

**Support for Public Education, Not
Tax-Funded Vouchers**

The HCBOE is opposed to vouchers, tuition tax credits, or scholarships which divert K-12 public school funding to private schools or home study. Reallocating tax dollars into private schools weaken - not improve - public education. Although we do not support allocating public funds to private schools, if done so, private schools should have the same accountability measures as public schools.



Support of these important issues would be greatly appreciated.

By working together, we can achieve a common goal of making Georgia's public schools the best possible.



Houston County Legislative Delegation

Senator John Kennedy
Senator David Lucas
Senator Larry Walker, III
Representative Shaw Blackmon
Representative Heath Clark
Representative Robert Dickey
Representative Bubber Epps
Representative Buddy Harden

Houston County Board of Education

Mr. Fred Wilson, Chairman, Post 4
Mrs. Helen Hughes, Vice Chairman, Post 5
Dr. Rick Unruh, Post 1
Mrs. Lori Johnson, Post 2
Mr. Dave Crockett, Post 3
Mr. Hoke Morrow, Post 6
Mr. Bryan Upshaw, Post 7
Dr. Mark Scott, Superintendent of Schools



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2019 Legislative Priorities

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Our *mission* is to produce high-achieving students.

Our *vision* is that our system will be world class.



HCBOE Legislative Priorities

Teacher Shortage Crisis

Our nation faces a tremendous shortage of teachers. A GaDOE report released December 2015 revealed that 44 percent of our state's new teachers leave the profession within five years. In addition, college students are choosing fields other than education, resulting in fewer applicants. School districts are struggling to find sufficient qualified classroom teachers and constantly seek new ways to recruit teachers. One solution would be legislation which allows Teachers Retirement System (TRS) beneficiaries to return to the classroom full time and retain their retirement benefits, similar to the 2008 Senate Bill 327. The retiree's salary could be determined by the employer and retired teacher, providing flexibility. For any retirees hired, the district could pay the full TRS contribution, to include the employee contribution. Having this option would give school districts another source of qualified teachers. TRS would also benefit by receiving additional funds without incurring any future liabilities. Most importantly, our students would benefit from fully-staffed classes containing professionally qualified, experienced, well-trained teachers.

Teachers Retirement System of Georgia

TRS has been providing educators with retirement security for 75 years, since 1943. TRS is funded through employer and employee contributions and investment income. The fund continues to grow, with employers currently contributing 20.9 percent of salaries and employees contributing 6 percent of their salary. More than one-third of the employer contribution is used to pay off unfunded liability accumulated over previous years. TRS is solvent, with 79 percent of its pension liability covered as of the end of 2017 and expected to continue to improve as it recovers from the 2008 economic downturn. In fact, in the next five years, the employer contribution is estimated to drop to 16.99 percent. Currently there are 227,452 active members with 127,223 beneficiaries. Only 2.2 percent of retirees make more than \$96,000 a year - 85 percent make \$60,000 or less. The average benefit for new retirees is \$2,331 month/\$27,972 year; the average for all retirees is \$3,169 month/\$38,028 year. Inflation can quickly erode this income, so retirees count on cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to ensure that their pay keeps pace with rising costs. Georgia's TRS is an excellent recruiting and retention tool and stronger than many similar retirement systems in other states. Since this system is working, there is no need for reform, overhaul or changes.

Safety

The safety of our students and staff is our number one priority. To be able to learn, students must feel that they are in a safe environment. Our faculty and staff must also be trained so that they feel prepared to handle whatever crisis may arise. Safety is funded by local dollars, so the safety grant offered districts this year by the legislature was greatly appreciated. The grant allowed our district to improve secured entrances by controlling access to many of our schools. This year our district will spend approximately \$1.2 million on School Resource Officers (SRO), to place a police officer at each of our middle and high schools. Safety measures must continue to improve, and we need your help. Preventative efforts, to include school-based mental health services and sufficient SROs, could be greatly enhanced if the state legislature would include School Safety as a line item in the budget.

Local Control, to Include School Calendar

Our Board supports local control and flexibility versus state mandates. Please oppose statutes that would limit the constitutional authority of school boards. The school calendar needs to remain a local decision based on the best fit for each district. Decisions that impact the calendar include: scheduling 180 days of school, planning for state testing windows, maximizing instructional time, allowing remediation and retesting time for low performing students, building in professional learning for teachers, parent and employee preferences, and scheduling around approved holidays. Localized calendars also allow districts to take into account local special events, such as the Georgia National Fair (GNF) in Perry. Our district typically schedules fall break during this October fair, allowing greater student participation without missing class time. Many district employees also work for the GNF or assist students who are competing in events. Please leave the school calendar and other such decisions up to the local board members and administrators, who know their educational needs, communities and families best.

Funding

To maintain the quality of education our students deserve, funding is critical. Our largest expenditure is human resources, with salary and benefits representing 90 percent of our budget. This includes classified employees' benefits, which are paid entirely with local funds. Since November 2010, healthcare premiums have increased 580 percent to \$11,340 per classified employee. Transportation is another area that the local share has dramatically increased over the years for school districts. In FY2007, the state provided our district over \$2 million for 100 drivers to serve 23,833 students; in FY2019, the state provided \$1.6 million for 100 drivers, although our enrollment increased by 4,825 students to 28,658. In FY2019, transportation costs for our district total \$13,624,552, with 12 percent funded by the state and 88 percent by local taxpayers. Please refuse legislation that would have a negative fiscal impact on public education.