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DeKalb County Schools Names Cheryl Watson-Harris as Finalist for District Superintendent

Current NYC DOE first deputy chancellor expected to start as superintendent July 1

STONE MOUNTAIN, Ga.— The DeKalb County Board of Education today announced Cheryl Watson-Harris as the sole finalist in its search for a new superintendent.

A celebrated leader with 26 years of experience in large urban school districts, Watson-Harris has a long history in education as a teacher, principal, network superintendent and senior executive director of field support. Currently, she serves as First Deputy Chancellor for the New York City Department of Education (DOE), the largest school district in the country with more than one million enrolled students.

“Cheryl Watson-Harris is part of the next generation of outstanding leaders in public education,” Board Chair Marshall Orson said. “A proven change agent, Cheryl is described as a ‘champion for children.’ She fits the criteria desired by the DeKalb community, including her dedication to high levels of academic achievement, her experience helping lead large, diverse, urban districts, her commitment to equity for all students, and her ability to plan with a long-term vision for the District.”

Georgia law mandates that school districts must wait 14 days before finalizing an agreement with a new superintendent. During this period, Watson-Harris will meet remotely with District employees and community members, including an online town hall meeting during which the public is invited to ask questions. To account for safety protocols regarding COVID-19, all meetings will be conducted virtually.

“Throughout my career as an education leader, I have made it my priority to ensure every child has access to high-quality education and is prepared for successful citizenship in our fast-paced 21st century global community,” said Watson-Harris. “I believe the public school system is the heart and soul of our country. I am passionate and excited about working with our district employees, our parents and caregivers, and the local business and corporate community to develop district practices that are impactful and equitable for children. I am confident my experience in district restructuring and the equitable allocation of resources, as well as my achievements in improving school performance, can help DeKalb Schools continue to move in the right direction.”

A New York City native, Watson-Harris began her career as an elementary school teacher in Brooklyn. After earning a master’s degree from Harvard, she served as an assistant principal and principal in Boston, becoming the youngest principal in the history of the Boston Public Schools. After serving as a network superintendent, she moved back to her hometown of Brooklyn to serve on the central leadership team of the New York City DOE. There, she designed the new school support and supervision structure for 1,600 schools and led the creation of the Comprehensive School Support Model, which allows the system to provide better planning and a more equitable distribution of funds. She currently oversees all the DOE executive superintendents and works to support and develop teachers, principals, and district administrators.

“This is a bittersweet day for us, and we are so grateful for all Cheryl has contributed to advancing equity and excellence for New York City’s 1.1 million public school students,” said DOE Schools Chancellor Richard A. Carranza. “We wish her the best in this incredible new endeavor and know the students of DeKalb County would be lucky to have Cheryl as their leader.”

Watson-Harris is expected to sign a contract with the DeKalb County School District (DCSD) after the public input period and formally assume the role of superintendent on July 1, 2020. Superintendent Ramona Tyson will continue to lead the District until Watson-Harris officially steps in.

The town hall will be available to view live on the [DCSD website](#) and via broadcast on DSTV 24 on Thursday, June 11 at 6:30 p.m. To submit questions for the town hall meeting with Watson-Harris, call 678-676-0722 or email dcsdsupesearch@dekalbschoolsga.org. For more information and updates about the schedule, visit the [superintendent search page](#) and follow the DCSD social media channels on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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