

[That's all folks...](#)

Today, February 10, 2009, 3 hours ago | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)



I started this blog because I used to post a lot at GoDeKalb and it got to the point that every thread became an education issue. This is because education is at the core of every issue. Without a proper education - or more importantly, a proper ability to debate and to see differing perspectives - then we are nothing more than an ignorant crowd. We become lemmings following each other off the cliff of the next new trend, new thought, new iPod or new math. Anyway, bloggers at GoDeKalb teased those of us who brought education issues to the fore and asked us to move to our own blog. One of them even told me how to start a blog and so I did. Since then, we have brought many issues to debate and many discoveries have been made and teams of caring parents have been formed. For that, I'm proud and happy.

However, I didn't expect the level of racial issues to bubble to the surface as they have. It seems that this county, in my opinion, is a racial battleground first and foremost, and that educating our children has become a years long game of bussing, M to M's, Magnets, AYP transfers, Administrative Transfers, Choice, and general moving of students from building to building, without much attention or investigation as to whether or not this movement is making a difference in the education of these nearly 100,000 children in our care.

I have (boldly) pointed out the posturing and racial divide and history between our new Board members as well as brought out the facts regarding the imbalance of SPLOST spending according to who plays politics the best with our superintendent. And oddly, now, as always happens, it has become time to "shoot the messenger". I have been told that Board members are saying that they know who I am and that I am "*bi-polar*" (which, by the way, is disrespectful to the many students and parents who actually battle that very real disease - to throw that term around as if it's simply a demeaning put-down.) And I have become the receiver of comments inferring that I am somehow a racist, for pointing out the racial imbalances I see. ("*There is just something tacky and ugly and low class about playing the "race card" - from both angles.*")

As many of you know, I am not a Southerner. Which is to say, I don't understand and certainly don't have the baggage of the racial southern experience. I just see what I see in it's current form and call attention to it. Today - now - with our current available tax dollars.

All of that said, I have decided - it just ain't worth the fight. I'm going to shut down this blog and go back to my basically wonderful life! I am happily *without* children in DeKalb County schools and have decided it's just not my battle to fight anymore. I need to be grateful for what we do have as a family as well as the excellent future my children are prepared for - due to basically good parenting, a fine

community and a lot of faith in my children for simply being the good people they are.

I don't want to fight about DeKalb schools until I fall into a trap of becoming nothing more than an argument - a symbol of rebellion and a radical proponent of equal spending. That's really not who I am, nor is it the kind of karma I care to bring to my life anymore. I wish you all the best - and I hope you continue fighting for your schools and your children. I wish the new Board well too - they have a very tough job ahead. I've just decided that it's time for me to move on and enjoy the pleasures of my life beyond DeKalb County Public Schools. It's been a fun ride here at DCSW. I've enjoyed our conversations and I truly hope that somehow, some positive differences were made by our having shared this bit of cyber-space for one brief, shining moment in time.

- "Cere"

"I went to a meeting and I heard..."

Today, February 10, 2009, 12 hours ago | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

I decided to start a post called, "**I went to a meeting and I heard...**", since we have lots of bloggers who go to lots of meetings and come back with lots of interesting info to share. When you do that - post it here!!

Also included in this post are my notes from the DeKalb School Board Meeting, January 9, 2009.

Highlights -- Block scheduling, budget cuts, Arabia HS and a proposed Military Academy.

DeKalb County Schools System as Mr. Potato Head?

Yesterday, February 09, 2009, 4:44:16 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

Posted originally by kim gokce 18 hours ago at [Community Radar](#)

Parents in DeKalb County School System (DCSS) have been carrying on a conversation about things DCSS over at the excellent blog, DeKalb County School Watch. In one of the threads, we began discussing the published salary reports for DCSS that are available at the State of Georgia "Transparency in Government" web site.

A lot of parents were surprised and outraged to see many hundreds of employees earning north of \$100k. My cursory look at this led me to believe that salaries for individual titles are in line with those paid in Fulton County, for example. So, the question for me is not how much

money one person makes but rather are the two systems relatively balanced in terms of Central Office vs. School resource \$\$\$.



Today, I sat down with Ella Smith to impose on her for her knowledge of DeKalb and Fulton job titles. We reviewed each of the over 300 titles (DeKalb accounted for 181 of these). After classifying each title as a title directly related to either an "in school" resource or to central services/admin resource, I ran the percentage of "Central Office Salary" / "Total Salary" for both DCSS and Fulton County School System (FCSS).

We included things like Information Services and Transportation and Maintenance personnel (not school custodians) in the "Central Office" figures. Before sharing the numbers, I want to be clear that this a "best effort" and in no way should be interpreted as a necessarily 100% accurate picture. The source data itself is questionable.

For example, Ella found 1 discrepancy in the Fulton file which incorrectly reported a principal as a substitute teacher with a salary \$80k below the range it should have been. Also, I noticed in both files (but particularly the Fulton file) many cases of what look to be potentially corrupt data values (truncated or duplicate titles, blank salaries, etc.) Government-provided bad data? Never!

Ok. With all the disclaimers and snarks out of the way, here is what I found in the available data.

DCSS Total Salaries 2008: \$682,709,025.22
DCSS Admin/"Central Office" Salaries 2008:
\$170,590,619.93
Ratio 2008: 24.987%

FCSS Total Salaries 2008 \$552,969,891.22
FCSS Admin/"Central Office" Salaries 2008:
\$56,194,268.83
Ratio 2008: 10.162%

DeKalb is nearly 2.5 times more "top-heavy" than Fulton? What?! I nearly fainted.

Please, someone tell me these data files are not to be trusted - that this is an absurd deviation. I was so floored by these numbers I repeated my own quality checks against my processing of the data.

I checked total salaries in the source files and in my transformation of this data and they match. I spot checked titles between the provided data and my data and they match. So, if there is an error, it is farther up-stream in the State of Georgia or County reporting process that created these data files. It is also possible that there are some other assumptions hidden in the source data of which I am ignorant (I'm generous).

Putting aside all these questions for the moment ... HOLY MR. POTATO-HEAD DCSS! I do not know what else to say ... no wonder you can't seem to get the system up and running again - your head is so big your chin is dragging on the ground!

If anything close to these numbers hold up, we could postulate that DCSS ran with the "efficiency" of

Fulton County in terms of central office salary costs versus in-school salary costs ... there's nearly \$100 million in the difference. Budget short-fall? What budget short-fall? Don't cut our schools when there is this apparent outrage in salary costs at the center of it all.

Many, many thanks to Kim Gokce and Ella Smith for compiling this data into a coherent article and especially to Kim who wrote this article and even provided the graphic. Many thanks also to all of the rest of the bloggers here at DCSW who downloaded the Excel file from the State and worked so hard to crunch these numbers - this was definitely a team effort. Mostly - thanks to "themommy" who came up with our group project idea in the first place!

To read the entire link with the revealing conversation go [here](#).

To download the salaries and travel reimbursement files from the State go [here](#).

[Open Post For The Week of Feb 8, 2009](#)

Sunday, February 08, 2009, 11:56:54 AM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

Aside from reporting what you hear at meetings in the thread below, post your random thoughts, information and ideas on this thread.

Food for thought begins with [today's AJC article](#) describing a recent study by the State focusing on the discrepancy between the levels of student failure on the EOCT's and the levels of passing those same students (with an "A"). You can use the pull-down menu in the article to check your school and individual test scores vs passing grades, but it's only accessible one test at a time. The paper published a chart which showed at a glance that DeKalb is a bit more consistent with the Biology and English tests, however, as a system 38.2% of students given an "A", had failed the EOCT in Geometry.

In English, the worst offenders were Clarkston and Cross Keys; in Biology, of Stone Mountain and Towers "A" students, over 20% failed the EOCT, but in Geometry, at Towers, McNair, MLK, Columbia and Cedar Grove, half the students receiving "A's" also failed the EOCT. DeKalb School of the Arts, Lakeside and Chamblee had the lowest levels (near 0%) of giving students who failed the EOCT, and "A". Dunwoody and Druid Hills were also very consistent, except in Geometry. Overall though, DeKalb had far and away more schools giving "A's" to students who failed the EOCT. Gwinnett, by contrast, rarely gave an "A" to a student who failed the EOCT.

The quote in the article that I most identified with was from Sheryl Gowen, an education policy professor at Georgia State University, who said, *"With education spending tight, it's better to catch up students in high school than leave them to flail in college..."*

"You don't want to spend more resources at the higher level remediating students who could have been helped at the K-12 level," Gowen said.

The AJC article goes on to tell us, "Last year, one in 10 college freshmen with a HOPE scholarship

needed remedial help. In 2006-07, only about one in four students in the Georgia University System held on to their HOPE for the equivalent of three years of full-time study."

QUESTION: Has the Hope Scholarship encouraged high school teachers and administrators to "dumb down" curriculum and grading to ensure that students receive the money for college? Further, has it created an uneven delivery of high school education across the state? Or worse, has HOPE sent some students on to college when others who perhaps may actually have been more college-ready were turned down because they didn't attend a school that would inflate their grades?

[Clayton mom gets felony conviction for putting child in Henry school](#)

Saturday, February 07, 2009, 7:41:18 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

By JOHN HOLLIS, MEGAN MATTEUCCI

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Saturday, February 07, 2009

A Clayton County woman says she was only trying to do right by her teenage son when they moved into her sister's home and enrolled him in the Henry County school system.

But that enrollment — at a time when area schools are loath to take nonresidents — was a costly move.

A Henry County Superior Court jury found both Tanja Revette Hale of Rex and her brother-in-law, James Lewis of McDonough, guilty of one count each of "making a false writing" this week in what is believed to be the first such school enrollment case to go to a jury trial in Henry County.

The case is notable in that the penalty could set a precedent for others convicted of the same offense, especially as students flee neighboring Clayton County's loss of school accreditation.

Hale is adamant she did nothing wrong.

"I've never heard of a parent going to jail for taking care of their kids," said Hale, a bartender and single mother of six children. "I've heard of parents going to jail for not taking care of their kids. But taking care of their kids? That's crazy."

As first-time felons, Hale and Lewis were placed on five years' probation, and each was ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine. In addition, they must complete 100 hours of community service and repay the Henry County school system nearly \$1,200 in tuition costs from the first half of her son's year at Louella High School.

Hale, 44, enrolled her son after completing an affidavit in December 2007 saying the two lived in McDonough with Lewis, a retired Atlanta police officer, and her sister, who is an attorney. Her sister,

Clayton trial attorney Loletha Hale, said the family would file a motion for a new trial.

Hale said she moved because she had become increasingly worried about the company her son was keeping, not because of any concerns over Clayton's accreditation.

To legally enroll, Hale's 18-year-old son, Theodore Belcher, had to be living in the county with a legal guardian or parent. Hale contends she lived in the Lewis home but never had time to fill out mail-forwarding forms to confirm her new address. Loletha Hale backed up her sister's contention that the two lived with her.

Tanja Hale's son — her youngest child — now lives with her in Rex and is a senior at Forest Park High School.

Henry County School Board Chairman Ray Hudalla defended the prosecution.

"A lot of this was driven by the community," he said. "The community demanded we be more accountable for educating students who actually live here rather than students who live someplace else.

"This isn't a matter of trying to punish students. This is about taking care of Henry County citizens," Hudalla said.

Confident they would be exonerated, Hale and Lewis had rejected an earlier deal that would have avoided a trial. The two didn't retain a lawyer and represented themselves in court.

Lewis, 58, did not return calls seeking comment.

Under Georgia law, making a false writing is punishable by a maximum sentence of five years in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine.

"When you make a false statement, that's a felony," said Tommy Floyd, the district attorney for the Flint Judicial Circuit.

This isn't Hale's first brush with the law. In 1999, she pleaded guilty and received probation after being arrested for a misdemeanor assault on Linda Tanner, who was the principal at Jonesboro High School at the time. Hale was also convicted of obstruction after struggling with a police officer during the arrest.

Clayton schools spokesman Charles White said he was unaware of the case involving Hale and Lewis and declined comment.

The district has lost about 3,500 students since losing accreditation, Superintendent John Thompson said last week.

With the anticipated exodus from Clayton, officials from nearby counties had expected to see a spike in illegally enrolled students.

Fulton, Fayette and Douglas have all discovered students illegally enrolled, with most being removed

without criminal penalty. **DeKalb County schools spokesman Dale Davis said he knew of no such cases.**

In Fayette and Henry, law enforcement authorities confirm each residency affidavit.

Of the 84 students withdrawn from Fayette after being found to be improperly registered, just one case has been submitted for prosecution. Fayette has already this year received \$2,200 in tuition restitution from a case prosecuted two years ago, said Melinda Berry-Dreisbach, a spokeswoman for Fayette County schools.

Henry County currently lists nearly 40,000 students, with 7,400 of those being served in portable classrooms.

So -- to recap -- 3,500 students have left Clayton. Dale Davis knows of no one who has enrolled illegally in DeKalb. Bloggers -- how about that? Shall we inform Dale Davis -- it seems he's living on that river in Egypt.

[Second-grader hit, killed in DeKalb school crosswalk](#)

Wednesday, February 04, 2009, 6:20:29 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

By DAVID SIMPSON, CHRISTIAN BOONE

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Monday, February 02, 2009

Cameron Dunmore headed off to school early Monday to start his day in the gifted program at Princeton Elementary School in south DeKalb County.

His older sister had seen the 7-year-old second-grader to the corner in front of the school on South DeShon Road. That's when it happened — a parent's worst nightmare.

Police say as Cameron crossed the street at the school crosswalk at 7:30 a.m., he was struck by a sport utility vehicle that did not stop for the crosswalk.

A crossing guard was on duty and had carried a stop sign into the street, and other vehicles had stopped, police spokeswoman Mekka Parish said.

“But for reasons unknown, the SUV driver did not stop,” Parish said.

Cameron was pronounced dead on the way to a hospital. The driver, Shirley Ogilvie, 40, was taken to a hospital after appearing distraught over the accident. Parish said Ogilvie would be charged with vehicular homicide.

The boy's grandmother, Linda Smith, said there was a traffic light in front of the school, south of Stone Mountain, when it opened in August 2007, but the light was removed shortly thereafter. She said her grandson would still be alive if the light had not been removed.

"It's such a busy street," she said. "We told them they need it, but they said we didn't.

"They're going to put a light there now," she said. "I know it."

She doesn't blame the driver for her grandson's death.

"I know that lady wasn't meaning to do it," Smith said. "It's a moment you can't get back."

Cameron walked a block and a half to school each day. His older sister had walked with him to the corner near where the accident occurred, Smith said.

"She had turned her back just before he was hit," Smith said. "When she heard about what happened, she knew it was Cameron because he had just left her."

Neighbors say they urged DeKalb County officials to put a traffic light at the school crosswalk. Resident Regina Hill said neighbors got together and signed a letter appealing for a traffic light at the intersection. Hill said she personally delivered the letter to the county government headquarters building in Decatur.

Princeton Elementary Principal Juanita B. Letcher said through a spokesman that a parent spoke with her last school year about safety concerns at the intersection, and that Letcher herself also had concerns "about traffic in the area," said DeKalb schools spokesman Dale Davis.

Letcher said she contacted county officials about her concerns. She said county personnel did an assessment — although no traffic light was installed.

County officials did not respond to questions Monday about whether they received complaints about the intersection or had plans to install a traffic light there. County spokeswoman Kristie Swink issued a statement from Chief Executive Officer Burrell Ellis.

"As a father, I am particularly pained by this tragedy," Ellis said. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the Dunmore family."

When school ended Monday afternoon, a DeKalb County police officer with a radar gun was just north of the school stopping cars for speeding.

Road signs warn drivers they are approaching the school crosswalk. Ogilvie's car was southbound. Drivers coming from the north pass a flashing school zone sign on a roadside post and a sign warning, "Stop for pedestrians in crosswalk" before traveling over a small hill just north of the school.

Within yards of the crosswalk, two more signs show pedestrian icons, one with an arrow pointing to the crosswalk.

Efrain Cordova Jr., who lives next door to the school, said the hill is a problem for inattentive drivers.

“Right here, there’s a lot of people who don’t obey the speeding limit,” he said, motioning to the downhill grade. “When you come over that hill, it’s very hard to see.”

He said a neighbor was struck by a car in his front yard as he cut the grass, and Cordova saw another vehicle jump the curb on the opposite side of the street and careen into a yard.

Parish said DeKalb had not had a school crosswalk fatality until Cameron’s death Monday.

Cameron’s grandmother described the boy, who was in the gifted program at Princeton Elementary, as inquisitive and kind-hearted.

“He was always very calming,” Smith said. “He always had something good to say.”

He most enjoyed going to Barnes & Noble with his mother, who also lives with Smith.

“She’d have her coffee and he’d start reading,” she said. “He loved to read.”

[Brainstorming - Again \(Ouch!\)](#)

Monday, February 02, 2009, 6:24:11 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

So our faithful blogger, pscexb tells me we should begin a new thread -- so here 'tis psc. I'll also include your [link](#) to the latest data on school population. Good info there - info that helps us chew on issues more intelligently. I encourage everyone who participates in discussions here to continue to dialogue with your Board rep - nicely please. I know we shred them here on occasion - but they are doing a basically thankless job for a pittance.

That said - I have learned some lately about budget cuts in Fulton County from a cousin who teaches there. They seem to have a pretty good grasp on where they need to cut and how much. And impressively, they are communicating it to their entire faculty & staff -- as in "brace yourselves". For instance, they are trying to reduce spending from 86 percent of the budget on personnel - DeKalb's GOAL is to reduce from 91 or so to 89! Fulton School Board has already voted, for example, to reduce the workday calendar of school counselors, psychologists, social workers and graduation coaches to the 190 days that are funded by the state.

They have made cuts such as discontinuing most day field trips, delaying some textbook adoptions and eliminating free summer school options except for those in grades 3, 5 and 8 requiring CRCT retest instruction. At the central office level, they have frozen more than 40 vacancies, eliminated at least 11 positions and have reduced each department’s budget by more than 12 percent. Fulton already runs a leaner central office than many other metro school systems, and they are "tightening our belts more than ever so that schools will not feel the pinch quite as deeply."

Fulton is raising 2009-10 class sizes – from 1:19 in kindergarten to 1:20, from 1:20 in grades 1-3 to 1:21; and from 1:27 in grades 4-8 to 1:28. In high school, class sizes will increase from 1:27 to 1:29. The increase in class size, coupled with a decrease in projected student enrollment, will reduce the need to fund new teaching positions in 2009-10. This will result in a surplus of some positions.

As another difficult decision, the system is not offering current part-time, school-based employees a job assignment next year until all surplussed full-time staff have been placed. Teachers employed by Fulton through the VIF and Global Resources programs, as well as those employed through the Teach for America program who have completed their second year, will not be renewed or offered contracts for 2009-10 so that surplussed full-time staff can be placed in available teaching positions. Staff who have been identified as surplus will be grouped by job category (e.g. general education, ESOL, special education, TAG, media services, etc.) and sorted by seniority. Those who have the most seniority will be placed at the top of the list, and therefore, will be the first assigned to a school requiring a position of their job category.

Tough! These are some gutsy cuts. Has anyone heard where DeKalb has decided to cut? I know many things have been discussed. I was glad to hear the Special Olympics didn't get cut after all. But I think driver's ed and some Resource Officers and K-9's did.

[Mark Your Calendars](#)

Monday, February 02, 2009, 12:15:13 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

There are several meetings and events coming up that you can plan to attend to gather information and to have your voice heard. This is a big way to stay active and involved in DeKalb County Schools. Do not just attend meetings in your area, branch out and visit and chat with others.

Tuesday, February 3 - from 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm - Teacher Career Fair at Arabia High School.

Wednesday, February 4 - at 8:45 am - Plan to attend the first of two upcoming meetings at [Cross Keys High School](#) to talk about plans to consolidate with HSTN.

Wednesday, February 4 - at 6:30 pm - Plan to attend a community meeting at [Lithonia High School](#) regarding attendance lines for the new Arabia High School.

Thursday, February 5 - at 8:00 am - Plan to attend Dr. Lewis' annual presentation, "The State of DeKalb County Schools" at Mercer University.

Thursday, February 5 - at 6:30 pm - A community meeting at [Martin Luther King \(MLK\) High School](#) regarding attendance lines for the new Arabia High School, scheduled to open in August.

Monday, February 9 - at 6:00 pm - The Board of Education's Work Session/Business Meeting: District Office Board Room 3770 North Decatur Road, Decatur, GA 30032

Tuesday, February 10 - at 7:00 pm - Mrs. Moton will give the State of Lakeside Address along with an update from the SPLOST III Work Group on the status of our campus improvement project which will include construction of a new auditorium and career tech classrooms.

Wednesday, February 11 - at 6:00 pm - The second of two upcoming meetings at [Cross Keys High School](#) to talk about plans to consolidate with HSTN.

Wednesday, February 18 - at 8:45 am - [Emory Lavista Parent Council](#) Meeting at Sagamore Hills Elementary.

Monday, March 2 - at 6:00 pm - The Board of Education's Work Session: Druid Hills High School, 1798 Haygood Drive, NE, Atlanta

If you have different or more information regarding these meetings, please post a comment below.

[Hot Off the Presses!](#)

Thursday, January 29, 2009, 12:08:41 AM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)
DCSS is scheduled to receive \$36,148,500 for construction and renovation from the economic stimulus plan that was passed Wednesday night. DCSS is scheduled to receive \$95,613,700 over two years for programs including Title 1 and Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). (Note the construction money is only for year one).

You know the question. What would you build/renovate?

To see other counties in GA, [here](#).

Many thanks to pscexb for this posting!

[Did You Know?](#)

Monday, January 26, 2009, 12:06:25 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)
Something mind-boggling to think about... if you have 5 minutes watch this video and then ask yourself, "Are we preparing our children for the future?"

[Let's REALLY Talk SPLOST](#)



This is getting out of hand. The blatant over-spending in the South end (and I will go out on a limb here and say majority black schools) is making me ill. For instance, how on earth, did Towers High School hopscotch over Lakeside, Dunwoody, Chamblee and Cross

Keys?

The first photo on the left is construction going on at Towers HS. The other three photos are inside Lakeside - wonderful restrooms, crumbling locker room (where students deposit their gum) and crumbling stairs.

This is what is published as planned Career Tech/Classroom/Fine Arts Additions in the CIP dated November 15, 2006:

Chamblee High School \$11,694,682 (Nothin' planned yet)

Clarkston High School \$11,694,682 (Plus an additional \$4 million for improvements - in the works - it's Zepora's school)

Druid Hills High School \$11,694,682 (They are in the middle of a \$10 million renovation - with ADA compliance - no expansion in capacity though)

Dunwoody High School \$11,694,682 (Nada - nothin' going on here)

Lakeside High School \$11,694,682 (Zip so far - the Board approved sending out for RFPs in November - any come in yet?)

Redan High School \$4,819,395 (Their work has been completed - again - one of Zepora's schools)

This is what is published as work for Towers (one of Zepora's schools) in the SPLOST 3 Capital Improvements Plan (CIP).

Facility Name: Towers High - Project Scope

- 1 Addition - Art Construct a new art studio suite 3,000.00 Square Foot - \$375,000.00
 - 2 Addition - Classrooms Additional classrooms (8) 12,000.00 Square Foot - \$1,500,000.00
 - 3 Addition - Technology Technology addition 1,200.00 Square Foot - \$150,000.00
 - 4 General - ADA Requirements Provide access to track and field area. - \$75,000.00
 - 5 Sitework - Asphalt Paving New bus turn around - \$250,000.00
 - 6 Sitework - Fencing Install fencing around the athletic fields - \$20,000.00
 - 7 Sitework - Irrigation Install a sprinkler system at the athletic fields-\$50,000.00
 - 8 Specialties - Lockers New lockers 1,400.00 Each \$100.00 - \$140,000.00
- Facility Subtotal: \$2,560,000.00**

However, as you can tell from the photo - Towers has a gorgeous new auditorium as well as some serious renovations and additions. Can somebody tell me what it takes to get things done? Can we trade our Board rep for Zepora?

[School board to hear public comments on budget](#)

Sunday, January 25, 2009, 1:03:45 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

By **KRISTINA TORRES**

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Friday, January 23, 2009

DeKalb County residents will have a chance Thursday to get in their two cents worth as school officials hold the first public input meeting on next year's budget.

The meeting (Thursday, January 29) starts at 6 p.m. at the system's central offices, 3770 North Decatur Rd. in unincorporated Decatur.

DeKalb schools Superintendent Crawford Lewis said last week that he planned to speed up planning for next school year because of continued funding cuts expected by the state.

He pegged February and March as key months, and indicated he wants to give both employees and the public "as much notice as possible" about what to expect. Staff members have already begun compiling a list of possibilities from which cuts or reductions can be made.

Any additional cuts would come on top of already approved cuts of more than \$20 million, including the layoffs of 127 employees by the end of June.

DeKalb — which started the year with a general fund budget of \$894.1 million — has since 2002 lost about \$100 million in state funds because of so-called "austerity reductions" by the state.

The cuts are expected to persist, if not deepen, during the recession. Just this school year, the system lost

\$10.5 million in a midyear state cut.

[Georgia Education Spending More than Doubles, State Graduation Rate Remains Among Nation's Lowest](#)

Thursday, January 22, 2009, 4:11:14 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration)

[Go to full article](#)

Check this out.

"The Center for an Educated Georgia released a new study today that finds graduation rates in our state are lower than they were a generation ago, despite massive increases in education spending.

During the past 25 years, public education spending in Georgia spiked 119 percent when measured on a per-student basis and adjusted for inflation (compared to 68.7 percent nationwide).

Despite the extraordinary increase in per-student spending, Georgia's graduation rate remains 49th in the nation, below where it was a generation ago. Although there has been an increase since 2001, Georgia's graduation rate dropped between 6 and 9 points between 1990 and 2005 - depending on the measurement.

"This new research is important, because it confirms what many suspect. There is no correlation between increasing education spending and improved student achievement," said Ben Scafidi, director of the Center for an Educated Georgia and director of the Education Policy Center at Georgia College and State University. "More money is not the key to improving education. It's time to focus our energy on finding new ideas that will result in Georgia students earning diplomas."

Here are some other key findings from the study:

Twenty-one states including seven in the Southeast have consistently higher graduation rates yet spend less per pupil than Georgia.

Class sizes have decreased 20.5% since the 1988-89 school year *from 18.5 pupils per teacher in 1988 to 14.7 pupils per teachers in 2005.*

Availability of technology in the classroom improved. *In 1996 there were 12.7 students per computer, while in 2007 there were 3 students per computer.*

General administration spending per student has increased 56.0% between 1996 and 2007. *This includes spending on positions such as superintendents, deputy superintendents, associate superintendents, assistant superintendents, and area superintendents.*

Georgia spends a higher percentage of personal income on education than the national average. *It jumped from 3.7 percent in 1990 to 4.7 percent in 2005. The national average was 4.1 percent in 1990 and 4.4 percent in 2005.*

Click [here](#) to read the press release and [here](#) to download a PDF of the new study.

[School Nurses proposed to be cut due to tough economic times.](#)

Wednesday, January 21, 2009, 12:05:52 AM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)



Gov. Sonny Perdue has the tough job of proposing a state budget in these rough economic times and the Joint Appropriations Committee will be meeting today to go over the Governors proposal which includes the elimination of school nurses.

With close to 1,000 kids in the new 4th and 5th grade elementary school; one of the biggest complaints I heard from the community on the construction of the school wasn't the red roof but rather the size and configuration of the health clinic. In the final design I believe several walls were moved and doors reconfigured in order to make the clinic hospitable and private for the little patients who would be visiting that room of the school, some on a regular basis.

Below is a letter I wanted to bring to your attention from my good friend Jay Spearman whose wife Paige serves our community children as the school nurse at Vanderlyn Elementary.

This is one cost savings measure that I believe will cut very deep, in many unintended ways.

Dear Parents and Friends:

As the parent of three school aged children, and the husband of the school nurse at Vanderlyn Elementary, I need to ask for your urgent help. As you may have heard, Governor Perdue has proposed to eliminate all state funding for professional school nurses in Georgia. In a nutshell, what this means is that RN's will no longer be there when your child is hurt or sick, assist in training staff and teachers, work daily with students suffering from diabetes, asthma, allergies, seizures, cancer, infectious illnesses and special needs, manage immunization records, perform vision and hearing screenings, conduct CPR classes, coordinate safety plans, perform emergency triage and much more. Why are school nurses important? The facts speak for themselves:

It is estimated that 15 million students annually visit and receive care from school based clinics for illnesses, medications and/or injuries.

1.5 million school-age children do not have health insurance and their first level of care when faced with a medical issue is the school clinic.

Approximately 30% of Georgia students have health conditions (i.e. asthma, diabetes, cancer, life-threatening allergies and seizure disorder).

As many as 5 million doses of prescription medications are given annually at schools. School nurses respond to medical emergencies, educate staff on school health issues and provide training on medical procedures.

School Nurses work in collaboration with community physicians and health organizations to ensure the health needs of students are met, which is of even greater importance due to the recently increased compliance requirements involving Georgia immunization laws.

Without School Nurses, parent volunteers would have to take shifts in the clinic. That is fine for band-aids, but as noted above, many of our children have needs, injuries and emergencies that surpass the abilities of a parent volunteer (or school secretary).

With all that being said, the most important reason to maintain school nurses is that they care about your child. School Nurses can make 3 to 4 times in the private sector what they are being paid by their school districts. However, they elect to be School Nurses because they love the kids and care about their well being.

Therefore, I employ and urge you as a Georgia citizen, physician, pediatrician, business leader, school administrator, community advocate, children's advocate, parent, student, school staff member or just supporter of school nurses to please contact the Governor and members of the Appropriations and Health Committees and offer your strong support by voicing disapproval of these funds being eliminated from the State budget.

There is a budget meeting scheduled on this issue today (Wednesday, 1/21/09), so time is very short. The following legislators need to hear from you ASAP:

School Superintendent Kathy Cox: 404-656-2800

Governor Sonny Perdue: 404-656-1776

Lt. Governor Cagle: 404-656-5030

Rep. Ben Harbin: 404-463-2247

Rep. Dubose Porter: 404-656-5058

Rep. Cooper: 404-656-5069

Rep. Jan Jones: 404-463-2247

Rep. Mark Burkhalter: 404-656-5072

Rep. Fran Millar: 404-656-5064

Rep. Ehrhart: 404-656-5141

Rep. Glenn Richardson: 404-656-5020

Sen. Jack Hill: 404-656-5038

Sen. Don Balfour: 404-656-0095

Sen. Tommie Williams: 404-656-0089

Sen. Renee Unterman: 404-463-1368

Sen. Dan Moody: 404-463-8055

Sen. John Bulloch: 404-656-0040

Sen. Jack Murphy: 404-656-7127

Sen. Horacena Tate: 404-463-8053

Sen. Eric Johnson: 404-656-5109

Sen. Robert Brown: 404-656-5035

Please make the phones ring.

Also, please e-mail these and your representatives. E-mail addresses can be found at: www.legis.state.ga.us. Please feel free to forward this e-mail.

Thanks for your assistance.

Jay Spearman

Thanks goes to City Councilman John Heneghan for alerting us to this important update -- visit his very informative [blog](#) about all of the happenings in Dunwoody.

[Ya wanna talk SPLOST?](#)

Tuesday, January 20, 2009, 2:56:56 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

It's complicated - it's complex - but it's getting stuff done!!!

We have made GREAT strides in building new schools, fixing old schools, building gymnasiums and auditoriums and all of the great facilities that expand and enhance the educational experience. Kudos to Pat Pope! She has done an amazing job of keeping this behemoth of a train on the tracks...and we've seen FAR more actual production completed under her leadership. I don't know how she manages to stay on top of it all -- we're talking about a half a **Billion** dollars worth of projects - big ones and small ones - along with the difficult task of reporting the progress as well as listening to the demands of the schools waiting in the wings for their share.

But - there is still more to do. For those interested, Pope publishes reports on a regular basis and you can see where we are regarding the progress as well as where we are planning to go with future projects. Download the CIP Report [here](#). Download the Construction Progress Report [here](#). The good news is - as reported in the October 2008 CIP update - SPLOST III revenue collections are up 24% over the budgeted amount! If we're careful - we can get a lot more work done with this money. And really - it's been painless. Far less painful than property tax increases anyway.

Bring your questions, compliments and general comments to this blog.

[Wow - What an Inauguration!](#)

Tuesday, January 20, 2009, 1:31:21 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)





Aren't we fortunate to witness this historic moment - the day we mark as the day we came together and put our racial issues on the shelf and brought the first African-American to the highest office in the land. At the community level, I hope we can keep some of the power and intent of Obama's words as we work together to remake and revitalize our schools - bringing an excellent, effective education to each and every one of our children.

The time has come - let's get it done.

"For as much as government can do and must do, it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies. It is the kindness to take in a stranger when the levees break, the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job which sees us through our darkest hours. It is the firefighter's courage to storm a stairway filled with smoke, but also a parent's willingness to nurture a child, that finally decides our fate." -Barack Obama

[Dr. Eugene Walker - Someone to Watch...](#)

Sunday, January 11, 2009, 8:20:12 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

Did you know...

Dr. Eugene Walker – our newly elected representative for District 9 on the DeKalb County School Board - has also served on numerous boards for the county – and currently STILL serves as the Chair of the DeKalb Development Authority?

Did you know that the DeKalb County School Board and the DeKalb Development Authority are not his only responsibilities? Eugene Walker currently serves as the Chairman of The Private Hospital Authority of DeKalb County and The Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly of DeKalb County as well.

Development Authorities were created by the Georgia General Assembly in for the purpose of promoting trade, commerce, industry, and employment opportunities for the public good and to promote the general welfare of the State. The Development Authority of DeKalb County was established in 1974 to promote economic development within DeKalb. It assists in financing business facilities and equipment for job creation and expansion. Do these goals align or conflict with the goals of a school system?

Did you know that the Supreme Court of the State of Georgia deemed the practice of using school taxes to fund developments known as TAD's unconstitutional?

Did you know that the Georgia Legislature introduced and in November, voters passed an Amendment to the Georgia Constitution allowing School Boards to take part in funding these private developments using school tax dollars?

Did you know that one of the private developers with the deepest pockets, the Sembler Company – the people who tried to buy and develop school property at North Druid Hills Road also contributed at least \$18,000 to the recent winning School Board campaign of Eugene Walker?

One more thing – did you also know – Dr. Lewis – Superintendent of DeKalb County Schools - was sponsored into [The Commerce Club](#) by Eugene Walker?

Think about it. Are these connections to developers good or bad for someone elected to serve our schools? We'll be watching...

[Brainstorming...A Free For All Open Post for the Week of January 12](#)

Sunday, January 11, 2009, 8:14:32 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

Let's have a group creativity exercise - a **brainstorm!** Let it be random and free-flowing. Send us your best ideas and your most reliable working knowledge. Some topic ideas include: **Title 1** - what does it take to become a Title 1 school? How many do we have in DeKalb? Are we utilizing the accompanying funding in the most positive way? How about **transportation**? Could we look at this web of current routes and devise a new plan? How about the **homeless** issue? What are we doing within the system and the individual schools to support these students? How can we streamline this support and make it as effective as possible? What about **pay scales for principals**? Why do our best principals have to get a job at the county office in order to cap out their salaries for retirement? What if we restructured the principalships so that they are the HIGHEST paid employees in the county? Wouldn't that attract the best and brightest from around the world? Principals make or break a school - IMO - what can we do to ensure that we have the best in DeKalb? How about **transparency**? Why can we not publish our accounting books online? Why not follow in the footsteps of some of the districts in Washington state that post all of their expenditures online - every single dollar that is spent has to be public. How about weeding out all of the people with **fake degrees** -- you know, the ones you earn in 6 months on the internet and they bump you up to the next pay level. How about saddling up to the **Bill & Melinda Gates** foundation to ask for their help and direction in creating more successful high schools? They've done all of the necessary research - why not just follow their advice? What about **nepotism**? Should we force the Board to implement a policy forbidding family members of high level employees from acquiring jobs as a favor? What would be our priorities for **magnet schools**? Do we think they're even worth it? There's always the **NCLB/AYP transfers** topic - but let's stay away from that one here - that one will require it's own thread.

I can go on and on - but you get the drift. Have at it!

[There is Hope - Affordable Options to Public School](#)

Sunday, January 11, 2009, 8:05:40 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

Metro Atlanta offers a wide range of private school options for students who are better suited to different educational environments. Some of the schools even specialize in particular areas of study or focus on helping with learning disabilities. However, with tuitions over \$15,000 these schools can be out of reach for many. There is hope. Below I have listed some affordable - even free - alternative education solutions when traditional DeKalb public schools are not meeting your child's needs.

First, DeKalb county offers most core and AP courses online through the **DeKalb Online Academy (DOLA)**. There are three options: during the School Day, beyond the School Day and Credit Recovery. Regular fees are \$250 per half-credit course. However - there's a well-kept secret - you may take a DOLA course at school, during the school day, at no charge. Your counselor will assign a designated area in school for you to work online. For more info, visit www.dekalbonlineacademy.org

The AJC recently reported that there are 4,400 students enrolled in the **Georgia Virtual Academy (GVA)**. This is a State program serving kindergarten through 8th grade and is completely separate from DeKalb's online academy. This program, according to the website, is a high-quality public school program that offers the innovative use of technology, a rigorous curriculum from a company called K12, individualized learning plans and accommodations to foster different learning styles. Officially a public charter school called **Odyssey School**, this is a partnership between the student, the family and a State of Georgia licensed teacher. To learn more visit www.k12.com/gva

If you would like to learn more about the company used by the State called K12, and to see a sample lesson, visit www.k12.com You can enroll your student in this program outside of the State if you choose or if you would like to access the high school curriculum.

DeKalb County also offers the **Open Campus** option. Don't count this out as an alternative high school - there are many good things happening here. The school offers an "educational opportunity to high school students who wish to accelerate the manner in which they complete the remaining required units for graduation. Open Campus offers an option for students wishing to enter college or join the work force early, to students who need to make up courses for graduation, to dropouts seeking education while employed or to married students. You must be a resident of DeKalb and at least 16 years old and have completed 75 hours or 5 units toward a diploma." Visit the website for more info at www.dekalb.k12.ga.us/opencampus

Make sure you also check out the student's testimonials by clicking [here](#).

Faith Academy is a SACS Accredited, Christian-based high school education program providing an alternative to traditional public high school. It is a very affordable, self-directed program where students pick up weekly assignment packets and do the work at home. Faith has licensed teachers on staff offering unlimited tutoring and scheduled weekly classes in certain subjects at no additional charge. Students can also view classes online. You must be 16 years old to enroll. They have locations in Loganville, Stockbridge and Buford. Many Clayton County students are enrolling at the Stockbridge campus. It sounds too far away to consider - but remember, you really only have to drive there once or twice a week - on your own schedule. Registration for next semester begins on January 5. Visit www.

faithaca.org for more info.

Homeschooling is becoming more and more popular. I will list several helpful websites for you to check if you are interested in this option. DASCH, the Dunwoody Area Support for Christian Homeschoolers offers a faith based support network. Visit their website at www.daschhomeschool.org. For a Catholic network, visit the website of the Holy Family TORCH at www.holyfamilytorch.com. Group activities are held at St. Benedict Parish in Duluth. C.A.R.E.F.R.E.E. (Children Achieving Real Education From Regular Everyday Experiences) homeschoolers is an inclusive, eclectic secular homeschool group with roots in DeKalb, Clayton, Rockdale, Newton and Henry counties. For more on them visit their yahoo group at groups.yahoo.com/group/CAREFREEHS. Ta'Alim Islamic Homeschool Alliance is a support group for Muslim homeschoolers throughout DeKalb and Metro Atlanta. They are comprised of a mix of Muslim families with a variety of backgrounds in education. Their excellent website is very helpful and informative for anyone interested in homeschooling. Visit them at www.freewebs.com/tiha/index/htm

It's a horrible feeling to be in the "gray" area regarding your child's education. With nearly 100,000 students in our system, logic tells us that we cannot serve them all with an educational plan that suits their individual learning style. So many kids end up outside the box, for a variety of reasons. Although it's frightening and somewhat depressing, please know that there is hope out there. There are a number of alternative pathways to earning a high school diploma. And there are many people who will gladly help you navigate them. I've listed some above - please add more ideas as well as share experiences in the comments links.

[The Cerebration Report – The December 1st Board Meeting as I saw it.](#)

Thursday, January 08, 2009, 10:23:37 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

“As high schools go – so goes the community.” That’s a quote. Want to know who said it? Dr. Lewis. Which implies to me he is fully aware of what he is doing to the Lakeside community. Now – on to the rest of the “meeting”.

I say “meeting” in quotes, because this one was a bit more like a game-show. There was definitely something sophomoric going on – as in, “We are high-schoolers and we are going to talk in code around all of you who are not in our special clique so that you don’t have a clue what we are talking about but we will make it sound intriguing so that you feel like you are really out of the loop and unimportant.” Let me tell you grown-ups what went down so that you can feel as confused as me.

There apparently was a special committee appointed by Lynn Cherry Grant (LCG) consisting of Zepora Roberts (Z), Jim Redovian (JR) and Jay Cunningham (JC), charged with the task of evaluating the “structure” of the legal system in place in the system. They were appropriately named “The Legal Structure Committee”. Zepora read the report, slowly, in a very shaky voice, citing their three meetings

and the specifics of what occurred. Basically, at one of the meetings, Dr. Lewis gave an oral report citing his recommendations. He proposed keeping the law firm HH&H (whoever they are) for special education and then I really couldn't tell if he recommended maintaining in-house counsel or going outside. Then, current legal counsel Josie Alexander gave a written report to the committee entitled, "A Joint Report by Dr. Lewis and Josie Alexander", or something more professional-sounding but with the same meaning. Josie basically wisely stated that it was not her place to make a recommendation, while Dr. Lewis only laid claim to his oral report. So they then submit the Committee meeting minutes for approval.

That's when something weird happened. Cassandra Anderson-Littlejohn (CAL) hit her light. She claimed that Z's minutes were wrong. LCG tried to dismiss her request to speak, saying that she was not on the committee and therefore couldn't change the minutes. But CAL stated that she had attended every meeting and had the whole thing on tape! But guess what – no one wanted to listen to her stupid little tape! So this crazy debate goes on for no less than 20 minutes trying to determine whether or not to pass these committee meeting minutes. CAL claims that a vote was never taken as Z reported in her minutes (which Z blames on JR, since he wrote up the minutes), due to an "incident" that occurred at the tail end of the meeting, which sent everyone scurrying. After many fuzzy references to the "incident", including JR simply stating, "you had to be there", we find out from Sarah Copeland Wood (SCW), who likes to lay all the cards on the table, that "someone" burst in to the meeting and used profanity against one of the board members. (Cassandra later clarified that she was not that person, since SCW had stated this in such a way as it left the impression CAL was the cause of the outburst.) SCW also declared the committee didn't represent the make-up of the Board and the committee should be declared null and void, as they had been "practicing malfeasance". LCG simply stated, "I find this all very puzzling." I couldn't really figure out what they decided in the end.

Other than that, Bebe Joyner (BB) only spoke once during the meeting, and that was to recommend naming a facility after Elizabeth Andrews. Marcus Turk gave the financial report, which pointed several times to the fact that we haven't collected our money from the State for the Homestead Tax Relief Grant. CAL asked about where some money came from that she noticed had newly arrived in the PDS24 budget. Dr. L stated that that was day-to-day school operations and she was "micro-managing". Dr. Wilson, in charge of personnel, enlightened us all, due again to CAL's questioning, that some of the people who took the early retirement package would indeed need to be replaced. So where is the savings? Dr. Lewis claimed that the agreement had been to replace vital jobs by promoting current staff, until at some point, I guess there's someone who won't need replaced – I'll call this the "Trickle Up Theory". No one else could remember what they had agreed upon and so agreed to go back and check the official record to see what they had actually agreed upon.

Oh, forgot one thing. The choir from the DeKalb School of the Arts sang two lovely songs to the departing Board members. No one cried, even though JC had given them each a Kleenex.

TTFN! -Cere

[The Jan. 6, 2009 DeKalb School Board Meeting – as I saw it.](#)

Thursday, January 08, 2009, 12:27:58 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

I just had to take a couple of Tylenol before I could sit down and write up my meeting “minutes” after watching the first televised DeKalb School Board meeting of 2009 – featuring our new Board in it’s entirety. First, I must say, that after seeing Shayna Steinfeld greeting everyone and listening to Dierdre Pierce as one of the citizen commentators, I am sad that these two were not elected – they would have been terrific!

As far as the citizen comments go, I was impressed most with the firm eloquence of Jeff Bragg, a teacher at Cross Keys who stated his case for showing some immediate support for not only Cross Keys, which was listed as #2 on the SPLOST 3 priorities, but also for the High School of Technology North, scheduled to merge with Cross Keys. However, not one shovel of dirt has been turned nor has one pencil been moved from the HSTN. For shame! This is really, REALLY sad and completely frustrating. Why on earth do these schools continue to suffer complete dismissal by the Board? They should be so proud of Cross Keys – having made AYP – in spite of a large immigrant population along with a high level of poverty. Get on this people – they need to schedule classes for August ASAP!

I must mention the tearful plea made by Belinda Joines begging the Board to revisit their decision to eliminate daytime driver’s ed. Her best line was something like, “What good does it do our kids to take all these AP courses if they die in a car crash?” Powerful.

Another great line came from Sandra Burkett who asked, "Why do we have people with degrees in Education running our Transportation department?" Great question Sandra.

I can’t even articulate the diatribe from a parent speaker who dissed the school board worse than I’ve ever witnessed. I never knew there were so many ways to say, “you guys suck”. Wow.

I always enjoy the enthusiasm of Sandy Purkett, parent extraordinaire from the GREAT Redan High School and the Blue Thunder Band! Sandy works harder than just about any other parent I’ve ever known. She loves these Redan kids and has guided and mentored many through the PILOT program. (www.thepilotprogram.org) Love that lady! She is a gift to our community and represents everything good in this school system.

After a 10+ minute break, this meeting took off at a snail’s pace, due to the fact that Paul Womack tried to add an item to the agenda. He proposed that the Board create some kind of non-binding referendum which would allow them to reduce their own salaries by 2.5% (about \$30/month) - in a show of support for the teachers loss of their STEP increase. Weird – but he somehow thought it would be a nice gesture of support for teachers. That is – until Gene Walker piped up and stated that he would vote “no”. (Remember, this was just a vote to get it added to the agenda for later discussion.) He called the idea “grandiose” and a “farce”. Zepora says she’d vote “no” because she needs her \$30. Sarah agreed as well and reminded the Board that they already return their unused travel expenses. Dr. Lewis clarified that everyone in the system got a 2.5% raise. The people earning over \$100,000 had to take a 2% pay cut (he

took even more), and the teachers were denied their earned STEP increase, which would have been on top of the 2.5% raise. This was all part of the package to save the \$10 million withheld by the State. Dr. Lewis asked them to please not revisit the \$10 million cut – to do so would cause a “train wreck”. This entire little motion (which failed) and it’s resulting discussion took nearly 20 minutes – BEFORE they even passed the agenda! Knife – please!!!

I had a thought during all of this. Weren’t the Board members supposed to have some kind of training? Better get on that.

Votes were taken on who gets to be the new Chair (Tom Bowen) and Vice-Chair (Zepora Roberts).

Marcus Turk reiterated that yet again, our budget is in the red by exactly the amount the State owes us in Homestead Relief Grant money.

One item that REALLY perked up my ears came from Jay Cunningham. He stated that his committee decided to spend the money to buy 1,500 new toilets, 1,500 new sinks and 500 new drinking fountains to be installed in some of the older buildings. (!!!) Best idea of the meeting, in my humble opinion. I hope Tom Keating, "The Bathroom Guy" finds out that someone else cares about working toilets!

There were other action items, but let me just end by saying that as Pat Pope stood at the podium as she always does in these meetings, asking for this contract or that to be approved for the lowest price from the responsible bidders, I couldn’t help but think about how truly lucky we are to have her on our team. I greatly admire her poise, her ability to articulate her agenda and the wealth of knowledge she is able to maintain and access in her own head! We really need her. I hope you will all support her in the coming weeks. I have a feeling she’s going to need us.

Until next time.

-Cere

[Open Post for the First Week of 2009](#)

Friday, January 02, 2009, 4:42:35 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

Happy New Year! Let's open a new thread and talk about what's up for our return to school Tuesday. We have the board meeting coming up on Tuesday evening, so let's carefully track the actions of the new Board for 2009 - right out of the starting gate. As far as updates - does anyone have info as to what's going on with the Pat Pope investigation by Crawford Lewis or the Crawford Lewis investigation by Gwen Keyes (DeKalb DA)? Could this be "junk" flowing downstream? Insiders - please comment.

Also - what's happening with Arabia High School? Are we moving students into the building as planned for January of 2009?

[Happy New Year!](#)

Thursday, January 01, 2009, 2:11:00 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

This video sums up last year in a nutshell - and keeps it all in perspective! Let's all remember that we're just here for one moment in time - and do what we can to make this a better place than it was when we arrived!

[New school board members to take oath](#)

Thursday, January 01, 2009, 11:08:00 AM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

This is from yesterday's AJC, by Kristina Torres.

"Newly elected DeKalb County school board members Don McChesney, Pam Speaks and Paul Womack will be sworn into office Tuesday prior to the board's first meeting of the year.

They join on the board newly elected member Gene Walker, who was sworn in last month after winning a special election to replace longtime District 9 member Elizabeth Andrews, who died in August.

Returning member Tom Bowen, who faced no election opposition, will also take the oath. Once the new members take their seats, more than half of the nine-member school board will have two or fewer years of experience."

Well, maybe...Except that these new people are pretty darn savvy. McChesney is a former teacher and community organizer (seeing as how one of those became president, it's nothing to sneeze at), Pam Speaks had a full professional career navigating the school system administration focused mainly on the complicated Title 1 funding, Paul Womack, a businessman and CEO, served 12 years on the DeKalb school board from 1980-1992 and Gene Walker is a quintessential politician - having most recently served as the Chair of the DeKalb Development Authority - he can maneuver in any sort of political situation.

The picture painted by Kristina is one of a much meeker, naive new board. She is wrong - old board members should brace themselves - these new people will hit the ground running. I believe they each come armed with a personal agenda in addition to the overarching responsibilities as a board member. Watch as they make their power plays - don't underestimate them, they know *exactly* what they are doing. This will be interesting, if nothing else. Here we go!

[Holding New Board Member's Accountable](#)

Tuesday, December 23, 2008, 4:40:04 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

We have recently elected four new members to the DeKalb County Board of Education. I have taken the liberty of reprinting some highlights from their campaign promises so that we can remember what was said in the middle of the campaigns and serve as "Watchers" to ensure that they follow through. They have all talked the tough talk - if they do as they say, perhaps there is hope for some change.

Gene Walker: "I have the commodity of time at my disposal. Being retired, I can invest more time into examining evaluating and acting on the issues facing our schools.....I would ensure that we recruit, retain and retrain teachers, and introduce programs and incentives to get parents re-involved in their children's education.....The DeKalb School ops budget is nearly \$900 million to educate 100,000 students per year. We need to take a good, hard look at where this money is being spent.....In technology - I would strongly advocate for partnerships in the business community and seek fed. Grants.....Our high schools should be more comprehensive in scope to adequately equip the students to be competent generalists in all areas of study, in addition to college prep study specialization. In elementary and middle schools, I would not advocate "reform" per se, rather a rededication of efforts to ensure our children have the basics – reading, ritin' and 'rithmentic, in addition to the inevitable inclusion of modern technology and computer training.....Cost overruns have multiple causes, but usually, it is insufficient planning on someone's part. Having said that, as a BOE member I would hold each member in the construction process accountable and responsible for any change orders and cost overruns. Every architect, engineer, scheduler, contractor, etc. would need to have an explanation before I could approve allocating add'l funds. I would insist all construction projects have measureable benchmarks with penalties for missing deadlines."

Paul Womack: "This is no time for 'on the job training' for a School Board. I've got the experience we need right now, and I'm ready to work for every DeKalb student in the system." According to his campaign materials, Paul Womack pledges to improve all schools so that parents don't need to seek transfers. Here's a quote from one of his mailers, "DeKalb County Schools face new challenges. Budget cuts are looming, teacher pay is lagging and the system is top-heavy central office bureaucrats. School attendance is out of balance, with good schools bursting at the seams while others are nearly vacant. Parents seeking a quality education are sending their children across attendance zones and across the County by any means possible. They are chasing excellence... Paul Womack wants to end that chase - by putting excellence in every school, in every neighborhood and in every classroom. Merit pay for excellent teachers is a great place to start. Giving parents a greater say in decisions that affect their neighborhood schools is another. Setting clear goals and letting the superintendent do his job without meddling in the day-to-day business is also key..."

Pam Speaks: Using the slogan, "Pam Speaks for Kids", she makes this statement on her website, "The run-off is now over and the difficult work begins. You can rest assured I will honor my campaign slogan to speak for all of the children as the new District 8 Board of Education representative." She also makes these promises:

"Ensuring Fiscal Responsibility - Utilizing increasingly limited resources wisely with each decision based on whether it is in the best interests of students

Accountability - Assuring all stakeholders - taxpayers, parents, students, and System employees the highest level of accountability and transparency. Being open and responsive to all opportunities to enhance the success rates of our students and to position DeKalb Schools as the best in the nation.

Ensuring Quality Personnel - Requiring highly qualified teachers in all classrooms, using teaching

strategies that keep students actively engaged in lesson content and reaches the auditory, visual and kinesthetic learner"

Don McChesney: "I see multiple challenges ahead for the board and I would like to be part of the change that takes us to more positive territory. I have spent months studying the issues in DeKalb schools. The task ahead is daunting, but we must help our school system return to more positive days. I have followed closely the zoning impact on our school system, also the condition of our school buildings along with numerous transportation issues. We have to try return the schools to our neighborhoods and involved parents. We must also begin to enforce our residency requirements. We have enough problems without importing someone else's responsibility. We must also get control of discipline in our schools. Without that, you will not see an appreciable rise in test scores.

The school board is in charge of policy not daily interference in school activity. We must get Dr. Lewis to enforce our rules by empowering our principals and staff. If we do these things we will attract better teachers and principals that will buy in to their daily jobs. We can make them decision makers and not just pawns.

Lastly, I ask for your vote on Dec. 2. I know how schools work. I have 34 years in the classroom. I know what school boards can do to help or hurt educational endeavors. I am also retired. This will allow me to devote the proper time to this position. I am also mindful that you would like to see some positive return for your tax dollars. I assure you, I am paying attention."

So that's it - in a nutshell. Feel free to add any more campaign promises in the comments section. There is no time for "ramping up" - the Board has some very serious issues to deal with right out of the starting gate in a couple of weeks - Budget cutbacks, construction issues, an investigation of our COO, an investigation of our Superintendent, and a final decision on SPLOST 3 spending plan (check out my post about that on this blog.) Gene Walker has officially begun his term as he was replacing Ms. Andrew's seat, so go ahead and contact him with issues you feel are important. The rest will attend their first public meeting January 6th at 6:00 p.m. at Henderson Middle School.

So - let's get to work! Start Watching!

TOP THREE COUNTDOWN for DCSS Board Consideration

Saturday, December 20, 2008, 2:52:30 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

Here's the post you've been asking for, bloggers. Let's begin a discussion as to what we think should be the top three priorities of the new school board for 2009. The first board meeting will be held on January 5th at Henderson Middle School at 6pm*. We will work to send this posting to the board members so that they can hit the ground running armed with some idea as to what the communities view as important. This is for everyone - from every area of DeKalb - so let's hear it!

***This was just sent in from one of our alert bloggers --**

Please note, the January 5th work session & meeting has been moved to Tuesday, January 6th to accommodate the Board's participation in CEO-Elect Burrell Ellis' Inaugural activities. The meeting will be held at 6:00 pm at Henderson Middle School (2830 Henderson Mill Road, Chamblee).

[Open Post for the Week of December 15, 2008](#)

Monday, December 15, 2008, 10:27:25 AM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

Ok - a clean, fresh board to begin a new weekly freeform conversation. Some topics we've been discussing are: Pat Pope's office under investigation, the mysterious improvements in CRCT scores last summer and leaky roofs. But this is an open post - so you may bring up any other subject you find relevant and important. This is the place to share and learn.

[Surge in CRCT results raise 'big red flag'](#)

Sunday, December 14, 2008, 12:21:03 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

By *HEATHER VOGELL*, *JOHN PERRY*

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Sunday, December 14, 2008

A miracle occurred at Atherton Elementary this summer, if its standardized math test scores are to be believed.

Half of the DeKalb County school's fifth-graders failed a yearly state test in the spring. When the 32 students took retests, not only did every one of them pass — 26 scored at the highest level.

No other Georgia fifth grade pulled off such a feat in the past three years. It was, as one researcher put it, as extraordinary as a snowstorm in July. In Atlanta.

Atherton Principal James Berry said the scores were the product of intense tutoring.

But state education officials said last week they will investigate steep gains at Atherton and four other schools as a result of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution's inquiries.

"It's a big red flag," said Kathleen Mathers, executive director of the Governor's Office of Student Achievement. She said officials don't know what caused the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test scores to soar, only that they require explanation.

The state has not routinely mined test data for such anomalies. But officials said it will begin to do so soon, employing widely accepted statistical methods similar to what the AJC used.

Atherton's unlikely performance was one of a handful the AJC uncovered by analyzing student scores on the CRCT and retest. The surges were so far outside the norm they raise questions about whether

those schools' retest scores are valid.

As a result, the findings also suggest some schools — such as Atherton — that relied on the retest to reach academic goals might not have met federal standards.

Atherton originally placed in the 10th percentile among Georgia fifth grades on the math test, meaning 90 percent of the 1,200-plus schools scored better, the newspaper's study shows.

After the retest, Atherton jumped to the 77th percentile. The move was unduplicated by any school statewide.

The Atherton student with what was likely the biggest gain answered just 16 math questions correctly his first time taking the test — a slightly better result than a student could expect after guessing on all 60 multiple-choice questions.

On the retest, however, the unidentified boy joined the ranks of high scorers, answering 50 questions correctly. Students needed 29 right to pass.

Two experts said the school's rocket ride to the top tier may be too good to be true. They said educators have yet to discover methods that would cause such a jump.

“We don't know of any interventions that do this,” said Gregory Cizek, a testing expert at the University of North Carolina.

Improving so many scores so much after 18 days of summer school, he said, “is miraculous.” He likened it to a July blizzard.

In an interview, principal Berry said the school made a tremendous summer-school effort to address failing students' weaknesses.

“This was all but giving blood,” he said. “I pulled out every stop known to man.”

Asked whether he had any concerns about test security or score validity, Berry said: “Oh my God, I hope not. I know the people that I chose were pretty honest. I would hope that that wasn't the case. Well, I can honestly say to you that I don't think that that was the case at all.”

DeKalb school officials are investigating because of the AJC's questions, spokesman Dale Davis said.

Tom Bowen, vice chairman of DeKalb's school board, said it was hard to believe that retest prep would make so much of a difference for so many students.

He suspects a score-processing error, he said, but impropriety remains a possibility. He said he welcomed the investigations.

“The children who receive these scores are not served if these scores aren't valid,” Bowen said. “They would get a false sense of their achievement level.”

Atherton's spectacular fifth-grade retest scores bumped the school into compliance with the federal "adequate yearly progress" standard under the No Child Left Behind Act.

This year was the first that federal authorities let Georgia districts and schools use retest scores in that calculation. It meant the retests, traditionally used to decide whether to retain children, took on new significance as a last resort for schools desperate to make the grade and avoid penalties.

In addition to undergoing closer state monitoring, schools that don't meet federal standards lose prestige and run the risk of losing students — and the state money that comes with them — to other schools.

In the metro area, two other schools also made extraordinary gains. Like Atherton, each met federal standards only because of retest gains.

In Atlanta, 19 of 19 fifth-graders at Adamsville Elementary took and passed the CRCT math retest, state data show. Statewide, only about half of retesters passed at each school. Adamsville students' scores increased an average of 48 points, compared to the state average of 16 points.

Principal Sharon Suitt said her school, like others, identified what tasks students did poorly during the spring test and focused on them in summer school.

"It was an all-concerted effort to make sure they were successful," she said.

Suitt conceded Adamsville's strategy was similar to that of other schools. She said her school tried to boost student self-esteem and was "just really working to motivate students, encouraging them and letting them know they could do it."

She said she did not have concerns about whether the exams were secure or the scores valid.

The Atlanta district has no plans to investigate, spokesman Joe Manguno said in an e-mail. The school developed a learning plan for each student, he said. Classes were taught by teachers who had demonstrated success with the spring CRCT.

"We are satisfied that the gains were valid and defensible," Manguno wrote.

At Fulton County's Parklane Elementary, 22 of 24 fifth-graders who failed the math CRCT passed the retest. The school outperformed three others in Fulton that shared summer school classes at Parklane.

Principal Lee Adams said Parklane also zeroed in on students' weaknesses. He said the summer program used a traditional teaching approach centered on basic skills. Students are more serious during the summer, he added.

Adams said he didn't know what his school did differently from other schools to produce such large gains. But he said he, too, was not worried about test tampering.

"We're the closest school to the district office. We make sure we're always on our P's and Q's because

you never know when someone is going to come out.”

Fulton officials do not see a need to investigate the gains, spokeswoman Susan Hale wrote in an e-mail. Parklane students received targeted instruction and a visit from Superintendent Cindy Loe at the beginning of the summer to encourage them.

“The summer school scores are the result of the hard work of both the teachers and students at Parklane,” she said.

Two other schools, one each in Glynn County and Gainesville, also stuck out in the newspaper’s analysis of test and retest scores. A spokesman for the Glynn district said its gains were the result of thorough remediation. A Gainesville official declined to comment.

The AJC’s study used a common statistical measurement called standard deviation to measure how much schools’ score increases differed from the average gain.

At the five schools in question, gains were more than four standard deviations above the average, the analysis showed. That meant the schools outpaced others to an unusually high degree.

“It’s concerning, and certainly it signals to you you need to look more closely to see what’s going on,” said Mathers, of the state achievement office.

Atherton’s scores were nine standard deviations above the average. “You don’t have 30 kids change on an average of nine standard deviations,” Cizek said after reviewing the newspaper’s analysis.

Experts said improprieties that could cause such gains include test tampering by an adult, student cribbing or coaching by exam monitors. Or, some teachers may have taught much more closely to the test than others — a practice some consider cheating.

State education officials will look more closely at the five schools the newspaper identified with the biggest average gains, said Stephen Pruitt, state associate superintendent for assessment and accountability. Others that were less dramatic standouts also may be examined, he said.

An investigation could include more data analysis and conversations with school officials. It also could involve what’s called an erasure analysis, which looks for an abnormal number or pattern of changed answers on students’ bubbled test sheets.

A group of state education officials will discuss the five schools at a meeting after the holidays, Pruitt said. They will begin collecting information from the schools right away and will consider each individually, he said.

The group could refer cases to the Professional Standards Commission, which polices educator credentials, or the student achievement office, which can perform a school audit. Such an audit could involve interviews with students and teachers.

Unfavorable findings could lead the state Board of Education to revoke a school's status as meeting federal standards.

The two state education agencies have begun toughening oversight of the school-reported data used to calculate adequate yearly progress.

“We've got a governor and a superintendent that are very serious about the integrity of our data,” Mathers said of Gov. Sonny Perdue and Superintendent Kathy Cox.

State officials emphasized they believe the vast majority of Georgia educators are trying to play by the rules.

Some experts say high-stakes testing has fueled the motivation to cheat on standardized tests.

Tom Haladyna, a professor emeritus at Arizona State University and a testing expert who also examined the AJC's data, noted nine schools had changes three standard deviations or higher.

“These are astounding results,” he said.

Haladyna said states should investigate unusual gains more regularly to weed out corrupted scores. In general, he and Cizek said, most teachers are honest. They have suffered over the years because of those who aren't.

“Your school is published as a nonattaining school while these others that have maybe taken liberties are celebrated as high-achieving,” Haladyna said. “It shames all of us in education to have this happen.”

[The Case for Re-allocating SPLOST 3 Funding](#)

Saturday, December 13, 2008, 10:04:58 AM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

A review of recent data from the DCSS Planning Department's website tells the story.

A brand new Arabia Mountain-area high school is currently scheduled to open for the 2009-2010 school year. The attendance lines have not been drawn as yet. The new school is expected to provide relief to Martin Luther King Jr. HS and Lithonia HS. This school has been built using SPLOST 2 funding.

MLK's 2008 enrollment is 2044, with capacity for 1513, they are over capacity by 531 students. Peak enrollment was in 2006. Built in 2001, the school is scheduled to receive a \$10.1 million classroom addition using SPLOST 3 funds. They already have an auditorium/career center. MLK is 5.72 miles from the new Arabia HS.

Lithonia's 2008 enrollment is 1683, with capacity for 1478, they are over capacity by 205 students. Peak enrollment is projected to be in the year 2016 (+528 - or 323 more than this year). Built in 2002, the school is scheduled to receive an \$11.4 million classroom addition using SPLOST 3 funds. They already have an auditorium/career center. Lithonia HS is 6.0 miles from the new Arabia HS.

Additionally, Miller Grove's 2008 enrollment is 1749, with capacity for 1688, they are over capacity by 61 students. Peak enrollment was in 2007. Built in 2005, the school is scheduled to receive a \$5.8 million classroom addition using SPLOST 3 funds. They already have an auditorium/career center. Miller Grove is 9.35 miles from the new Arabia HS.

TOTAL over capacity for these 3 schools in south DeKalb is currently 797. Even with the projected peak enrollment of +548 for MLK, the over capacity number will peak at 1120.

Arabia High School will hold 2100 students.

Arabia Mountain High School will be 240,000 square feet with a capacity of 2,100 students. The high school will include an environmental sciences lab, three business labs, a 600-seat auditorium, three music rooms, an indoor running track, practice athletic fields, an outdoor classroom/amphitheater and walking trail.

There is no need then for all of the planned additions to Miller Grove, Lithonia and MLK. The demographers report projects just over 1100 students over capacity at peak in the Lithonia region – that will only fill half of Arabia HS. Arabia was not taken into consideration when the demographer created these projections. This area will be overbuilt if we follow through with the current plans. For an example of over-building, look at Stephenson HS, built as the large school model, it has the capacity for 2188 but currently has only 1893 students.

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Balance the choices made in Lithonia, MLK, Miller Grove and Arabia Mountain communities with the realities of the Dunwoody, Chamblee and Lakeside communities.

Lakeside, Chamblee and Dunwoody, who together are currently 693 over capacity, have plans only for small additions and auditoriums/career tech.

Lakeside's 2008 enrollment is 1705, with capacity for 1353, they are over capacity by 352 students. Peak enrollment in 2016 is predicted to be 1901 (+548). Built in 1968, the school is scheduled to receive an \$11.8 million career technology and auditorium addition and ADA modifications using SPLOST 3 funds.

Chamblee's 2008 enrollment is 1564, with capacity for 1434, they are over capacity by 130 students. Peak enrollment in 2016 is predicted to be 1460 (+26). Built in 1968, the school is scheduled to receive an \$11.7 million career tech and auditorium addition using SPLOST 3 funds. This building is also experiencing a mold and mildew issue.

Dunwoody's 2008 enrollment is 1602, with capacity for 1391; they are over capacity by 211 students. Peak enrollment in 2016 is predicted to be 2166 (+775). Built in 1974, the school is scheduled to receive an \$21 million HVAC, ADA, Career Tech Renovation and Additions using SPLOST 3 funds. Dunwoody is the only school in the north end scheduled to receive instructional classroom additions (8)

in addition to the standard auditorium/career tech high school package, but that addition will fall far short of serving the expected enrollment.

TOTAL over capacity for these 3 schools in North DeKalb is currently 693. The demographer's projections state that they will be over-capacity by 1349 by the year 2016.

Additionally, Cross Keys 2008 enrollment is 829, with capacity for 1322, they are under capacity by 493, however, the equipment and students from the closed High School of Technology North will combine with Cross Keys. This school, as a result, will require a complete renovation. This is an excellent opportunity to transfer funds into creating an exemplary vocational/technical school, following national and local trends, however funding and a commitment to provide such an alternative high school must be procured.

I urge each of you to review the decision-making made prior to the SPLOST 3 vote. At that time, many on the board argued against the three school additions in light of the alleviation expected by the opening of Arabia Mountain. Their concerns were voted down.

I urge you to review the demographic report and realize that the increased crowding at Lakeside, Chamblee and Dunwoody is a result of both known and unknown causes. The demographic report shows steady growth and increased crowding over time but the transfer sanctions of the No Child Left Behind has suddenly added hundreds more students to these three schools - beyond the demographer's projections. It was swift and unexpected. Transfers will continue. The law has no provision for over-crowding. In fact, the NCLB law specifically states no transfer shall be refused because of building capacity.

SPLOST assignments of funds can only be reassigned when a project can be verified as "no longer needed." The future needs of the above mentioned North DeKalb schools must be considered. Please encourage your Board representative to vote to reassign some of the SPLOST 3 dollars to meet the ever-growing needs at these north DeKalb schools.

[Leaky roofs and other rotted things](#)

Thursday, December 11, 2008, 9:21:08 AM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

This is an open post for anyone to list the leaks and rotten places in your DeKalb school building. Although we are building so many beautiful, new buildings with SPLOST money, we unfortunately have many older, crumbling buildings to deal with too. It's a huge job. Principals should be submitting work orders for maintenance items such as these, but for reasons unknown, often don't. So, if you have a building with a leaky roof, or some other maintenance issue that is a detriment to providing a clean, safe educational environment for your child, list it here. Once the list is significant, we can pass it along to Pat Pope's department.

[Something to think about - spend wisely this season! Click the](#)

[arrow to play...](#)

Saturday, December 06, 2008, 8:50:36 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

[Open Post for the Week of December 8, 2008](#)

Friday, December 05, 2008, 6:41:39 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

Here you go, guys! I have created an open post for you to post comments about anything that comes to mind regarding DeKalb schools - I'll try to start a new one each week. Make a conversation out of it -- enjoy!

[Holy Crap, Batman!](#)

Friday, December 05, 2008, 12:15:29 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

Ok - quick work by Anonymous! In answer to my question - why did Dr. Lewis keep harping about needing "legal protection in every and all areas"? Seems we may have an answer - and it's TOTALLY not good.

Top DeKalb school official under ‘review’

Computers seized from chief operating officer Patricia Pope’s office

By KRISTINA TORRES
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Thursday, December 04, 2008

A top official of the DeKalb County school system is facing an “internal review” over allegations of irregularities in school contracts, according to individuals close to the school system.

The review involves the office of Patricia Pope, the chief operating officer of the DeKalb system. This week, school system police officers and information systems employees confiscated computers from Pope’s office, according to a person who spoke to someone who was there.

Officials also interviewed several operations employees who work under Pope.

No announcement of the review has been made. Superintendent Crawford Lewis, reached by phone Thursday, confirmed in general that a review is being done but said it involves a personnel matter. He would not say who or what is being looked at, adding that “until I have all of the facts, it would be inappropriate to make any comments.”

Pope, reached at her office Thursday, referred questions to the system's spokesman, Dale Davis. Davis cited the review as a personnel matter and declined comment.

Lewis said the review "is ongoing" and that he hopes to "know something more" next week.

Lewis hired Pope in late 2005 as part of an administrative reorganization of the system's construction program, about which independent auditors had previously cited problems including delays and probable overpayments for work.

An industry veteran, Pope in the years since has earned praise both from Lewis and community members for turning around the construction program and tackling several new initiatives, including "going green" with environmentally friendly practices.

[Here 'tis!](#)

Thursday, December 04, 2008, 9:44:01 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

Well - here it is! The first installment of the DeKalb School Watch blogsite! After finding that so many parents, teachers and school board reps had so much to say about what is going on in our school system as well as what they would like to see happen in our schools - I bit the bullet and created this blog.

(Amazing fact - it only took about 2 minutes!) It's really going to function more or less as a forum - a place to share what is working and not working within our 145+ schools in our system. It will serve as a place to brainstorm new ideas and share current plans with anyone interested in improving our schools.

You are free to post anything that comes to mind as being a viable issue to discuss relative to improving our schools or simply serving as a watchdog to maintain fairness.

So - let's get started!!! Question -- We will have 4 new members elected to our 9 member school board on Tuesday. What do you all think the new school board should devote it's attention to in 2009?

[The New School Board has been decided - finally](#)

Thursday, December 04, 2008, 9:43:45 PM | noreply@blogger.com (Cerebration) [Go to full article](#)

Ok = TGTO -- Thank God That's Over. What a process! The runoff for the open school board seats, along with the Senatorial runoff, a couple of judgeships and darn if even the public service commission seat didn't go into a runoff. I don't know about you all, but my phone is still warm! At any rate - as I posted at the GO blog - at least we have this opportunity! I know we are all grateful to live in a country

where pretty much anyone can throw their hat in the ring to run for office and try to make a difference. I can weather a few extra phone calls and emails to enjoy the freedom to choose. I'm also grateful that we now have these public internet forums to host our debates - and overall - most of it was healthy discourse. We really need to have these discussions, in my opinion, they move us forward. So here we go -- tell us what you think of our new school board!

Here is the new Board in it's entirety. I'll * the newly elected people.

District 1 - Jim Redovian

District 2 - Don McChesney*

District 3 - Sarah Copelin-Wood

District 4 - Paul Womack*

District 5 - Jay Cunningham

District 6 - Tom Bowen

District 7 - Zepora Roberts

District 8 - Pam Speaks*

District 9 - Eugene Walker*

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