



LEADERSHIP LENS

Dr. Douglas Hendrix Sr.

Interim Superintendent/CEO of Schools

The Hands That Hold Tomorrow

July 13, 2026

There are professions that make a living possible. There are professions that make life more comfortable. And then there are professions upon which the future of a society depends.

Education is one of them.

Every morning, educators walk into schools carrying far more than lesson plans, laptops, radios, keys, and calendars. They carry the unfinished stories of children. They meet young people still deciding whether they are intelligent, whether they belong, whether their circumstances will define them, and whether the future has room for their dreams.

And then they go to work.

Research confirms what those of us who have spent our lives in schools already know: among the things a school can influence, teachers matter more to student achievement than any other aspect of schooling.

Think about the weight of that truth.

Behind nearly every accomplished person is an educator whose name may never appear in the story of that accomplishment. Someone taught the physician to read. Someone helped the engineer understand fractions. Someone corrected the future author's first paragraph. Someone noticed the child who had stopped talking. Someone called home. Someone stayed late. Someone refused to give up when giving up would have been easier.

The world often celebrates the harvest while forgetting the hands that planted the seeds.

Today, I want to remember the hands.

I want to speak to the teacher who has spent personal money on a child who needed something. To the paraprofessional who knows exactly which student needs a little more patience. To the bus driver who is the first adult from our school system to greet a child in the morning. To the custodian who prepares a clean and dignified place for children to learn. To the cafeteria worker who knows that, for some students, the meal served at school may be the most dependable meal of the day.

I want to speak to the counselor carrying stories that cannot be repeated. To the school nurse caring for frightened children. To the secretary who receives the anxious parent. To the school resource officer who understands that protecting children also requires knowing them. To the coach, the principal, the assistant principal, the social worker, the psychologist, the maintenance worker, the technology professional, the central office employee, and every person whose work makes it possible for a teacher to teach and a child to learn.

You are part of something larger than a job.

The work is difficult.

We should say that plainly.

There are days when the needs are greater than the resources. Days when the criticism is louder than the gratitude. Days when a teacher gives everything they have to a lesson and still wonders whether anyone learned. Days when an educator carries the pain of a child home because leaving the building does not mean leaving the child behind.

There are easier ways to earn a paycheck.

But few ways to spend a life are more consequential.



LEADERSHIP LENS

Dr. Douglas Hendrix Sr.

Interim Superintendent/CEO of Schools

The Hands That Hold Tomorrow

July 13, 2026

Educators work in the place where society sends its most precious possession and its greatest hope: its children. Every problem that exists in the world eventually walks through the doors of a school. Poverty walks in. Grief walks in. Hunger walks in. Violence walks in. Loneliness walks in. Fear walks in.

And every morning, educators open the doors anyway.

They teach.

They listen.

They correct.

They encourage.

They protect.

They believe.

That is why I believe educators are among the builders of civilization.

A teacher may never see the completed building. Education is a profession of foundations. We lay bricks in lives we may never see finished. We plant trees beneath whose shade we may never sit. We pour something of ourselves into children who will one day walk into rooms we will never enter, make decisions we will never hear about, raise families we will never meet, and shape communities we may never visit.

Yet something of us will be there.

The patience we showed.

The standard we refused to lower.

The book we placed in a child's hands.

The second chance we gave.

The conversation in the hallway that we barely remember but that a student never forgot.

The moment we saw possibility in a child who could not yet see it in themselves.

This is the quiet power of education.

Schools do more than prepare children to live in communities. Schools help determine what kind of communities will exist.

The quality of our future hospitals, businesses, churches, neighborhoods, governments, and families is being shaped right now in classrooms. Democracy itself depends upon people who can read, reason, question, listen, disagree without hatred, and recognize the humanity of others.

Society will rise or fall, in no small measure, by the quality of the work educators do.

That truth should not frighten us. But it should humble us.



LEADERSHIP LENS

Dr. Douglas Hendrix Sr.

Interim Superintendent/CEO of Schools

The Hands That Hold Tomorrow

July 13, 2026

It should also cause this nation to reconsider how it speaks about those who teach its children.

Respect for educators cannot live only in appreciation weeks, plaques, and ceremonies. Respect must be present in how we listen to educators, how we support their growth, how we protect their time, how we provide the tools necessary to do their work, and how we speak about their profession in public.

You cannot continually diminish the people entrusted with building the future and expect the future to be strong.

To every educator and every person who supports an educator: thank you.

Thank you for choosing work that asks much of you.

Thank you for returning on days when yesterday was difficult.

Thank you for believing in children who sometimes struggle to believe in themselves.

Thank you for teaching students whose names the world does not yet know.

Thank you for understanding that education is not simply the transfer of knowledge. It is the construction of possibility.

As Superintendent, I know that one of my greatest responsibilities is to create the conditions that allow you to do this work well. Leadership must never become so distant from the classroom that it forgets who carries the mission. Our organizational charts may place people in different positions, but the truth is much simpler: those closest to students carry the future in their hands, and the rest of us are here to help them succeed.

So, as we enter another school year, I ask you to remember who you are.

You are not merely employees of a school system.

You are witnesses to possibility.

You are guardians of potential.

You are builders of communities you may never live to see.

You are the people society entrusts with its tomorrow.

History may never record every sacrifice you make. There may never be a monument bearing your name. But somewhere, years from now, a person will make a better decision, raise a stronger family, lead with greater compassion, solve a difficult problem, or extend kindness to another human being because, once upon a time, an educator stood in their path and helped them become more than they believed they could be.

There are few greater contributions one human being can make to another.

You are worthy of our gratitude.

You are worthy of our support.

You are worthy of our respect.



LEADERSHIP LENS

Dr. Douglas Hendrix Sr.

Interim Superintendent/CEO of Schools

The Hands That Hold Tomorrow

July 13, 2026

And you are worthy of being called what you have always been, heroes among humankind.

May we never become so consumed with the business of running schools that we forget the people who give schools their soul.

The future is not waiting somewhere in the distance. It is sitting in our classrooms today.

And, thankfully, it is in your hands.

Together, we will honor the work, support the people who carry it, and continue building a better tomorrow, today.

Respectfully,
Doug

Douglas Hendrix Sr., Ed.D.

Interim Superintendent/CEO of Schools