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Steve Martinez, Ed.D.*

*To inspire each student to
extraordinary achievement
every day*

Feb. 19, 2026

Dear Twin Rivers Unified School District Community,

It is with a deep sense of gratitude that I am writing to share that I will be stepping down from my role as Superintendent of Twin Rivers Unified School District at the end of October 2026. This decision comes after more than a decade of service to a community that has profoundly shaped both my professional journey and my life.

Thirteen years ago, I stepped into the leadership of a district that many believed could not succeed. Twin Rivers was born from the merger of four separate school systems, four cultures, four bargaining histories, four communities, and was still struggling to find its identity. In 2013, the district carried \$169 million in debt and was approaching the threshold of state receivership. Our graduation rate stood at 76%, and only 19% of our students were considered college-ready. Few superintendents would have chosen this assignment. I did because I saw what this district could become.

Together, we have realized that promise.

Twin Rivers now boasts a 92% graduation rate, higher than both state and county averages, and 46% college-readiness. We eliminated \$169 million in debt by 2020 without a single layoff, a recovery that stands among the most significant fiscal turnarounds in California public education. We invested hundreds of millions of dollars to modernize facilities so that every student has access to safe and inspiring learning environments.

But the story of Twin Rivers has always been about more than numbers. From the very beginning, every decision we made was guided by a single question: are we creating the conditions for our students to experience something meaningful, something they and their families will carry with them for the rest of their lives? That question shaped everything. We expanded pathways to college and career through dual enrollment, Career Technical Education, and dual immersion programs. We strengthened academic supports, invested in the whole child, and built systems that did not exist before — but the work that I am most proud of is what those systems made possible.

We built visual and performing arts programs from the ground up so that a child who had never held an instrument could walk across a stage and see their family in the audience. We created after-school athletics programs so that students had a place to belong when the final bell rang, and parents had a reason to come back to campus with pride instead of worry. We invested in extracurricular experiences, enrichment opportunities, and student activities that gave young people in our community something too many of them had never had: a moment of joy connected to their school.

None of this happened by chance. Every program, every investment, every initiative over the past thirteen years was intentional — orchestrated to ensure that Twin Rivers was not just a place where students were educated, but a place where they were celebrated. In a community where families carry extraordinary burdens, I believed that if we could create even one moment where a parent watched their child smile performing on a stage, competing on a field, or presenting a project they were proud of, then for those few minutes, the weight of everything else would lift. That was always the purpose behind the work. That is the Twin Rivers we built together.

In an era when the average superintendent tenure in America is fewer than four years, I have had the privilege of serving Twin Rivers for thirteen. This year carries special meaning as I prepare for this transition. The students who entered this district in Kindergarten in 2013, my first year as superintendent, are now graduating seniors. I have watched this class grow from wide-eyed learners taking their first steps into school to confident young adults ready for the next chapter of their lives. Their journey mirrors the growth of our district itself, and their success stands as one of the most meaningful measures of the work we have done together. To witness this full-circle moment is both humbling and deeply rewarding.

On a personal level, this decision reflects my desire to devote more time and energy to my family to be more present for the moments that matter most, to strengthen the relationships that have supported me throughout my career, and to embrace this next chapter surrounded by the people I love and cherish.

I want to address something directly. This decision is not a response to any challenge or pressure. I came to Twin Rivers with a commitment to help transform a district that many had written off, and together, we did exactly that. The challenges currently before us will be resolved under my watch, with the same urgency, transparency, and resolve that have defined our work from the beginning.

I will remain fully engaged in my role through October 31, 2026, ensuring continuity and supporting the Board of Trustees as they conduct a comprehensive search for Twin Rivers' next superintendent. The next leader of this district will inherit not just a transformed system, but one positioned on stable ground with the relationships, knowledge, and strategic runway necessary to succeed from day one.

I am extraordinarily proud of what we have accomplished together. None of this progress happened because of one individual. It is the result of teachers who refused to accept limits for

their students, classified staff who kept our schools running with pride and purpose, administrators who led with courage, families who trusted us with their children, community partners who invested in our vision, and a Board of Trustees willing to make student-centered decisions even when they were difficult.

Serving this district and our incredible students has been the honor of a lifetime.

I will continue to lead with the same energy and focus over the next eight months, with immense confidence in the future of Twin Rivers. The foundation is strong. The trajectory is upward. And the story of this district is far from finished — in many ways, it is just beginning.

With deep appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Martinez", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Steve Martinez, Ed. D.
Superintendent
Twin Rivers Unified School District