

Ludington Superintendent Candidate Interviews

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The following is the transcribed questions and answers from interviews conducted on March 18 and 19 by the Ludington Area School District Board of Trustees.

The school board will meet on April 21 for a meet and greet and final interviews, according to the school district. This transcript includes responses from 3 candidates, Travis Walker, superintendent of Brandywine Community Schools, and Jonathan Wennstrom, principal at Riley Upper Elementary School in Livonia Public Schools. These are the two candidates moving forward. The responses from the third interview with Frank Marietta, assistant principal at Ludington High is included in this document but appears at the end of this transcript.

Q) Bret Autrey: What do you believe are the most immediate challenges that we face as the district here?

Travis Walker:

“ Um I feel like I know quite a bit about the district. You know I’ve been watching this position for a couple of years now. And you know, I’ve been following some of what you’ve been through going back to this fall. I’ve had the opportunity on several occasions to speak with Mrs. Marshall. Several times I’ve spoken with Mr. Hart. I’ve had the opportunity to speak with several teachers, community members, business owners. So I feel like I have a good picture of what’s going on here and one of the things in speaking with, not just Mr. Stow but Mrs. Marshall and several others, is even during the difficult times, the last couple years, kids have been unaffected and that speaks volumes to your staff, your teachers, to the community that when you’re going through hard times, people still come in and they do the right thing by kids. Um that tells me that there’s all kinds of potential here that you’re already doing great things and there’s potential for even more wonderful things to happen. Um as far as challenges, I think it’s been echoed time and time again in the people that I’ve spoken with, rebuilding that culture. And it sounds like Mrs. Marshall has already started that and that this next person will have the opportunity to pick that, pick up what she has done, pick up from where she left off and continue some of what she’s done that she’s already building that back. But really, building up the climate, making sure that staff morale is high, building a positive culture. I think that those are going to be the most immediate challenges. From what I hear from community members, from some parents. I think restoring some trust in the school system, and repairing relationships with

them as well, being transparent. And then obviously monitoring the financials and setting yourself up for success in future negotiations with all the unions.”

Jonathan Wennstrom:

“I know quite a bit about this district. You have a lot to be proud of. I see the high school is ranked in the top 7 percent in the U.S. News and World Report for high schools. Ludington, of course, is listed in USA Today as Best Historic Town. As far as the district, I know that like Livonia where I’m working right now, you have professional learning communities with your staff where teams get together and collaborate. I have the same exact model at my building and throughout our district, giving our staff the opportunity to collaborate with one another, and grade scores with common assessments and interventions that fit each child’s need. I know your strategic plan focuses on the areas of student achievement, which it should. It’s number one, communication, finance facilities and also learning environment. What I know about Ludington right now is there’s been a fracture of trust, and from what I read, people I’ve talked with and knowing the community and coming back, right now I feel the greatest need is probably the restoration of trust and bringing that community back together. And that is something I would make my first effort.”

Q) Steve Carlson: So if you would mind just describing your general, typical Style of Leading and then maybe can you give us an example or two when you’ve had to vary from that style?

Walker:

“ You know as a leader, you have to be adaptive and flexible. There is no one size fits all model. You know, what I did that worked as a principal of Constantine may not have worked in Brandywine, and what I do there might not work here in Ludington. So you have to be adaptive. You have to be flexible. You have to meet the needs of the community that you’re leading and that you’re serving. Um you know, Jimmy Costas would say ‘what we model is what we get.’ So if I could, if I had my choice, I think I would strictly, I would love to be able to lead just by modeling right? And if everybody reflected that that’s great, but at the same time, there are times where we also have to be firm. Not everybody responds to the modeling of the behaviors that you expect. And so then we have to be firm, we have to set the expectations. We have to make sure that you know while we are good listeners, that we are empathetic, that we see not just to here to respond but we listen to understand, that at the same time, we have our expectations and we hold people accountable to that. And it’s tough because there’s such a human element to this job. You develop those relationships and people grow close. And it is challenging. When you have to, but you have to adapt and you have to hold people accountable then right? And then you have to become more firm in certain situations. Again it sounds like there are wonderful people doing wonderful things here. Schools everywhere are filled with good people with good intentions. And it you know, I would love to be able to walk in and just continue to model what it is that we expect from our staff but when needed, I can step away from that and also be firm but fair.”

Wennstrom:

“My style is collaborative and I’ve worked in several districts, many buildings and I believe any

person that has worked with me would tell you the same, I have a collaborative style of leadership with strong communication skills. I listen, I connect with people and I want to work together with people with a shared vision. I believe in empowering staff so that we're all working together for the same goal. I usually start with when I'm coming into a new building or new district, I call it my listening campaign, coming in and trying to find out what are people proud of, what are the traditions they don't want to let go, what are their hopes and dreams, so I would want to do that coming into this role as well with all stakeholders from the school board to our administrative team to our school leadership team and the community as well, of listening to people. What's important and where do we want to go? Yes there's times when it needs to be more directive as opposed to collaborative. Those are often in a time of crisis or time of direct need. Sometimes it does need to be more directive. I'm clear with my teams of making sure we know when we're going to collaborate, get all their ideas and look for ways forward together, or when something that needs to be done (that might be financial emergency, that might be something safety related, or something) when it does need to be more directive. I think communication is key in making sure we are clear of where we are going and that being said, the vast majority of my leadership style is collaborative."

Q) Mike Nagle: Would you describe your experience with budget development and financial management?

Walker:

" Yeah so you know first of all, obviously what happened this fall, the superintendent, all everything's going to come back to the superintendent, whether it's the finances, whether it's a student related issue, a staff related issue, everything is going to come back and point at the superintendent. So you got to be well versed in that. At the same time, you know, you need to lean on your professional in your district. So your CFO, you business manager, whoever that person is and speaking with Mrs. Marshall, it sounds like you guys are close to securing somebody and that's wonderful to hear. But making sure that you are well versed in the school of finances that you have those internal controls and that you have those processes to help that person be successful, and that you collaborate and that you work together is essential in terms of my experience with finances and educational finance in general. Educational finance is a difficult one because even people that come from the private sector, it doesn't necessarily translate. There are so many nuances to schools that you don't see elsewhere. So when we look at budgets, obviously, as an educational institution, we need to invest on what impacts kids the most. And we know what impacts kids the most is people. And it's not just the teachers, it's the parent professionals. You have to invest in people. People have the greatest impact on kids and the greatest impact on education. And again that's your paraprofessionals, your secretaries, your administrators, your custodian, and your maintenance workers who keep the buildings clean and keep the buildings up and functioning. So making sure that we manage our fund balance, that we have money set aside that we can negotiate with, that we can record and retain good teachers through competitive wages. Um you know other components to school finance. Obviously knowing your categoricals and knowing how to use them effectively so that you can focus the general fund on those areas where you can't spend the category where you

can't spend 31A funds, where you can't spend your title funds. Um you know they're hot topics right now, Fewer, fewer are passing just in the last five years from where we're five years ago. But when we talk about bonds and sinking funds, knowing, knowing what your debt levy is, knowing when you're going to have mills falling off, you know, I know at Brandywine right now, we have a long term map of what this looks like. In 2030 we will have debt falling off, we'll be able to go for another school improvement bond without raising raising those mills. In 2032 we will have an operating mill expiring, and in 2035 our sinking fund will be expiring, so knowing the right times to be able to go to the community and ask for their support without increasing tax, tax rates, without asking for more money than what they're already contributing. You know, speaking of the operating millage, making sure that you're not affected by Hedley rollback, you know, statutorily, we can only Levy 18 Mills for operating millages. And here's the thing that people don't always understand that aren't in education. Without that 18 Mills, you don't get what they say you get, you're not getting that full foundation allowance. And, you know, I know here, we're out of formula, but, but not by much. I think I looked at your State Aid Foundation or your your financial status, State Aid Report, status report. And I think the per pupil funding here is about 10,008 75 the State Foundation allowance right now is, is 10,050 so there's not much of a buffer there. But making sure that you're not subject to the heavy rollbacks they continue to levy those bills is really important. Our last operating Mills, we passed it. Obviously we can only Levy 18. We passed it for 21 we should be good for some time. And then, if that is, you know, maybe that's not expiring for another three years, but once you start to see that Headley rollback, making sure that you're prepared and ready to go to the community. Maintenance, I don't think I touched on this one yet, but maintenance of your buildings, the largest expense of any school district is your personnel. Second largest buildings, doing a facilities assessment, knowing having that long term projection of when you're going to need new boilers, of when you're going to need repairs on the roof, and having that idea of where that funding is going to come from. And I know that you have a small sinking fund right now. Think it was around point three Mills, maybe I saw, but having a long term plan so that you don't get impacted all at once, which then will have an impact on your negotiations with your personnel for the next three to six years is maybe you try and have to recover from those large expenses, if you haven't planned that out. It's you know, my cousin is very financial savvy and as we were talking about the situation that you were going through, he just asked, how does that happen? And there are so many components to school finance that, I think again, even private sector people that are in finance, they just don't understand. So you've got to use your resources. You've got to make sure that your internal people, that they have supports, and that you're, you know, overseeing their work, that you're monitoring that, and that those systems are set up for that. One thing I want to touch on really quick, and I know we probably need to get to the next one for the sake of time, budgeting creatively too, looking at what's not there. When I was principal in Constantine at the end of my first year, our superintendent tasked the principals, four principals, four buildings, with eliminating \$500,000 from the school's budget. He told me that 300,000 of that had to come from the high school. So, you know, one quarter of the school was responsible for 60% of the budget cuts that year. I couldn't just look at what was in front of us. I had to look it wasn't there, and we were able to work on some things and do some creative new things that reduce our budget by 300,000 and it didn't negatively impact kids or adults.

Wennstrom:

“In addition to working with the school budget, which I’ve worked with many school budgets, I’ve also worked at the state level, the national level and in Rotary, which I forgot to mention also. I’ve been a proud Rotarian for 15 years serving in both Cadillac and Ludington and was president three years ago, but in all of those areas we work with budget, and I’ve worked closely with my current district’s financial officer. In all cases, the \$200,000,000, \$215,000,000 budget in Livonia Public Schools or all budgets I’ve worked with is really regular communication, sharing out. That might look like quarterly reports, that might look like meetings, like in this case, with the financial officer and the board and superintendent making sure that we know what’s happening, where money is going and also assuring our money is always aligned to our priorities. And in this case, our number one area on a strategic, is student achievement. So if our money lines up with our priorities, if there’s transparency and accountability, regular reporting, we’ll be doing well. I believe teachers need to be fairly compensated and well respected for the professionals they are, but we also need to balance with financial stability.”

Q) Sarah Lowman: Tell us about a time that you disagreed with the stakeholder’s view on an issue that still showed empathy and understanding to come to a resolution that was workable?

Walker:

“ People like to disagree with you, so anyway. I mean you know, it’s happened over and over again. I’m trying to think of a specific situation. So we had a parent who was frustrated, um, felt like their child was being bullied and nothing was being done about it, um wanted the student wanted the other student suspended wanted them removed from school. Obviously we can’t tell parents what we’re doing with other children with other parents’ kids with children that are not their own. But still you know, I wasn’t just going to say it’s being handled right? I wanted to let them know that, yes, this other student, they were aware of what they’ve done. So maybe this isn’t necessarily acceptable, and yes there might be consequences, but I had to let them know this is not bullying right? Bullying is we say zero tolerance, bullying is very severe. This child was not coming to school to target any one student to make them feel worse about themselves, trying to harm them physically or mentally. And I’m just, we have those honest conversations that you know, here’s our definition of bullying and in this situation, it’s not that, you know, I can’t share what the consequences will be, but we can help brainstorm some ideas that can help prevent this. One of the things that I was asking my principal for, so this really helped it was nice, was I had been asking them to get more parents involved. And maybe you’re familiar with like a watchdog program. It’s I’ve heard it involved dads of great students or dads of great schoolers. But you know and it doesn’t have to be dads. Let’s get parents in the building, lets get them in at lunch, help them supervise the cafeteria and then help them supervise the playground. Let’s surround our kids with positive role models. We don’t need to rely on just you know, one lunchroom supervisor and then our 4 teachers at recess outside at lunchtime. Let’s create opportunities for parents to come in, be good role models, to, you know, when we see a police officer we slow down right? Put more adults out there and let’s curb what you think is the bullying. You know what I’m going to disagree with you and that it was bullying, but it is an issue we needed to address and let’s address it together and they liked that. And they said, yeah we’ll

help recruit right? We'll go out and we'll get these parents and we'll get them to come in. We've had some come in, we, you know, the ones who, of course were I think the loudest about it um said they didn't have the time, but yes, we have made some headways there this year with that."

Wennstrom:

"Unfortunately I've had many times where there's been a disagreement on perhaps a way we are moving forward, and as a building principal for years, sometimes that also includes disciplinary action and so I'm okay with disagreement. I'm okay with varying points of view. My process has always been starting with that common ground, and our common ground working in education is always the student. So, regardless of the disagreement or issue that's going on, if we can start with that base. So that is how I have in the past many times sat down with parents or stakeholders and we'll talk about what is our goal and that is a success most of the time. A parent has a different lens. Their lens is their child, as it should be. So again, balancing doing what's right for students, making sure each is successful but sometimes there's going to be decisions that are made that not everyone will agree with. I don't ask that everyone agree with everything I do, but what I do want to make sure is that everyone understands why, how I came to that decision and how it's working towards the success of all of our students. Disagreement's okay, but in a respectful way."

Q) Alan Neushwander: What are the key practices needed to establish and maintain a good working relationship with and among the school board?

Walker:

"A number of key practices and um walking in new um. You know I'm gonna go to first. Let's assume that you're not all in this position. I think it starts with the onboarding as we get new board members. And now in this case, I think that process probably happens with this whole team, maybe, having a governance workshop, you know, clearly identifying our roles. Open and honest communication, transparency is absolutely essential. Nobody here wants to get blindsided. If there's something I know about that I think is going to elevate to your level, I want you to be in the know and I would ask the same thing of you. It's not fun when you have to respond to that angry parent or that angry staff member and it was something that I could have made you aware of. So at least you were equipped for that conversation. One of the things that I do with our staff, with our board, excuse me, we have a quarterly meet. So we just sit down with breakfast, lunch, dinner, I come to them. We meet around whatever you know, I've got one board member now who she's an administrator in another district where we're on the Indiana border so she's in Indiana so I will go to see her at lunchtime and just talk about what's going on in the school, but just talk about life, getting to know each other better. Being able to have professional conversations where we do challenge each other right? We talk so much behind the scenes one on one. Communication with my board president and all board members that I know sometimes schools or school boards get accused of being a rubber stamp board, but my goal is for you to walk into every meeting so equipped with information that not a lot of discussion has to occur, but the public needs to see that discussion. So you know one of the things I've encouraged our board is those questions that you're asking me and email that you're

responding to my board notes with that you're calling me with. Ask those at the meeting so that everybody can see those questions being asked, that they know that you are involved, that you take this role seriously, and that it's not just, you're not just, you know, giving me carte blanche rule over everything that's going on, that you are holding me accountable as well. I think the optics of that for both you and I help develop positive relationships as well. You know and uh, maybe governance retreats, you know, active strategic planning together. All of those are key practices of that working relationship with between the board and the superintendent and really acting as a governance team of eight."

Wennstrom:

"I think communication, number one. I think transparency. I want to be clear on direction. I want to know what direction the board is giving and be very clear about it. I want the board to be very clear on how I'm carrying out those directions, so that requires regular communication, I would say routines as well. I would want the board members to know how are we communicating, when we are communicating so there is no guesswork; and you'll hear about something or how that's happening, so I feel, again establishing good communication, a trusting communication, that the board knows if I say something, I'm going to do it, and if I do something, I'm going to say it before then, so we're communicating and establishing those rhythms and really as a partnership of working together to make sure we're reaching those goals and strategic plans in our mission statement of actually carrying that out. So I would say communication, transparency would be essential. And when I spoke with my current superintendent at Livonia Public Schools, when I asked her advice the very first thing she said to the board, she said that has to be your foundation of working so that together you can work with your administrative team, your teachers, your community to serve your students."

Q) Mike Winczewski: How would you go about evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum, assessments, and teaching methods?

Walker:

"Again I'm gonna have to be adaptive and flexible on something like this. A lot like finances, leaning on your curriculum director and leaning on the administrators that are overseeing that on the day to day. You know, I have my own ideas of what the ideal classroom looks like to me. But I'm here to lead the work that the staff in this community values. So obviously data you know, student achievement data is one piece of that but that doesn't tell the entire picture, getting in and being in the classrooms, being present, you know, one of the things that we do to evaluate what we're doing in Brandywine, we have what we call the teaching and learning council. It was formerly the curriculum council. When I started there as principal, I noticed that we were gathering quarterly answer were just talking curriculum. And for the kindergarten teachers to adopt a new ELA curriculum, you had to have the department heads from the high school there to approve it. And it just didn't make a lot of sense to me, and I didn't feel like it was a good use of everybody's time. So when I became superintendent, we continued what we were doing but we transformed it into the teaching and learning council. And so we do talk about evaluating our teaching methods. We talk about you know, how is student engagement in the district? You know what do we want to do? What's our belief system in terms of homework in this district? And homework practices, assessment practices. You know how are we going to

integrate artificial intelligence into teaching and learning at Brandywine. And part of it too is involving those teachers. So right now we are in a curriculum adoption for a new math curriculum. So our math teachers, that was something that was of concern. Our scores show that. I'm not gonna hide that. You know as a math teacher that hurt me very much so. But you know, we knew that our teachers, they said they needed more support. So we received qualitative feedback. When we look at our academic scores, we know that we need a better curriculum. We have good teachers, but especially at the elementary level where you're teaching 4 core subjects and you might only have official training, and my wife has an elementary degree, but she only has, you know, collegiate level training in ELA. Our elementary teachers needed more support, more resources in terms of math. The score showed it, and so now this year we are piloting 4 different curriculums, K10 and we're collecting that feedback on that, and we're continuing to monitor that. We're getting that teacher feedback. We're looking at the student scores and how it's impacting our students. And at the end of this year, we'll be ready to recommend a new math curriculum to the Board of Education for official adoption."

Wennstrom:

"Well first and foremost, getting to know the processes that are in place. I'm not a quick-to-change person. I want to first learn about what's happening, what's going well, so my first step would be working with the curriculum director on finding out the processes that are already in place. And again, just looking through the website, I see the professional learning communities that are already in place that are solid. I also would be looking at the data, again, which I've looked at. I saw that the elementary students were in the 99th percentile in the NWEA testing in math. That tells me there are systems in place already that are effective. But with any system I feel it's continuous course monitoring. I feel teachers getting together for collaboration, administrators getting together and then looking at data, saying, 'Is what we're doing effective? Does it need to be tweaked? And what can we do to make sure we're getting the results we want.' What I found as a building administrator is that it is an ongoing process. Years ago, I would say a decade ago, I used to do what I call data dives, where we would look at all of our data at the end of the year and make plans for the following year. I scrapped that model a decade ago and now it's ongoing where we do quarterly data dives as I call them, looking through our testing data and saying, 'Where are our strengths, where are our weaknesses and with having professional learning communities in place which I also have as well I have found that process is even more streamlined because teachers are regularly, weekly meeting and saying they are looking at data, they are making sure assessments are common, so that really helps us narrow it down. I've had specific achievements with my team, and again teachers doing this, me overseeing and helping facilitate, but we do see our economically disadvantage gap. We went from almost 26 percent to 14 percent in about three and a half years. I attribute that to systems in place, teachers looking at data and having consistent models they can collaborate on."

Q) Stephanie Reed: How would you invest time and engage with the community to ensure that your work aligns with the overall values of our schools and communities?

Walker:

" So I think you know looking, yeah because if you went through a similar process as to what

we did in Brandywine, a big part of that is getting the parent feedback, is getting the staff feedback, is getting the community feedback. What is the direction? Like what's the next wave of education at Ludington Schools? So being able to review that, if that data was collected, and see what that says. One of the things that I do is uh, I have coffee and collaboration where I meet quarterly with community members and this is open to anybody. This is open to the community, to parents, to staff. It's typically parents and community members. Sometimes the staff joins, have a specific coffee and conversation for them, but we do a coffee and collaboration, and that is one, a time for me to share all the wonderful things that our staff are doing with the community, but then to receive their feedback, to hear what they're concerns are in all aspects of education and Brandywine. And that's something I enjoy a lot. Sometimes those are a half hour to 45 minutes. The last one that we had was an hour and a half, almost 2 hours. I ended up missing my son's game because of it, but it was a great conversation, and I walked away, I learned a lot from that one. I think that's one thing that I would do. Again, finding out from the community how do they want to communicate with me? Is that their avenue for doing that? Or are there other forms that we need to set up? Being present, being approachable is so much a part of this, just daily interactions, to not even have anything formal, but to you know that they can come to you, that they can share their concerns, showing that you have heard them is absolutely important that you've heard their voices, that you understand where they're coming from, and then showing them how you're balancing all the thoughts that you're getting because we have, we get a lot of different perspectives that come to us. Everybody has a different set of priorities. But making sure that people feel heard that they have a voice. And you know we can't meet everybody's wish, but we need to be able to justify when we don't right? Why we're doing what we're doing. As long as you stay in that communication with them, and you can defend your beliefs, they're usually pretty accepting of that."

Wennstrom:

"I am eager. I feel that being a superintendent is more than a job, it's a lifestyle. And that includes not only meeting in the buildings in the district but participating in being out in the community whether it's attending the extracurricular events, serving in the community, I want to continue serving in rotary or whatever is available, and connecting with our community members. Our community just approved a \$100 billion dollar bond, it's been about 1019, 2020, but that shows the community is invested in our school and I feel we need to make that same investment for our community and I believe the superintendent really needs to do that. Again, I've been blessed with having some good role models of superintendents who live it and that's what I want to do, being there to support all of our aspects of school, academics and beyond and be physical in the community, and listening. I want to be accessible and visible."

Q) Autrey: How do you communicate your expectations to employees and how do you deal with employees who do not meet your expectations? Please provide an example.

Walker:

"I'm gonna go back to the question about you know my leadership style, and it's by modeling it right? It is by my interactions with staff and with students. My interactions are I hope will be reflected in our staff and in our students and in our community. So that's where I start is with modeling expectations myself. The standards that I have for others, I hold myself to a higher

standard always. As far as communicating expectations it depends. Everything in education is so situational right? So expectations, sometimes it's at the start of the year, through year back to school, staff gatherings, professional development. Sometimes it is email communications and one of the things I've learned, we do a lot with coach leadership styles, and I believe very much in them. And you're uh coach personality types. And one of the things that I learned about myself through that process is you don't always, you don't have to tell me why. If the board asked something of me, when my superintendent, vice principal would ask something to me, I might disagree and I'll let them know. And I'll present another point of view, but if you tell me that this is what we're doing, I don't need to know why. I'm gonna do it. But a lot of people they need to know why. You know, look at Simon Sinek and the Golden Circle. People don't buy what you do. They buy why you do it. So I think in our communications, why is always a very important part of that. One of the things that I've talked with our central office staff about a lot is some of our frustrations when people don't do what they're supposed to. We think everybody knows this, but they don't right. We deal with this every day, but a teacher might only do that once every year or two years or three years. They might not know where to go for that information. They they may have forgotten that thing that you told them when they first got hired. They were supposed to do so, just like we do with our PBIS, where you know when we go away for a break, when we go for Christmas break or Spring Break, break when we come back, we reteach kids expectations, and there are certain things that we need to we need to just give staff reminders about from the central office standpoint, of people need to be reminded of this because they're not doing it on the daily like we are, and it's not that they're intentionally trying to break rules. Sometimes people forget, especially when they don't have that muscle memory. So, so recurring communications, I think, is important as far as communicating, you know, and this one's not specifically your question, but one of the things that you know, I think, is very important is, is personal, authentic communications, and that's whether that's whether that's with staff community, that you're hearing somebody's voice, that we're not making robo calls, that you're seeing somebody you know, like on social media and stuff. And I know that this question is specifically about the staff communications, but something that I think is important part of peace in this when we talk about communications in schools, as far as, what do you do when somebody doesn't meet your expectations? You know, I think first, you need to clarify, are they aware of the expectations? Again, going back to, did they know? Because they're oftentimes, they're not intentionally trying to do something. So you need to see if they were aware of the expectation. You need to, I think, get their understanding of the situation, their perception of what they did. Maybe, maybe they didn't realize. Not only were they not aware of this, but maybe they perceived that they thought they were following the correct expectation, and that it depends right what is the level of expectation that they broke? Is it something severe that that needs a consequence, or is it just a teachable moment? Do we need to remind them? Do we need to coach them up? Is it something we need to reevaluate in how we communicated that information and do it better the next time it's very situational? As far as a specific situation goes, one of the things that we had a lot of issues with was we had coaches who oftentimes were not attending professional development work that occurred on non school days, and we had a lot of coaches who were not always attending parent teacher conferences. That is an important time for our parents. They value that they want to come in. They want to hear about their kids education, and they get very frustrated when somebody is not there to communicate with them.

So knowing that we had issues with coaches being gone with from both professional development and parent teacher conferences, one of the things that I did at the start of your just I said, Here, here's the issue and here's why this is important, right? They they come to you, they are, they are taking time out of their day. They want to hear from you how their children are doing. Here's the why, and here's my expectation. Yes, if we have a competition that night, you absolutely need to be with your team. But if it's a practice, if it's anything else, you need to have assistance in place. You need to reschedule whatever, because you need to be present for this. I mean, this is contractual time. We had a we had a teacher come to me, and it wasn't even coaching, it was it was actually they, they were going to officiate. They came to me the day before parent teacher conferences, and this is going back to when I was a principal, and they said, I'm not going to be here tomorrow. Just wanted to give you a heads up, thank you, and started to walk away. Wait a minute, you know, we made a point of this This year we talked about this. The expectation is that you will be there. This is important time for our families. You are not doing anything affiliated with our school system. You need to be present at parent teacher conferences tomorrow. That is the expectation. And if there, if you are not there, we will need to follow up. This happened to be at at the time the staff member happened to be my Board President's son, you know, and I'm not going to shy away from that, right. Everybody's going to be held to the same expectation. Fortunately, they found somebody to officiate for them.”

Wennstrom:

“I think it starts with being very clear about expectations. I don't feel we can hold people accountable if expectations haven't been clear. So I think it starts with clear goals, clear expectations. And after that, there's support and accountability. So accountability would look like regular check-ins, progress monitoring. How are we doing? I do not blend accountability with micromanagement. I feel strongly in empowering teams, but administrators and teachers with a clear vision to work together. At the same time I want to be giving support. I want to be there to model if necessary, to provide training if necessary, and offer support. All of that being said, if something is not happening, I'm going to go back to 'clear is kind,' of saying this is the expectation and depending on what it is, there could be a variety of supports needed. Support might just be a person who doesn't know how to do it or needs help with it. A scenario where a person maybe is saying, 'No, I don't want to do that,' what I would do is I use what we call an FBI method. I use this when I'm mentoring principals across the state, where they describe the situation, the behavior that's happening and most importantly the impact. In a case where somebody, and I have had cases before, where I had a staff member (this is a long time ago) who was violating our confidentiality protocols with a special needs student and it had been reported was making some disparaging remarks. I had spoke with that person, described the situation, the behavior that was reported and most importantly the impact that it had. In this case, the impact was it was ruining our climate and culture in our building. After the conversation, things did improve, not only with that staff member but with our culture, and what I found was when those difficult conversations (that I call them) happen, most times staff are cheering on silently, because people want to work in a place where we are working together. I believe what we permit we promote, and I want to promote our very best with our team and our staff.”

Q) Steve Carlson: So in the district there's about 20 administrative leaders. How would you go around if you were to get the job and understand what their strengths are? How would you learn other ideas of development or and how would you coach them?

Walker:

“Learn what their strengths are and coach them. Determine what areas need improvement and how to take the net resolve that use it to coach you. As far as learning what their strengths and identifying areas of improvement, number one being present, observing them. You get a great sense of a leader's skills when you just walk in the building and being present and seeing the environment, speaking with staff and getting to know them through my onboarding process. Hopefully there'll be the opportunity to do this again in a couple of weeks and part of that typically is that 90 day plan, you know, sitting down and getting to know the administrators, and just having that honest conversation about what do you need from me? You know what kind of support, what leadership, what expectations do you have of me? And you know, I'm going to share with them I you know, what my strengths are and what my growth edges are and how they can help me and start that conversation and then allow them to do the same, you know, what are their growth edges? What is the leadership that they're looking for in this role? As far as, you know, identifying, and I will say too, the evaluation model, the new evaluation model in Michigan for administrators, I love it because it requires us to go and do classroom observations with our principles. I mean, that is part of their evaluation and how they are meeting their plans for our district's continuous improvement. As far as identifying the improvement, just like identifying those strengths, being present, having conversations with them, that's one way, but I think one of the things that we need to do too is we need to solicit feedback. Just like at the college level, we've all filled out those, of course, surveys on our instructors right? And we should do the same thing. My first year as principal at the end of the first semester, give me some feedback. What am I doing well? What am I not doing well? What do you need more of from me? How can I do better to serve you? And I did the same thing with my first, I started this with my very first superintendent evaluation. I said, 'here's what the board's made to evaluate me on. I have to walk in and do my, I remember what we call it now, because this year I had an off year, but the like the pre-evaluation, the self-assessment. When I had to get my own assessment, I did that based on the administrator feedback that I had received. I gave them the tool. I created a survey and I said this is what the board is going to be evaluating on. I would love your feedback you gave to them. We need to be vulnerable. We need to seek that feedback and create opportunities for staff and students and parents to do that. We partake in the my student voice survey, and part of that is leadership of the buildings and getting that feedback from our community, from our parents, from our staff, from our students, that's for grades 5 through 12. As far as coaching, I'm going to go back to kind of , you might hear me say this a couple of times this evening, but it's situational. It depends, if it is something that I feel that, is a strength of mine that I'm well versed in, you know, that is something that I will coach them on, that I will be present, that you know, will, just like a instructional coaching round will identify what their growth edges are. We'll set up meetings throughout the year to come in and observe it to see how they're working towards it. We'll coach them and we'll continue to evaluate them on that. If it's an area of strength of Mr. Hart, we enlist his help in that you know. I had the opportunity to meet some of your staff this year at the PLC summit, so I'm going to start going to

use names because I had the opportunity, the privilege of having dinner with them one night and you know, if it's Mr. Forsberg's area of expertise, we lean on him. If it's Mr. Marietta's area of expertise we lean on him, and I'm down the line. We also outside, we you know this year, I have been through adaptive schools training a couple of times with Steve Seward, and I absolutely the utmost respect for him, especially in terms of observation and feedback. He's got a company right now that I partnered one of our new principals, I paired her up with one of his coaches. So she has a weekly meeting with him because I felt like, number one, she has to have a mentor this year. We could have just assigned one of our principals in the district but I wanted somebody outside the district who had another perspective that was trained in coaching. So that was, in that case, we turned to him to write that coaching. So it really depends on what administrators needed and how we go about identifying the proper coaching."

Wennstrom:

"I would start by talking with them, asking them. I feel people, educators especially, are pretty honest folks at saying, 'These are our strengths and these are areas we want to grow in,' so I would start by leading with the administrative team in individual meetings and talking with people saying, 'Where do you feel your strength is? What is your passion? What's an area you want to grow in?' We would do this with all staff and then in addition to listening, observing, being present. I am not a person who leads from a distance. I want to be with my team. I'm very visible, so being out in the buildings, working with our administrators, and again, not to micromanage, but to support, be there. I often use the analogy as a principal, 'If I'm not in classrooms, how do I know what is going on?' and I tell teachers all the time when a parent calls up and has a question or concern, I want to be able to say, 'I'm in that room. I know that person. I know what type of things are happening in there. I want the same for our administration team so I can support them as well, too.'"

Q) Mike Nagle: Student and staff, school safety continues to be a major issue of concern in our public schools. Could you tell us what concerns you have around school safety and what actions you've taken at your school to protect your students and staff?

Walker:

"Every day, parents place their most valuable resource, their loved ones in our care. And you know schools are here to educate, but we can't educate them if we can't keep them safe. That is of the utmost priority. And it's scary right? You say it's not going to be you and we saw in Oxford. I mean it really hits home with a lot of people in Michigan. What we've done you know I think it starts with just being proactive and creating a good culture, create a safe environment for kids. One of the, my first year superintendent, we have three buildings at Brandywine. Our middle school, high school, had 2 counselors, and then we had one counselor between the 2 elementaries. We added another counselor so both counselor, both elementary buildings had their own dedicated counselor full-time. We also hired a social worker. We have done some things to put in place like circles in the morning for socially emotional learning, breeding safe spaces, creating environments where kids are learning those character traits to help them do better. So we're trying to, I think be proactive and prevent things from within because we know that in most of these really major situations, a lot of them happen from within the building. So creating the environment where kids are number one, they have caring adults who they are

learning from. And in learning the right thing to do but also that they themselves have systems that they know that they have people that they can go to, present adults, that they can report things to. And then in terms of your other layers of safety we have done a number of things in the last 4 years at Brandywine. We have, and I'm going to try and recall everything that we've done. We have installed night locks in every classroom and every office space. Every gathering space, locker rooms, media centers, each one of those spaces has a night lock. So that is that is the mechanism that you drop into something on the door, prevents the door from being open, even if the door is unlocked. We know that in some of these major, and we'll say here, you know, you hate to even talk about it but in school shooting specifically, a locked door is that barrier you need to keep people safe. Making sure that our doors are locked at all times. It is as you know, it's nothing special, it's nothing fancy, but it's something that we have to do. And it does, it creates an inconvenience as you have students coming in and out of the classrooms, but you know safety is not convenient. We have through a bond, we put secure vestibules in each of our buildings. We implemented the Raptor Safe check once you get to our buildings, you every time anybody comes to our building, they have to either scan a QR code from the Raptor Safe app or they have to present their drivers license and it does an automatic background check and checks you against the sex offender registry..."

Wennstrom:

"Student and staff safety is the highest priority. Without safety, we cannot have effective learning. I take this very seriously and have worked with local law enforcement, first responders and school teams to ensure we have clear, practiced safety protocols. This includes regular safety drills, secure entry points, visitor management systems, and strong communication systems. I also believe strongly in prevention through relationships—students need trusted adults they can go to if they see or hear something concerning. We have worked to build that culture so students feel safe reporting issues. In addition, I support ongoing review and improvement of safety plans, including collaboration with state and local agencies to ensure we are following best practices. Safety is not a one-time effort, it is continuous."

Q) Bret Autrey: What do you believe are the most immediate challenges that we face as the district here?

Frank Marietta:

"Yeah so my job as a superintendent, obviously you guys will govern. I'll make sure that you're informed, make sure that you can set policy and move us in the direction that you want us to go for our kids. But my job as superintendent is gonna be, first and foremost, to build a safe, supportive, and collaborative culture. And if we can build that, and you'll see in my district, my 90 day plan of entry, that supportive collaborative culture, which I believe there's pieces here that we already have, and when you talk about the bigger changes, we've got some work to do there, and it can be done because we've got great people who went in education for all the right reasons. You know my, you know within that plan, you build up, it's called a high reliability school that actually will really couple well with PLC. As a matter of fact, as we go to our PLC institute in the summer as a staff, they will have sessions there on how our next steps could

easily fit with and be very exemplary with the high reliability schools of Robert Marzano. And really just so you know, that challenges the fact that we've got the PLC piece the last 4 or 5 years with some integrity, where that's the driver, that's the engine, and then you've got your high reliability schools which is our framework to be able to support our staff to make sure that we have systems in place. You know you think about an aircraft carrier, the fact that they can't make a mistake. You think about a nuclear power plant, they can't make a mistake. We don't want to make mistakes when we're educating our kids, and it's just one of those systems that gives us those checks and balances plan, do, check, adjust. So I can speak more on that but yeah I think that's the greatest challenge. Yeah again if you so, it's just a safe, supportive, collaborative culture is the step number one."

Q) Steve Carlson: So if you would mind just describing your general, typical style of leading and then maybe can you give us an example or two when you've had to vary from that style?

Marietta:

"Well it's all about relationships and you know, and you know they would call me blue green right there. I've given, you guys that you could take a look at my strengths binder for those of you who can't see it you know, there is that I'm a communicator, that I'm a developer of people. I'm a ranger. Naturally you'll read in there how some people may lean away from something that is challenging, I lean into something and try to finally work out problems, and I'm collaborative with other people on that. As you know it's not about me, this isn't a one-man show. We're a team. And so what's interesting is you know, I'm very blue green in color for those of you who know that one. This one here is, again this is belief it's a communicator, um the arranger the developer, but one of the things you might be thinking about is, do you have the ability to change? Most of us do. And my staff has seen me change. Matter of fact, a little story for you. I'm really grateful for our tech team. We had an SAT test coming up and we had some power outages going out there. They were doing everything they could, they were busting their bottom to try to get that thing to work. And what we need is good data. What you need is good data to govern, right? To be able to govern well you need good data. And they gave me good data. And says 'Hey Frank we need fifteen more minutes', and I said 'True but we don't have fifteen more minutes'. So I can get very read and direct when it comes to an emergency situation. Like a threat of school, or if it comes to something like that, that was high stakes testing, we had hundreds of thousands of dollars on the line for our kids. And so I can be read and direct, but my natural tendency, if you talk to my staff, if you talk to our people, very relational, real personable, approachable. Win others over. There's you know, there's times where people maybe at first glance they're like 'ah I'm not so sure' and then you win them over. It's just kind of who you got, you know, who that person would be. And that's some of me there for you."

Q) Mike Nagle: Would you describe your experience with budget development and financial management?

Marietta:

"I can. So what's really cool is when I look at, um, and this is something I would you know, that I um was thinking about in the beginning as well. When you look at my work, when you look at

each chapter of my life, there's been a theme that's led me to this point. And when I was a youth director in Detroit, I was over at Oxford High School, which is where I did a football internship as well, with Oxford High School, it's where I met my wife. I was in charge of Clarkston High School, this was my whole area. Lake Orion, the pure east, the pure west, Rochester Hills, Rochester High, and even Brandon. And so all those kids from those high schools is a fairly large organization, a non-profit that I was working for. I worked with Oxfords At Risk as well. They only gave me \$15,000. And in that I had to run that little budget and we ended up having and creating revenue where we had over \$80,000 of a pass through rate. So it started there, you know, started small. They gave me a small and we did what we could with it. Then moving on to being the Athletic Director, I had a budget that most high school principals will never see, which is \$300,00. A big part of that is working with our business manager or chief financial officer. Her name is Pam at Fennville. We were on the phone several times a week. There was times that we were, you know, together in her office and we work hand in hand looking at you know, expenditures, budget, you know making sure that if we were going to rob Peter you could pay Paul, it was like legit and legal and you could do that. You can't just move money. You have to make sure that it's in the right line item and in the right category. So there's that. And the thing that I, you know, that I feel like it leans into is, some of the bond work that I've been able to do with 2 different school districts that's also there in my resume, and it has a fact that it was a 10.9 million dollar bond at Ravenna. And then when it comes to Fennville I believe it was 23 million on there. So the idea of a campaign, being a part of that, especially in athletics, was more of an athletic bond than anything. But after you pass the bond, you know, how we spend the money is important as well. You know, those line items tied to that you know with this new building, you can't just put it anywhere you want. And so it was really cool. We were able to do some things with students too, with that as far as you know, we built a whole new media center, and in there they got to choose, we had the vendors put everything out and we got student vote and they got to choose what it was going to look like and so that was really fun. Moving out of that though, you know, some of the things that I've learned and be able to lead is I know that it's about revenue and our per-pupil funding. We, it's very important moving forward here at Ludington Schools that we have our 3 and 5 year projections. That we are able to forecast because what we're trying to do with our budgets, we're trying to protect our instruction core. We're trying to align our staff and then maintain our programs. And so when it comes to building that budget, if some of the work we've done right with our interim and with Kathleen as well, you know, going through line items of which, where we may need some money. And you know for example, if Mr. LeDuke's class needed some new equipment, we have to make sure that we're speaking that to Kathleen to see if we can actually do that. And how we'll make that happen. But again it's all about protection uh protecting instruction core, it's about having those checks and balances. You know, there's an accounting blog too about that we have to have certain timelines that we have to keep. I will be working diligently and closely with our new business manager to make sure that we're doing those and having those checks and balances. And then those either might be two weeks to a month, making sure that we're transparent and making sure that you guys have those reports that you can see them in front of in our in our in our people can too, when they come to our board meeting, they can see those. If you want to be Quarterly, we do quarterly, if you want to do monthly, but the idea is to make sure that we stay on target, because if you get a little bit behind and you miss, it doesn't take long, and now you're too far behind, you

can't catch up. And I've had that happen in two other districts or one other district I've been in, and it's a real thing. And so it's something where we have to what you need to know about me is, yeah, I don't know it all right, but what I do know is I know the right people, whether it comes to Mesa or Michigan. You know Association of Business Officials, our MSBO, even, even the school board, MASB. You know that will I got the right acronym there in my head? There's so many acronyms for us. But anyways, it's about not being afraid to make a phone call if you don't know, and I can just see the our new business manager or myself saying, hey, you know what? I'm not sure about that, let's call Jason Helsing over at MASB or MSBO, and let's make sure we know what we're doing and where we're going next."

Q) Sarah Lowman: Tell us about a time that you disagreed with a stakeholder's view on an issue that still showed empathy and understanding to come to a resolution that was workable?

Marietta:

" It's really good. Give me a second to think. I want to circle back to just one more thing that I didn't say, and that is that what I need you to know is that I'm not afraid of a budget, not afraid of looking at numbers. I've been doing for a long time. Going back to the stakeholder piece, you're saying that there's something that we disagreed upon?"

'Would you like me to repeat?'

Yeah,

'tell us about a time that you disagreed with a stakeholder, stakeholders view, on an issue, but still showed empathy and understanding to come to a resolution that was workable'

I'm gonna take a second to look at some things I was hoping to hit, what's a time to disagree with a stakeholder. Yeah I might have to come back to you on that one, it's not jumping out of my mind right now"

Answer:

"So yeah just you know, I got one that I got brought into, and that happens sometimes. I got tapped, you know, by the superintendent to help. A couple of their people weren't available that day, and I believe he knew some of my experiences when we talk about contracts and things like that. There was you know, a situation where there was some discrepancy and some discussion between our union and some discussion between our union and some of you know, how we've handled things. And basically what is comes down to is, you know, is the idea that there was some disagreement on the interpretation of the contract. And so I got brought in on this one. And when the superintendent came to my door and we talked, what I reminded him of was this is that and here's the thing that's something you guys might not know. My dad's a long time union member of local 699 in Saginaw. I grew up with him in the shop over in General Motors in Plant 6, and I heard every day union talk at my table. I was also a union member for a long time too as a teacher. My sister just finished her, she was the president and vice president over in Saginaw of her union there. She's a speech pathologist for the whole county. So um,

when I was talking to our superintendent, the idea was like 'hey listen it's about did we follow a process?' that's what they want to know, did we follow the process? And when we looked at our language, we felt that we didn't do it properly right? So what I did is, I went with him and we met with the union, and um, a member, and we worked it out, and we got it straight and we got it right, and then you know, made that person whole. So you know it's not personal. It's procedural. And so that's something to remember when it comes to work with stakeholders and how we treat people. They know if we treat them the right way and we care for them the right way, they're gonna feel that. Something that you can tell them. It's something that they feel."

Q) Alan Neushwander: What are the key practices needed to establish and maintain a good working relationship with and among the school board?

Marietta:

"So I think one-to-one meetings will be huge to start us out. You know, I think we need, I need to hear from each one of you on that one-to-one setting. I think that's a great place to start. Um, I think workshops are, you know, where we actually get to align ourselves to each other and understand how you see things, and how I see things. And again I think about Stephen Covey's eight healthy habits or seven healthy habits and he wrote an eighth on helping people find their voice.

But it's about the idea of like, I'm seeking to understand rather than be understood in a lot of those conversations. So listening to you and understanding where you're at, you know, so and then, you know, there's retreats, those things, um would be really cool as well. And I think those 3 things are right there in my mind, your workshops, and your one-to-one meetings, doing the work together, you know, that's where it's at. I mean with my own staff right now, you know, if you want to build relationships with people, bleed with them, you know, they're not going to care about whatever you have to say until they've seen your blood, sweat and tears. Simon Sinic, I'm a big fan of him, you know, it's through trust and collaboration over time, where we build those relationships and we build that trust and it's through that communication. So one-to-one and those workshops right here you know in our own backyard, would I think really lead right away to some good relationship building and understanding where we're at together to lead."

Q) Mike Winczewski: How would you go about evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum, assessments, and teaching methods?

Marietta:

"Well we all do that. We do that together and that's the beautiful thing about the leadership here before I came here. You know, well underway was the idea of a PLC network. Dowford refers model is that we're all assessing what our kids, what we want them to learn, know and be able to do. And so we're all looking at, it's about a collaborative culture. It's about co-laboring together that we, again, it's that blood, sweat, and tears that we're trying to say, how can we get better? What do our kids need? And we do that through our DGC, our BGC, just so you guys know it's called the District Guiding Coalition. The Building Guide Coalitions that I've been able to be a part of. You know and that's why I say to you guys, it's not about me. It's about us. And we do this together. And we're transparent when we fail. We are in our might be in a staff meeting and said, you know, we've got real conversation going. The whole key is let's get each

other talking about our kids and around our kids. You know when we fail, we're sharing our failures, when we have successes, we're sharing our successes. What strategies are working for our kids? So when you talk about increasing student achievement, I know that our SAT scores have gone up. I know what our AP scores have gone up since we've been here since I've been here. I know it's because of the hard work, the co-laboring that our teachers do and our support staff do whether it's in a staff meeting or professional development, or it's just on the everyday basis. That's another area that I would love to see us get better at is where our teachers get a chance to talk more and they could talk on a daily basis. How cool would that be? It's really tough for them sometimes to be able to get across the hall. And so I think that's an area of improvement that we can do. So yeah the PLC work that we've been doing that's in our district strategic plan is working. We're co-laboring together and we're able to assess where our kids are at, whether it's in the classroom or at a state level test."

Q) Stephanie Reed: How would you invest time and engage with the community to ensure that your work aligns with the overall values of our schools and communities?

Marietta:

"Well that's the ticket right? It's the idea that we have a district strategic plan. And in that district strategic plan what it does for us, what it does now, and will do in the future, is it helps us remove distractions and control the controllers. And so, again when you talk about like 'hey what are our targets? What are our practices? What do they look like?' Matter of fact in our next version, what I'd really like us to see where I'd like to see us to go together, when I talk about those high reliability schools and how that couples close to the PLC is that we can actually drill down even more off of the, now listen great work in our strategic plan but it's always about constant improvement. One of the things we can do is get some metrics in there. What are those practices? What does it look like when you walk down the hall? What does it look like when you walk into a classroom? How do we know if we're getting it done? When we look, we start to see the practices that we all agree upon right? And that co-laboring, that we all agree upon it, we get it written in our strategic plan. We then can look at evidences of success. What is the artifacts and evidences that we can collect that can say that, yeah our kids are getting the goods. Now that might be a project, might be with through competency-based learning. That's that whole piece, again, that has Robert Marzano's high reliability, high reliability schools or HRS, the idea of building a safe supportive collaboration culture. The next step in that that we have right embedded next to our practices of PLC work, you know is effective teaching, and then a viable curriculum, a guaranteed viable curriculum. Now we're really good at getting the guarantee part, where we struggle is that viable? Which is it's kind of that Goldilocks mentality about getting just enough, not too much, you know, content and curriculum that we would not feel as bold as we want, but just enough and not, you know, not too much, not too little, and do we have enough time to teach it? So when you look at that, that's that framework again. It helps you get the driver, the PLC, and then you've got the that framework of an HRS. So remember, in a district strategic plan. That's those three key areas. Research tells us we're going to have a robust facilities and finance plan with practices right that we were talking about before. Those are going to be listed and written, then artifacts and evidence, like, do we have curriculum licensing, and do we have a lot in the time and the date that those are due? Do we have our

facilities for you. You know, What needs do we have? What concerns does our Ad Council say that we have already on the books that we need to get there in the budget so facilities and finances, practices, but then also teaching and learning, right? So what practices are going to see there, and what evidence of success are going to see there? And the other one is relationships and communication. Communication is key. I have to communicate to you. We have to communicate to our communicate well, to our community. And so there's going to be standards there. There's gonna be target goals. What does that look like? What are the practices that help us bring that about? And then what are the evidences of success? We'll literally put that back out to our community. We can put it online, we can put it in the paper, we can use old sources of video, do a radio talk show, whatever it is you guys want to do, and we can talk about the idea of like, Hey, here's the ones we're hitting. Here's the ones that we have yet to do, because we're not going to get it all right away, right? Three to five years. So anyways, I get excited when I start talking about that stuff.”

Q) Bret Autrey: How do you communicate your expectations to employees and how do you deal with employees who do not meet your expectations? Please provide an example.

Marietta:

Refers back to stakeholder question.

”Alright Dr. Autrey you had yours for me?”

Autrey:

“How do you communicate your expectations to employees and how do you deal with employees who do not meet your expectations? Please provide an example.”

Marietta’s Response:

“It’s a great question. Well here’s the deal. We’re gonna have high expectations. There’s going to be high expectations on me. There should be. But what supports are we giving our people? Right? What supports are we giving them? And if we’re going to have high expectations, then we have to give a little support. What type of professional development are they getting, right? Are we meeting with them regularly making sure that they have their needs met? Do we have a mentor for them? You know, are we communicating with that mentor? Is that mentor communicating with us? And so yeah, we’re gonna have high expectations but we also have high levels of support. So that’s a firm belief of mine. You know if someone’s not meeting an expectation, it depends on what the situation is, and how severe it is. You know, if you could give me some more specifics, I could tell you I’d probably handle one situation different from another. I think that’s fair, but let’s just say it’s you know, what we consider, you know, minor stuff. Like let’s just say its cell phone right? You have a cell phone policy. We all agreed that we’re gonna file this policy and let’s say that you know, maybe somebody’s not keeping an eye on it as much. Sometimes it’s just a conversation. You just, you know, walk in the room and say ‘hey how are you doing? How are you feeling? How’s things going? Hey I noticed this, is this something that you’re noticing too?’ And you just start the conversation with them. You don’t go right to like a formal write-up. You know build up, you know, let’s just talk about what you know,

what we're seeing. And so you can't be afraid to ask tough questions. You can't be afraid to have a tough conversation. What I always say to my partner in crime Mr. Forsberg is like 'hey healthy people talk' You know sometimes it's you know somebody passed away and they're not even thinking about you know a cell phone at that day. Maybe it's, I lost my dog a year and a half ago. I was a wreck, you know, like, it just depends on what they're dealing with. But, you know, the idea is like, hey, remind them of the expectation, and they move on. Now, if it keeps happening again and again. Dr. Autrey, well, then you're going to have to go back to policy. What is our policy? What is our administrative guidelines? What does our handbook say? What does the teacher contract say? You know, I'm talking to the mentor. Hey, let's say it's a young teacher that's under five years. Hey, this is what I might not even go to the young teacher, I might go to the mentor first and just say, hey, here's some things that I'm seeing. Are you seeing? 'Ah, yeah, I'm seeing this too. 'Okay, well, we can work on that. They're not going to get it all at once. We can, can't expect it. Gosh, I've been doing this for 30 years, and I keep thinking I make mistakes. So again, follow the contract policies. Make sure that we have sound procedures. And then again, with our, you know, our LEA would want, you know, would want is this idea that we are following the process. When those tough situations arise, we have to have those even tougher conversations. Hope that helps."

Q) Steve Carlson: So in the district there's about 20 administrative leaders. How would you go around if you were to get the job and understand what their strengths are? How would you learn other ideas of development and how would you coach them?

Marietta:

" Yeah okay so as an athletic director, we used to call it coaching coaches. I was able to bring in CAP courses from the MHSA and I'll relate to this in a minute. But the idea is that we need to increase the capacity in our people. Again it's the same thing with you know, our teaching staff. Like hey provide the professional development, give them support when they need it. If there's correction, when we handle that correction, we do it through you know our policies and procedures, and having those healthy conversations. So when I think about that, when I think about our people, we've got great people, we have a great administrative team. There's that whole idea of strengths and weaknesses. You know I give you strengths finders we can read 2.0 with the Gallop Organization and we can take our strengths finders test. You can do blue green and we can have those in an Ad Council. We can have those in our retreats. You know, we're better together. It's something that Mary has said to us recently, and she's tagged that, and it's true, right? The idea is, like when I said in the beginning, it's not about me. It really isn't. The thing is we bring people on that make us better and so we lead together and we sharpen the saw. You know we spend the time where we're committed to growing together. That's the whole PLC process. Like we get stronger, we get better together, because we're, you know, our model is to collaborate, our models to co labor. So you know, you also have to ask, you know, this, here's the thing, not a lot of people have ever done this for me, I've only had a couple, is to ask them what they're dreaming, what do they want to do? Where do they want to go? What do they want to achieve? You ever have that? You ever have a boss never asked that? doesn't that drive me crazy? Like, it's like, you know, not that I don't love what I'm doing, but I aspire, I aspire to make a difference. How can you help me get there our young people that we're trying to hire

and maintain and retain staff, that's, that's one of the things. Like, you can pay me without paying me, like, give a rip about me. Like, hear about where I'm at? And I think it's something again, that they feel it's a tribal thing. And so it's just, you know, I think it's my heart. I think it's who I am. I think I come to it naturally. And so I hope that helps your thinking."

Q) Mike Nagle: Student and staff, school safety continues to be a major issue of concern in our public schools. Could you tell us what concerns you have around school safety and what actions you've taken at your school to protect your students and staff?

Marietta:

"Well you know here at Ludington we work closely with our SROs on a daily basis. A matter of fact they collaborated with them on an attendance team initiative. Something that Abby likes to call the Attendance task force, which I thought was pretty cool. So you know we certainly you know work with them. I know Tyrone. I know he works with the fire marshals when they come through here and they definitely told us what to do and not do. There was those systems checks, you know, that we already have in place, and I'm grateful for that. But one of the things that I've experienced in Fennville that I would really like to see and do here, and I've even mentioned in our ad council before, as we've had a team of people come in throughout the state and help train us on best practices. And you know sometimes they might come in on a Saturday. This one they actually found a way to do it on a weekday say well. You know it was legislators. We had state troopers, we had county, we had local federal police department there. Jim Gregonis and Dirk Wheeldrier they're our two superintendents there that were fantastic. They were, you know, great at helping us implement that. We ended up with you know our safety plan and we were able to get to all of our people, and we built that together. Again it's that co-laboring peace. I mean there was probably 25 of us in the room that were helping build this together with people who know way more than we do regarding safety and standards. I think that's something we could do here. There's a number of organizations that we could work with to just kind of bolster that, you know, one more iteration. As far as you know, certainly we have our camera systems, you know, we have our alarm systems, we've got our panic button and we use with the whole staff. We at staff meetings make sure that we're communicating that cover, we've even tested it with staff members where they got to set it off. We've got the boots, we actually practice, we do drills as mandated by the state, and then we report those and those views are available online. So there's just some things that we've done there. I guess my mind went right away to how do we get one increment better, something that I was able to experience, I think that really made us sharper. And you know safety is paramount. That's always going to be our first priority."