



HIGH TECH HIGH

**Dr. Rasheed Hakim Meadows' Introduction to the
High Tech High Community
July 20, 2020**

John Lewis has two powerful quotes that center me in this moment.

“If you're not hopeful and optimistic, then you just give up. You have to take the long hard look and just believe that if you're consistent, you will succeed.”

“What I try to tell young people is that if you come together with a mission, and its grounded with love and a sense of community, you can make the impossible possible.”

We lost another giant and champion of human and civil rights last week, and his passing comes at a critical moment in our country—a moment when we are facing, as many are saying, two pandemics. One of the pandemics is novel—it's the coronavirus that is ravaging the country and impacting communities of color in disproportionate ways. The other virus has been impacting communities of color for centuries—it's racism, and with the ongoing spate of killings of Black men and women at the hands of police broadcasted all across news and social media outlets, we are forced to face a choice as a nation: we can be hopeful, optimistic, and to galvanize around a collaborative agenda of love and unity; or we can be fearful, hateful, greedy and face ongoing peril and uncertainty as a nation.

I choose hope, optimism, and collective attention on an agenda that positions children to benefit from our work together

Good Afternoon, I am Dr. Rasheed Hakim Meadows and I am pleased, enthusiastic, honored and extremely excited to be your Chief Executive Office, your Chief Learner, your Chief Colleague, and your Chief Collaborator.

Buenas tardes, me llamo Dr. Rasheed Hakim Meadows, y tengo mucho placer que ser su nuevo director ejecutivo, su alumno ejecutivo, y su colega y ayudante ejecutivo. ¡Mucho gusto! No puedo esperar hasta que tenemos la oportunidad de pasar tiempo juntos, cara a cara.

I wish to take a moment to acknowledge and appreciate those of you that I had a chance to meet during the interview process and those of you who I look forward to meeting very soon, including Chairman Jacobs, members of the Board, students, families, administrators, support staff, teachers, and community partners, who are members of the K-12 schools team and who are faculty and staff of the Graduate School of Education, with whom we will collaborate closely. I am particularly excited to meet others that are new to the community as well, as I prepare to meet all the new staff, teachers and leaders over the weeks ahead. Welcome to you all! Thank you for this opportunity to lead this inspiring, innovative learning community. Thank you for entrusting me with its care. I take the responsibility very seriously and I am committed to

working together to do what it takes to get through the next phase of High Tech High's growth and development.

I want to extend a particular thanks to Larry Rosenstock, whose tireless, visionary leadership over the years has elevated High Tech High to be the model for how students can learn in a progressive, innovative, and authentic way. Thank you, Larry, for your service and dedication!

You should know a bit about the journey that brought me here. It starts with my parents, not only because they birthed me, but also because of their educational and life journeys. They were high school sweethearts that got to know each other well from traveling far from Boston, on a bus, in order to get a good education. They were the first graduates of a voluntary desegregation program in Massachusetts called METCO, the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity. They got great educations and were in their first years of college when they found out they would be new parents, so they dropped out to focus on family. Years later when it was time for my sister and me to go to school, we also attended METCO schools far from home. I traveled an hour and a half each way to get to school. I faced racism and exclusion as young as six years old when I was first called the n-word. I faced racism and discrimination in middle school when I was tracked into low-level classes because my teachers believed that was where I belonged, despite getting good grades and having good test scores. Were it not for my Spanish teacher at the time, who recommended me for her highest level class, I would have been stuck in that track unknowingly. Many fights with administration later, my parents and METCO counselors were successful moving me to the highest level, and I thrived from there and graduated high school, got my bachelor's in biology from Yale and went on to Harvard to study education. And I have spent my career teaching, leading schools, and leading leaders both in Boston and Cambridge, where I grew up, and, more recently, through my work supporting leaders and teams, nationally, at TNTP, an education non-profit dedicated to eradicating educational inequities.

I tell that story because it speaks to some of the challenges I experienced in education as a Black boy who lived in two worlds, and it speaks to the sacrifices my family and I made for me to get a high-quality education. I know that many High Tech High students have to do the same thing. Some of you travel far from home to come to school, and the sacrifice is meaningful and also necessary to get a good education. I also know that educators at High Tech High have been thoughtful about leveling the learning experience for students and thinking thoughtfully about the design principles that anchor all of us in the values of the school community: Equity, Personalization, Authentic Work, and Collaborative Design. Let me take a moment to connect my values to those principles.

On Equity, HTH is an equity project, and I am an equity warrior! Through my work I have found value in creating access for kids and families to get high quality educational experiences by de-tracking learning, reforming school discipline practices and ensuring kids go on to college at unprecedented rates. I have worked to diversity teacher and leader pipelines in my work at TNTP while also doing the work in the organization to lead our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work.

On Personalization, I believe in personalizing learning for kids so that their culture and identity are affirmed, and so they can choose the mode of learning that highlights their strengths and allows them to grow, learn and develop.

Regarding Authentic Work, I have always been a champion of students, both going into the community to learn, and bringing the community into the classroom from exhibitions of student work to externships and dual-enrollment programs.

On Collaborative Design, I am a collaborator at heart, and I am known for leading highly functional and impactful teams that are able to accomplish as a team what would otherwise be individually impossible. I lead WITH my teams – shoulder-to-shoulder with them in relationship and partnership. My philosophy is to create environments that bring out the best in people through the ways we set up management relationships, organize groupings to leverage individual strengths and lead teams to measurable goals and outcomes.

This brings me to the work that we have to do ahead of us. I envision High Tech High will be a global learning network that leverages what we are learning about the boundless connections that technology provides students as they learn. That means that our students in San Diego can connect with students in Wuhan, China to understand the impact of the coronavirus on our communities, or engage in project based learning with students in Senegal about the impact of the pandemic in Africa. It means that one day, students can travel across the country to other High Tech High schools and learn on exchange as a requirement for graduation, or travel to High Tech High international schools engaging in projects across the globe while keeping pace with their learning and progress toward goals. This vision is certainly much further out from the issues and concerns that we are addressing today, so I want to be clear, as excited as I am about that vision, I am a pragmatist at heart and know that the most important thing we can do right now is be prepared for opening school.

With that in mind, I am focusing on three priorities most immediately given the ambitious work we have ahead of us.

1. **The first is to focus on a strong start to the school year!** There is a lot of planning that has already happened and much work ahead to ensure that the opening of school is a strong one, and that we set out to engage, motivate, inspire, and educate students in similar ways as if they were in brick and mortar school. I will be planning and working alongside the teams involved with making sure we are designing with the best interest of our students, families, and educators.
2. **Second, I plan to hit the ground learning!** I am working on an entry plan so that the school community will have a sense of how I will spend my onboarding, which will include a series of learning conversations with stakeholders and groups across the HTH community. Why? It's really important for me to understand the history, the culture, and the people. I am excited to get to know you and your work, and I want to be careful, intentional, and systematic about how I engage in learning about the work we are in.

3. **Finally, I am excited about the identity and equity work to build awareness and lean into our development to become anti-racist learning community!** I am excited that we are taking on this work. I have been engaged in this work in one form or another over the course of my career, and have most recently led efforts at TNTP to drive our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work forward. From our work with National SEED, DEILC, work with school departments and teams across the country that seek a similar outcome as High Tech High, creating policies, behaviors, and culture that ensure all students and staff in the organization experience an inclusive and welcoming learning environment where their culture and identity are valued and *required* to ensure the best learning environment for everyone in the community.

In summary, that second John Lewis quote comes back to mind: “What I try to tell young people is that if you come together with a mission, and its grounded with love and a sense of community, you can make the impossible possible.” I am here for that! And I’m inspired by what we can do together as a community. I am looking forward to meeting and talking with you soon as we dig in and get started with this exciting work next month.

Muchas gracias, los veo pronto cuando podemos empezar nuestro trabajo juntos.

Thank you and be well!