

## About Dr. Cheryl Pruitt

Dr. Cheryl Pruitt is a nationally recognized educational leader, consultant, and strategist with nearly four decades of experience transforming schools and communities through courageous, data-driven leadership. When she returned to her hometown as Superintendent of the Gary Community School Corporation, the district was already under state takeover and burdened by more than \$100 million in debt. Undeterred, she led with hope and conviction—closing unsafe facilities, cutting over \$85 million in costs, and beginning real fiscal recovery while restoring academic excellence and community trust. Under her leadership, graduation rates rose from 51.4% to 85.7% in two years, algebra proficiency increased from 4% to 56%, and literacy rates soared, with some schools reaching 100% of students reading on grade level. Gary also won its first state track championship in more than 30 years and produced professional NFL and WNBA athletes. Dr. Pruitt's leadership extended globally through the Confucius Institute partnership in China, where she led the first-ever music collaboration between the United States and China. She also partnered with Earvin "Magic" Johnson on workforce readiness and with Mrs. Katherine Jackson to celebrate education and culture in Gary. A reformer known for tackling complex systems, she later led the Chicago Virtual Charter School, where she successfully separated the school from a for-profit management firm—returning vital funds to classrooms and improving graduation outcomes. As an educational consultant, Dr. Pruitt advises schools, districts, and nonprofit organizations nationwide on leadership development, literacy, AI integration, and community-based reform. She also serves as Vice President for Pathways to College, expanding programs that empower first-generation and underserved students to succeed, and co-founded the National African American Literacy Institute (NAALI), advancing literacy, restorative practice, and leadership development through NAALI Press. A TEDx speaker, leadership coach, and co-author of UNSHAKEN: Lesson & Stories, Dr. Pruitt leads at the intersection of courage, data, and technology—proving that true leadership is measured not by position, but by transformation.