



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

Name:

Shelley McKinley, Ed.D., Superintendent

Current School District and Location:

Texas Juvenile Justice Department
Austin, Texas

INTRODUCTION

Meet Shelley McKinley, the Superintendent of Schools for the school district within the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. In most cases, juvenile records are sealed so students are given a second chance at life without the stigma of having been in trouble with the law. Shelley takes that second chance seriously and works to ensure that students leave the district with academic credentials and workforce readiness.

Education:

Shelley is a three-time graduate of Texas Southern University with a Bachelor of Science in Premedical Biology, a Master of Education in Educational Administration, and a Doctorate in Curriculum & Instruction.

Experience

With positions ranging from crossing guard to superintendent, Shelley's career has given her rewarding experiences all along the way. Teaching middle school science for five years gave her insight into adolescence as a developmental stage and confirmed that secondary education was her niche. She has rural and large urban school district experience, as well as Harris County Department of Education experience. Shelley has been a private school elementary principal, public school central office administrator, and has served as both assistant superintendent and superintendent for the Texas Juvenile Justice Department.

Outstanding Achievement(s)

Shelley has had many achievements throughout her career, but she is most proud of the 'Grow Your Own' trend occurring in her school district. There are administrators and diagnosticians who were once teachers in the district. There are also teachers who started as teacher aides. She views that as a testament to the culture of the district. Employees don't have to leave to grow professionally. If they express an interest, they are given experiences that fit their professional goals and aspirations.

AN INTERVIEW

Tell us about how you see today's superintendent.

Today's superintendent is one who must stay current in many areas such as technology, educational research, trauma research, and societal trends. As a good friend of mine often says, "If you aren't reading, you shouldn't be leading." Almost everything happening in society comes into the school building with the students and staff, whether it's a trend or trauma, so proactively providing frameworks and strategies has proven to be beneficial.

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

I learned that no matter how prepared you think you are, there is always something you didn't see coming, which is just permission to be creative. As the superintendent, you don't have to have all the answers, but you need to know how to empower other people to share their best thinking. That starts with being your authentic self, sharing what the situations are candidly, then invite others to share their best ideas. Earning the doctorate taught me to cite my sources, so I believe in giving credit where it is due. Employees know that accolades and recognition are coming their way for their ideas.

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

We've spent time learning about the 'Commitment Yes' instead of the 'Counterfeit Yes' which serves as an easy escape from a difficult conversation, or the 'Confirmation Yes' which is a reflex response without a promise of action. As we have adopted new core competencies, I've asked for a "Commitment Yes' backed by action. We've gone so far as to say what those actions will look like, sound like, and act like when working with colleagues and students. The three types of yes originated from a book called Never Split the Difference by Chris Voss, but we've adapted it to our setting.

Submitted by:

Shelley McKinley/

Shelley McKinley

Name/Signature

4/25/2026

Date