



*Reflecting on what brought us here,  
and setting our course for the path ahead*

## **Storywall Session Report**

*From Session on April 27, 2022*



**TeamWorks**  
International

*Trusted. Proven. Unique.*

***Reflecting on What Brought Us Here and Setting the Course for the Path Ahead***  
*Presented by TeamWorks International*

April 27, 2022  
4:00-7:00 p.m.

**Objectives:**

1. To identify the current and historical stages of the School District's lifecycle and the balance of Prime
2. To define the multiple characteristics of the School District's past and present peak performance and what is purposefully rewarded (or possibly abandoned) in the future.
3. To discuss next steps and choices for *Partnership Leadership* as the school district prepares its strategic plan.

**Agenda**

Introduction and Overview of the Strategic Planning Process, Timeline and this Session

Adizes' Corporate Lifecycle – how does it work with schools and educational organizations?

Storywall Phase One – design and discussion about the span of time in which you joined the District

Storywall Phase One – report out

BREAK – 10 min

Storywalls Phase Two – analysis in mixed groups

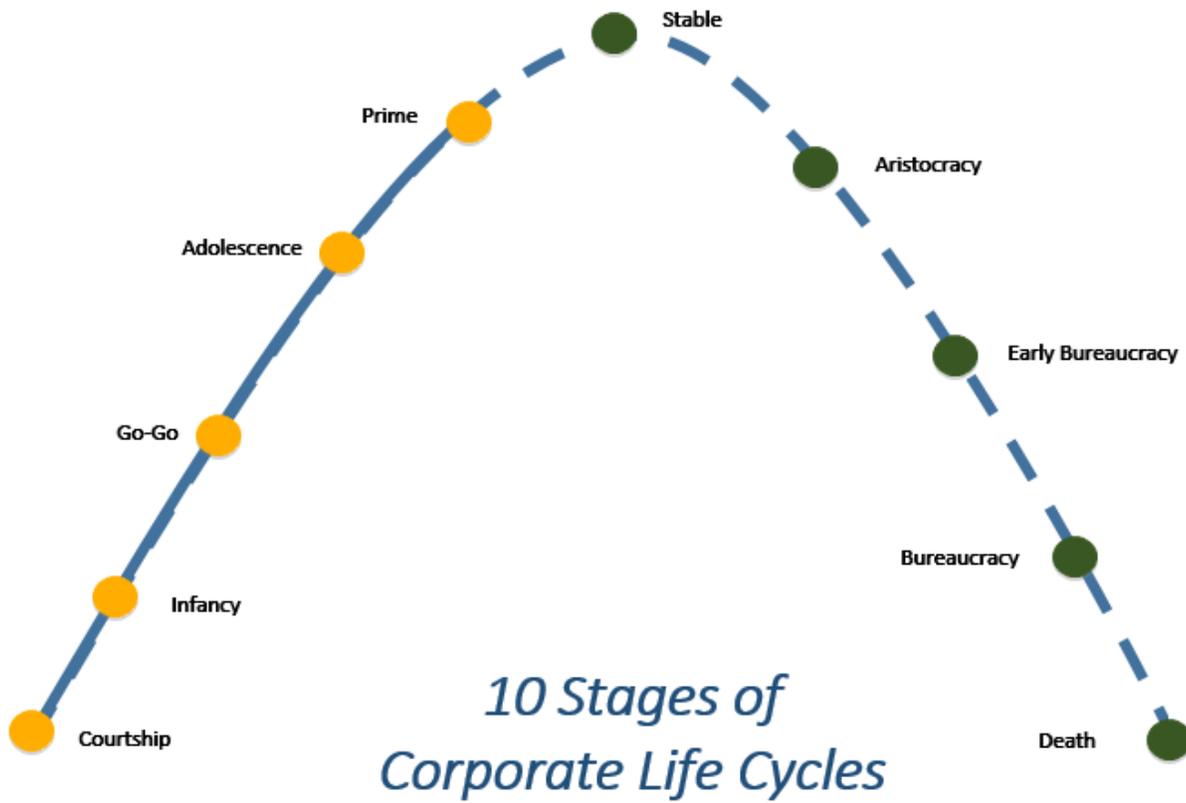
Storywalls Phase Two - report out

Discussion through the Leadership Choices FrameWork

Shared Messages and Key Next Steps

**Outcome:**

The Story Report including a full record of the day's work



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NOTES

## The 10 Stages of Corporate Life Cycles

*Courtship.* Would-be founders focus on ideas and future possibilities, making and talking about ambitious plans. Courtship ends and infancy begins when the founders assume risk.

*Infancy.* The founders' attention shifts from ideas and possibilities to results. The need to make sales drives this action-oriented, opportunity-driven stage. Nobody pays much attention to paperwork, controls, systems, or procedures. Founders work 16-hour days, six to seven days a week, trying to do everything by themselves.

*Go-Go.* This is a rapid-growth stage. Sales are still king. The founders believe they can do no wrong. Because they see everything as an opportunity, their arrogance leaves their businesses vulnerable to flagrant mistakes. They organize their companies around people rather than functions; capable employees can--and do--wear many hats, but to their staff's consternation, the founders continue to make every decision.

*Adolescence.* During this stage, companies take a new form. The founders hire chief operating officers but find it difficult to hand over the reins. An attitude of us (the old-timers) versus them (the COO and his or her supporters) hampers operations. There are so many internal conflicts, people have little time left to serve customers. Companies suffer a temporary loss of vision.

*Prime.* With a renewed clarity of vision, companies establish an even balance between control and flexibility. Everything comes together. Disciplined yet innovative, companies consistently meet their customers' needs. New businesses sprout up within the organization, and they are decentralized to provide new life-cycle opportunities.

*Stability.* Companies are still strong, but without the eagerness of their earlier stages. They welcome new ideas but with less excitement than they did during the growing stages. The financial people begin to impose controls for short-term results in ways that curtail long-term innovation. The emphasis on marketing and research and development wanes.

*Aristocracy.* Not making waves becomes a way of life. Outward signs of respectability--dress, office decor, and titles--take on enormous importance. Companies acquire businesses rather than incubate start-ups. Their culture emphasizes how things are done over what's being done and why people are doing it. Company leaders rely on the past to carry them into the future.

*Early Bureaucracy/Recrimination.* In this stage of decay, companies conduct witch-hunts to find out who did wrong rather than try to discover what went wrong and how to fix it. Cost reductions take precedence over efforts that could increase revenues. Backstabbing and corporate infighting rule. Executives fight to protect their turf, isolating themselves from their fellow executives. Petty jealousies reign supreme.

*Bureaucracy.* If companies do not die in the previous stage--maybe they're in a regulated environment where the critical factor for success is not how they satisfy customers but whether they are politically an asset or a liability--they become bureaucratic. Procedure manuals thicken, paperwork abounds, and rules and policies choke innovation and creativity. Even customers--forsaken and forgotten--find they need to devise elaborate strategies to get anybody's attention.

*Death.* This final stage may creep up over several years, or it may arrive suddenly, with one massive blow. Companies crumble when they cannot generate the cash they need; the outflow finally exhausts any inflow.

*Adapted from The Pursuit of Prime, by Ichak Adizes. Copyright ©1996 by Ichak Adizes. Published by arrangement with Knowledge Exchange LLC, U.S.A. All rights reserved.*

## Characteristics of Prime

### **The school/organization is guided by vision – clear purpose – peace of mind when making tough decisions**

- *The organization is guided by the vision of its reason for being. There is a clear purpose and people know what they will do, and will not do, "they walk their talk"*

### **Focused, energized and predictable**

- *The organization operates in a focused, energized and predictable manner*

### **Stretch goals set, aligned, consistently achieved**

### **Student/family focus and their long-term satisfaction**

- *There is a shared school-wide focus on customers and earning their long-term satisfaction.*

### **High degree of loyalty to the school**

- *There is a high degree of "customer" loyalty. At the same time, the organization knows when and how to say "no" to the market. It is disciplined enough to protect itself.*

### **Organizational fertility - controlled, accountable innovation**

- *Priorities are clear. The organization knows what to do, and what not to do. It enjoys a certain composure and peace of mind when making tough decisions.*
- *The entrepreneurial spirit is fully institutionalized. Evidence of organizational fertility abound.*
- *This creativity repeatedly produces controlled, accountable innovation.*

### **Structures works well – infrastructure provides reliable support - Continuously realigning vision, strategy, structure, information, resource allocation and rewards.**

- *Organizational structures work well. Opposing forces are balanced. There is alignment between vision, strategy, structure, information, resource allocation and rewards. An organization in Prime is continuously realigning these subsystems.*

### **Decision making and governance are clear – there is healthy, constructive conflict**

- *The governance process is institutionalized. People know and understand where and how decisions are made.*
- *Decision-making is done in an environment of healthy, constructive conflict. Points of view are considered, but there are no hard feelings if one's recommendations are not heeded.*

### **Differences of opinion rarely deteriorate into personality clashes or turf wars - Internal cohesion – retain staff and leaders**

- *Differences of opinion rarely deteriorate into personality clashes or turf wars.*
- *There is intra- and inter-organizational integration and cohesion with clients, suppliers, investors, and the community. This internal cohesion enables the Prime organization to devote much of its energy externally.*
- *People enjoy working at the company. Few willingly leave and there is a backlog of people applying for positions at all levels.*

### **Embrace change**

- *They embrace change. Prime organizations work hard to adapt to changes in markets and technology so that they can gain a larger share of their resident students and open enrolled.*

### **Consistent, above average performance**

## Storywall Building – 101

### *The step-by-step process for our session*

#### FIRST STORYWALL SESSION

1. Proceed to the date range in which you joined the District.
2. For that date range, discuss and plot out the following:
  - a. Using words/timeline/concept map – to visually plot out the major events (internal and/or external) that impacted the district (positively, neutrally, or negatively is not essential to determine at this step).
  - b. Embellish those major events – consider an artifact you or another may have brought along or choose from the assortment of pictures that characterize the emotion or energy of the time.
  - c. Use the Whole System View FrameWork to make sure that you've covered it with a system view.
  - d. Prepare to report out

#### SECOND STORYWALL SESSION

1. Create even mixed time groups at each timeline.
2. For the date range, discuss and record the following:
  - a. Looking back, what was the most influential event or change of that period?
  - b. What behaviors were encouraged and rewarded during that time period?
  - c. Of the successes, what were the characteristics?
  - d. Of the failures, what were the characteristics?
  - e. WHERE WAS THE DISTRICT ON THE LIFECYCLE DURING THAT PERIOD?
  - f. Prepare to report out.

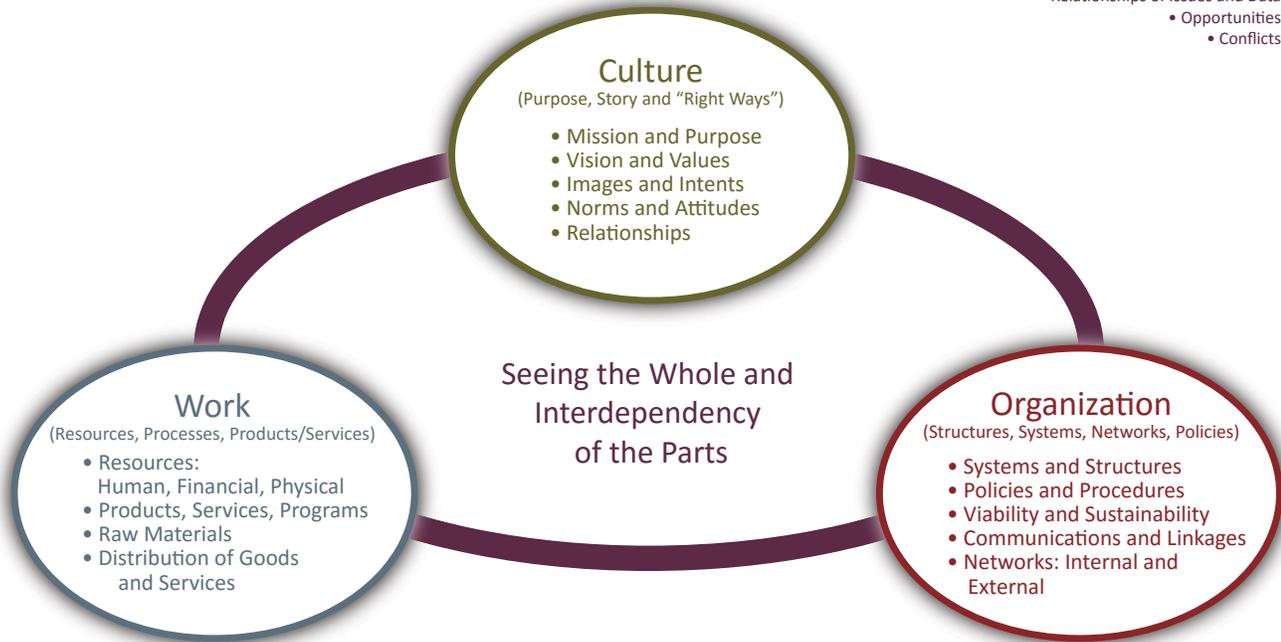


## Whole System View

Part of the FrameWorks Series

Used For Assessment of:

- Situations "In the Moment"
- Relationships of Issues and Data
  - Opportunities
  - Conflicts



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Period	Major Events/Actions of Duluth Public Schools	Observations/Characteristics	Lifecycle(s)
1993  To  2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> Gulf War – students’ parents deployed to war</li> <li>• 9/11/2001 – housing market impact, school lockdowns began, stock market decline – concerns about finances</li> <li>• Central 7-12 school 1993</li> <li>• Many more school sites (Cobb, Chester, Birchwood, Washington Jr. Central, Woodland, Morgan Park, Washburn, Lakeside, Nettleton, Lincoln MS, Piedmont)</li> <li>• Bubble sheets</li> <li>• STC/VoTech, LSC – 1995</li> <li>• Internet introduced (web sites)</li> <li>• Carbon copies (sp. Ed.)</li> <li>• TV on a card with VHS</li> <li>• 2001 funding formula from state</li> <li>• Budget retrenchments (from state)</li> <li>• 16,000 students / 1200 teachers</li> <li>• Less competition</li> <li>• Edison 1997 (started by superintendent)</li> <li>• Magnet schools (music, language, science / math)</li> <li>• Nonstandard spending (tech, SpEd, specialists)</li> <li>• Columbine – 1999</li> <li>• Reg Noland</li> <li>• Mark Myles 94-98 (different focus)</li> <li>• Julio Almonza 98-05 (different focus)</li> <li>• Hiring policies varied</li> <li>• Lots of volunteers from community</li> <li>• Start of police liaisons (low key presence)</li> <li>• Resource competition</li> <li>• Grade level meetings – different decisions in schools</li> <li>• More administrators in elementary schools / fewer in high school</li> <li>• Smaller class sizes</li> <li>• Lunch tickets</li> <li>• Desegregation money – EEAC made funding decisions</li> <li>• Sp. Ed. Service no core or co-teach least restrictive</li> <li>• Greater public respect for teaches</li> <li>• 2001 – NCLB, OBE</li> <li>• 2004 – HS 7 period day to 6 period day</li> <li>• Job market?</li> </ul> 	<p><b>Most Influential Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edison Opening</li> </ul> <p><b>Behaviors Encouraged/Rewarded</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competition (internal within each school and external (community))</li> </ul> <p><b>Characteristics of Successes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Efficiency</li> <li>○ Autonomy</li> <li>○ innovation</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Characteristics of Failures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top-down</li> <li>• Accountability                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Stress on teachers</li> <li>○ Initiatives</li> <li>○ Mandates</li> <li>○ Unfunded</li> <li>○ Standardization</li> <li>○ Constant change</li> <li>○ Stress on students</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Start of decline – past stability

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1998-03 – Profiles of learning</li><li>• 2004ish – Basic Skill testing</li><li>• Sp. Ed. Other districts enrollment</li><li>• Headstart</li><li>• ½ day kindergarten</li><li>• Veteran staff – young staff / teachers laid off</li><li>• Hires just before school starts</li><li>• Scarcity model</li></ul>		
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Period	Major Events/Actions of Duluth Public Schools	Observations/Characteristics	Lifecycle(s)
2012  To  2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Red Plan shifts</li> <li>• Smart boards</li> <li>• Compensatory education funding</li> <li>• Achievement and Integration funding</li> <li>• Special Education curriculum purchase</li> <li>• Declining enrollment</li> <li>• “Priority and Focus” school designations</li> <li>• Data Coaches</li> <li>• Instructional Coaches</li> <li>• WIN</li> <li>• Closing Nettleton, Morgan Park</li> <li>• Zero hour</li> <li>• Opening / Relocating               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Myer-Wilkins</li> <li>○ Ordean &amp; Lincoln MS</li> <li>○ Denfeld</li> </ul> </li> <li>• World’s Best Workforce Plans</li> <li>• ACT Mandates</li> <li>• Fastbridge implementation</li> <li>• Cohort model MTSS</li> <li>• Continuous Improvement Team</li> <li>• PBIS started in some schools</li> <li>• Full-service community schools model</li> <li>• BARR at Denfeld</li> <li>• Immersion Programs</li> <li>• Academic Excellence Online</li> <li>• Wonders Program</li> <li>• 8-day rotation for elementary specialists</li> <li>• Standards based grading</li> </ul> <p>School branding and establishing new identities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End of Red Plan shift</li> <li>• Crawford</li> <li>• Amy Starzecki – Assistant Superintendent</li> <li>• Lots of principal turnover</li> <li>• Mike Cary – Curriculum Director</li> <li>• Firing of black administrators</li> </ul>	    <p><b>Most Influential Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End of Red Plan Transition</li> </ul> <p><b>Behaviors Encouraged/Rewarded</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentionality and structure to improve with consistency</li> </ul> <p><b>Characteristics of Successes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration, consistency, systems, implementation, leadership</li> </ul> <p><b>Characteristics of Failures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of funding</li> <li>• Lack of follow through</li> <li>• Wrong conversations about equity</li> <li>• No action to address racial disparities</li> <li>• Assumed families would stick with us</li> <li>• WE DON’T LEARN FROM MISTAKES</li> </ul>	<p>Early bureaucracy / recrimination or Infancy</p>

- PLC Solution Tree Training
- Business Manager transitions
- FLOOD
- “Kids First”
- Overcrowding in some buildings
- School Board Drama
- MDE came to curriculum after ISD709 was reported
- Attendance focus – SARB shift



Period	Major Events/Actions of Duluth Public Schools	Observations/Characteristics	Lifecycle(s)
2017  To  2019	<p>2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spanish immersion at Lowell started 2016-17</li> <li>Cold</li> <li>\$0 fund balance</li> <li>Tire mulch removal on all playgrounds</li> <li>Compensatory education resolution</li> <li>Workforce development starts putting staff in high schools</li> <li>Low graduation rates among black and brown students (50%)</li> <li>Scheduling task force</li> <li>More fully staffed</li> <li>Duluth Community schools collaborative</li> <li>Disproportionate suspension rate</li> <li>Sandy Hook</li> </ul> <p>2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ALICE</li> <li>Lowell adding sections every year</li> <li>Boundary study               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Denfeld vs. East parent controversy</li> </ul> </li> <li>New security for all buildings</li> <li>Operating referendum passes (new \$ into district)</li> <li>Technology referendum did not pass – no funding for technology               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reaction to where \$ went</li> </ul> </li> <li>Walz elected</li> <li>New CFO</li> <li>Budget reductions of \$3.1 million</li> <li>District developed TEA form</li> <li>Stronger cultural competency push</li> <li>To Kill a Mockingbird</li> <li>Pre ETS launches at Denfeld and East</li> <li>Transition to email / virtual communication</li> </ul> <p>2019</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gronseth and Jeff Horton left (in 2020 but announcement in 2019)</li> <li>Huge snowfall – schools closed 4 days</li> <li>District cut FT CTE coordinator position</li> <li>Denfeld principal leadership change</li> <li>Low unemployment – workforce shortage</li> <li>Lowell suicide in woods</li> </ul>    	<p><b>Most Influential Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boundary Study</li> <li>Tech in referendum not passing</li> </ul> <p><b>Behaviors Encouraged/Rewarded</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Started to talk about equity which triggered white fragility</li> </ul> <p><b>Characteristics of Successes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immersion programs, internal leadership rose to occasion</li> </ul> <p><b>Characteristics of Failures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership has been reactionary to loudest voices</li> </ul>	<p>Early Bureaucracy</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DFT President change</li><li>• Loss of SPED \$ to charter schools – cap on special education funding</li><li>• New LSC Leadership</li></ul> <p>Trends across three years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Population flat (no) growth</li><li>• Lack of staff diversity; student diversity increasing</li><li>• Sustainability</li><li>• East / West Divide</li><li>• Declining enrollment</li><li>• District systems, policies, practices, evolving</li></ul>		
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Period	Major Events/Actions of Duluth Public Schools	Observations/Characteristics	Lifecycle(s)
2020  To  Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid</li> <li>• Access to services limited</li> <li>• Social services limited</li> <li>• Physical separation 6 ft</li> <li>• Isolation – human disconnection</li> <li>• SEL needs</li> <li>• Return to school – adaption – significant needs – 2 test years</li> <li>• Mask mandate</li> <li>• Lack of resources and support</li> <li>• Increase in mental health needs</li> <li>• Vaccinations</li> <li>• Unemployment surge</li> <li>• Reliance on teachers               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Trust and appreciation</li> <li>○ Mistrust</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Hybrid learning</li> <li>• Supply chain issues – products food</li> <li>• Operational Plan</li> <li>• New leadership</li> <li>• Transition to a new central office – closure of HOCHS – impending sale of HOCHS</li> <li>• Staffing crisis               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Late postings</li> <li>○ Educator morale</li> <li>○ Communications errors</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Loss of life, livelihood, jobs, etc.</li> <li>• Remote learning and implementation               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Missing kids                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Responsibilities for kids</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Inequality / inequitable access</li> <li>○ New technology                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Learning and collaborating DL teams and admin</li> <li>▪ Innovation and integration</li> <li>▪ Remote work</li> <li>▪ Alternative spaces in community</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Roll out for tech use – disrupted timelines</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Safety plans</li> <li>• Social media – TikTok</li> <li>• Contract negotiations</li> </ul>    	<p><b>Most Influential Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid</li> </ul> <p><b>Behaviors Encouraged/Rewarded</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandated isolation</li> <li>• Adaptability</li> <li>• Clarity</li> </ul> <p><b>Characteristics of Successes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Collaboration = learning work</li> <li>• Innovation – serving</li> <li>• Developing autonomy</li> <li>• Selflessness - community</li> </ul> <p><b>Characteristics of Failures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of empathy</li> <li>• Lack of foresight; preparedness</li> <li>• Challenges informing meaningful relationships</li> </ul>	<p>Death &amp; Courtship – emerging work</p>

- Enrollment is down
- NAACP reports on discrepancy
- Governor’s Executive order
- Safe learning plan
- Hunter policy – negative impact on students of color
- Socio-economic divide and access and opportunities
- Division – essential vs. non-essential workers
- George Floyd
  - Racial divide
  - Police
  - SRO conversations and review
- Polarizing Political Election – and political landscape
- CRT discussions
- January 6
- Cultural wars
- Fake news – misinformation
- Impact of Covid on student teachers / teacher training
- Missing training and onboarding
- ESSR funds
  - Technology
  - Positions
- Inflation



Shared Messages StoryWall

1. Value of historical perspective
2. Open up and share things
3. Grateful to meet new people
4. Generative process
5. Diverse perspectives
6. Focus on strengths and weaknesses
7. Factual and transparent
8. Emerging of patterns and insights
9. Sharing of history and feelings of those who lived it
10. Safe to share perspective
11. A lot of work to do