



## Vision

We will build the foundation for all children to be their best, achieve their dreams, and make the world a better place.

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June 3, 2021

To the State Board of Education and Superintendent Woods:

City Schools of Decatur (CSD) is committed to addressing the origins and presence of race and racism, and to exercising local control of curriculum and professional learning to meet those ends. The State Board of Education's misguided and ill-informed June 3 resolution undermines local control and harms all children.

For several years, CSD has undertaken the challenging and essential work of addressing racial inequality, and we are heavily invested in these efforts. We have developed a District Equity Action Plan (<https://equity.csdecatur.net>), have done in-depth equity development with teachers, and formed a cohort of Students Organized for Anti-Racism (SOAR). Many of our students have been empowered to form organizations and join community groups focused on eliminating inequity within our schools and communities. Our school and district leaders have received extensive equity training under the Leadership for Racial Equity Development program, and our leadership and school board have participated in multiple opportunities to develop their personal understandings of racial equity. Each school and the central office has an active Equity Team, and we have an easy process for concerned parties to submit equity ideas and/or concerns directly to our equity coordinator at <https://bit.ly/CSDEquityIdeas>. Advancing Racial Equity is a core pillar of our district improvement plan. We know saying "racism is intolerable" is not enough, and we know we must actively engage in anti-racist actions if we are to progress in our schools, our city, and our country. We have undertaken this work with overwhelming community support. This is what local control looks like – and this is what the State Board's proposed resolution undermines. This resolution undermines the GaDOE's [own efforts](#) to support LEAs in eliminating [equity gaps](#) and adopting [impactful equity initiatives](#).

Although the resolution is a set of "belief" statements largely [copy-and-pasted from the National Association of Scholars](#), it would have a chilling effect on LEAs' ability to initiate and sustain the difficult work of addressing racial equity in their community. We are saddened that the body charged with setting educational standards would so thoroughly undermine educators' ability to advance educational outcomes for all students. Additionally, this resolution would fuel the efforts of malicious actors who more overtly create disingenuous barriers to and distractions from addressing racial equity. Considering how egregiously disparate Georgia students' educational outcomes are along racial lines, this resolution would unconscionably stultify school districts' ability to innovatively address learning gaps. To address racial disparities (as required by law and per rules enacted by the Board), we need to be able to talk about them, even and especially when that makes us uncomfortable. This resolution would harm all students by misrepresenting history and seeking to deny them the space and tools to critically examine our country's past and present actions that have marginalized people of color.

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Chair

**Heather Tell**  
Vice Chair

**James Herndon**  
Board Member

**Jana Johnson-Davis**  
Board Member

**Lewis Jones**  
Board Member

Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow* writes, “I think we all know, deep down, that something more is required of us now. This truth is difficult to face because it’s inconvenient and deeply unsettling. And yet silence isn’t an option.” This resolution would drive LEAs toward silence, or diminish the conversations to such a meager whisper as to be ineffective. However, CSD will not remain silent. Despite our strong work toward eradicating racist outcomes, we also acknowledge that the stubborn specter of disproportionate outcomes and other manifestations of racism continue to loom over our efforts. We are committed to our efforts. We are responsible for nurturing anti-racist learning environments where each and every child is respected and valued for who they are regardless of skin color, gender, sexual identity or orientation, ability or disability, or any other marginalized category. We will not accept educational environments where students are subject to conditions in which their identity makes them a target of abuse. Nor will we accept a resolution that treads dangerously close to limiting our staff’s and students’ First Amendment right to free speech.

Our work isn’t done. Despite the resolution that the State Board of Education is considering, City Schools of Decatur will further our efforts toward anti-racist leadership and fostering inclusive educational environments where every student and staff member feels a sense of belonging and is treated with dignity and respect.

Therefore, each of us, individually and collectively, remain committed to engaging in policy and practice changes that stand against all forms of racism at interpersonal, internalized, organizational, and systemic levels. Georgia’s students deserve the same commitment from the State Board of Education.

Sincerely,

City Schools of Decatur Leadership

Dr. Maggie Fehrman, Superintendent

Dr. Curtis Armour, Jr., Principal

Dr. Mari Ann Banks, Equity Coordinator

Dr. Kristy Beam, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Shana Brewton, Coordinator for the Office of the Superintendent

Dr. Holly Brookins, Principal

Lonita Broome, Executive Director of Finance

Marcia Bryant-Fowler, Director of Professional Learning and Evaluation

Courtney Burnett, Director of Community and Government Relations

Tanisha Frazier, Principal

Sarah Garland, Principal

Billy Heaton, Principal

Frances Holt, Executive Director of State and Federal Programs



Dr. Lillie Huddleston, Executive Director of Equity and Student Support  
Rochelle Lofstrand, Principal  
Eston Melton, Executive Director of Information Services  
Karen Newton, Principal  
Sergio Perez, Executive Director of Operations  
Ruth Scott, Principal  
Rodney Thomas, Director of Athletics and Activities  
Adena Walker, Director of Staff Support  
Dr. Kimberly Watson, Principal  
Heidi Whatley, Director of Research and Analytics  
Greg Wiseman, Principal

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