



The NHC GOP Podcast

Episode 2:15 **Great News From The New Hanover County Board of Education**

Reuel Sample: Welcome to the NHC GOP podcast. I'm Reuel Sample. I am happy to be joined by three of our conservative Republican board members from the Board of Education, Pete Wildeboer, Jose Barnhart and Pat Bradford. I want to start off by saying that we had invited Melissa to be here tonight, but she could not make it. And so Pete is pinch hitting tonight, being the intrepid chairman that he always is. And thank you for your leadership and thank you all for your continuing work for education and and turning things around here in New Hanover County. Before we go into some of the great things that have happened today, Folks, if you're listening to this podcast, we always get together before the podcast and talk about things that are going on. These folks are absolutely giddy of of things that are going on here. But I want to kind of ramp that down a little bit and talk about an important issue that has come and gone, but people are still talking about it. We'll talk about Stamped the book that has gone throughout the entire education system all throughout the country. It's a very controversial book. And you folks have handled this issue in a way that I think is brilliant. So, Josie, tell me about Stamped and what you folks have done with that here in New Hanover County.

Josie Barnhart: Thank you. Reuel. The question that came into play was Stamped as it was related to an AP course. And so the whole board agreed to read it and read through it. And we had a very lengthy hearing. And ultimately, the Board of Education is on the hook for the law as it relates to education. And so when we were looking through the lens of the law, we had to decide whether or not this book was permissible and education. So one thing was sexually vulgar and language. And I don't think any board

member even tried to dream that it was that. And then it came to educationally unsuitable and age appropriateness. And so when we're talking about that, what ultimately the board decided to do was to temporarily restrict it from curriculum and use, because we did not see a balance in the curriculum as it pertains to the analytical lens of racism. And so this teacher will have to create that balance prior to reintroducing it into her class. But we allowed it to stay in the libraries of the school system. So when this comes into play and I've told people that the Board of Education members, if this gets challenged in a further court, we will be on the stand testifying to that relation. And so this is something that was not an easy decision, but it's something that we tried to be fair to all parties involved and to be cognizant of. We want a well rounded quality curriculum that engages in critical thinking.

Reuel Sample: One of the things that we always encourage is parents to get involved in their education system and be with their kids. And so if you are a parent. I think the board would encourage you to check that book out for yourself to see what's going on and to make those decisions for your child. But you folks made a legal decision based upon the restrictions that you had to work in. And it was a tough decision. So well done. And now let's talk about some good stuff, because as I said, these folks are just they're just bubbling at the seams to talk about some of the things that are going on. We want to talk about academics because as Pete was saying before the break, is that New Hanover County was failing in relationship to the surrounding counties. Pete, we've got some good news. What's going on?

Pete Wildeboer: Well, and Reuel got to tell you, that was one of the main reasons, one of the beginning reasons why I ran for the Board of Education. I was a principal in Pender County. Pender County, as I've said time and time again, we had folks running from New Hanover County to Pender County because the school system up there was doing so well and they still are doing very well. But New Hanover County has come and gone past is actually now, you know, well past both Pender and Brunswick County in education. You know, just a couple things here in front of me, we went from seven excuse me, from 12 low performing schools to seven. We've had just so many schools that went either went up a letter grade, either went from an F to a D or a lot. Alderman Gregory Blair, Sunset Park, Holly Shelter all went from a D to a C, I'm sorry. Myrtle Grove. Myrtle Grove. Thank you. And then from a C to a B. Castle Hayne, Holly Shelter, Murray Winter Park, Roland Grace. And from A B to an A, Ogden. So it just we had 18

schools that exceeded growth. We had 18 schools that met growth and only four that didn't meet growth. So, you know, in that growth factor is so, so important. You know, kids, we want our students to grow. We want them to all exceed growth. We want them to grow a year and a half for a year's worth of education. But we've had, you know, 18 schools that did that that, you know, went well beyond a year's worth of growth in a year. And then we had 18 others that made what the state said, you know, we expect you to make this growth. We've you've made that growth. We only had four that didn't. And that's not okay. But, you know, when we have 36 that did either meet or exceed growth, that's good news. That's good news. So, you know, we need to celebrate that. And I think we will be.

Pat Bradford: And you know what, Holly Shelter, Middle was the fifth highest growth index in the state, the number one growing index for the Title One schools. This is really big stuff. And I don't think that Wilmington Legacy Media has given it the due. It's one thing if you're just sailing along and you're, you know, you're in the middle of the road. But we when we came into office, we were we were looking at failing schools, lots and lots of failing schools. And these numbers are phenomenal. We're just ecstatic about it. We really are. 90% of our schools met or exceeded.

Reuel Sample: Well, let's talk about that. Because if one school exceeded or improved in grades, you can say, well, you know, it's bound to happen at some point. But you said 18 schools.

Pat Bradford: 14 grade. Yeah.

Pete Wildeboer: And five of the schools went from not making growth. So in other words, they didn't even make a year's worth of growth in a year. Five schools went all the way up to exceed.

Reuel Sample: So what did you do? So, Pat, go ahead and take this one. Pat, what did you do? Go ahead.

Pat Bradford: When we first got into office, one of the very first things we did was look at the strategic plan and rank it in our priorities to give give direction to the staff and to the superintendent. And we placed academics as number one. And then we came along

and we said, listen, you know, we've talked about this. Can we can we bring our reading up by 10% by this date in these classes? You know, let's focus on math. We have just really pushed academics. It's our number one thing. And the school district met our expectations and exceeded them. They are all so excited. And what's what's interesting that I didn't realize is when you're your school, the principals get a monetary reward for this, which is kind of cool, but they worked really, really hard to. Yeah, the teachers, the principals, the vice principals, the staff, they all worked really hard in all of these schools. They do deserve a big kudos and that's why we're high as kites about it. It's been embargoed news for what, about a month now. We couldn't share it, but we're extremely excited. And we just found out today Bellamy Elementary has been named a national blue ribbon school by the US Department of Education. So who cares, right? Well, 353 schools in the entire country got this kind of an award, and Bellamy was one of them. And it was for innovative school practices. It's for, you know, it's for excellence. And it's just a big deal. You know, our whole school district is pulling at the plow in the right direction towards academic improvement because we were we were we were failing. And we're showing it and we're we're excited.

Reuel Sample: Josie, we're going to talk about that hat here in a little bit. But one of the things that I have found, both in the private sector as a business owner, in the military, as an officer and other places, is that when you hold people to a high expectation, a high standard and help them achieve that goal, they meet that goal and they often exceed those standards. Josie, how are the teachers responding to this renewed sense of a higher standard that you're putting throughout the school district?

Josie Barnhart: I mean, I love to say I think very well. Part of the thing is when people talk about teacher pay and when people talk about advocacy, it's part of proving that worth to right? So when I go to legislators and state officials and I say, look at this improvement that our staff is seeing, they're going to be more apt to saying, Tell me what more you need. Tell me how I can support because they want to see that growth continue and not only our county but the entire state. And so one of the great things and I believe and hope it's still in the draft agenda is advanced teacher roles in the state budget, meaning our staff who are performing and showing that effective growth, that inspirational, met and exceeds expectation, they're going to get paid more for that because when you're looking at standards and achieving those standards, you should be incentivized for it. And they're doing their job very well. And so my job is to, in turn,

help them get money to benefit the academic growth that we're seeing. And so that's something that I'm very excited about with the state budget. If slash when it drops very soon, I'm going to keep saying very soon so that it keeps into play. But that's one of the things is as a board member, it's our job to advocate for our staff. And when we see things like this, we're seeing how hard they're working. It makes it easy to be able to approach not only our county commissioners, but our state reps to talk about the great things that are happening and to help continue as far as funding goes for them. And we're going to be seeing that in this budget with New Hanover County.

Pat Bradford: Yeah, there's lots of good stuff in this budget for us.

Reuel Sample: Pete. One of the things that all four of you ran on was parental involvement in education. We've talked about teachers, we've talked about staff. How can parents keep this ball rolling, keep this standard rolling so we just keep on going up from here?

Pete Wildeboer: Well, there's a lot of ways. You mentioned before Reuel, and I think you're right on point. There is being involved, you know, and that means, you know, I'm going to remind everybody, we have an election coming up before too long, you know, for three seats. So join us on the Board of Education. But but also be involved in your school, you know, PTA, PTO. I think Pat's going to talk about Reading Buddies a little bit. That's another great avenue. Come in and volunteer in your school. And I know people well. I work. I don't have time. Well, you know, you know, even if it's one day a week or even if it's once every couple of weeks, you know, come on in. Come to the after school events, join, you know, become, you know, be become a volunteer coach. I you know, when I used to coach, I had a lot of parents that would come in and help out and coach, you know, So whatever your strength is, bring it to bring it to the table, whether it's just coming in occasionally and reading in a kindergarten classroom, what a great opportunity that is. And that's, you know, that ties into the Reading Buddies again, too. But I mean, just come in, you know, they have career days. They have just so many opportunities for parents to be involved, but also be involved with your child. I mean, and I'm not you know, I have three children of my own. You know, I talk to a parent the other day that, you know, when I come home, when my child comes home, we talk about what's going on in school and, you know, ask questions.

Pete Wildeboer: You know, I think one of the great things we've done over the years is we've put the curriculum right there in front of you. So you can go on the website and see what it is. I have a question about that. I have a concern about this call. You know, I go up the ladder. I've always say that, you know, you can definitely keep us in the loop on it. But, you know, start with with the teacher. If you have a concern, you have a question, you know, even ask the ask the teacher, how can I help? How can I be a bigger part of my child's education? Because really, it does take, you know, an outstanding parent, an outstanding teacher, an outstanding school system, you know, all the way up to the, you know, up to the superintendent. It's all that's all a piece of what's going on. You know, we have opportunities for parents. CTEC. We were at CTEC the other day and, you know, we saw a great new spark lab going in there. And, you know, that's a that's another opportunity for students. You know, that's something when I was a child, we didn't have all those kind of opportunities. You know, you went to the school and did that kind of thing. So, you know, just, you know, please, please, please, just, you know, continue to be as involved as you can with your child's education.

Pat Bradford: Can I share something about teachers? Governor? Yeah. Governor. The governor was in town last week at HOW pre-K. And he said there are 3500 vacancies for teachers across the state of North Carolina. And last year at this time, we had seven student facing vacancies and we've got it down to 12. Last year we had 20 teachers assistant vacancies. At this point, that's been cut in half and staff's going to put together a put forward a recommendation next Tuesday for the final principal vacancies that we have. We're at 100% on our principals staff is in contact with people to be interviewed for vacancies for next summer. They've been very proactive in human resources, in hiring. So we're not feeling this dearth that the rest of the state is feeling, is feeling. And that just goes to show that we got to be doing something right. You know, you don't come to a failing district. You don't come to a district that's in disarray when there are so many opportunities in the state. People are coming here because what we've got is good and it's going to get better.

Josie Barnhart: Shout out to our county commissioners, I mean, we have a phenomenal New Hanover County subsidy. It's roughly 10,000 more than what the state pays. So when you have staff coming into this district, you're well taken care of. And the financial component, too. So shout out to the county commissioners. Thank you for that.

Reuel Sample: And because this is a Republican podcast, I am going to state without a moment of hesitation is that there there seems to be a direct link here is that last November we sent New Hanover County, sent four conservative Republicans to the Board of Education. They sent conservative Republicans to the county commission. And you all are getting things done. Is that I think in the end, parents don't really care if you're Republican or Democrat. They want to see that you're getting things done and you're getting things done. And we're going to we're going to talk more about the things that you're getting done. Okay, Josie, you've got the hat on. You look like the opening scene from the Fresh Prince of Bel Air. And you're even waving your your your head around earlier like that. What's going on? That's right. What's going on with the hat?

Josie Barnhart: So today, I got to join my fellow colleagues in another board member, Miss Walker. And we went to New Hanover High School. Hendrick Toyota had given us a \$25,000 grant to increase our automatic and automotive and CTE program for our pit crew. So to target just the skills that you need to be a potential pit crew teammate. And so they had all these hats on display. And so I made all my colleagues put on these hats and I got mine signed from Kyle Larson, who is there today. And so what's really great is one of the things that I talked about was educational pathways and opportunities for our students, because it's not a one size fits all when you graduate high school, to be successful after high school is going to look different for every single kid that we see in our county. And so I feel passionate about the more opportunities that we can provide for our students, the more likely we're going to see success with our teachers, with our students combined. And so this was just a really energizing day to be able to come out and see. Yes, it was really cool. It was loud. We're not we're maybe talking a little bit louder because the ear we didn't get earplugs to after the loud part.

Josie Barnhart: But what's really cool about this is being able to be a part of it and to say, you know, let's be here together. And so while we were networking, actually, my two colleagues and I, we were we were standing around talking. And the two of the gentleman that helped sponsor this grant, \$25,000, they talked about not only one the potential for renewal of grant, which is amazing, a continuation of this program, but then two, the possibility to create mentorships and internships with our students. And all of us are like light bulbs, just kind of we said, absolutely, we want to make this happen. We've

been working on this software to have businesses be able to plug into New Hanover County so that our kids can be connected. And so we made an instant connection with one another and we just said, Hey, let's keep this conversation open. We pulled in some other people from the district saying, Hey, you need to talk to these guys. They're interested in a mentorship and internship opportunity. And so it's one of those things that that's the fun part of my job is because when I when I come across people who want to engage with our children, I want them to engage with our children. You have the finances. That's great.

Josie Barnhart: You have the opportunity. That's great. Now let me see how I can help plug you in. And so and it's one of those mutually beneficial official exchanges because we have so many people who are looking for quality workforce people. And so in high school, if we can help equip some of these students with the skills to be successful after high school, then we are setting them up for success for their life after high school. But then we're also providing this link in workforce development on the employer side. And so it's really mutually beneficial exchange. And so that was that was an enlightening conversation. I don't know about you two, but I know for me that absolutely was to be able to just engage with our community and talk about the passion that we have for for these programs. I'm not a mechanic. I take my car in every single time, but I'm so grateful for the people who work on my car every single time. And so it's it's just really cool to be able to be a part of those things. And so today was a fun thing. And I'm going to keep my hat proudly and got a couple for my kiddos to wear and they were very excited about it and hearing about the program too.

Pat Bradford: Kyle Larson was here and you got to understand he's like the number one hot NASCAR driver. He was the leader at Bristol just last week, Bristol Motor Motor, Bristol, Tennessee, the Speedway. And he brought his his actual pit crew and he brought a stock car. And they trained our kids in the automotive program. And one of the things you might think, oh, well, they're just like changing oil. Well, no, this automotive has gone very high tech. It's all tech tech stuff. It's all computer stuff. And it was Jack Morgan from Hendrick Toyota in Wilmington who told us today that these guys in the pits are making twice as much money in these technical jobs. They're working as those working in Encino here. And that's a pretty impressive number.

Josie Barnhart: \$250,000 is the number he dropped. He said, yeah, easily, you know.

Pat Bradford: The race car driver, Carl Larson, he he just signed a new contract at the start of this season for \$10 million a season. So we're talking big time stuff here. The kids were so energized. It was thrilling. And Pete mentioned the Spark Lab, another innovation in 2021, when Apple said it was coming to North Carolina, some smart people said, hey, those are going to create a lot of jobs. We don't want people coming and being shipped here from California for this jobs. How do we train up our high school kids so that they can take these jobs? And now we have a pilot at our technical school, CTEC, out on the campus, the North campus for Cape Fear Community College. Pete and I were at that ribbon cutting. And, you know, it's just another way for for students to learn that's just so innovative. It's almost impossible to describe. You have to experience. And we they had demonstrations and you know, I've heard for at least five years printed that on my 3D printer and built it. Well, didn't know what that meant. So I had a young man who was 16 stand at the printer and explain to me how, you know, the machine works, how the layers, things he had built. And now I understand it. Pete had a fun experience with with, um. Was it Pete Guitar Hero?

Pete Wildeboer: I still can't play Guitar Hero, but there was a young man there that hooked me up and. Oh, yeah, it's really easy. And after about 3 or 4 minutes of me struggling through it, I said, Can you show me how to do it? Right? And he got in there and was just, you know, obviously doing a great job. And there are so many things that boy, I tell you, they had, you know, the the sports they had two people there, two young men there demonstrating. They were playing a soccer game with cars. And I said, you know, is this one that you actually, you know, use for for the E sports? Oh, this is absolutely this is you know, this is a rudimentary level one. You know, some some point we can show you how to do the, you know, the the really high level one. But, you know, again, another opportunity for students.

Pete Wildeboer: Boy, I tell you, you've just seen you should have seen their faces because they were just so enthralled and so excited to see that we were excited about what they were doing. And boy, I tell you, they you know, the gentleman that was the emcee of the the speaking, he got up there and, you know, he. Oh, yeah, he was he was nervous as all get out. But he did such a great job.

Reuel Sample: Okay. So so wait a minute, Pete. Wait a minute, Pete. Number one, I'm going to have to work very hard to get the image of you playing Guitar Hero out of my head. But number two, what you are what you are talking about is flying directly in the face of what liberal educators across the country are saying is that we've got to send everybody to college, is that they've got to go to college in order to be successful. And what you are saying is that you are bringing these programs in like car mechanics, electronics, computer programming where they don't have to go to college, but it is still leading them into a career is and that is just as justifiable and just as important as going and maybe even more so than going off to a college for four years. Pete They have.

Pat Bradford: Jobs waiting for them when they graduate. There's so much demand for what we're teaching them.

Pete Wildeboer: The Hendricks group was talking about that they can actually train a technician through their programs if they can get them in there. And, you know, they they have been working through Cape Fear Community College, which is a wonderful place. But they said if we can get them earlier, then we can actually have them go through our programs. And it's free, as he said, it's free.

Pete Wildeboer: It's free. And they come out and they make great money. And it's something my dad was was an auto mechanic all his life. And, boy, I tell you, that was his passion. He loved, loved, loved that. So, you know, that's the thing. It may not be for none of these are for everybody. That's the thing is giving children choices.

Josie Barnhart: Our superintendent really led the charge with that too. I mean I'll be honest is some of these programs and initiatives came into play of him being able to go out and lobby essentially. I mean, for lack of a better word, I know it's not technically political terms, but being able to continue to build those relationships is really important. And to have people who are going to continue to build those relationships is what's going to translate into opportunities for our kids.

Reuel Sample: Mike Rowe, who we probably all remember from Dirty Jobs, he also runs a foundation called MikeRowWorks, and he's all about the trades. He's all about this career development. One of the things he said is that you can't digitize water. So so you always, as Jose said, you don't know your mechanics. So but you bring your car to

the mechanics who have been trained by on the job training or vocational training, and they're turning the wrenches and and fitting the pipes together and they're contributing to society probably a lot more than somebody who graduates with a BA in some kind of history.

Pat Bradford: And so the tires off a stock car.

Reuel Sample: That's right.

Pat Bradford: It was amazing. Right. You know, to see them use the equipment and so on. It was it was just it was one of the best days.

Reuel Sample: Pat, I'm going to throw something to you. This is from Maya Angelou. She says that any book that helps a child to form a habit of reading, to make reading one of his deep and continuing needs is good for him. I passed that on to you because I want you to talk about your Reading Buddies program.

Pat Bradford: With academics being our number one strategic plan goal. We've created a reading program for first graders called Reading Buddies. It's pretty simple. We have 1900 first graders, so we need 1900 people. They've already got some to volunteer and it's 30 minutes a week to read to a first grader. We have 15 elementary schools. So here's the action call. Pick an elementary school either near where you live or where you work. Wherever you drive by, you know that's convenient for you. Call up or go in and say, Hey, I want to volunteer to be one of these reading buddies. Where do I sign up? And you'll have to fill out something and there'll be a little you know, you're not going to they're not going to fingerprint you, but you're definitely going to have to have some some check out there and spend 30 minutes a week reading to a first grader. And, you know, I was one of those kids that had a pretty tough childhood. And I read a lot. And that were some of my some of my thinking about this this this topic come from that because my parents had a very large bookcase and I read everything on that bookcase. Some of it was inappropriate for me at my age and it caused me some problems. But you can especially a child who's poor or maybe there's some things going on in the home that aren't great in that book. Those kids can travel around the world, so it's very important for a child to learn, to read, to enjoy reading, to get excited about reading. And here's an opportunity for everybody in the GOP to step up. And if you don't

want kids reading woke indoctrination stuff, go down there and read them. They have the books picked out. They're all just simple, sweet, adorable books. And you can make a difference in one kid's life. And if you've done that, it's you've lived a good life.

Reuel Sample: Is this a one on one or is it a one person to a group? So you're sitting down with a child first grader and just read. I'll tell you what, all of us are parents and Pete, Josie, Pat, you've probably all read to your kids. As I read to my kids, it changes their life, doesn't it? And it actually bonds you to to who they are.

Josie Barnhart: Yeah. And I signed up to be a part of it. So you can, as a board member can do it, too. I mean, and it's really just one of those things and there's a way to do it online, too. So 30 minutes, 30 minutes a week.

Reuel Sample: So take a break from playing Guitar Hero and go and go read read with a first grader. Josie, one thing that you're happy about that your guys are working on, on the Board of Education.

Josie Barnhart: I am ready for the budget to pass because one of the things that we're.

Reuel Sample: We're talking the state. We're talking the state budget.

Josie Barnhart: The state budget. Yes. Our state budget to pass. One of the things that I actually had the opportunity, Miss Bradford and I were networking with Representative Miller, and we had somebody from the Speaker Moore's office, and we were discussing workforce development and we were discussing opportunities for our students. And so back in December, I mean, we were newbies on the board maybe a few weeks in we had sat down and we were discussing how the chamber had a pilot program with our seventh graders, and at the time, 47th graders had the opportunity to explore eight of the top areas, industries here in Wilmington. And so we said, wouldn't it be great? And, you know, we were just talking and just real passive. Wouldn't it be great to give seventh graders all that opportunity? And so this year we now have 100 students in that program. That program is growing, and that's through a partnership with the chamber. So they pay for it out of their non profit. Well, in the budget, in the draft budget, there is actually an expansion of that for to the tune of close to \$3 million. And what that does, it allows for every single seventh grader to have the opportunity of

hands on career exposure. That's over 1700 students. And so that is something that I'm very hopeful and grateful for to come to fruition. Representative Miller was the one to really help get this across the finish line. We knew that my future NC had a goal of 2 million employment by 2030.

Josie Barnhart: And so, you know, all I know all three of us have have put in a good word along the way, but we have the opportunity to have a networking event in Raleigh a few months ago and really just sit down and kind of hash out details about what it looks like, how could other counties do this and things. And so to really have that investment on us about some of the things that we're already doing is encouragement. It's encouragement for me in many ways, because when you're talking about advocating for kids or to, you know, have different changes in policy or curriculum, what you're looking at is proven track record. And so when you're looking at the different things that you can support and rally behind, you're working with people in all the different sectors of local and state level. And I think that's really important to get things done effectively for our students. And so I will continue. I know me and the chairman talked about an opportunity we're going to bring to the table in October, so I'm going to leave you hanging on that. You'll have to watch your board meeting for that. But really to network within our community and continue to build those relationships with board members and community members and multiple boards across our institution because. That's how we're going to be the most effective to be the positive change for our students. And so I'm looking forward to that.

Reuel Sample: If you listen to Nick Craig in the morning, the host of Wilmington's Morning News, probably the best broadcast after this one for getting news and views out. Nick talked about the the budget draft that was dropped last night in the middle of the football game. And it does have a lot of of budgeted items for education, including a accelerated pay increase schedule for first time teachers and for new teachers. So it should be very and just like everybody else, we encourage our GOP voice up at Raleigh to get that thing passed. And so keep working on it. Pat, what what's what's exciting you today?

Pat Bradford: We had we had a really good day today in our policy committee meeting. We had we had like this many policies to get through very healthy number of policies to be reviewed and either moved forward or kept in policy. Some some some stuff that

we've been trying to get done. And the meeting went very smoothly. There were no arguments, there was no division. It was absolutely heavenly. Um, the only two committee members that were present were like minded. And so it was, it was a breath of fresh air. There's like a there's like a momentum that started the staff feel it. You can see it in the teachers. You could see it today in the kids. We could see it at Spark Lab last week. People are excited in the school district and it's a positive thing. It's like we've turned a corner and it's very exciting and we're you know, we are the people you're looking at right here. We are committed to the things that we said that we wanted to see done and the opportunities. We don't speak to anyone anywhere that they don't want to help. And they say, what can I do to help? It's just been an exciting thing for us to participate in because there is a lot of negative this is a hard job and we get a lot of criticism on, you know, the 5% on this side, the 5% on this side. And but today was one of those days that it was really fun to be a school board member.

Reuel Sample: Ronald Reagan, when he was running his campaign, said that it's morning in America and what it sounds like it's morning in New Hanover County. Pete, what's going what's going on with you? What are you what what are you working on?

Pete Wildeboer: Well, I've been out of schools a lot lately. And I just got to tell you, number one, we talked about all the great things in academics, but, you know, we still have some schools that need to be moved. And there's been some very strategic moves. We have our two lowest performing schools. We've moved two, you know, rock star principals into those schools, one that was in this county and turned a school around and one from another county. So I'm excited to see them growing stop by several times and I will continue to do that. But it's been great going in and out of schools, seeing some real positive things, you know, and people have come up and said, Hey, I got a concern about this. I walked around one school the other day and boy, I tell you, I'm not going to ever do this. But I would you know, you could eat off their floors. It was such you know, it just sparkling, you know, So there's just a lot of great things going on, a lot of smiling faces. You know, at the beginning of the school year. This this year has started out very, very well. I want to a huge shout out to all the schools and all the principals and all the teachers and teacher assistants. I just saw a list of, I think, 7 or 8 schools that their cafeterias have 100%, you know, fantastic. I mean, there's a lot of great and I'm pleased to understand, I'm not saying everything's perfect and we're going to sit back on our laurels.

Pete Wildeboer: No, we're going to continue to keep doing what we're doing, keep improving, you know, looking at new, new and better ways to do things. Have those conversations, those those easy conversations, those tough conversations. But overall, I think things are going very, very well. Again, a huge shout out to to all the faculties, the bus drivers, to everyone for, you know, starting the school year out very, very positively. And I just want to thank thank those folks. The kids are back. They're excited doing what they're supposed to be doing. You know, 99.9% of the time, which is great learning and that's what it's all about. So thanks to everyone. Thanks to the parents. You know, I know we still have some schools that have you know, we can't it's hard to get the kids into school, but that's because we have, you know, a very, very big campuses in some places. But you know, again, trying to improve know there's nobody that says we're 100%. You know, we still have, you know, some low performing schools. So we need to continue to keep working. But that's some great things are happening. And a lot of things, as I've said before, that we need to celebrate. So thank you to everybody. Thank you to the parents and to all the educators and to the students for sure. To my fellow board members for all their hard work. You know, I think the ship is going in the right direction, but we need to keep it going.