Parents, students, teachers and administrators all across North Texas begin a new school year today. At DISD’s annual Convocation last week, Superintendent Michael Hinojosa sought to remind 17,500 teachers and staffers what their mission is all about.

He piqued the audience's expectations with references to a mysterious keynote speaker who would help drive his point home and finally introduced Dalton Sherman, a fifth-grader from the Charles Rice Learning Center in South Dallas. Here is the text of Dalton’s remarks, which earned a standing ovation. To get the full impact of his speech, watch the video, posted on our Opinion Blog.

I believe in me. Do you believe in me?

Do you believe I can stand up here, fearless, and talk to all 20,000 of you?

Hey, Charles Rice Learning Center – do you believe in me?

That's right – they do.

Because here's the deal: I can do anything, be anything, create anything, dream anything, become anything – because you believe in me. And it rubs off on me.

Let me ask you a question, Dallas ISD.

Do you believe in my classmates?

Do you believe that every single one of us can graduate ready for college or the workplace?

You better. Because next week, we're all showing up in your schools – all 157,000 of us – and what we need from you is to believe that we can reach our highest potential.

No matter where we come from, whether it's sunny South Dallas, whether its Pleasant Grove, whether its Oak Cliff or North Dallas or West Dallas or wherever, you better not give up on us. No, you better not.

Because, as you know, in some cases, you're all we've got. You're the ones who feed us, who wipe our tears, who hold our hands or hug us when we need it. You're the ones who love us when sometimes it feels like no else does – and when we need it the most.

Don't give up on my classmates.

Do you believe in your colleagues?
I hope so. They came to your school because they wanted to make a difference, too. Believe in them, trust them and lean on them when times get tough – and we all know, we kids can sometimes make it tough.

Am I right?

Can I get an Amen?

So, whether you're a counselor or a librarian, a teacher assistant or work in the front office, whether you serve up meals in the cafeteria or keep the halls clean, or whether you're a teacher or a principal, we need you!

Please, believe in your colleagues, and they'll believe in you.

Do you believe in yourself? Do you believe that what you're doing is shaping not just my generation, but that of my children – and my children's children?

There's probably easier ways to make a living, but I want to tell you, on behalf of all of the students in Dallas, we need you. We need you now more than ever.

Believe in yourself.

Finally, do you believe that every child in Dallas needs to be ready for college or the workplace? Do you believe that Dallas students can achieve?

We need you, ladies and gentlemen. We need you to know that what you are doing is the most important job in the city today. We need you to believe in us, in your colleagues, in yourselves and in our goals.

If you don't believe – well, I'm not going there.

I want to thank you for what you do – for me and for so many others.

Do you believe in me? Because I believe in me. And you helped me get to where I am today.

Thank you.