



National Association of  
School Superintendents  
United in Common Purpose: Each Other's Success

Dr. Michelle Rodriguez  
Stockton Unified School District, Stockton, CA

## INTRODUCTION

### Education

University of Southern California, 2012  
Ed. D., Educational Psychology

University of Southern California, 2012

School Business Management Certificate Program

Walden University, 2004

M.A., Elementary Reading and Literacy

California State University, Chico, CA, 1993

B.A., Liberal Studies/Spanish

Honors: Dissertation of the Year Finalist, Golden Key Honors Society, Phi Eta Sigma, Phi Kappa Phi

### Experience

Dr. Michelle Rodriguez is the Superintendent of Stockton Unified School District, a transformative leader committed to creating an inclusive, innovative, and rigorous educational environment. She engages the community in a purposeful journey toward elevating student strengths, enhancing educational rigor, and inspiring joy in learning to ensure that every student is prepared for college and career success. With over 32 years of dedicated service to urban and rural, low socio-economic districts, Dr. Rodriguez has a long-standing commitment to uplifting vulnerable student populations with a focus on Whole Child, Whole Family, Whole Community. She has held various positions from dual immersion teacher, instructional coach, site administrator, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, Chief Academic Officer and Superintendent of Schools for the last 9 years.

In her first two years at Stockton Unified, Dr. Rodriguez released a Public Accountability Dashboard ([allofsusd.net](http://allofsusd.net)) which highlighted the completion of 44 Priority Recommendations created through 21 community listening sessions and townhalls, achieving significant improvements, including the highest graduation rate in district history, reduced chronic absenteeism, expansion of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Career Technical Education courses and increased early literacy rates.

### Outstanding Achievement(s)

Her impact has been widely recognized with numerous awards, including Stockton Cinco de Mayo Grand Marshall (2025), Hometown Hero Award (2025), Legislature Resolution Recipient (2023), Community Indicators Consortium Community Leader Award (2022), ACSA Superintendent of the Year (2022), Community Health Trust Rather Award (2020), United Way Community Hero Award (2019), and selection for the CDE Community Engagement Initiative (2020). Dr. Rodriguez's visionary leadership continues to drive meaningful change, uplifting students, families, and the broader educational community.

## AN INTERVIEW

### Tell us about how you see today's superintendent.

Today's Superintendents of Schools must assume the role of a systems thinker, committed to continuous improvement and placing students' needs at the forefront of all decisions. They must adeptly balance these needs with the requirements of the dedicated staff who provide essential daily support and instruction. Superintendents must maintain high visibility within schools and community events, fostering firsthand insight into the system's dynamics. This visibility not only informs their decision-making but also encourages authentic collaboration among stakeholders. Ultimately, effective Superintendents cultivate an environment where all members of the educational ecosystem feel heard and valued, ensuring that district decisions align with the collective goals of student success and community engagement.

### What new understandings did you acquire after two or three years on the job?

After two to three years as a Superintendent, I gained a deeper understanding of the critical importance of authentic community connection and collaboration. I came to appreciate how strong, trust-based relationships with staff, families, and community members form the foundation for navigating complex and often difficult decisions, whether responding to a global pandemic, managing declining enrollment, or addressing funding shortfalls amid rising costs.

I also learned that trust does not mean universal agreement; rather, when people know your values and see your commitment to students and the district, they are more likely to respect your decisions even if they disagree. This credibility is built over time through transparency, consistency, and presence.

Another key realization was that each district is its own ecosystem. What worked well in one community may not automatically translate to another. To lead effectively, you must take the time to listen deeply, understand the local context, and co-create solutions that are personalized and rooted in the district's specific culture, history, and needs.

### Share an idea to use or something you've learned with your colleagues.

One idea I have embraced and encourage colleagues to consider is the importance of supporting not just the Whole Child, but also the Whole Family and the Whole Community. Our students' academic, social-emotional, and physical needs are deeply interconnected with their home and community environments. While schools play a vital role, we must remember that we

only have direct access to students about 13% of the year. The remaining time is spent with their families; making it essential that we also support and uplift the people and systems surrounding them.

When families are supported through access to resources, opportunities, and stable environments, students are better positioned to thrive. This requires us to expand our partner ecosystem to include nonprofits, faith-based organizations, healthcare providers, and other educational institutions. By building strong, collaborative networks around children and families, we create a foundation where students can envision and achieve the futures they deserve.

Submitted by:

**Dr. Michelle Rodriguez**  
Name/Signature

**May 31, 2025**  
Date