



LEADERSHIP LENS

Dr. Douglas Hendrix Sr.

Interim Superintendent/CEO of Schools

Where Trust Begins

July 20, 2026

Communities are not divided in a single day.

And they are not restored in one either.

Distance rarely begins with miles. It begins when conversations stop, assumptions grow, and people slowly become strangers to one another while living side by side. Before long, neighborhoods become islands, institutions become silos, and trust becomes something people remember more than something they experience.

Perhaps the greatest work before Clayton County Public Schools is not simply improving education. It is helping restore the relationships upon which great education depends.

I am deeply grateful to every employee, volunteer, faith leader, and community partner who joined us this past weekend. Together, we met families where they already were, in grocery stores, home improvement centers, restaurants, parks, recreation spaces, and places where everyday life unfolds. We stood in the ordinary places where conversations happen naturally because trust often begins in ordinary moments. We also gathered with our neighbors at Light of Joy Church and at San Felipe de Jesús Catholic Church, continuing a journey that is rooted in listening, learning, and walking alongside the people we serve. These gatherings are part of our commitment to strengthen relationships through information, engagement, and open dialogue as we prepare for the school year.

I pray our efforts continue to grow.

Not because we seek larger crowds.

But because every new conversation is another opportunity to replace uncertainty with understanding and distance with relationship. Schools have always been asked to educate children. Today, they are also called to help reconnect communities.

That work requires humility.

Before many families are ready to receive the full promise of an educational opportunity, they are often navigating realities that compete for their attention every single day. Some are searching for stable housing. Others are balancing multiple jobs, caring for aging parents, finding transportation, managing healthcare, or simply trying to make it through another week with dignity intact.

A child carries all of that into school.

Education cannot pretend those realities do not exist.

That is why our work must extend beyond school walls. We must not only teach children; we must help connect families to the people, organizations, and resources that allow children to thrive. Instruction remains our highest purpose, but communities flourish when schools, faith organizations, businesses, nonprofit partners, and neighbors understand that they are part of the same story.

I love the promise of Clayton County.

Not because every challenge has been solved.

But because I continue to meet people who refuse to stop believing in one another.

I see it in pastors opening their sanctuaries. I see it in business owners welcoming conversations with families. I see it in volunteers who give away their Saturdays. I see it in parents who still believe education can change the direction of a child's life. I see it in employees who understand that their work begins with service.



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That promise deserves to be connected.

Our next chapter is community coherence.

Community coherence is not the absence of differences. It is the decision that what unites us is greater than what separates us. It is the understanding that every church, every business, every neighborhood, every civic organization, every family, and every school is a thread in the same fabric. A single thread has strength. Woven together, those threads become something capable of carrying generations.

The work ahead is larger than a community tour.

We will continue meeting families in churches, recreation centers, senior centers, neighborhood gatherings, and community events. We will continue partnering with businesses, expanding access to information, connecting families to resources, and creating new opportunities for people to learn, ask questions, and participate. We will continue inviting every voice to the table because communities are strongest when no one believes they are standing outside the room.

Trust is not built by asking people to believe us.

Trust is built when people repeatedly experience that we are worthy of belief.

That is the journey we have begun.

I believe the strongest days of Clayton County are not behind us. They are waiting for us on the other side of trust, on the other side of partnership, and on the other side of the silos that have separated good people for far too long.

Everyone.

Regardless of everything.

That is not simply a phrase.

It is the community we are determined to build.

Together, we will continue replacing walls with bridges, neighbors with partners, and separate efforts with one coherent community, building a better tomorrow, today.

Respectfully,
Doug

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