

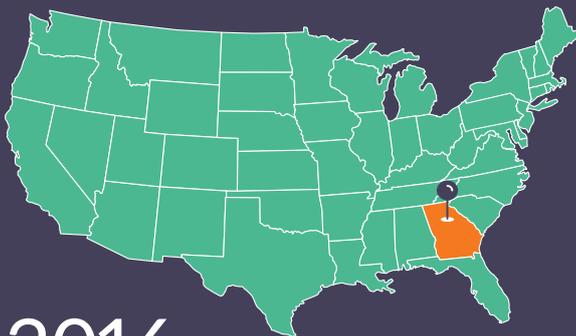
# DeKalb County Public Schools

## Overview:

- itslearning has helped DeKalb manage, organise, and update their curriculum in one place
- Platform serves as the home of the district's professional learning community for the 7,100 staff and teachers
- The district's device-agnostic infrastructure and cloud-based applications are now better supported
- Teachers are trained on how to use technology to promote critical thinking, problem solving and collaboration

## Customer:

DeKalb County Public Schools, Atlanta, Georgia USA



2016

Year Implemented itslearning

## District Profile:



102,000

Students from K-12



15,500

Employees, including 6,600 teachers

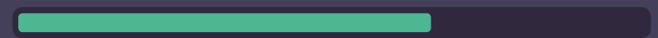


140

Languages spoken by students

## Demographics:

64% African American



17% Hispanic/Latino



11% White



6% Asian/Pacific Islander



## Teaching the Teachers: How one school district has utilised blended learning for professional development

In 2014, DeKalb County, the third largest educational district in Georgia, began looking to shift the way it provided education. School administrators in the district were eager to use new technology, eyeing a more blended experience that gave students the opportunity to learn in a 24/7 environment.

Despite the timeliness of this goal, DeKalb faced several hurdles in its completion. As a large district with thousands of teachers, any solution chosen would have to be iterated across a range of environments. The solution would also need to interact seamlessly with the district's extant technology. And, perhaps most importantly, it would have to be a platform that teachers understood and wanted to use.

"First, we figured out what that solution would look like," explains Monika Davis, Director of Virtual Learning and Instructional Technology at DeKalb County. "Then, we assigned metrics for how we would measure success. Ultimately, we decided that we would need an LMS."

### Evaluating Potential Solutions

The process of choosing which LMS to go with was a rigorous one. The district looked closely at five different platforms, on both an instructional and technological level. Each was tested via mini-courses, to see how the platforms would react in real time. The potential solutions were

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Monika Davis, Director of Virtual Learning and Instructional Technology

evaluated around a number of different components, particularly user experience — how easily teachers could get up to speed on the platform, and how well would they be able to use it to teach once they did understand it.

**At the end of that lengthy process, one platform stood out: itslearning.**

Davis highlighted itslearning’s ongoing support as one of the key drivers in the district’s ultimate choice: “There is a difference between a vendor and a partner. A vendor simply wants to sell you a product and then move on. But a partner is there to keep working with you, even if issues crop up. In itslearning, we knew we had a partner.”

## Training 7,100 Teachers and Administrators

Once the district decided that itslearning was the ideal LMS partner, the next challenge was professional development. More than 6,000 teachers and 1,000 administrators needed to get up to speed on itslearning, as well as be able to grow with the platform and change as it did. The challenge boiled down to a single question: ‘How can we make sure that teachers are using itslearning as effectively as possible to teach?’

The answer was simple: have them take courses on itslearning, as a student would.

In 2017, DeKalb launched *Ignite U*, a three-year, professional development plan designed to transition teachers onto the new platform, hosted completely on itslearning. As the educators are trained on itslearning, they are also getting accustomed to using it, so that by the time they are ready to apply it to their own classrooms, it is familiar technology.

## A Custom Professional Learning Community

Ignite U has three levels of familiarity:

- **Basic:** The teacher understands what itslearning is, how to access it, how to use it and what other people are using it for.
- **Proficient:** The teacher understands how itslearning integrates with their own classroom and how to analyze and evaluate it for classroom use.
- **Advanced:** The teacher understands itslearning enough to be an ambassador and innovator, and teach others and represent their school on a leadership team.

In year one, DeKalb reached its goal of getting 80 percent of teachers to the basic level. In year two, the district aims for 80 percent of teachers to reach the level of proficient. For year three, DeKalb aims for at least one advanced user per school, though is optimistic that that number could be significantly higher.

Davis has already noticed an improvement in the questions teachers are asking about district initiatives, as well as overwhelmingly positive feelings about the experience overall: “They’re asking more directly about our tools. The questions they ask are more directly aligned with our district initiatives, and show a much clearer understanding of our educational goals. And, even though a lot have never learned on an LMS, they are for the most part very happy with this initiative.”

Check out a recent webinar with Monika Davis, where she describes how using an LMS has helped promote critical thinking, collaboration and problem solving.

