



LEADERSHIP LENS

Dr. Douglas Hendrix Sr.

Interim Superintendent/CEO of Schools

Ready Before the Bell

July 6, 2026

Long before the first bell rings, a school district is already teaching.

Not through lessons or assignments, but through preparation.

The month before school begins is much like training camp for a championship team. The games have not started, the stands are empty, and the scoreboard reads zero. Yet every practice, every meeting, every adjustment, and every conversation matters. Championships are rarely won on opening day. They are won by the discipline of preparation long before anyone is watching.

A school system is no different.

When I think about readiness, I think about a living cell. Every healthy cell has a nucleus. It is the center that gives direction, purpose, and life to everything around it. In a school district, teaching and learning must be that nucleus. Every department has an important function, but every function should ultimately strengthen what happens between a teacher and a student.

Instruction begins the work. Curriculum is refined. Lessons are planned. Assessments are aligned. Professional learning sharpens practice. Principals prepare their buildings to support excellent instruction, while teachers prepare classrooms where students will be challenged, encouraged, and inspired.

Around that nucleus, every other department plays a vital role.

Transportation prepares routes because students cannot learn if they never arrive. School Nutrition prepares meals because hungry children struggle to concentrate. Human Resources works tirelessly to place outstanding people in every classroom. Technology ensures devices, networks, and systems are ready because learning depends on reliable access. Facilities prepare safe, clean, and welcoming schools because the learning environment matters. Safety and Security review plans, practice responses, and anticipate the unexpected because peace of mind creates space for learning. Student Support Services stands ready to remove barriers so every child has the opportunity to succeed. Communications ensures families understand expectations and opportunities, because informed families become trusted partners in learning. Finance quietly manages resources so every dollar serves the classroom with purpose and accountability.

None of these efforts stand alone. They work because they work together.

Coherence is many minds made up for one purpose, one mission. It is recognizing that while our responsibilities may differ, our destination is the same. When every department understands how its work contributes to instructional success, silos begin to disappear and students begin to benefit.

Preparation also means asking difficult questions before they become difficult situations. What if enrollment exceeds projections? What if buses are delayed? What if technology fails? What if staffing changes occur unexpectedly? Planning for the best-case scenario is responsible. Planning for the worst-case scenario is leadership. Readiness is not measured by whether challenges arise. It is measured by how well we respond when they do.

The month before school opens is filled with details that most people will never see. Floors are polished. Classrooms are arranged. Bus routes are adjusted. Technology is tested. Cafeterias are stocked. Professional learning fills calendars. Phones begin to ring. Thousands of individual tasks quietly come together so that, on the first morning of school, a child walks through the front door believing everything was always ready.

That is the beauty of coherence. When preparation is intentional, confidence replaces confusion. When every department sees itself as an instructional support, students receive the full benefit of an organization moving as one.



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As we continue through this season of preparation, let us remember why we do this work. We are not simply opening schools. We are opening doors to possibility. Every checklist completed, every problem solved, every plan refined, and every relationship strengthened is an investment in a child's future.

The bell has not yet rung, but our work is already underway. Let us prepare with purpose, serve one another with excellence, and enter this school year united around the nucleus that gives life to everything we do, teaching and learning. That is how we will continue building a better tomorrow, today.

Respectfully,
Doug

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