

# All the Woke We Cannot See

One School District's Foray Into  
Discriminatory DEI and Response to  
Federal Civil Rights Enforcement

*By Paul Zimmerman*

June 2026



**DFI**

Defense of  
Freedom Institute

## Key Points

- The U.S. Department of Education’s (ED or the Education Department) return to federal civil rights enforcement based on the rule of law has led some observers to argue that discriminatory diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs and practices are in retreat at schools, colleges, and universities. Others remain unconvinced and contend that such moves are insincere and that DEI will resurface with the next change in administration.
- This report examines how one school district, City Schools of Decatur (CSD), Georgia, has navigated the Trump administration’s efforts to purge racially discriminatory policies and practices from federally funded education programs and activities.
- Until recently, CSD invoked the historic scourge of racial discrimination under Jim Crow to justify its own regime of disparate treatment based on race. It referred to its discriminatory efforts as “paying the debt”—that is, offering special support to students due to their race and training teachers and staff to blame white supremacy for achievement gaps in the district.
- Through race-based decision-making, “equity” pressure and racial affinity groups, and training for teachers and curricula that malign America as inherently racist and portray “whiteness” as the villain of our national story, CSD shunted aside academics as it made race central to the district’s philosophy and operations.
- In response to the 2024 elections and the enforcement priorities of the Trump Education Department, CSD quietly removed its most racially charged content and communications from its website. After years of rampantly discriminatory training, indoctrination, and practices, however, the question arises whether this removal of materials reflects genuine policy changes or a hiatus in the district’s DEI efforts pending a change in administrations. CSD has never permanently rescinded its discriminatory DEI policies to comply with federal and state law.
- Federal and state civil rights officials should investigate CSD, mandate that the district formally rescind its racially discriminatory policies and revise its practices, and direct the district to comply with the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and applicable state law.

## Executive Summary

Under the second Trump administration, the Education Department has moved aggressively to prohibit federally funded K–12 schools, colleges, and universities from leveraging DEI offices and programs to discriminate based on race, sex, or other factors. This has had the welcome effect of forcing many institutions to retreat from unlawful programs. But do they view this retreat as a permanent off-ramp from discriminatory DEI practices, or as a temporary detour from race-based policies that will end once the enforcement threat has passed?

This report represents a case study examining how the school board and administrators of a public school district in Georgia justified racially discriminatory treatment in its classrooms. CSD spent millions of dollars to require administrators and educators to examine their decisions and teaching through a racial lens and to indoctrinate students into a race-based agenda, including the following:

- CSD’s equity office trained nearly all teachers and other staff in schizophrenic “Beyond Diversity” ideology, which both accepts that race is an imagined construct and then requires that all district decisions be made in reference to that construct.
- CSD established equity teams in all schools and launched racial affinity groups to further the message that failing to be anti-racist means being the enemy.
- CSD’s school board drafted a policy that would have explicitly required race-based decision-making throughout the district. Responding to advice from its attorney, the board adopted a sanitized version of the policy that removed its obsessive focus on race, but members communicated that the move was aimed at deflecting attention from Georgia authorities rather than reflecting any substantive change.
- CSD built a resource database that contained racially discriminatory materials, including a push to “decolonize” curricula by insisting on a critical refocus on each person’s racial “identity” as a fundamental aspect of how one views one’s society, country, institutions, and each other.

The Trump Education Department quickly made known its hostility to DEI and its commitment to ensuring that federal funding does not go to recipients that discriminate based on race. In response, while the CSD school board has formally maintained its “equity” policies, CSD staff have quietly removed racially discriminatory resources from the district’s website, revised descriptions of “equity” to characterize it without reference to race, and parted ways with key personnel who drove the district’s DEI efforts; however, the U.S. Constitution’s Equal Protection Clause and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 require more of school boards and public-school administrators than temporarily placing policies “on ice” and removing them from official websites. Accordingly, this report urges federal and state civil rights officials to investigate CSD and examine to what extent racially discriminatory DEI exists in the school district’s policies, practices, and programs.

## Introduction

In April 2025, Bob Wilson approached a lectern before the five members of the City Schools of Decatur (CSD) Board of Education and told them they faced a dire choice: abandon their mission to weave “racial equity” ideology into all of the district’s policies and practices (launched eight years earlier and maintained across superintendents and “equity” coordinators) or risk the withdrawal of at least three million dollars in federal funding from the district.<sup>1</sup>

Wilson, the school board’s attorney, explained that the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) had imposed a deadline of April 22 for public K–12 school districts to affirm their compliance with federal civil rights laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits race-based policies and practices in line with the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2023 landmark decision banning race-based university admissions in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*.

“Like many other school attorneys,” Wilson declared, “we totally disagree with that interpretation and disagree with the [Trump] administration on it, and its applicability particularly to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in its amendments.” But in accordance with his duty to offer his best legal advice to the district, he recommended that the board stave off the federal enforcement threat by rescinding policies requiring the district to ground its actions in “equity” and removing mention of the term in others.

CSD board members voiced their disgust with the administration’s anti-DEI efforts. The board’s vice chair, Hans Utz, called the Education Department’s directives “vile” and “repugnant in every possible way.”<sup>2</sup> At-large member Dr. Jana Johnson-Davis, a full-throated supporter of the district’s racial focus in its quest for equity, asserted that “there’s harm in” even failing to mention the term “equity” in the school district’s policies.<sup>3</sup> But for the purpose of avoiding the loss of federal funding, the CSD board voted to rescind and revise those equity-related policies. (Johnson-Davis voted not to rescind the district’s primary policy on equity.)

At the same time, CSD board members signaled their expectation that, despite the rescissions, CSD staff would continue their race-based work in the school district. According to Utz, for instance,



“I don’t think words matter more than kids. It’s not stopping us from doing the work—it’s stopping us from using the words.” He added, “I support compliance, not conformity (there is a difference) with these changes.”<sup>4</sup>

The CSD “equity” policies were off the books for only two weeks. Later that month, after federal courts temporarily blocked Education Department measures to prohibit discriminatory DEI, the CSD board convened a special session in which it unanimously approved the reinstatement of the policies.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, district administrators took a more discreet approach. Within months of President Trump’s second inauguration, they removed from the CSD website any reference to “racial equity,” including by submerging an entire section of the website—“Equity @ CSD”—dedicated to explaining the district’s race-based mission to pay an “education debt” to black students and impose “cultural humility” in each classroom.<sup>6</sup> Only a sanitized version of the district’s website remains, seemingly neutral and seeking the success of “ALL students” in the district, with the race-obsessed equity agenda of the district locked behind an error page as of early 2025.<sup>7</sup>

This report is a case study of how the leaders of a public school district in a conservative-leaning state responded to the historic wrongs of Jim Crow by imposing their own regime of racially disparate treatment across the school system. It spotlights a district that spent millions of dollars to support an equity department that forced its administrators and educators to examine all problems through a racial lens and to indoctrinate young children into doing the same. It explores how school board members sought to conceal their race-based agenda, in light of the state political landscape, behind all-inclusive wording while letting district officials peddle a discriminatory ideology on the ground in the school system. And it finds that, in the face of enforcement efforts by an administration that opposes discriminatory DEI, district leaders have wrestled over whether to risk federal funding to continue race-based programs or end those programs, at least until the enforcement threat has passed.

Rather than disavow its past discriminatory initiatives, CSD has apparently just locked its DEI policies in a drawer—perhaps until it is safe, once again, to return them to the daylight. Federal and state officials charged with enforcing civil rights laws should investigate the district’s current practices and compel the district to adopt and abide by a policy clarifying that treating individuals differently on the basis of race is illegal and will not be tolerated. Such enforcement actions would deflect administrators from resurfacing their discriminatory DEI practices to the detriment of the school district’s students, families, and teachers.

## **Chapter 1**

### **“Pay the Debt”**

In 2017, CSD Superintendent Dr. David Dude hired Lillie Huddleston as CSD’s first equity director, charging her with addressing racial disparities in the small school district in DeKalb County, Georgia, several miles from downtown Atlanta.<sup>8</sup> Dr. Huddleston, a psychologist who had previously served as a clinical assistant professor at Georgia State University, joined CSD staff in a “strategic reorganization” of its central office aimed at closing gaps in discipline outcomes and academic success between black

students and white students identified in a consultant assessment completed in 2017.<sup>9</sup> The mission of Huddleston’s new office was to provide “dedicated resources to fuel CSD’s progress toward paying our education debt to students of color.”<sup>10</sup>

CSD has explained that this “education debt” refers to what education researcher Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings once described as “the incorrect way we have defined insistent racial achievement and discipline separations between students in the past and the debt we owe in the present.”<sup>11</sup> According to an article published by Ladson-Billings in 2006, the “education debt” consists of “the historic, economic, sociopolitical, and moral debt that we have amassed toward Black, Brown, Yellow, and Red children.”<sup>12</sup> It calls on readers to “use our imaginations to construct a set of images . . . remind[ing] us that the cumulative effect of poor education, poor housing, poor health care, and poor government services create a bifurcated society that leaves more than its children behind.”<sup>13</sup>

According to an article published by [Dr. Gloria] Ladson-Billings in 2006, the ‘education debt’ consists of ‘the historic, economic, sociopolitical, and moral debt that we have amassed toward Black, Brown, Yellow, and Red children.’

Under Huddleston’s leadership in 2018, the CSD school system—now containing seven elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, and one early childhood learning center enrolling a total of 5,764 students—began incorporating the principles of a seminar called *Beyond Diversity* and its Courageous Conversations About Race (CCAR) protocol, created by racial-equity activist Glenn Singleton and his Pacific Educational Group (PEG), into CSD policy and practice.<sup>14</sup>

Singleton’s CCAR protocol is based on the ideas that (1) systemic racism against black students pervades today’s education systems and (2) the only way to address white supremacy is to “deepen your understanding of the need for personal racial consciousness” and “learn how to talk about race in ways that build bridges of understanding that lead to effective action.”<sup>15</sup> One of PEG’s course syllabi for CCAR listed its objectives as follows:

1. *The need for personal racial consciousness and the importance of engaging in the Protocol for [CCAR].*
2. *How race impacts you on a personal, local, and immediate level.*
3. *The necessity to isolate race while acknowledging the broader scope of diversity and the variety of factors that contribute to a racialized problem.*
4. *How race is socially constructed and how your perspective is different from others’ perspectives and lived racial experiences.*
5. *The definition of race that differentiates between nationality, ethnicity, and race and recognizes the interconnections of color, culture, and consciousness.*

6. *The meaning of “whiteness” and its role and impact in schools and society.*

7. *The practical implications of implementing [CCAR].*<sup>16</sup>

By the end of the program, the syllabus suggests that the participants “will be able to identify what anti-racist leadership looks like by creating a person action plan.”<sup>17</sup>

At the encouragement of board members, Huddleston’s equity office made CCAR’s race-based methods central to CSD’s efforts to end the racial disparities revealed by the 2017 assessment. The injection of the protocol’s tenets into the CSD system led in 2018 to an upgrade of the district’s equity initiative from an “office” to a “department.”<sup>18</sup> Between February 2018 and 2023, district leaders hosted approximately twenty sessions of the Beyond Diversity training featuring the CCAR protocol for an estimated 850 “teachers, support staff members, parents, community partners, all CSD Board members, and teachers new to the district.”<sup>19</sup> It has touted that this number included, at the time, “almost all of our administrators and educators” from 2018 to 2023.<sup>20</sup>

Throughout those five years, CSD paid PEG a total of \$212,033<sup>21</sup>—a cost the district has justified by characterizing the Beyond Diversity training as “one of several valuable tools CSD uses to fight inequitable student outcomes and pay our education debt”<sup>22</sup> and “develop a common language regarding race across the district.”<sup>23</sup>

In 2018, CSD developed an “Equity Action Plan (EAP) . . . to eliminate predictable patterns of academic achievement based on subgroup membership” by engaging in three broad practices, called “normalizing,” “organizing for,” and “operationalizing” racial equity within the district:

- “Normalizing racial equity” meant requiring teachers and staff to “develop cultural humility[,] i.e.[,] the ability to recognize how their ethnocentrism and cultural backgrounds shape their work with students whose backgrounds differ from theirs” and by “promoting racial and cross-racial affinity groups for staff and students . . . and conducting cross-district study circles and professional development that promote racial awareness and healing.”<sup>24</sup>
- “Organizing district infrastructure for racial equity” included requiring educators to “recognize that many aspects of curriculum and instruction are historically based in Eurocentric principles and content . . . and build the organizational capacity, skills, and competencies to decolonize curriculum and praxis, diversifying content to perpetuate a just, humane, and democratic society that enables all students to be safe, seen, and successful.”<sup>25</sup>
- “Operationalizing equitable, high-leverage policy and procedures” included “equitable and accountable policies and practices of our education system and appropriate resource allocation,” as well as implementing “restorative practices and Code of Conduct revision [sic] to encourage equitable disciplinary outcomes,

strengthen[ing] recruitment and retention efforts to increase and retain staff members with diverse backgrounds across all roles,” and “review[ing] and revis[ing] school, district, and board practices and procedures to ensure equitable outcomes.”<sup>26</sup>

Huddleston and her colleagues launched ‘equity teams’ in CSD schools, consisting of eight to ten ‘self-identified, racial equity leaders who have completed the *Beyond Diversity* seminar and feel a strong commitment to being school leaders and active partners in the elimination of systemic racism across our District.’

To implement this plan, in fall 2018, Huddleston and her colleagues launched “equity teams” in CSD schools, consisting of eight to ten “self-identified, racial equity leaders who have completed the *Beyond Diversity* seminar and feel a strong commitment to being school leaders and active partners in the elimination of systemic racism across our District.”<sup>27</sup> CSD describes members of these school teams as “teachers and administrators who work collectively in schools to eliminate systemic racism (and other ‘isms’) in CSD” who, among other activities, “teach their

colleagues more about being culturally-responsive educators . . . and inspire equitable outcomes for all students, particularly students [i.e., based on racial grouping] who are experiencing disproportionately adverse academic and discipline outcomes.”<sup>28</sup>

To qualify as an equity team member, one must “commit to being anti-racist, providing and supporting professional development re[garding] equity, having and encouraging hard conversations, & educating students and caretakers in our schools re[garding] equity.”<sup>29</sup>

Since 2018, the district’s “E-Teams” organized and led “professional development activities that strive to assist CSD administrators, faculty, and staff as we deepen our understanding of institutionalized racism, acknowledge its impact on student learning, and examine how we play a more effective role in its elimination.”<sup>30</sup>

## Chapter 2

### “Decolonizing” the Curriculum

In July 2019, CSD hired Mari Ann Banks, PhD, to help Huddleston—then the district’s Executive Director of Equity & Student Support—advance the school district’s racial-equity mission.

Banks has characterized herself on her LinkedIn page as an “Institutional Equity Architect.” She had most recently taught “multicultural education” for over eleven years in various roles at Clayton State University in Georgia. Her new title at CSD was System Equity Coordinator, in which she “work[ed] to dismantle institutional and systemic racism within education” and “committed to affirming all aspects of multiple identities by continually interrogating and disrupting racist and oppressive systems and practices and rebuilding them with interculturalism, inclusivity, and equity at the center.”

Over nearly seven years working for CSD, Banks rose to the top echelons of the district, replacing Huddleston as Director of Equity in July 2021 and then becoming Director of Equity and Professional Learning in July 2024.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, CSD superintendent Dr. Dude departed the district in 2021, and Dr. Maggie Fehrman continued to champion the equity department’s work as CSD’s new superintendent.<sup>32</sup> In June of that year, Superintendent Fehrman and others in the district submitted a letter to the Georgia State Board of Education and the Georgia State Superintendent of Schools decrying the State Board’s “misguided and ill-informed June 3 resolution” seeking to rid Georgia public-school classrooms of CRT and other curricula that promote unlawful discrimination.<sup>33</sup> According to the letter:

*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.*<sup>34</sup>

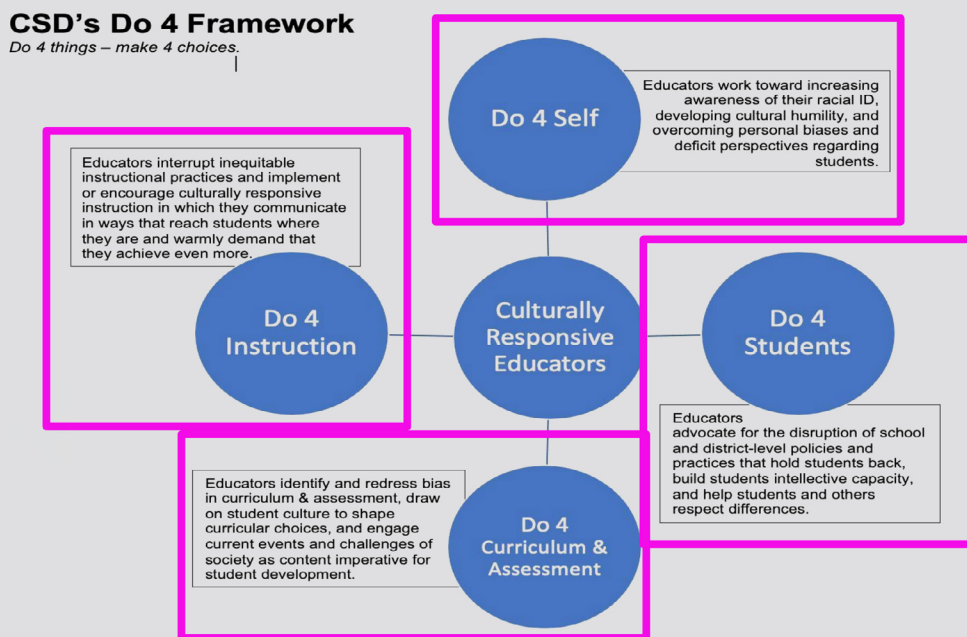
Consistent with this focus on “anti-racist” schools, in September 2021, Banks described in detail during a presentation to the CSD school board administrators’ efforts to implement racial-equity ideology in the district. According to Banks, “normalizing” equity within the district means practicing “cultural humility,” which she described as being “aware of and sensitive to historic realities . . . and be[ing] knowledgeable about key concepts related to racial equity, like anti-racism, implicit bias and systemic racism.” Banks also explained that CSD administrators “are implementing racial affinity groups”—gatherings of employees who identify with the same race, ethnicity, or other characteristic—“because the research indicates that they promote staff retention and satisfaction.”<sup>35</sup>

Banks’ 2021 presentation indicated that “Challenging Stereotypes” is a key part of “normalizing” equity within the district, including requiring CSD teachers to “examine yourself for bias, Whiteness, and/or microaggressions in which you engage.”<sup>36</sup> This effort also includes training teachers to “identify the Eurocentric structures and assumptions embedded in your content area and supplement that content by including diverse perspectives,” as well as to “examine yourself and your practices to identify the roles you might play in generating disproportionate outcomes for African American students.”<sup>37</sup>

““ Banks’ 2021 presentation indicated that ‘Challenging Stereotypes’ is a key part of ‘normalizing’ equity within the district, including requiring CSD teachers to ‘examine yourself for bias, Whiteness, and/or microaggressions in which you engage.’ ””

“Organizing” for equity in the district involves, according to Banks, implementing “culturally responsive education” through the “Do 4 Framework,” which she described as “discussing four things culturally responsive educators choose to do to be anti-racist, abolitionists, just great teachers as a

whole.”<sup>38</sup> As part of the “Do-4 Culturally Responsive Education Framework,” Banks set out goals for teachers including that they “increase awareness of their racial identity, develop cultural humility,” and “help students identify bias and discover agency to make social change.”<sup>39</sup>



Dr. Mari Ann Banks, Department of Equity and Student Services, City Schools of Decatur, *The ARE Pillar of CSD's Framework for Equitable Outcomes* (September 14, 2021), 13, <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=4052&AID=1313885&MID=93880>.

According to Banks, “[m]any [teachers] will need extensive professional learning and active coaching to make this work part of who they are. We have to do that intentional work if we wish to see substantive change.”<sup>40</sup>

Banks’ presentation included a discussion of CSD’s efforts to “decolonize its curriculum” through task forces on equity in education, social studies, and equity in assessments.<sup>41</sup> She explained that the final “decolonizing” initiative for the district—called “Justice, Action, Diversity, and Equity (The JADE Program)” —would be a course on anti-racism and social justice required of each CSD student prior to graduation.<sup>42</sup>

The documents CSD presented to the board in September 2021 included a description of the “rationale and need for” the JADE Program as follows:

*The purpose of the JADE Program is, at its core, to achieve equity and justice within [CSD]. At the moment there are gaps in the curriculum that lead to harmful biases remaining intact throughout a student’s education and make learning less accessible to many young minds. This has been made clear to the Decatur community in the past year, with the sharing of*

*several racist and racially ignorant videos of CSD students. The present ignorance in the district has harmed students of color, and there must be a curricular change to address this. The JADE Program will combat inequity by filling in curricular gaps and equipping students with the skills they need to organize and better their community through action. This program will be implemented across all grades of middle school to minimize the harm of inequitable and unjust curriculum throughout the students' academic experience and develop critical thinking skills for students to evaluate content in the future.*<sup>43</sup>

Additionally, according to CSD, the program “will create a new generation of social-justice-oriented students who have the tools and the knowledge to stand up against inequity.”<sup>44</sup>

The document noted that the only middle school in the district, Renfroe Middle School, has a “unique position as a school that educates young students during crucially formative years,” thus making the school, which enrolled approximately 1,350 students at that time, “the best candidate for the implementation of the JADE Program.”<sup>45</sup>

Each grade level would be required to pass a level of the JADE Program, and completion of the JADE Program would be required to graduate from Renfroe Middle School.<sup>46</sup> Students who fail the pass/fail classes “must attend a series of remedial sessions the week after the school year ends, in which discussions about the importance of social justice advocacy are held and students are pushed to understand the necessity of their participation.”<sup>47</sup> Five new teachers would be required to implement the JADE Program.<sup>48</sup>

According to the document, the program “will be initially piloted in the second semester of the 2021–22 School Year at Renfroe Middle School” as an extension of the school’s current “Social, Emotional, Ethical Learning” framework.<sup>49</sup> The pilot would involve an initial “focus on exploring and developing JADE perspectives, where students have discussions and reflect on issues of race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, etc. and how they influence our community,” with a “culminating project” targeting subjects such as “[d]ecolonizing our community” and “[f]urthering our democracy.”<sup>50</sup>

Closing her 2021 presentation to the school board, Banks explained:

*A lot of people ask why so much of our equity work focuses on black students. I hear that all the time. I cannot emphasize enough that CSD is doing what we do regarding equity in order to . . . [Banks paused, and CSD board members recited the mantra “pay the debt”], you got it, pay the debt. We owe these students. And it’s like triage: we have to pay attention to the students we have injured the most and help them to get better so we can help others to get better.*<sup>51</sup>

The board members responded with questions about and praise for the work that Banks was doing for the district and voiced no objections to her goals.

In November 2022, Banks and CSD equity coordinator Anthony Downer updated the CSD school board on the district’s progress toward “decolonizing the curriculum” in all grades and subjects. According to Downer:

*Decolonizing means identifying ways in which schools structurally reproduce colonial patterns, then confronting, challenging and rejecting the status quo, and putting alternative roads in place for the benefit of academic integrity and social welcoming. . . . A decolonized curriculum starts with acknowledging that students’ identities are linked to structural inequities within society.*<sup>52</sup>

Banks suggested, “We know that a lot of the time when we have problems emerge or things happen that are hurtful to populations it happens in social studies, so let’s look at the curriculum, let’s look at the resources, let’s look at what’s being used in social studies and really discuss and process something better, put something better in its place.”<sup>53</sup>

In the slides for their presentation, Downer and Banks characterized decolonization as “so pervasive that it is similar to ‘ending systemic racism.’”<sup>54</sup> They declared that “[i]t is not a ‘one and done.’ It is in ALL content areas, all classrooms, includes curriculum, assessments, assessment practices, instructional practices[.]”<sup>55</sup>

The presentation slides asked “Where are we going?” and responded that the district was continuing to pursue the JADE Program. A sample JADE lesson plan to which the slideshow links, labeled “Identity,” explains (in a bulleted list) that “[o]ur identity is made up of languages spoken, religion, race, culture, nationality, personality, interests, likes and dislikes, and relationships.”<sup>56</sup> Part of that curriculum involves requiring students to write their names in the center of a “multicultural self map” and directing them “to fill in the circles with the most important parts of their identity,” with suggested examples including “race, gender, religion, familial relationships, or other identifiers that are important to them.”<sup>57</sup> The students then share among small groups “[a] story in which they are proud of one of the identifiers,” “[a] story in which they were ashamed of or had a painful experience with one of the identifiers,” and “a stereotype about one of their identifiers that is inaccurate,” the



last of which they could be instructed to share in a presentation.<sup>58</sup>

Earlier in 2022, the CSD Board of Education had voted to rename Renfroe Middle School—then named for former district superintendent Carl G. Renfroe—Beacon Hill Middle School.<sup>59</sup> The changed name reflects that of the historically black Beacon Hill neighborhood in Decatur, although the middle school is not located in that neighborhood.<sup>60</sup>

Today, Beacon Hill Middle School’s website does not contain a reference to the JADE Program, but its course descriptions reflect an International Baccalaureate (IB) framework called the Middle Years Programme, which it says aims “to help sixth through tenth graders develop the knowledge, understanding, attitudes, and skills necessary to participate fully and responsibly in a changing world.”<sup>61</sup> As part of that program, students are expected to “give our own cultures and personal histories a high-five, while also tipping our hats to the values and traditions of others! We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.”<sup>62</sup>

CSD’s Decatur High School also offers IB courses in several subjects. The high school offers seniors a course called IB Language and Literature (year 2) whose description strongly emphasizes the relevance of “culture” and a “global perspective” to analysis:

*The . . . course aims to develop skills of textual analysis and the understanding that texts, both literary and non-literary, can relate to culturally determined reading practices. The course also encourages students to question the meaning generated by language and texts. An understanding of the ways in which formal elements are used to create meaning in a text is combined with an exploration of how that meaning is affected by reading practices that are culturally defined and by the circumstances of production and reception. The study of literature in translation from other cultures is especially important to IB DP students because it contributes to a global perspective. Texts are chosen from a variety of sources, genres and media.*<sup>63</sup>

The description of the IB History course for high-school juniors emphasizes a “critical” approach to history:

*The IB history course is a history course based on a comparative and multi-perspective approach to history. It involves the study of a variety of types of history, including political, economic, social and cultural, and provides a balance of structure and flexibility. The course emphasizes the importance of encouraging students to think historically and to develop historical skills as well as gaining factual knowledge. It puts a premium on developing the skills of critical thinking, and on developing an understanding of multiple interpretations of history. In this way, the course involves a challenging and demanding critical exploration of the past. Teachers explicitly teach thinking and research skills such as comprehension, text analysis, transfer, and use of primary sources.*<sup>64</sup>

On October 26, 2023, Anthony Downer—the district equity coordinator who presented to the CSD Board of Education a description of “Decolonizing the Curriculum” in 2022—sent an email to CSD’s

central-office staff that included an attachment labeled “Resources for Learning & Actions to Support Gaza” attributed to “a queer collective of Jews, Palestinians, and allies in Atlanta” and linking to resources from a group called Jewish Voices for Peace, which, according to the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, “is a radical anti-Israel and anti-Zionist activist group that advocates the eradication of Zionism.”<sup>65</sup>

A complaint regarding this incident prompted an investigation by the Department’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR), launched on January 2, 2024, to determine whether the district properly responded to potential anti-Semitic harassment.<sup>66</sup> The complaint asserted that classroom materials minimized terror attacks against Jews and claimed that “Israel wants to take over Saudi Arabia” and that a teacher told a student that Hitler’s grandmother was Jewish (insinuating, according to the complaint, that a Jew is responsible for the Holocaust).<sup>67</sup>

CSD investigated Downer over the email, found that he was insubordinate and had violated CSD’s conflict-of-interest policy, and recommended that he be released from his job.<sup>68</sup> According to Downer’s LinkedIn page, he remained employed at CSD until June 2025.<sup>69</sup> He is now a senior financial aid counselor at a Georgia university and a self-employed tutor for black students.<sup>70</sup>

## Chapter 3

### The Equity Newsletters

Huddleston’s and Banks’ racial-equity efforts hit their stride between September 2022 and June 2023, when CSD published ten *Equity @ CSD* newsletters,<sup>71</sup> each of which spotlights the terms “Diversity,” “Equity,” and “Inclusion” at the top of its first page.<sup>72</sup>

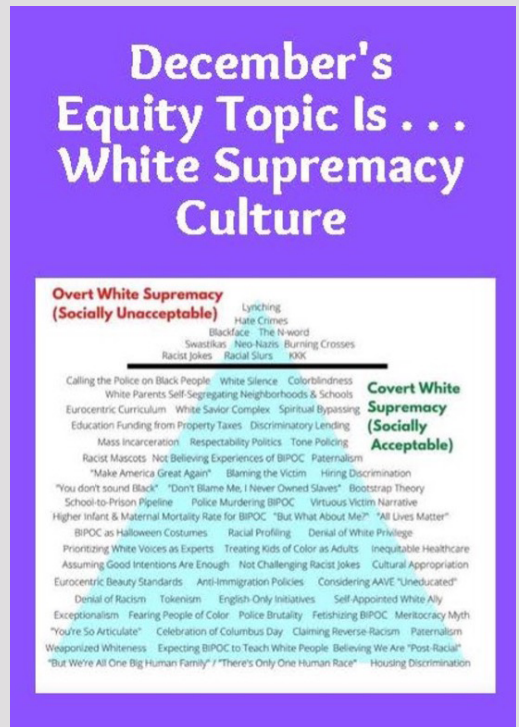
“[R]acial equity” necessarily means unequal treatment based on race—a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution and Title VI, the federal civil rights law prohibiting race-based discrimination.

Published in September 2022, the first newsletter bluntly admits that equity is not equality: “[e]quity is simply making sure that everyone gets what they need; it’s often confused with equality—which is not the same thing.”<sup>73</sup> Pursuant to the author’s own definition of the term, “racial equity” necessarily means unequal treatment based on race—a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution and Title VI, the federal civil rights law prohibiting race-based discrimination.

In its December 2022 *Equity @ CSD* newsletter, CSD includes a racist diagram (reprinted on the next page) of a “white supremacy culture pyramid.”<sup>74</sup> A dividing line bisects a pyramid filled with terms relating to phenomena ranging from the worst forms of racial violence to slogans and platitudes. Above the line, the diagram identifies examples of “Overt White Supremacy (Socially Unacceptable)”; below the line are examples of “Covert White Supremacy (Socially Acceptable)”:

Today, the newsletter says, white supremacy “has become a culture so pervasive that it is replicated by people from multiple cultural backgrounds who are either totally unaware that we have been programmed to believe that ‘white is right/best/beautiful’ or people who are aware but don’t care or are having difficulty shutting down this implicit (and explicit) mental programming.”<sup>75</sup> “In sum,” says CSD, “throughout this newsletter, when you see the term ‘white supremacy culture (WSC),’ it refers to ways in which the ruling class in the U.S. uses the social construct of race to create and elevate Whiteness, the way many white people who are not part of the ruling class reinforce the culture because they believe that they benefit from it, and the ways others of us have been so indoctrinated that we reinforce the culture without even meaning to do so.”<sup>76</sup>

City Schools of Decatur,  
*Equity @ CSD*, Vol. 4,  
 December 2022, 1.  
 (On file with the author).



The newsletter describes the interaction of “Intersectionality”<sup>i</sup> with “White Supremacy Culture” as follows:

*White supremacy culture rarely stands alone. It often works together with and supports, reinforces, and reproduces capitalism, class oppression, gender oppression, heterosexism, ableism, and Christian privilege—just to name a few of it’s [sic] friends. For example, classism tells us the rich work for it and the poor do not, while it reproduces WSC through a racially disparate reproduction of wealth and exploitation of labor. In another example, Christian hegemony teaches us that Christians (and white Christians at that) are divinely capable of shaping and defining reality for the rest of us. (Remember Manifest Destiny? or Dobbs v. Jackson?) Such factors intersect with WSC to clearly indicate who is given worth in US society and who is not.*<sup>77</sup>

The newsletter warns that “WSC and its corresponding attitudes don’t belong to only one ideology, one political party, or one particular geographical location. These attitudes exist across different regions, socio-economic classes, income levels, education groups, and political affiliations. Since both anti-blackness and white supremacy are baked into our country’s foundation, they often play out in our daily lives and this includes school.”<sup>78</sup>

<sup>i</sup> For more on the dangers of intersectional ideology and its discriminatory application in education and other contexts, see the Defense of Freedom Institute’s (DFI) and Legal Insurrection Foundation’s (LIF) report, [Intersectionality: The Rise of a Dangerous Anti-American Ideology and How to Stop It](#), published in April 2026.

As an example, CSD specifically calls out its white female educators as part of the problem: “When white women call administrators or SROs and say they are ‘afraid of their black students,’ they receive focused attention that frequently results in swift and punitive measures for students. It’s imperative that white female educators, especially, recognize this pattern, actively work with their biases, and develop relationships with their Black students so that they react more thoughtfully when issues arise.”<sup>79</sup>

The May 2023 issue of *Equity @ CSD* compares ‘anti-racism’ to broccoli, describing it as ‘a superfood for your mind and soul’ that ‘[y]ou have to make . . . a part of your everyday life.’

The May 2023 issue of *Equity @ CSD* compares “anti-racism” to broccoli, describing it as “a superfood for your mind and soul” that “[y]ou have to make . . . a part of your everyday life.”<sup>80</sup> CSD places a special onus on white students to engage in “anti-racist” work:

*What POGM [People of the Global Majority] really need white people to do is consciously, consistently, and intentionally unlearn racism. It’s no secret that shame and guilt go hand in hand with unlearning racism—but you can’t do this work in any meaningful or truthful way without experiencing these feelings and—you will feel uncomfortable. Trying to do anti-racism work while remaining comfortable and actively avoiding your feelings, is just not possible.*<sup>81</sup>

The newsletter also charges “POGM” with “work[ing] to be anti-racist by intentionally dedicating our efforts toward unlearning any internalized racism and de-elevating our internalized whiteness, racism, or bias toward other POGM.”<sup>82</sup>

The newsletter offers several tips for countering white supremacy, including “[w]ork on [y]our [r]acial ID [d]evelopment,” which it describes as “challeng[ing] white supremacy inside yourself and becom[ing] familiar with who you are as a racialized being,” and “[d]on’t be [a]fraid to be [w]oke.”<sup>83</sup> In line with CCAR training, the newsletter also recommends “[e]xamin[ing] the presence and role of whiteness,” meaning “[u]npacking the way whiteness shows up in a conversation,” which “allows us to interrogate how [white] culture is influencing the issues we are discussing as well as the very discussion itself.”<sup>84</sup>

## Chapter 4

### The School Board Equity Policy

Huddleston and Banks institutionalized racial equity in CSD for years in the absence of any school-board policy requiring that they do so. That changed in November 2023 with the CSD Board of Education’s adoption of Policy BAC.

In the lead-up to its adoption of an equity policy, the CSD school board considered at least one draft policy that made clear the racial underpinnings of the effort. Considered at a board meeting on September 12, 2023, draft Policy BAC would have explicitly required that CSD engage in “intentional action that *prioritizes* access, resources, and opportunities for *groups* with the greatest need” (emphases added).<sup>85</sup> The draft policy included a lengthy call to action regarding the scourge of systemic racism in CSD:

*In CSD, we acknowledge that racial disparities exist because of historical inequitable access to educational opportunities that has a profound intergenerational impact and has perpetuated economic, social, and educational inequity in communities of color. As a District, we believe these disparities are unacceptable and contradict our belief that all students can achieve. Racial inequities have been created and perpetuated over time and can be eliminated. Similarly, personal prejudice is learned and can be unlearned. Creating, ignoring, or perpetuating these and other such inequities that impact students, faculty, and staff is racial misconduct. By way of this policy and procedure, the CSD School Board and the District are committed to understanding and interrupting institutional and bias patterns at all levels of the organization, whether conscious or unconscious, that exacerbate our education debt and induce disproportionately adverse outcomes, most notably for historically marginalized students. While the primary focus of our equity policy is on race, our District also acknowledges the importance and intersectionality of multiple forms of social inequalities and oppression, including but not limited to race, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, national origin, linguistic ability, physical ability, and learning differences.*<sup>86</sup>

The draft version of Policy BAC would have required administrators, teachers, and staff to participate in “anti-racist” professional development and review policies and programs under the rubric of a “racial equity analysis tool.”<sup>87</sup> Additionally, it offered a “Definitions” section that said the following:

- *Anti-Racist—someone who supports policies that interrupt inequitable systematic and institutional practices through their actions. (Ibram X. Kendi, How to Be An Antiracist, Random House, 2019)*
- *Disproportionality—the “overrepresentation” and “under-representation” of a particular population or demographic group relative to the overall student population. (National Association for Bilingual Education, 2002)*
- *Education Debt—the cumulative impact of fewer resources and other harm directed at students who have been historically marginalized, as represented in CSD data. This debt is not only financial but also historical, sociopolitical, and moral. (Gloria Ladson Billings, NEPC) . . .*
- *Educational Equity—public schools should provide equitable access and ensure that all students have the knowledge and skills to succeed as contributing members of a rapidly changing, global society, regardless of factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation,*

*ethnic background, English proficiency, immigration status, socioeconomic status, or disability. (NSBA Beliefs and Policies . . . )*

- *Race—A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups. (Source: Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge.)<sup>88</sup>*

In a red-lined version of the document, the CSD board attorney—perhaps the same attorney who, as described in this report’s introduction, counseled the board to rescind Policy BAC for a short time in April 2025—proposed to cut many of the draft policy’s references to race-based action and oppression.<sup>89</sup> He likely did so because he concluded that they would not be in compliance with civil rights law and Georgia law regarding the teaching of “divisive concepts.”

At its September 2023 meeting, CSD school board members clarified that they did not intend the changes, ultimately reflected in Policy BAC, to alter how the school district actually implemented the policy, which the district was already carrying out in a race-based manner. Instead, the primary purpose of the revisions was to deflect Georgia’s attention from the policy’s focus on race:

- *The context for some of these changes, if we’re going to be talking publicly about it, . . . is that we need to be able to comport to state law without creating a target on ourselves, but we also have to be able to reflect the values and wishes of the community, which are very clear on this particular topic . . . .<sup>90</sup>*
- *The redline change is not a reflection of our commitment to the core values. . . . [S]ome of it has to do with the language of it so that we can be in compliance with the state, but it’s not because we had put it on the backburner, that we weren’t committed, or that we had decided that it wasn’t important . . . or that we can prioritize other things, but that was not the core issue. It was more or less that we had to make sure that we were able to put something out there that we could sustain . . . .<sup>91</sup>*
- *And very specifically how do we be aggressive as we possibly can through our policy on this particular point but without bringing the state into this, right? Because if anything it’s a demonstration of our commitment to this that it took us as long as it did to actually get it right so we can be comfortable . . . .<sup>92</sup>*
- *[Inaudible] speak to some of the things we know we must do now in the state of Georgia based upon law, and we are going to be compliant but at the same time ensure that we do have equity where these schools of Decatur all truly means all.<sup>93</sup>*

The CSD Board of Education adopted Policy BAC as revised in November 2023.<sup>94</sup> The policy as adopted describes equity as “both an outcome and a process.” Outcome-based equity “results in fair and just

access to opportunity and resources that provide all humans the ability to thrive.”<sup>95</sup> Process-based equity consists of the following actions:

1. *intentionally and methodically evaluat[ing] benefits and burdens produced by neutral systems and practices;*
2. *engag[ing] those most impacted by the problems as experts in their own experiences, strategists in co-creating solutions and evaluators of success, and*
3. *engag[ing] in intentional action that ensures access, resources, and opportunities for individuals with the greatest need.*<sup>96</sup>

Policy BAC requires CSD staff to require all employees to “continuously raise the level of achievement for all students while eliminating academic disparities; . . . identify and aggressively address inequities in access to opportunities/opportunity gaps; . . . actively recruit, support, and retain a diverse workforce by using an equitable hiring tool; . . . participate in district-approved, annual, and ongoing multicultural professional development for administrators, teachers, and staff to strengthen employee knowledge, skills, and abilities to eliminate disparities in achievement, course and program placement, and discipline[;] . . . consistently review and evaluate existing policies, programs, professional development, and procedures annual to ensure equity through the use of an equity analysis tool[;] . . . develop all new policies, programs, and procedures with the aid of a racial equity analysis tool[; and] . . . equitably allocate sufficient resources to accomplish these goals.”<sup>97</sup>

The policy declares that CSD “shall actively model its commitment to equity by aligning all processes and procedures to applicable law and the district’s Definition of Equity, including but not limited to . . . [d]ecision-making at every level[.]”<sup>98</sup>

CSD also focused on so-called “gender identity” issues in its schools. Earlier in 2023, CSD had adopted Regulation JAA-R(2), which describes the policies and practices the school district uses to carry out its nondiscrimination policy with respect to



students’ “gender identity.” Huddleston presented the contents of CSD’s “gender identity” regulation to the school board on October 10, 2023.<sup>99</sup>

The regulation declares that “students will be permitted to use restrooms, locker rooms, and changing facilities corresponding to the gender identity the student asserts at school.”<sup>100</sup> Regarding interscholastic athletics and activities, Regulation JAA-R(2) explains that CSD will comply with the rules of the Georgia High School Association; however, “[w]here other gender-segregated activities exist, students should be able to participate in accordance with the gender identity asserted at school.”<sup>101</sup> CSD ignored the biologically based protections of Title IX, the landmark civil rights law prohibiting sex-based discrimination in federally funded schools, colleges, and universities, when developing these policies.

## Chapter 5

### The New Superintendent

CSD hired Dr. Gyimah Whitaker as its superintendent in July 2023.<sup>102</sup> A Philadelphia native, Whitaker holds degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and Georgia State University. She had just served as the deputy chief academic officer, area superintendent, and executive director of Georgia’s fourth-largest school district, Fulton County Schools.<sup>103</sup>

At approximately the same time that she began leading CSD, Whitaker traveled to Jackson, Mississippi, to become a fellow of the Southern Education Foundation’s Racial Equity Leadership Network.<sup>104</sup> SEF describes the initiative as “an 18-Month Fellowship Program for Executive Leaders in districts who are committed to addressing persistent disparities in their systems and ensuring that race and class are no longer the most reliable predictors of student success.”<sup>105</sup> Committed to these goals, she returned to CSD as a newly minted “RELN Fellow” to implement the school district’s strategic plan, “All In Decatur.”

“All In Decatur” runs from July 2023 (just before the adoption of the board’s equity policy and after the hiring of Whitaker) to June 2028. According to a summary, it represents CSD’s “five-year strategic plan to bring out the best in our students, educators, families, and city through outstanding, inclusive public education.” Despite this nod to inclusivity, the summary then declares, “When we say ALL, we mean ALL, with a deliberate focus on investing in students of color who have been historically marginalized the most.” The summary states that CSD “[w]eaves equity into the fabric of everything we do.”<sup>106</sup>

Accordingly, the executive summary of All In Decatur’s Strategic Plan Objectives, published by CSD’s Project Management Office and last updated in May 2025, contains multiple objectives and progress assessments based on race. The document identifies one objective as “[c]los[ing] the achievement gap of our students who have been traditionally marginalized.” It says that the scope of the project is to “[e]liminate achievement gaps by focusing on effective leadership in addressing disparities in academic performance among different student groups, particularly those traditionally marginalized . . . .” It lists as a “Major Milestone” that has been completed as of July 2024 “creat[ing] structured, equitable learning environments that support student success, particularly for marginalized communities.” The document identifies the estimated cost of achieving that objective as \$500,000 and

a target completion date of June 30, 2028.<sup>107</sup> CSD has published its progress with respect to “content mastery” by what it refers to as the “Black Subgroup” in a number of different areas, from elementary-school math to high-school American literature.<sup>108</sup>

In line with Policy BAC’s requirement that new and existing policies be reviewed based on their contributions to equity, CSD published a “CSD Equitable Planning Tool” in August 2024.<sup>109</sup> That tool declares that “[r]esearch and data indicate that persistent racial disparities exist in CSD in which individual, institutional, and structural impacts of race, racism, and other biases are pervasive and significant in our student outcomes. Thus, we are tasked with paying our education debt to students who experience these outcomes.”<sup>110</sup> According to the tool:

*Every member of the CSD community is expected to share an awareness of inequity and a personal commitment to eliminating inequities through intentional action. The CSD Equitable Planning Tool lays out a clear seven-step process to ensure that all significant decisions in CSD are aimed toward paying our educational debt and advancing equity.<sup>111</sup>*

With respect to all kinds of decisions, the CSD Equitable Planning Tool requires staff members to determine:

*How will the proposal address racism, close opportunity gaps, and pay our education debt?*

*How will the proposal impact populations such as black, ELL, Special Education, and/or economically disadvantaged students?*

*How have key internal and external interested/affected groups (such as black, ELL, Special Education, and/or economically disadvantaged students, families, and staff) been engaged in considering and shaping the proposal?*

*What has our engagement told us about the potential positive and/or negative impacts of the proposal for different groups and how this proposal might produce or perpetuate racial inequity?<sup>112</sup>*

The CSD Equitable Planning Tool contains a cover sheet that requires the user to identify “Interested/Affected Groups Consulted” regarding each decision, including a “[l]ist of core participants’ names, affiliation to an interested/affected group (staff, students, families, community advocates, partners, etc.), and their racial/ethnic identities.”<sup>113</sup>

“  
The CSD Equitable Planning Tool contains a cover sheet that requires the user to identify ‘Interested/Affected Groups Consulted’ regarding each decision, including a ‘[l]ist of core participants’ names, affiliation to an interested/affected group (staff, students, families, community advocates, partners, etc.), and their racial/ethnic identities.’  
”

Although Whitaker dedicated herself to “equity” in the district, signs of tension began to emerge regarding whether she viewed “equity” in the same way as her equity staff. Soon after Dr. Whitaker became superintendent, on December 31, 2023, Dr.

Huddleston—then CSD’s associate superintendent of equity and student services—left her post “to pursue an opportunity in the private sector.”<sup>114</sup>

In remarks to a local media outlet in October 2024, after nearly a year at the helm of CSD, Whitaker lauded the school district’s commitment to equity as “the vehicle to excellence” but said that “[w]e are expanding our efforts from a more singular focus on racial equity to a broader focus on meeting the individual needs of students, regardless of their identity. After reviewing academic and discipline data during my 90-day entry plan, it was clear that we needed to expand our equity work with focused action steps that correlate to increased student achievement and outcomes to accomplish the goals of the five-year All In Decatur strategic plan.”<sup>115</sup>

But Whitaker also said that CSD’s equity work will continue to align with the district’s race-focused strategic plan. “We’re closing that gap [between black and white students]. Closing the gap does not mean that our white students are dropping. It means that we are looking at how in which [sic] we accelerate the learning for our Black students.”<sup>116</sup> CSD Board of Education Chair Dr. Carmen Sulton confirmed the continued racial focus of the district: “Dr. Whitaker also looks at reading and math from the lens of closing the achievement gap for our most marginalized students. While this will take time, we are beginning to see some improvements in targeted areas.”<sup>117</sup>

Meanwhile, the district’s Director of Equity and Professional Learning Mari Ann Banks and her equity staff maintained a vast database of resources devoted to defeating “white supremacy” in CSD schools.

## Chapter 6

### The Equity Database

Until early 2025, CSD’s Deputy Superintendent webpage linked to an equity database called “Equity @ CSD.” As of the date of this report’s publication, visiting the “Equity” webpage results in an error message, but the internet archive resource Wayback Machine archived that database 47 times between March 5, 2021, and February 10, 2025.<sup>118</sup>

The CSD equity database contains the obligatory “land acknowledgment” that has become a ritual of the progressive left:

*It is important to recognize the longstanding history that has brought us to reside on the land which encompasses City Schools of Decatur and to seek to understand our place within that history. Land acknowledgments do not exist in a past tense or historical context: U.S. colonialism is a current, ongoing process, and we demonstrate mindfulness of that fact through this act. We stand in solidarity with Indigenous People; we acknowledge their sovereignty, culture, and enduring presence and we call for the repatriation of their land across Turtle Island.<sup>ii</sup>*

---

ii “Turtle Island” is a term, purportedly based on Native American lore, used by intersectionalists to refer to North America. For more on how extremists devoted to intersectionalism have adapted and weaponized this term to delegitimize U.S. institutions and justify violent

*CSD is on land that belongs to the Muscogee Creek. Muscogee ancestors built expansive towns and inhabited the present states of Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina for thousands of years. Yet, from 1739–1832 this indigenous population experienced involuntary removal from their land through many colonizing and genocidal actions; one of which was called “Indian land cession” (see below for an excerpt). This is just one example from a series of broken treaties and institutionally racist actions by the State of Georgia and the United States Government who carried out genocide, ethnic cleansing, and forced removal against the Creek as a way to acquire land. Yet, despite all efforts to remove the population, this is still land under the stewardship of the Indigenous peoples of this area. It will always be so.*

*Indigenous people are not relics of the past. They are still here and they continue to demonstrate their talents and gifts amidst a backdrop of systemic colonialism and oppression. The Muscogee Nation is the fourth largest tribe in the U.S. with 86,100 citizens and the Tribal headquarters of the Creek Nation is now located in Okmulgee, Oklahoma.*

*We honor and respect the indigenous people still connected to Turtle Island, the U.S., GA, Decatur, and the land on which we educate young people today. We stand with them as we take this moment to appreciate our place in their human family.<sup>119</sup>*

The CSD equity database includes an FAQs page that asks the following question: “How should I handle a racist (sexist, ableist, etc.) incident at CSD, or, I think my teacher/administrator is being racist (sexist, ableist, etc.), [sic] what should I do?”<sup>120</sup> It answers:

*Racism isn’t something that happens “somewhere else.” Unfortunately, it happens right here in the halls of our schools, within the confines of our academic departments, and throughout our city, state, and country. It is sometimes purposely inflicted by strangers, other times unconsciously by well-intentioned colleagues and friends, and, most influentially, systemically. If you believe you have experienced racism at CSD it is imperative that we investigate and address your concerns.<sup>121</sup>*

**The CSD equity database contains a vast array of resources relating to training educators and teaching students that white supremacy pervades America’s schools and that ‘whiteness’ and ‘eurocentrism’ must be decentered from their learning.**

According to the FAQs page, “CSD employees often say, ‘We can’t just be against racism—we must be anti-racist’. [sic] What does that statement mean?” (emphasis in original).<sup>122</sup> CSD answers, “Defeating racism calls for more than just ‘disagreeing with’ or ‘disliking it’—we’ve got to consistently and actively work towards equality for all races while striving to undo racism in our minds, our personal environments, and the world. In other

acts to “liberate” its territory, see DFI’s and LIF’s report, [Intersectionality: The Rise of a Dangerous Anti-American Ideology and How to Stop It](#), at pages 25–26.

words, we all have to do active work against racism—or— [sic] we are upholding racism.”<sup>123</sup>

The CSD equity database contains a vast array of resources relating to training educators and teaching students that white supremacy pervades America’s schools and that “whiteness” and “eurocentrism” must be decentered from their learning. The database links to a “Culturally-Responsive Curriculum Scorecard” and a “Culturally Responsive-Sustaining STEAM Curriculum Scorecard,” both developed by the NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development.

The Curriculum Scorecard is based on the assertion that “[c]urricula that only reflect the lives of dominant populations—for example, White people and culture, nuclear families, or able-bodied people—reinforce ideas that sideline students of color, linguistically diverse students, single parent/multi-generation/LGBTQ+ led families, and differently-abled students.”<sup>124</sup> The scorecard thus provides to “parents, teachers, students, and communities” a way to evaluate the extent to which curricula “provide opportunities and resources for teachers to utilize culturally responsive practices.”<sup>125</sup>

The Curriculum Scorecard includes a section called “Decolonization, Power, & Privilege,” described as follows:

*This section focuses on understanding relationships among people, worldviews, resources, ideas, and power dynamics. Historically, public school curricula reflected Eurocentric ideas and culture, while the contributions and philosophies of other groups were excluded, minimized, misrepresented, or relegated to a small portion of the curricula. A culturally responsive curriculum centers sources of knowledge, experiences, and stories of diverse groups of people.*<sup>126</sup>

The STEAM Curriculum Scorecard seeks “to help parents, teachers, administrators, students, and community members determine the extent to which their schools’ Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) curricula are (or are not) culturally responsive.”<sup>127</sup> It acknowledges “the possible negative, stressful, or traumatic experiences or memories



that could be surfaced when thinking about STEM experiences in school,” calling for “historically marginalized folks . . . to (re)claim STE(A)M and your right to it.”<sup>128</sup>

CSD’s equity database also links to Teaching for Change’s “Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Children’s Books.”<sup>129</sup> This guide is based on the notion that young children “need to know about people from all social identity groups who have—and are currently—working for justice for all.”<sup>130</sup> The resource also discourages the use of any books published prior to the 1970s because of their failure to promote “social justice”-oriented and identity-based messages:

*More children’s books began to reflect the reality of a pluralistic society and nonsexist and non-ableist perspectives in the 1970s. Since then, the range of accurate, respectful, and caring books reflecting diversity has increased significantly (unfortunately the diversity of books published in the United States still does not accurately reflect the actual diversity of the people living here). When considering new books for your collection, begin with most recently published ones and then continue with descending copyright dates.*<sup>131</sup>

The CSD equity database explains that critical race theory (CRT) is “really not the big bad wolf that some would like you to believe it is”<sup>132</sup> and is “merely a theory that explicates the historical perspective of an honest, lived truth for many BIPOC [black, indigenous, and people of color] in the US.”<sup>133</sup> The database links to an article that describes CRT as “an intellectual framework that examines how racism is embedded in the laws, policies, and institutions (schools, for example) of the United States. It’s a way of understanding how racial inequality is built into the systems around us.”<sup>134</sup> According to the CSD-endorsed article:

*The U.S., and all of its laws and institutions, were founded and created based on the myth of white supremacy—the assumption that lighter skin and European ancestry meant that white people were better and deserved a higher social and economic position than people of color. Because racism is embedded within our systems and institutions, codified in law, and woven into American public policy, this racial inequality is replicated and maintained over time. Thus, systemic racism shows up in nearly every facet of life for people of color.*<sup>135</sup>

The article explains that CRT “provides educators the tools they need to transform current practices in teaching and learning and to examine the attitudes and biases—implicit or explicit—that they bring into their classrooms.”<sup>136</sup> Although “CRT isn’t part of most standard K–12 curricula, . . . the influence of critical race theory in K–12 is real—and for many schools and educators, it’s helping to shift practices in ways that center equity, truth, and justice.”<sup>137</sup>

The CSD equity database identifies the following resources for CSD teachers to use to include CRT in their curricula: “How Should I Talk About Race in My Mostly White Classroom?,” “Stop Hiding in Your Classroom—It’s Time to Talk About Race,” “Talking About Race,” “31 Children’s Books to Support Conversations on Race, Racism & Resistance,” “NYT—26 Mini-Films for Exploring Race, Bias and Identity with Students,” “A TED Talk: What Kids Should Know About Race,” “How to Talk to Kids About Microaggressions (Embrace Race),” “Anti-Racist Book List for ALL Ages K–Adult!” (emphasis in original), and “Understanding Prejudice: Tips for Elementary School Teachers.”<sup>138</sup>

The database describes “Culturally Relevant Pedagogy In Mathematics” as “a critical need,” discusses “Math as Social Justice,” and presents a resource called “Radical Math” that it says “empowers educators to address issues of social and racial justice in math classrooms through curriculum, lesson planning resources, and professional development opportunities.”<sup>139</sup> It recommends “Culturally Relevant Science” and offers a path to “Becoming an Anti-Racist Music Educator” with a resource “explor[ing] the ways that Whiteness manifests in music education and . . . examin[ing] actions music teachers might take to resist Whiteness.”<sup>140</sup>

“  
The database describes ‘Culturally Relevant Pedagogy In Mathematics’ as ‘a critical need,’ discusses ‘Math as Social Justice,’ and presents a resource called ‘Radical Math’ that it says ‘empowers educators to address issues of social and racial justice in math classrooms through curriculum, lesson planning resources, and professional development opportunities.’  
”

Resources in the CSD equity database include a chart labeled “Opportunities for White Folk in the Fight for Racial Justice: Moving from Actor, to Ally, to Accomplice,” which “draws from ideas and resources developed mostly by Black, Brown, and People of Color” and “challenges White folks to go outside of our comfort zones, take some bigger risks, and make some more significant sacrifices because this is what we’ve been asked to do by those most impacted by racism, colonialism, patriarchy, white supremacy, xenophobia, and hyper-capitalism.”<sup>141</sup>

The webpage includes a resource on “Multiple Types of Privilege” and “How to Decenter Yourself in Conversations with Members of Marginalized Communities,” the latter of which is described as follows:

*There are parts of all our identities where we find ourselves having privilege. For example, although I am a Black woman and Black people are marginalized in the US, there are parts of my identity where I do have historical privilege such as being a Christian in the United States, having a middle-class socioeconomic status, and having an extensive post-secondary education. If someone who is historically marginalized is trying to tell us what life is like for them, then it is important for us to seek to understand others’ experiences, reflect before contributing to a conversation, and use our own privilege to give marginalized groups a platform. These behaviors can help create safer spaces for meaningful discourse.*<sup>142</sup>

According to the equity database, district staff “have seen positive signs of the influence of our work in a reduction of suspension and expulsion outcomes.”<sup>143</sup> According to the website:

*We are proud of the work we have done; yet, CSD is still very much a work in progress. We are far from fully paying our education debt to our Black students; so, without hesitation, we continue our pursuit of equity and pledge to revise, escalate, and rededicate our efforts until we achieve that goal.*<sup>144</sup>

## Chapter 7

### The Federal Threat

On November 19, 2024, two weeks after the reelection of Donald Trump to the presidency, the CSD Board of Education hosted a retreat at Decatur High School. During the final hour of a four-and-a-half hour meeting, Superintendent Whitaker delivered to the board a presentation entitled “Equitable Outcomes for All Students.”<sup>145</sup> Sometimes, Whitaker would play the teacher—asking board members to “silent solo” (i.e., write down) their reactions to her presentation and then discuss these with each other. At other points, she would play the impassioned foil to members of the board who seemed willing to sacrifice state and federal funding in their quixotic campaign against alleged systemic racism.

Whitaker told the board that, in August and September 2023, she attended equity team meetings to learn more about the equity efforts of the school district. There, she encountered language (which she showed the board on one of her presentation slides),<sup>146</sup> apparently from anti-racist training assessments of district staff, that referred to “Anti-Blackness, Whiteness/White Supremacy” and “Systemic Oppression, Anti-Racism.” Statements, questions, and assessments discussed at those meetings included:

*I can identify and confront anti-Blackness and whiteness/white supremacy culture when it shows up in my instructional practices or interactions with students, personally, locally, and immediately.*

*What characteristic(s) of white supremacy culture has/have been a barrier(s) to student engagement in your role or building?*

*If non-White, are aware of how their internalized (conscious or unconscious) racism/bias/oppression can manifest in deficit perspectives of students. If White, are aware of how their internalized (conscious or unconscious) bias/racism can manifest in deficit perspectives of students.*

*What is one way that you have individually perpetuated anti-Blackness and/or white supremacy culture in your role since our training in July?<sup>147</sup>*

According to Whitaker, Georgia House Bill 1084, which prohibits public school teachers in the state from teaching certain “divisive concepts,” “flies in the face of what I saw in the equity team meeting,” and, in fact, the law specifically calls out some of the language that CSD staff was using in the meeting.<sup>148</sup> “And law trumps policy every day of the week.”<sup>149</sup>

Whitaker then discussed the potential risks related to the incoming president’s election and the forthcoming priorities of his administration:

*So now, it’s November 2024, specifically two weeks ago[,] . . . we’re talking about eliminating*

*the Department of Education at the federal level . . . . And [an Atlanta Journal-Constitution] article specifically talks about how that law is going to put all the funding to do all of the things that we talked about from this table at risk.*

*So House Bill 1084 says we're going after your [state funding] if you are espousing what the lawmakers label divisive concepts—the concepts in red in that spoken sequence.*

*So now, I'm a leader, so I've got to figure out how can we still do equity, but we can't do it the way we've been doing it. Because not only is it for the black students that I was asked to look into, but realize your federal dollars come for all of your special education students as well.<sup>150</sup>*

Turning to a slide featuring a November 15 media story regarding the president-elect's plans to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education, Whitaker continued:

*So what does that say? That says to me, as the CEO of the City Schools of Decatur, I can't be the person who puts us at risk and puts the target on our backs even larger, because, guess what, the state is actually here already, and what are they actually talking about. They're talking about this.<sup>151</sup>*

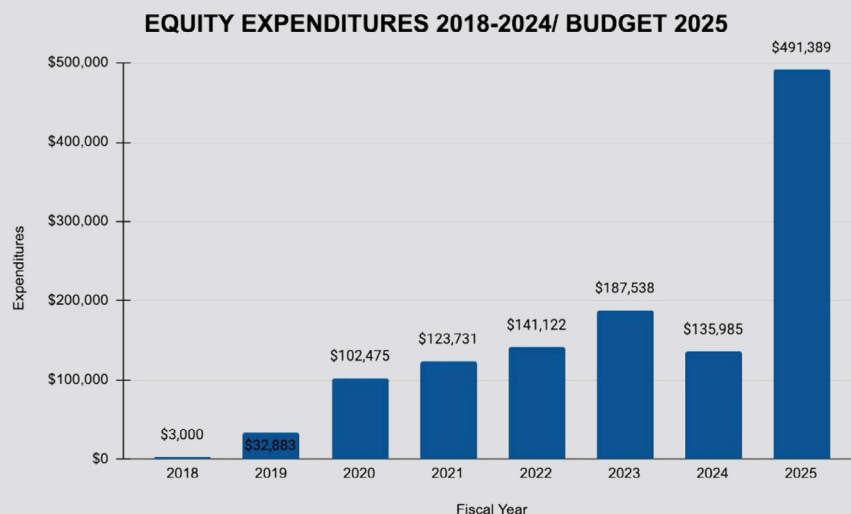
When questioned by CSD Board Vice Chair Utz regarding whether she planned to only focus the district's work on equitable outcomes, Whitaker pushed back: "I'm saying that [equity] has to be interwoven in everything."

Whitaker made clear during her presentation that her vision of "equity" in CSD—focused on closing discipline and achievement disparities between black and white students while jettisoning some of the extreme racial rhetoric from district trainings and teaching—definitively does not mean reducing the district's focus on "marginalized" (e.g., black) students. On the contrary, when questioned by CSD Board Vice Chair Utz regarding

whether she planned to only focus the district's work on equitable outcomes, Whitaker pushed back: "I'm saying that [equity] has to be interwoven in everything."<sup>152</sup>

For that reason, she proposed creating an "Equitable Outcomes Executive Director," who would, among other things, "[o]versee the development and implementation of a comprehensive Equity and Student Outcome Plan which builds upon the current board-adopted Equity Policy (BAC)" and "[a]ssist schools with identification of needs and areas of growth and assessment of student outcomes to include marginalized populations."<sup>153</sup> The "equitable outcomes" focus would include supporting "the development and implementation of evidence-based strategies to close achievement gaps, with a focus on marginalized student groups"; pushing staff "to mitigate the impetus of subgroups to inappropriate special education evaluations"; and offer "coaching in the use of classroom management and behavior support strategies to *promote equity and diminish implicit bias in disciplinary practices*" (emphasis in original).<sup>154</sup> She added, "As a black woman, there is no way in the world I wouldn't want any child not to feel safe, seen, or successful, but I can't do it the way it was done before."<sup>155</sup>

## CSD Investment in Equity 2018-2025



\* Includes Salaries and Operational Expenditures

28

Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, Superintendent, City Schools of Decatur, *Equitable Outcomes for All Students* (November 19, 2024), 28, <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=4052&AID=1727242&MID=121352>.

One of Whitaker’s slides, labeled “Investment in Equity 2018–2025,” shows combined spending on equity by CSD from fiscal year 2018 to 2024 of \$726,734—compared to \$491,389 CSD had budgeted for equity efforts in fiscal year 2025 alone.<sup>iii 156</sup>

Just over two months later, on January 23, 2025, the president signed Executive Order 14173, *Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity*, which ordered “all executive departments and agencies . . . to terminate all discriminatory and illegal preferences, mandates, policies, programs, activities, guidance, regulations, enforcement actions, consent orders, and requirements” and “to enforce our longstanding civil-rights laws and to combat illegal private-sector DEI preferences, mandates, policies, programs, and activities.”<sup>157</sup> It also directs “the Attorney General and the Secretary of Education [to] jointly issue guidance to all State and local educational agencies that receive Federal funds . . . regarding the measures and practices required to comply with *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*, 600 U.S. 181 (2023).”<sup>158</sup>

iii The slide implies that this figure “includes salaries and operational expenditures,” but a local media outlet reported in October 2024 that, according to documents received pursuant to a records request, CSD spent \$611,660 on its equity initiatives from 2015 to June 2024, plus staff salaries of approximately \$1.8 million between 2017 and 2024. Zoe Seiler, “Decatur Schools’ Equity Efforts Refocused after Previous Work Didn’t Close Achievement Gap,” *Decaturish*, October 22, 2024, [https://www.decatrish.com/news/decatrish/decatrish-schools-equity-efforts-refocused-after-previous-work-didn-t-close-achievement-gap/article\\_ba1a2e6a-5b94-53a4-b32d-4ecc0b4cdb55.html](https://www.decatrish.com/news/decatrish/decatrish-schools-equity-efforts-refocused-after-previous-work-didn-t-close-achievement-gap/article_ba1a2e6a-5b94-53a4-b32d-4ecc0b4cdb55.html). Because Whitaker’s slide records an expense of only \$3,000 on equity in 2018—the year after the district had hired Dr. Huddleston as its equity director—it is highly unlikely that the slide reflects staff salaries.

On January 29, 2025, the president signed Executive Order 14190, *Ending Radical Indoctrination in K–12 Schooling*.<sup>159</sup> That order directs federal agency heads to develop an “Ending Indoctrination Strategy” that includes “eliminating Federal funding or support for illegal and discriminatory treatment and indoctrination in K–12 schools, including based on gender ideology and discriminatory equity ideology.”<sup>160</sup> It includes several examples of “discriminatory equity ideology,” including the notions that “an individual, by virtue of the individual’s race, color, sex, or national origin, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously”; “an individual’s moral character or status as privileged, oppressing, or oppressed is primarily determined by the individual’s race, color, sex, or national origin”; and “the United States is fundamentally racist, sexist, or otherwise discriminatory.”<sup>161</sup>

The implementation of these orders by federal agencies, including the Department of Education, resulted in a flurry of activity by the CSD Board of Education—resulting in the brief rescission of the board’s equity policies, followed by their reinstatement, as discussed in this report’s introduction.

More quietly, CSD administrators concealed the vast trove of CSD equity resources discussed above and renamed “equity”-related initiatives in the district. February 10, 2025—three weeks after the inauguration of President Trump—was the final time the Wayback Machine archived CSD’s equity database; at the time of this report’s publication, it remains inaccessible to the public. As of November 10, 2024, the CSD website’s page for the school district’s deputy superintendent identified that office as housing a “Department of Equity and Professional Learning.” Presently, the deputy superintendent’s webpage does not refer to any such department.<sup>162</sup>

**CSD administrators concealed the vast trove of CSD equity resources discussed above and renamed “equity”-related initiatives in the district.**

The term “equity” on the deputy superintendent’s webpage, which once linked to the CSD equity database, now links to a modified description of the district’s equity efforts as focused on “ensur[ing] that all students have access to and feel welcome to participate in high-quality learning experiences regardless of race, socioeconomic status, gender, ability, religion, sexual orientation, linguistic diversity, or other cultural characteristics.”<sup>163</sup> Whereas the submerged CSD equity database referred to the need to cater specifically to “marginalized” groups to pay the education debt, the current language focuses on “a culture that is reflective and inclusive of all students and staff regardless of cultural or racial background.”<sup>164</sup>

This way of characterizing “equity” in the district apparently did not sit well with the coordinator of the district’s equity program, Dr. Mari Ann Banks. In early 2026, she reposted a criticism of institutions for cutting DEI programs and offices in response to the Trump administration’s offensive against discriminatory policies and practices and added:

*The damage done by pre-capitulation to these mandates is incalculable. Now that the*

*mandate's teeth have been removed, how quickly will our institutions move to replace and reinstate what and who they eliminated?*

*Ok, so you got scared, that's human. Now you don't have to be. Your move.*<sup>165</sup>

In late March 2026, she posted an article on her LinkedIn page that criticizes the movement to end DEI and defiantly argued that DEI in schools and workplaces was here to stay:

*This . . . say it, mean it, and create policies that undergird it. Do not walk away from it when it gets uncomfortable or when it's just getting started—that is the essence of the work. Also, to [the author's] point, it's too late (republicans) to congratulate yourselves for “eliminating DEI”—the tsunami of diverse students and employees moving into positions they deserved decades ago—[sic] has already begun 🙄.*

....

*JEDI [Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion] isn't a temporary initiative, a two-day training, a fiscal milestone, or a luxury to be trimmed during a budget cut. JEDI is an operational system that builds organizational resilience by thoughtfully and intentionally ensuring that every voice is not merely present, but heard and actively integrated into the conversation, resulting in real policy change. Only after you create this kind of experience for the people in your organization—only after you do the dang thing for real—will you begin to see the ROI [return on investment] that you desire.*

*Real system transformation is a marathon, not a sprint, and if you quit before it's over, there's no way that you will ever win the race.*<sup>166</sup>

Banks left CSD in April 2026 and is currently working at a consulting company she founded in March 2024.<sup>167</sup> CSD has removed the position of “Director of Equity and Professional Learning” from the CSD’s “Deputy Superintendent” webpage.<sup>168</sup>

Since 2023, CSD has periodically published a newsletter—“Supe Scoop”—featuring a note from the superintendent and news and updates from the school district. Showcasing its resistance to the administration’s efforts to purge DEI from education, the January/February 2025 “Supe Scoop” included a note assuring students and families that the district would not alter its policies or practices in response to what it referred to as “recent federal changes”:

*I want to reassure you that as directed by our local Board of Education, we will continue to support our teachers and staff in implementing the established board policies and district regulations that reflect the Decatur community's values of inclusive and engaging learning environments that foster trust, understanding, and respect for all. We will also adhere to state and federal laws protecting students.*<sup>169</sup>

The April/May 2025 “Supe Scoop” was more explicit in its reference to “the wave of executive orders initiated on January 22, 2025, aimed at eliminating DEI initiatives in all federally funded institutions, including K–12 schools.”<sup>170</sup> The newsletter again signaled no changes to the district’s equity policies and practices in response to these directives:

*As we continue to navigate these rapid changes, I continue to appreciate our community’s partnership and engagement as we strive toward ensuring equitable outcomes for all students. Our priority remains to provide high-quality instruction, resources and services in safe, nurturing and supportive learning environments where all students are successful.*

*All still means All in CSD.*<sup>171</sup>

Policy BAC remains the board’s official framework for equity in the school district. The district also continues to implement Regulation JAA-R(2) to require that students use bathrooms, locker rooms, and similar sex-separated facilities on the basis of “gender identity,” not sex, and that female students compete in non-interscholastic sports with boys and men who identify as female.<sup>iv</sup>

## Conclusion

At the end of her November 2024 presentation to the school board, Superintendent Whitaker played a recording of a 5th grader who had been enrolled in CSD schools since kindergarten.<sup>172</sup> As she struggled through a reading assessment, the student couldn’t recognize simple words in each sentence. As Whitaker recognized, a student may feel a sense of “nonbelonging” for multiple reasons—perhaps not due to her race or ethnicity, but because she cannot read. Amidst the rampant school-district focus on “normalizing, organizing for, and operationalizing” racial equity, school staff inexcusably neglected to teach this fifth grader that basic skill.

CSD’s version of “racial equity” isn’t about helping individual students at all; rather, it is about advancing an ideology that constructs “white supremacy” as the enemy of all that is good and enlists our young in defeating that vaguely defined supervillain.

Superintendent Whitaker’s frank admission about the shortcomings of CSD’s “racial equity” work in improving student outcomes prior to her arrival at the school district—and the need to incorporate “a broader focus on meeting the individual needs of students, regardless of their identity”—begs the question what that work is supposed to accomplish in the first place.

iv On April 21, 2025, CSD revised Policy JAA-R(2) to make clear that “[s]chool staff will comply with state and federal law regarding disclosure [of information related to a student’s “gender identity”] to the student’s parents and will provide requested information to parents” and “[p]arents will continue to have access to their student’s education records in accordance with FERPA.” Compare City Schools of Decatur, *Regulation JAA-R(2): Equal Educational Opportunities* (2023), 4, <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=4052&AID=1566877&MID=113098>, with City Schools of Decatur, *Regulation JAA-R(2): Equal Educational Opportunities* (2025), <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Policy/ViewPolicy.aspx?S=4052&revid=PodJK1swslshN6IxdBFN9B0LA==&ptid=amIgtZiB9plushNjl6WXhfiOQ==&se-cid=p6v70fd4K8ukRv6vtplusTtSg==&PG=6&IRP=0&isPndg=false>. It did not change the district’s facilities-access or athletics-participation policies under the regulation.

Based on the CSD policies and resources explored in this report, the unsettling answer seems to be that CSD’s version of “racial equity” isn’t about helping individual students at all; rather, it is about advancing an ideology that constructs “white supremacy” as the enemy of all that is good and enlists our young in defeating that vaguely defined supervillain. In doing so, two of the district’s superintendents and the school board allowed their equity staff to run amok, spending millions of dollars to inculcate teachers in a race-obsessed dogma, establish “anti-racist” task forces in every school, publish DEI manifestos as official district newsletters, and inject appalling notions of “whiteness” and privilege into the discussions of middle-school classrooms.

To the Education Department’s credit, it appears to have convinced Whitaker and perhaps some CSD school-board members that staying the course on racial equity in the district is not worth losing approximately three million dollars in federal funding—not to mention what the district stands to lose from the state of Georgia when its lawmakers and policymakers learn more about what the district has been teaching its students.

But, notwithstanding federal and state enforcement efforts, Whitaker is fully committed to “equity” and is still implementing policies that require district and school decisions, small and large, to be made on the basis of race. Policy BAC remains unchanged. The teachers and staff over whom she serves have been trained to believe that they must “pay the debt” to black students or consider themselves part of the problem. The course descriptions at her middle school still reflect an effort to “decolonize” the curriculum. In short, the machinery of equity continues to turn.

CSD’s response to the Trump administration’s efforts to purge DEI from schools begs several questions. If there were no enforcement threat from the Department, what then? Would the district acknowledge that its “racial equity” programs and policies were a failed, misguided, and illegal experiment, leave its “Equity @ CSD” website inaccessible, and amend its policies to recognize that *every* child is unique and must not be treated on the basis of his or her race, color, or national origin? Or would it keep its racial-equity efforts, unimpeded by any threat to federal funding and requiring each student to learn before he or she graduates that America is built on white supremacy and that one must choose between being an ally or an enemy?

CSD’s failure to change its policies on access to intimate facilities and sports on the basis of “gender identity” suggests an answer to these questions. Unlike its DEI policies, the district sees its policies on bathroom access and sports eligibility to be relatively safe from the Education Department’s enforcement threat. Perhaps that is because the requirements at issue are not as central to the district’s strategic plan and have thus far not garnered the attention they deserve.

It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that the district’s shift regarding “racial equity” points not to a sudden change of heart, but rather to panicked behavior by officials who fear enforcement action by an administration that is interested in enforcing civil-rights law according

“ Only a strong district policy that unambiguously reinforces the commands of the Equal Protection Clause and Title VI will prevent administrators and schools from one day returning to an emphasis on ‘racial equity’ over academic achievement by each individual student. ”

to its letter and meaning. Once that enforcement threat has passed, it is likely that DEI will once again pervade the CSD system. Only a strong district policy that unambiguously reinforces the commands of the Equal Protection Clause and Title VI will prevent administrators and schools from one day returning to an emphasis on “racial equity” over academic achievement by each individual student.

States, school districts, and communities must stop these racially discriminatory policies from capturing their schools. If they do not, schools will continue to fail the very students to whom they claim to be “paying the debt.”

## **About the Author**

**Paul Zimmerman** serves as Senior Counsel, Policy & Regulatory, at DFI. He leads the Teacher Union Accountability Project and assists with DFI’s federal agency transparency and oversight efforts. Before he joined DFI, Paul served as Counsel at the U.S. Department of Commerce. Prior to that, he worked at the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies, where, in various roles, he served as sole editor of the Society’s law review and helped establish networks of lawyers, judges, academics, and think tanks across Europe and on other continents. He earned his bachelor’s degree at Duke University and his J.D. at the Georgetown University Law Center. He is a member of the Maryland and District of Columbia bars and of the Federalist Society’s Civil Rights Practice Group Executive Committee.

## **The Defense of Freedom Institute for Policy Studies, Inc.**

DFI is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization focused on providing thoughtful, conservative solutions to challenges in the areas of education, workforce, labor, and employment policy. Through a unique blend of policy and legal expertise, we fight to expand school and work opportunities for all Americans; to limit the power of federal agencies and government-sector unions; and to defend the civil and constitutional rights of all Americans in the classroom and the workplace.

## Endnotes

- 1** April 15, 2025 Board of Education Meeting, City Schools of Decatur, April 15, 2025, video, 4:13:39, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lf6CggqZUgY&list=PLtkZsZ9W0py0HiDpxYZHIVRTRduqlCXPQ&index=9>.
- 2** April 15, 2025 Board of Education Meeting, City Schools of Decatur, video, 4:24:19.
- 3** April 15, 2025 Board of Education Meeting, City Schools of Decatur, video, 4:26:31.
- 4** April 15, 2025 Board of Education Meeting, City Schools of Decatur, video, 4:25:47.
- 5** “Special Called Meeting: 04/29/2025—04:30 PM, III. Policy,” City Schools of Decatur, last accessed June 11, 2026, [https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SB\\_Meetings/ViewMeeting.aspx?S=4052&MID=125489&Tab=Agenda&enI-ID=dOstX2VwXx2IllfCNGxdyg%3D%3D](https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SB_Meetings/ViewMeeting.aspx?S=4052&MID=125489&Tab=Agenda&enI-ID=dOstX2VwXx2IllfCNGxdyg%3D%3D).
- 6** Compare “Equity @ CSD,” City Schools of Decatur, February 10, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250210141443/https://equity.csdecatur.net/> (archived by Wayback Machine) with <https://equity.csdecatur.net/> (the latter displaying an error message stating that the website “can’t provide a secure connection”).
- 7** “Equity,” City Schools of Decatur, last accessed June 11, 2026, <https://www.csdecatur.net/our-district-5f/departments/office-of-the-superintendent/deputy-superintendent/equity>.
- 8** Dan Whisenhunt, “Decatur Schools’ First Equity Employee Announces Departure,” *Decaturish*, December 19, 2023, [https://www.decaturish.com/news/decatur/decatur-schools-first-equity-employee-announces-departure/article\\_b18c2167-ec06-5d68-8fce-32921ada4149.html](https://www.decaturish.com/news/decatur/decatur-schools-first-equity-employee-announces-departure/article_b18c2167-ec06-5d68-8fce-32921ada4149.html).
- 9** Dan Whisenhunt, “City Schools of Decatur Hires ‘Equity Director,’ Fills Other Key Positions,” *Decaturish*, May 16, 2017, [https://www.decaturish.com/news/decatur/city-schools-of-decatur-hires-equity-director-fills-other-key-positions/article\\_09eb52a0-9397-52df-84d8-b4d7921af526.html](https://www.decaturish.com/news/decatur/city-schools-of-decatur-hires-equity-director-fills-other-key-positions/article_09eb52a0-9397-52df-84d8-b4d7921af526.html).
- 10** “A Brief History of Our Equity Work,” City Schools of Decatur, January 23, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250123133740/https://equity.csdecatur.net/how-did-csd-get-here> (archived by Wayback Machine).
- 11** “A Brief History of Our Equity Work,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 12** Gloria Ladson-Billings, “From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools,” *Educ. Researcher*, Vol. 35, No. 7 (Oct. 2006), 9, [https://thrive.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/From%20the%20Achievement%20Gap%20to%20the%20Education%20Debt\\_Understanding%20Achievement%20in%20US%20Schools.pdf](https://thrive.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/From%20the%20Achievement%20Gap%20to%20the%20Education%20Debt_Understanding%20Achievement%20in%20US%20Schools.pdf).
- 13** Ladson-Billings, “From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools,” 10.
- 14** “A Brief History of Our Equity Work,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 15** “Courageous Conversations About Race,” EducatorEd, June 5, 2024, [https://web.archive.org/web/20240605061602/https://www.educatorred.com/courses/courageous\\_conversations.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20240605061602/https://www.educatorred.com/courses/courageous_conversations.html) (archived by Wayback Machine).
- 16** Pacific Educational Group and Knowledge Delivery Systems, *Course Syllabus: Courageous Conversations about Race* (New York: Knowledge Delivery Systems, Inc., 2014), 3, [https://web.archive.org/web/20240605070002/https://www.educatorred.com/courses/documents/courageous\\_conversations/Syllabus\\_CCAR\\_%2045hours.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20240605070002/https://www.educatorred.com/courses/documents/courageous_conversations/Syllabus_CCAR_%2045hours.pdf).
- 17** Pacific Educational Group and Knowledge Delivery Systems, *Course Syllabus*, 7.”
- 18** “A Brief History of Our Equity Work,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 19** “A Brief History of Our Equity Work,” City Schools of Decatur.

- 20** “CSD & CCAR,” City Schools of Decatur, November 10, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20241110152733/https://equity.csdecatur.net/what-is-csds-equity-plan/csd-and-ccar> (archived by Wayback Machine).
- 21** “CSD & CCAR,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 22** “FAQ’s,” City Schools of Decatur, January 23, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250123150350/https://equity.csdecatur.net/faqs> (archived by Wayback Machine).
- 23** “Courageous Conversation Affiliates,” City Schools of Decatur, March 19, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250319134210/https://equity.csdecatur.net/what-is-csds-equity-plan/meet-our-ccar-affiliates> (archived by Wayback Machine).
- 24** “A Brief History of Our Equity Work,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 25** “A Brief History of Our Equity Work,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 26** “A Brief History of Our Equity Work,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 27** “A Brief History of Our Equity Work,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 28** “Equity Teams,” City Schools of Decatur, January 23, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250123140408/https://equity.csdecatur.net/what-is-csds-equity-plan/district-and-school-equity-teams> (archived by Wayback Machine).
- 29** “Equity Teams,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 30** “A Brief History of Our Equity Work,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 31** “mari ann banks, ph.d, j.d.,” LinkedIn, last accessed June 11, 2026, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/docmari/>.
- 32** Zoe Seiler, “Decatur Schools’ Equity Efforts Refocused after Previous Work Didn’t Close Achievement Gap,” *Decaturish*, October 22, 2024, [https://www.decaturish.com/news/decatur/decatur-schools-equity-efforts-refocused-after-previous-work-didn-t-close-achievement-gap/article\\_ba1a2e6a-5b94-53a4-b32d-4ecc0b4cdb55.html](https://www.decaturish.com/news/decatur/decatur-schools-equity-efforts-refocused-after-previous-work-didn-t-close-achievement-gap/article_ba1a2e6a-5b94-53a4-b32d-4ecc0b4cdb55.html).
- 33** Dr. Maggie Fehrman, Superintendent, City Schools of Decatur, et al. to the State Board of Education and Richard Woods, Georgia State Superintendent of Schools, June 3, 2021 (on file with the author), 1.
- 34** Fehrman to the State Board of Education, 1.
- 35** Zoe Seiler, “Decatur School Board Discusses District’s Work related to Equity,” *Decaturish*, September 15, 2021, [https://www.decaturish.com/news/decatur/decatur-school-board-discusses-district-s-work-related-to-equity/article\\_3e0e3380-941a-54ab-86e9-eba9264ef130.html](https://www.decaturish.com/news/decatur/decatur-school-board-discusses-district-s-work-related-to-equity/article_3e0e3380-941a-54ab-86e9-eba9264ef130.html).
- 36** Dr. Mari Ann Banks, Department of Equity and Student Services, City Schools of Decatur, *The ARE Pillar of CSD’s Framework for Equitable Outcomes* (September 14, 2021), 12, <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=4052&AID=1313885&MID=93880>.
- 37** Banks, *The ARE Pillar*, 13.
- 38** Banks, *The ARE Pillar*, 13.
- 39** Banks, *The ARE Pillar*, 13.
- 40** Banks, *The ARE Pillar*, 13.
- 41** Banks, *The ARE Pillar*, 13.
- 42** Banks, *The ARE Pillar*, 13.
- 43** Julian Fortuna and Koan Roy-Meighoo, *JADE Program Proposal* (2021), 1, <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=4052&AID=1313911&MID=93880> (at page 60 of the materials).

- 44** Fortuna and Roy-Meighoo, *JADE Program Proposal*, 2.
- 45** Fortuna and Roy-Meighoo, *JADE Program Proposal*, 2–3.
- 46** Fortuna and Roy-Meighoo, *JADE Program Proposal*, 6–7.
- 47** Fortuna and Roy-Meighoo, *JADE Program Proposal*, 7.
- 48** Fortuna and Roy-Meighoo, *JADE Program Proposal*, 8.
- 49** Fortuna and Roy-Meighoo, *JADE Program Proposal*, 9.
- 50** Fortuna and Roy-Meighoo, *JADE Program Proposal*, 10.
- 51** *The ARE Pillar of CSD’s Framework for Equitable Outcomes*, presentation by Dr. Mari Ann Banks, Department of Equity and Student Services, City Schools of Decatur, September 14, 2021, video, 1:54:51, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5X0fnTNU14>.
- 52** Zoe Seiler, “Decatur School Board Discusses Decolonizing the Curriculum,” *Decaturish*, November 30, 2022, [https://www.decatrish.com/news/decatrish/decatrish-school-board-discusses-decolonizing-the-curriculum/article\\_eef6d4f5-8d4a-5979-a604-3ec83d4d2a9a.html](https://www.decatrish.com/news/decatrish/decatrish-school-board-discusses-decolonizing-the-curriculum/article_eef6d4f5-8d4a-5979-a604-3ec83d4d2a9a.html).
- 53** Seiler, “Decatur School Board Discusses Decolonizing the Curriculum.”
- 54** Dr. Mari Ann Banks, Department of Equity and Student Services, City Schools of Decatur, *Decolonizing Our Curriculum* (November 29, 2022), 4, <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=4052&AID=1472947&MID=102626>.
- 55** Banks, *Decolonizing Our Curriculum*, 4.
- 56** *JADE Lesson 3—Identity*, 6, [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1tyYnfWHL7t5jI-vvvK6-HUfJCCHR8m-tguh-DW1X493Q/edit?slide=id.g158e3562c0c\\_0\\_107#slide=id.g158e3562c0c\\_0\\_107](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1tyYnfWHL7t5jI-vvvK6-HUfJCCHR8m-tguh-DW1X493Q/edit?slide=id.g158e3562c0c_0_107#slide=id.g158e3562c0c_0_107).
- 57** *JADE Lesson #3*, 1, [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uL53wxu6\\_6ejWaN8QJd0PeZr3lKP\\_SSeva0bHHiEZeg/edit?tab=t.0](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uL53wxu6_6ejWaN8QJd0PeZr3lKP_SSeva0bHHiEZeg/edit?tab=t.0) (also on file with the author).
- 58** *JADE Lesson #3*, 1–2.
- 59** Zoe Seiler, “Decatur School Board Renames Renfroe Middle School to Beacon Hill Middle School,” *Decaturish*, May 11, 2022, [https://www.decatrish.com/news/decatrish/decatrish-school-board-renames-renfroe-middle-school-to-beacon-hill-middle-school/article\\_4e9e5eb3-3926-5edf-92e5-2110b0f1a86c.html](https://www.decatrish.com/news/decatrish/decatrish-school-board-renames-renfroe-middle-school-to-beacon-hill-middle-school/article_4e9e5eb3-3926-5edf-92e5-2110b0f1a86c.html).
- 60** Seiler, “Decatur School Board Renames Renfroe Middle School.”
- 61** City Schools of Decatur, *Beacon Hill Middle School Course Descriptions, 2025–2026*, 4, [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qrZ\\_Z-7tanCyBCWg6YAtjuqpHeE6s8Rg/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qrZ_Z-7tanCyBCWg6YAtjuqpHeE6s8Rg/view).
- 62** “Academics & Student Services,” Beacon Hill Middle School, last accessed June 11, 2026, <https://bhms.csdecaur.net/teaching-learning>.
- 63** City Schools of Decatur, *26–27 Decatur High School Course Descriptions*, 9, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/11SSTpBD0Z9nw8BZCyGt7bV2g8eBhfp4TTSo2-xX80Bc/edit?tab=t.0>.
- 64** City Schools of Decatur, *26–27 Decatur High School Course Descriptions*, 21.
- 65** Dan Whisenhunt, “Investigation Finds Decatur Schools Equity Coordinator’s Email about Israel and Gaza Violated District Policies,” *Decaturish*, December 7, 2023, [https://www.decatrish.com/news/decatrish/investigation-finds-decatrish-schools-equity-coordinator-s-email-about-israel-and-gaza-violated-district-policies/article\\_def367b7-46c6-5f67-b916-4803831d56db.html](https://www.decatrish.com/news/decatrish/investigation-finds-decatrish-schools-equity-coordinator-s-email-about-israel-and-gaza-violated-district-policies/article_def367b7-46c6-5f67-b916-4803831d56db.html).

- 66** Zoe Seiler, “Feds Probe Decatur Schools’ Response to Equity Coordinator Email, Model Arab League Participation,” *Decaturish*, March 21, 2024, [https://www.decatrish.com/news/decatrish/feds-probe-decatrish-schools-response-to-equity-coordinator-email-model-arab-league-participation/article\\_980a244b-0173-5afa-b9c6-3d1c153476a4.html](https://www.decatrish.com/news/decatrish/feds-probe-decatrish-schools-response-to-equity-coordinator-email-model-arab-league-participation/article_980a244b-0173-5afa-b9c6-3d1c153476a4.html). The complaint also alleged that Decatur High School’s participation in the Model Arab League, which selected the high school to represent Palestine, constituted unlawful discrimination. Seiler, “Feds Probe Decatur Schools’ Response to Equity Coordinator Email.” DFI has found no record of OCR’s actions with regard to the complaint on its website.
- 67** Seiler, “Feds Probe Decatur Schools’ Response to Equity Coordinator Email.”
- 68** Whisenhunt, “Investigation Finds Decatur Schools Equity Coordinator’s Email about Israel and Gaza Violated District Policies.”
- 69** “Anthony L. D.,” LinkedIn, last accessed June 11, 2026, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/anthony-l-d-a9178199/>.
- 70** “Anthony L. D.,” LinkedIn.
- 71** “2022–2023 Newsletters,” City Schools of Decatur, January 23, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250123143823/https://equity.csdecatrish.net/equity-resources-newsletters/newsletters> (archived by Wayback Machine).
- 72** E.g., City Schools of Decatur, *Equity @ CSD*, Vol. 4, December 2022, 1 (on file with the author).
- 73** City Schools of Decatur, *Equity @ CSD*, Vol. 1, September 2022, 1.
- 74** City Schools of Decatur, *Equity @ CSD*, Vol. 4, December 2022, 1.
- 75** City Schools of Decatur, *Equity @ CSD*, Vol. 4, December 2022, 1.
- 76** City Schools of Decatur, *Equity @ CSD*, Vol. 4, December 2022, 1.
- 77** City Schools of Decatur, *Equity @ CSD*, Vol. 4, December 2022, 2.
- 78** City Schools of Decatur, *Equity @ CSD*, Vol. 4, December 2022, 2.
- 79** City Schools of Decatur, *Equity @ CSD*, Vol. 4, December 2022, 2.
- 80** City Schools of Decatur, *Equity @ CSD*, Vol. 9, May 2023, 1 (on file with the author).
- 81** City Schools of Decatur, *Equity @ CSD*, Vol. 9, May 2023, 2.
- 82** City Schools of Decatur, *Equity @ CSD*, Vol. 9, May 2023, 2.
- 83** City Schools of Decatur, *Equity @ CSD*, Vol. 9, May 2023, 2.
- 84** City Schools of Decatur, *Equity @ CSD*, Vol. 9, May 2023, 2.
- 85** *Board Policy BAC: Equity (DRAFT)*, 1, <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/DownloadPolicyPDF.aspx?S=NiDslshMTDL3UOY25CEaAgyqgw==&AttachmentID=6CfZsZeOrwZMkGP4qyOALg==&IID=kTC8lVBPvpvt149uY-b47Qg==> (linked from agenda for CSD Board of Education meeting on September 12, 2023)
- 86** *Board Policy BAC: Equity (DRAFT)*, 1.
- 87** *Board Policy BAC: Equity (DRAFT)*, 2.
- 88** *Board Policy BAC: Equity (DRAFT)*, 2.
- 89** *Equitable Outcomes for All Students*, presentation by Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, Superintendent, City Schools of Decatur, November 19, 2024, video, 4:28:46, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KL7O4dxQOE> (statement by CSD board member recounting that the board redlined much of the original Policy BAC at the direction of its attorney).

- 90** September 12, 2023, *Board of Education Meeting*, City Schools of Decatur, September 12, 2023, video, 34:49, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32Mv3XT0uEA&list=PLtkZsZ9W0py0HiDpxYZHIVRTRduqlCXPQ&index=28>.
- 91** September 12, 2023, *Board of Education Meeting*, City Schools of Decatur, 37:28.
- 92** September 12, 2023, *Board of Education Meeting*, City Schools of Decatur, 38:21.
- 93** September 12, 2023, *Board of Education Meeting*, City Schools of Decatur, 40:27.
- 94** City Schools of Decatur, *Board Policy BAC: Equity* (2023), <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Policy/ViewPolicy.aspx?S=4052&revid=5Y5CSkvnslshq0vTanwseAEsA==&ptid=amIgtZiB9plushNjl6WXhfiOQ==&secid=zxfvZYmcKk-pluslhKHZD4ftFA==&PG=6&IRP=0&isPndg=false>.
- 95** City Schools of Decatur, *Board Policy BAC: Equity*.
- 96** City Schools of Decatur, *Board Policy BAC: Equity*.
- 97** City Schools of Decatur, *Board Policy BAC: Equity*.
- 98** City Schools of Decatur, *Board Policy BAC: Equity*.
- 99** “Work Session: 10/10/2023—04:00 PM, i. Regulation JAA-R(2)—Equal Educational Opportunities,” City Schools of Decatur, [https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SB\\_Meetings/ViewMeeting.aspx?S=4052&MID=113098&Tab=A-genda&enIID=Vya7NdrvdvI18mmznOkUUA%3D%3D](https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SB_Meetings/ViewMeeting.aspx?S=4052&MID=113098&Tab=A-genda&enIID=Vya7NdrvdvI18mmznOkUUA%3D%3D).
- 100** City Schools of Decatur, *Regulation JAA-R(2): Equal Educational Opportunities* (2025), <https://simbli.eboard-solutions.com/Policy/ViewPolicy.aspx?S=4052&revid=PodJK1swslshN6IxdBFN9B0LA==&ptid=amIgtZiB9plushNjl-6WXhfiOQ==&secid=p6v70fD4K8ukRv6vtplusTtSg==&PG=6&IRP=0&isPndg=false>.
- 101** City Schools of Decatur, *Regulation JAA-R(2): Equal Educational Opportunities* (2025).
- 102** Zoe Seiler, “Decatur Schools’ Equity Efforts Refocused after Previous Work Didn’t Close Achievement Gap,” *Decaturish*, October 22, 2024, [https://www.decaturish.com/news/decatur/decatur-schools-equity-efforts-refocused-after-previous-work-didn-t-close-achievement-gap/article\\_ba1a2e6a-5b94-53a4-b32d-4ecc0b4cdb55.html](https://www.decaturish.com/news/decatur/decatur-schools-equity-efforts-refocused-after-previous-work-didn-t-close-achievement-gap/article_ba1a2e6a-5b94-53a4-b32d-4ecc0b4cdb55.html).
- 103** “Superintendent,” City Schools of Decatur, last accessed June 11, 2026, <https://www.csdecatur.net/our-district-5f/superintendent>.
- 104** *Equitable Outcomes for All Students*, presentation by Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, video, 3:37:17.
- 105** Southern Education Foundation, *Racial Equity Leadership Network: Fellowship Overview*, 1, [https://southern-education.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/RELN-Fellowship-Overview\\_2021.pdf](https://southern-education.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/RELN-Fellowship-Overview_2021.pdf).
- 106** City Schools of Decatur, *All in Decatur: 07/01/2023–06/30/2028, Summary*, 1, last accessed June 11, 2026, <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Planning/PlanView.aspx?S=4052&pid=GCQ0TXPplusjwaD0YA-QTP8uA%3D%3D&Tab=0>.
- 107** City Schools of Decatur Project Management Office, *2023–2028 All in Decatur Strategic Plan Objectives Executive Summary* (May 2025), 7, <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Planning/PlanSummaryAttachment.aspx?S=4052&aid=slshOMR2ExLkgExSbgNqZDukA==>.
- 108** “All in Decatur, 07/01/2023–06/30/2028, Balanced Scorecard,” City Schools of Decatur, last accessed June 11, 2026, <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Planning/PlanView.aspx?S=4052&pid=GCQ0TXPplusjwaD0YA-QTP8uA%3D%3D&Tab=4&Subtab=4>.
- 109** City Schools of Decatur, *The CSD Equitable Planning Tool*, v.5 (2024), 1 (on file with the author).
- 110** *The CSD Equitable Planning Tool*, 1.
- 111** *The CSD Equitable Planning Tool*, 1.

**112** *The CSD Equitable Planning Tool*, 11.

**113** *The CSD Equitable Planning Tool*, 13.

**114** Dan Whisenhunt, “Decatur Schools’ First Equity Employee Announces Departure,” *Decaturish*, December 19, 2023, [https://www.decaturish.com/news/decatur/decatur-schools-first-equity-employee-announces-departure/article\\_b18c2167-ec06-5d68-8fce-32921ada4149.html](https://www.decaturish.com/news/decatur/decatur-schools-first-equity-employee-announces-departure/article_b18c2167-ec06-5d68-8fce-32921ada4149.html).

**115** Whisenhunt, “Decatur Schools’ First Equity Employee Announces Departure.”

**116** Zoe Seiler, “Student Achievement Improves during Decatur Superintendent’s First Year,” *Decaturish*, March 27, 2025, [https://www.decaturish.com/news/decatur/student-achievement-improves-during-decatur-superintendent-s-first-year/article\\_dbe3d593-e551-58c2-80ef-c92fef20fd6.html](https://www.decaturish.com/news/decatur/student-achievement-improves-during-decatur-superintendent-s-first-year/article_dbe3d593-e551-58c2-80ef-c92fef20fd6.html).

**117** Seiler, “Student Achievement Improves during Decatur Superintendent’s First Year.”

**118** “Equity @ CSD,” City Schools of Decatur.

**119** “CSD Land Acknowledgment,” City Schools of Decatur, January 23, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250123141921/https://equity.csdecatur.net/equity-resources-newsletters/csd-land-acknowledgment> (archived by Wayback Machine).

**120** “FAQ’s,” City Schools of Decatur.

**121** “FAQ’s,” City Schools of Decatur.

**122** “FAQ’s,” City Schools of Decatur.

**123** “FAQ’s,” City Schools of Decatur.

**124** J. Bryan-Gooden, M. Hester, and L. Q. Peoples, *Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard* (New York: Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, New York University, 2019), 4, [https://lbhflearningpartnership.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/CRE\\_Rubric-2018-190110-Revised.pdf](https://lbhflearningpartnership.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/CRE_Rubric-2018-190110-Revised.pdf).

**125** Bryan-Gooden, Hester, and Peoples, *Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard*, 4.

**126** Bryan-Gooden, Hester, and Peoples, *Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard*, 6.

**127** Leah Q. Peoples, Tahia Islam, and Timothy Davis, *The Culturally Responsive-Sustaining STEAM Curriculum Scorecard* (New York: Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, New York University, 2021), 2, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bc5da7c3560c36b7dab1922/t/611d2fdc51de012b3803d0be/1629302755849/CRSE-STEAMScorecard.pdf>.

**128** Peoples, Islam, and Davis, *The Culturally Responsive-Sustaining STEAM Scorecard*, 3.

**129** “The Equity Toolkit,” City Schools of Decatur, January 23, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250123144731/https://equity.csdecatur.net/equity-resources-newsletters/equity-toolkit> (archived by Wayback Machine).

**130** Louise Derman-Sparks, “Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Children’s Books,” *Teaching for Change*, April 14, 2016, <https://www.teachingforchange.org/selecting-anti-bias-books>.

**131** Derman-Sparks, “Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Children’s Books.”

**132** “Equity Resources for Home,” City Schools of Decatur, January 23, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250123143906/https://equity.csdecatur.net/equity-resources-newsletters/equity-resources-for-home> (archived by Wayback Machine).

**133** “Equity Resources for Educators,” City Schools of Decatur, January 23, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250123140151/https://equity.csdecatur.net/equity-resources-newsletters/equity-resources-for-educators> (archived by Wayback Machine).

- 134** “EXPLAINED: The Truth about Critical Race (CRT) Theory and How It Shows Up in Your Child’s Classroom,” *Ed Post*, May 5, 2021, <https://www.edpost.com/explainer/explained-the-truth-about-critical-race-theory-and-how-it-shows-up-in-your-childs-classroom>.
- 135** “EXPLAINED: The Truth about Critical Race (CRT) Theory and How It Shows Up in Your Child’s Classroom.”
- 136** “EXPLAINED: The Truth about Critical Race (CRT) Theory and How It Shows Up in Your Child’s Classroom.”
- 137** “EXPLAINED: The Truth about Critical Race (CRT) Theory and How It Shows Up in Your Child’s Classroom.”
- 138** “Equity Resources for Educators,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 139** “Equity Resources for Educators,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 140** “Equity Resources for Educators,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 141** “Equity Resources for Educators,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 142** “Equity Resources for Educators,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 143** “A Brief History of Our Equity Work,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 144** “A Brief History of Our Equity Work,” City Schools of Decatur.
- 145** Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, Superintendent, City Schools of Decatur, *Equitable Outcomes for All Students* (November 19, 2024), 1, <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=4052&AID=1727242&MID=121352> (presented at CSD board retreat in November 2024).
- 146** *Equitable Outcomes for All Students*, presentation by Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, video, 3:43:17.
- 147** Whitaker, *Equitable Outcomes for All Students*, 15.
- 148** *Equitable Outcomes for All Students*, presentation by Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, video, 3:45:06.
- 149** *Equitable Outcomes for All Students*, presentation by Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, video, 3:46:19.
- 150** *Equitable Outcomes for All Students*, presentation by Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, video, 3:46:26.
- 151** *Equitable Outcomes for All Students*, presentation by Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, video, 3:48:10.
- 152** *Equitable Outcomes for All Students*, presentation by Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, video, 3:57:37
- 153** Whitaker, *Equitable Outcomes for All Students*, 35.
- 154** Whitaker, *Equitable Outcomes for All Students*, 39.
- 155** *Equitable Outcomes for All Students*, presentation by Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, video, 4:11:51.
- 156** Whitaker, *Equitable Outcomes for All Students*, 28.
- 157** Exec. Order No. 14,173, 90 Fed. Reg. 8633, 8633 (Jan. 31, 2025).
- 158** Exec. Order No. 14,173, 8635.
- 159** Exec. Order No. 14,190, 90 Fed. Reg. 8853 (Feb. 3, 2025).
- 160** Exec. Order No. 14,190, 8854.
- 161** Exec. Order No. 14,190, 8853–54.
- 162** “Deputy Superintendent,” City Schools of Decatur, last accessed June 11, 2026, <https://www.csdecatur.net/our-district-5f/departments/office-of-the-superintendent/deputy-superintendent>.

**163** “Equity,” City Schools of Decatur.

**164** “Equity,” City Schools of Decatur.

**165** mari ann banks, ph.d, j.d., “The damage done by pre-capitulation to these mandates is incalculable,” LinkedIn, approximately February 2026, [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/docmari\\_i-am-currently-on-a-cruise-and-i-just-saw-activity-7422053840646057984-ofvW?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop&rcm=ACoAABD3El4BPKPLupC54x2pt2LUODcYGPiofa0](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/docmari_i-am-currently-on-a-cruise-and-i-just-saw-activity-7422053840646057984-ofvW?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAABD3El4BPKPLupC54x2pt2LUODcYGPiofa0).

**166** mari ann banks, ph.d, j.d., “This . . . say it, mean it, and create policies that undergird it,” LinkedIn, approximately April 2026, <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7444612842659467264/?originTrackingId=%2Fb7dHkgelLQuEbKbHeA5Ag%3D%3D>.

**167** “mari ann banks, ph.d, j.d.,” LinkedIn.

**168** “Deputy Superintendent,” City Schools of Decatur.

**169** Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, *Supe Scoop* (January/February 2025), <https://app.smore.com/n/hck9s>.

**170** Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, *Supe Scoop* (April/May 2025), <https://app.smore.com/n/xjcbz>.

**171** Whitaker, *Supe Scoop* (April/May 2025).

**172** *Equitable Outcomes for All Students*, presentation by Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, video, 4:31:10.