

Quality Public Education is the Greatest Equalizer in Our Society

By Moises Echeverria

I still remember walking into East Central High School as a new immigrant to translate for my parents when they enrolled me in school over 20 years ago. I didn't know then that my high school experience would help me develop high standards in my character.

The teachers and counselors there would set me on a trajectory of excellence and teamwork, with an eye to equity, and help me learn to have joy regardless of the challenges I face. I am thankful to them for seeing my potential and for challenging me to give my best.

I believe that quality public education is the greatest equalizer we have built in our society. Supporting and maintaining a quality public education system should be important to all of us, whether we have children or not, because it [impacts all of us](#).

We find ourselves in a significant time as public education throughout the nation faces critical [challenges](#). Staff shortages, at every level (teachers, custodians, administrators, cafeteria workers), mental health crises, violent and tragic events at schools, just to name a few.

Recent tragedies within our own Tulsa schools remind us that students and faculty need the community to rally around them and support them. Our schools need us.

It was meaningful to be at [McLain High School the first day students returned to school](#) after the tragedy experienced at their Homecoming game. We stood shoulder to shoulder with people from the McLain community and throughout Tulsa with signs cheering students as they walked into school.

Our support doesn't need to stop there though. What else can we do? Attend sporting events or performances in your neighborhood school, support PTA and local school foundation events, volunteer through great organizations that are in school offering structured programming: whether helping students learn how to ride bikes, reading with students, playing math games, gardening, doing STEM experiments, or playing soccer, and of course, support policies that strengthen public education.

You can also be part of educating the next generation of leaders by becoming a substitute teacher, full-time educator, or support professional.

There is no contribution too big or too small to make our schools and public education system stronger.

Recently, the Foundation for Tulsa Schools coordinated a ribbon cutting ceremony for new STEM labs in every elementary school in Tulsa Public Schools. The ceremony was energizing with hundreds of Hawthorn Elementary students reciting their [school creed, values, and mission](#). Every local media outlet was there as this was a great, joyous moment

Today, every Tulsa Public Schools elementary school student has access to quality STEM experiences thanks to the generous support of Devon and the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation. Additionally, thanks to the support of Tulsa voters in the 2021 bond, Tulsa's secondary students will also have updated STEM labs.

I know students' lives will be transformed through this investment.

As I stood in the back of the room while remarks were being shared and confetti was flying down, I noticed one of the cameramen covering the event had asked a student to help him use his camera. This

man took it upon himself to show a student the possibility of a career in media. This was a simple act without publicity or fanfare.

I was deeply touched by his action, and I was reminded that we need everyone – corporations and foundations who can make large donations as well as individuals who can mentor or coach – to inspire our students to be the best that they can be.

I owe a lot of gratitude to my mentors and teachers who did the same for me, and I invite you to positively transform the life of a young person through your gift of time, talent, or treasure to public education.