



Remove Wilbanks as Superintendent

We, the Concerned Stakeholders of Gwinnett County Public Schools petition the Gwinnett County Board of Education to terminate Superintendent Wilbanks' contract.

Gwinnett County is the largest and most diverse county in the Southeast and as such needs a leader who is committed to equity. To secure a world-class educational system of excellence and equity, **the Board of Education shall install and supervise a superintendent who will be passionate about providing opportunities to all students** regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, sexuality, ability, immigration status, or primary language spoken.

Superintendent J. Alvin Wilbanks has misled GCPS for 24 years. He has enabled a racist and ableist school culture that caters to upper middle-class white students.

It is the duty of the Board of Education, on behalf of the people they represent, to remove and replace a superintendent who does not have the students' best interest. Mr. Wilbanks has engaged in nepotism at the district and local school level and implemented an exclusionary process of decision-making that stymies equitable representation. Equity requires genuine community engagement, and the Superintendent refuses to engage with the community in a meaningful way. **The Superintendent has an egregiously overpriced contract and unjustifiably lengthy tenure that far surpasses that of superintendents in comparable school districts.** The Board of Education must vote at its earliest convenience to exercise the ninety-day notice of termination to end Mr. Wilbanks' contract. Here are some of the ways that the Superintendent has failed GCPS:

EDUCATION INEQUITY & DISCRIMINATORY USE OF FUNDS

The Superintendent has been a barrier to equity and has neglected his role as the top instructional leader. GCPS has significant gaps in student access, opportunity, and achievement. On his watch, students have suffered exacerbated racial and class disparities in discipline and gifted/AP/IB enrollment¹. In addition, ELL and special education programs are in dire need of funding and qualified staff. **The Superintendent has mismanaged a 2-billion-dollar budget!**

- Students of color from low-income families and students with disabilities have been abandoned by GCPS. The digital divide in Gwinnett County, where students without home access to internet or devices face disadvantages in school, worsened during the pandemic. Digital learning has been a disaster which could have been prevented with proper planning and meeting student needs even before COVID-19. A failure of

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. (2017). Civil Rights Data Collection. Retrieved from: <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/profile/9/district/28916/disciplinereport>; <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/profile/9/district/28916/dualenrollmentdualcreditprograms>; <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/profile/9/district/28916/educationalequityreport>.

leadership from the Superintendent before and during 2020 has led to our current crisis.

- To appease the minority white residents of Gwinnett, Mr. Wilbanks builds schools and funds programs in majority white areas. A new artificial intelligence themed high school cluster will be created for Northern Gwinnett students while schools in the southern end are lacking basic technology needs. Mr. Wilbanks is using public dollars in a majority Black and Brown district to fund projects that benefit whiter and wealthier sections of the county.
- The unfortunate truth is in GCPS, Black students are over-represented in discipline and underrepresented in academic opportunities. Black students with disabilities comprise 35.9% of the student population yet represent 54.1% of referrals to law enforcement and 59.1% of school-based arrests.²

SUPPRESSING DISSENT & TOXIC SYSTEM CLIMATE

GCPS has suffered from a culture of secrecy and suppressing dissent. This culture of suppression comes from the top, and the Superintendent has reinforced it throughout his tenure. The district is more concerned about its reputation than the well-being of its students. Those who dare to question the policies or practices of GCPS are punished. Those that fall in-line are rewarded and promoted. Community members and staff are witnesses to the following:

- The Superintendent dismantled the school system's COVID task force July 2020 upon deciding to reopen schools without establishing safety guardrails on the continuance of in-person schooling. The Superintendent's intention is to keep schools open whether it is safe or not. Maude Jones who served as a special education paraprofessional at Rock Springs Elementary School died January 4, 2021 of COVID-19. She was in quarantine after her co-worker tested positive. Ms. Jones is not the first employee at GCPS to die from COVID-19. We demand that the Board take action to protect students and staff.
- During this pandemic, GCPS staff members are written up if they choose to disclose their positive COVID test results to staff they interacted with including co-teachers and paraprofessionals. Teachers have shared that there are significant discrepancies in COVID cases reported by GCPS and the accurate numbers.
- Superintendent Wilbanks sets the school system climate. His bullying and intimidation tactics are used against parents and students who openly express disagreement. The School Resource Officers issue no trespass notifications to parents if they continuously disagree with that school's administration. Students are retaliated against when their parents engage in advocacy.
- GCPS staff are reprimanded and threatened with their jobs if they openly express dissent. One recent example occurred at the board meeting on November 19, 2020. Superintendent Wilbanks berated a GCPS teacher, who has spoken about district issues at several board meetings. During this open rebuke, the Superintendent told the teacher that he was ready to accept his resignation immediately because of the teacher's dissention. This open public rebuke was intended to chill future dissent from any staff member.

We respectfully request Board action to remove Superintendent Wilbanks from his position. Please sign and share this petition if you agree it is time for a change in leadership.

² U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. (2017). Civil Rights Data Collection. Retrieved from: <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/profile/9/district/28916/discipline/schoolrelatedarrestwithdisabilities>.