



207 Shamrock Drive
Dublin, GA 31021
Phone: 478.353.8000
Fax: 478.353.8001
Website: www.dcsirish.com

Richard Woods
State School Superintendent
Georgia Department of Education
2066 Twin Towers East
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Superintendent Woods,

On behalf of Dublin City Schools, I write in response to the March 24, 2026, letter regarding the Georgia Department of Education's decision to remove dedicated staff assigned to support our district.

First, we want to express our sincere appreciation for the support the Department has provided to Dublin City Schools during an extraordinarily difficult period. The financial challenges facing this district were not created overnight, and no one currently serving in district leadership or governance inherited a simple situation. We recognize the time, expertise, and commitment that Georgia Department of Education staff have invested in helping Dublin City Schools navigate one of the most difficult financial circumstances any of us has encountered in public education. We are grateful for that support, and we remain committed to continuing our work with the Department in good faith.

At the same time, we must respectfully respond to several statements in the letter that do not accurately reflect this district's actions or the context of recent budget discussions.

Most importantly, the Board did not vote to maintain tens of thousands of dollars in coaching supplements. We voted to drastically reduce those supplements. We also reduced leadership compensation by reducing the number of days, and we approved furloughs across the district, not only for classroom teachers. The recommendation from state financial staff was for 12 days of furloughs across the district, including classroom teachers. District leadership ultimately settled on 8 furlough days. These were difficult decisions, and they demonstrate that the district and Board have been willing to make substantial reductions to move the district toward financial stability.



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There was also a significant miscommunication between the Georgia Department of Education's financial staff and me regarding the budget information shared and understood by the various parties. After speaking with multiple Department staff members, it became clear to us that there had been a breakdown in communication, specifically regarding information the GaDoE financial staff shared and the understanding and relay of that information at the district level. The Board had requested the opportunity to meet directly with financial staff from GaDoE in a face-to-face budget session to ask questions, clarify assumptions, and ensure full alignment. It was made clear to us that the said staff would not meet directly with the Board. That lack of direct communication contributed to the confusion that now appears to have informed the Department's letter.

The Board believed it was operating within a balanced-budget framework based on the information available at the time. However, at the most recent Board meeting, the presented budget did not accurately reflect the cuts already established. Specifically, the Board voted on updated salary schedules and supplements, but those approved actions were not properly reflected in the budget information that was shared with the state due to the communication breakdown referenced above. As a result, the budget snapshot used to evaluate the Board's actions did not fully capture the reductions already made.

It is also important to emphasize that the budget before the Board was always understood to be tentative. From the outset, district leadership and the Board acknowledged that this was a work in progress. We knew additional cuts would be necessary and that further alignment would be needed for both FY27 and FY28. The reason for moving forward with a tentative budget framework was to ensure that contracts could be issued to teachers by the end of March, so our employees would have some measure of certainty about their continued employment. At no point did the Board treat that tentative budget as a finished product. Rather, it was presented as an estimate based on the best information available at the time, with the understanding that continued work sessions and budget revisions would follow.

In fact, the Board and district leadership have a scheduled work session tomorrow evening to further align supplements and salary schedules to ensure a positive fund balance. That work is ongoing. We would have appreciated the opportunity to address the miscommunications and provide this context before the Department issued a letter



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that publicly characterizes the district leadership as unwilling to make hard decisions. The reality is that hard decisions have been made, and more will continue to be made.

Since August, this Board and district leadership have worked to reduce an approximately \$13 million deficit by more than \$6 million. Those reductions have not come from inaction. They have come from difficult votes, painful conversations, reduced compensation, district-wide reduction in days, and a sustained effort to repair broken systems, processes, and financial oversight. This work has required not only technical correction but also a deep commitment to supporting students and staff through instability that none of them created.

We also believe it is important to say plainly that education should not become a political football. The children, employees, and families of Dublin City Schools deserve stability, not political crosscurrents. Our district has been forced to navigate an extraordinarily difficult environment while also operating amid broader political pressures and competing agendas about the future of public education in this community. Despite that reality, our district remains focused on its central responsibility: restoring fiscal health and ensuring that Dublin City Schools continues to provide a quality education for its students.

We do not deny the seriousness of the situation we find ourselves in. It was, and remains, a financial quagmire. We take ownership of fixing it. But it is equally important that the record reflect that this district has been rolling up its sleeves and doing exactly that. We are making the hard decisions. We have been making them. And we will continue making them.

Dublin City Schools remains willing to work with the Georgia Department of Education and all appropriate stakeholders to ensure a strong financial footing for FY27, FY28, and beyond. We are committed to continued collaboration, transparency, and action to address the dire issues affecting this district. Our students deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,

Marcee Pool



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Marcee Pool
Interim Superintendent
Dublin City Schools Board of Education