



BOARD OF EDUCATION 2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Board Agenda – October 1, 2025

LEGISLATIVE SESSION 2026: PRIORITIES

The following Legislative Priorities are provided by the Board of Public Education as key focus areas for Chatham County Delegation during the 2026 Legislative Session.

STUDENT SUCCESS: Start Strong, Stay Strong

We urge legislators to provide increased appropriations for support of Pre-K programs to set students up for educational success. For continued academic and personal achievement, we urge legislators to support funding allocations to ensure the social and emotional well-being of ALL students.

- Georgia school districts must receive improved allocations to support quality offerings for Pre-K students. We urge legislators to provide additional **funding for Pre-K teachers** and resist any proposal that would decrease available Pre-K slots.
 - **Annually, SCCPSS contributes funds from the general fund for pre- kindergarten, primarily to address pay disparities for Pre-K teacher salaries.** State funding allocations are lower for Pre-K teachers than for other teachers.
 - **Kindergarten students who attended SCCPSS Pre-K outperform** those who did not attend SCCPSS Pre-K as measured by early childhood learning domains in the GKIDS Readiness Check (Foundations of School Success, English Language Arts, and Math).
- We urge legislators to provide **increased funding allocations for School Social Workers positions in our District.** School Social Workers are called on to help address truancy, social issues, and the effects of emotional or traumatic events such as community crime or substance abuse influences.
 - **SCCPSS has 25.5 social worker positions for a student population of 35,000** at a ratio of one School Social worker to every 1,394 students. The School Social Worker Association of America recommends a ratio of one school social worker to every 250 students depending on the needs of the student population.
 - **The State funds just 14 social workers** for the 35,000+ students in SCCPSS.

STUDENTS IN SCHOOL: Age Requirements

By current law, children are required to attend school between the ages of six (6) and sixteen (16). We urge legislators to modify age requirements to require school enrollment before first grade and to keep students in school through their 17th birthday.

- Countless studies demonstrate the benefits of enrolling children in an educational environment prior to age 6. The Board supports compulsory enrollment in educational programs beginning with persons at age five years to effectively create a mandatory kindergarten requirement. The rapid brain development in our youngest learners presents **the best opportunity for building a strong educational foundation.**
- Students are **better prepared for post-secondary endeavors** if they do not leave school at a

young age. Changing mandatory requirements to include attendance through their seventeenth birthday can increase their likelihood of graduation for students.

RESOURCES: Innovative Funding, Innovative Staffing

We urge the General Assembly to continue the work of the Senate Study Committee to Review Educational Funding Mechanisms (the Quality Basic Education (QBE) Funding Formula) and expand the use of ESPLOST to provide flexibility and address changing market conditions.

- The **existing QBE formula was established in 1985** and does not properly account for current cost realities, changing district needs, or evolution in educational practices and programs.
 - Modernize the QBE Formula
 - Address disparities in the local .5 mil share
 - QBE formula funds cover a fraction of personnel costs. SCCPSS funds over 40% of our teachers, campus police, nurses, and other district personnel with local funds.
- **Support Literacy** by investing in teacher training.
 - There is no funding for state-required changes to meet changing educational needs, such as the state-mandated Science of Reading. **SCCPSS has contributed \$2.7 million in general fund expenditures for teacher training (LETRS) as required for implementing the Science of Reading.**
- Consider constitutional or legislative amendments for **expanded flexibility for the use of Educational Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (ESPLOST) revenue** to include instructional programming and materials. Flexibility is needed to allow modifications to approved referendums. Changing market conditions will often influence enrollment projections and population shifts, which impact school facility needs and priorities.
- **Support Local Control and Workforce Needs** for Districts who hire retired teachers.
 - Provide legislative that lifts restrictions set forth under HB 385 (effective July 2022) that defines eligibility as “a teaching position in PK-12 and in a high needs area as defined by the relevant RESA.”
 - Provide a revision of Georgia code that establishes how the Teachers Retirement System defines eligibility for hiring retired teachers by eliminating the existing restriction that determines areas of needs as defined by the relevant RESA, and **allow local Districts to define the specific areas of need** based on their local market conditions.

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