



# LEADERSHIP LENS

Dr. Douglas Hendrix Sr.

Interim Superintendent/CEO of Schools

## The First Ninety Days—A Beginning, Not a Bow

May 4, 2026

Ninety days ago, we stepped into something that did not ask for comfort. It asked for clarity. It asked for courage. It asked for a willingness to see what had been avoided, to hear what had been softened, and to confront what had quietly shaped outcomes for far too long. What began was not a performance, but a reckoning, a steady turning of the soil to understand what could grow and what could not.

And so, we listened.

We listened in rooms where truth did not come dressed for approval. We listened in hallways, in meetings, in schools, and in the spaces between words. We listened until the district could hear itself again. And what emerged was not always easy, but it was necessary. Because truth, even when it unsettles, is the only thing strong enough to build on.

From there, we began to move, not hurried, but intentional.

We stabilized what had been drifting. Expectations were no longer implied; they were spoken, lived, and reinforced. Time mattered again. Presence mattered again. Professionalism was not a suggestion; it became a shared agreement about how adults show up, because how adults show up will always determine what children receive.

We aligned what had been scattered.

For too long, work moved like separate currents, strong in places, but disconnected. And so we brought it together. Academics, operations, finance, human resources, student services, no longer functioning as isolated efforts, but as parts of a single body learning how to move in rhythm. The organizational chart was not a drawing; it was a declaration that fragmentation would no longer be our default.

Inside our schools, we returned to the classroom, the quiet center of everything.

Instructional time was protected as if it mattered, because it does. Schedules were tightened, not to control, but to create space for learning to breathe. Tier 1 instruction was defined, not as an idea, but as an expectation that could be seen, measured, and strengthened. Supports for students, academic, emotional, behavioral, were no longer scattered responses, but a coordinated system, designed to meet children where they are and move them forward.

We strengthened the way we carry responsibility.

Audits that lingered were completed. Systems that wavered were reinforced. Financial stewardship became visible, not assumed. Processes were clarified so fairness would not depend on interpretation. And when the unexpected arrived, as it always does, we did not retreat. We responded. A path was found to invest in people through mid-year pay increases while protecting the integrity of our commitments, including the Arena at Southlake. That is not convenience. That is discipline.

We built windows where there had been walls.

Data, once hidden in corners, now speaks in real time. A districtwide dashboard gives us sight, not just of what has happened, but of what is happening. Accountability is no longer a moment reserved for review; it is a rhythm embedded in the work itself.

And even as we corrected, we planted.

A \$4.5 million investment in early literacy reached into the earliest years, where futures are not yet visible but already forming. Partnerships were strengthened, not for appearance, but for impact. Climate was measured, not to observe, but to act. The Arena opened, not as spectacle, but as signal, a sign that this district can build while it improves, invest while it refines, and move forward without waiting for perfect conditions.



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Even our moments of celebration carried weight.

A golf tournament that raised \$140,000 was not about the swing of a club. It was about the lift of a future. A concert held in a newly opened space was not about sound. It was about possibility. These were not shows. They were grows. They told us something quietly powerful: we are learning how to become.

And for all of this, I am grateful.

Grateful to the leaders who steadied themselves when the ground shifted.

Grateful to the staff who chose alignment over comfort.

Grateful to the Board for governance anchored in purpose.

Grateful to the community for its voice, clear, honest, and necessary.

Grateful to every individual who decided, in moments both seen and unseen, to do what was right.

We did it.

But let us be clear. We are not done.

What we have built in these ninety days is a foundation. And foundations are not meant to be admired; they are meant to be built upon. The work ahead will not ask us to start. It will ask us to sustain. To take what has been aligned and ensure it is lived consistently, not occasionally. To move from intention to habit, from structure to culture, from correction to coherence that holds under pressure.

The next phase will ask something deeper of us.

It will ask for trust.

Not the kind that is requested in words, but the kind that is earned in action. Trust that grows slowly, like roots beneath the surface, unseen at first, but strong enough to hold when storms come. It will require more listening, not less. More collaboration, not competition. It will require us to resist the pull toward self and lean fully into shared purpose.

Because trust does not grow where ego is fed. It grows where humility lives.

And so we stand now at a quiet edge, not at the end of something, but at the beginning of what that something makes possible.

If we remain disciplined...

If we remain aligned...

If we remain committed to something greater than ourselves...

Then what we have built will not simply stand.

It will rise.

It will stretch beyond this moment, beyond this district, and into the lives of children who may never know our names, but will live the results of our decisions.

That is the work.



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To build something that outlives us.  
To serve in a way that leaves no child untouched by opportunity.  
To move with such clarity and purpose that this community not only sees the change—but believes in it.

Ninety days ago, we chose to see clearly.

Now, we must choose to continue steadily, together, without retreat.

Because the work ahead is not lighter.

It is greater.

And it is worthy of us all.

As we continue building a better tomorrow, today.

Respectfully,  
Doug

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