



The NHC GOP Podcast

Episode 2:12 **Tough Decisions - Conversation with Republican Members of the NHC Board of Education**

Reuel Sample: Welcome to the NHC GOP podcast. I'm Reuel Sample. I am happy and honored to be joined by three Republican board members of Education. Pat Bradford, Pete Wildeboer, Josie Barnhart. Good evening and welcome to our podcast, folks.

Pete Wildeboer: Thanks for having me, Reuel Thanks for having us. Thank you very much.

Reuel Sample: We're going to talk about right off the bat an issue that has come up very recently, just this week, about Dr. Charles Foust, who is the superintendent of the schools here in New Hanover County. There is no question that he was an issue during the campaign. And so I want you to share with us briefly, because all of you talked about it during your campaign. What was the issue of Dr. Foust? The superintendent of the schools. Pete, I'm going to have you go first on that one.

Pete Wildeboer: Well, again, thank you Reuel for having us on here this evening. Um, you know, I talked to a constituent just yesterday, and he was asking me several questions, and I said very clearly that, you know, I haven't changed from what I said during the campaign, which is we're either going to help the man out or help the man out. And I mean by that, help him out to improve or help him out to do something else. And he has improved. I mean, he really has can't go through a lot of the things that we talk about in closed session, but in a lot of areas, we've given him a directive or a

charge. You know, we just had our wonderful town hall meeting. And during that meeting we talked about the strategic plan. And the number one thing that we as a board voted was academics. And I can't go into the encumbered data yet. I can't wait till we can because I think everyone will be very pleased at the direction of the school system at least in that area, in the area of academics. And that was the number one thing that we charged him with, was to improve our academics. You know, the school system needs to continue to improve overall. But, you know, the school system, at least in that area, again, is moving in the right direction. So I'll turn it over to my colleagues.

Reuel Sample: Josie, you were very vocal about EDI throughout your campaign. What is EDI and specifically, why did you have a problem with Dr. Faust and EDI?

Josie Barnhart: Thanks for that question. So when I started my campaign again, I speak on behalf of myself, not on behalf of the board. One of the concerns became equity, diversity and inclusion, because the idea and concept of an equity or an equitable opportunity should be embedded in practices. So when you are a teacher and you have a classroom full of students, you need to be ensured that you are meeting the needs of all your students. And so the idea and concept of a committee and thus a director position, a central office, office position happened under the previous board leadership and I was opposed to that. I still am opposed to that. I would rather see the resources go to our classroom teachers and in our classrooms so that we are directly responding to the needs of our students. And so that's something that as we look at budget cuts. We had less enrolled. So we have money that we have to be cutting back. And so that should be coming from out of the classroom positions, not not not in the classroom positions, but outside of the classroom positions, how we can decrease that.

Josie Barnhart: And when you look at the budget that was presented this year, that's what happened. The top level district budgets were cut. And we try to keep as many classroom teachers as possible. So for me, my biggest issue with the superintendent was the creation of EDI. But after some research, I found out that EDI was developed in 2019 with so two boards ago started it and then the last board kind of had ownership to take control of what that looked like. And he during my campaign actually presented to cut the EDI director position and the previous board demanded that it stayed. And so that was something that I wanted to look more into coming in. And it's still something that I do think that we need to, um, I would be okay with ending the committee, but I

think it's, it's a board decision. And so if, however, we move forward because it is a strategic plan goal, I do think that we need to look at realignment of what that looks like and what the expectation of that is.

Reuel Sample: Pat, you are a small business owner and you've been doing that for a long time. From the the statement that you folks put out is that, quote, We believe we can work with Dr. Foust and his leadership team to accomplish what we need to achieve and we need to achieve everything we promised voters last year. One of the things that you and I have talked about is that this was a human resource decision to keep Dr. Foust on. Can you talk about that a little bit more?

Pat Bradford: Well, and I say it was a business decision. People don't really grasp the size of the school district. I don't mean in terms of geography, but, you know, we have a \$440 million budget and we know that 100 million of that approximately was government federal government money that's gone away. It's titrating out now. And so next year's budget won't have that. And we have 2900 employees. We have 27,000 students. So the structure, you have to understand how the school district actually works. And I didn't understand it the whole time. The year and a half, I followed the board every meeting I followed, the policies I learned. But I didn't understand the structure of how the school district actually works. The only power the superintendent has is what we, the board, give them. We empower him or her to do their job, and we give them instructions. And as Jose pointed out, the past board boards plural, but the most recent one under Stephanie Adams and Stephanie Krayble as chair, they were telling him policies that they wanted him to do during their tenure and we inherited that. So we come into power, we tell him this is what we want to do, how we want to right the ship, how we want to focus on academics, how we want to focus on safety.

Pat Bradford: And and this is how we we've instructed him and we're doing it. So as a business person, that's all you can hope for with that many people and that many students, which we can call customers if we're going to call this a business. And then you've got their parents and their guardians and their grandparents, and then you have the stakeholders, the taxpayers. So it's a huge operation. And I liken it now to an aircraft carrier. It's not going to turn that quickly. I think when people elected us, they said, okay, y'all go in there, wave your magic wands and fix everything and see you later. And it's not been quite like that. We are doing we are working as hard as we can possibly work

and we're working well. And the superintendent is responding to what we want to do. His staff is responding and we feel very good about what's happening. So this brouhaha has kind of been like a gut punch, to be honest.

Reuel Sample: Mm hmm. Uh, we're going to talk about that in just a second. Pete, as you have talked with Dr. Foust. And the areas that the three of you want him to improve, to improve, and not just you, but others who are parents and teachers and educators. How has he responded to the new direction that you want to go in the terms of the school district? Is he. Is he being abrasive? Is he being resistant or is he carrying out the policies of the school board?

Pete Wildeboer: I would say for the most part, you know, as I've said before, I don't think anyone is ever perfect. But I think for the most part, he is very willing to do as he's asked to do. You know, he's made comments before. You know, I worked for four of you and I know that was taken when it was originally said with the last board. It was taken very poorly. But I think what he meant by that was that he works with the majority. So with the majority pushed, you know, the majority direction directives and directions are that he is willing to work with his staff. He's got you know, I could spend the rest of the time we have talking about his excellent staff that he has, especially his senior staff. Well, all the way down, but especially, you know, the senior staff that we work with quite a lot. Wonderful educators. One one lady I worked with for years and years in Pender County. And just, you know, I can't speak highly enough of her. Others that he's brought on board, some some great, great folks, you know.

Pete Wildeboer: You know, so it is I mean, he's he's dug down he's got in some you know you know, just to take a second, we'll talk about our low performing, our two of our low performing schools. He went to the next county, got two great principals, brought them on board. One was on board, but he moved him over to the low performing school. So he's he's using his resources wisely. He's bringing some new folks in that are just, you know, you know, educators like to use the terminology, rock stars and, you know, some rock star folks that are going to change. You know, and again, it'll take some time. But moving schools in the right direction, you know, at the end of the day, it's all it's not about, you know, me or Pat Josie or anyone or Dr. Faust. It's about the students and doing the right thing by the students. Somebody today kind of give me a little pep talk and said, you know, as long as you can say at the end of the day, you're doing the right

thing by the students, you know, you're at your best judgment, then, you know, then then you should be able to sleep well. I mean, and that's the thing is, I've been in the education business my whole life, you know, ever since 22 years old. And I've seen.

Reuel Sample: Back when you had hair.

Pete Wildeboer: Back when. Thank you. Thank you for reminding me.

Pete Wildeboer: You know, I've seen some great educators. Superintendent on down. I've seen some lousy educators. Superintendent on down. But, you know, the bottom line is, you know, you have to be able to work with the person. You have to they have to understand that the board is, you know, ultimately in charge of policies and, you know, the overall direction of the school system.

Reuel Sample: And that can't be stated enough. That can't be stated enough. Jose, is that the the the the policy sets the board the board sets the policy and the superintendent carries it out. But there is also some other things linked with the superintendents contract. Weren't there some other staff members that were part of his contract that if you ended his contract, then you'd basically have this big crater hole in the organization of the New Hanover County School Board system.

Josie Barnhart: One of the things is the superintendent is not allowed to sign any contracts past his own. So teachers typically operate on an annual contract renewal space. So superintendents will get up to four years at a time. And same thing with our admin. So 2 to 4 years at a time. So everybody that is in the leadership roles right now would end the same time that Dr. Foust ends, which would be June 20th, 24. And so when when the vote when it came time to question whether or not we should vote, that was one of the considerations is understanding across the state of North Carolina. Currently, there's 30 vacancies for superintendents. That's the very top of the level. But if you look at vacancies for those district level positions, it's probably five times that. And so when you think about running something effectively, can you do that with a fill in person? Can you do that with people who are not there for the long haul? And I mean, that really becomes a kind of depends, right, who you get in the interim. And so it's it really became a question for myself to say if we see somebody who we're able to work

with and give direction. And get the results that we want to see academics and understanding and articulating.

Josie Barnhart: And I had planned a trip up to Raleigh. One of the things I'm very passionate about is networking with all these different entities. And so Pat and Pete and Dr. Foust, we were able to all go up together and seeing, seeing some of the conversations happening just naturally. It was nice to see and hear him advocate for our staff, for our students. And so to understand where the passion is coming from, not only is it to yes, we have to secure money and yes, we have to do safety and all these things, but to hear it from the person in charge, it was a different perspective because we were sitting in front of multiple different legislatures and hearing him be able to articulate his passion, his goals, his desires to make programs the most effective, the most efficient that we've seen them was an opportunity for me to see to see him his passion in action. And so I understand that we're in a time of budget cuts and different things that we're cutting back on, but knowing that the heart is in the right place as far as the desire to make things better, and him understanding that he takes direction from the board is is a big thing when you're talking about being able to to trust leadership, to provide that accountability that you expect from a quality leader.

Reuel Sample: Pat, you talked about a gut punch. There's no question is that governing ain't easy. I know I'm talking to a bunch of educators and I'm using improper verbiage, but it's not easy. But what about this particular decision? Is it getting you in the gut. And I'm actually going to ask that of the other two. Why is this one? Why is this one getting to you?

Pat Bradford: How I feel? We you know. Not just the three of us, but we we have been since day one, since we were sworn in. Really, the campaign was was was pretty arduous. And we got sworn in. And we have been hitting this thing as hard as we possibly can. So I think I liken it to we're soldiers in the trenches on the front line and we are getting bloody and beat up and battered every day. But we are we are moving the front line forward and we're victorious and we're excited. And then, you know, we check in with base camp and and they gut punch us over the decisions we've made. But we're making progress. We're moving the the war forward. And yet the guys back in camp, maybe they're just like playing cards and drinking soda, you know, but they weren't keeping up with what we were doing. And part of that's our fault for not telling everyone

what we've been doing. But it it it hurt. It did. But I think that's a small percentage. I really don't think the vast majority of people out there feel that way. That's my opinion.

Reuel Sample: And to to to dovetail on what you said, I'm going to get to Jose and Pete here shortly is that we are going to be checking in with you folks on a on a much more regular basis. So a lot more to come. Jose, how are you doing?

Josie Barnhart: Well, I mean, I think a good leader is willing to admit whenever things go wrong. And I will say that we needed to have a better line of communication with the GOP because while I'm helping write policy or, you know, I was just able to help secure reached out to the county and Dane Scalise helped me and we helped get some billboards about bus safety. And also we reached out to DOT and DOT those flashing signs the weekend before school starts. So this weekend you'll see or yeah, this weekend you'll see school bus safety signs. And that was just from a conversation we had with transportation of like, what are we doing and how can we help educate our community. And so I'm a big fan of communication and understandably the operational side. I think that we're doing much better. We're able to be very transparent with our agenda reviews and the meetings that we have with our parents and trying to recap things and having opportunities to give feedback. But the flip side is we're not recapping those and highlighting those for you, because I understand that not everybody is able to watch 24/7. And to go into those details like I can for hours and hours and hours. And so I want to first say that that's how we can do better. We need to do better with that is to be able to help recap some of those things.

Josie Barnhart: And for me, I, I respect when people disagree with me. And this is something that is I want to highlight because being a Republican and understanding that different people have differences of opinions is something that I value. However, when you agree with somebody 9% of the time, 90% of the time, you're still on the same team. And so this is something that I can understand initially if you hear the news, and that wouldn't be the decision you made, you could kind of be taken aback. But then the reality is to say, I've had people reach out and ask and they said, you know, I'm really grateful for you helping explain some of your reasons and justifications and telling the things that you've accomplished. Because I feel better. Not that I wanted this decision, but I feel better about it. And so that's the whole thing is understanding that it's my role as a leader to help share with you guys what we're doing and the things that we have

accomplished or wanting to accomplish and some things that we can highlight for people. And so I think that we're still on the same team. And I also respect people for being upset about it, and I'm grateful for those people who reached out to have conversations with me about it.

Reuel Sample: Pete, I'm going to get to your feelings here. Ultimately, you renewed his contract based on the fact that he's he's going to follow your policies. He's going to carry out the directions of the board. And he is ultimately qualified to do the job, regardless of whether he's Democrat or Republican. He is doing what you are telling him to do. Is that correct?

Pete Wildeboer: It is. And, you know, had a as I mentioned before, I had a quick conversation actually about an hour conversation yesterday with a constituent. And he went through and that was simply the question. I said I said, what what are your concerns? What are your problems with with the superintendent? And honestly, we talked about it and he he didn't change his mind at the end of the day. But his everything that he brought up, you know, as was mentioned before, the I was on the board when the EDI director position came up, he he he meaning the doctor, Faust actually had a budget that he presented to us, I think this is two years ago now, and it didn't have a director position. And the people in charge at that point said, oh, no, no, we have got to have that position. He followed the directive of the people, you know, um, you know, above him and redid the budget. And, you know, I actually brought up at that point and said, can't we just if you have to have the position, can't we give that to someone who's already at central office so we can keep the people in the classroom? And they said, Nope, nope, nope, nope. It doesn't matter. I think I equated it to three teachers or five teacher assistants and they said, Nope, nope, we have to have it. So again, that was one the person also brought up. Well, he closed schools. He closed schools. I still remember that first night. Boy, it was a long night back in 2020 when I was sworn in. And he at at I think it was about 1130 at night said we need to reopen schools. And the board as a whole said no.

Pete Wildeboer: So again, you can blame the man for it. You can blame the man for anything. But, you know, the board said, no, it wasn't you know, he actually said the exact opposite. You know, I think we have to look at things. A lot of people have just a little different perspective on things. For instance, I think our board as a whole is

working. My own personal opinion, humble opinion. I think we're working together a lot better. One of the board members said absolutely no, we don't vote the same. We don't vote seven zero on everything. I said, you know, and I said to her, I said, we're never going to vote 7 to 0. We have difference of opinion, but at least we can be civil with each other. We can model civility. That's the thing. You know, we are we lockstep with, you know, the Democrats, You know, no, we're not simply we're not. But at least we can model civility. I had two very close friends that are that are principals, one assistant principal principal. They're married. And they said they used to get, you know, a beverage and some popcorn and watch the board. I mean, at least we're not doing that anymore, you know? So I think a lot of the good things, you know, all of a sudden it's like, oh, my goodness, this one decision, that was the biggest decision, the only decision that I care about. Well, there's so many things that this board has done that is positive. We really need to highlight that. And I agree that we we haven't done a great job doing that. We need to do better.

Reuel Sample: And that's called governing, folks. And I'm actually just I'm talking to those who are listening so that these folks were elected to govern and to make the hard decisions. And that's what you're doing. If I were to ask each one of you, would you make this decision again, knowing all the fallout that you'd get, you would probably say yes, because that's this is what you have been hired to do. And I shudder to think if what would be happening if you folks hadn't been elected to this board of Education, is that things going on that were going on would be continuing to go on. And so I continue to believe in all all of you doing what you are doing. And you actually put out a statement today or yesterday. When did you put this out? A few days ago. Is that right? Wednesday, just this past weekend.

Josie Barnhart: 21st. The 21st wrote it Monday. So we.

Pat Bradford: Yeah, Monday. Monday. Long week.

Reuel Sample: So everybody's looking at this right now because in politics it's always the last thing right. But in your eight months if you haven't folks if you haven't seen this statement that I'm holding in in my in my fingers here, it's been sent out on email. You can always contact us to get a hold of us. Let's let's talk about just a couple of.

Pat Bradford: It'll be on the website tonight. So we elected a conservative chairman and vice chair, reversed the NHS athletic participation policy to align with birth biology. That means what, Josie?

Pat Bradford: That means we, we, we we change the sports policy before the state legislature voted on it. We were way ahead of that to where girls play and girls sports and boys play and boys sports.

Josie Barnhart: Because it used to be Gender identification. How you identified with that's how you could play the sport.

Reuel Sample: And quite frankly, girls were getting beaten up by guys who were wearing girls uniforms. And so that's not going to happen here anymore. You adopted a K through eight English curriculum standard for the district that includes parent accessibility. Pete, what does that mean?

Pete Wildeboer: Well, it's really important. I think one of the few things I can say positive about the the pandemic was the fact that a lot of parents had more time and they could look into their child's schooling. What's going on in school? I don't know. I don't know what's going on. So I think it is important that they have we have the transparency. We have it on our website where a parent can go look at what is being taught in your child's school. And I think that is, you know, I'm a firm believer. I think we all are, um, of, you know, parents rights. I mean, what the state has done is wonderful. You know, kudos to Senator Lee and everyone who did that. But I think that was, you know, I think that's wonderful. And I think but we've we've actually done some of those steps before where we can actually see exactly what's going on. It's it's a logical K-8 excuse me, K 12 building so we can continue going on. But I think it is very valuable. And I mean, that way we can hear from more parents. We I'm just going to throw one other one out because that I'm super happy about. And that is the town hall we had the other day where, you know, we started this. I actually started this a couple of years ago. But, you know, we've actually gotten somewhere. You know, it started out to our call audience. We had 16 people show up because everybody was like, Yeah, okay, big deal.

Pete Wildeboer: Now we're actually having a town hall roundtable where people are sitting at a table looking at each other, talking with each other. We had educational experts there. We had the Board of Education, we had parents, We had concerned citizens from the community. We were able to talk about every single one of the strategic goals and, you know, their thoughts and their their their plus deltas. You know, this is wonderful. This needs to be fixed. So we we're hearing from people, we're having dialog, but it's not like the call to audience where we're just hearing from people and have to write down notes and hopefully come up. You know, we were able to answer. And if there was something that that, you know, the educational expert, Dr. Foust, was sitting there and said, hey, this is let me explain that even better, you know, that kind of thing. So it was it was really, really profitable. And I think it is, you know, I would we're going to have another one in October. So, you know, please sign up for it. We had 150 people sign up. You know, we were only able to have 60 people. And we actually had a couple of folks that didn't show up for it. So we're going to try to do even better, have sign ups at the door. So we'll fill every seat and we'll have those those really important conversations.

Reuel Sample: Pat, one of the things that you talked about in your campaign was safety in schools. And you have you are looking, according to your statement, a, uh, additional funding for investments in schools, 5.5 additional funding and increased a you've increased some security layers for your schools. What's going on with that?

Pat Bradford: We have. And, you know, with security, we're not allowed to talk about it so much because we don't want anyone who's nefarious to have all the, you know, what's going on behind the scenes. But when school starts and now in just a few days, you're going to see dogs in the schools. And we we've got a field trip that the superintendent has planned for us. And I think it's coming out of his budget. If I remember correctly. He's going to take us to another county to look at some security that they're using. That's cutting edge. That's coming up soon. Um, I'm yeah, he leaked this the other night on a WECT interview so we can talk about it now. Um, we've, we've, we believe we're getting the funding for AI cameras, so that's huge to keep the schools safe. And there's other things in the works and we're excited about that. It's, you know, safety. Safety is our number two strategic plan goal. And we talk about it, we think about it and brainstorm a lot.

Reuel Sample: Cutting edge security to keep our kids safe, which was a huge thing during the during all of your campaigns and continues. Jose, uh, you talked about protect it survey topics. Basically students were being asked things without parental consent and they are being asked things across a whole wide, wide range of areas without parental consent. And you have changed that policy.

Josie Barnhart: We have. And that was something that kind of was a loophole because we said, well, you know, parents have rights. They can opt out if they want to. Well, that's if you catch the survey, that's if you saw the email to do that and all those things. And so for protected topics for federal surveys only, the policy used to be only for federal surveys of all those protected topics sex behavior, attitudes, illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating or demeaning behavior, critical appraisals of other students with whom students have close family relationships, with recognized, privileged relationships with lawyers, physicians, ministers about your religious practices or affiliations or beliefs. So that was only opt in if it was a federal given survey. So we changed that to not only the federal level, the state level, the local level, the classroom level. We also provided a window of opportunity that parents should be given to look at the survey prior to it being administered. We put in a caveat to give back to the board whatever survey we give, and we're going to implement something. As a result, it would come before the board to inform us This is the result of the survey. This is what we're doing with the results. And so just to really increase that layer of accountability, because if we're going to do something, we want to make sure that we're doing something that's effective for students and academic progress. And so that is ultimately where that change came from. I utilize the same language from the bill that just became law from the nickname the Parents Bill of Rights. So that is already in our policy. That's already a procedure that has been enacted. And so we're still going to have to update a few more things based on some laws that have passed through. But as far as the surveys and the window of time and the things like that, that already echoes that. So we're already good to go in ahead of the curve for that in New Hanover County.

Pat Bradford: And Reuel. Can I chime in? Because that was a very hard fought battle. It was something that that Pete started before we got on the board and he was getting nowhere. We started it. It looked like we were getting nowhere. And we just we just we dug in. We we pushed and we kept bringing it back and saying, no, this is what we want. And it was successful. We're very proud.

Reuel Sample: Again. Again, I shudder at what would have happened if if you all had not been elected. And so, again, I will emphasize, you are governing and you are governing the way that we want you to govern is to make the hard decisions. So as you go forward in governing, I'm going to ask each one of you with this. And Pat, I'm going to start with you. What's on your plate now going forward? What are you looking forward to do the most?

Pat Bradford: I can't tell you that. You know, I'm one of those people that I'm not going to broadcast my plans to everyone. I'm just going to go about doing it. And then afterwards I can tell you what we did. So I'm not going to be able to answer that one for you. But we've got a lot of things in the works. You know, when we went to Raleigh, Senator Lee helped us with the tutoring for the fourth grade math. That's going to be huge. It's a pilot program Reuel. And it's it's so cool that two other districts immediately said, hey, can we do that, too? Can we hop on to that? And then there's something else, you guys. I can't remember what it is right now where a couple of their school districts have said, you know, they're going to adopt our model immediately. You know, we've got a lot of things in the works. It's very exciting time for us. So the timing of of this displeasure is is is not great. I'm looking forward to digging into next year's budget, starting a little early. I'm chair of the Finance Committee. I'm going to have a finance committee meeting, I think, in October. And I'm going to bring in a couple of county commissioners and we're going to talk about it because that's the source of all of a majority of our funding locally. And just just get, you know, some things out in the open and see where we are.

Reuel Sample: Josie, what are you looking forward to? What's on your plate?

Josie Barnhart: Well, I spina lot of plates at the same time, but one of the things that I enjoy doing is figuring out the loopholes and Ms. Bradford said the budget. We have a lot of different avenues for funding between grant funding, the endowment fund, so that those applications are opening up September 1st. Our district people are ready and have a plan to fill out applications to help support reading initiatives to help support our bus drivers. And I'm forgetting the third one off the top of my head that we want to continue to advocate for our staff and for our students. So I'm excited to see the enthusiasm for that. So one of the things we passed was a resolution for calendar law

change in that did not go through on a statewide bill, but there is a pilot program in the state budget that would allow ten districts to utilize for the next four years flexibility and calendar and submit data along with that. So that was a big concern for parents, for our students testing, you know, before the before Christmas time, before they got out for break. So I'm really eager to say, hey, when this passes, put in the application. So these are the kind of things like I hear we hear about some great ideas and wanting to follow up on. And I think one of the other concerns that I've heard from a lot of our community is specifically responding to our special needs students and supporting those. So when you're talking about target demographics, our special needs students and our multilingual students are definitely something that I think we can do a better job supporting. And so as we move forward, I want to look for ways that we can we can do that effectively as a district.

Reuel Sample: And Jose, you and I have talked before about how how you as a board have have passed resolutions or have gone to change things only to be stymied at the state level, that you can't get things. So it's not that you're not trying, it's just that you just kind of run into roadblocks that that are insurmountable at this time. But you've only been in eight months. And so things are coming around. Pete, you're steering the ship. What's on your what's on your agenda?

Pete Wildeboer: Well, you know, one thing that, you know, we've talked about several of the strategic goals, safety being one, academics being one. You know, our third our third goal, which is supporting our staffs, you know, climate, you know, the school climates and stuff. I mean, that that's crucial. You know, a happy teacher is an effective teacher 99% of the time. So we need to get the, you know, the staff happy. We have to get the schools, especially the low performing schools. You know, we need to get them up. Like I said, we have some some rock stars leading the way. We have some rock stars teaching in the classrooms and teacher assistants. I'm going to get back. You know, one thing that I've kind of gotten away from, which is unfortunate, is visiting the schools as much as I used to when I was, you know, before I became the chairman, because it takes a lot of hours. But, you know, I really need to get back out into schools and sit down with the principals and talk to the teachers and talk to the assistant, the teacher assistants and and see what's going on and see how we can improve that. You know, that that's an area that I think that we we need to you know, we talked about directing the superintendent and that is to to really focus on that teacher working

condition surveys take them especially the you know the places that that there are not very good and see how we can improve them to support you know the staff because you know I'm going to keep the same thing.

Pete Wildeboer: As I've said time and time again, it's all about the students, but it's the folks in the school, in the schools that that make it happen each and every day. And we can't take anything away from them. We're actually talking right now about, you know, at our board meetings allowing 2 minutes or 3 minutes. We'll be talking about that at our next agenda meeting for the various teachers of the year to come in and highlight what's going on at their school and, you know, to have them you know, we have student voice, which is important. We need to have teacher voice to and educator voice, whatever, you know, exactly how we term that so we can hear from from our educators on a regular basis. You know, and, you know, we're also going to be talking about the call to audience because, you know, I've heard from time, you know, time and time again that 8:00 on a Monday morning is very difficult for teachers. That's why we try something new. We're going to be talking about, you know, exactly what we want to do in the weeks and months to come as far as that, so that we can, you know, hear from educators as well as that doesn't mean we don't want to hear from community members or parents because we definitely want to hear from them continually. But, you know, to hear from other folks, too. So I think we you know, it takes you know, it goes back to the it takes a village.

Reuel Sample: I am struck. And with this, we'll we'll start wrapping up. I am struck that in the last 20 years we have seen the importance of the Board of Education, school board, whatever you want to call it, is that the Board of Education used to be something that was okay you had to have it to being absolutely critical to the present and future state of our nation. Is that the Board of Education is really the battle ground of everything that we're trying to teach our children. And it's it's it's one that I am so glad that the three of you, the Republicans on the on the board of Education, that you are there representing us, representing the values for which we elected you to do this job. And you are so great at doing it. Eight months and you've got a list of things a mile long and probably more that you could not put on this on this. And so I think it's a great thing is that are you going to make decisions that are unpopular? Yes, you have to. That's what's called governing. But I am so glad that the three of you are there doing your job. Pat, thank you for being here.

Pat Bradford: Thank you. This has been a pleasure. And you know what's really fun is we like each other. We like everyone on the board. So we're not we're not we're not the old board. You know, one of the things the superintendent says all the time is where are we are his third board since he got here. And that's that's a lot you know, that's a lot of different um it's just a lot of different and so but we we like each other and that it makes it easier.

Reuel Sample: Josie thank you for being here.

Josie Barnhart: Absolutely Reuel I'll be happy to do it anytime.

Speaker6: Pete, thanks for being here.

Pete Wildeboer: Reuel, thank you. And thank you for hosting us. I think one of the things we need to do better, and that is to communicate and this is a great avenue to do that. So thank you again and thank you for your time tonight. And thank you, ladies, for being here.

Josie Barnhart: A plug for our new candidates. If you're thinking about running, we would be happy to talk to you about what the expectation looks like, the time that you have to spend away from your family, from your job. But we have three seats that are available and this 2024 and we need more people who are passionate about education. You don't have to know everything, but if you're passionate and wanting to do some work and be a public servant, we would love to talk to you and have the support.

Reuel Sample: You can talk to these three candidates. You can always talk to the folks down at the NHC GOP. We'd love to talk to you. Thank you all for listening or watching our podcast tonight. It's always a pleasure talking to these three. For the New Hanover County Republican Party, I'm Reuel Sample. Thanks for joining us and have a great night.

Pat Bradford: Good night, everyone.

Pete Wildeboer: Night. Thank you.