

Demystifying School Boards

What Do School Boards Do?



School boards are responsible for the education of a community's young people, ensuring all students have access to a high-quality, rigorous education that prepares them for college, careers, and life.

Boards usually consist of five to nine elected or appointed representatives from the community, who meet regularly to discuss and decide issues related to local schools. They base their decisions on input from the superintendent, families, teachers, students, and the general public.

What is the role of a school board

- Hire and evaluate the superintendent
- Approve budgets
- Set spending priorities
- Approve textbooks and other curriculum materials
- Adopt the annual school calendar
- Make decisions regarding opening and closing schools
- Work closely with school and district leaders on school schedules, supplies, safety, discipline, classroom resources, facilities, and other issues

Beyond the practical tasks, effective school boards set a vision for a community's young people, helping them achieve a world-class education that prepares them for life beyond high school. Broader tasks include setting high academic standards, supporting teachers and staff, ensuring transparency and accountability, creating a safe and positive school culture, and advancing policies that allow every student to thrive. As issues arise, school boards pursue consensus, reconcile differences, reach a compromise, and find solutions.



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SCCPSS Structure



The Board of Public Education for the City of Savannah and the County of Chatham, Georgia, incorporated in 1866, is a body politic and corporate, and a school district of the State of Georgia with boundaries coterminous with Chatham County. The District operates a system of schools primarily for grades kindergarten through twelve, serving around 36,000 students.

Vision, Mission, Principles

Vision

From school to the world: All students prepared to be successful and productive citizens

Mission

Together, we ignite and foster lifelong learning at the highest levels for all

Principles

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1: The school board provides governance, establishes policies, and evaluates the superintendent while providing autonomy for meeting established goals and for managing day-to-day operations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2: All students' academic and personal achievements will be at levels that will enable them to be fully productive citizens beyond graduation.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3: Education is a shared responsibility among home, school, and community.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 4: A safe, secure, healthy, and positive environment is essential for the education of all.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 5: The commitment to the equitable allocation of resources is essential for all students to learn, grow, and achieve at their highest levels.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 6: Fiscal responsibility, accountability, and stewardship must be maintained to ensure equitable allocation of resources.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 7: Positive relationships with all stakeholders are built through a culture of diversity, equity, inclusion, respect, and transparency.



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Budget Process

The School System follows these procedures in establishing the budgetary data reflected in the financial statements:

1. *Budget requests are normally completed in March.*
2. *Proposed budgets are consolidated and reviewed by the Budget Department, then submitted to the Budget Committee for additional review prior to the approval by the Savannah- Chatham County Public School System Board.*
3. *Public hearings on the proposed budget are normally held in May and June.*
4. *The annual budget is legally adopted by the Board in June for the General Fund and Special Revenue Funds.*
5. *The administrative level of budgetary control upon adoption is at the program level. Transfer of budgeted amounts between object categories within programs requires the approval of the program manager or budget office depending on what account lines are affected.*
6. *Revenues and expenditures of the five-year ESPLOST Fund are budgeted on an annual basis.*
7. *The Savannah-Chatham Public School Board approves the budget for the Special Revenue Funds as a whole, which is the legal level of budgetary control (the level at which expenditures may not legally exceed appropriations). The combined Special Revenue Funds budget to actual schedule does not include the Proprietary Fund, which is included when provided to the Board.*





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Fund Purpose

The district appropriates budgets for governmental funds including the following fund types:

*The **general fund** is the district's primary operating fund. It accounts for all financial resources of the general government, except those required to be accounted for in another fund. Major revenue sources include state funding under the Quality Basic Education ACT (QBE) and local property taxes. Expenditures include all costs associated with the daily operations of the schools, except for federal and state grant funded programs and interdepartmental services.*

*The **debt service fund** accounts for the accumulation of resources for, and the payment of, general long-term debt principal, interest, and related costs.*

*The **capital project funds** account for financial resources used for the acquisition and construction of major capital facilities. The district has three funds used for that purpose: Capital Projects, ESPLOST II and ESPLOST III.*

***Special revenue funds** are used to account for and report the proceeds of specific revenue sources that are restricted or committed to expenditure for specified purposes other than debt service or capital projects.*



Commonly used terms

Understanding language matters. These are the definitions of words you will often hear in and around education spaces.



APEX: Currently housed in over 15+ SCCPSS schools, The Georgia Apex Program (Apex), funded by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), strives to build capacity and increase access to mental health services for school-aged youth, Pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade, throughout the state. Apex recognizes schools as a natural environment for identification and intervention, and aims to reduce the number of youth with unmet mental health needs. The program promotes collaboration between community mental health providers and schools to provide school based services and supports, including training for school staff, in hopes of facilitating the right care at the right time for children, young adults, and families.

504: A 504 comes from Section 504 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is designed to help parents of students with physical or mental impairments in public schools, or publicly funded private schools, work with educators to design customized educational plans. These 504 plans legally ensure that students will be treated fairly at school.

504 Plan Basics

Students can qualify for 504 plans if they have physical or mental impairments that affect or limit any of their abilities. Examples of accommodations in 504 plans include:

- Preferential seating
- Extended time on tests and assignments
- Reduced homework or classwork
- Verbal, visual, or technology aids
- Modified textbooks or audio-video materials
- Behavior management support
- Adjusted class schedules or grading
- Verbal testing
- Excused lateness, absence, or missed classwork
- Pre-approved nurse's office visits and accompaniment to visits
- Occupational or physical therapy
- Accommodations to walk, breathe, eat, or sleep
- Accommodations to communicate, see, hear, or speak
- Accommodations to read, concentrate, think, or learn
- Accommodations to stand, bend, lift, or work



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Individualized Education Program (IEP): A written document that's developed for each public school child who is eligible for special education. The IEP is created through a team effort and reviewed at least once a year. Before an IEP can be written, your child must be eligible for special education. By federal law, a multidisciplinary team must determine that (1) she's a child with a disability and (2) she requires special education and related services to benefit from the general education program. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a federal law, requires certain information to be included in the IEP but doesn't specify how the IEP should look. Because states and local school systems may include additional information, forms differ from state to state and may vary between school systems within a state.

College and Career Ready Performance (CCRPI): The College and Career Ready Performance Index – CCRPI – is Georgia's annual tool for measuring how well schools, districts, and the state are preparing students for the next educational level. It provides a comprehensive roadmap to help educators, parents, and community members promote and improve college and career readiness for all students.

Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (ESPLOST I): Passed by voters in September 2006, a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) for education. It is a one-cent sales tax on all retail purchases. This means that everyone who makes a purchase in the school district county, including visitors, contributes to the support of local schools. By law, an E-SPLOST can only be used for certain capital projects, such as buildings, furnishings, computers, and buses. SPLOST funds cannot be used for the day-to-day operational expenses of a school district. Over 85% of the ESPLOST funds are spent on building new and replacement schools; making additions and renovations to existing facilities; re-roofing schools; installing HVAC replacements, fire alarms, electrical and security upgrades; and purchasing new technology. The use of ESPLOST funds also provides a resource to help keep taxpayer expenses down by paying off previously incurred bond debt.

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Georgia Milestone Assessment System (GMAS): The Georgia Department of Education implemented a new testing system called the Georgia Milestones Assessment System (GMAS), during the 2014-2015 academic year. The system replaced the previous CRCT and the EOCT assessments. The Georgia Milestones Assessment System (Georgia Milestones) is a comprehensive summative assessment program spanning grades 3 through high school. Georgia Milestones measures how well students have learned the knowledge and skills outlined in the state-adopted content standards in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Students in grades 3 through 8 will take an end-of-grade assessment in each core content area, while high school students will take an end-of-course assessment for each of the eight courses designated by the State Board of Education. Students in grades 3 through 8 will take an end-of-grade assessment in each core content area, while high school students will take an end-of-course assessment for each of the eight courses designated by the State Board of Education.

Handle with Care: A partnership between the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS) and the Savannah Police Department (SPD) to assist children who have experienced trauma. Officers are trained on how to use a phone application that can alert school staff that a child has witnessed or been involved in an incident that may be traumatizing. The application requires police officers to enter and submit the first name, last name, and school the student attends. It automatically sends a notification to the student's principal and counselor, and the nature of the incident is not shared. Children exposed to violence and trauma are at a higher risk of poor school-related outcomes and are more likely to enter the criminal justice system later in life, which can contribute to generational cycles of violence and system involvement.

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Quality Basic Education (QBE): The Quality Basic Education Act was enacted into law by the 1985 session of the Georgia General Assembly to set out the provisions for educational funding for grades Kindergarten through twelve (Georgia's Funding Formula: Quality Basic Education (QBE) 20-2-161 O.C.G.A). Funding is based on three parts:

1. Full Time Equivalent Students (FTEs)
2. Training and Experience of Certified Staff
3. Health Insurance eligibility of Certified Staff

Districts also earn funding based on the data sent to the Georgia Department of Education that documents districts' experience and education. Georgia's current base teacher salary for FY24-25 is \$37,092 for a teacher with 0-3 years of experience and a bachelor's degree. These amounts increase based on a "T" scale, which starts at T-1 (0-3 years experience) to T-7 (54,176.00). The state salary scale shows what the State Board of Education approved for earnings in training and experience based on a teacher's education level and experience.

Georgia schools operated under strict budget cuts, or austerity, for 18 years. Austerity ended in fiscal year 2018. The QBE has been fully funded three times since its inception in 1985, resulting in a cumulative budget shortfall of over \$10 billion.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL): Social-emotional learning (SEL) is the process of developing the self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are vital for school, work, and life success. People with strong social-emotional skills are better able to cope with everyday challenges and benefit academically, professionally, and socially. From effective problem-solving to self-discipline, from impulse control to emotion management, and more, SEL provides a foundation for positive, long-term effects on kids, adults, and communities.

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Student Growth Percentile: In the 2012-13 school year, the Georgia Department of Education began reporting a new measure called the Student Growth Percentile (SGP). The Student Growth Percentile will allow us to answer questions about improvement in student achievement over time. SGP's describe the amount of growth a student has demonstrated relative to academically- similar students from across the state. Growth percentiles range from 1 to 99, with lower percentiles indicating lower academic growth and higher percentiles indicating higher academic growth. With SGP's, all students – regardless of their achievement level – have the opportunity to demonstrate all levels of growth.

Vouchers: A school voucher is an amount of money provided by the state government to parents to use for private educational programs, such as tuition at private schools. There are two basic ways the state can finance school vouchers.

a.) Tax-credit vouchers: Taxpayers can choose to pay portions of their tax obligation to “student scholarship organizations” which then provide money to parents for private school tuition.

b.) State funded vouchers: These vouchers use existing state funds meant for public schools and instead redirect them for use in private education programs. Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) are a form of state funded vouchers.

Voucher proponents make the case that these policies are revenue neutral, since the state would spend the same amount on a public school as a private one for each student. However, the effects are not neutral for individual school budgets. If a school loses three students to a voucher program, they cannot cut off three seats on a school bus or reduce the heating bill for the remaining students. These fixed costs remain regardless.

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Budget Calendar

Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools FY 2024 – 2025 Budget Calendar

- *October 30th – Begin Enrollment Projections (Staff)*

November 2023

- *November 2nd – Begin District Staff Input*
- *November 29th – Finance Advisory Committee; Whitney Administrative Complex, 9:00 AM*

January 2024

- *January 22nd – Non-Salary Per Pupil Allotments are Distributed to the School Sites*
- *January 24th – Finance Advisory Committee; Jenkins High School Auditorium, 9:00 AM*

February 2024

- *February 9th – Staffing Projections*
- *February 21st – Finance Advisory Committee; Whitney Administrative Complex, 9:00 AM*

March 2024

- *March 6th – Present Budget Calendar*
- *March 19th - Begin Community Stakeholder Input (Presentations & Surveys)*
- *March 20th – Finance Advisory Committee; Whitney Administrative Complex, 9:00 AM*

April 2024

- *April 10th – FY25 Preliminary Budget Book*
- *April 10th – Tax Assessor Office Presentation @ Whitney Administrative Complex 11:00 AM (Informal Meeting of the Board)*
- *April 23rd and April 30th – Advertise and do press release for Board Public Hearing on Budget (to be held May 8th and May 15th) in newspaper and on SCCPSS website*
- *April 24th – Finance Advisory Committee; Whitney Administrative Complex, 9:00 AM*





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Budget Calendar

May 2024

- May 8th – Board Public Hearing on Budget – 6:00 PM
- May 15th – Finance Advisory Committee; Whitney Administrative Complex, 9:00 AM
- May 15th – Board Public Hearing on Budget – 6:00 PM
- May 20th – Tax Digest and Rollback Millage Rate from Chatham County Board of Tax Assessors (anticipated)

June 2024

- June 3rd – Advertise Millage Rate Public Hearing #1 and #2 (to be held June 12th) and #3 (to be held June 20th) in newspaper and on SCCPSS website
- June 4th – Staff issues Press Release on Tentative Recommended Millage Rate / Required Press Release of Intent to Increase Taxes in newspaper and on website
- June 5th – Regular Board Meeting (Tentative Budget and Tentative Millage Rates Adoption)
- June 12th - Board Millage Rate Public Hearing #1 - 11:00 AM and Board Millage Rate Public Hearing #2 – 6:00 PM
- June 20th – Board Millage Rate Public Hearing #3 – 6:00 PM; Special Board Meeting – 6:30 PM (Recommended Millage and Final Budget Adoption)
- June 25th – Advertise Five Year Tax Digest and Recommended Millage Levy for Chatham County
- June 28th – Staff transmits Certified Millage Resolution to County Commission
- June 30th – Fiscal Year 2024 Ends

July 2024

- July 1st – Fiscal Year 2025 Begins
- July 12th – County Commission (Levying Authority) Adopts Millage Rate at 9:30 AM (anticipated)
- July 26th – Assessor submits Tax Digest and Levy to Georgia Department of Revenue for Approval (Approximate Date)

September 2024

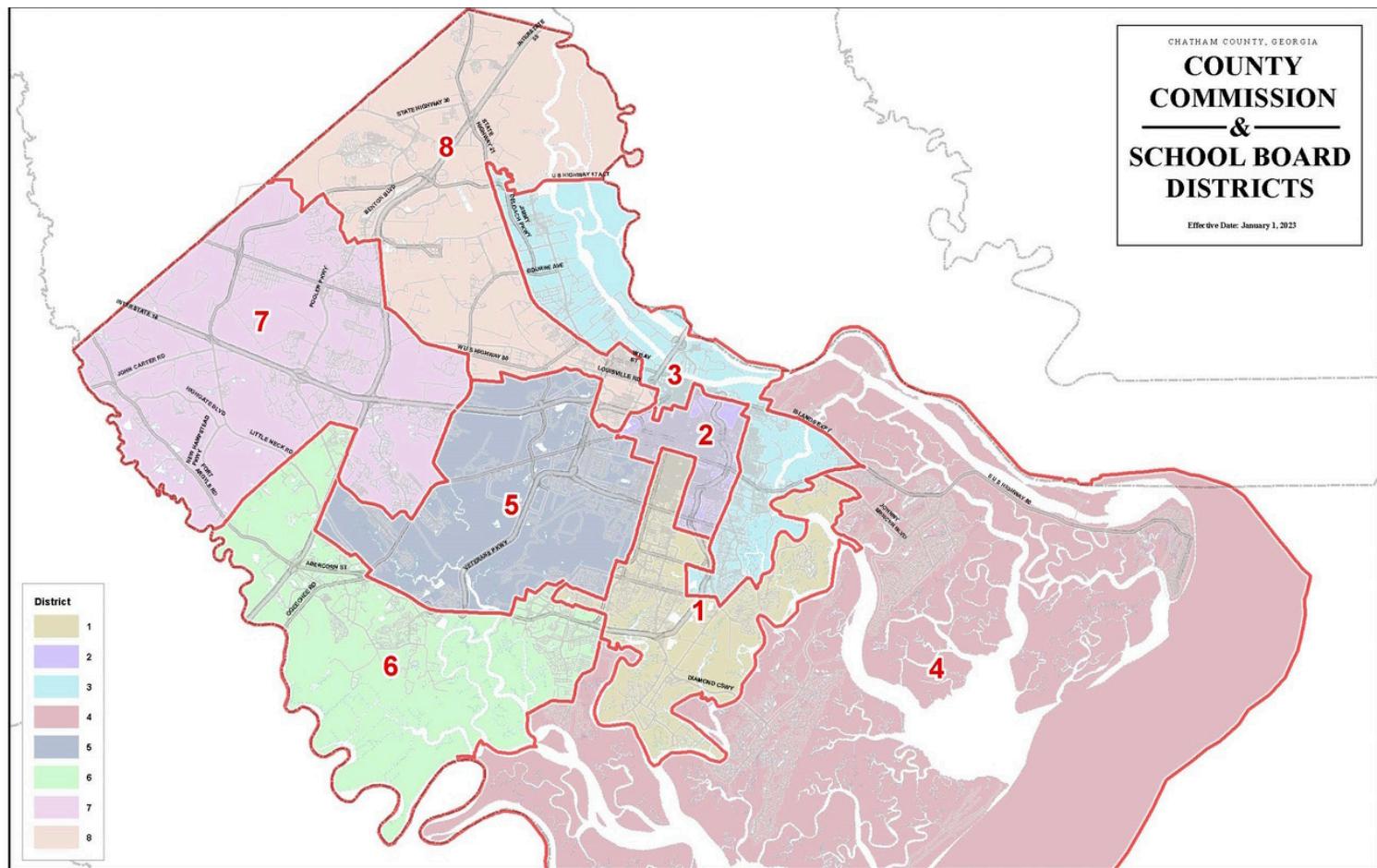
- September 30th – Staff distributes FY 2025 Adopted Budget Book and submits book to GFOA & ASBO



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How to stay engaged

1. Find your representative at: <https://www.sccpss.com/board/board-members>
2. Contact the school board office at [\(912\) 395-5534](tel:(912)395-5534) with inquiries
3. Reach out to your school board district representative
4. Attend school board meetings in-person or online at:
<https://www.youtube.com/@SCCPSSCommunicationsTV>
5. Vote in school board elections



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