which you may be referencing) is a popular rating system that bases their calculation on four ratings, each of which is designed to show different facets of school success: the Student Progress Rating or Academic Progress Rating, College Readiness Rating, Equity Rating, and Test Score Rating. The ratings for each school vary based on data availability or relevance to a school level (for example, high schools have a College Readiness Rating, but elementary schools do not). If ratings according to Great Schools have declined in any of the above areas, the site may provide a rationale.

3. The current strategic plan says that the purpose of the class size waiver is to support “creative programming” such as lecture halls, etc. This is now what is actually happening. Is the new strategic plan an opportunity to drop that waiver?

Districts have flexibility in how they implement Strategic Waiver School System (SWSS) waivers but the waiver or variance of at least one of the following four areas are required of SWSS districts—class size requirements, expenditure controls, certification requirements, and salary schedule requirements. Click here to access Section 6 of State Board Rule 160-5-1-.33 on SWSS. The District's current Strategic Waiver School System contract ends June 30, 2024 and includes the waiver of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-182 (Program weights to reflect funds for payment of salaries and benefits be; maximum class size; reporting requirements; application to specific school years). Waivers may be added or removed from the SWSS contract at renewal. Further, the contract may be amended mid-term upon approval by the DeKalb Board of Education and State Board of Education. As second semester begins, the FY25 budget development process continues. An important component of the process is the development of the annual Resource Allocation Methodology Plan referred to as the RAMP. The RAMP is a plan that specifically outlines how the school district allocates personnel and resources. The District is also gathering feedback from stakeholders to develop the FY25 Resource RAMP. The new proposal will provide more flexibility to principals and building leaders in how they use allotments.

4. Over half of the students are projected to score below proficient on the Milestones in both math and reading. What specifically is being done about that? How are teachers truly being supported? We know that smaller class sizes are better for everyone, but especially for lower-level students. Has any effort been made to lower class sizes?

Literacy Instruction

The DeKalb County School District is focused on building teacher capacity to provide strong, aligned reading instruction at the elementary level for kindergarten through grade 3. LETRS supports the District's instructional framework for deep teaching and learning and provides the fundamentals of reading instruction – phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, and language. The professional learning also supports the Georgia Early Literacy Act (HB538) which requires districts to require all public-school kindergarten through third grade teachers in Georgia to complete training in the science of reading, structured literacy, and foundational literacy skills.

Knowledge Building for Leaders

DCSD is participating in the Knowledge Building for Leaders Cohort facilitated by the Rollins Center | Cox Campus to meet the expectations of HB538 - Georgia Early Literacy Act. Our goal is to ensure building leaders are equipped with the knowledge to lead the change required for rigorous aligned instruction for structured literacy.

Numeracy

With the implementation of the new K-12 mathematics standards, teachers are receiving unit by unit trainings to unpack the standards, plan lessons, identify the learning targets and success criteria, and do the math prior to teaching.

Class Sizes: As second semester begins, the FY25 budget development process continues. An important component of the process is the development of the annual Resource Allocation Methodology Plan referred to as the RAMP. The RAMP is a plan that specifically outlines how the school district allocates personnel and resources. The District is also gathering feedback from stakeholders to develop the FY25 Resource RAMP. The new proposal will provide more flexibility to principals and building leaders in how they use allotments.

5. We've heard rumors about competitive sports coming to K-5. Please elaborate. How is it being funded? How does it align to the district's mission statement?

At DeKalb County School District, we firmly believe that learning environments that support student success and promote equity are essential for the holistic development of our students. As part of our commitment to providing a well-rounded education, we recognize the value of exposing our elementary students to organized sports. Competitive sports not only provide a platform for students to engage in physical activity but also offer invaluable opportunities to learn valuable life lessons on the playing field. The introduction of competitive sports in our K-5 program is a significant step towards fostering a culture of sportsmanship, teamwork, and personal growth among our students. Through participation in organized sports, students develop essential skills such as discipline, resilience, and effective communication, which are transferable to various aspects of their lives. In

terms of funding, the DeKalb County School District has allocated resources to ensure the successful implementation of the K-5 competitive sports program. We recognize the importance of providing equitable opportunities for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds. Therefore, funding has been allocated to cover the necessary equipment, coaching staff, and facilities required to support the program.

This initiative aligns seamlessly with our district's mission statement, which emphasizes the provision of a high-quality education that prepares students for lifelong success. By introducing competitive sports at the elementary level, we are creating an inclusive and supportive environment that nurtures the physical, social, and emotional well-being of our students. This aligns with our broader goal of promoting student success and fostering a sense of belonging within our school community.

Furthermore, the introduction of competitive sports in our K-5 program is a testament to our commitment to equity and access. We firmly believe that every student should have equal opportunities to explore their interests and talents, regardless of their age or grade level. By offering organized sports at the elementary level, we are ensuring that all students have the chance to discover and develop their athletic abilities, regardless of their background or previous experience.

6. Are you aware of the large mismatch between seats available throughout the district and enrollment? We have over-crowding here, but under enrollment in many schools. Are you working to match enrollment with open seats? Are you contemplating redistricting to fix the mismatch?

A more suitable reply will be provided at a later date, especially as we approach discussions related to the Comprehensive Master Plan and the process of re-districting.

7. Are you considering redistricting elementary schools in the district to better use capacity?

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8. In the theme of disrupting for excellence, are we soliciting feedback directly from teachers? How are principals/leadership held accountable in growing, listening and better supporting our teachers?

Teachers can give feedback through surveys, and we solicit their voices on school and district committees. We have the principal's communication committee and the new role of the new Executive Administrators who work closely with principals for accountability.

9. Considering that special education has LTSEs, has there been any consideration of having designated staff over 504s or ESOL documentation and coordination to alleviate the responsibilities from counselors or in-class teachers to allow them more time serving the students?

During the FY25 budget cycle, the needs of schools are considered as allocations and new positions are determined for the year. The duties and responsibilities of the local school selected 504 chairpersons are currently under review.

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10. For new teachers having school age children, how are leaders held accountable on holding principals accountable for not being responsive to parents and the safety of their children, who can we turn to for help?

The families can contact the district Area Superintendent and Culture and Climate Coordinator. The Culture and Climate Coordinator will then work with the principal.