

Paulding County Board of Education 2016 Legislative Priorities



Introduction

The Paulding County Board of Education respectfully requests your consideration of the items listed herein during the 2016 session of the Georgia General Assembly. We encourage the General Assembly to prioritize education as a means of sustaining and improving Georgia’s long-term economic viability, as well as the development of future citizens. The items identified are critically important in meeting the educational needs of our students and the operation of the Paulding County School District.

Priority 1: Funding

Georgia’s plan for funding its public schools should have as its primary objective the promotion of effective instruction and improved student achievement. Therefore, the Paulding County Board of Education supports the following priorities in financial support from the State.

* Legislative Action

The Paulding County Board of Education urges your consideration of the following items:

- Prioritizing public education in the State of Georgia by completely ending State “austerity budget cuts” and allocating to School Districts all locally earned funding under the statutorily required Quality Basic Education (QBE) Act formula. For FY 15, the Paulding County School District received austerity cuts of approximately \$13.5 million and \$8.3 million in austerity cuts in FY16.
- A new funding formula is considered, we request adherence to the following recommendations:
 - Student Driven – The formula should reflect the actual cost of meeting each individual student’s needs (for example, Special Education, Gifted, etc.) and not an average cost of educating all students.
 - Equitable, not just equal – For as long as property tax is the sole source of local operating revenue for school districts, there needs to be a measure of equalization funding. Equalization funds allow the less-wealthy districts the necessary resources to provide students an education that is comparable to that provided by wealthier districts.
- Restoring state funding for non-certified employees’ health insurance and plan implementation of a statewide strategy for State Health Benefit Plan cost containment, without passing annual premium increases to local School Boards, teachers and State employees.

- Require all bills that have an impact on local school districts include a one year delay in implementation and fiscal note detailing the budgetary impact.

* Program Funding

- ✓ **School Health Nurse Program**
 - The Paulding County Board of Education believes the promotion and protection of student health is an important factor in enhancing potential for academic achievement. Therefore, we fully support the funding of the School Health Nurse Program. For FY16, the State funds approximately 58% of the Paulding County School District’s Nursing Budget.
- ✓ **School Graduation Coaches**
 - The Paulding County Board of Education believes that the completion of high school is important to individual success. Therefore, we support full funding of graduation coaches to positively impact graduation rates throughout the State.
- ✓ **School Based Instructional Technology Specialists**
 - The Paulding County Board of Education believes that use of instructional technology better prepares students for post-secondary opportunities and the 21st century work force. Therefore, we urge the General Assembly to fund school based instructional technology specialists.
- ✓ **Student Transportation**
 - The Paulding County Board of Education urges full funding of the state’s student transportation formula. Currently, the State funds approximately 12 percent of the cost to transport students to and from schools.
- ✓ **School Safety**
 - The Paulding County Board of Education believes safety and security of students is a priority. Therefore, we urge the General Assembly to provide school districts with the appropriate resources to maintain a safe and secure environment for students.

Priority 2: Improvement of Student Achievement

Student learning should be the focus of every initiative to strengthen public education in Georgia. The following issue is critical to the quality of our schools and the improvement of student achievement in our district.

* Accountability for Improved Student Learning

Educators should be fully involved in continued refinement of the state’s educational accountability plan. An accountability plan should stress support for system and school initiatives to improve student achievement. Any accountability requirements imposed by the state should be coordinated with criterion-referenced tests that measure appropriate content standards for the K-12 curriculum. The determination of acceptable student performance should not be based on a single measure or indicator; rather, such determination should be made based on multiple measures using a model that will credit

both students and their teachers for the students' academic growth during a school year. Test scores for sub-groups of students, when used to determine school and/or system performance, should be used only when the sample size is large enough to be deemed statistically significant. Norm-referenced tests should play no role in a plan of educational accountability.

Priority 3: Maintain Local Control of Public Education

We request that you support the responsibility of local boards of education to govern local public schools, including such matters as setting local millage rates, determining how funds are spent for the education of children, and establishing school calendars. Given the diverse communities and needs throughout our state, it is our belief that these and other decisions are best made by elected officials closest to the individuals they represent.

The Paulding County School District supports the Vision for Public Education, published by the Georgia School Boards Association and Georgia School Superintendents Association, as a vehicle to raise awareness, address issues and enhance public education in the state of Georgia. A full copy of the Vision for Public Education is available at www.visionforpubliced.org.