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Politics, Policies, and Procedures: The Iron Triangle of Implementing Education Reform

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Imagine this scenario. It's 8:30 on a Wednesday morning, and you are running late to work. You rush outside, get to your car with enough time to make it to work, but it won't start. The engine rolls over, makes a peculiar noise, but that's it. Your car is done for the day- no getting to work; it's not doing what you need it to do.

So, you decide to take it to your mechanic in hopes of getting it repaired. You might have it towed, you might roll it, you do what you need to get it there. Once there, you explain the issues that you are having, and fortunately, it's a slow day, so multiple mechanics go and look at your car. One at a time they each come back and each one gives you their diagnosis. The mid-level mechanic comes back, and they've deduced that your starter has burned up, and you will need a new one. As he leaves, the new mechanic comes in and tells you that he believes that a spark plug has hit its limit and needs to be replaced. Then, confused by the two different diagnoses, you go to the owner looking for a solution. He tells you that he disagrees with both mechanics and the ground on your battery is the true problem which you will need to replace.

You leave the shop confused and at an impasse. Who should you believe? What should you do to your car? Do you implement each fix? This situation reflects where we are with education today. We all know that something is wrong, but we are not sure exactly how to pinpoint the exact problems, and we don't have a solution that resolves the issues.

Introduction

What is the purpose of education? This question is extremely important when beginning discussions about educational reform. Historically, education has served both a political and a social purpose (Strauss, 2016). The purpose of education historically was to ensure a constant supply of professionals (Herbst, 2004). In addition, families historically viewed education as a way raise the esteem in which they were held by their neighbors and to improve their children's well-being (Herbst, 2004). In essence, education supplied social constructs with professionals they needed in order to last, and it was used as a way to cement one's social standing or improve one's social standing. Today, according to Strauss 2016, Americans are divided on the issue of the purpose of education. However, according to the article, Americans fall into one of three camps. Either they believe education prepares students academically, for the workforce, or to be knowledgeable citizens.

I would argue that the purpose of education is truly all three camps combined. It is only through education that we can become academically successful. However, the driving force behind education should be to prepare knowledgeable citizens who are successful in and beneficial to the workforce. The article does point out however, that there is a consensus between Americans where they believe that lack of funding is the number 1 problem confronting local schools and they have said so for 15 years (Strauss, 2016). This is where education reform begins to play a role. The purpose of education reform is to redirect education to align with the purpose the public believes it needs to fulfill. Unfortunately, recently there has been a divide between the reform agenda and the desires of the American public (Strauss, 2016). This problem of reform is a symptom of the bigger problem behind education; we aren't listening to those involved and instead implementing what those who are removed, politicians and scholars, believe is right.

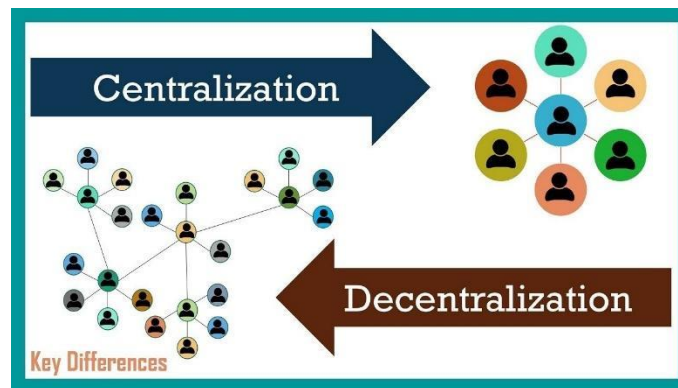
I recognized this problem and immediately wanted to know why. Why is education reform this complex, and what comes in the way of education truly changing in radical ways? I realized the importance of technology in education and questioned the importance it has on the development of education. Further, I saw the connection between technology and the rate of educational change. I was curious as to how reform really happened and what showed reform. What is true proof that schools are changing and growing? Finally, I wanted to develop my own idea of education reform. I didn't want to be the person who talked the talk but couldn't walk the walk, so I decided to investigate each one of these ideas and ask why.

How Does Education Reform Happen?

For us to best understand barriers to educational reform, we must first understand what reform is. What qualifies as changing schools? How can we see improvement in what schools are doing? Some say the answer is standardized testing. One year you teach a subject in one way and have them take a standardized test; then the next year you implement a variety of reforms and have students take a standardized test, comparing the scores from each year. From a scientific and experimental standpoint, this process seems reasonable. We have our independent variables, we have our dependent variables, and most of all we have our constant. So far, we have allowed this ‘rational thinking’ to prevail in education, but we once again miss an important detail: not all students are the same. For instance, although the students who take the test each year are in the same grade and take the same test, each year there are variations of the test from the prior year, not to mention, the group of students are not the same students. Apples are being compared to oranges.

Education cannot operate as a one size fits all model. Therefore, we cannot assume that students one year will learn the same as students the next year or the same as they will three years from now. Instead, Duchnowski et al., 2004 investigated school improvement activities and proposed that there are six areas/propositions describing reform and improvement activities. The study proposes that these six indicators of reform are: Governance, Accountability, Curriculum and Instructional Reform, Includedness, Parent Involvement, and Prosocial Discipline. The study does not define any of these indicators but instead tells us what they need to be qualified as improving and implementing reform.

Governance



The idea of decentralized authority is essential to understanding how schools show improvement and reform through Governance. This decentralization indicates a movement of power from the school district to the school buildings. This would take power away from the superintendent and put more power into the hands of the principals who know and understand each school. Further, the principal would not be in complete control of decision making on the school level. Instead, decisions would be made by implementing Advisory Councils where the decision-making process would allow for shared communication between the principal, the faculty, and the parents.

However, the study doesn't go far enough, students should be included in these decisions as well. Too often, administrators don't listen to the voice that is most important in education: our students. Students are the ones who are directly impacted by decisions and should have a voice in the decisions being made. According to Professor Ben Kirshner and his study on supporting youth participation in school reform, "youth become engaged when they are included in the decision-making and given the chance to solve problems they care about" (Kirshner, 2007, 355). Let's give the most important people in education a chance to solve the problems that affect us all.

Accountability



The school must show “a system of measuring outcomes” (Duchnowski et al., 2004, p. 119); this system can be federal or state mandated, but it could also be a system of their own creation. The most important component is the idea that there is a commitment to demonstrate student progress. Each school is as unique and different as each and every child under their care; therefore, they should advocate for an independent form of accountability. For example, a form that is not mandated by the government, but instead, acts as a monitor that only gets involved when needed would be beneficial. Finally, the school must show authentic assessment techniques when documenting the educational progress of their students.

Curriculum and Instruction Reform



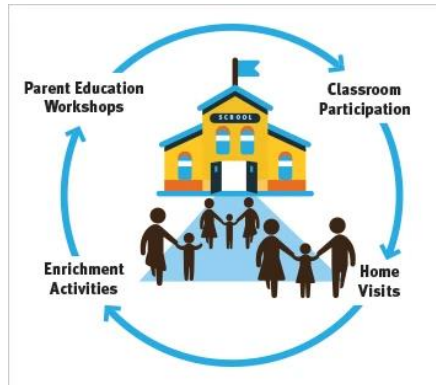
In broad terms, reform is shown by evidence of systematic reform in instruction. Therefore, education reform should be laid out in a step-by-step methodical process that takes time and is strategically and intentionally thought out. Once the reform is implemented, the school must show sustained activity to improve the instruction of their students. This can be shown in many ways but can simply be research-based innovative techniques or instructional models. Finally, this reform and improvement must be shown in both areas of general and special education. This is important because instruction that is stagnant and complacent is not changing in order to meet the needs of students. It requires that students move to meet it instead of it moving to meet them.

Includedness



As Tim O'Brien points out, oftentimes those who perform low on exams or struggle to meet benchmarks are often excluded because they can be seen as a negative impact on the school. Therefore, a big sign that schools are improving, or reforming, is the shared value that children with emotional or behavioral disabilities are educated within a community school setting. These children should not be isolated and kept separate from their peers, but instead they will learn best when integrated with peers. Tim O'Brien speaks to inclusion and says, "Inclusion is about more than just a headcount: it must maximize both presence and participation" (O'Brien, 2020, p. 300). This is precisely what educational reform should look like- all students present and participating in class. In addition, all staff should share responsibility for all students while schools must demonstrate some form of support mechanism that will help achieve and cement this includedness.

Parent Involvement



While our students may be the most important voices in education, their parents or legal guardians come in at a close second. Thus, one metric in which schools show improvement and reform is by showing high levels of parent/guardian involvement throughout the school.

Parent/guardian involvement means collaboration between parents/guardians and teachers in the education of their children, not just attendance at school functions and celebrations. However, parent/guardian involvement cannot override the knowledge and skill of the teacher.

In practice it can be extremely difficult to find the correct mixture of parent involvement and teacher/educator authority. Too many times we find ourselves at the extremes and not the middle ground. Parent Involvement is only effective when the parents are supporting their child and supporting their child's teacher(s). This support requires effective and open communication between parents and teachers, yet at the same time it also requires that neither side is demanding or dictating how things are to be done. It is a partnership centered around the well-being of the student and each person involved using their strengths to achieve that goal. A reformed/reforming school realizes the importance of these relationships and has structures in place to form and nurture them.

Prosocial Discipline



A strong sign of how reformed minded a school is can be determined by how they discipline their students. A reformed and improved school incorporates discipline based upon conflict resolution, peer counseling, and learning from their own experiences. Further, discipline is delivered positively and individually. Prosocial is an important descriptor because it describes focusing on behavior that is positive, helpful, and promotes social acceptance and friendship. Prosocial discipline is not about punishing kids for their behaviors but about changing their behaviors (Prosocial, n.d.).

These six ideas give us a holistic view of educational reform. They analyze every aspect of education and determine what it must do to advance and succeed. Time and time again we have seen that education reform only works if it is addressing all problems, and not just an attempt to cover up deficiencies within the school. Just as when a car breaks down, or when we get sick: we can't only address one symptom or one problem. Instead, we must address each one even if that means investigating until we find the root problem and then alleviating it. We can't fix one problem, leave the rest, and expect to operate at peak condition and be successful. So why are we expecting our education system to function this way?

What Is Education Reform? My Positionality

Throughout my research, I integrated one point of view: my own. While I learned a great deal about other's ideas and views, I processed the information and formed my own opinion. I formed ideas that I consider as educational reform, and more importantly, what I expect from it. During my research, I spoke on a variety of topics. To best understand the research I have completed, you must also understand my stance on education reform. While reading Bruno Manno's research on school choice, I learned valuable information that many people don't know and wouldn't know unless they sought it out.

According to Manno, "less than 3% of the nation's school districts serve more than 40% of students" (Manno, 2010, p. 515). This statistic is a problem. While it does support the idea of school choice, it also shows the need for education reform. It shows that we need to analyze the education system with the intent to ensure that schools can handle the number of students they are being tasked to educate. It also means that school reform cannot be solely based upon the needs of particular schools that serve particular demographics. Many schools cannot support the number of students that already serve. The implications of these facts are grave and reveal yet another flaw within the education system and add to the call for education reform.

Through my research, I have found a great deal about educational politics and governance, and with that, the idea of decentralized and centralized responsibility. Centralized responsibility is the idea that power and authority is held on a governmental level and all districts hold to those guidelines. In a centralized system, there is no room for individual autonomy and uniqueness. If there are problems unique to your school, schools can't quickly implement new policies to combat them. Instead, they must move the problems up the correct channels until the central authority implements a large-scale fix to the small-scale issue.

In contrast, decentralized responsibility is the idea that authority and power are devolved so that decisions can be made on smaller scales. Instead of a central authority making all the decisions, each school or district can make decisions based upon the needs of their community and environments. Therefore, it makes sense that there is not an education system that works effectively by running off a “one size fits all” mentality, and my research has supported this claim. Hence, in advocacy for education reform, I strongly emphasize that responsibility should be decentralized and devolved to the district level, or in drastic circumstances, the school level.

As I have spoken on in the previous section, I believe that change should come from a point of holistic reform, of both the system and of the school. When talking holistically, there are two schools of thought: the entire system of education and the entire school. However, the difference is, within the system of education, we are focused on every part of education, meaning administration, curriculum, inclusivity, etc. Yet, when looking at holistic school reform, while we are taking these into account, we are more focused on whether the school is changing completely and not just partly.

Holistic reform is the only way true change can happen. If we are not focused on education as a whole, it would be equivalent to the saying of one step forward and two steps backwards. We could fix one part of education and effectively make the system worse because we didn't change another part. Education must have all systems firing correctly and effectively, and the only way we can be effective is if we have all facets on equal playing fields. A great example of this type of reform is educational content. The content taught within education is something extremely complex, and according to Gustavo E. Fishman and Luis Armando Garmin (Fischman, G.E., & Gandin, 2016), it has three main fronts: the fragmentation of knowledge, neutrality of school content, and the supremacy of scientific/erudite knowledge.

Reform is often focused around new or improved curriculum and often the reform does not consider all three of these facets. Instead, it can get focused on only one of the facets and forgets about the other two, resulting in two greater problems stemming from the two other facets of curriculum that were left unaddressed. A great example of this is the idea that school content must stay neutral, yet we hold scientific and erudite knowledge as absolute. This can snowball into problems and division within the community when local community knowledge differs with the content brought forth by the school, and thus we end up with fragmentation of knowledge. Fragmentation of knowledge can realistically be seen in the Bible Belt of the South. For instance, in schools, Evolution and other scientific principles are taught as absolute truth while the community holds Creationism as truth.¹ Knowledge is then fragmented and not collectively held. A good way we can combat this controversy is through devolving responsibility within the structure of education.

In addition to the notion of holistic reform, everyone involved in the system of education deserves a voice in its reform, including students. Ben Kirshner, a professor in the School of Education at the University of Colorado at Boulder, did intensive research on the subject and gained paradoxical results. According to Kirshner, “School reform leaders endorse the idea that students should have input into how their schools are designed” (Kirshner, 2007, 355), but what do these leaders believe a voice really is? All too often these youth are not taken seriously; their ideas and contributions are only taken at superficial value and gain only insincere acceptance. No politician would object to the idea that youth deserve a voice, and no leader would openly argue with a youth actor. Instead, they sit and listen politely soaking it all in, just to quickly move on to more ‘pressing’ matters. Why? They are not yet 18 and cannot vote. Youths' voices are not deemed as important as voting citizens' voices to reform leaders and political actors because they

¹ This research does not support or encourage one way of thinking as correct or incorrect.

have no real influence on the system, only symbolic influence on a system that superficially recognizes and accepts them. Youths are trapped in this paradoxical black hole of politics and true passion, a black hole we can't seem to find our way out of. Kirshner doesn't claim to have the solutions, but he does suggest some steps we can take to see a reform that is inclusive.

Kirshner realizes one huge problem with youth reform participants: they can talk passionately about what they believe needs to improve within their schools but often struggle to offer tangible policy recommendations about their beliefs. Kirshner counters this flaw with a possible solution: ““apprenticeships” in civic participation” (Kirshner, 2007, 359). A program where youth and adults can work together in a mentor/mentee relationship. In this relationship the mentor would guide the youth on methods of argument and how they differ depending on their circumstance and help them through the process of putting tangible ideas to their passionate beliefs.

Kirshner also delivers three lessons that set the path needed for young people to effectively participate in reform. First, young people must ground proposals in evidence. Evidence makes an idea a proposal, and solid evidence makes the youth the expert to be taken seriously rather than ignored. Second, young people must strategically use policy discourse. If youth can present themselves well by learning to speak and advocate like they are experienced in their proposal, they would be taken more seriously. They must be taught when to utilize these skills and master the preconditions necessary to be taken seriously when in front of political actors and reform actors.

Finally, youth must have ambitious goals and expectations. Youth are more likely to be taken seriously if they realize their proposal is just a means toward a greater end and not the end itself. Youth need to show that they can carry through with their ideas and not leave it up to

someone else after proposing them. Youth are the purpose behind the education program and those who experience the reforms and improvements put into place. Everything done affects them in some way, and thus they notice what works and what doesn't. This makes them our most valuable voice within education reform, so why shouldn't leaders start taking them more seriously?

My investigation of the literature drove me to ask questions, questions that require answers, and so I sought them out. I asked these questions and quickly realized there was something much larger going on. These were only symptoms of the system's greater illness. I read and read and consistently came back to one idea that is plaguing the educational system and educational reform. This idea is the Iron Triangle of Politics, Policies, and Procedures and how they work together to put a chokehold on education and education reform. Throughout the rest of my project, I plan to investigate just what politics, policies, and procedures are and how they create barriers within education and education reform. Further, I plan to conduct a Case Study on a public school district superintendent and principal to hear about their experiences with the Iron Triangle and use their real-life experiences to answer the question: How do Politics, Policies, and Procedures create barriers to the implementation of education reform?

Literature Review

Defining the Iron Triangle

In my introduction I used a metaphor of a car to explain the status of education today and how we got there. Three different mechanics told you three different things to do, leaving you confused and stuck at a crossroads. What was the main factor in getting you here? Communication! Not one of the mechanics talked to the other, each diagnosed the problem on his own and gave you their singular opinion. They didn't communicate with each other. The same can be said for those trying to fix education today; however, it's not completely their fault. In 2010, Bruno Manno, a senior advisor over K-12 Education at the Walton Family Foundation, conducted a study looking into the barriers to school choice. Manno wanted to investigate what was impeding the expansion of school choice. While this topic may seem narrow, the idea can be applied to all of education. What barriers are impeding the growth of education?

In his article, "School Choice: Today's Scope and Barriers to Growth" (Manno, 2010), Manno outlined three barriers that work together to create the Iron Triangle of School Choice, and more importantly education reform. These barriers are Politics, Policies, and Procedures. While Manno truly focused on how these impede the growth of school choice, I am going to broaden his scope and show what they are and how they impede the growth of education.

What are Politics?

Politics is a word that we can recognize and a word we hear all too often, but is this a word that we can say we understand? Is this a word you could give a clear definition? For most people they would say no, and understandably so. Politics is an abstract idea that heavily influences our lives in many complex ways. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines politics as "the

total complex of relations between people living in society” (Politics, n.d.). In the most basic form, politics are how people work together and function as a group. The discussions we have, the compromises we make, how we come together and solve problems. That is politics; however, today the term has come to mean the ugly inner workings of government and its impact on all aspects of society. However, when we apply this to education, it becomes so much more complex.

According to Manno, Educational Politics is all about group conflicts working together to maintain the status quo. Well, then what is the status quo? The status quo is the current position of education at any point in time. It’s the idea that everybody is working to gain and/or maintain the position where they are most comfortable or have the most power. Further, the status quo is about maintaining what society views as education and what society expects education to deliver. From this viewpoint, politics also becomes about what we believe the purpose of education is, and what we expect to gain from it. The status quo is either something you work with and is where you find your position in your career and your position in your society, or the status quo is something you work against, and you find no worth in how the status quo views your position. Working against the status quo shakes things up and causes change. This is when education really experiences change, and in turn growth or decline, depending on the outcome of the change. We challenge the status quo because of our passions and our beliefs. Either we believe what’s working is the right way to go, or we believe that the system in place is too comfortable and needs the change to grow.

Another aspect of School Politics is the idea that it has two forms: the politics of those working within the system and the politics of those working outside the system. Politics within the system refers to the interactions between educators and administration. Politics within the

system of education refers to the expectations administration have for teachers; it refers to the decisions made by the school board. Politics within the system of education is about the relationships among teachers, the relationships between teachers and administration, and the relationships between administration and school boards. In contrast, politics outside the system refers to the relationship schools have with the government and the relationship schools have with their community. According to a systematic review of principal leadership, the ability of school leaders to influence their schools and their communities is directly linked to their school's success, thus, showing the importance of politics on schools' growth and success via school leaders and the relationships they have with their communities.

What are Policies?

Whenever anyone talks of Politics, you can bet the word policies will come up. Policies and Politics go hand in hand- one couldn't exist without the other. Policies are the product of Politics, the product of interworking relationships of compromises and the plans as to how we will solve the problems. According to Manno, "policy...the basic ground rules that determine what can and cannot be done" (Manno, 2010, p. 518). Policies are the groundwork, the structural rules to any foundation. According to the team at XQ America, Policies are the sets of ideas and plans that a group of people have agreed to follow in certain circumstances or situations (Team XQ, 2021).

There are policies for anything and everything that we can imagine, and every group has their own ideas of what policies are and what they can do. In education, there are so many groups competing for the right to decide what should and shouldn't be a policy. There is an even greater complexity to the idea of Politics. Politics also includes the idea of interrelations between groups, not just individual people, which is even more important when it comes to government. Different

political parties have different opinions of what education should look like. Therefore, they have different policies they want to enact. These groups have policies they all can agree upon, but in a more critical sense they have policies that land on polarized ends of the scale. This in turn creates polarized policies that in effect can paralyze educational reform.

When discussing Policies, Manno spoke again on the idea of Status Quo Politics. Manno said that Status Quo Politics in turn creates Status Quo Policies that effectively protect the existing power standings. These policies control how power is allotted and who gets the power. They create the flow and chain of command therefore defining the Status Quo. Further, like politics, policies have three levels in conjunction with the three levels of government: Federal, State, and Local. Each level is working to maintain their own view of the Status Quo and therefore are all at the same time working against one another in some way.

A reason these different types of government are called levels is because each holds a different amount of power/control over education. The bottom level of control is the Federal level. This seems ironic seeing as the Federal Government is often the strongest form of government; however, when it comes to education, they have little to no control. According to XQ America, 2019 data suggests that only about eight percent of K-12 school funding comes from the federal government (Team XQ, 2021). In government, funding means power, meaning that the Federal Government only holds about 8% of control over education. So where does most of that control lie? State or Local? In a sense you could say each has equal levels of power and control. The State Governments control who gets funding and why they get funding. Following this, the Local level of government (school districts) then direct that funding into the best interest of their schools.

These levels of government clearly work closely together and influence the education system in similar ways but also have some differences. One difference can be seen on the State level. The state level has a Department of Education which can create policies that impact the more day to day side of education. This differs from the other two. The State level is more specific than the Federal level due to population size. While the Local level carries out the decisions of the State level. This shows that the State level of government holds the most power, but it, like the Federal level, does lack one vital component: our voices. At the State and Federal levels, the decisions are made by politicians and bureaucrats. In contrast, Local levels are often made by those in your own community. Plus, the local level offers the community several different opportunities for their voices to be heard.

What are Procedures?

Safety Procedures, Medical Procedures, Evacuation Procedures, Standard Operating Procedures; procedures is a word that we hear and see in many different aspects of life, but have you ever stopped and asked yourself what that really meant? Are Procedures something you do/an action? Are Procedures a thing we see and know? Procedures is a hard word to define and can even muddle your brain if you think about it for too long. In the simplest terms, Procedures are the processes put into place by policies that create a certain form of operation. In more official terms, Procedures are the set or system of objective rules that govern the management of an organization with the intent to establish efficiency, consistency, responsibility, and accountability (What are administrative procedures? - definition & explanation).

The educational workforce is human. As humans, we make mistakes, cause errors, and differentiate in process. There are variables when dealing with a human workforce, and with those variables come possible disruption of learning outcomes. However, we did our best to

solve that variation in all workforces through the introduction of bureaucracy. Procedures are the bureaucratic side of education, the side that sometimes works in the shadows you may say. This part of education is often seen and not heard. Bureaucrats work hard in the background to ensure that every child has the same educational experience and that none are falling through the cracks. This part of education includes all the contracts teachers, administrators, and parents must sign. It also involves the regulations teachers and administrators must know and enforce. Further, it includes the processes teachers and administrators take to get different things approved (field trips, fun activities) and the process they must perform to provide additional help to students that need it. Finally, it involves the processes we follow in emergency situations so that we can ensure everyone's safety and well-being.

Educational Procedures can be cumbersome and often get in the way of the goal of education. Manno argues that Procedures are a "bureaucratic, monopolistic system with little transparency...thereby blocking the development of new system capacities and individual capacities" (Manno, 2010, p. 518). While procedures are important and do help ensure that no child is left behind, they can also inhibit the growth of education and, as Manno goes on to say, discourage freedom of action at the school level. This can be further understood with the knowledge of Policies, and Politics I have already established. The State level, holding the most power over education, puts forth policies and fundings to the Local level of government. This level then takes those policies and creates their own that then inform the procedures for their schools. While they do get some freedom to decide how these policies are implemented through the procedures, they must ensure that the procedures fulfill the needs of the State before ensuring that the needs of the school and the students are met. These differences in needs are the points where people and information can fall through the cracks and therefore inhibit the growth

of education. However, if this bureaucratic process was brought out of the shadows and was more transparent, better communication could be had and some of those cracks could be filled.

Politics: Accountability in Education

The Iron Triangle of Education Reform talks about Politics, Policies, and Procedures as abstract ideas. However, defining these ideas does include making them concrete and tangible. Defining the Iron Triangle does not help us understand how these barriers play out; however, examples do. When defining politics, policies and procedures, the central point to make is that in the end, the conflicts within politics, the language of policies, and the rigidity of procedures all work to maintain a Status Quo. A Systematic Review on Principal Leadership presented another aspect of educational politics, an aspect that works as the checks and balances to maintaining the Status Quo: governmental accountability. Accountability is a concrete example where you can see politics, policies, and procedures being barriers to educational reform.

Governmental accountability works on all three levels of government: Federal, State, and Local. While legally the state level does hold the most power and influence, through a study conducted on teacher evaluation, Professor Helen M. Hazi at West Virginia University and Daisy Arrendondo Rucinski at the University of Alabama show that “The most frequently adopted form of state oversight is the approval of local revaluation policy” (Hazi, H.M., & Arrendondo Rucinski, D, 2009, p. 10). Accountability is the idea that the State and Federal governments create policies and procedures to ensure that local districts/schools are doing what they are supposed to by meeting certain standards. These standards are set by the policies and put into practice by procedures.

Additionally, according to Hazi and Rucinski in accountability, “supervision is usually understood as teacher evaluation” (Hazi, H.M., & Arrendondo Rucinski, D, 2009, p. 2). Hazi and

Rucinski also provide a theory stating that “evaluation statutes and regulations will be changed to try and make teachers more accountable through this highly ritualistic procedure, and in doing so, will further complicate a flawed practice” (Hazi, H. M., & Arredondo Rucinski, D, 2009, p. 4). This ritualistic procedure is where the barriers begin to rear their ugly heads and impede educational growth.

As you can see, accountability starts with good intentions, but inevitably it becomes a barrier to the growth of education and implementation of education reform. A great example of this is student-tracking paperwork. A policy is put into place that has the intentions to better track student growth, or lack thereof, in order to try and prevent students from slipping through the cracks. This is a good intention; however, when it is put into practice, it results in more paperwork and procedural burden. This burden can distract teachers from their ability to connect with children and build relationships because they are trying to check off the boxes. Building relationships with students is so much more important to ensuring that students don’t fall through the cracks because a relationship with their teacher is proven to be the reason students grow while paperwork is not.

The accountability aspect of Politics can often minimize the principal’s role in schools from ultimate leader to only a middle manager. Therefore, as in many middle manager positions, principals eventually feel pressure from the demands and needs of those who work for them and their own bosses. A study that analyzed principals’ responses to accountability demands and how they cope with performance demands found that “teachers continue to struggle with how to respond to demands from national tests” (Camphuijsen, 2020, p. 451). National tests are just one form of accountability, but if this form of accountability creates demands that can cause stress for teachers, we can assume principals also have stress from these demands. They possibly have

even more stress since they are responsible for many other demands in multiple facets that would add to their stress.

The study also states that often “principals act as key “managers in the middle” or policy brokers.” (Camphuijsen, 2020, p. 429). Therefore, principals sadly often end up “juggling multiple, and sometimes conflicting, accountability demands” (Camphuijsen, 2020, p. 429). The conflicting accountability demands end up causing undue stress on principals that prevent them from fulfilling all the duties their job calls for. Since they cannot fulfill these responsibilities, some will end up being pushed aside, which “limits the objectives the school is attempting to achieve” (Aderet-German, 2021, p. 292). Since the paperwork and bureaucratic responsibilities cannot be pushed aside, so that the schools can stay open, unnecessary pedagogical responsibilities are the ones forgotten and pushed aside. If a school is functioning and succeeding without any reform, then reform would be deemed unnecessary. Further, if reform conflicts with the demands of the higher bosses, it would be stopped dead in its tracks. The political aspect of the accountability barrier can thus be seen in education when it stops reform and stunts educational growth.

Interpretation and Translation are subset barriers to the bigger barrier of Accountability, a barrier that encompasses the entirety of the Iron Triangle, but they are more prevalent within the barrier of policies. Instead of becoming a barrier by maintaining the system’s Status Quo, Interpretation and Translation maintains the Status Quo within individual schools. Interpretation and Translation are the critical parts of any enacted accountability. According to a study conducted by Professor of Sociology, Antoni Verger, and Professor of Teacher Education and School Research, Guri Skedsmo, Interpretation “is a collective process that results from interactions between a broad range of individual and external stakeholders.” While Translation

“is the process through which school actors ‘transform their institutional agenda into specific practices, concepts and materials as a means of responding to policy’” (Verger, A., & Skedsmo, G, 2021, p. 395). Together, Interpretation and Translation respond to policies set forth by higher-ups in the education system, namely Federal and State governments. Through these processes, school leadership can “actively adapt, modify and reframe policy prerogatives to suit their preferences and the needs and constraints of their school’s context” (Verger, A., & Skedsmo, G, 2021, p. 395).

This is a perfect example of where the process of accountability has great intentions, but sadly the implementation still prevents change because Interpretation and Translation also allow school administration to pick and choose which enacted accountabilities, or reforms, they want to truly focus on and help flourish and which ones they underdeveloped and cram into their systems. Verger and Skedsmo say that “When negative interpretations predominate, schools tend to address the external pressure to comply with new policies and regulations through dilution strategies and obstructive bureaucratic game” (Verger, A., & Skedsmo, G, 2021, p. 395). School leadership decides which reforms fit best with their school, but are they the ones in the classroom day in and day out? Do they truly know what our students need, and can they overlook the bureaucratic needs and focus on students? This shows us exactly how the accountability system tries to be beneficial but ultimately harms the education system. The process understands the need for autonomy but unfortunately does not understand where that autonomy is needed.

Verger and Skedsmo also go on to say that “Test scores and numbers have become key elements in education governance and accountability enactments in terms of providing decontextualized information about the quality of schools” (Verger, A., & Skedsmo, G, 2021, p. 398). This tells us that the procedure of testing and the procedure of analyzing those scores

creates a barrier to education reform and growth. Decontextualized information is information that is gathered in isolation from the school and its individual biases. This allows education governance to look at cold hard facts about a school that are not tainted by the perspectives of the actors within that system.

While this does allow decision makers to remove biases from the process, it also has many drawbacks. In a study that investigated how school administration copes with performance expectation, Professor Marjolein Camphuijsen identified a few of these problems. Camphuijsen first identified that performance metrics have changed the purposes and goals of the education profession because “educators can come to internalize or embody new definitions of “quality”, “excellence”, and “success”, fostering efforts of norm compliance” (Camphuijsen, 2020, p. 432). Camphuijsen shows that performance metrics, namely test scores, change teachers' ideas of what they truly need out of their classes and thereby naturally sway them to comply with the new ideas and norms even if they don't agree with them.

This is further done through the importance set on these metrics. Camphuijsen states that “test data are used for multiple purposes, including when distributing resources, assessing and comparing teachers' performance, moving around staff members, and deciding on the school's focus areas and improvement plans” (Camphuijsen, 2020, p. 442). All of these issues put stress on the teacher, whether that is because they need more funding to try a new idea they have for their class or they feel their job is threatened if their students don't perform well on the test. No matter the cause, this stress can force teachers to change their curriculum and pedagogy and teach to the test instead of the needs of their students.

Finally, test scores can affect the community of the school through comparison. Camphuijsen calls this “Commensuration” and shows that commensuration leads you to

“compare oneself to others, as well as previous versions of oneself, thereby affecting how entities make sense of one another and themselves” (Camphuijsen, 2020, p. 432). Ultimately, test scores lead to commensuration and can detrimentally affect relationships amongst teachers and potentially between teachers and students due to the turmoil they feel within themselves. All of this can cause the community of the school to deteriorate.

Camphuijsen finishes by saying that test scores ultimately lead to small quick fixes within schools and that “schools adopting such “quick fixes” are likely to see an increase in their test scores in the short-term, but at the same time emphasize that in the long-run “they fall like a rock, because they have not worked out on what underpins the results” (Camphuijsen, 2020, p. 447). Camphuijsen clearly lays out how test scores and data are barriers to reform. Whether that's through forcing norm pedagogy or affecting the school community, test scores are not true measures of accountability. Finally, Camphuijsen closes with the statement “focus should lie on continuous and steady improvement of classroom practices” (Camphuijsen, 2020, p. 447).

In the simplest terms, accountability is a procedural barrier to educational growth because, according to the Systematic Review on Principal Leadership, accountability supplies a “burden of paperwork” (Cruz-González et al., 2020, p. 33). This procedural burden of paperwork eventually distracts principals from fulfilling their pedagogical responsibilities within the school and ultimately can reduce them to a middle manager instead of a school leader. In addition to this demoted view of principles comes the added stress of meeting standards and expectations. Furthermore, for many teachers and administrators, the idea of accountability can put a bad taste in their mouths. According to O'Brien, during accountability assessment, teachers feel that they “seem to spend more time justifying that they can do their job rather than being trusted to get on and do their job” (O'Brien, 2020, p. 303). O'Brien goes on to say that because of this “Teachers

become stressed. Pupils become stressed. Systems become stressed.” In a stressed state of mind, can you accomplish anything meaningful or worthwhile? Generally, no. Thus, do you believe that the education system can grow when it is stressed? Absolutely not.

The biggest barrier accountability poses to education is stress, and as O’Brien says, “Surveillance is not support” (O’Brien, 2020, p. 303). Unlike the political and policy barriers, the procedural barriers of accountability are tangibly seen through the people of the system through the burdens, stress, and anxiety placed upon teachers and administrators.

Finally, the biggest way accountability is a barrier to education is accountability in its entirety. This barrier exists in politics due to the way resources are allocated, through policies in the idea of autonomy granted or not granted to institutions, and in procedures due to the use of reinforcement data. According to Professor Tali Aderet-German’s study on Sustainable Self-Evaluation there are three things needed for effective evaluation, a form of accountability. In order for accountability to be effective schools first must have a flexible structure. This means they need a “structure...that enables pooling of network resources” (Aderet-German, 2021, p.308). This pooling of resources allows teachers to share the responsibility of reform and ensures that the pressure and responsibility is not placed on one individual.

Further, for effective accountability, a flexible structure means a more autonomous structure. Teachers need “more autonomy in managing their funds” (Aderet-German, 2021, p.308). If resources are pooled, this could allow teachers to have more freedom in how they choose to send their funds to best advance their reforms and ideas. However, administration needs to allow this autonomy to foster that freedom and thus a flexible more autonomous structure would foster effective accountability. After the evaluation has been completed, in order for it to be effective, there must be correct evaluation data practices. Schools should practice

something called “reinforcement data use” (Adert-German, 2021, p. 308). Reinforcement data use is “Identifying and celebrating school strengths alongside understanding what requires change” (Aderet-German, 2021, p. 308). Accountability is the real-life manifestation of the Iron Triangle; the three concepts it needs to be successful can form the three sides of the triangle. Primarily, politics first locks out education reform through access to resources and how we pool them, then policies lock it in further by preventing teacher/administrator/school autonomy, and finally procedures seal the triangle through negative data use instead of reinforcement data usage.

In addition, the Iron Triangle masks the purposes of reforms and accountability which in turn makes it hard for people to understand and accept the reform or the accountability. This prevents reforms and accountability to do what they need to do effectively. Often accountability and evaluation have negative connotations because they focus only on the negative side of things. Usually, they do not point out strengths but only weaknesses. In order for accountability to be effective, it must point out both. It should tear down and build up, not tear down until there is nothing left. Using this practice would also help establish the third requirement for effective accountability, a staff culture of understanding. The Iron Triangle masks the purposes of reforms and accountability, thus making it hard for people to understand and accept which doesn't allow the reform to be effective. If the staff understands the purpose behind accountability and evaluation, they would be more apt to accept and grow.

Further, they would feel more comfortable taking risks and trying new ideas. According to Aderet-German, they need an “understanding of the term “Criticism” (Aderet-German, 2021, p. 309). Criticism is a good and positive force that can be established through a “balance...between accountability and improvement goals” (Aderet-German, 2021, p. 309).

Ultimately, staff need to know that “a critic is a teacher” (Aderet-German, 2021, p. 309) and that they are there to help not harm. Aderet-German goes on to say that “implementing SSE [school self-evaluation] rather than external evaluation can reduce negative emotional effects on school staff by facilitating the differentiation between self-evaluation and self-inspection” (Aderet-German, 2021, p. 310). Accountability will be effective and lasting if staff can understand that while they are being evaluated the school is ultimately inspecting itself and asking them to do the same.

Ultimately, we must “design evaluations that balance improvement and accountability goals based on the organizational mechanisms described above while ensuring that the staff is cognizant of the way the evaluation serves the school’s needs towards improvement and learning and is not only an inspection or regulation tool” (Aderet-German, 2021, p. 311). All of this goes to show that accountability is a barrier because it seems impossible. The meeting requirements of a flexible and autonomous school structure that knows how to use evaluation data and has a staff that understands the importance of positive criticism and sees beyond the negative sounds like having a unicorn as a pet. Missing one or more of these markers either makes reform realistically improbable and discourages teachers from trying or makes teachers believe they can’t take risks and try new things as in radical reform.

Accountability makes the abstract ideas of The Iron Triangle tangible. It shows that through efforts to maintain a Status Quo of power and comfortability, educational administration and government actions regarding education disregard opportunities for reform and in turn educational growth. The barriers of accountability come in many forms whether that's through barriers only understood by professionals such as paperwork, additional yet avoidable stress, and the requirements needed for accountability or the barriers that can be understood by anyone such

as perceived demotion of credibility, low work ethic due to hindered morale, and the effects of decontextualized information. Overall, accountability is one way we can tangibly see and understand The Iron Triangle. Through accountability we can see how all three sides of The Iron Triangle (Politics, Policies, and Procedures) interact and work through conflicts in order to achieve their goals and their own Status Quo from both within and outside the educational system.

A Special Note: Technology and Educational Reform

Due to the increasing and integrated use of technology within our schools, especially in a post COVID-19 era, special consideration must also be paid to the role technology has in impacting educational reform. Throughout history, there have been consistent themes of societal improvement and societal change, the biggest theme being technological advancement. The same can be said for education reform. Education reform can be characterized by the advancement in technology of the surrounding society. Beginning in the mid-nineties, society started fully embracing technology and incorporating it into even the smallest parts of our lives. The early 2000's brought us new ways of connecting, consuming, and transforming our lives. Our lives can now be characterized by technology such as the iPhone, YouTube, Social Media, Cryptocurrency, Virtual and Augmented Reality, and Artificial Intelligence. All these inventions are thoroughly integrated into our society and into our lives, but is technology effectively and efficiently integrated into our education system?

According to a study conducted by professors Lars G. Björk, Olof Johansson, and Paul Bredeson, "technology has accelerated notions of time and decreased distance typically associated with the transmission of goods, services, and knowledge across regional and national boundaries" (Björk et al., 2002, p. 467). Technology has sped up the rate at which we can talk to one another across vast distances, distances once thought impossible to communicate with each other. While this communication has obvious benefits, it also has downsides.

According to the study, these downsides are homogenization due to globalization. Homogenization is the process of making things uniform or similar, and in the case of education, this is dangerous. The study describes homogenization's impact as comparing the process of

educational reform to that of laying out a business in a business plan. This is detrimental because it takes the cultural and relational aspects out of education.

How has homogenization come about? Globalization. According to the study, globalization has allowed educators from around the world to adopt a sort of hive-like pattern of thinking in attributing educational success to the best practices through similar educational reform in countries around the world. This thinking is based in the frame of a one size fits all mindset that is sadly not true. Learning is a highly individualized process, while we all have some inherent similarities, we do not all learn the same, we each have unique tendencies that can often be cut off when viewing a homogenized and globalized education system. When talking about the topics of inclusion and exclusion within education, professor and author Tim O'Brien said this: "We need to value commonality, similarity and difference - in combination - so that we can maximize understanding, participation and belonging for everyone, everywhere" (O'Brien, 2020, p. 309).

The literature clearly indicates that education reform has a long way to go in order to accomplish true reformation. It is with this literature that I have moved forward in investigating the Iron Triangle, indicators of reform, culture and education, and much more in order to see how they play out in the day-to-day lives of average educators, specifically in the day-to-day lives of two administrators. More importantly, I have looked to see what barriers these aspects of education present to education reform and the growth of education.

Methods

My research attempts to answer the question: How do Politics, Policies, and Procedures (The Iron Triangle) create barriers to the implementation of education reform? This question addresses how Politics, Policies, and Procedures impact education reform and in turn, why they do so. In order to answer this question, I chose to use a case study approach because case studies are most appropriate when the type of research question is “how” or “why” and when you are researching in a real-life context (Klein & Grauer, 2012). A case study helps in understanding a complex issue. For my research, a case study is best because I am taking an abstract idea and linking it to a real-life phenomenon. Therefore, there is no quantitative data but only qualitative data. Furthermore, case studies are better suited when emphasizing details of a smaller number of events linked to a relationship (Klein & Grauer, 2012). It is almost impossible to research every situation or relationship, or even a majority of the situations or relationships found within the educational system. Therefore, being able to take details from a certain relationship and amplify them is best for my study.

In this study these main questions were proposed:

- How have you seen Politics working to impede education reform and/or growth within your career?
- How have you seen Policies working to impede education reform and/or growth within your career?
- How have you seen Procedures working to impede education reform and/or growth within your career?
- How have you seen Status Quo working to impede education reform and/or growth within your career?

Setting and Structure

To best understand the implementation of education reform, I intended to interview superintendents, principals, and other educational administrators. Due to beginning my research during COVID, I was constrained to only involve two participants. This forced me to only conduct research from the principal and superintendent's perspectives on education reform. Both participants work within the Trent County School District (TCSD)². TCSD is a rural school district in Kentucky that services students from preschool all the way up to 12th grade. TCSD consists of eight schools: six primary/elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. The high school campus also includes the Travis M. Johnson Freshman Academy, Trent County College and Career Center, Trent County Alternate Learning Center, and the remediation Bramble Hills High School. TCSD has about 4,800 students enrolled. This case study will not take place in the classroom but rather from within the administration, TCSD does not stand out in educational reform in any way. TCSD has not pioneered new implementation techniques or outstandingly shown barriers. Instead, TCSD is an average school and therefore provides the best setting for my research. In addition, due to covid restrictions, TCSD and the participants were chosen due to their availability to the researcher.

Participants

Mrs. Hartman was a teacher for five years and was involved in post-secondary education for one year. Mrs. Hartman was then a high school counselor for six years, a high school assistant principal for three years, and this is her fifth year as a high school principal. Mrs. Hartman has almost 20 years of educational experience. She has experience teaching Business,

² This is a pseudonym. All names and identifiable information have been removed and replaced with pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of the study's participants.

English, and Psychology. Mrs. Hartman is currently the principal of Trent County High School (TCHS) located in Bramble Hills, Kentucky. TCHS services 1,551 students in grades 9th-12th grade. TCHS is a Title 1 eligible school, but there is no Title 1 Program at the time of this study. Mrs. Hartman identified herself as a 42-year-old White Female, is married, and holds a Professional degree from an accredited university in the United States.

Dr. Kendall was a Math and Reading Special Education teacher for six years before coming to Trent County Schools to be a district administrator as the Director of Special Education and was also involved in the Gifted and Talented Program and pupil personnel. Dr. Kendall worked in this position for six years until he became the Trent County Schools Superintendent in 2020. This is his third year as superintendent. Overall, Dr. Kendall has almost 15 years of educational experience. As a refresher, TCDS consists of eight schools and enrolls over 4,800 students. Dr. Kendall identified himself as a 36-year-old White Male, is married, and holds a doctoral degree from an accredited university in the United States.

Data Collection

I conducted this study through two different data collection techniques: a survey and a semi-structured interview. These collection methods were planned with the participants and occurred over about three months' time.

My first method of data collection was through a survey. The survey consisted of 53 questions. Ten of these questions were demographic questions and the other 43 were Leichter Scale questions. The survey asked Leichter Scale questions over five different topics. The five topics are as follows: The Iron Triangle, Education in Response to Culture, Education and Technology, Educational Reform, and accountability. These topics were included because I

believe they all relate to the barriers of education reform in some way. In addition, these categories were explored as I developed the Iron Triangle of Education Reform Implementation.

This survey was used as a way to gauge the basis of my participant's thoughts on barriers to education reform. Furthermore, this survey was an opportune time to define and explore some terms my participants may have been previously unfamiliar with. These terms were defined or explained at the beginning of the related section or before the related question. In the Iron Triangle section of the survey, I defined the terms Politics, Policies, Procedures, and Status Quo. In the Education in Response to Culture section, I defined the term WOKE. In the Education and Technology section, the terms Globalization and Homogenization were defined. Then, in the Educational Reform section, the terms Governance, Accountability, Curriculum and Instructional Reform, Includedness, Parent Involvement, and Prosocial Discipline were defined. Finally, in the Accountability section the defined terms were Accountability, Translation, and Interpretation. A chart including these terms and their definitions can be found in Appendix A.

I will use this survey to build the foundation of my semi-structured interview. Using the responses to this survey, and some of the survey questions themselves, I will begin to form a path that I intend for my semi-structured interview to follow. This is important because the survey and its responses give me an even clearer direction to ask more pointed questions during the interviews.

My semi-structured interview was conducted at the conclusion of my study. I used five questions as conversation starters and then used survey results to keep the conversation flowing. In addition, the interview was based around the experiences of the individual, and therefore I asked questions for clarification and elaboration. The terms defined and used during the survey were continually used throughout the survey as well. These terms were used to gain an

understanding of how the participants viewed, used, and understood these terms. Dr. Kendall's interview was held in the conference room at the Trent County Board of Education and Mrs. Hartman's was held within her office at Trent County High School. Each interview lasted between an hour and an hour and a half. Both interviews were audio recorded and transcribed after the interview. These transcripts can be found in Appendices B and C.

Data Analysis

There were two main steps to the data analysis phase of my research. I began with the analysis of the survey responses. After receiving each participant's responses, I printed out their surveys. I then looked through their responses and noted abnormal responses or just responses that stood out from the rest. For example, if they strongly agreed or disagreed with any question this was noted. I also looked for contradictions within their responses in order to ask clarifying questions during the interview. After doing this I grouped questions together into the key concepts or themes they addressed. I then took these questions and made them into interview questions that would be used during the semi-formal interview, in addition to the questions that were predetermined.

The next step was the analysis of the interviews. After the interview, I used the transcripts provided through the previously used recording mediums to read back through the interview. As I listened to the interviews, I discerned overall themes during their interview. These themes include both the barriers they perceived throughout their experiences and what each participant believes can be done about these barriers. The overarching themes also included smaller more detailed subsections that the participant's experiences with the themes best related to.

Findings

Dr. Kendall and Mrs. Hartman's beliefs about Education reform are shaped by their own beliefs on the structure and focus of education and curriculum as well as their own experiences with the components of the Iron Triangle (Politics, Policies, Procedures) and the Status Quo. These beliefs are also influenced by the manifestation of the Iron Triangle through school culture and accountability. My findings on these experiences and beliefs led me to five themes in the case of each research participant. These themes are the result of smaller subsets that explain the hindrance to education and education reform as well as how they believe education reform could benefit from these ideas.

The Case of Dr. Kendall

Simplicity

In Dr. Kendall's experience, it is the complexity of the accountability system and the bureaucratic responsibilities placed upon educational professionals that impede educational reform. In our interview, Dr. Kendall simply said, "We do not do a good job in education of simplifying." (Full interview transcripts are presented in Appendix B).

When addressing the overall issue of accountability, Dr. Kendall made this remark, "We need to simplify accountability." He goes on to address this in a couple of ways. First, Dr. Kendall believes that "we need a unified measure to determine if students are making progress really from kindergarten through twelfth." Dr. Kendall goes on to explain that what he means is vertical alignment. Currently testing does not start until third grade and ends after the junior year. Through this interview, I discovered that his experiences inform him to believe that accountability should begin in kindergarten and continue until twelfth grade.

Dr. Kendall also addressed accountability from the perspective of parent involvement in education and education reform. Later in the section, under the structure of reform theme, I will discuss the place of parent involvement within education reform, but it is also important to the simplicity of education. Parents cannot take their place in education reform if they cannot understand the accountability system, and according to Dr. Kendall, “I don’t even think our parents understand the testing system.” Therefore, in Dr. Kendall’s opinion the accountability system needs to be simplified so that parents can more easily understand it and can take their place within education reform.

Regarding the bureaucracy of education, Dr. Kendall believes there needs to be some simplification. Bureaucratically, Dr. Kendall identified smaller more specific reform barriers such as focus and paperwork. In Dr. Kendall’s experience, bureaucratic responsibilities can begin to bog down and hinder the performance of teachers and administrators. He describes it like a trip to the cafeteria, “It’s kind of like going to the cafeteria, and you get a scoop of this, a scoop of that. That’s what it’s like being a high school principal or being an administrator in general.” How can we focus on all these things on our plate, in his experience it is by “focusing on the 20% that moves the needle.” What this means is taking the hurdles that come with having a full plate and evaluating what needs to be prioritized for the needs of the kids. Without this evaluation and focus, Dr. Kendall sees where this would be a problem for a district. It is an understanding of trying to deal with the problem “in the most efficient, simple way possible” but knowing “that’s not where your focus should be.” An impediment to this evaluation can be federal funding, “Anything that’s federally funded is federally scrutinized,” meaning that these things must take priority. The priority shifts from the needs of students to the needs of political pressure.

In his response to the survey question on paperwork, Dr. Kendall strongly agreed that the burden of paperwork distracts teachers and administrators from their pedagogical responsibilities and in turn their students. According to Dr. Kendall, “Our teachers, school counselors, are inundated with paperwork we have no control over.” Much of the bureau complexity discussed by Dr. Kendall has to do with complying with state policies and procedures and while schools have to meet a threshold of compliance, but Dr. Kendall views this as the floor, not the ceiling. According to Dr. Kendall, “When really, we need to meet the threshold and go back to what’s the 20%” meaning the 20% that moves the needle.” Later, Dr. Kendall categorizes it as needing to “prioritize the data that helps students.” Overall, Dr. Kendall leaves paperwork by asking what is the paperwork that truly helps students and which ones are archaic. For those that are archaic, he says it is time to scrap them and unfortunately in his experience, this is not done enough at the highest levels.

Connection

Throughout my interview with Dr. Kendall, a theme of connection seemed to rise often. What does this theme mean? Dr. Kendall talked about how when there is a disconnect between those in leadership and those they lead, the disconnect can create a barrier to education reform. Dr. Kendall discusses this from three points of view: school leadership, political leadership, and cultural leadership.

At the beginning of the interview, Dr. Kendall responded to questions about the barrier of a Status Quo within education. What his experience tells us is that this barrier can be overcome through leadership. He says that “from a leadership standpoint...when we entertain making adjustments...that we lead with the why.” Hence, often times education reform hits barriers because it is not connected to the why of education professionals. In contrast, “if you got a strong

culture in the district, what connects back to the why of why you're an educator, what we're trying to accomplish together, then you got a shot at it." This further shows that without a connection to the educators that they are leading, school leadership's efforts to enact change will fail.

According to Dr. Kendall, "leadership is about influence." Dr. Kendall talks about how a culture of trust will cultivate and support education reform. He explains that "If you don't have a culture of trust, that we're not willing to follow in this direction because we don't believe this person stands for what we stand for, if you're not on the same page, you really can't have reform." Without the connection of a culture of trust between school leadership and educators, reform is not possible.

Political leadership is just as guilty about undervaluing this idea of connection. When discussing how politics influence our schools, Dr. Kendall expressed his frustration at the level of disconnect we often see between politicians and the needs of educators. He expresses this by saying, "Sometimes as a leader, you feel like you're at the mercy of others that are not always engaged in what's really going on." What Dr. Kendall is expressing here is the frustration of feeling like educators don't have a voice in the decisions politicians make in regard to education. An example? State testing. Dr. Kendall talks about how the narrowed focus of state testing adds anxiety to educators that force them to question their why, "This anxiety of this one large looming test that is definitely making people question their why." His experience also suggests that "national testing is not strongly connected to the purpose of our people."

Narrowed Focus

One of the most significant themes that arose in my interview with Dr. Kendall was the idea of education having Narrowed Focus. When Dr. Kendall mentioned this idea of a Narrowed Focus, what he meant was that in his experience, different factors can take the whole experience of education and chisel it down to one specific idea or point in time. In other words, in his own experience, the way education is often approached is an approach that forgets about the entire scope of education and instead gets laser-focused on one thing. Oftentimes this Narrowed Focus results in seasons within a school year, forgetting about the process of education, and forgetting about the importance of progress within education.

In Dr. Kendall's experience, the biggest contributor to this sense of narrowed focus is standardized testing at the end of the year. Dr. Kendall describes it like this, "What you have is, is a buildup and a season of the school year that's focused on this very narrow thing because accountability and because of the pressure put on it. Where after that it's almost like, well these months aren't quite as important 'cause we've passed this hurdle." Dr. Kendall goes on to describe that this impedes the natural flow of the school year, the narrowed focus towards state testing is oftentimes the reason that the structure of a school year doesn't feel natural or is the reason that the school year will feel artificial. According to Dr. Kendall, "that one week, that one test shouldn't be more important than another 34 weeks."

Furthermore, the idea of narrowing education down to a single score rather than looking at the whole entire year forces educators, administrators, and parents to forget about the process of education. In Dr. Kendall's words, "we spend more time...as a country, when it comes to reform, chasing a score instead of chasing a process." Similarly, the narrowed focus brought by state testing also forces educators, administrators, and parents to forget about the progress of

education. State testing does not consistently measure student progress. When talking about state testing Dr. Kendall voiced these concerns, “How can we ever truly measure progress if one, it's once a year, and two, if they don't give it time to take root and for us to compare year to year?”. In Dr. Kendall's experience the accountability test is not reliable. A test is only reliable when the purpose is clear and consistent, and its results are supported by multiple iterations. The current test doesn't meet these requirements, and according to Dr. Kendall, “That's why a test that's given once a year, that the target's always moving, is not reliable.”

Students First

Another significant theme that was prevalent throughout the interview was the idea of Student First. When I use this term, I am not necessarily referring to anything specific. Rather, it is the broad idea of having elements of education, and education as a whole centered around the needs, interests, and priorities of the students. In our interview, Dr. Kendall described how putting students first benefits and shapes education reform and how these ideas are lacking in the current model of reform.

If we think about education reform, there are a few things Dr. Kendall identifies as the “hallmarks of what students need.” These hallmarks should be the ideas we build our reforms around. Dr. Kendall goes on to identify these as the hallmarks of students' needs: “Students need intervention,” and “students need a good healthy experience with school counselors who are positioned to be school counselors.” Here Dr. Kendall covers both aspects of students: academic needs and social needs. The idea of intervention attends to the academic needs of students and refers to “dedicated time every single day to giving students what they need, exactly where they need it.” Furthermore, Dr. Kendall discusses the idea of student growth. Explaining that a

Student First centered idea of reform is centered around student growth; because, as Dr. Kendall says, “all students deserve to grow.”

If you ask anyone what the priority of education is, almost everybody, even professionals within education, would answer with standardized testing or test scores. According to Dr. Kendall this would sadly be the case because, “it’s hardwired in our brain...that that’s important [high stakes testing] because people put a priority on it.” Dr. Kendall, however, goes on to say that while it is important, it is nothing that we should be placing the weight of “life changing decisions.” Dr. Kendall goes so far to say that high stakes standardized testing is nothing more than a game. “We’re making decisions for students based off a game to make our school look good, and that’s not the way it should be.” A structure of manipulation, used for manipulating the game, the students, the lives entrusted to our schools all for the purpose of making the school look better. According to Dr. Kendall, “Chasing the test scores is not the most important thing. It’s preparing ‘em for quality of life. We invest in all kids and give them what they need when they need it.”

Structure of Reform

Throughout my interview with Dr. Kendall, I discovered that he believes that there is an imbalance in the structure of Education Reform. This theme also relates to the concerns of Dr. Kendall that I have previously addressed, more specifically, his concerns and notions that the current model of Education Reform is not a holistic/comprehensive structure. In his words, “I would compare it to a tree. You got your roots and your trunk, and you got hundreds of branches coming off that tree; and I think sometimes we attack the branches instead of really getting to the root of it.”

Similarly, Dr. Kendall talks about how the current structure of reform is based upon a framework that is not comprehensive. Currently our structure of reform doesn't address the whole child; instead, we narrow our focus away from the student and onto a test score. Dr. Kendall advocates for a framework that "may not be perfect, but that is a comprehensive experience of what we're trying to do." He goes on to explain that what we are trying to do describes our focus. Are we trying to achieve that test score or are we trying to prepare a quality workforce and quality lifestyle? Dr. Kendall goes on to explain that a comprehensive framework would allow for continuous and consistent measurement, a tool that will allow teachers and educators to be equipped with quality data that will allow them to help students make progress.

A comprehensive framework will additionally address Dr. Kendall's concerns of an imbalance within educational reform. This imbalance is seen in the six indicators of educational reform. According to Dr. Kendall, he disagreed with the six indicators of education reform posited through my research: Accountability, School Governance, Curriculum, and Instruction Reform, Includedness, Parental Involvement, and Prosocial Discipline. Dr. Kendall explains that he doesn't believe these are the six indicators because he doesn't believe that they are all equal. Instead, he believes that "some of these take a back burner" and that "a lot of things are driven by accountability, and it's not balanced out" Dr. Kendall agreed with me that all those indicators listed are important, but he believes that "some are so skewed" that they are not equal indicators of reform, most notably Accountability and Parental Involvement. Furthermore, he believes that the most important indicator is School Governance, but it doesn't hold the same weight as other indicators. This is why a comprehensive framework is so important. A Framework for reform includes an equally weighted six indicators of reform, a holistic idea of education that is focused on the student from which changes can be made and enacted.

The Case of Mrs. Hartman

Mrs. Hartman's answers to the survey questions and her interview responses expressed five main themes as well: Conflict, Student-Centered, Curriculum, Non-Holistic, and Respect. These themes relate to Mrs. Hartman's ideas and beliefs about the barriers to education reform and their solutions.

Conflict

Mrs. Hartman's first identified barrier is the idea of conflict, and she speaks on conflict in two different ways. Mrs. Hartman discusses how the structures of education reform, including the system of accountability and the laws that govern education, often conflict and contradict one another. In addition, Mrs. Hartman talks about common conflicts that arise in the structure of reform and change.

The first area of conflict that is identified by Mrs. Hartman is the relationship between the decision-makers of education reform, the leadership, and those who are involved in education day in and day out. When talking about the idea of the Iron triangle and how it plays out in her experience, Mrs. Hartman responded by saying, "I believe a lot of people who make decisions about education and the ins and outs of education truly don't understand." (Full interview transcripts are presented in Appendix C). Mrs. Hartman is expressing a disconnect between those who are making decisions about the ins and outs and those who are the ins and outs of our educational system, meaning teachers and administrators. Mrs. Hartman discussed her experience in direct reference to the Iron Triangle, "There are sometimes very conflicting policies, procedures, laws that are made that conflict with what we feel our true mission is."

Mrs. Hartman goes on to explain that her mission is to maximize her students' experiences, produce the best citizens and workforce she can, and make a better community.

Mrs. Hartman is therefore saying that the decisions of the leadership are impeding the experiences and preparation of her students. In other words, Mrs. Hartman is concerned with contributing back to her community and building up her community, but she cannot do so because “there are so many conflicts.” Many would argue that educators should just avoid these conflicts; however, many times they cannot. Mrs. Hartman provides us with the best example when she discusses how federal funding requires that certain things be done in order to maintain funding and/or in order to receive the actual money. This is a tactic used by political leadership to require local educators to make changes that they expect and want to see rather than changes that those closest to the students believe are needed.

Throughout the interview, Mrs. Hartman discussed other examples of how the structure of education reform can conflict with the needs of students and education. Mrs. Hartman prominently discusses how often educational law and the accountability system do not match, meaning that each system, each structure, is asking for different things, pulling educators in completely different directions. Mrs. Hartman explains that the requirements of each of these structures make school leadership extremely difficult. Often school administrations may feel that they have to teach the requirements of an accountability test and that these must be met, and then they realize that what they are doing violates the requirements of educational law. This forces a balancing act that takes away from the true focus, the needs of the students. Mrs. Hartman calls for “the laws, the mandates need to talk and partner with the accountability system.” Mrs. Hartman also discusses common conflicts that she has seen in her experience with the system and structure of reform. Most significantly, Mrs. Hartman discusses a struggle seen throughout all of education, the priorities we hold and the time we have. Mrs. Hartman discusses that the

expectations set upon schools and school leadership force administration to create priorities within their duties.

Student-Centered

Throughout her interview, Mrs. Hartman expressed a concern that connects across all the barriers she has experienced. This interwoven and connecting thread is that, in her experience, educational reform is not Student-Centered. When Mrs. Hartman discussed her experience with this barrier, she discussed how the structures of reform are not focused on the needs of the students but rather the needs laid out by the politics, policies, and procedures within education. Most significantly, Mrs. Hartman expressed her frustrations with the scope of educational reform. In the current scope, Mrs. Hartman feels that “everything that makes us who we are...is not reflected in our accountability score.”. Instead, the scope is missing the full experience of the student and the full experience offered by schools. The current scope only focuses on “one piece of data”, only one score. The system is centered on this data instead of the students that create that data.

Curriculum

A further barrier to education reform and change is the curriculum intertwined throughout the reform system. In Mrs. Hartman’s experience, the current curriculum that is promoted and used is not geared towards the best interests of students nor the best interests of the educational system. The current curriculum does not promote the development of citizens or the development of a society. Instead, it promotes the development of accountability outcomes. This barrier presents itself in a couple of ways and each is truly catastrophic.

The first way the barrier presents itself is through teachers teaching the test. The accountability system to date lends itself to the creation of a curriculum that is tailored to the

needs of the system rather than the needs of the students. According to Mrs. Hartman, “it all depends on the test,” in other words, it all depends on the accountability system. The curriculum is dependent on whether the test of the system is a good or bad test. The barrier more holistically presents itself in the type of students it creates. According to the experiences of Mrs. Hartman, the current curriculum does not produce critical thinking or reasoning within students. In her experience, if we’re promoting critical thinking “then we’re creating better decision makers, solution-based thinkers for the world out there.” Creating these people is not only important to societal contribution but also to the student's education. If we create critical thinkers and decision-makers, then we create better learners because the students can “choose what makes the learning stronger” for them as individual students.

Non-Holistic

Mrs. Hartman’s true problem with the overall system of reform is that it does not address the education system in a holistic way. In addition, she believes that the education system does not address students holistically. Further, from her experience, Mrs. Hartman does not believe that education reform and the education system holistically address the problems and conflicts that arise within education. An example of this can be seen in the Student-Centered barrier. According to Mrs. Hartman, “the accountability system does not fully address the whole child or the whole school.” In addition, “who we are is not reflected.” This is just one tangible example of how education reform and the education system are not holistic in perspective. Additionally, Mrs. Hartman believes that an independent form of accountability is a form of accountability that focuses on a “single form of accountability.” She believes that this form of accountability is not the form of accountability that realistically depicts the student's needs or the needs of the educational system. Mrs. Hartman expressed this barrier within her experiences in how students

must test, “So the way all of our students have to test is one size fits all with very, very few exceptions.”

The biggest way Mrs. Hartman feels the education system is not aligned in a holistic perspective is the current need for social-emotional learning within the curriculum. In the experience of Ms. Hartman, there is one thing prominently hurting the present and future of education, “in our society, there are less parents being parents,” and unfortunately, “schools are not equipped to be the parent.” As we progress in our society, we are beginning to see more and more social-emotional issues that are impeding learning. These are issues that schools do not know how to address and are issues teachers are not taught how to deal with. Slowly teachers and teacher preparation programs are beginning to realize there is more to students than their academic life, but the overall system has not reformed to accommodate these changes that Mrs. Hartman identified. The educational system and the reform built into it continue to only be focused on the academic life of the students, not the social-emotional needs of the students. This is the biggest hindrance and danger of a non-holistic system. Unfortunately, while we must understand this problem and address it we cannot be the ones to stop it because it “is derived from the environments that our kids live in outside of school.” While we cannot control what happens outside of the system, we can control what happens within it and hope that eventually, those changes will affect change on the outside.

Respect

The final barrier Mrs. Hartman discussed throughout her interview is a barrier that takes place mainly outside of the educational system itself. This barrier is one that takes place inside of the people within the educational system and outside of the educational system. The final barrier discussed by Mrs. Hartman is respect- not only the respect many hold for the profession but also the respect teachers hold for themselves.

An important barrier of respect that is often not talked about is the barrier created by a lack of professional respect for the teaching profession. In Mrs. Hartman's experience, a lack of professional respect adds stress to an already stressed system, "Teachers are already stressed. They already, because of things beyond my control, are not respected as educators." Mrs. Hartman goes on to explain how this adds stress onto teachers but also to administrators, "I'm afraid I'm gonna have more teachers leave." How can we expect a system to change when the profession is hemorrhaging, losing more professionals than it can gain? Professional respect is required to keep professionals on board and change can only happen when we have the professionals in place to enact it. According to Mrs. Hartman, "Until the education teacher profession is respected from the state level, the high state levels, and even national level, I think it might get worse before it gets better."

Further, in my discussion with Mrs. Hartman, I discovered that the self-respect teachers hold is extremely important to overcoming the barrier our educational system and educational reform face. Thankfully, in Mrs. Hartman's experience she believes that "the majority try to rise, rise above the status quo." While this is true, it is also the responsibility of administrators and leaders within the educational system to motivate and cultivate an environment of self-respect. An environment motivated and focused on respect is how educators can combat the dangers of

complacency. Mrs. Hartman describes the consequences of when educators don't feel respected, "it is easy to get complacent and it is easy to get down as educators, especially when you feel like you're not respected".

Discussion

This case study set out to explore one question: How do Politics, Policies, and Procedures create barriers to the implementation of education reform. In essence the study set out to investigate how this Iron Triangle realistically manifested barriers within our education system. The findings of the study laid out how the Iron Triangle plays out in the lives of an average Principal and Superintendent. It discovered that these three overall barriers are manifested in many different ways. In addition, it discovered barriers that continue to frustrate and fluster experienced educators. Educators who are not speaking out of naivety or ignorance, but out of honesty and experience.

It is also important to note that these are the case studies of two individuals. Understanding this fact, we must also acknowledge that it is impractical and even imprudent to draw overarching conclusions about the entire education system based upon the experiences of two. It is prudent, however, to be cognizant of the experiences of two well established and experienced individuals.

Why keep it simple?

Dr. Kendall's experience informed me that there are unnecessary bureaucratic and procedural responsibilities within our education system, responsibilities that take away time that teachers could otherwise use to focus on students' needs. Mrs. Hartman had a similar feeling when she explained the situation of how being a Targeted School for Improvement compromised her role as principal. Mrs. Hartman discusses how the paperwork became a prison that restricted her to her office so that she could jump through the hoops to ensure that her school would look good in front of the state. These state requirements kept Mrs. Hartman from implementing real

change, “Sometimes the paperwork portions take precedence over, okay, let me roll up my sleeves and start working on this.” Mrs. Hartman felt that the procedural burden of paperwork prevented her from acting as a principal and from working to make the changes needed within her school.

Paperwork and bureaucratic responsibilities take away from the true purpose of principals, superintendents, and other educational administration roles. In Dr. Kendall's opinion, “the more we add, the less we simplify.” However, there is one question that can solve this, what is best for our students? When asking how we can simplify our education system, this is the only criterion that matters. Finding and focusing on the 20% that moves the needle, efficiently moving through the necessary, and scrapping what is unnecessary.

Another way that Dr. Kendall's experiences show we need to simplify is in the accountability system. Dr. Kendall takes issue with the idea that students are only tested during one week at the end of the school year, rather than over the whole year in order to mark the students true learning progress. Dr. Kendall would propose a program where students would take tests like MAPS or STAR at the beginning of the year, then again at Labor Day, winter break, April, etc. Dr. Kendall calls for a more unified system measure within the school year and across grade levels. This may not seem to be a simplification, but if the measures were more unified, then the students' progress would be simplified.

According to Dr. Kendall, the accountability system is too complicated for parents to understand whether or not their child is truly progressing. If we can make an accountability test more tangible so that parents can understand their child's progress, then we can improve parental involvement which can improve the structure of education reform. Parental involvement in education is extremely important in overcoming barriers. A simpler model of education reform,

of accountability, gets parents and schools on the same page, which eventually leads to less conflict between the school and the family unit. If this conflict can be resolved, and students can receive the same message from school to home, they are more likely to progress.

Simplifying the education system and education reform is about making it easier to navigate and be more efficient. It is about allowing not only those in education to understand what is happening, but also those outside of it to understand what is being used to make decisions about changes. Simplification not only streamlines processes within education but also begins to bridge the disconnect that is often felt when it comes to education.

How do we bridge the divide? Where's the disconnect?

Dr. Kendall and Mrs. Hartman expressed similar themes of Connection and Conflict. These themes hit on a disconnect between leadership and those they influence.

Mrs. Hartman also expressed ideas about the disconnect between administration and educators and the conflicts that it presents. If educators and administration had all the time in the world, there would be no conflict. In reality, administration and leadership must make decisions on what to prioritize as the right path. This can create tension and conflict. Often, the tension is highest when those who make the decision are viewed as disconnected. In Mrs. Hartman's experience, "The quicker you can address it, the better off you are." It is important to address conflicts quickly; however, in order to effectively address the conflicts, it is also important to have a community of transparency. According to the experience of Mrs. Hartman, "The more transparency leaders have with their teaching staff, ...the less it will impede." According to Mrs. Hartman, the best way to keep common conflicts and problems from impeding change and education reform is to create a culture of transparency and trust so that communication with your

teachers invites them to trust that you are going to handle and resolve the situation before it gets to the point of impeding student needs.

Further, I found that this disconnect then creates a conflict between what our educators are trying to accomplish and what the leadership dictates reform to be and what reform should accomplish. It is in these times of disconnect and conflict that education reform cannot take hold. It is the connection between leadership and those under it that allows for change to truly happen. At the school level and at the political level it is up to our leaders to understand the “why” of our educators. Without an understanding of the “why”, education reform will never be able to circumvent the barriers placed before it.

In Dr. Kendall’s experience, it all relates back to the barrier of politics, “Politically it depends on what our people with influence are passionate about.” It is left up to the passions and pursuits of people who don’t truly know the needs of the students. In contrast, “The people who really know the students, the teachers, the administrators, sometimes...don’t have a seat at the table.” The disconnect is that educators don’t have a seat at the table and therefore there is a conflict between what is being handed down and the mission of the educators who know and love our students. This is concerning because the only concern of a good educator should be how can I be doing what is best for my students? If this is not their main concern, then they cannot be the great educator they are. Stifling out the light of these great educators is part of the reason we are in desperate need of teachers. Too often there have been great teachers who have left the profession because they feel they cannot do what’s best and instead hinder children due to the requirements of those decision makers who do not understand.

What is this divide? It is the divide between what educators believe is best for students and what decision makers believe is best for the system as a whole. Decision makers are not

focused on the needs of the students and will not be until educators who love what they do and love their students are given a seat at the table. It is not until educators are respected that education reform can be centered on the needs of students. It is then and only then, when educators are respected and students' needs are the center of reform, that we can bridge the divide. Then decision makers and educators will be on the same side, the same page.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T! Tell me, why doesn't that apply to me?

Teachers used to be one of the most respected individuals in the community. That is no longer the case. Too often instead, teaching is looked down upon as a profession for rejects and for those who “can't do anything else.” At the same time, we are seen as public servants who are to be above reproach. Educators cannot be allowed to be fallible humans who make mistakes but instead are expected to be perfect. These contradicting and impossible standards are contributing factors to the previously discussed divide that we are trying to bridge.

It is not only the respect others give us that we must address but also the respect we hold for ourselves. Without self-respect and self-confidence, teachers have no motivation to change how they teach. Without these things, teachers will not understand the importance of self-reflection and life-long learning and growth. It is through respect that we hold within ourselves that we can rise above the barriers standing in our way. Intrinsic values and extrinsic judgements can often be the biggest barriers any system or change must overcome. It is often a question of respect when change is brought up to educators, they feel questioned and misunderstood. This is why it is important to understand that conflict is mitigated by acting quickly and transparently in order to get out ahead of problems. These are also good practices to carry respect throughout change and transitions. Although we must be sure that we hold ourselves in a position of high respect, we must remember that we can all improve.

The lack of desire to change and move forward is being complacent. Complacency in educators and the education system is when we begin to miss the needs of the students. When we miss the needs of the students, we fail as educators and when changes miss the needs of our students we hurt and degrade the system we are trying to improve. While respect seems small and insignificant, when it goes unchecked and ignored, we create maybe the largest and strongest barrier yet.

Respect held for the profession, respect held within professionals, and respect between professionals must all be present in order to bridge the divide and to make change. It is only with these three things can we center our education reform on the needs of the students we claim to respect enough to care that they receive a holistic education? We must have intrinsic motivations and extrinsic support in order to have true and meaningful change.

What is at the eye of this storm that we call education reform?

The biggest barrier discussed by both Dr. Kendall and Mrs. Hartman was the fact that the accountability system and education reform is not centered on students. In their experiences, the priorities of these systems were not the students but instead about making the system look good, about making schools or districts look good. Education is not about getting the best results that make our schools look good and therefore letting students fall through the cracks. Education is about the school looking good 10 years after graduation when the workforce is thriving, the community is thriving, and our students are living lives that are full and have quality due to the boost they received in school. The priority of Education shouldn't be the opinions of those in government or those who hold the purse strings- it should be the student's well-being and their quality of life. The purpose of schools is to create better people, better citizens, who can and will contribute to society in a way that will be to the betterment of those around them. The question

we must ask ourselves is should we be prioritizing a manipulative structure, a game, or should we be prioritizing the students' needs and interests.

Further evidence of incorrect priorities is the lack of intrinsic motivation created by the accountability system. True learning is motivated by the intrinsic motivation created by the student. The current accountability system is not conducive to the student's creating motivation within themselves. The accountability structures currently in place have no true consequences, good or bad, this results in students not taking the tests and accountability systems seriously. A lack of understanding and a lack of realistic connections to the students results in a lack of intrinsic motivation within students. A system that doesn't pull in students and creates intrinsic motivation is a system that is centered and focused on itself rather than the students. A smaller example can be seen in how the test is given. The accountability test is currently only offered online through the computer. In Mrs. Hartman's experience, this is not student-centered because "There's a lot of students who could probably make a better score through a paper-pencil test but there is no option.". Taking choices away from students takes differentiation out of the process which is another example of the system not being student-centered.

Giving the students the tools to strengthen their own learning is how we as teachers will learn and grow and how the educational system will be able to change on its own for the needs of the students. How can we give students these tools? Through our curriculum. The curriculum should be focused on giving students the tools, skills, and abilities to be those better people and better citizens and in Mrs. Hartman's experience these are all centered around critical thinking.

A curriculum focused on post-secondary readiness absolves the accountability problem of teaching to the test. According to Mrs. Hartman, "post-secondary readiness is a more holistic way of figuring out who we are on this campus." . Post-secondary readiness also includes a

curriculum focused on creating critical thinkers and decision-makers. A post-secondary readiness curriculum is one step towards overcoming the curriculum barriers encountered by educational professionals. Our curriculum, our educational system, should not be dependent on a test but instead, it should be dependent on the needs of the students. According to Mrs. Hartman, what makes a test 'good' is if "it's gonna help us create better people, better citizens for the world.". What is a better test than testing their readiness to stand on their own?

Further, our school days should be framed around giving students what they need. . Taking time to come down to their level and working there for a little bit. Not hoping that they eventually catch up to the level the teacher and class they are currently in. This is how we ensure that students have the tools they need to be independent learners and critical thinkers. These are measures we must take to ensure that we are promoting student growth. Accountability data is only important if we are using it in a way that is student centered. A student-centered approach is when we use it to intentionally grow student weaknesses and highlight student strengths. Which can only be done in a school day centered around giving students what they need. Intervention is the way to do this because intervention means "dedicating time during the school day to truly use [that] data".

A student-centered system of education reform means we need a structure that reaches beyond the academic and instead addresses the social emotional well-being of the child. The only way we can have a comprehensive framework is if we comprehensively address the needs of our students. The idea of a healthy experience with school counselors attends to the social needs of students which encompass their social-emotional, moral, psychological, and cognitive-intellectual needs. These are the needs that the position of school counselor is meant to address. Unfortunately, school counselors are often times not able to fulfill these roles because they are

required to fulfill the roles of administrators. More specifically testing and curriculum. In order to have a true healthy education, and in order to have true school reform school counselors need to be restored to their intended purposes, being a student centered/student first position that can attend to the social-emotional, moral, psychological, and cognitive-intellectual needs. needs of students in a more professional and comprehensive way. A supplement to the overall student experience in ways that teachers cannot.

As you can see, a student-centered system of education reform is not a simple matter of saying that we put our students first. We must look at the priorities of our school, and the intentions of our decision makers. Are we prioritizing the game of chasing test scores or are we using those test scores to grow and equip our students? Further, we cannot forget to look at the whole student. We must remember that the purpose of school is to create better people and better citizens. Our curriculum and structure must promote creating students who can think for themselves and students who understand every aspect of themselves, not just the academic aspect.

Do we treat the roots or the branches?

When a tree begins to die, where do we see this death first? The branches. The branches tell us the state of the tree, they are the trees' indicators and plea for help; however, they are not what we treat. We don't treat the tree's branches in order to cure the tree. No, instead we look to the roots of the tree and desperately do what we can. Why is it then that when we look to make changes to the educational tree, we cannot look anywhere but the branches. Too often are we making small fixes to our branches and ignoring the true problem at the root of the tree, we have a narrowed focus. With a narrowed focus, education reform cannot take hold, in fact, education reform cannot even begin. This narrowed focus keeps educators, administrators, and parents

from looking in the correct places when thinking about reform. It keeps them focused on one season of the school year and one score rather than the school year as a whole and the process and progress students endure throughout it.

A comprehensive structure of education reform is the answer to addressing the roots of our problems and combating the narrowed focus of our current system. Some will ask why a comprehensive framework is important. First it gives a starting point for any and all changes that may come from the reform process. If we don't start in the right place, we definitely won't end there. Furthermore, a comprehensive framework allows for everybody to be on the same page. Preventing the so-called 'educational lottery' that plagues our country even still today. A more comprehensive form of accountability is the approach needed to give educational reform the best information for making the best decisions. An independent, or single-focused, form of accountability ends up resulting in reform that is focused and eventually adopts the one-size-fits-all mentality.

Once again, we see that when accountability systems become focused, choices are lost and thus differentiation is lost which as educators we know is extremely detrimental to the well-being of all students. In addition, this focus on one season of the school year to make all our decisions blocks us from looking at the school, and at the child, in full. Blocking reformers, educators, administrators, and parents from making truly informed decisions about what's best for their schools and students. In these conditions, we have narrowed our focus when thinking about changing the test rather than bringing growth to students. While this fact alone is a barrier to education reform, it is further exacerbated because these tests are unreliable.

Furthermore, in this narrowed focus we lose the process of education, meaning the process a student goes through to have an academic experience. What are the different things

involved in this process? It is how the student is taught, how they're involved in their community and in their school, and it even includes the social life of the student. The process is everything we can use to look at a student and determine if they've grown academically and as a person. Narrowing down a student to one test score doesn't do that. Instead, it looks over the entire school year, forgetting about where they started or where they went along the way and only seeing where they ended up.

Starting in the right place so that we ensure we end in the right place is needed in our world of education and it is needed soon. A comprehensive and holistic form of education reform where we see the whole child is truly important. This is what we as educators can use to combat the narrowed focus that accountability so often brings. A structure that focuses on the whole school year, the whole student, and loses the blinders we have is what is needed. It will allow us to simplify the system of reform in order to be the best student-centered agents of change so that we may bridge the divide we currently see in education.

Conclusion

The findings of this research highlighted the barriers seen as a result of the Iron Triangle formed by Politics, Policies, and Procedures. This research explored the resulting barriers and solutions based off of the experiences of superintendent Dr. Kendall and principal Mrs. Hartman. This research calls for continual work and continual change. I hope that you can recognize that the first, and most important implication of this research, is the implication for a call to conduct more research. I hope that this study and its implications spur more professionals toward researching these discoveries on a larger scale. Further, this research calls for decision makers to try and hear the voice of educators trapped on the other side of this great divide and to then make an effort to close that gap. It calls for student-centered reform and for respect to be given. Most importantly, it calls us all to be great for the needs of the next generation, to be great for our students.

As a mentor once told me, “It's easy to be a terrible teacher. You come in, and you do not care and do what you need to get through the day. It's hard to be a great teacher. A teacher who cares for their students and does everything they can to meet their students where they are and give them what they need.” Similarly, it is easy to be a terrible education system, and it's easy to be an unchanging system that doesn't work to meet the needs of its educators or its students. I implore us all as educators to work for change, to work for the needs of our students. We cannot settle for bad, for mediocre; we cannot even settle for good- we must strive for greatness. It will not be easy, but I plead with you to be great and break down the barriers that are before us.

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Appendices

Appendix A

<i>Terms</i>	Definitions
<u>The Iron Triangle</u>	
<i>Politics</i>	The total complex of relations between people living in a society that works to maintain a Status Quo.
<i>Policies</i>	The sets of ideas or plans a group of people use to create the basic ground rules that determine what can and cannot be done and are agreed to be followed in a certain circumstance of situation.
<i>Procedures</i>	The bureaucratic processes put into place with little transparency.
<i>Status Quo</i>	The current position of Education at any point in time, the idea that everybody is working to gain and/or maintain the position where they are most comfortable or have the most power.
<u>Education in Response to Culture</u>	
<i>WOKE</i>	To be socio-politically and culturally aware and to demonstrate this awareness by delivering contextualized and targeted instruction in order to reimagine classrooms as forced spaces of social change and progress.
<u>Education and Technology</u>	
<i>Globalization</i>	The process of seeing the world as a unified place through the linking of localities separated by great distances and intensifying relations between these locations.
<i>Homogenization</i>	The process of making things uniform or similar.
<u>Educational Reform</u>	
<i>Governance</i>	Evidence of decentralized authority and shared decision making among administration, faculty, and parents.
<i>Accountability</i>	A system of measuring outcomes with a level of commitment to demonstrate student progress through authentic assessment techniques.
<i>Curriculum and Instructional Reform</i>	Evidence of systematic reform in instruction that is sustained through activity to improve the instruction of children.
<i>Includedness</i>	Evidence of a community school setting and shared responsibility for the progress of all students.
<i>Parent Involvement</i>	A high level of parent involvement and collaboration between parents and teachers in the education of their children.
<i>Prosocial Discipline</i>	Using positive and individualized strategies of discipline that enable students to learn from their experiences.
<u>Accountability</u>	
<i>Accountability</i>	The process of supervising in order to ensure that local districts/schools are doing what they are supposed to by meeting certain standards. These standards are set by the policies and put into practice by procedures. Accountability works as the checks and balances to maintaining the Status Quo.
<i>Translation</i>	The process through which school actors transform their institutional agenda into specific practices, concepts and materials as a means of responding to policy.
<i>Interpretation</i>	The collective process that results from interactions between a broad range of individual and external stakeholders that may influence policy.

Appendix B

Speaker 1 (00:00:00):

Was this a chosen topic? Or is this a class directed?

Speaker 2 (00:00:02):

Topic? So, um, because I'm a presidential fellow, I had to do five hours of research a week. Okay. Every year. Um, and it was completely student led. You just found yourself a research mentor. Okay. And, um, so I picked the topic and my research mentor actually was, is, has nothing to do with this type of stuff, but I just clicked with him and he was like, well, I hope you the best way I can, but we'll figure it out from there. Um, so I, through high school, I was always just interested in why we chose the things that we did and, uh, how education worked. But um, so I got in there and I was like, I want to research education reform and why schools don't change as well as like some other industries. Yeah. Um, and got into the barriers to education reform from there.

Speaker 1 (00:00:49):

Yeah. And it's okay if some of it's just opinion. Yes. Fact versus opinion. It's

Speaker 2 (00:00:53):

Okay. Yes, of course. Um, so I'm doing a case study, which just takes your experiences mm-hmm. <affirmative> and kind of with the literature that I found Okay. And melds them together.

Speaker 1 (00:01:03):

So, this would be like the, uh, qualitative side

Speaker 2 (00:01:05):

Of it? Yes. Just qualitative. I have, um, mainly because I started in Covid and the nature of the, uh, the study, there's no quantitative side to it. Okay. Um, the hope was to actually talk to, he had four people in mind as soon as I talked to him about it, um, down in that area mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And then a couple weeks later he was like, CO's just not gonna have let us do it that way. Yeah. He was like, do you have people that you can reach out to? I

Speaker 1 (00:01:28):

Remember those emails you sent me.

Speaker 2 (00:01:30):

[REDACTED]

Speaker 1 (00:01:37):

Glad to. Okay. Let's do

Speaker 2 (00:01:38):

It. Okay. So, um, based on number question number four, you strongly agree with the phrase, would you agree with the idea that there is a status quo within education? Are you recording? Yes. Make sure that we have to keep and not disrupt. Why did you agree with this statement and what are your experiences with it?

Speaker 1 (00:01:56):

That

Speaker 1 (00:02:04):

I think that there are just things generationally hardwired, um, that we don't analyze to determine what's best for students. And sometimes I think adult convenience gets in the way. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, and it sometimes outta goodness of our hearts change is hard. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I think change is even harder for educators. So status quo, sometimes that could be with policy, procedure, things that are directive to us from the federal government and some of it's just local, you know, I think, you know, there's a lot of questions on here about politics and culture, but, uh, some things, you know, you would ask like, why do we do it that way? Well, it's just always the way we did it. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, for example. Mm. Um, when I was a teacher in █████ County, we paid twice a month to our employees. That's the way most school districts do will be county. When I ask like, why do I get one check a month? What's the way we've always done it and it's the way the payroll works here. Okay. Now it's right or wrong, but I think a lot of times it's hard to talk about something that would change our procedures. That change is difficult for people.

Speaker 2 (00:03:05):

Okay. Yeah. So a lot of the idea of status quo being traditions and not stuck in traditions, but used to traditions

Speaker 1 (00:03:13):

And some of those are good and we need to continue to honor 'em. Yeah. But, um, I think it's important from leadership standpoint that when we even entertain making adjustments to how we do business, that we lead with the why. Okay. You always go back to the why, what and how. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know, why are we doing this? Well, a lot of times our why and the school system should be about what's best for students. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> really every time how are we're gonna do it, the what part, but you always gotta leave with the why.

Speaker 2 (00:03:41):

Okay. Um, so what put status quo, um, in this talk, and you might just addressed this with mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, above politics policies and procedures.

Speaker 1 (00:03:53):

Say that again about status quo.

Speaker 2 (00:03:55):

So what puts status quo above those other three? Um, the politics, the policies and the procedures. What still

Speaker 1 (00:04:01):

Number four?

Speaker 2 (00:04:02):

Uh, yes. Okay. So well it comes, kind of relates back to these other three. Okay. Got, because you strongly agreed with that one, but you just agreed here. And so I just wondered what put that, um, that one above these other three,

Speaker 1 (00:04:14):

You know, going back to experiences, as you said at the beginning mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, you have to operate within a framework of your policy and procedures. Um, your policy, the law is the law. But locally, whether you're talking about locally at the school level, from a site based perspective, uh, board of education at the district level, there are still things that are going back to being hardwired that are really hard to break. And sometimes, because we know it's gonna be a lot of work and a lot of leadership from not just your, your head executive leaders, but every, all stakeholders, instead of addressing those, you have to bite off what you can choose. Okay. So a lot of times it would be, you know, we've always done this way mm-hmm. <affirmative>, so why are we changing it? Is there a strong enough why to change it? And can you build consensus on a team because you can believe it mm-hmm. <affirmative> and you can power through as a me thing, but if you want it to be a we plan, you gotta be able to paint that vision and you gotta have enough support to move in that direction. So if your why's not strong, you end up not attacking it. Okay. And as a leader, um, if you can articulate that and consensus build, you're not positioned for success, and all you'll do is consternation rule bound. Okay.

Speaker 2 (00:05:34):

Thank you. That was, um, in the research and the literature pointing out, uh, reform really talked about the politics, the policies and the procedures. Um, but then I kind of, as an umbrella went with the status quo. So I just thought it was very interesting to see, uh, that put above. So for number five, which here you go. Yep. You, um, in what ways have you seen culture create barriers to education reform and growth through the status quo?

Speaker 1 (00:06:05):

Yeah. So you gotta gotta heart before you get a hand. And if your culture is, is not hardwired in a way where people are connected to their why and connected to their purpose, then you'll have a hard time identifying barriers in building bridges. There'll be a lot of walls that could put up instead of those bridges. So, um,

Speaker 1 (00:06:33):

Culture, um, is something you're always working on. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and it creates trust. There's transparency, there's gotta be two way communication. You've gotta have, I think especially your main leaders in your organization, whether we're talking school or CEO of a business, have to have your egos in check. Because if you do not understand that your seats come with people scrutinizing people disagreeing, um, and then you're not gonna be successful. And more than likely you're not gonna be a leader who prioritizes culture. It's gonna be more about a, you just can't be a very insecure person mm-hmm. <affirmative> and setting these roles because people are just not gonna always agree. And you gotta be able to communicate reasoning. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So, um, going back to make sure I answer that question. When you think about change, again, reform, we're reforming how we do things, um, operationally, instruction, whatever it may be.

Speaker 1 (00:07:32):

If you don't have a culture of trust that we're willing to follow in this direction because we don't believe this person stands for what we stand for. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, if you're not on the same page, you, you really can't have for, you can be a direct leader, you can have a title, but that doesn't mean you have influence. Really. Leadership is about influence. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and leading a culture or organization culturally is all about having, you know, a pulse on your stakeholders and making sure that they're valued. That doesn't mean we always agree mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but that they're, that they have a voice. And when you can't, you know, always make people happy. Cause you can't leadership all the time. You gotta be able to explain the why behind a, Hey, I hear you, but here's why, of where we're, why we're going in this direction. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Speaker 2 (00:08:19):

Okay. Um, with that, and this goes, um, kind of coming off of the question eight. Okay. Um, coming with that, how does this differ from Walt culture, which in your opinion, does not impede educational reform?

Speaker 1 (00:08:36):

Yeah. Could you define what you mean by that? Yes. Could you say Walt culture? Do you have like a definition I could work

Speaker 2 (00:08:41):

From? Yeah. So that one right there, but if it needs to elaboration on it,

Speaker 1 (00:08:48):

I think I was probably answering that as neutral. Is that correct? Okay. Cause I don't know that I totally understand.

Speaker 2 (00:08:53):

Okay. Um, so I mean, if we look at what's been happening in recent years, just across the country, um, with the soc, uh, socially correct. Politically correct. Um, and I definitely haven't seen it here, but mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, tailoring teaching to what we believe like society is telling us to teach, um, to demonstrate the awareness, um, through targeted instruction in a lot of ways. So, um, taking something from the society and almost forcing it into like forcing a square peg into a round toe Yeah. At times in order to like, just reimagine classrooms, um, as spaces of social change in progress. Yeah. Um,

Speaker 1 (00:09:43):

I would say the reason I probably put a two could easily put a three there. It's kind of neutral. Cause I have not seen locally change here. Now. I read just like you do, like, okay, in Iowa they're doing this, or Tennessee, they're considering that. I know there's been conversations in some states about board members having to be affiliated with a political party when they run. That hasn't happened in Kentucky. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So here's the way I believe about politics. Um, I'm, I'm not a political person. I, I, I just care about students mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and I've had to make that communication many times to stakeholders, community members. Um, we're gonna teach the standards and the Kentucky State Department sets those standards. Whether we agree or disagree, we have to follow through and implement those. Okay. So, um, you know, could that change in Kentucky? I guess it could. I have not seen it drastically change us here. Okay. Um, so I don't know that I can answer that question differently.

Speaker 2 (00:10:38):

Yeah. Thank you. I I was just, yeah, we've talked about it a lot and I've seen it a lot. Um,

Speaker 1 (00:10:45):

But I, but I do believe you read nationally what's going on, and you'd be naive not to think that those conversations are not gonna impact what's going on in the classrooms. Yes. I just haven't seen it here yet. Okay.

Speaker 2 (00:10:56):

All right. Number 17.

Speaker 3 (00:10:57):

Okay.

Speaker 2 (00:11:06):

Yours printed off. Not in the most conducive way.

Speaker 1 (00:11:08):

Oh, that's no problem.

Speaker 2 (00:11:09):

There we go. All right. Um, so you disagreed with the six indicators of reform that I presented, which were governance, accountability, curriculum, and instruction reform included this parental involvement and pro-social discipline. Um, what do you, what do you believe to be the indicators of educational reform?

Speaker 1 (00:11:26):

Okay, let me look at this again.

Speaker 3 (00:11:36):

Okay.

Speaker 1 (00:11:38):

Talk to me about pro-social discipline

Speaker 2 (00:11:40):

A little bit. Okay. So actually just looked into this a little bit and it's just the, the idea of, um, so rather than, I think it's a lot of what we've talked, so whenever I came for the sub training here mm-hmm. <affirmative> and talking about the, um, you know, the use of correct discipline rather than incorrect discipline. Um, and I, so the discipline that is implemented here in this county, I would say would be pro-social discipline. Okay. Um, but more of just the idea of, you know, not immediately jumping to the most drastic outcome, but trying to use the positive, uh, reinforcement, restrictive, least restrictive. Okay. Um, and then, yeah. And the individual approach in a lot of ways as

Speaker 1 (00:12:29):

Well. Okay. That helps me. So I don't think that I disagree that these are all important mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, but when it comes to educational reform, I don't know that, I think it's a, it's loaded a little bit. I think it's simpler. Okay. So maybe that's the way I'll approach it. Of course. Um, I'm trying to think of the simpler way to say it. Cause where it has elements of all those things. Mm-hmm.

Speaker 3 (00:13:09):

<affirmative>,

Speaker 1 (00:13:10):

I'm not sure that you can say. I think, I think you can continue on as well. Let me talk to which ones I think are most influential. Okay. See, where I disagree is that when it comes to accountability, yes, it is an indicator, but I think our, uh, accountability system is, is archaic. So I think that when we talk about high sex testing, and I'm not sure if that's in the rest of the survey or not, but I believe in measuring student progress. I do. I don't believe in an assessment that comes out once a year telling the story, especially when we can't do anything with the data right away. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I believe you, you map tested

Speaker 2 (00:14:03):

A student.

Speaker 1 (00:14:03):

Yes, I do. I'm a more believer and if we're trying to truly measure student growth for all students, that we should continually be making decisions and not say one day in May is gonna determine if a kid is making progress. Okay. That same kid that's tested at Labor Day, December and April, we can show growth mm-hmm. <affirmative> we can, and we can use that data to make decisions. Okay. So while accountability Yes. Is, um, a part of education reform, um, I don't believe it's what we and me county schools hang our hat on as saying that one piece of data mm-hmm. <affirmative>, we look at all kinds of pieces of data. And then I think from social emotional learning, I think from the comprehensive student experience, that's what we do. Now when it comes to educational reform, I will say the one that jumps out at me the most, and it's probably cause my dissertation research was in this mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Speaker 1 (00:14:56):

Was school governance. Okay. So, in Kentucky, the law has just changed recently, but my dissertation went from a 2003 study that I replicated in 2018 about how site-based councils are governed. How the superintendent in Kentucky did not pick the principal in isolation. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, it was a, we are a, um, a decentralized model mm-hmm. <affirmative>, where a centralized model, like in tendency in other states, the, all the hires, um, for that executive position are made at the central office. I could argue either mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but I will say that school governance is probably the number one thing when it comes to educational reform. Okay. So there, there's been some changes, uh, this past spring with the legislators on how curriculums selected, um, how the principals selected. That's a pretty big deal. Um, to me, we spend more time chasing as a, as a country when it comes to this reform, um, chasing, um, a score instead of chasing a process.

Speaker 1 (00:16:05):

And I think that we need to be more unified across state, across the country, on what is the process for a student to have comprehensive experience. Okay. So, for example, I think students that are involved in the drama club, the band athletics research tells us anybody that's connected in that way mm-hmm. <affirmative> or more likely to graduate wanna be successful. But I don't think there's enough, um, value put on that. So I think sometimes we look at what's their math score of the marine score when he continue to do that. But we need to balance it out. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And I think what we've done in education is we've, um, dehumanized it just a little bit, especially for our staff members. I don't think we have as much as maybe other states and other districts mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but, um, we need to find a happy medium on how we determine student growth.

Speaker 1 (00:16:53):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So when it comes to educational form, the reason I probably put, I kind of disagree, is I think that some of these take a back burner. And I think that a lot of things are driven by accountability and it's not balanced out. Okay. So I would say the most important

one as I would say governance Okay. Would be good. Um, I think that's, that's an important one. But I think accountability will always be there. Should be there. But I think that it is disproportionately impacting these others. So when we talk about pro-social discipline, one that I would add to that, that should be a part of educational reform. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> that is, um, really the whole child approach of social emotional Okay. Learning. Do they have tier of support? So when we talk about tier of support for discipline, I think that we've gotta continue to look at how are we using tier of support for the whole student mm-hmm. <affirmative> and are they getting as, as the school counselor getting to do what they were intended by God to do. And that is be a school counselor, not a accountability test taking type. So I, I think I, I think that's probably why I disagreed. I know it's not a great answer, but I just don't feel like those six are evenly weighed out in reform. No, I think there are one or two that drive 'em, so I would've probably put less on here.

Speaker 2 (00:18:09):

Okay. No, thank you. That was, that was very, uh, eye opening. Um, especially because I would, and getting into, so I had almost two, two phases of literature review. Yeah. Um, and the second one focused a lot on accountability. And as throughout the survey, there's more questions on that. Um, so I would definitely agree that, you know, accountability has kind of become the king over the entire stack. Lot

Speaker 1 (00:18:38):

Of ways when you simplify accountability. Okay. Accountability. And you may say, well, my idea is harder cuz it's more testing. No, it's not. More testing as much as we need a unified measure to determine if students are making progress mm-hmm. <affirmative> really kindergarten through 12. So if you think about our current accountability model of Kentucky, it doesn't start to third grade. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know, why aren't we starting right outta preschool? You know, and then if we're talking about preparing students for quality life, that's why at least the me county mm-hmm. <affirmative>, how are we positioning them as seniors? Cause a lot of times the accountability stops the junior year. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So,

Speaker 2 (00:19:12):

Um, and so before I forget this question, you're talking about moving accountability from, you know, that one test in May mm-hmm. <affirmative> to more multiple testing scenario. Would that be, uh, in your opinion, similar to an RTI model? How we uh, that that multiple testing to your testing?

Speaker 1 (00:19:31):

Yes. Yeah. So I'm sure you've heard about MTSS, multi-tier support. So yes. My idea would be, I think schools, and I think we do it here, we could always get better. I know we're gonna look at some things that are secondary level too. There should be dedicated time every single day to giving students what they need, exactly where they need it. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So if I'm a special needs student, I need skills at my level, even if it's 20 to 30, 40 minutes a day. If I'm a gifted student on the other end of the spectrum, am I truly getting differentiating instruction,

which is really hard to do in our state and really all states. Mm-hmm. Then gives money for it. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So we probably put more money towards gift and talent than anyone per capita, or at least that I know of. But whether I'm a tier one kid, tier two, tier three, all people, all students need access to the core.

Speaker 1 (00:20:19):

They do. But there needs to be some dedicated time every day to do that. By going to this type of model and measuring progress throughout, we can make more informed decisions about how we tailor that time. So here's what I think, here's what I think's broken is we get this data five months after sometimes six if we're late mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and we wanna do this in education, we wanna swing it from here to here based off one test. Where if we periodically could just say we're all, every week's important, every month's important, we could have a better season to our school year. And we can make decisions as a professional learning community. Because I think that our one test a year scenario does not drive what needs to happen in our PLCs or our staff members. Okay. And if we truly want cascade to cascade it to our students, if our students, I think we do this with MAP testing and it wouldn't have to be the map, it could be something else comparable mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Speaker 1 (00:21:12):

But for our students and parents, the truly parent involvement of all those, you show me, parent involvement does not, um, does not have a high enough place with those other ones. Um, I don't even think our parents understand the testing system. If they could be engaged stakeholders in that process. Mm-hmm. And saying from kindergarten all the way through 11th, 12th grade, we are continuing to measure your your hundred dollars' progress. Mm-hmm. I think they'd be, I think they, it is more tangible and they can understand the MAP test a lot more than the other one. And politically mm-hmm. Let's just call it what it is. Um, I have a board member that's about the end of his tenure. He's been on the board 16 years and we were talking about the KSA test that just came out mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and I'm wanting to say it's his sixth or seventh accountability in 16 years that the test has changed so many times and it depends on, you know, the, you know, it depends on who's in leadership, right? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, how can we ever truly measure progress if one, if it's once a year. And number two, they don't give it time to take root and for us to compare year to year mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So, um,

Speaker 2 (00:22:10):

Yeah. I remember, I mean when I was in elementary school, it was the cats. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (00:22:14):

That's what it was

Speaker 2 (00:22:15):

When I was, then it moved right before I started testing to was it case or something similar to that. Oh yeah. And then it and I and then it would be, it just changed the casea. I think

Speaker 1 (00:22:27):

It just did.

Speaker 2 (00:22:28):

Yeah. And so, I mean just from where I'm like my experience with education already changed three times. Yeah. Within, I mean 15 years.

Speaker 1 (00:22:38):

You think about if you had a universal screener assessment, like the map is mm-hmm. <affirmative> and you said all students from Iowa to Texas to Florida, Kentucky are gonna be normed against each other. And how are you progressing? And it's okay that you're a student that um, has an intellectual disability. You have, you have a learning disability wherever it may be. Are you growing though? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Cause all students deserve to grow, including gifted kids that are in the nice day nine that are 99.9 percentile. Are we pushing them? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. But what I see in districts we work with and we've been there too, is dedicating time during the school day to truly use that data. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I think we've gotten better here about that. Um, but I think we need to be doing that cross country. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, that's a more opinion than it is factual.

Speaker 2 (00:23:23):

No, that's, that's great. Um, talking about that dedicated time mm-hmm. <affirmative> and we will get into I think more in a couple questions, but teaching to the test at times can, you know, not allow that dedicated time mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, because we're so focused on what has to be tested to get to in May that we run out time for the specific needs of the

Speaker 1 (00:23:45):

Student. Yeah. And going back to the season of it mm-hmm. <affirmative> like Indiana, my was Indiana, they give their tests at a different time of year mm-hmm. <affirmative> and I think it maybe March. So what you have is, is a buildup and a season of the school year that's focused on this very narrow thing because accountability and because the pressure is put on it. Where after that it's almost like, well these months aren't quite as important cuz we've passed this hurdle. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, where if you just had an ongoing assessment to measure progress, um, then you would just have a more natural flow of the school year. And every day would be equally important. We can say that as leaders all we want, but when one state says midyear is gonna be our test, the others say spring. Um, I think it kind of puts more value on parts of the school year. And that's unfair to students. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And I think that's where accountability's lost its way. Okay.

Speaker 2 (00:24:36):

Yeah. Thank you very much. Um, 21. Okay. And this, this will be similar to what we were talking about. You agreed with a holistic approach in regard to education reform. Um, do you believe that this is the current method or approach that is, you know, used at large? Um, and I

mean we've talked about the seasons of accountability, um, rather than, you know, the entire year,

Speaker 1 (00:25:01):

So, right. So lemme clarify. I believe it should be, I think inclusion means maximizing the presence of participation. All students uhoh we on 21 or a different one.

Speaker 2 (00:25:09):

I must have

Speaker 1 (00:25:12):

No, that's one I've got.

Speaker 2 (00:25:13):

Yes. I numbered, I numbered my paper wrong. That's all right.

Speaker 1 (00:25:17):

That is time.

Speaker 2 (00:25:22):

Oh, 22. Okay. 22

Speaker 1 (00:25:26):

Educational

Speaker 1 (00:25:26):

Form only was if we addressed it holistically, meaning addressing all the problems including the roots, not only symptoms. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. So going back to roots. So I would compare it to a tree. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you got your roots in your trunk and you got hundreds of branches mm-hmm. <affirmative> coming off that tree. And I think sometimes we attack the branches, um, instead of really getting to the root of it. A hundred percent agree with that. Okay. Um, I think it comes back to what kind of student are we trying to prepare for the workforce. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Cause that's what we're doing. A well rounded student. And going back to those narrow bands of saying, okay, fourth graders are testing science this year. Um, fifth grade will be self studies. You know, what happens is we focus more on science in fourth grade and less than fifth. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, that's not good.

Speaker 1 (00:26:18):

We should always be looking at science, social studies, art, music. Um, I think that we're doing a better job in me county. But I'll say that from [REDACTED] and everywhere in between our elementary students got a different experience in special areas. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, just

depending on what they could staff and what they wanted staff. Well really that shouldn't be that way. Every student should get pe every student should get art music. But we don't look at it holistically. We look instead of looking side by side, we've got just hundreds of issues. And politically it depends on what our people with influence are passionate about. You know, we had a commissioner a few years ago that I really liked who was very passionate about science. So guess what? Science got a lot of attention. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. It shouldn't really be that way. It should be, we can all agree holistically that you're in the stater across the country.

Speaker 1 (00:27:02):

That these are the hallmarks of what students need. Students need intervention. Going back to our MTSS discussion from the last question, students need a good healthy experience with school counselors who are positioned to be school counselors cuz they're not worried about being testing agents. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So a hundred percent feel strongly about that one. And I don't think that we look at it holistically, but we should. Um, and that's really the way I read the question. It only works if, and I think the reason it hasn't worked, we made improvements is because we don't, we look at situations in isolation. Okay. Yeah.

Speaker 2 (00:27:38):

Um, so this next question might get a little confusing. Okay. Um, it's over number 24, 27, 28, 29 and then 36. Okay. So, um, you agreed that policy stemming from educational accountability can minimize administrators to the role of middle middle managers. And that principals have undue stress due to being forced to juggle multiple and at times conflicting demands. In addition to the idea that paperwork can be distracting from the responsibilities in students. However, you disagreed with the idea that bureau responsibility or bureaucratic responsibility can take precedence over others. Why is that? And if

Speaker 1 (00:28:17):

You, okay, what number is the, the second question you refer to?

Speaker 2 (00:28:20):

Um, 24 and then 27 through 29. Okay. And then 36.

Speaker 3 (00:28:26):

So

Speaker 1 (00:28:26):

Right. Let look those

Speaker 3 (00:28:27):

Real. So,

Speaker 1 (00:28:46):

Okay, let me look at 29 cause I definitely agree with 27, 28 and 24. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and, and lemme talk about that before I forget. We call that with our principles focus on focusing on the 20% that moves the needle. There's that 80% that administrators deal with especially principals. Whether it's discipline, whether it's upset parents. But this issue, whether it's, you know, trying to get to PLC means so we can have a conversation about what's moves needle for kids. So when we continue to add more on them, and I'll say this cause I, yeah. Even though it's federally funded, it's federally scrutinized, the more we add, the less we simplify mm-hmm. <affirmative>, the more we're putting on their plate, it's kind going cafeteria and you go scoop of this scoop of that. That's what's being, it's like being high school principal or being an administrator in general mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So let me analyze nine and try to figure out why I put disagree.

Speaker 1 (00:29:44):

They only take precedence if you allow 'em to mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So maybe that's why I put disagree. I think I'm kind of neutral on this one. Like I was one of the earlier questions mm-hmm. <affirmative>, it can, but if your organization we call blocking out the noise is we're gonna try to deal with this, um, in the most efficient, simple way possible mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but that's not where your focus should be. So I do believe it could be a strong one or two for most districts. We do not allow that here. And maybe that's the frame I was answering that question in because we acknowledge it, we address what we need to and sometimes we block it out and be like, no, that's not gonna move near for kids. So that could be why let go to 36.

Speaker 2 (00:30:27):

Okay. Um, but so you can, you can see that where this can become a problem, but here in this

Speaker 1 (00:30:34):

Oh definitely.

Speaker 2 (00:30:35):

But here in this this district, you've found a way to block that out.

Speaker 1 (00:30:39):

Yeah. In other words. Okay. I I think that we, um, it's something you're always working on, but yes, it can be a problem. Okay. Yeah. 36 procedural burden of paperwork extracts teachers. Oh yeah. I feel pretty strongly about that one. I always go back to my special ed lens and I say this to anybody, listen, I think that, um, it's hardwired generationally. Um, and for good reason, there was time when special these kids weren't allowed to come school at their own school. They were just, they stayed home. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. But we have not moved past, um, the paper side paper doesn't move what people do. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And we have gotta be more collaborative, inclusive, all those things we said earlier. Um, but we going back to change and politics and mm-hmm. <affirmative> for a lot of reasons we are not willing to have a hard conversation about what moves the needle for all students, not just special ed.

Speaker 1 (00:31:33):

Um, and I do believe there needs to be accountability when it comes to paperwork and doing things the right way. Yeah. But we do not do a good job in education of simplifying. Yeah. We refuse to even look at sometimes and we need to look at the law, the regulations and say how can we meet the letter of the law, the threshold and I'll call it the floor, not the ceiling. Cause I think a lot of times our leaders with influence say we're going to get to the ceiling of compliance. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> when really we need to meet the threshold and go back to what's the 20% who's new for kids, address the 80% how we best can, so our leaders can be unleashed in position to do it. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So I think this is of all the answers I have, one of the biggest issues with education reform, with having enough time for not only our administrators, but our teachers.

Speaker 1 (00:32:22):

Yeah. Our teachers, school counselors are inundated with paperwork that we have no control over. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> that what we try to do as best possible as leaders is try to simplify or say, let's handle it in this way and move on. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. But um, and I know it comes back to litigation lawsuits and precedents, but we have got to, in the next 50 years, if we wanna move for students, find a way to address this and not make this the priority. Sometimes this is that noise that boxes down where we can't do great things for students. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Speaker 2 (00:32:55):

[REDACTED] she's just talking about, well I have three IEPs to get done within the next week. And I was like, and so seeing how it can bog down Yeah. Um, her herself and then, you know, throughout high school I did see not as much, um, because I wasn't in those specific classrooms. I was kind of removed from that system a lot of times. But, um, I've seen teachers and had that and so I'm very thankful that you did feel strongly on that. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (00:33:30):

And I, and I felt as a teacher, [REDACTED], I can't tell you how much we simplified our process mm-hmm. <affirmative> and we weren't worried about, well what, what are they gonna say if we, we get audited, you know what, we're gonna spend our time doing what's best for students. We're gonna simplify the compliance. If they find something, we'll try to correct it. But culturally, this goes back to culture like we talked about earlier. You've gotta know, you've gotta make sure that you communicate your wise leader and that you lived your message with sincerity. So when you say the most important thing is what you do for students mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and you sit there and say we're going to beat a dead horse of compliance that doesn't anything for students and you don't help them simplify it mm-hmm. <affirmative>, then shame on you as a leader. So I think that's what we try to do here. It's not perfect, but we really try to prioritize what is the data that helps students. Um, and some of that data is in, those are in those IEPs. [REDACTED]

████████████████████ Yeah. These other check boxes, if we make a mistake here, we make a mistake. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And I think we've tried to carry that

Speaker 2 (00:34:32):

Through. Yes. And um, that was just one example. Yeah. But definitely I would've said, I've seen her go from working a ton to, you're still working a lot, but not the level that you at once. At one point,

Speaker 1 (00:34:46):

I think the most important side of this is finance. I think that there, there needs to be a lot of accountability finance, cuz that's stewards taxpayers money. And I think you do need to have your t's crossed there. I'm sure it could be simplified, but what we're putting on our teachers, um, what we're, which impacts students, um, we need to say this is the data, um, and paperwork that does help students. And this is the ones that's archaic and we just need to scrap it. And we don't do that well enough at the highest levels.

Speaker 2 (00:35:16):

Okay. Moving back to 25 and 26.

Speaker 1 (00:35:21):

Okay.

Speaker 2 (00:35:22):

Um, and we have, we have talked about this one. Um, how have you seen, sorry.

Speaker 1 (00:35:29):

No, you're fine. Take your time.

Speaker 2 (00:35:30):

Go ahead. Okay. How have you seen national testing create demands that cause teachers to stress, which prevents them fulfilling from fulfilling the duties their jobs

Speaker 1 (00:35:39):

Call for sure.

Speaker 1 (00:35:45):

I think teaching today, uh, leading today as a principal superintendent, all of it, um, there are pros and cons in some ways it's better. We have more resources that are, um, our, our hands. Um, but we're asked to do things that are so comprehensive in nature. And one being accountability, which we've talked already about that we just simp. It's, it's not always feasible to execute. So, and I don't anticipate it slowing down. Um, and just even going beyond a test, it comes

sometimes back to basic needs. We have more students in poverty across the country. More students come from broken homes for mom and dad are not in picture. I'll give you an example. When I was preschool director in 2014 and we've had meetings with families as they were coming out of first steps, they went outta five of our students were being raised by a grandparent.

Speaker 1 (00:36:47):

When I left in 2019, 2020, uh, three outta five were being raised by a grandparent. Now we're talking about our needier students from poverty. But still, um, the support systems in our homes are not as strong as they were 15 years ago when I first started teaching. They're just not, um, across, across all areas. So we're being asked to do things and meet the needs. Some of the SEL teaching students just basic, um, things and trying to find time to cram in those narrow focuses of fourth grade science cuz that one area is tested. Um, you know, and this anxiety of this one large looming test that that is definitely making people question their why. So when we go to the culture and connecting people to other Y I'm sure that you are not considering going into education because you, while you value a test and you want that for your students to show growth, that's not your why.

Speaker 1 (00:37:50):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative> your why is you wanna make a difference. Something like, you wanna make a difference for students. Um, you're passionate about school. That's the way I was. I grew up around it. Um, but I didn't get into it. I wanna do ipss, I wanna check boxes mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, I, I want to help my school district, you know, be awesome on this one test. And I think that it gets people further away from why they got an education. So I know that's a really simple answer, but I think it, it's not what people signed up for and dreamed about. Yeah. So I don't, I really believe that 99% of educators believe in accountability. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Cause we love students and we want students to show progress. I think we just disagree about how we're getting there. Mm-hmm <affirmative> and the what And I think it's getting further from our why I think there's balance in the middle.

Speaker 1 (00:38:42):

Cause I also believe that at one time, you know, years and years ago there wasn't enough accountability and it was you're self-employed, go to your class, do what you want to do. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and I don't believe in the educational lottery. This is my own opinion. This is not something you'll research. But I do not believe in a scenario where you do not have professional learning communities and people are self-employed just like turn, go to what you wanna do. I don't think that's what's best for students. Because when I was in school, I think I went to uh, during a time where I was an educational lottery, um, in my school system and I had some really good teachers and I had some teachers that there was no accountability. <laugh>. I think in leadership, just like way we hold students accountable, we need to, we gotta hold each other accountable as a PLC teacher to teacher, teacher to administrator and vice versa. So to answer your question, um, yes, yes, yes, a hundred percent agree with it. But I think it's because national testing is not strongly connected to the purpose of our people. That we don't connect to it that, but that doesn't mean that we are letting go of the rope with accountability. We believe in accountability. I truly believe that.

Speaker 1 (00:40:02):

But we just don't believe that that really makes up the comprehensive experience of students. You were probably involved, what groups were you involved with at [REDACTED] high school?

Speaker 2 (00:40:10):

Oh, um, shortlist, FBLA, FCA, um, swim team. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, uh, let's see, what else? Y-Club for a little bit.

Speaker 1 (00:40:21):

I knew you just swim.

Speaker 2 (00:40:22):

Yes. I'm trying to think of,

Speaker 1 (00:40:24):

Yeah. Would you say that defines you as a student more than the test you took once a year from third grade up? Of course. Yeah. See I think that's where our teachers feel. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I think that's the weight I feel. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and we feel like, you know, there needs to be some weight given to our ability to connect students to the whole experience. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> because I think we probably, um, would do a better job if we were given credit for Okay. Can you show documentation that Clint was, was connected to two or more student activities, which we all agreed across the country lead to a person being positioned for a quality life. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, if there were some verbiage in there like that and some weight given, maybe not 50%, but like okay, five to 10% of our accountability system is making sure students are connected to high agents and activities. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and list 50 of 'em, drama club band, F B F C A, whatever. Then I think we could rally behind that. I think the problem here is educators in general are not united and can rally behind this cuz this is not connected. Why they want to be educators.

Speaker 2 (00:41:31):

Um, and going back to, you know, talking about that verbiage that you mentioned. Um, so how would you, how would you approach those kids? Cuz I mean I went to school with them who wanted nothing to do with anything to do with school. Nothing to do with any, not that they, some of them did hate school. Yeah. Um, but not that they hated school. Just that like one of my best friends growing up, he now owns, um, his own store. Yeah. That was where he was plugged in and that's where he wanted to be plugged in. So how would you, you know, talking about that? Um, because not every kid's going to be,

Speaker 1 (00:42:06):

I think it starts early. You would talk about vertical. I in our district a lot and we've tried to offer more offerings at the elementary level since you've been in school. So last year we started after school music. Um, we have St P is gaining some steam. We have used basketball at the

elementary level now. I think that we sometimes because of all these other requirements, all this other noise mm-hmm. <affirmative> that we're not, I think we do it well in need, but I think the larger the district, the more they get lost. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, we're a medium sized district. We're not so small. We don't have enough money to do good things, but we're not too big. We don't know our people. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So I think that's what's the advantage of being in one high school town like me versus when I was in ██████ County had multiple schools.

Speaker 1 (00:42:45):

Um, that is a challenge and it's a challenge for us. Like it is everybody. But it goes back to having dedicated time in your schedule that we're gonna have a comprehensive experience where we're gonna dedicate 10, 15 minutes a day of getting to our students. We're gonna have intervention time where we work with small group students. I think what happens in the shuffle is when we're not engaging students and we don't have engaging in structures that we get, we we lose sight of those kids. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and we gotta know our kids Well and there comes back to culture. Um, if you got a strong culture in the district, what connects back to the why of why you're an educator, what we're trying to accomplish together, um, then you got a shot at it. But I do agree with you that those kids get lost up in the shuffle sometimes it's out of our control.

Speaker 1 (00:43:29):

Sometimes there's something going on at home where, uh, parent grandparent could be drugs in the home, could be whatever. And they're not, they're just not gonna put in the effort for them to do anything after school. Yeah. And we do everything we can. We can run activity buses. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, we can try to get 'em there. But it's that relationship, that parent involvement, which is one reason I probably disagreed with the other question about six indicators. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Cause I don't think they're equally weight. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> because I think there's some that are so skewed. Of course it takes away from the others. Of

Speaker 2 (00:43:58):

Course. Okay. All right. Um, so number 33 through 35. Okay, there you go. So you agreed with the idea of performance metrics forcing teachers to teach the test. But you disagreed with the idea that performance metrics negatively affect the school community.

Speaker 1 (00:44:21):

Did you say 35 is the second one?

Speaker 2 (00:44:22):

Or 33? 33. 34 and 35. Oh, okay. Um, and so you disagreed with performance metrics negatively affecting the school community. Okay. Um, why is that if performance metrics can lead to quick fixes?

Speaker 1 (00:44:39):

So let me unpack this in my own words a little bit. Of course. Let me start with 34. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I don't have a problem with performance metrics. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I don't. So I think that it can be taken too far. I don't strongly agree, strongly disagree with it. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I think you need some standards and high expectations. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So that's why I answered 34 the way I did. Let me go to 33. Yeah. So I agree. I'm, I'm a two oral one on that one. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> because this isn't balance to it because sometimes because of the way our, we are deemed to be good or bad, let's say mm-hmm. <affirmative> is comes down to um, a performance metric that it does stress people because they're not connected to it. Because they're like this one day, this one piece of data, this one event does not define who I am as an educator, as a person.

Speaker 1 (00:45:34):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative> nor should it define my student. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So I do believe there're two different questions the way I view them. Okay. Now lemme go to 35 and I think it's cuz we, the school year should be a season. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> where every season important, every day is important. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And sometimes some take more precedent. You watch, you listen to educators. Enough of 'em where you're at in Murray, by the time we get to March, April, especially April, people start stressing, oh my god, testing's coming. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, let's shut down the community. No know this or that. Kids shouldn't be playing baseball the night before. It shouldn't be that way. You know, it shouldn't, that one week, that one test should not be more important than another 34 weeks. That's my biggest issue. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> going to 35 performance

Speaker 2 (00:46:16):

And 35 just kind of melded together with them. So like, and you talked about this, I was wondering why you disagree that performance benefits negatively affect the school when they can lead to those quick fixes.

Speaker 1 (00:46:30):

Yeah. So I think, I think that's what this is. And once again, changing testing every other year. I'm sure Kentucky's not the only one, but I always call this catching lightning in a bottle. So when I say balance winds, balance sustained, some people would say culture Trump saw. Right. Okay, that's fine. We could, we could have two potlucks a week. We could wear jeans three days a week. But in that classroom door shuts, there's not really much going on. I've seen that. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Okay. I've seen it in other school districts as well. Or you can be rigor, rigor, rigor, rigor testing, test and testing. Um, you know, and you'll, you'll do better in some cases, um, for one or two years. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and then you'll go back cuz everybody hates your jobs and people don't wanna be there cause you don't balance. Balance wins, balance, sustain.

Speaker 1 (00:47:18):

So when I talk here, yes. I, I, I'm a two or a one, you can say, okay, the test has changed. We're gonna put more weight on X and where it used to be Z. So now schools that were really

struggling now they're gonna look really good because we're putting more on growth. They've got so far to go. But the schools that have always consistently performed well, they don't have as much room to grow. So they're gonna get negatively heard by this performance metric. So yes. And, and and to think that that's not political would be naive. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So I don't think that we kind of just go flow and we're, but depending on who is in influence, not a person but a group of people, whether they wanna make a group or or district look good or bad, I think that you can set up your performance metrics too negatively hurt someone.

Speaker 1 (00:48:14):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So it really depends on who's an influence. But it is a quick fix and it can also be a quick, oh you're a bad school now. That's why a test that's given once a year that the target's always moving. It's not reliable. You know, being someone that's worked with statistics, how can we compare student progress when we're so caught up in how the school district looks? I think sometimes it's the perception of the school, the school district and we're chasing that. Um, to say we are good or we are not. Instead of really looking at the individual student. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Speaker 2 (00:48:49):

Okay. So, um, in what ways would you say performance metrics positively affect the school community?

Speaker 1 (00:49:06):

I think when they're going back to previous question. When they're holistically and comprehensively done. Yes. When they're looked at in isolation. No. Okay. So I think most of 'em are negative. I really do. I think if we could all come to the consensus and there was great two-way communication in a process, whether it's statewide or across the country, that we all could agree that students needed well-rounded education and all these things are important. Yes. We need students to read. Yes we need to know, um, foundational numeracy. But to also say that, you know, they need to be connected to a student activity, science, social studies should continue to be taught daily. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know, and you start going, whoa, where do you find the time? I mean that always, always gonna be something we're gonna have to look at. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. But if there was a holistic approach to how we did accountability and it was ongoing and we as educators got the information quickly to make informed decisions mm-hmm. <affirmative> on formative assessments, summative assessments, then yes. Um, I'm all for it. But I'm always skeptical because I do believe that there's something not time politically driving it. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, we don't leave things alone enough. Education's terrible about this paradigm shifts.

Speaker 1 (00:50:27):

This person is passionate about science and pathways. Let's crap everything we've been doing the last three years, let's go that way. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, we try not to do that here. We try to, we try to say what do we want a graduate to have here? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And we understand that the game's gonna change. We could decide to go play this game clean if we want our test scores to go up. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, we could do things where not all students had

access to instruction. We could, you may or may not know this, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Um, we have me, I know I'm talking about me only, but we have probably have the lowest percentage of all assessment students in our region. My last two years of special ed director, we were under 1%, which is the state. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> what they want you to say.

Speaker 1 (00:51:08):

Less than 1% of your total student population. All 5,000 are all assessment. We're the only person that 42 in our region that two years in a row got that. I don't know if we are this year or not. We try to give every student a chance, exhaust every resource to get a regular diploma. Cause if you and I, if it's our kids, we would want to know even of our kids close to being intellectually disabled, can we give 'em a diploma? Mm-hmm. <affirmative> we could play the game and we could say, okay, all those tweeners that we could get a diploma, let's put 'em on alternate assessment so they can score distinguish. Cause we know they're gonna be novice on the regular side, but the chasing the test scores not the most important thing. It's preparing 'em for quality life. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So we take a lot of novices from let's say third to fourth, fifth grade mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Speaker 1 (00:51:47):

And then we'll make a decision to say, okay, we tried everything we can. That kid needs to be in a more restrictive setting. Okay. With a to sailor with a Chris inhibitor. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, these people you won't know. Yeah. That's called playing the game. Now I've been in another district, I know of others that'll say, well better make that call by second grade. So we get a good test score in third grade. See that's the problem. We're making decisions for students mm-hmm. <affirmative> based off a game to make our school look good and that's not the way

Speaker 2 (00:52:13):

It should be. And not always giving them the time Yeah. To make the, make adjustments.

Speaker 1 (00:52:18):

And sometimes it's obvious, sometimes there's a student with a moderate severe disability. Yeah. Nonverbal, wheelchair bound, medically fragile, get that mm-hmm. <affirmative>. But a lot of times you won't go back to that stress question, but teachers and principals, it's not cause they don't have good hearts. It's that sometimes we, we forget that parent hat and we're like, oh, but our test scores mm-hmm. <affirmative> because it's hardwired in our brain. Now after 25 years of this, however long we've been doing high stakes testing in Kentucky, that that's important because people put a prior on it and it is, but we shouldn't be making life changing decisions based off this. So going back to me county, we will, we will be aware of the game, we will be aware of what's waited and what's not mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but it will not drive decisions we make for students. Okay.

Speaker 2 (00:53:04):

And with this being a case study mm-hmm. <affirmative>, we've narrowed down, like we we're not looking at the, you know, super view, looking at what you're doing here and what and your experiences itself. Okay. Um, 39 and 40 will be one of pretty much the last question. Okay. You might not have it. I do not have it. I realized that. Okay. So it's right here. Um, so how can the current education model change to have a flexible structure of pulling of resources and autonomy in order to be conducive to accountability?

Speaker 1 (00:53:38):

Okay. Think what I've said already mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, are these, there needs to be a framework given that may not be perfect, but that is a comprehensive experience of what we're trying to do. Prepare students for quality life, prepare quality workforce. I think that if we could engage all stakeholders, um, cross country or across state if it's Kentucky initiative mm-hmm. <affirmative> and say, this is what we all agree upon, that, you know, we need these essential skills. It could be something as simple as teaching our students that the value of showing 'em up to work on time, being accountable, soft skills, all those things. But academically, um, social emotionally. And, and if we can agree to that and then give it to our school districts mm-hmm. <affirmative> for some local autonomy, and then having great systematic procedures for professional learning communities from the district level down to the, to the school level.

Speaker 1 (00:54:31):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and making sure that there's no educational lottery. That yes, [REDACTED] has a different teaching style than someone that does their job at [REDACTED]. That's fine. They're different people. The gotta who God made 'em to be, but then the day a third grader at [REDACTED] should not have a totally different experience than a third grader at [REDACTED], somewhere in between. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. That they should have comparable experiences, they should get art music, that they should have access to research based curriculum. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, that's not just, well, [REDACTED] I think this will cover the standard. So working together as a team across a plc across the district mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, that is huge. But if the expectation is not set, um, and we're not positioned as a school district to look at a comprehensive framework mm-hmm. <affirmative>, then we're kind of pigeonholed into fourth grade, science is gonna be more important than it is as a sixth grader. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, well that's, that's not the way it should be. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know, um, and then saying that we are going to measure student progress consistently mm-hmm. <affirmative> and not once a year. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, and that our, our educators and teachers specifically are going to be equipped with, um, quality data to help students make progress. I know that sounds really simple, but that's where we gotta get, if we're gonna move the needle for students.

Speaker 2 (00:55:54):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Okay. All right. This isn't, this is a question that I honestly did, I'm interested to hear your opinion on. Um, I don't know if I asked the question on the survey, but I've looked into it a little bit through my research of literature, um, and just looking at how students get involved in the reform. Because, I mean, I remember going through high school, as I said, and being in one drink. How do I get, like, how do we get our voices heard? Cuz we're, you

know, a lot of times, times I, I can feel or I can see students are the ones going through it and you know, are on the receiving end on of the decisions that are made for them. And a lot of times, um, and so here and of course there's gonna be, it's not fully developed, um, opinions yet, or fully understanding opinions, but hearing, you know, those needs. Just wondering or hearing how you, you know.

Speaker 1 (00:56:48):

Yeah. So there's a lot momentum in that really just in the last two or three years. Not just here, but other places. So since you've graduated, um, before it's always been a student government mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know, to high school level, but it goes beyond that. Goes to our middle school kids, goes through elementary. I started a student advisory council my first year, which was two and a half years ago this time. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> where we have all types of students. We got students, our severe disabilities, freshmen through seniors. We meet six times a year. We have these conversations. When we did our strategic plan in 20 20, 20 21, um, we had focus groups, we had student focus groups, we have parents still at post groups. Students need to have a voice. A hundred percent agree with you. I, our commissioner has started some similar structures mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, but once again, going back to change, it's hardwired in us.

Speaker 1 (00:57:35):

Yeah. Um, and adults do have a different perspective that went through school like you're going through right now mm-hmm. <affirmative> then a seven year old or a 17 year old of course. But sometimes it's not decisions that are based off math and reading. When I was in the pandemic, we were talking about how are we gonna have prom? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, how's your graduation gonna get back to normal? Yeah. Within the restrictions. So it's, it's real world conversations. It's about safety. When we're talking about do you feel safe at school? Why do you feel safe at school? Why do you not feel safe at school? So, but if you don't have a structure in place, you don't have a system, you can't measure it, you can't manage. So what I've got is six dates. My next one's [REDACTED] and they'll have their agenda topics, I'll have mine and we'll just have two way conversation. But once again, going back to culture, if you don't have transparency, if you don't have trust. So yes, we're taking steps at least here. And I think a lot of school districts starting to do it. I hope it's not just for attention or say it's checkbox. We've listened to students, I talked to Adam 'em for 30 minutes, now we're done. Are we genuinely listening or are we talking to people? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So I think it's, it's getting better, but there's a long way

Speaker 2 (00:58:37):

To go. And, and I can see when I was in high school, the wind moving that way. Yeah. But like what you just said, a lot of, of attention of Yes, I've talked to 'em now let's check it off the list. Cuz I can remember feeling that way. And I think that's why a lot of people, you know, in my grade felt like, well, can we get an actual voice in this? In some,

Speaker 1 (00:58:55):

We visited classrooms together. We started that last year. Cause when pandemic started getting better, we did that. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, we visited every school this year so far except for [REDACTED]. And when we come back and debrief whether it's right after or our future council meeting, we'll talk about Okay, the whole student experience. What'd you like about what you saw here? What could we do to improve it for not current students, but future students? We take it and here's the key. What do you do with the data? Do you take it back to your principals? Do you take it back to your teacher advisory council, which I started that two years ago. Are you connecting it? But if you're looking at this isolation data and saying, well students believe this, teachers feel this one of their common grounds. Are there things that our adults don't know that we need to tell 'em?

Speaker 1 (00:59:33):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And we're talking about six to eight students. Does that make up all of our students things we're doing at the elementary level now, students are leading instructional groups. They're taking ownership, they're, we're trying to develop leaders a little bit. Gift and talented. We have not done a good job here. Um, I've said doing better the last couple years of identifying giftedness can be more than academics. It can be leadership, it can be art, can be music. So, but, but students, I do worry that some of these structures are say, okay, we're gonna have a non-voting member student on our, um, our board. I don't know if all that's genuine, Clint, just between you and I, I'm not saying it's not, I can't measure someone's intention. Yeah. But I do wonder if people are truly listening or they're checking a box. Okay. And I think here we really, truly are listening. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Speaker 2 (01:00:23):

All right. Um, well that's all the questions I had. Um, do you have anything that you wanted to ask or?

Speaker 1 (01:00:30):

No, I, I think the one that's the hardest for me to answer because I think I'm just so laser focused on what we do here. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> is how much do politics truly influence what's cascaded in our schools. I'm a third year superintendent. I'll be able to answer that question better in seven, eight years once I've done a decade of it. But I do see it. But um, sometimes as a leader you feel like you're at the mercy of others that are not always engaged in what's really going on. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, they're not in our classrooms. They don't know the struggles we deal with. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, I do worry that they take something they read on social media and be like, oh, that's the way it really is everywhere, you know? Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and that's really not. So I think my only thing would be, and I try to engage our, um, leaders in Frankfurt.

Speaker 1 (01:01:17):

They visit classrooms with me. We have conversation mm-hmm. <affirmative> done that the last couple years. But I just hope the people making decisions about education are truly informed and are not. The truth is usually in the middle. There's a lot of extremes in our country politically mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, on both sides. But I don't believe that all of our people making

those decisions are always as informed as I wish they were. Yeah. I feel like the people that really know the students, the teachers, the administrators, um, sometimes we don't have a seat at the table and it's frustrating. Yeah.

Speaker 2 (01:01:48):

Okay. I can, I've heard that frustration with the people in my cohort who were not even teachers yet, but seeing that and hearing that from when we were in school. And so

Speaker 1 (01:02:00):

Biggest issue in public education in the coming years, not just next five years, next 20 years and before you retire, um, we'll be preparing a quality workforce, not just a workforce. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but a quality workforce. And if we don't invest in it, I'm talking about per pupil funding, I would encourage you sometime on your own to look at what Kentucky gives per pupil funding. So for example, this year we get \$4,100 per student. That's before we get special ed add-ons and all that. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> next year we'll have 4,200. So in this two year budget from the legislators, they're investing more than they used to. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. But go research what Tennessee, Ohio, Indiana, and Arkansas do. See what they're giving cuz I've looked at it mm-hmm. <affirmative> and you'll be as surprised at what you're gonna see. So what we've gotta continue to do to meet the needs of our students is have quality workforce, but we cannot give the raises we need to give if we don't have the funds to do it.

Speaker 1 (01:02:54):

Yeah. Because it's getting more expensive to educate students. Not just cuz of diesel prices. Not just cuz it costs more to feed people. Okay. But it's getting just more expensive than student needs in general. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So the biggest thing that we need to do in this state is invest in great workforce, but we've gotta be positioned with the dollars. There are dollars that are not gonna put into this state. And I don't just mean five, \$600 more in Arkansas. I'm talking about as high as \$2,700 more per student to \$3,300 more per student. Like when you see those states that order us and in our region, we are not a, we are a distant last mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And that is probably the most important thing that's not talked about enough and honestly probably not talked about enough within our groups. Um, we get caught up in kindergarten funding, which is important, transportation fund and we need those. But if we simply have as much money as Indiana, Tennessee, Arkansas, we can do great things for students and pay our people what they're worth.

Speaker 2 (01:03:49):

[REDACTED]

Speaker 1 (01:04:07):

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Speaker 2 (01:04:43):

[REDACTED]

Speaker 1 (01:04:46):

[REDACTED]

Speaker 2 (01:05:00):

Okay, perfect.

Speaker 1 (01:05:01):

[REDACTED]

Speaker 2 (01:05:03):

Okay. All right. That's great. Yeah. So I was doing, I was reading your survey and I was like, that experience doesn't sound exactly right. So I wanted to clarify that with you, but, alright,

Speaker 1 (01:05:15):

Clint, it was pleasure. It was a

Speaker 2 (01:05:16):

Pleasure. I hope this is helpful. It has been. Yes.

Appendix C

Speaker 1 (00:00:02):

All right, here we go. All right. So, um, this is based off of questions one, two, and three. Here we go. And I tried to number 'em, so, oh, no, I did not get to number you. I'm sorry. So, no, you're fine. It's these first three questions right here. Okay. You wanna look at 'em? Um, so it is basically, you strongly agreed with the phrases I've seen, the idea of politics. Okay. Policies and procedures, respectively, slowing down and impeding education reform and or growth. Why did you agree with these statements? Um, and what are your experiences with those three, uh, ideas?

Speaker 2 (00:00:40):

So, um, there are, I believe a lot of people who make decisions about education and the ins and outs of education that truly don't understand the work. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and just one example, A as to the reason I agree with this, and this is kind of goes hand in hand with our staffing issues right now mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So, um, right now I have, I was super proud at the beginning of the year, cuz we came in August with every teacher certified spot field. Hmm. Now, some of those spots were filled as alternate route certifications. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and emergency certifications. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but I had them all filled. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> felt really good about that. Yeah. Because there was a time in the summer when I thought, oh gosh, <laugh>. Um, but I had a good person in front of every classroom and I felt good about that. Since the start of school, I've had five teachers, not because they're disgruntled, not because it's, um, they're mad at the principal mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Speaker 2 (00:01:48):

Not because it's, they've just found other opportunities outside of education mm-hmm. <affirmative> that are better for themselves and their families. And so they're leaving the profession. I've had five certified teachers. Five. Yes. That's a big wow. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, technically four. The fifth one is in limbo right now. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, it's gonna happen. I just, it's just not official yet. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, that's hard. Two of them were math teachers, two of them are English teachers. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> one was science. And so that's a lot of students. Yeah. Yeah. On a daily basis in core classes mm-hmm. <affirmative> that don't have that certified teacher. So the reason that the strongest reason for, for my answers is, for example, it is required. I, I think the legalities of teacher certifications are very strict. For example, if I have a science teacher who is certified in biology mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I'm not allowed to put that person in front of my chemistry students mm-hmm. <affirmative> because it's a different certification mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but I am allowed to get a substitute who isn't qualified or has a teacher certification or a teacher background at all. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> input in front of those students. Yeah. Like, there should be a perk, there should be some type of something that helps that certified teacher, even if it's not the right certification, because that person in my eyes as principal is better qualified mm-hmm. <affirmative> to teach my

Speaker 1 (00:03:27):

Students and it would help with the sub shortage and, and those different problems that we've been encountering in the last mm-hmm. <affirmative> two years. Yes. Um,

Speaker 2 (00:03:35):

And, and some of the certification, uh, pieces. So, so I have a highly, who I consider highly qualified English teacher mm-hmm. <affirmative> teaching my English students this year. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, she is from Virginia, she's certified in Virginia, was a teacher in Virginia. Um, but because of how difficult it is to transfer a Virginia certification to Kentucky certification mm-hmm. <affirmative>, she's only getting paid to be an emergency certified teacher. And I had to send a letter home to all students saying, saying this about my teacher. About, okay. You know, because of the, the way the certification reads, um, you know, you don't have a, your, your son or daughter doesn't have a holly qualified Kentucky certified teacher in front of students, but I've, she is qualified. Yeah. She is certified. You know what I Yes. So that, that's, that's very, very frustrating. Yeah. And until some of, um, some of those decisions with certifications and hiring mm-hmm. <affirmative> and pay, um, until the education profession is respected. And it used to be, I would say, but until the education teacher profession is respected from the state level, the high state levels, and the even national levels mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I think it might get worse before it gets better. Yes. So that, that's my biggest re those are my biggest reasons. That's behind why I've answered how

Speaker 1 (00:05:00):

I answered. No, that's great. Um, and I did, I meant to preface this by saying this is a case study, so any of here that you're just looking at or your experiences, that's what we want. Um, it's not big overarching, like not necessarily fact based things, but your experiences and what you've encountered. So good. That's good. That's great. That's,

Speaker 2 (00:05:21):

Yeah. Yes. Because I might not speak the, the, the perfect lingo that, like, I might not say the words exactly the way they need to be, but I will share my

Speaker 1 (00:05:28):

Experience. No, and that is, that is perfect. Because I mean, that's the best way that we can learn and that we can grow is through those experiences. Yeah. Um, and so I'm very, I'm very thankful for that. But that, and that example that you shared certifications and everything like that hits all three, it hits the poli Yes. Politics policies and procedures. Um, and as the name of it is the Iron Triangle mm-hmm. <affirmative>, which is just, that really shows it, the three of them working together to create that barrier. Yeah. Um, and then number four, so unlike those three, you didn't exactly strongly, you still agreed. Um, but what makes the status quo a little bit less so than

Speaker 2 (00:06:07):

Those three? Okay. So, um, and, and hopefully I, I'm thinking about this correctly. So one example is, um, I do believe that our Kentucky Department of Education has worked hard and is doing a better job on creating standards mm-hmm. <affirmative> for our, uh, courses that

actually, um, will benefit students mm-hmm. <affirmative> and help our teachers be able to truly make better citizens. For example, the most recent, um, state testing, I, I'm not a huge fan, and I, we'll probably get to this even a little bit more later. Yeah. But I'm not a huge, I have not been a huge fan of state testing mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, it all depends on the test, really, you know, teach to the test. I hate that phrase, how be, because sometimes that's a bad thing to teach to the test, but it really depends on the test. If it's a good test, then of course we wanna teach to it because it's gonna help us create better people, better citizens for the world.

Speaker 2 (00:07:12):

So, um, so I think that the most recent standards work and state tests that were developed will help us create better people mm-hmm. <affirmative> and better citizens, because you have to have a hard work ethic. You have to have some stamina. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you have to have some content, you know, knowledge as well mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but it's more about critical thinking and, um, trying to decipher what you've read, understand what you've read, whether it's reading a chart graph, or long excerpts. Um, but it truly promotes critical thinkers mm-hmm. <affirmative> and decision makers based on facts. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> decision makers based on evidence. And if we're doing that in all of our core classes mm-hmm. <affirmative>, then we're creating better decision makers, solution based thinkers for the world out there, which

Speaker 1 (00:08:13):

Is gonna be more

Speaker 2 (00:08:13):

Applicable. Yes. Yes. So I think the te the, the Kentucky Sumative assessment mm-hmm. <affirmative> has done a better job of that, um, than they've ever done before mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So that makes me believe that we will rise above the status quo. Okay. Um, because of the, because of the, the way the standards and the tests mm-hmm. <affirmative> are CRE being created mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, you know, there was a time, and I'll just use this as an example. There was a time when there was a social studies test, and it was a state test, it was mandated. And a lot of what was on that test was memorization facts. Well, is that really gonna help our world? No. But our strong critical thinkers mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, hard work ethic, uh, students who have stamina to, uh, to, to read and understand, to make a educated decision mm-hmm. <affirmative>, that's gonna make, that's gonna make a big difference in our world moving forward. So, um, so that's, that was the main reason I, I, I bumped that down. So,

Speaker 1 (00:09:19):

No, that's, and that's exactly what I was looking for. Yeah. And I mean, in college, I have definitely realized, um, not that our school or that this school didn't promote critical thinking, but that the test, I figured out the system of plug and chug, memorize, dump it later, figuring out what I need to know now. I didn't, I mean, I did learn critical thinking, and I, and I can critical think, but not in the way that I could have truly been educated to do mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, and how to apply intelligence in different ways. Yeah. There's other people out there that I've come into contact with who did figure that out. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, and they're

the engineer majors and those people like that. But while that is great for them, and that's how their brain works, we can definitely make it to where most kids can start to think in that way. Yeah. And get that skill out. And so, yeah. Um, then you, when did that put, here

Speaker 2 (00:10:17):

We go. Yeah. That the culture creates barriers to education, reform, and growth. Yes. I, I, I kind of, my, I I think my answer kind of answers that one as well.

Speaker 1 (00:10:26):

Okay. Well, and that's, and that was the next one I was going to because of your difference in the status quo, bumping it down a little bit mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but also saying it creates those barriers through the culture. Um, so how do you see that, or have you seen that through, um, and I have a definition of status quo on there, just, which is just everybody working to gain or maintain the position where they are. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, would you say that's the way you see it, or do you see it in different ways? Um, working to be the most comfortable and the most power or?

Speaker 2 (00:10:54):

I, I do think that overall now there are al there's always gonna be, um, the population who is not gonna rise above their comfort zone. But I do believe overall, especially educators try to rise above the status quo. Um, you know, and, and I think about our, our current commissioner and a lot of his messaging, I mean, he is trying, you know, he is working to motivate us to not be okay with the status quo and let's grow and let's innovate. Um, especially with, uh, project-based learning. And I am a, I'm, I'm a fan of project-based learning. Um, maybe not in every single department across this campus, for example, but I do think there are huge benefits to project-based learning. And, um, so, so I, I do believe the majority try to rise, rise above status quo.

Speaker 1 (00:11:56):

Okay. That's great. Um, moving on to the questions, it's number eight, but it's this woke culture, um, questions.

Speaker 2 (00:12:05):

I'm gonna go back, I'm gonna go back and say one more thing. Okay.

Speaker 1 (00:12:08):

No, it's

Speaker 2 (00:12:08):

Great. <laugh>. So,

Speaker 2 (00:12:12):

So I do believe the majority of educators want to rise above the status quo, but I will also say that it's easy to get stuck. So it's a constant, um, as, as leaders, it's a constant, okay, how can I motivate? What are the right words and activities that I can present that I can say that I can do, that I can model mm-hmm. <affirmative> to make every, to help everybody want to continue to rise above the status quo. Cuz it is easy to get complacent mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And it is easy to get, um, you know, down as educators, especially when you feel like you're not respected. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but yeah, I did wanna add

Speaker 1 (00:12:53):

That into No, that's, and that's great. Um, but, so for the two woke culture questions, um, they're basically just the opposites of each other. You more so agreed that woke culture, uh, woke culture has affected learning, um, while my other participant disagreed with that. So what have you seen, um, with woke culture and how it's affected,

Speaker 2 (00:13:13):

Help me remember what woke culture is. I need to, I need to refresh my brain on that

Speaker 1 (00:13:17):

A little bit. So it's just the, let me, trying to make this so the awareness or the con text targeted instruction, um, with a sociopolitical and culturally, uh, agenda in a, in a way, um, that reimagines classrooms as four spaces of that social change in progress, not necessarily, um, letting that social change in progress happen naturally, but kind of trying to f force it and trying to, um, make th make these kids think the way that often their teachers think. Looking at how some stuff has happened around the nation recently.

Speaker 2 (00:14:01):

So, let's see. Woke culture has not affected learning

Speaker 1 (00:14:05):

In educat educational reform. And then the next one is, has, and you agreed more so with that one.

Speaker 2 (00:14:14):

Okay. So I think that, I don't know if I answered these correctly or not, so I'm just gonna kind of share, share my thoughts. Um, so I believe that, um, that our, that our teachers

Speaker 2 (00:14:50):

Strive to create safe places, safe environments mm-hmm. <affirmative> for our students, um, as a, in a, in a large high school, um, what's going on out in the world seeps its way into our walls mm-hmm. <affirmative> continuously. I think this year, and I'm gonna knock on wood <laugh>, I think this year, um, we've had less divisiveness mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, holistically. So from my perspective, holistically, have I had to, um, as a whole school work on some specific

divisiveness between groups? Uh, I have not. Now do I think we need to improve our student to student interactions? And do I think all of our students respect each other's differences? No. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but I think we've kind of worked through some of that divisiveness before Covid through Covid last year mm-hmm. <affirmative>, because I did have to, to holistically address some things on this campus that socially seeped into to our schools mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Speaker 2 (00:16:07):

Um, and so I think our teachers are aware. I think I, I think I have been transparent enough with our teachers to help them be aware enough to where, um, there's discussion that's safe and respectful when an adult is involved. It might always, might not always be the case when it's just students involved in the conversations, the sidebar conversations in the hallway talk mm-hmm. <affirmative> or the lunchroom table talk mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, and, and, and we are working on that. But, um, so I don't know if that answers your question or not, Clint. Um, and there, you know, there, there are <laugh>, so I'll give an example of a textbook. So we, uh, had a teacher in social studies who requested, uh, a new textbook and we, uh, approved it. Um, it was all good. The, the cover of it that was shown in the picture, and it was, it was all good.

Speaker 2 (00:17:13):

We, we ordered them and they came in and the front of the textbook had a big picture on the front of someone holding a sign that said Black Lives Matter. And that was frustrating mm-hmm. <affirmative>, because I did not purchase a textbook where the front cover said Black Lives Matter, so social things outside of these walls nationally seep into here. And because of that, I knew that being on the textbook was gonna cause issues. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> was gonna cause some divisiveness was gonna cause conversations that maybe, um, my teachers weren't, you know, that that would distract from the standards my teachers should be going over in the classroom mm-hmm. <affirmative>, if that makes sense. So, um, so we didn't end up using those textbooks and they, we didn't get our money back from her anyway, so that's like a, a little thorn in my side, but, um, but so that, that could be an example mm-hmm. <affirmative> that, you know, that that did affect. Um,

Speaker 1 (00:18:20):

But, and that definitely is exactly the kind of thing that we were thinking and wondering, um, is have we seen that? Like, is this outside world this big problems that are going on in our nation right now, and the things that are coming up that are newsworthy and the news headlines that hit mm-hmm. <affirmative>, is that really seeping through? Or is, are those just the outliers that of course are getting picked up because they're those extremes? And so, and that's, and so that's great to hear and to see how it is really affecting you all.

Speaker 2 (00:18:51):

Yeah. So yes, it absolutely affects us, but I don't think it impede it. I wouldn't say that it impedes the trueness of what we do mm-hmm. <affirmative>, because, you know, we are focusing on creating the best [REDACTED] possible through our [REDACTED] success indicators, um, through

our, you know, through the standards, you know, that our teachers hone into in their classrooms. Um,

Speaker 1 (00:19:20):

So would you say, if it doesn't impede now, uh, earlier you mentioned it's gonna get worse before it gets better. Could you see it impeding later teacher?

Speaker 2 (00:19:28):

Yeah. And I think the, and I think it has impeded before mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I just think right now, for whatever reason, we're in a pretty good spot here. But now, like I said, knock on wood mm-hmm. <affirmative>, because sometimes you, you never know when, so you know when that's gonna spark.

Speaker 1 (00:19:44):

Okay. Uh, so it's like it fluctuates. Yes. Okay. So it fluctuates and how it affects and how it impedes. Yes.

Speaker 2 (00:19:52):

Okay. Okay. And when it impedes, if addressed properly and appropriately, we quickly get back on track. Okay. So that's in my, this is my fifth year as principal and that's what I've experienced so far. Okay. So I do think, um, there have been times when it's impeded, um, this year, not so much in years past, but I think the quicker you can address it, the better off you are. Okay. And the more transparency leaders have with their, their teaching staff Yeah. Who are in the trenches with the students, the, the more, the less it will impede because you've made your teachers aware of this problem that you see becoming big. If we don't talk about it, you know, cuz if we pretend it just isn't there, that's when it's, that's when it gets bad. Yes. Yeah. You know, so, and, and you know, whether it's a message from me to the whole school, and then, you know, if I've pre communicated with the teachers mm-hmm. <affirmative>, they're gonna extend that messaging and conversation in creating a, usually it's divisiveness. So that's why I think in creating a safe learning environment mm-hmm. <affirmative> so that the true learning can continue to happen and,

Speaker 1 (00:21:06):

Okay. Yeah. Yeah. And that, and

Speaker 2 (00:21:07):

So hopefully that Yes, that helps answer the question. Definitely. Yes. And, and I don't know if I answered the strongly agree, disagree right. Or not on that, but,

Speaker 1 (00:21:15):

All right. Um, education, um, the next page I think will be where we're at. Okay. Education reform can be characterized by technological advancement. Um, was the question, so it might be

one more. Okay. Um, you strongly disagreed with this idea, um, of education reform being characterized by technological advancement, basically. Why do you think it's not, and what do you think it is characterized by?

Speaker 2 (00:21:44):

So I think technology, technology has a great impact on how we, uh, teach and what we can do with students. But I would hope that we are using technology as tools. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> not as the lead reason, not as the, um, key piece to teaching and learning. Okay. If that makes sense. Yes, yes. Um, because you know that there's a big diff if, as a teacher, if I am using technol, if I say I'm using technology in my classroom, and that means I've assigned something, uh, through Google Classroom and a Google Doc and, and I might be walking around, but the kids are all doing something on their own through that, uh, piece of technology, that that's really not how we should be utilizing technology to reform education. We need to teach our students how to utilize the tools to be better critical thinkers, to be, um, and, and not necessarily force you to, to, to do that work in a Google Doc mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but you choose, yeah. You have this as a tool and you have, you have this app and this, and you choose what makes the learn the learning, um, stronger for you as a student mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So that's,

Speaker 1 (00:23:18):

It's more, it's more of education, adding it to its arsenal of tools, adding it to its techniques, not necessarily you might have that tool. Doesn't mean we've changed. It doesn't mean we were reformed. It's kind of how you're thinking. Yes. Okay. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. And I can definitely see that. Um, but a lot of people will say that as these tools get better, then education's reforming and changing, which is not necessarily true.

Speaker 2 (00:23:39):

Yeah. Well, and, and I do, I do agree mm-hmm. <affirmative> with that. Um, because cuz we are changing, we are adapting to the technology around us mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but hopefully we're not using it as like a scapegoat or using technology as a babysitter. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> or let's, let's teach, you know, the teach it as a tool

Speaker 1 (00:24:05):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Speaker 2 (00:24:05):

Okay. So yeah, I think that that's my belief.

Speaker 1 (00:24:10):

Um, this next question covers that one and a couple others. So number 10, 11, and 12. Okay. Which is, so just these next three. Okay. Here, um, which, and it's a general question. As I said, you disagreed with questions regarding technology leading to, uh, technology and globalization leading to homogenization and one, one size fits all mentality. What would you say

leads to homogenization and a one size fits all mentality? Because you did, you did agree with those things. Yeah.

Speaker 2 (00:24:39):

But yeah, so, so it depends on, you know, um, I guess the teacher's level of comfort with the technology mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So it's important that we leaders, um, do the best we can to teach how we prefer the technology to be used. So I do think so if, so holistically, we are using Google Classroom across this campus mm-hmm. <affirmative>, so that would help all students become familiar with Google Classroom, but is it helping our students become more familiar with other technologies that are out there? If that makes sense. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, so one size fits all Google classrooms, the end all be allall, that type. Um, so I, I agree that some of that happens, uh, if that, if that makes sense at all.

Speaker 1 (00:25:35):

Yeah. Um, so are there other things that you can, so other than technology mm-hmm. <affirmative>, are there other things that you see leading towards homogenization or one's highest fits all mentality? Um, and in what ways do those things negatively affect education reform?

Speaker 2 (00:25:52):

Well, let me think here. I hope, I hope not. You know, I hope that, that that's not what we're leading because groupthink is not, is not what we want. Of course. Yes. And our schools are in this world. So that's why the, the critical thinking p I think the standards are right. I think the, the Kentucky Summit of Assessment is right, continuing to think about project-based learning, continuing to think about how we can use technology as a tool, um, and not as the end all be all way to learn. Mm mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, so I don't think we've got processes in place that make everything uniform or similar. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I think there's enough differences. Um, at least I hope so. I can't think of a, I can't think of a specific reason. Do you have an example anybo,

Speaker 1 (00:27:05):

Anyone I don't

Speaker 2 (00:27:05):

Used recently that,

Speaker 1 (00:27:06):

Um, this is just not necessary things that are happened mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but things that you might have seen or things that, and so if you haven't, that's great. And that's what I wanna write down. Yeah. Not

Speaker 2 (00:27:17):

That I can really think of right now. Okay.

Speaker 1 (00:27:20):

It's just, this is what literature has suggested might have been led to. Um, sure. And so, um, just looking into that, so a couple pages and at the bottom of your page Okay. It, it'll have page numbers. I can't even think of that. Page 14.

Speaker 2 (00:27:35):

Okay.

Speaker 1 (00:27:38):

So

Speaker 2 (00:27:39):

Yeah. Technology has created a one size fits all. It's all mindset with the society. I don't think so. Social media, I will add this. Social media makes our education jobs so much harder, um, because it's so accessible mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and I'm not so sure the majority of people know how to find credible sources. Yes. And that does scare me a little bit for group think to be able to happen because if, if our kids don't know, um, what credible sources are, are they gonna grow up knowing or believing everything mm-hmm. <affirmative> that they read on the internet. Yeah. So I think our older generation is more apt to believing everything that's on the internet than our younger generation mm-hmm. <affirmative>, which is, which shows hope for me mm-hmm. <affirmative>, because if our younger generation, um, are the ones not believing everything on the internet, of course, then I think that, um, hopefully we're doing a good job. But I do think

Speaker 1 (00:28:48):

It could,

Speaker 2 (00:28:48):

The internet and social media could have that potential if, if we're not careful and if, um, policy makers and government leaders don't continuously address internet and social media issues and safety and ethical standards, if that makes sense.

Speaker 1 (00:29:09):

Yes. Six. Okay. So there are six indicators of education reform at the bottom or page 14. Okay.

Speaker 1 (00:29:20):

So we have these six indicators, and I ask the question on them. And there's one on the other one, uh, on this, on this page at the top. Okay. At the bottom of it. So this is the sixth indicator, um, just based on literature, this is what we found to, or what's been found to indicate education reform and the level of education reform within schools. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, do you,

number one, you said that you agreed with it. Uh, do you, is that, has that changed? Um, and then number two, do you think that there's maybe different dynamics between the three, uh, between the six? Is there something that outweigh the rest? Yeah. Or are they on this evil, this even level playing field? Yeah.

Speaker 2 (00:30:08):

Oh goodness. So, um, the, the first thing that jumps out to me, right, right now mm-hmm. <affirmative>, we have, and I, not just in [REDACTED], but holistically in our society, there are less parents being parents that is hurting our future mm-hmm. <affirmative> because our kids are growing up not being parented, um, to the level that's needed. And schools are not equipped to, to also be the parent. We try our best mm-hmm. <affirmative> to also be the parent to also teach, you know, morals and values and, um, life skills and, but there's so much schools just don't have the resources to do at all mm-hmm. <affirmative> at, at all times. Um, so we're seeing a whole lot more social and emotional issues, um, that are, that are impeding learning. And I think it all is derived from the environments that our kids live in outside of school. I think that's the number one factor of, um, issues that are hard for schools to, that make it harder for schools to advance in positive directions.

Speaker 2 (00:31:43):

Um, as far as, you know, accountability and curriculum, I kind of alluded to some of that earlier. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I think our government, our, our KDE leaders, I think they're constantly trying to do a good job. I don't always agree with it. And it all it all doesn't always make sense because there are so many laws that don't even match the accountability and testing systems, which makes the leadership of leading schools very difficult because you have to, you have to require this, but yet we're trying to, um, you know, teach to this test mm-hmm. <affirmative> and they don't match mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So that, that happens a lot between government laws, uh, being passed, government, uh, leader politics and the creation of the accountability and curriculum system. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, they, a lot of times they don't, they don't match mm-hmm. <affirmative>, <affirmative>. And that's frustrating as teachers and, um, administrators.

Speaker 1 (00:32:45):

Definitely. Definitely. Okay.

Speaker 2 (00:32:51):

Included, this is better now than it's ever been mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, we are more inclusive everywhere, but politics in society can have a, you know, a negative effect on that. Um, because, you know, if, if, and, and social media and how the news portrays it, um, has an effect as well. But I do believe holistically our schools are safer and more inclusive than they've ever been. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Mm-hmm. So I don't know if that answers

Speaker 1 (00:33:28):

What you mean. No, it definitely, I dunno if that helps us. It definitely did. Going off of that, include in this track mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, how have you seen students being included in the reform process? In what ways can this be better, better

Speaker 2 (00:33:40):

Done? Yeah. So, um, you know, so here in me county, uh, [REDACTED] has created an advisory council mm-hmm. <affirmative> and or many advisory councils, one of which is a student advisory council mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, so that is one way. Um, we also invite students to our, um, here at [REDACTED], our lead team meetings and our mm-hmm. <affirmative> site-based meetings. Now I will be in our P B S meetings. Like if we have, um, whole school, um, initiatives, so to speak, we invite students to be a part of those mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Now, I will say our students this year have not participated near as much as I kind of thought they would. Um, but I do think it's because maybe it's not seen, you know, the, the students, um, have more important things to do than go to that meeting that night, if that makes sense. Yes. So, because it is after most of it is after school hours mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, and or they're involved in on the softball team or, or involved in something else, yeah. That takes the priority. Um, how could we get better at that?

Speaker 2 (00:34:55):

I think the [REDACTED] Advisory Council has definitely helped. Um, so one thing I did when we were, and I would, I will continue to do as needed, is there a system I could put in place instead of it just being as needed? Probably. Um, but like when there, when there's an issue going on that is festering and could get big within our school, I try to bring in a variety of students and just have table talk mm-hmm. <affirmative>, Hey, this is what's going on, here's the why behind what's going on, you know, here are some possible solutions, what are you all, let's just talk mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And so I think that helps. Um, and creating a system of that, I think it's a little tricky because you, depending on the issue depends on the who's you need on around that table. Yeah. If that makes sense.

Speaker 2 (00:35:53):

Yeah. So it's almost like a, for me, and as needed basis, depending on the issues that are, that are there, I do think our educator, educators rising co-curricular organization is doing a good job with, um, getting students in our teaching and learning pathway. Um, more involved in site-based council, um, because they're sending a student, there's a student that will attend at every site-based council meeting from Educators Rising. So, um, and then our student government, um, are charged with leading our class meetings mm-hmm. <affirmative> periodically throughout the school year. Of course. Um, this year's, the first year we've been able to bring those back in a systematic way

Speaker 1 (00:36:40):

Since Covid,

Speaker 2 (00:36:41):

Uhhuh. <affirmative>. Yeah. So last year we had, we had maybe a couple class meetings, but it wasn't a systematic, because really the first semester through covid last year was still there. It was still lingering. We were here mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but we were still being careful. And when, when I did have a class meeting, I had everybody set every other seat and, you know, so, but this year was the first year we've been able to kind of bring that back mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, and so I think those kind of systems, um, can get strong, will get stronger because the systems are in place, um, for that to happen. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, uh, the, the trickiest part is getting the right people involved, um, and making it a strategic process of planning so that you know, that the right adults are facilitating and helping teach the students how to lead mm-hmm. <affirmative> mm-hmm. <affirmative>, because we technically don't have a, a leadership course or a leadership study Yeah. Or a, you know, on this campus, it doesn't really, um, it fits into curriculum. And so it's, it goes on in, in places like it might, there might be some leadership, um, lessons being taught in our agriculture pathway, for example. Um, but they're, they're, they're spotty throughout. So I know that leadership is being taught across this campus, but there's not like a designated class or a designated curriculum or a designated, um, pathway mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know, if that makes sense.

Speaker 1 (00:38:16):

It's just leadership within their own Yeah. Within their own experiences

Speaker 2 (00:38:20):

In a lot of ways. So, so creating that system of leadership mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, might be something that could help in that area that you've asked about with students being included in the reform decisions.

Speaker 1 (00:38:31):

That's great.

Speaker 2 (00:38:34):

All right.

Speaker 1 (00:38:35):

Going on to the next page. Okay. Number six or page 16.

Speaker 2 (00:38:39):

All right.

Speaker 1 (00:38:40):

So why do you strongly disagree with this statement? An independent form of accountability is best for education reform. So just that, that

Speaker 2 (00:38:48):

So independent form, I guess that, that, in my mind, that means, um, a single, a single form of accountability instead of a holistic form of accountability. So I believe more holistic, a more holistic approach is better than an independent approach.

Speaker 1 (00:39:12):

Okay. Which I, I agree with this. I think this independent form is coming from something not necessarily outside of the education system mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but something that's not necessarily, um, I'm trying to remember when I wrote this question exactly. What was my thinking behind it mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, mainly not necessarily somebody coming in from outside who has no idea what's going on mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but somebody, let's say from a, from the board, one person whose job it is be that independent form of accountability that's coming from the outside, but also does have that educational experience, if that makes sense.

Speaker 2 (00:39:51):

Yeah. So as a support that, that, that, that's awesome. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but as the end all be all, this is the way it's gonna be. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> from one independent person, from one, uh, from one source, from one. No. Okay. We need a, we need a comprehensive, more, a variety, um mm-hmm. <affirmative> mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, more holistic, more that that's, that's the way I feel. No,

Speaker 1 (00:40:15):

And, and that makes sense. And so I wasn't thinking of it from that perspective. Okay. And so getting that is great, um, to hear and to kind of elaborate on. Okay.

Speaker 2 (00:40:24):

Um, but, but if you, if, if you wanna a, you know, I don't know if there's a, if you're trying to get to a different, um, conclusion, is there another question? Is there another way? Okay.

Speaker 1 (00:40:36):

Not really. No, that's, and, and these questions, like I said, are to figure out how I'm coming down with this idea of how do we get around this, these three policies, procedures, and politics. Okay. Is it this way or is it a different way? Okay. Um, and so taking it and saying, well, an independent form of accountability isn't exactly what we want or need because it's not necessarily going to be able to take things in holistically Yeah. Is a great, is a great thing. Um, okay. To help and to go with, um, the top of the next page. Okay. You agree with the holistic approach in regard to education reform, so just like we talked about. Okay. Do you believe that this is the current model or approach that's used at large?

Speaker 2 (00:41:17):

It's getting better. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>? Um, I do believe it's getting better. And, um, I, I only believe that, I mean, my, my belief is it's getting better because I have reviewed the standards and I have reviewed the released Kentucky Summit of assessment test items. Mm-

hmm. <affirmative>, and I believe more in the current Kentucky summit of assessment mm-hmm. <affirmative> now than I ever have in the past mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, because of the whole critical thinking, solution-based thinkers, and that's what our world needs. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, our world needs to be able to read critically, think critically, and come up with solutions based on evidence mm-hmm. <affirmative> strong wise behind, um, and not, and not have group think so. Um, so I do think that we are, um, you know, addressing, I think we're doing a better job. Yeah. I'm not saying it's, it's nowhere near perfect, but I think overall we're doing a better job of, um,

Speaker 1 (00:42:35):

We're seeing it more holistically. Yes. Just not all the way yet. Yes. Okay. Yeah. And I can definitely see where that is true. Um, but I can also agree that we're getting better, but we're not there yet.

Speaker 2 (00:42:45):

Yeah. We are definitely not there where we are gonna be yet. Yeah. Which

Speaker 1 (00:42:49):

Is great. Um, this one is a big one. It's got a lot of 'em, so you don't even have to turn to those questions. Um, I kind of addressed them within the question. So you agree that policy stemming from the education, from educational accountability can minimize administrators to the role of middle managers? Um, that is where we at, well, we're on a couple different pages. So 18 Oh,

Speaker 2 (00:43:09):

Okay.

Speaker 1 (00:43:10):

And then 20. So number, the bottom one on page 18, and then the two questions on page 20. Okay. But you agree that educational accountability can minimize administrators to the role of middle managers, and that principles have undue stress due to being forced to juggle multiple and at times conflicting demands in addition to the idea that paperwork can be distracting from their responsibilities and students. So, like I said, a lot, what are your experiences with those, um, and what days and what ways do you see them affecting education

Speaker 2 (00:43:43):

Reform? So, um, I think I alluded a little bit to this earlier mm-hmm. <affirmative>, there are sometimes very conflicting, uh, policies, procedures, laws mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, that are made that conflict with what we feel like our true mission is. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know, our true mission is to ma to maximize the [REDACTED] experience, to, um, produce the best green waves possible, to make a better community Mm. Um, within our school while we're here, but also once our students leave us, and we want our students to be equipped, uh, for life outside of [REDACTED], no matter what the student, um, does. So, you know, building that mental strength and those solution-based thinkers mm-hmm. <affirmative>, like

I've said multiple times mm-hmm. <affirmative> is, is is the role, that's what we need to be doing. Uh, but sometimes there are so many conflicts, um, with what the law says we have to do, or, um, what, so there might be funding tied to this grant that we have, for example mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Speaker 2 (00:45:05):

And then the grant has all of these rules. Uh, so, so we've got this funding, but we've got all these rules we have to follow, and if we don't, then the funding gets taken away. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So it's almost like a double-edged sword, um, that you're, you're constantly as a leader trying to juggle what is the priority? Is it, is it the money, is it the, and, and, and a lot of times it all conflicts with one another, which, uh, can take away from truly what's best for the organization and students. Yeah. Yeah. Um, which it's hard to explain. I'm trying to think of a, a very specific example. Uh, I don't have one right off the top of my head. I'll probably think of one as soon as you leave <laugh>. Um, but I mean, in my most recent work that's been daunting, um, it kind of, kind of goes along with the paper.

Speaker 2 (00:45:55):

Well, I don't know what question it was, but you said something about paperwork Yes. And undue stress of principles. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So our Kentucky summative assessment, um, was, uh, given this past spring mm-hmm. <affirmative>, of course, we just went through a pandemic of students that took the assessment, have not been held accountable to a state test in, you know, since 2019. Yeah. Um, and, and, and we schools hadn't been held accountable to, uh, accountability and state testing since 2019. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, so those results came out at the very end of October. And, um, and since then we have been working super hard to try to diagnose the why behind our scores to that accountability and, and state testing. Um, and, and, and I've been working on the comprehensive score improvement plan, some of which, um, some of the demands to IT are, you know, kind of crazy mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Speaker 2 (00:46:57):

And take me away from what I truly feel like the most important work is. Yeah. Um, there are some, there are some good things about it too, um, because it helps, it helps me analyze where we are and why we are where we are. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and, um, but, but it, it is, it is super stressful. Yeah. Um, so I guess to, to kind of wrap that up, the con the conflict between trying to figure out the right PRI priorities at the right time is nearly impossible <laugh> for school leaders mm-hmm. <affirmative>, because there are, there's so much that is expected to happen in schools, and sometimes it's just hard to figure out, okay, what, what, what is the right path here? Yeah. Where do I put all of my eggs? Um, and, and, and I wouldn't want to make decisions, rash decisions, because of those scores. We want to be able to think long range. Okay. What is, what is best holistically, um, for the continued progress of me county high school students mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, versus just making a rush decision, uh, immediately right now that maybe won't affect the future in a, in a positive way, but those are some of the, the stressors and some of the hardest pieces.

Speaker 1 (00:48:20):

Yeah. Which juggle and I mean, cuz you can't go against these things that have come down. Right. But you have to figure out a way to work around them Yes. And to work with them. Yes.

Speaker 2 (00:48:30):

Okay. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (00:48:31):

All right. Um, 20, the top of 21. So have you seen bur bureaucratic responsibilities take precedence over other responsibilities? Um, and how have they caused those areas to deteriorate?

Speaker 2 (00:48:50):

So, yes. Um, let me think of, I'm gonna try to think of of an example. Um, I don't know if this answers, but I'm gonna go back to the sta staffing issues are mm-hmm. <affirmative> are heavy on my mind as a principal, and I'm sure they are many principals. Um, the r the rules and regulations to, um, that we have to follow in order to, you know, I, I just wanna be able to find good people that I know will be awesome role models and awesome teachers for my students. I can't do that because of some of the rules and regulations that I have to follow mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, for teacher certifications. Um, so that's, that's one current big example that is a a that's a big frustrator right now.

Speaker 1 (00:49:55):

Well, and it, it definitely will take you away from your responsibilities mm-hmm. <affirmative> and it's causing areas to interior. Cause you don't have, you're struggling to find teachers, so not saying that this happened, but sometimes you're gonna take what you can get, which might not always, which might not always be what you wanted. Yeah.

Speaker 2 (00:50:12):

And that's a, that's goes back to some of those other, that's a conflict. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, that's a conflict. Like I, I wanna put the absolute best of the best in front of my mm-hmm. <affirmative> students. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but I also know if I non-renew this teacher because he or she is not not that great, then I may have burned a bridge with that person and I might need them next year because I don't have anybody else mm-hmm. <affirmative> and is nobody better than somebody like, and so that it Yeah. It's, that gets tricky.

Speaker 1 (00:50:40):

Well, and so you see it deteriorate maybe in those ways. You also see it, you're talking about not having anybody in front of those classrooms. Correct. Or, and I mean, I'm subbing, but I go into a classroom, I don't necessarily know what I'm going to have to teach the day. I don't know how they've been running their classroom. Yes. Lesson plans help, and yes, I've been told those procedures. Yeah. But I'm, I'm figuring out as I go. Um, and so is having a sub there better than having maybe not necessarily certifi certified teacher there, like you were talking about, so Right. That, that example of staffing is great and really does show those ways how those

responsibilities might take you away mm-hmm. <affirmative> and might cause other areas to deteriorate. Yeah. Um,

Speaker 2 (00:51:22):

And even some of the school improvement planning pieces, you know, we, we are, uh, based upon our state testing results, our school is labeled tsi a targeted school of improvement. Um, because our, there are different subpopulations within our school. Um, one is, um, economically disadvantaged. Mm. Um, the different races, um, uh, students with disability, there, there are several subcategories, you know Yeah. To the school of data. Yeah. So, um, our students with disabilities, um, are performing at the level of all students in, uh, the lowest performing schools. So because there's a gap between our students with disabilities and our regular population holistically, we have a, a labeled tsi. So we have these targets that basically there's a lot more paperwork that has to be done because we're labeled. Um, and, and, and we have to prove and show plans of evidence on how we're gonna address the TSI label and fix it. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, and researching and, and, and putting all of that on paper can be helpful to a certain degree, but it also, sometimes the paperwork portions take the precedence over, okay, let me roll up my sleeves and start working on this instead of being behind a closed door. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> trying to get the paperwork done so that it looks good in front of the state. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (00:53:04):

<laugh>. Yeah. Well,

Speaker 2 (00:53:05):

And it's, so there's a, there there's a lot of that that goes on too. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (00:53:08):

And it just, you having to,

Speaker 2 (00:53:11):

So that's

Speaker 1 (00:53:11):

A do the research private

Speaker 2 (00:53:12):

Responsibility.

Speaker 1 (00:53:13):

Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. You having to do this research when you should, when you should be able to be out and actually getting to work on it. Um, while that research is helpful, maybe there should be somebody else helping you do it. Correct. Right.

Speaker 2 (00:53:24):

And I, our district does try to do that. Yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (00:53:27):

Yeah. But, okay. Um, and then that one right under it, number 20 would be number 28 if I had numbered them. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, in what ways have you seen reform conflict with the ideas of higher authorities? I think we really just talked about that. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, so on the next page, the top of that, um, how have you seen performance metrics negatively affect the school community? Um, we might have really just talked about that as well, but, um, anything else you want to expound upon there?

Speaker 2 (00:53:53):

Yeah, so, well, I, you know, everything that makes us who we are as green waves is not reflected in our accountability score. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and I believe that with my whole Green Heart <laugh>. Um, so that's, that's hard. Yeah. I'm not happy with our accountability score mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I'm not happy with our state test scores that we got back Yeah. From this past spring mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, I do think that we have a lot of apathy amongst our students right now. I don't think they gave it their best back in the spring. Um, so I know that's some of the work that I'm trying to lead this year. Um, so that we are, um, we're building more motivated students Yeah. Um, who hopefully are becoming better readers and critical thinkers and solution-based thinkers. So, and then hopefully they will then be motivated enough to take that test seriously and mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Speaker 2 (00:54:45):

And trial their best on that test. Um, but a lot of the accountability in state tests that are given, especially to the older students, it's harder to get older students to buy into, well, what is, I don't care about this test. It doesn't do anything for me. I don't get a grade out of it. I don't get, I don't get anything out of it. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, it's, and it's hard to sometimes build the intrinsic motivation, uh, with within our students mm-hmm. <affirmative> to, to take that test seriously. So I'm, I am, um, I'm not happy with our results, but I also know that those results don't tell us truly who we are

Speaker 1 (00:55:26):

Doesn't tell us who the kids

Speaker 2 (00:55:28):

Are. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And, um, I mean, we have so many opportunities for our students on this campus mm-hmm. <affirmative> that are not a part of the accountability system. Yes. If we could showcase what our students do through F B L A, through Skills usa mm-hmm. <affirmative> through ffa, through our girls basketball team, through our, uh, leadership athletic development program, through our, there are so many opportunities that we offer and that our students showcase and represent us in such an awesome way mm-hmm. <affirmative>, that the

accountability system doesn't capture mm-hmm. <affirmative> if it could capture that somehow, some way I could see where that would be hard. Um,

Speaker 1 (00:56:10):

But it's important to still consider and think about. Yes.

Speaker 2 (00:56:14):

Yeah. And, and I know that as principle mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, so I think the community could have a negative feel Yeah. Uh, for how we're doing as a school based upon the accountability scores mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, and some, and some of the accountability scores I'm super proud of. Uh, but there are some areas that I'm not so proud of, but it doesn't, it doesn't paint a full picture. Of course. It's just of course one piece of data. Yes. And our community sometimes doesn't see it that way. They don't, yeah. If there's a family in California who's gonna move to Kentucky, they don't know where in Kentucky they're gonna move to, but they're researching schools, schools, they're gonna see that accountability score for me, county high school. And I'm not proud of that. And that family in California has no idea who we really are of course, based on that score. Cuz that's just one piece of data. But that's how a outsider could perceive us.

Speaker 1 (00:57:08):

No, I completely understand that. And I think that is a big problem with accountability and with the reform model as it is now, is we don't, we're not able to take students as they wholly are. Yes. We narrow it down to that one day in May or the, those five days in May, which is a problem. And

Speaker 2 (00:57:27):

Yes, the accountability system does not fully address the whole child or the whole school.

Speaker 1 (00:57:34):

Yes.

Speaker 2 (00:57:34):

Okay. Um, and I don't know, gosh, I wouldn't know how Kentucky Department of Education could or should even fix that to be honest. Yeah, yeah. Because it's so like a school is like a living organism. Mm-hmm. It's always changing. Yes. And, um, it's very, you know, it's not black and white. It's, it's, um, um, oh, what's the right word? It's a feel. Mm-hmm. You know? Yeah. It's a feel and, and how, how to capture, um, on paper Mm. Or through a test mm-hmm. <affirmative> or through some type of site visit. I don't know how I, I don't know how the accountability system could, could, could be tweaked to truly know who we are,

Speaker 1 (00:58:24):

But it's something people need to put their heads together and try to figure out Yeah, I agree. Which right now don't know if that's what's happening. Right. Right. So I agree with, I can definitely agree with that. I can hear what you're saying on that and I can understand. So page 25 and we've got two more. Okay. I know I've taken up a lot of your time. You

Speaker 2 (00:58:42):

Are fine.

Speaker 1 (00:58:44):

Um, the top one on there, how have you seen accountability lead to teachers having to justify their ability to be trusted and teach effect and teach? So this may be the education

Speaker 2 (00:58:55):

Form as principal mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and especially on a large campus, um, a large high school campus. High school minded teachers think they know it all most of the time holistically. So high school minded teachers have a hard time being told what to do. Yeah. Uh, they just do. Yeah. And that's hard because it's like, if I know, because I've, I have dove into the accountability and Kentucky State assessment results mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and I know some things that we need to improve on at me county high school. It's a trick <laugh>, it's a strategy. It's, um, a daunting, uh, planning and strict, like, how do I get my teachers on board with these changes that I know need to happen because they think they're the bee's knees and they they are, they've got it going on in their classroom. And I'm not saying they they don't, but we can all improve. Of course. And so that's, that's probably one of the hardest jobs for, you know, one of, um, very important, but very hard job for me. And so I know some improvement areas at BK High School right now, and I'm trying to work on how I'm going to rip the bandaid off Yeah. And say, this is what we're doing. Yeah. Without causing my teachers to be like, oh,

Speaker 1 (01:00:17):

Yeah.

Speaker 2 (01:00:18):

You know? Well,

Speaker 1 (01:00:19):

I mean, I can think back.

Speaker 2 (01:00:20):

I'll agree with you. Yeah. Quit telling me what to do. Uh,

Speaker 1 (01:00:24):

<laugh>, I can think back to when I was in school and I loved all my teachers and they were great teachers, but they know how they want to teach and they know their content and they know

what they want to do. Um, doesn't mean it's conducive for everybody. Yeah. Um, and so I can definitely see what you're thinking and hear that, and it's figuring out how to tell them, you're a great teacher, but we need to fix some things like this and figure this out. Yep. So,

Speaker 2 (01:00:47):

Yeah. And you know, teachers are already stressed. They all, they already, because of things beyond my control, um, are not respected as educators. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> teachers are not respected in their profession. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> have already, I'm, I'm my fifth one of leaving to go to another pro profession. So if I get 'em all upset, I'm afraid I'm gonna have more teachers leave. Yeah. So it's that balance that that's, that's a, that's a

Speaker 1 (01:01:11):

Biggie. It's a balancing act. Yeah.

Speaker 2 (01:01:13):

Yes,

Speaker 1 (01:01:13):

Yes. Yes, I can. Okay. All right. And last one, and short, as shorter as as long, um, you said the current education model is not, um, or not the last one. The, yeah. This one right here, uh, this bo the bottom of 26. Okay. The current education model is not conducive to the ideas of successful accountability and evaluation. So what needs to change? What needs to, and I think we really probably talked about this. Um,

Speaker 2 (01:01:42):

Yeah. It's, I don't know, I don't know how, I don't know how to make it change mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but it needs, there needs, we need a system that talk, the laws, the mandates need to talk to and partner with, um, the accountability system mm-hmm. <affirmative>, because some, they don't match, they conflict. Mm.

Speaker 1 (01:02:06):

Okay.

Speaker 2 (01:02:07):

You know, for example, one of the most recent laws that was passed gave a whole list of, um, excerpts, readings in social studies that must be taught in the social studies classrooms in high school. Um, but though that whole long list might not match the standards that we are required to teach. Yeah. How do we put those together? It's like, yes. You know, the, the, the, the organizations and the, the leaders in the politics and blah blah, blah, blah, blah. Out there, just, there's a, there's a lot of conflicting pieces. Okay. So that doesn't help, that makes it non not conducive at all. Okay. Um, but also just the whole who we are is not reflected,

Speaker 1 (01:02:59):

It's not

Speaker 2 (01:02:59):

Reflected accountability system. And I, I do believe that with my whole heart mm-hmm. <affirmative>, do we have improvement areas based upon our accountability score? Yes. Uh, but I think we're better than what that accountability score says we are. Yeah. Um, because it only tests certain things and certain grade levels. Of

Speaker 1 (01:03:18):

Course.

Speaker 2 (01:03:18):

Yeah.

Speaker 1 (01:03:19):

Um, well, I mean, I had friends in high school who, number one couldn't have cared about the test, but also probably couldn't, didn't know what they were going to, they didn't know the content on the test. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. But if you put them in the mc four and in some of those classrooms mm-hmm. <affirmative>, they're smartest person you're ever gonna meet. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, yes. But the test doesn't know, the test doesn't know that. And the test doesn't care about that at this point in time. Um, and so that's one another aspect of, you know, we're talking about not seeing who kids are in the fullest. Um, and so

Speaker 2 (01:03:50):

In our post-secondary readiness, there's a portion of our accountability system mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, that's called post-secondary readiness, and we score high in that area. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And I'm very proud of that because I do think post-secondary readiness is a more holistic way of figuring out who we are Yeah. On this campus.

Speaker 1 (01:04:10):

It's getting people ready for the outside world, not getting them ready for a

Speaker 2 (01:04:14):

Test. Yes. Both academic. Yeah. It has some academic measures, um, and it also has career measures. Okay. And, you know, so I, I was proud of that piece. Yeah. Yeah. But it was only 25% of the whole piece mm-hmm. <affirmative>, whereas reading and math was 45%. And I'm not saying reading and math aren't important, um, but reading and math are tested at the 10th grade level. Reading and math are tested solely online. So the test is online only. There's a lot of students who, um, could probably make a better score through a paper pencil test. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but there is no option. There's no

Speaker 1 (01:04:55):

Option.

Speaker 2 (01:04:55):

Can't choose. Yeah. So it's, so then I'm trying to teach my teachers, hey, teach our students how to take this test online. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know, is that really something we should be teaching? Should we, we should be spending our time on? So

Speaker 1 (01:05:09):

It's not, is you, is taking that technology as a tool and they can get Okay. Yeah. I can see. Yeah.

Speaker 2 (01:05:16):

So, so some of what we're mandated to do, I'm thinking back to one of your other questions now, I can't remember which one it was, but, um, making one size fits all mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So the way all of our students have to test is one size fits all. Yeah. Yeah. With a, with very, very few exceptions with our students with

Speaker 1 (01:05:37):

Disabilities. Of course. Of course.

Speaker 2 (01:05:39):

So, um, so that does make me think a little bit differently about how I answered a previous question, but No.

Speaker 1 (01:05:46):

Well,

Speaker 2 (01:05:47):

Good thing you're recording

Speaker 1 (01:05:48):

<laugh>. <laugh>. Exactly. No, exactly. Well, and then I wouldn't remember everything that we've talked about, especially when well won't review most of this until, yeah. So, but that is everything. I didn't really have a question on that last one. Oh, okay. Um, well, good. So thank you very much. You're welcome. Please. Um, I'm very appreciative. Yeah. This has been two and a half years of work finally coming to fruition. So, well,

Speaker 2 (01:06:12):

I hope, I hope I've been helpful. If you

Speaker 1 (01:06:14):

