November 10, 2026

Superintendent Message Announcing Conclusion of Tenure at City Schools of Decatur

I want to start by expressing my heartfelt thanks for the honor and privilege of serving as your superintendent and for the opportunity to advance the mission and vision of the City Schools of Decatur.

When I began my tenure, I shared quite often that I consider City Schools of Decatur to be a GEM - unique, hard to find, and a rare and exceptional beacon of excellence. CSD already had a reputation for high achievement. I committed to making CSD an even higher-achieving district by refocusing our efforts on student outcomes, all students, reimagining what education could look like to address their diverse needs, and fostering an environment where ALL students graduate future-ready, feeling safe, seen, and successful.

This idea of CSD being a GEM would shape my entry plan and ongoing engagement with hundreds of key stakeholders across the district, including students, staff, families, community members, and business leaders, to gather information and envision a forward-thinking plan that would incorporate the feedback and ultimately maximize results. This concept also aligned seamlessly with our district's new five-year strategic plan, "All IN Decatur," which provided a roadmap to maximize student outcomes from cradle to career.

Each phase was designed to do exactly what the board members in 2023 had hired me to do: refine our efforts around organizational leadership, communication, and instructional leadership, particularly in the areas of building an infrastructure that would establish the conditions for building the capacity of the adult leaders in our district, closing the achievement gap and enhancing literacy to sustain positive outcomes for all students.

As we enter the fourth year of the district's strategic plan, CSD continues to set the gold standard for public education in Georgia. Achievement across CSD isn’t just about data averages but about outcomes for all students. And thanks to the unwavering dedication of our school leaders, teachers, and staff. ALL students in CSD, at ALL levels, ARE achieving.

We are now ranked among the top three school districts in the state, with students performing in first or second place on state assessments across all grade bands. Further, CSD earned the highest College and Career Ready Performance Index score not only in the state but also in

our district's history. Just as important, our graduation rate has reached 96 percent, more than a 2.5% increase over the previous four years. The most significant improvement is the meaningful progress and double-digit systemwide academic success among historically underserved student groups.

Since FY24, we have collaborated with the board to enhance student voice by adding the state's first student representative to the Board of Education. Additionally, we have approved salary increases at all certification levels, marking some of the most significant compensation investments in the last decade. I am also proud to report that, as the nation struggles with teacher shortages, we have established a "grow your own" pipeline.

CSD is also consistently recognized nationally for communications and finance, with finance earning the highest bond rating possible for a district of our size and receiving clean audits, achieving a 2% variance between budgeted and actual amounts, reflecting careful, responsible financial management.

CSD has also aligned its sustainability work covering energy efficiency, renewable power, and waste reduction with the City of Decatur’s priorities. CSD is the first public K-12 school system in Georgia to enter into a Solar Energy Procurement Agreement.

This is growth.

This is closing the achievement gap.

This is targeted intervention.

This is what happens when you believe in student success for ALL students and back that belief with action.

And THIS was the work I was hired to do.

Our work in CSD not only serves as a beacon but also an aspirational roadmap for education leaders across the nation, who frequently greet me with one question: How did you do it in such a short time?

At my core, I am a teacher who evolved into a leader. For over two decades, I have been committed to improving access to exceptional education and creating sustainable outcomes for

every student. My core values as a leader—equity, leadership, and engagement—have guided my professional journey and will continue to do so as I transition to enhancing student outcomes nationally.

City Schools of Decatur is a special place, defined by a diverse community with shared pride in our schools. I thank the Board of Education for entrusting me with your GEM and allowing me the opportunity to make it shine with an even higher level of brilliance, where all truly means all.

With gratitude,
Dr. Gyimah Whitaker
Superintendent, City Schools of Decatur