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Hi, my name is Brenda. I'm a senior at South Milwaukee High School.

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Hi, my name's Ivy. I'm a junior at South Milwaukee High School.

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It's really passionate about arts because of the free creativity

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and freedom we get whenever we're doing.

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And then you're listening to SMOI podcast.

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Welcome to the SMOI podcast.

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My name is Daniel Bader.

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Report cards are as part of school as pencils and chalkboards.

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The goal of the report card is to give parents an idea of where their students are in their studies

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and serve as an early warning sign that they might be struggling in a subject and need some help.

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Schools and school districts have report cards too, for many of the same reasons.

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Today, we're going to hear from some people who report the data back to the state

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and who also use that data to improve how our schools operate.

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Then we'll hear from Superintendent Deidre Rehmer about some system-wide changes she's putting in

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to help South Milwaukee schools improve for students and on the report card.

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Here with me to talk about our report cards today, which are coming out next week,

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is Christy Gajewski, Director of Curriculum and Instruction,

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and Carrie Stolenwerke, our new Director of Pupil Services and a former principal.

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Thank you guys for being here.

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Thank you. Glad to be here.

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Thanks.

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So tell me about what data parents can read in our school report cards.

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So our school and district report cards have actually a lot of data that goes into figuring out those scores,

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both for the district and for the schools.

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So some of the data that goes into that is student achievement data,

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so how students are performing on the state exams that they take every year.

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From that, then they also calculate growth, so they look at scores from year to year,

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usually a two to three year window to calculate the growth overall for those cohort groups of students.

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Then there's the target group outcomes, which is a newer indicator,

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which kind of lets schools and districts know who the groups of students are that they need to focus on,

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who are maybe experiencing some learning gaps.

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What would be an example of a target group?

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Students who speak multiple languages, for example.

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Or students with special needs.

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Some of those identifications then help us understand where we need to focus some attention.

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Then there's also the on track and post-secondary readiness,

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which shows graduation rates and things like absenteeism and chronic absenteeism.

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Those kind of fill in those scores.

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And then we get an overall score, which is based on all of those pieces of data,

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and it's weighted based on the student groups that we have in the district.

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So for example, because our school district has a population of students who could identify as low income,

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our growth score is weighted heavier for us because it's that whole value add.

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It takes much more effort to support students who have been experiencing those learning gaps.

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Our growth score is weighted higher than some of the other areas.

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So when you say weighted higher, you mean that when there is progress in that or decline,

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that factor is higher into the score at the end?

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Definitely.

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And it would be different for other school districts.

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It's a way to kind of try to level the playing field across the state for how schools are supporting students from different backgrounds.

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Carrie, what should they take away when they see some of the...

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Is this telling parents about their kids or is this telling them about the teachers and the structure behind everything?

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Yeah, so it's speaking to how a school district and the schools within it are addressing those specific areas.

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So it'll tell you how we're performing on absenteeism as compared to other schools in the state.

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It'll tell you how we're performing on our student growth, like are we seeing growth from year to year as compared to other schools in the state.

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So it's going to give parents a nice snapshot of where their school is currently performing

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and should help them to have some questions about how they're growing.

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So when it says something like X number of students not reaching these things,

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should I take away that my kid's cohort, that grade level, is struggling as a whole or is it really that reflection of what a school is doing, how the school is...

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It's a tough question. I think it's kind of a both and.

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I think for us when we look at this is like cohort data, so it's how all of the students performed overall.

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But you know, parents can also...usually typically parents can have an idea of how their student may have contributed to that

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by based on getting the four exam scores when those are sent out.

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Usually toward the end of the school year is when parents get the copy of their own student's performance.

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Usually that will give you an indicator of how your own child performed.

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But that's only one significant piece of the data, like one piece of the data.

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It really...I don't know if I...how to explain that exactly, but it's kind of both and.

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Like your student scores, their coming to school, their participation, all of that matters.

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But it is really kind of a large scale bird's eye view of how the school and the district are performing and supporting kids overall.

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Yeah, maybe I could back up for a second and actually just talk about what...really what this is.

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This is a report from the state to the community to say what...how our schools are doing in educating students.

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Right, it's speaking to very specific metrics though, so like it doesn't capture the school culture and the student experience.

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That's something that we as a district are working on better defining and building a plan for.

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So like this doesn't capture that.

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It really does give you like hard data measurements.

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Right, so it's not like a poor schools...well I've been in schools that scored...not here, but it scored really low on their state report cards.

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But I would send my kid there in a second because I love the principal, I love the teachers I've met, those kind of things.

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So it's kind of a conundrum because what you're reading as an overall score doesn't seem to reflect the reality when you're in there.

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I would agree with that. It doesn't tell the whole story.

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So this is us, well in the administration here, providing specific metrics, specific data to the state.

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You kind of listed them, but what are...like how do we even get those?

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So our achievement and growth data comes from a couple of places.

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For elementary schools and middle schools it's the forward exam.

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We take the scores, the kids take the forward exam starting in third grade and they take it all the way through I think tenth grade.

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Yeah, and what's a forward exam study? What does it ask?

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A forward exam is usually in most grade levels, reading and math, reading and literacy and math.

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And then in a couple of the other grade levels they also put in like in fourth grade, eighth grade, and tenth grade.

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They layer in social studies, in science learning as well.

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So it is typically content and it's aligned to the state standards.

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So it's kind of really measuring how well have the kids learned the standards, have they reached mastery of those standards.

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And it's given at the end of the year.

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So it's like everything the kids have learned they're going to be kind of assessed on some of those pieces.

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Even maybe a more silly question, but is it a paper, Scantron, fill-in test?

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Is it a reading circle?

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Good question. It's done on the computer.

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And so kids have to learn to navigate that.

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So and it usually the testing window is usually over a month's worth of time.

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And our teachers really try to break it up for kids so they're not testing all day long.

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So they might do one reading test one day and then the second reading test the next day.

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And the same thing with different math, math and science pieces.

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So they don't test them all day every day, but they do try to be strategic and test that.

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Say let's we're going to do a reading test. We try to in same environment the students are learning reading.

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We want to try to have them tested during that time.

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So it's not a complete disconnect from what the kids are already doing because while the test is important,

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we also know that our kids are more than that test.

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But we do want them to take it seriously because it really does show whether or not we address the standards well in our teaching and learning over the course of the year.

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Sure.

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I think the other thing to keep in mind with the forward test and with any testing is that it is a measure of the way a child performs on a test that day.

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So many students, you know, aren't particularly good testers.

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It doesn't mean that they don't demonstrate the learning in other ways.

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But on this test on that day, it's a snapshot.

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Yeah.

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So it's important to remember that the test scores are only one way of measuring what a student is learning in school.

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Right. Sure, sure.

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And I guess you would expect that the average eventually would come out to give you a good idea of everybody.

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Right.

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Yeah.

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And then for high school, they also include the ACT.

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And then the other metrics, like I said, there are other metrics too.

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We look at chronic absenteeism, which is the number of students who are chronically absent is like if they're absent 10 percent of the school days that are allotted.

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So if they're absent 10 percent in 180 days, they miss 10 percent of school.

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That's a lot.

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So they measure that.

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We get kind of points based on how close we are.

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We also one of the things that does go into our report cards as well is the number of students tested.

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So if the school district dips below 5 percent of students who don't take the test, we can receive a loss of points in that area.

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So I know that, you know, that's kind of been for some families, they don't want them to take these tests and things like that.

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And they always have the ability to opt out.

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But again, like Carrie said, it's kind of a snapshot one day of the performing on that particular day.

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And we just really encourage the kids to at least try it, you know, whether or not.

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But I get every family has, you know, has their beliefs on that.

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So we understand, but just know that there is there is a small consequence written into the ESEA law that if if we don't, you know, have that many students, they opt if we have more than 5 percent students either not show up and take the test or opt out.

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It does impact that overall score and say it sounds like to those metrics can hurt you and doubly hurt you.

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Right.

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Because 5 percent don't come to school and 5 percent don't take the test. Yes. Dinged both times.

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And I imagine people remember it wasn't that long ago, this idea of testing and high pressure.

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Imagine that. Do you hear that from parents?

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That's why they don't want to take the test.

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I think so. And I think, you know, the perception is still high stakes testing.

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I mean, there's accountability attached to it. Right.

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So anytime there's accountability attached, it does feel high stakes.

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But I think what has shifted and what has shifted in that was in the era of No Child Left Behind when we were specifically trying to make sure 100 percent of the kids were, you know, moving and grooving and proficiency, you know, in a certain time frame.

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I think it was until what, 2011 or something, whenever that law changed.

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But then the law had been reauthorized and pen adjusted and some of the accountability tools and measures have also changed.

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There's still accountability at the state level because we receive federal funding and that's part of the reason why we have to have these report cards.

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But at the same time, like we recognize now that these tests are a snapshot and they're an indication of where the system is and where we might potentially have gaps with students that we need to restructure our, you know, internal metrics or retool some of the teaching practices that we're doing to try to address and engage more students.

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In learning and those kinds of things.

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But we don't use those tests in any way, shape or form to say a teacher hasn't been performing or things like that.

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Like it's not tied to that where in some states it has been.

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I would say that was the second iteration after Race to the Top, right?

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Then it was tied to teachers, which also is not exactly a great measure.

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I can see where some of that attendance comes from because I know No Child Left Behind was purposely meant to stop warehousing special education students, right?

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Because if you could keep them from taking the test, then maybe your scores would be better and you'd get better funding.

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So there's some gamification and then we're talking 20 or two decades of adjusting these kind of things.

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So we have attendance data. I know we'll talk to our superintendent a little bit about some of the changes, but you said aligning, like it's kind of identifying for us some problems in the system that either we are not scoring well on because we're doing it wrong,

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or we're actually scoring like recording it incorrectly or yeah, just something else. What are the other benefits of this to the school district, the report card?

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Long pause.

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Yeah, long pause.

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I think.

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I know the school improvement plans seem to have come out of them, right?

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Yeah, school improvement plans and really having an awareness of how we're supporting all kids, you know, because like you mentioned, a race to the top and No Child Left Behind, groups of students were kind of deliberately pulled out of the general education population.

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And that's not exactly best practice. It's not good for kids. And this helps us at least say, okay, we're doing really great in this area, but we might need to adjust some of our teaching practices and things like that to support more kids, engage more kids.



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So that's where the strategic planning and the district strategic plan kind of come into play. It at least helps us pinpoint areas that, you know, when you work in a school district, you know, you're serving a greater community.

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And it can feel very overwhelming because you feel like you have to fix every single thing because you're seeing kids on a daily basis.

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But it's impossible to do that. We have to be able to strategically pick the things that will help the system move forward overall.

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And if we know that we've got certain groups of students who, if there are trends in all of our schools where we might be inadvertently creating gaps among students, then that helps us look at is it the resource that we're using?

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Is it a teaching practice that we've tried and isn't working? Is it really attendance? How many days have kids missed school?

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So it really helps us really try to identify where the areas are that we actually have control over fixing to pick those things that will help the system grow overall.

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Sure. I think too as a principal, it was really helpful in facilitating conversations as a whole staff around like where did we identify opportunities based on this and how were we building a plan to address it and to normalize conversation about what was working and what wasn't.

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Like this just really provides that very natural entry point to that conversation so that we do live in a place of we're always trying to get better.

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Yeah, I guess if even if it's not a perfect yardstick, you have someone else's yardstick to say this is what we have to measure up to.

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Right. And there's no perfect yardstick. So it's not the only one we use, but it is one of them that provides us with some really nice normed data.

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Yeah, I can open the door with school improvement plans. Can one of you explain what that is and what they're used for?

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Yeah, sure. So a school looks at their baseline data. So how we're performing in the areas of like academics, we do usually include culture and climate and student engagement, attendance, parent and community relationships.

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So based on those, we identify where our opportunities for growth as a school are and we write a plan and each the plan has components aligned to each of those areas. So you work like we worked with our staff to identify what would be our goals and then to build objectives, measurable objectives within each goal area.

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And that drove our work and it was a, we came back to it regularly at staff meetings to talk about where are we, we used a red light, green light system to see like how we were progressing toward the goal in each of the areas.

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Okay. And that's kind of what happens on professional development days. I imagine you have a check in about that.

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Yes.

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In your guys experience, do all schools have school improvement plans, even if they are scoring really well? Yes. Yes. I mean, that's kind of part of written into the federal law is that it's kind of continuous improvement is written into the federal law and it was written in deliberately into the state plan as well to make sure that, you know, even if a school is scoring well, there's still students who might not be reached. Right.

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So you still have to kind of have, or you might not be communicating well, or you might not have the best culture and climate in one school and have great climate and culture in another school. So it really does give us just kind of a starting point for improvement conversations. But yeah, most school districts should, I'm not going to say all because I know that I cannot speak for the 411 school districts in the state.

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But it is written into this, into the federal and state law that we're supposed to have continuous improvement.

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Okay.

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So let's talk a little bit about what's not, not in the report card.

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Like they can measure data points that we can fill out on a form or submit electronically but how do we, what, what are some of the things that are not shown on a report card.

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I think a lot of the student engagement stuff is not really, we know that attendance and graduation rate and things like discipline and stuff are indicators there could be an issue, but it's not necessarily spelled out for us.

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So they don't count.

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Kids aren't coming to school because they're anxious is not, that's something that would populate on and on a report card from the state. So then it's up to us to dig a little bit deeper and kind of figure out, well what's preventing kids from coming to school.

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Is it something that's without their control because their families are hit a struggle spot and don't have a vehicle to get them here or is it something more, you know, like, is it, what does the national trend say post COVID kids aren't coming as regularly as they used to.

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So those are all things that are not on there and that we kind of try to dig in and find out more information about, well how do we help kids get here, you know, for attendance wise anyway.

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I think family engagement too is a really big one.

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I think particularly coming out of COVID that as we try to strengthen relationships between families and schools and really be strategic partners that there's a lot of opportunity there and it's a harder thing to measure, but schools work really hard to figure out kind of where they are with that and how they can

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improve. So that's a big one and staff engagement too. So like using a totally separate survey to ask staff, like, how are you feeling about the work? How are you feeling about the job responsibilities? What do you need to keep doing the work or to improve?

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So I mean really making room for some of those things which are drivers for how the things that the report card does measure come up.

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So they don't ask how many kids are engaged in extracurricular activities, how many athletes do you have, nothing like that. So if everybody left here at 2.30 or 3.30 depending on when they get out here, 2.55, that if everybody went home and there was nothing that happened after school, no pepper allies, nothing, then that wouldn't score at all.

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You would have no way of knowing that from the report card.

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What should a parent, your average parent, A, should they look at these period and B, what should they take, do you think if they should, should they take away from when they read it?

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Yeah, that's another tough question. We don't want to hide anything. We don't want to hide anything. They are public domain as of November 14th and you know we do know that families who consider moving into different areas in the school system, they look at them.

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Yeah, they do look at them.

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But you know, I think what makes people anxious is that sometimes it doesn't always look that great and it only gives a surface level of what's actually happening in those schools. So I think you're going to see that we've had several of our schools improve over the last year and one school that saw a decline.

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So when those scores come out, and it's one of those things where it is painful to be a part of a school system and have be at the school where you saw a decline because you know everyone in that building is working their tails off.

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And so keep that in mind, right? So if you're looking at your school and you see, oh, my school is the school that went down, what's happening over there?

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Well actually it's a lot. There's a lot of layers that we have to sift through to figure out what exactly happened to cause those scores and that configuration to see a decline instead of an increase like some of our schools.

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So just know that the people who work in those buildings are working their tails off to try to figure it out. They want to hear from you about you know how you think your kid's doing and what you know those kinds of questions and things like that.

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But I think we just have to be cautious and know that there are people behind this and that you know nobody wants their scores. I mean even when we were in school, right?

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Like you took a test, you never wanted to get enough on your test, but you also knew, oops, I got to fix something, right?

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So it does not feel good. It is very stressful to receive those scores. But it is also kind of a rally cry to say, hey, we got to come together and figure this out.

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So just know that when schools get an identification or they receive a report card score that looks less than stellar, there are people that are working on it to try to help improvement.

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And I think our superintendent is going to talk a little bit about like our strategic planning for the school district and how that layers into it as well.

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But I think that's the biggest takeaway is you know it is important to take a look at. We are judged. I mean I would be lying if I said we weren't, but...

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I also think that you know it is great to have some understanding of the report card, but if you have questions about your school, get involved.

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Like join your PTO, PTA, have conversations with teachers, with the principal, like get to know the climate and culture and the work of every day that is happening in the school.

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Because that is way better information than this one snapshot.

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Interesting. And I guess conversely should we celebrate too much when a school does get better?

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I think we have to celebrate because they have really collectively come together and worked for the students and the staff have come together to show those improvements.

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So yeah, we need to celebrate. But we don't want to celebrate so much that the other schools feel defeated.

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It is just like okay we did this and what we do on the professional learning days and calibration in professional learning communities is kind of talk about what happened.

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What went well, what didn't go well and how are we going to try to come together and take ownership of this so we can move forward.

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And maintain it. I mean I think that is the...as a building principal for me that was the danger of celebrating too much.

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Because yes we want to celebrate but we also have to be really aware of the fact that it is like a moving target and we have to keep figuring out how we are going to continue to grow and get better.

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So you lose a class every year and you gain a class every year right? So there is turnover every year in schools.

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Well guys, Christy Gajewski and Carrie Stonewark, thank you so much for being here today.

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Absolutely. Thank you.

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Joining us now is Superintendent DJ Raymer. Thank you and welcome to the podcast.

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Thanks for having me on Dan.

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Again. So we just talked about everything that goes into a report card and everything not in a report card.

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It is kind of the district's job, your team's job to try to improve those scores.

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Even if you get the best scores you want to keep working on improvement.

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What are some of the things that we do to try to work on our report card scores?

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There is a ton of things that we do as a district and as a system that really do boost up those scores as best that we can.

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One is to make sure that kids understand the material that goes into them right?



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So all the work that we have been doing around early literacy, that is what it is designed for, is to make sure that kids can read.

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Reading is such an important skill.

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This is one way that we get a snapshot of how well our kids are doing in reading compared to other kids across the state and compared to other kids in our region.

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So that is an important measure because we want to know that our kids are making growth at a commensurate rate to other people in our area.

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And then a lot of the work that we have been doing at the high school around understanding what the data tells us.

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We have been doing a lot of work for the last couple of years around data literacy.

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So what does a score on the ACT tell us?

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As much as I am not a huge fan of standardized tests, they are the measures by which we are publicly judged.

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And the nice part about taking those when you are as the state assessment is then we have students that get to take a practice opportunity at the ACT.

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Or they get to use that ACT score to go on and apply to colleges.

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And it opens up some doors for our kids.

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A high score on the ACT can come with scholarship money or other things that we want to make sure all kids have access to.

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So paying attention to how kids do on those standardized tests even if we don't love the standardized test is important.

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And they break all those tests down. They will tell us right in the forward exam.

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Third grade students are struggling with levels of comprehension.

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High school students are struggling with identifying these elements of literature or these pieces of math.

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And then that tells us to go back and look at all of our curricular documents to make sure that we have the right components in there to address the areas where our kids are doing well.

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And we can keep going strong in those areas and address the areas where we are seeing some skills gaps.

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Hey, where do we need to add something to the curricular options to make sure that our kids have a really solid experience and can perform well at whatever they are going to do.

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This particular measure is based off of the ACT for high school kids and for the elementary and intermediate and middle school students the forward exam.

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But we want the kids to feel confident anytime they are asked to show me what you know that they can do it.

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Right. Right. And like we said it's helpful I imagine for you to have someone else's yardstick.

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And to build kind of trust out in the public that at least this is a common yardstick that we are all being measured against.

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From a systems point of view though I know specifically since you've been here we've talked about changing how we take attendance.

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Right. I mean that's your job right. The big system stuff.

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Explain maybe the attendance changes and then anything else you'd like to add to that.

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Sure. Yeah. We're just paying more attention to the times that our kids are in school.

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And we want kids in school when they're healthy enough to be there. Right.

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So we got some feedback from some families when we posted something about attendance like hey just so you know there's a big virus going around and I want to make sure we're keeping everyone safe.

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And so do we. We take that part really really seriously. But we're just starting to pay more attention to what are the reasons kids aren't coming to school.

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Because if they're not coming to school access to the content knowledge that they would need to go on and do a job or go on and be successful in life.

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One way to measure that is through the ACT isn't going to be there if they're not regularly in school.

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So we've been working really closely with our elementary schools and one of our principals at Lakeview.

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Chris Sapursky just presented and some of the work that they've been doing around attendance at the also conference a big statewide conference and just starting to look at what's the root cause.

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So does the family have a barrier to get into school that we need to overcome or we need to work on.

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Do we have accessibility things. Do we need to move around some of the courses so that the student has a schedule that works a little bit better if they're working two jobs outside of school or if they have other things going on.

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How do we tailor the school experience to really maximize the student getting what they need out of it.

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Sure sure. And also to write if a student is struggling to get to school on time and they're not there when the bell rings.

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They still there's a point at which they can be counted as being in school right. So if they correct. Yeah.

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A little bit late. Yeah. And in elementary school in particular we tend to only take attendance two periods of the day right morning and afternoon.

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And then if we've marked the kid absent because they were tardy in the morning then we've counted them absent for the really the whole day when it comes to the measures that are used in the state report card system.

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So there's just some ways to more accurately reflect attendance. We want to make sure we're getting credit when the kids are in school on this report card system and that we're honoring the fact that the student isn't in school when they're really not in school.

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And so by changing a few of the systems ways that we look at the whole picture of how we're recording things to be absolutely in compliance with what's expected by DPI and the law.

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But yet to make sure that it's really true to form for how they're going to measure it on these report cards.

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That part has also been really important and sometimes a new set of eyes can see something that if you've done it for a long time you just always do it the way you did it.

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And so being able to look at some systems and talk to the different people who manage those systems here to say hey where are the gaps that are created.

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Right. Are we clear with how we're taking attendance and does it meet what's required by us. You know through DPI like I said in the statutes.

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But does it also philosophically align to what we're trying to do where we also want to work closely with families. Kids need to be on time for things in life.

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That's a super important skill. So it's not that we're taking that lightly. But life also happens to people and people have doctor's appointments or there's transportation issues or other things.

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And we want to make sure that we're providing the right amount of grace but then also not taking a ding in the way that things are measured when really it wasn't our ding to take because that student was in school for the majority of the day.

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Yeah I was going to say like the idea from knowing how they pull the data and how they look at it matters with how you record it in the first place. Right.

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So I think of it as driving down a mountain back. I don't know if people drove stick but if you didn't downshift and just rode your brakes all the time they'd overheat the brakes.

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There's nothing wrong with the brakes just you were driving incorrectly. Right. And it's just to get the wrong warning sign then.

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Yes. Systematically any what are some other changes that are coming in.

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Yeah I think we're really working on we do a lot of PLC work in our school district which is a professional learning community.

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And that's when a group of teachers get together and they start to talk about what do they need to hold in common across areas so that we ensure that all kids have access to the absolute standards that they need.

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And then where is there that balance of teacher autonomy to base what's going to happen in the classroom and what the teacher is interested in or what the student is interested in.

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And we're trying to figure out what that balance is right now. So the PLC is historically we're filling out more scope and sequence documents and some of those are really broad.

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And they just had some of the state standards identified but they didn't really talk about what was the experience going to be that you know teachers held in common between classes.

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Right. Every social studies student is going to have access to these particular skills and then within the class the teacher can personalize it to themselves or to the students.

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There should be a ton of teacher autonomy in a system. Yeah. But there should also be a basic floor that we all agree to hold in common.

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All third grade students should have access to these 10 to 15 ELA standards English language arts so that we can ensure the kids have the equal opportunity to learn the important skills around reading.

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And then teachers are going to do a million things on top of that. So we meet. That's what we do with the teachers when we have those half days which is we're grateful to this community for supporting that time with our staff.

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But that's what we do on those days as we start to figure out what we need to hold in common. And we've had a couple of half days under our belt and we got some feedback from our staff.

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It's still not 100 percent clear what we're doing and why we're doing it. So now we're going to clarify this week Wednesday we're going to get back together as a whole system all the staff and the PAC and I'm going to talk about why it's so important that we hold some things in common across every school and every building in our district and every department so that kids can have a commensurate experience wherever they go.

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And then the beauty and the autonomy that are incredibly talented staff bring to the table and then our kids with their passions and what they're interested in bring to the table.

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Sure. And I guess like what I didn't understand about schools before I learned about it was that Dan Bader in third grade struggled with this but the third grade teacher never actually gets to talk to the fourth grade teacher that has Dan Bader because there's no PLC time.

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So you don't know that I'm dyslexic and I can't get my numbers backwards. They start failing the test right away in the beginning because you didn't know because you didn't get a chance to talk to third grade teacher.

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Right. So how do we build those PLCs then across our district too because we want the kids at Luther to be having a similar experience to the kids at Ross and Blakewood and Lakeview as well.

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But we also want that autonomy for the experience to be the right one for the kids that are in that classroom and that school at the same moment. So the systems work is really trying to find the balance between what we need to hold in common.

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Why are we holding that in common? It meets a state standard. It's something that we know is going to be assessed on these tests and it's a life skill that we know is important to our kids as they learn how to read or as they learn how to do math.

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You know why did I need to know this as a question students have been asking teachers for the length of time. But some of them we have actual really good answers to where you're going to use all of that information later in life.

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This is just one measure these report cards and these tests. That's one measure. But it also kind of tells us okay overall our kids are making gains.

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Here's how we have to do progress monitoring. So that's when we give like a maps test. The high school gives a test called Horizon. The middle school was working on a test called iReady.

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That gives us more regular progress notes so that we're not just surprised when we take voila the big assessment once a year.

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Yeah. Yeah. Both Kristi and Kerry mentioned the strategic visioning process. How does that tie? How does developing a mission, a vision and a purpose tie into report cards?

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Yeah that's a great question. So it has a very distinct tie right. We want our students to feel successful in school. But the feeling and the doing are two different distinct parts of it and those both contribute to the student experience.

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So one of the building blocks of the plan not only will we have a mission and a vision. The mission's been set for us. That's the moral imperative that our board has already approved.

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The values need to be held in common by the people who support this organization and lead it. And then the vision like where do we want to be next is that aspirational moment to say what do we want for the students we get the opportunity to serve every day.

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And that's such an important statement about where we're going next. So on top of that in the strategic plan then you make goals in four areas. So we're doing the student experience.

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So what do we really want for our kids not only with these tests and these report cards but everything else that goes into it. How do we expand electives? How do we expand opportunities for them to communicate and collaborate and problem solve so that they can go out into the world and do whatever is right for them and their families with the encouragement and the support of their families and their support system outside of school and us.

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And then one around the employee experience. How do we ensure our teachers know exactly what they should be doing and where they have all the room in the world to be who they are and respect their professionalism in order to be able to determine what's next for the kids that they get to serve with the kids that they get to serve with the students that they work with.

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And then there's one on community and community relations. How do we make sure our families understand what we're trying to do. How do we create more business partnerships and then how do we work together so the whole system can move forward. And then the last one is around fiscal stability and facilities.

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What do we want in the long term plan to ensure we can stay fiscally stable and have the facilities that we know we need. This community supported a referendum about 20 years ago that built this beautiful high school. But we need to make sure we have a really solid plan to maintain that and respect the investment the community made.

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And that's the part we have been able to. But now to be able to report back to the community some accountability measures and how we're doing on all of those pieces. That's the other exciting part. Once you get the five year plan you make some one year markers, and then you have something to go back to the community and say here's what we worked on and here's how we're doing.

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And then with the help of that, then they get the school report card measure as well, so that family start to say okay our kids are more than just one test score 100%. These are the other measures that I understand about the student experience, so that I can know that my child is supported

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and feels like they belong and wants to work hard here at school. And so, I guess last question because I know you got to go. What are, what do you hope, or what do you want a parent to take away when they see the report cards come out.

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I want our parents to understand that we're growing and we're growing in the right direction and many many many cases and we have a plan for the schools where we are not growing at the rate that we wish that we were right so a lot of our school report card a good chunk of it gets based on

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how students do from one year to the next and that's something we pay really close attention to. We're working to close gaps for all students all the time but we want to know that every single student is growing at a really nice pace, along the way.

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And that's the thing that you know as you get your school child school report card score as you see what's out there pay attention to that growth score is that higher than the state average are we moving in the right direction to close some gaps on behalf of the kids we get to serve

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every day. Okay, well thank you. Thanks for being on the podcast.

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Thanks for listening to this episode of the SMI podcast. Couple of reminders that strategic planning process is open to anyone in the community to attend. A lot of thoughtful people are giving a lot of their time and energy to the process, and if you want to be a part of it

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or observe, you're more than welcome. Second, please pay attention to another deliberative process going on right now. The South Milwaukee School Board is considering a potential referendum. It's important to follow along as board members debate and discuss the needs of the district

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and how to meet them. You can learn more on our website, [www.sdsm.k12.wi.us](http://www.sdsm.k12.wi.us). My name is Daniel Bader. Thanks for listening.