

# Del Norte Schools One County, Two Organizations



# Clarifying Differences: Understanding DNCOE and DNUSD

SINGLE-SINGLE COUNTY, SHARED GEOGRAPHY, DISTINCT ORGANIZATIONS, ROLES, & BUDGETS.

District budget & staff discussions often raise questions about staff, programs, and services belonging to the County Office of Education. The district and the county share campuses and collaborate closely on programs. However, they do not have shared budgets or authority; their separate roles protect services, ensure legal compliance, and serve the best interest of students county-wide in accordance with California law.



# The California Way: Roles Overview

California has two education entities in every county. School districts run day-to-day schooling—teaching, principals, bell schedules, and site budgets. The County Office of Education (DNCOE) is the single countywide agency that supports and oversees districts/LEAs and operates programs best run at the county level (e.g., foster/homeless services, alternative education, CTE, health services, and student supports).

<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>ROLE</b>	<b>FOCUS</b>
<b>DNCOE (County Office)</b>	<b>Supports LEAs; provides countywide student-services programs</b>	<b>Oversight, support services, advocacy</b>
<b>DNUSD (District)</b>	<b>Manage schools &amp; direct public instruction</b>	<b>Classrooms, site management</b>

# Governance Structures of DNCOE: Elected Superintendent

## UNDERSTANDING THE ROLES OF THE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT AND COUNTY BOARD

The **Del Norte County Office of Education (DNCOE)** operates under a different governance structure than the district. The **County Superintendent**, an elected constitutional officer, oversees the educational framework under specific statutory responsibilities and holds the highest authority in the county office of education. The **County Board of Education** provides governance in its specific areas (e.g., county school curriculum, COE LCAP approval, budget adoption, charter school approval, property purchases, etc.) while remaining distinct from the District's authority.

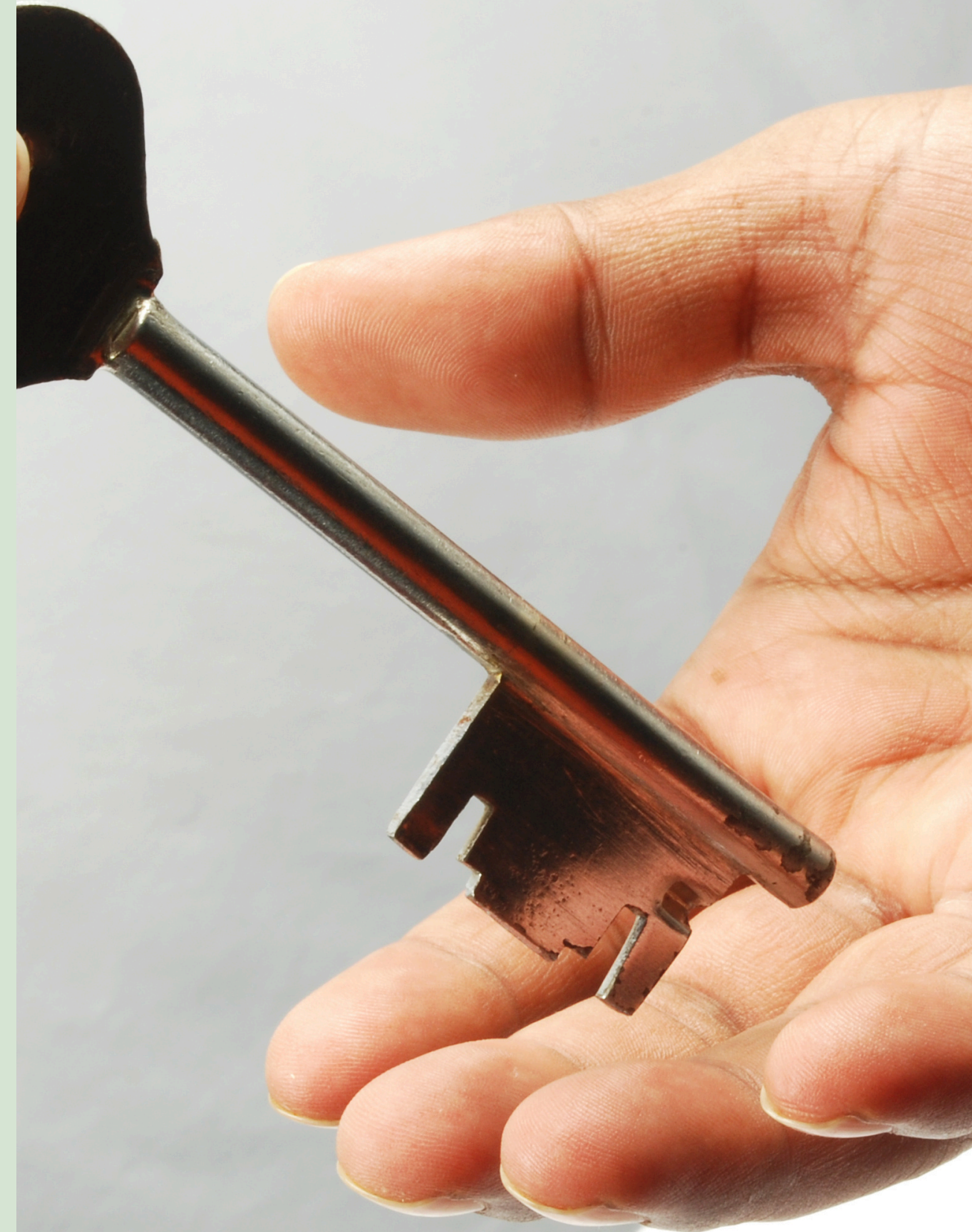


# Role of the County Office Superintendent

## SPECIFIC ROLES, FOR SPECIFIC AGENCIES

The **County Superintendent of Schools** is the county's chief education officer. Under Ed Code §1240, they oversee district fiscal health, ensure legal and instructional standards, conduct site reviews, and lead County Office services that support and strengthen districts.

- General Statutory Duties (Ed code §1240)
- Visitation and Inspection of LEAs
- Reporting Directly to the State Superintendent and Board
- Curriculum and Instruction Oversight
- Budget and Fiscal Oversight
- Charter School Oversight
- Personnel and Administration
- Public Information and Community Engagement



# Governance Structures of DNUSD: Elected Board of Trustees

## UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND SUPERINTENDENT IN DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

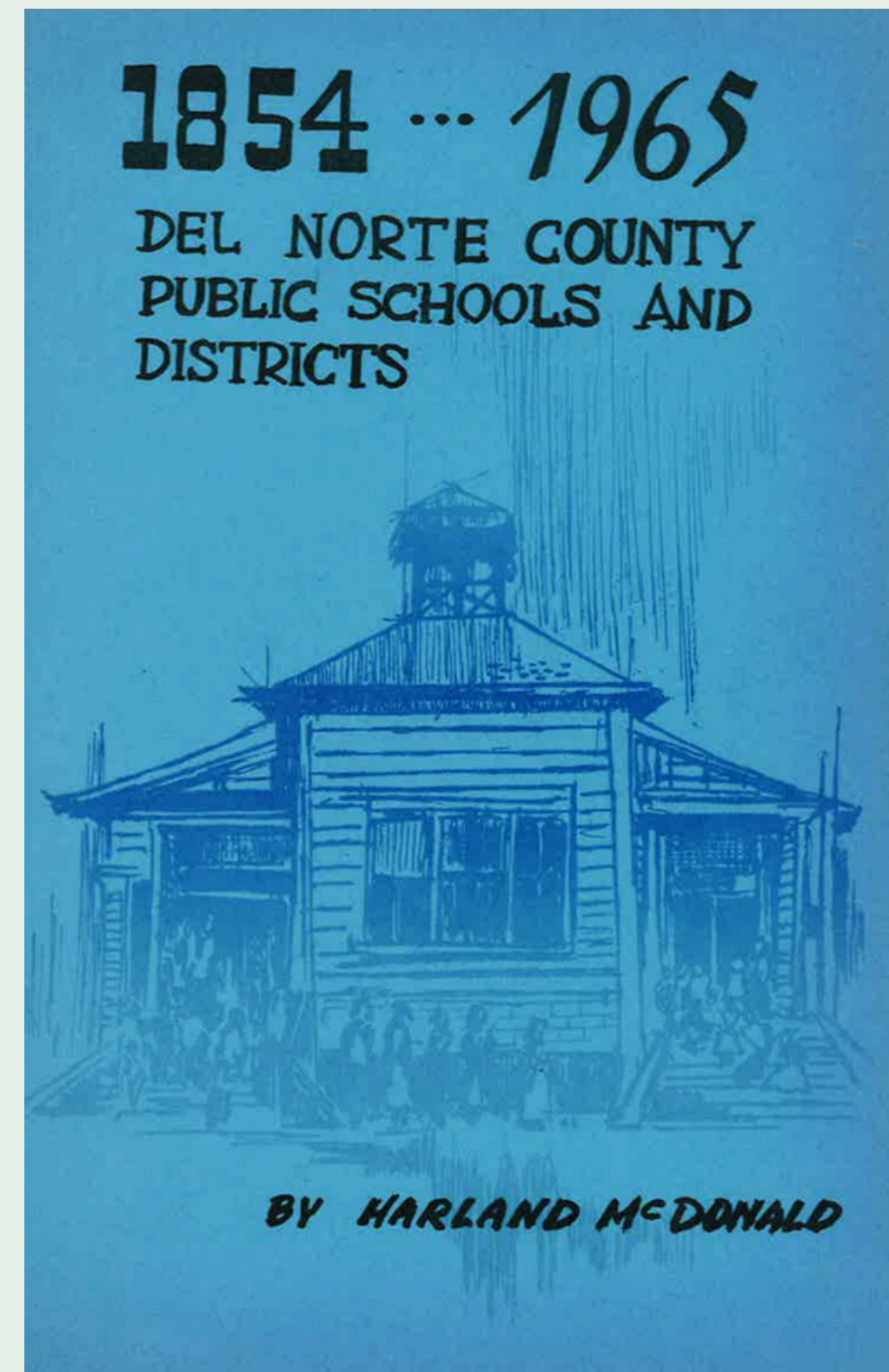
The **Del Norte Unified School District (DNUSD)** is governed by an elected school board, which oversees the district's educational policies, budget, and is the highest authority in the school district. The **superintendent**, as an employee of the board, is responsible for implementing these policies and managing district operations. This structure facilitates accountability, ensuring that community needs are prioritized and addressed efficiently.



# The Del Norte Way

## A COUNTY UNIFIED: HOW DEL NORTE'S SCHOOLS CAME TOGETHER

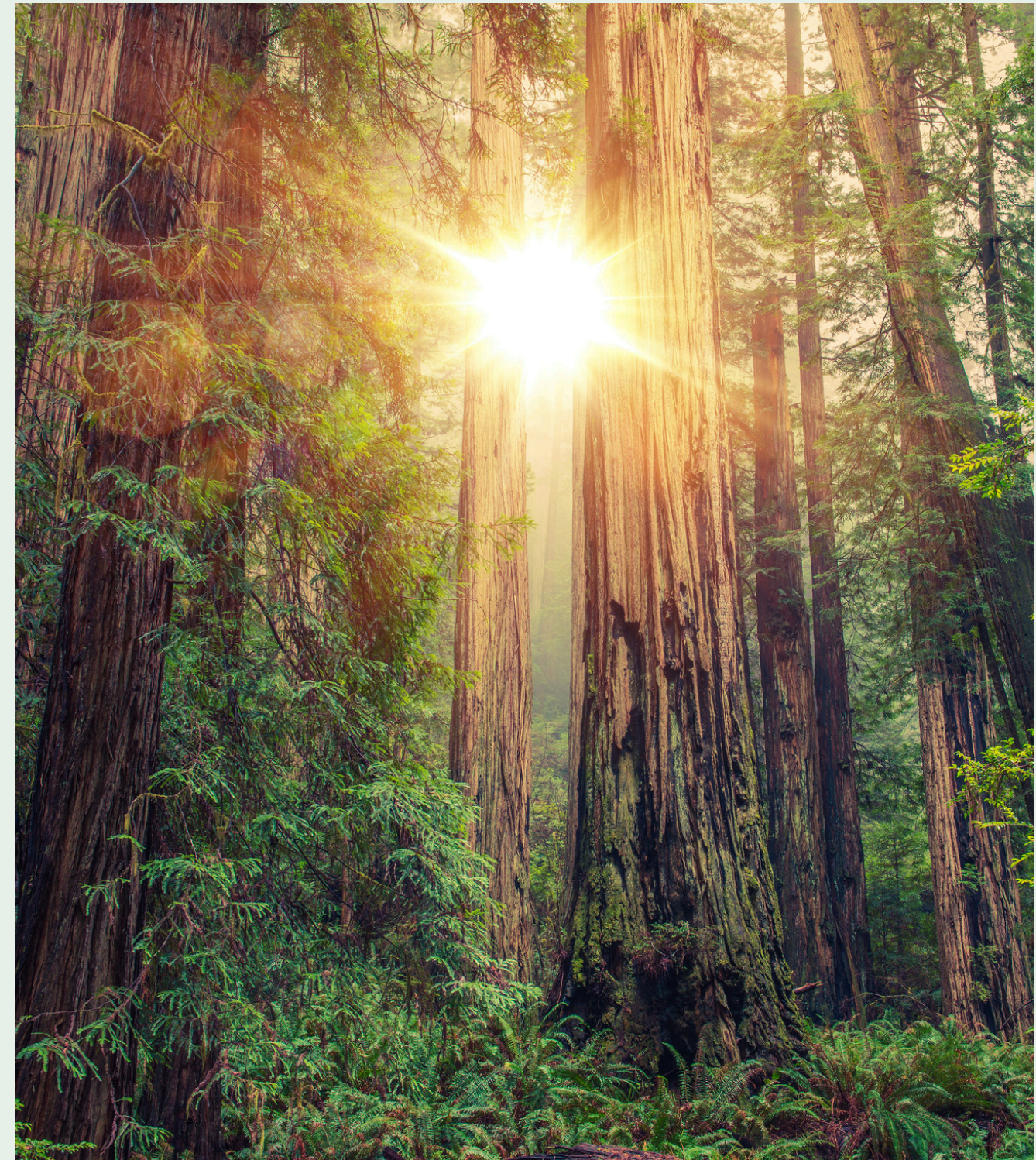
- Del Norte County's schools were initially divided into multiple small local districts throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.
- In **November 1964**, voters approved the **unification of all remaining school districts** into one county-wide system — the **Del Norte County Unified School District (DNUSD)**.
- On **July 1, 1965**, DNUSD officially began operation as both a **unified school district** and the **county's single public educational agency**, formalizing the structure still in place today.
- Paul Rosendahl became the **first unified District and County Superintendent**, following **Harland McDonald's** retirement as County Superintendent in June 1965



# The Del Norte Way

## HOW DISTRICT & COUNTY GOVERNANCE WORKS IN A SINGLE-SINGLE COUNTY

- Under **California Education Code §1000**, when a county has only one school district, that district's **board of trustees** automatically serves on the **County Board of Education**.
- Del Norte County elects a **County Superintendent of Schools**; under **Ed Code §35026**, that same individual may be **appointed by the district board** to serve as **District Superintendent**.
- This structure ensures **unified oversight, fiscal efficiency,** and **coordinated educational services** across all schools in Del Norte County.



# What Were The Results?

## OUR MODERN SYSTEM - UNIFIED DISTRICT & COUNTY OFFICE

### Pros

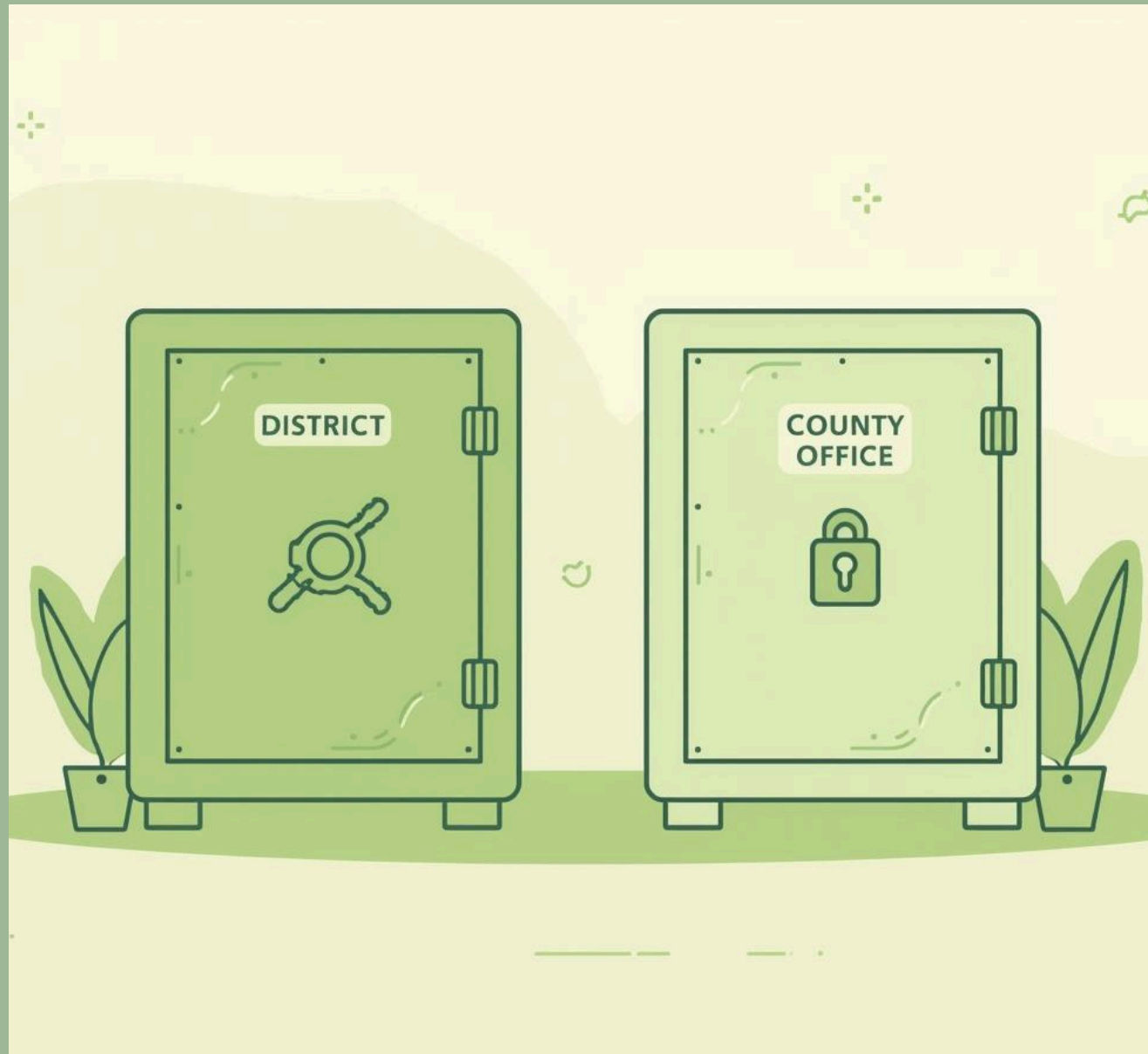
- The 1965 unification unified all public schools under a single system, **streamlining governance and operations**.
- Consolidated resources and shared services **increased efficiency** and **strengthened collaboration** in the county.
- Countywide coordination allowed **more equitable programs**, reducing the wide disparities that existed between districts in Del Norte.
- Today, this model allows Del Norte to **operate as one educational ecosystem**, allowing us to better serve every student in the community.

### Cons

While the system improved equity and collaboration, it also blurred the lines between two legally distinct organizations (DNCOE & DNUSD):

- **Budgets** – Separate funding streams and mandates, often misunderstood as shared.
- **Governance** – One board and superintendent serving dual roles can create confusion about oversight and authority.
- **Staffing** – County and District employees work side-by-side, leading to misunderstandings related to supervision or funding sources.

# Budget & Funding Separation



- Funds are legally distinct; not interchangeable per state law (Ed Code § 42621, §§ 1600–1606, §§ 1620–1630)
- DNUSD & DNCOE receive funds with restrictions that are required to be spent in specific ways.

# Addressing Misconceptions: COE and DNUSD Collaboration vs Consolidation

- **Myth:** DNUSD and DNCOE can directly cut or repurpose positions of the other.
- **Fact:** No, they cannot; they are separate employers with distinct budgets.
- **Myth:** If DNUSD has budget cuts, COE can fund them.
- **Fact:** No. Each entity has legal separation regarding funding and authority.
- **Myth:** Shared services, campuses, or staff mean shared budgets.
- **Fact:** No. Budgets remain separate, but collaboration remains high. The county office has historically provided support to LEAs in the county in the form of millions of dollars annually through Communications, IT, Health Services, Mental Health, CTE, and more.

# Clarifying Roles for Student Success

**UNDERSTANDING THE DISTINCT RESPONSIBILITIES OF DNCOE AND DNUSD IS ESSENTIAL FOR OUR COMMUNITY.**

Clear communication about the **differences in governance and funding** between DNCOE and DNUSD protects our educational services. By addressing common questions and misconceptions, we can foster a better understanding of how these organizations collaborate to support our students while maintaining their unique roles.

The Del Norte Schools Organization chart detailing both **county and district organizational details** can be found at [dnusd.org/org](https://dnusd.org/org)



# Bottom Line

- **District vs. County Office:** Shared campuses/programs ≠ shared budgets, oversight, or authority.
- **Ownership matters:** Some facilities and services are County Office of Education responsibilities, not District.
- **Why it's confusing:** District and County work very closely, and discussions about budgets and staff can blend groups together
- **Clarity reduces friction:** Defining who does what eliminates confusion and conflict at meetings.
- **Protects services:** Clear roles ensure essential student and family services continue to run smoothly.
- **Legal compliance:** Separation of duties ensures we follow state law.
- **Bottom line:** Collaboration is real; budgets and authority are distinct. Both the county and the district needs to operate within their means.

# Thank you!

We hope this has been helpful.  
For questions or additional information  
please reach out to:  
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