



LEADERSHIP LENS

Dr. Douglas Hendrix Sr.

Interim Superintendent/CEO of Schools

The Difference Between Activity and Impact

May 11, 2026

There is a difference between movement and progress.

A wheel can spin endlessly without taking a vehicle anywhere. A rocking chair can move all night and still remain in the same corner of the room. Organizations often fall into the same pattern. Meetings occur. Emails circulate. Calendars fill. Reports are written. Conversations repeat themselves. Activity becomes constant, yet outcomes remain unchanged.

Schools are not immune to this.

In education, activity is often mistaken for effectiveness because the work is so visible. Buildings open before sunrise. Buses travel thousands of miles. Teachers prepare lessons. Students rotate through classrooms. Parents attend events. Leaders move from meeting to meeting solving one issue while another emerges. A district can appear extremely busy while still struggling to move children meaningfully forward.

That distinction matters.

Impact is different. Impact is not measured by how much motion exists around the work, but by whether the work changes conditions for students. It asks harder questions. Are children learning at high levels? Are schools safe and orderly? Are adults aligned? Are resources reaching classrooms effectively? Are systems becoming clearer rather than more confusing? Is trust growing? Is opportunity expanding?

Activity fills time.

Impact changes trajectories.

This truth applies to every stakeholder connected to a school system.

For students, activity can look like simply completing assignments, attending school, or moving from grade to grade. Impact occurs when learning becomes understanding, when effort becomes discipline, and when students begin to see futures larger than their current circumstances. A child can remain busy academically while still feeling disconnected from purpose. Schools must ensure students are not merely occupied, but developed.

For parents and families, activity can become attendance without engagement. Signing forms, attending programs, monitoring grades. These matter, but impact occurs when partnership deepens into shared responsibility. Students flourish when children see alignment between home and school, when expectations are reinforced consistently, and when adults communicate not only during problems, but during progress.

For educators, activity can easily consume every hour of the day. Teaching, grading, planning, managing behaviors, answering emails, attending trainings. Yet impact is found in the moments where instruction truly reaches students, where classrooms become places of thought, challenge, encouragement, and growth. It is possible to work tirelessly while still operating inside fragmented systems that dilute effectiveness. That is why coherence matters. Teachers should not have to fight the system while trying to teach children within it.

For school and district leaders, activity often becomes the culture itself. Meetings begin to produce more meetings. Problems are discussed repeatedly without resolution. Visibility replaces effectiveness. A leader can become exhausted while still failing to move the organization forward. Impact requires clarity. It requires difficult decisions, aligned systems, and the discipline to focus on what matters most instead of what produces the most noise.

This is where "adults first" becomes essential, not as privilege, but as responsibility.

Students should never have to carry the burden of adult inconsistency. Children should not suffer because communication failed, because systems remained fragmented, because expectations shifted depending on personalities, or because comfort was protected over clarity. Adults first means the grown-ups in the system accept responsibility for creating order, alignment, and stability before asking children to succeed within it.



LEADERSHIP LENS

Dr. Douglas Hendrix Sr.

Interim Superintendent/CEO of Schools

The Difference Between Activity and Impact

May 11, 2026

For boards of education, adults first means governance rooted in stewardship rather than distraction. It means understanding that trust in a district is strengthened when leadership, governance, and operations move with shared purpose rather than visible division. Public confidence grows when adults model the very consistency they expect from students.

For community and business partners, adults first means investing not only in events, ceremonies, or symbolic moments, but in sustained opportunities that strengthen students long after applause fades. Ribbon cuttings are memorable. Lasting pathways to opportunity are transformational.

A school district resembles a bridge more than a building. A building can stand isolated. A bridge exists to connect. Every beam carries weight connected to the others. If one section weakens, strain spreads across the structure. Coherence works the same way. Transportation affects instruction. Human resources affects school culture. Finance affects opportunity. Leadership affects trust. Communication affects alignment. Every part touches another.

When systems lose coherence, activity increases because fragmentation creates constant reaction. People spend more time compensating for dysfunction than advancing the mission. Energy is consumed maintaining instability instead of building excellence.

That cycle must end.

The next phase of this work requires all stakeholders to think differently about effectiveness. Not simply asking whether something was done, but whether it mattered. Not whether people were busy, but whether children benefited. Not whether systems existed, but whether systems worked together.

This requires maturity. It requires honesty. It requires adults willing to confront uncomfortable truths without losing sight of one another's humanity. Decency and accountability are not opposites. Strong systems require both. The work ahead is not about appearing productive. It is about becoming aligned enough that our collective effort produces measurable change for children.

Because children do not graduate from activity.
They graduate from impact.

And every day we confuse the two, time continues to move forward without them.

Through leadership, clarity, shared responsibility, and sustained action, we will continue Building a Better Tomorrow, Today.

Respectfully,
Doug

Douglas Hendrix Sr., Ed.D.

Interim Superintendent/CEO of Schools