

April 27, 2022

Members of the DeKalb County Board of Education:

I am in receipt of your April 26 letter regarding facilities issues identified within the district.

You responded with a commitment to “address unacceptable conditions at Druid Hills High School as well as other District facilities” and “take all reasonable and necessary steps to comply with the department’s plans for corrective action.” However, the board’s actions in its called meeting on April 26 are a step backward in making real progress on addressing the concerns of the community you are charged to serve.

In my April 25 letter to the DeKalb County Board of Education, I called on the governance team to work together to get all your facilities to a standard of quality across the district. I also called on the governance team to “empower Superintendent Watson-Harris to take swift and immediate action.”

Instead of moving deliberately and decisively in line with my recommendations, the board chose to largely meet this moment with dysfunction and deflection.

Also in my letter, I referred to the issues identified as “an opportunity for DeKalb County Schools to restore trust with the community [and] enact bold and sweeping change to the way it maintains and invests in its facilities.”

The events at yesterday’s called meeting continue to erode not only the public’s trust, but my trust in your seriousness to address the issues facing DeKalb County Schools.

The board seems to have focused the bulk of its efforts on defining and parsing out the definition of “cosmetic fixes” and blaming years of neglect and poor planning on a Superintendent who has only been at the post a short while – certainly, the issues at Druid Hills High School and across the district did not originate during Superintendent Watson-Harris’ tenure.

As I stated in my original letter, my team will be in touch to develop immediate, short-term, and long-term plans for corrective action. It is my expectation that the board undertakes this work in a productive way, with the sole aim of supporting DeKalb County students, parents, families,



and educators, and embraces these challenges with the greatest sense of transparency, urgency, and unity.

This is what students attending courses in every DeKalb County Schools facility deserve.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard Woods". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".

Richard Woods
State School Superintendent