



DeKalb Brilliance Academy

Where the strength of our community nourishes the brilliance of our children

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DeKalb Brilliance Academy is a K-4 (growing to K-8) free, public charter school serving 365 students (growing to 700) founded in 2022 in the South DeKalb community.



DEKALB BRILLIANCE ACADEMY

Where the strength of our community nourishes the brilliance of our children



Our Mission

With unwavering commitment to exceptional academics, leadership development, and community collaboration, DeKalb Brilliance Academy prepares all Kindergarten-8th grade students to thrive in high school and college, have fulfilling careers, and become impactful leaders in our communities.

Our Vision

Each child will know and leverage their unique brilliance to critically analyze the world around them and to design a better and more equitable future.

Founded

2022-2023

Grades Served

K-4

(K-5 in 2025-26, growing to K-8)

Enrollment

365

(420 in 2025-26 school year, growing to 700)

Portrait of a graduate

Each 8th grader graduates from DeKalb Brilliance Academy equipped with:



Real-world Project Portfolio: Our students will enter high school with a portfolio of eighteen different complex projects in design, law, engineering, finance, social justice, the arts, and more.



Dream Team: Beginning in 5th grade, each student will have a Dream Team consisting of a school-based coach, family, and other meaningful mentors. Dream Team members offer mentorship to help the student stretch even further.



Legacy Maps: Our students will clearly define three long-term paths to the impact students want to have on their communities. In addition to the paths will include research of network of contacts in the field, required schooling/training, timeline, and financing required for each path.

Our founding story



The process

We worked for three years with families and community members to design our school. When we asked over 1,000 community members “what should the purpose of school be?” we heard:

- 1) help my child understand their unique gifts, talents, and interests
- 2) help my child understand their paths for impact

The outcome

Families pushed us beyond college and career readiness to focus on students' legacies by empowering students to be leaders in any field they choose

With this charge, we designed **Real-world Project-based Learning:**

Our model	Our model's impact
Students learn not only from their teachers and peers, but also directly from scientists, lawyers, engineers, and designers.	Our students' relationships with not just their teachers, but also diverse community experts, affirm that they can be leaders in any field they choose.
Teachers partner with community experts to create semester-long projects that give students relevant experience connected to high-demand careers.	Our students will enter high school having worked with their peers to solve eighteen different complex projects in entrepreneurship, design, law, engineering, social justice, the arts, and more.
The same experts coach teams of students monthly and be in the audience to celebrate students' work at the end of the semester.	Our middle school students will have more experience collaborating with peers and presenting/receiving feedback on their ideas than most students entering college do.

Real-world project based learning



Our real-world projects are embedded in our humanities program to create an interconnected learning experience for students. Students read and write around a topic, simultaneously building reading and writing skills as they build background knowledge connected to the real-world career and semester-long project.

Grade	Semester 1	Semester 2
K	Design & construction	Entrepreneurship
1st	Healthcare	Production & logistics
2nd	Science	IT
3rd	Engineering	Finance
4th	Social justice & media	Mathematics

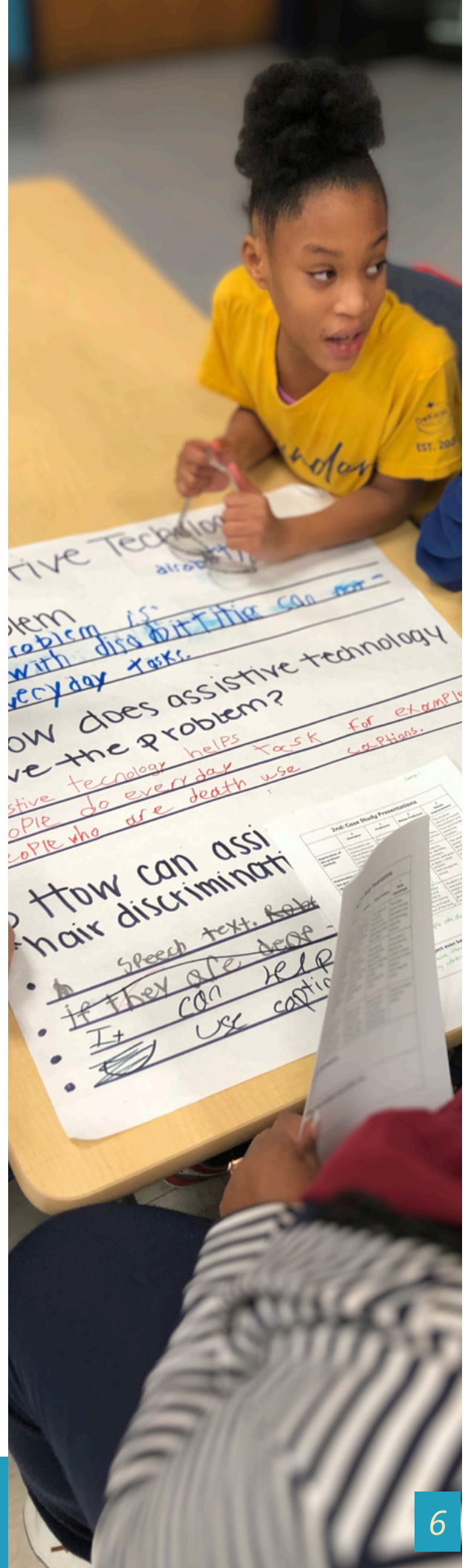
Y2 semester 1 real-world projects:

- urban planners & landscape architects coached Kindergarteners on how to design a community park for grandparents, athletes, or babies/toddlers
- doctors, nurses, and therapists coached 1st graders on a proposal to improve the health of the South DeKalb community
- environmental scientists coach 2nd graders on the animated short story they write to teach a lesson to help save our planet
- engineers coach third graders on designing a prototype of an engineered structure their character needs to solve a problem in an extended narrative story

Y2 semester 2 real-world projects:

- entrepreneurs coached Kindergarteners on how to design a toy for a unique customer profile
- water scientists and engineers coached 1st graders on an invention to protect water
- tech founders and leaders coached 2nd graders on how to design & pitch a tech solution to solve an education injustice
- financial advisors, accountants, & economists coached third graders on how to create a financially-viable restaurant concept

Our students presented their work in Celebrations of Learning, with families gathering to celebrate our children's ideas - our first step toward following our students into a better and more equitable future.



Day in the Life

Activity	Length	Purpose
Classroom meeting	30	Opening & closing meetings to build connection in our classroom communities and set intentions for the day ahead
Mathematics	15	Eureka Math Skills: Develop age-appropriate math fluency skills to support students ability to take on more advanced mathematics with confidence
	40	Eureka Math Concepts: Create the conceptual understanding and coherent body of mathematical knowledge students need for advanced mathematics
	30	Number stories/CGI: Build on what students already know, their natural number sense, and intuitive approaches to problem solving to uncover and expand every student's mathematical understanding
Enrichment	60	Foster curiosity and creativity; reinforce students' identities as leaders, through studying the music, dance, inventions, and scientific contributions of the African diaspora. Empower students to think, read, write, and argue like real scientists and engineers through knowledge-based units and hands-on investigations, literacy-rich activities, and interactive digital tools.
Lunch	30	At DeKalb Brilliance Academy we believe that every moment is an opportunity to learn and build social-emotional skills-including while playing and socializing!
Recess	30	
Humanities: Reading & Writing (Real-World Project-based Learning)	30	Reading: Daily read aloud/shared reading is embedded in our humanities units and is an intentional time to build students' love of reading, academic vocabulary, content knowledge, and reading comprehension through intentional questioning and habits of discussion. Teachers model close reading strategies through multiple reads of the same text to teach annotations as students work their own copy of the text.
	30	Writing: Teachers will model writing genres (narrative, argumentative, informational) and work in iterative cycles with students to outline, draft, revise, and publish written works. In K-2, this includes modeling grammar and writing structure through interactive writing.
Reading rotations	100	Utilizing the station-rotation model, teachers instruct small, leveled student groups (based on reading assessment data) during our 100-minute rotations block. The block begins with three full-group mini lessons: 1) phonemic awareness (utilizing Heggerty) and 2) phonics/ morphology (utilizing IMSE Orton-Gillingham-aligned resources) 3) close reading (utilizing Georgia Standards of Excellence aligned resources). Next, we split our students into four groups so that a) we can work with each child on skills they have yet to master, and b) so we can monitor closely individual skills (e.g. how students are pronouncing phonemes, as well as grasping standards based reading comprehension skills), and c) so that the volume level in the classroom remains lower to allow for focus. We utilize IMSE and teacher-designed resources for leveled, small-group instruction. Independent Practice: Independent reading time will build students' love of reading through high-interest books that they select; Lexia Core5 provides differentiated literacy instruction for students of all abilities.



Community Investment

The strength of our community continues to grow

Increasing Demand

Since opening, community demand for attending our innovative school has continued to increase. In the current student recruitment cycle for SY24-25, DeKalb Brilliance has seen an 18.6% percent increase in applications when compared to our first year of operation, and a 40.7% percent increase in applications when compared to our founding year. DeKalb Brilliance is projecting that total applications for SY24-25 will approach ~525 by the end of the summer (for ~125 open seats).

Student Investment

I like my school so much that I would tell my friends to go to school here.

Y1: 92%

Y2: 93%

Family Investment

Overall, I would recommend this school to other families

Y1: 97%

Y2: 98%

Staff Investment

Overall, how positive is the working environment in your school?

Y1: 88%

Y2: 80%

Student/family retention: 85% | Staff retention (of contracts offered): 90%

Academic results

Year 1: a year of tremendous growth

Incoming Scholars

DeKalb Brilliance opened in the 2022-23 school year. Opening a school so shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic, we expected to see that the brilliance of our children was not yet reflected in their academic performance.

80% of our incoming scholars entered below grade level, with the biggest gaps in our incoming second graders (78% of our incoming second graders entered our school reading at a pre-K level).

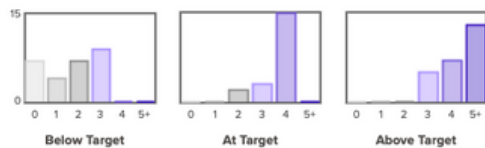


Systematic Reading

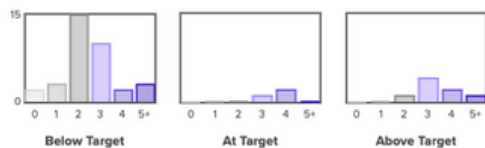
Our two-teacher, systematic reading approach propelled our students growth. By the end of our first year, 64.9% of students had reached their goals or grown *three or more* reading levels.

0 Steps 1 Step 2 Steps 3 Steps 4 Steps 5+ Steps

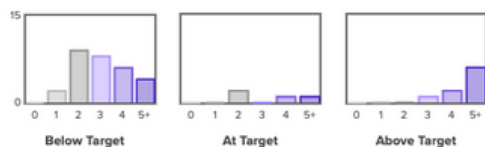
Kindergarten



1st Grade



2nd Grade



Accelerated Growth

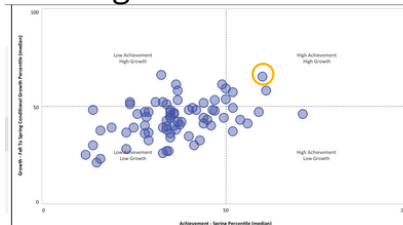
DeKalb Brilliance has several national data proofpoints:

Out of a portfolio of 80 new schools across the country selected for competitive funding from New School Venture Fund):

- 4th in reading growth
- 3rd in math growth

Front of the pack for growth among 75 new *and* established founded through same fellowship program

Reading



Math



Academic results

Year 2: growth translates into proficiency gains

Increasing % of Students on Grade level

In DeKalb Brilliance Academy's second year, the school's strong growth translated into proficiency gains. Across the school, the percent of students meeting the proficiency benchmark (85% percentile or above on the NWEA MAP assessment) improved:

- From year 1 to year 2, the percentage of students performing at or above grade level in math improved from 39% to 55%.
- From year 1 to year 2, the percentage of students performing at or above grade level in ELA improved from 30% to 54%.

Cohort Analysis

Notably, the gains were strong with the students with the largest gaps: the same cohort of students that had previously had 78% of students reading at a pre-K level:

- From year 1 to year 2, the percentage of students performing at or above grade level in math improved from 17% to 41% for 3rd graders (85% percentile or above on the NWEA MAP assessment).
- From year 1 to year 2, the percentage of students performing at or above grade level in ELA improved from 10% to 32% for 3rd graders (85% percentile or above on the NWEA MAP assessment).

Traditional School Comparison

DeKalb Brilliance Academy's performance is projected to outpace the other four elementary schools in the same zip code, which had 14% of 3rd grade students at or above grade level in reading (compared to 32% at DBA), and 17% of 3rd grade students at or above grade level in mathematics (compared to 23% at DBA) in the 2023-24 school year.





Become a Project Partner

Our free, public charter school is recruiting volunteers to coach student teams in real-world projects in your area of expertise.

**Kindergarten:
Entrepreneurs**

Coach student teams on designing a toy business

**1st Grade:
Health Care Professionals**

Coach student teams on a project to improve the health of the DBA community

**2nd Grade:
Environmental Scientists & Advocates**

Coach student teams on creating stories to communicate the changes our planet needs

**3rd Grade:
Civil, Structural, Mechanical, & Geotechnical Engineers**

Coach student teams on an engineering challenge

**4th Grade:
Lawyers, Activists, & Social Media Careers**

Coach student teams on raising awareness and advocating for social justice issues

Contact our Head of School:

jocelyn.alter
@dekalbbrilliance.org
404-618-2242

Apply at bit.ly/real-world-project-coach

- 4 one-hour commitments
 - 10/24, 11/7, 11/21 and 12/4 or 12/5
- Training, materials, & teacher support provided
- \$500 stipend





Support our school



Make an individual donation

\$25 covers the cost of a uniform for one student. \$50 covers the cost of a field trip for one student. Whether \$25 or \$2,500 your generous gift will support in providing technology, curriculum, facility upgrades, and more!



Donate event food or supplies

DeKalb Brilliance Academy runs on community, and values donations of food or supplies for our community events such as our Fall Festival and Spring Black History program.



Donate goods/services to silent auction

Make a tax-deductible donation of goods or services (e.g. gift certificate) for the school to auction at our Bid on Brilliance fundraiser in July.



Become a sponsor

Tax-deductible sponsorship levels begin at \$1,500. Sponsors receive digital and physical recognition of your support with our 1,400 families & community members at all sponsorship levels.

Visit <https://dekalbbrilliance.org/donate> or email our Head of School jocelyn.alter@dekalbbrilliance.org

Give our scholars the building they deserve.



Donate today:
www.dekalbbrilliance.org/donate



Comprehensive Fundraising Campaign

As DeKalb Brilliance Academy purchases and renovates our 60,000 square foot permanent facility, and grows our program to serve over 700 students in the South DeKalb Community, we seek \$2.9M in support to grow our impact in the community.

	FY25	FY26	TOTAL
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN	\$690,000	\$1,330,000	\$2.0M
OPERATIONAL / GROWTH	\$265,000	\$670,000	\$0.9M
TOTAL	\$955,000	\$2,000,000	\$2.9M

As of September 2024, DeKalb Brilliance has secured \$620,000 of our comprehensive \$2.9M campaign.





Who to contact

Jocelyn Alter

Co-founder/Head of School

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Contact For Questions Regarding:

Community Partnerships + Fundraising

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Co-founder/Principal

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Contact For Questions Regarding:

Curriculum + Student Experience

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Contact For Questions Regarding:

ELA, Reading + 2nd/3rd/4th Grade

Dawn Wooten

Assistant Principal

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Contact For Questions Regarding:

Math, Enrichment + Kinder/1st Grade

Emma Pean

Operations Manager

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Contact For Questions Regarding:

Nutrition Program, Front Office, & After School Programs



Stay connected

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470-563-6690

