

Reimagine Minnesota Virtual Conference

June 17, 2020

1. We should take this opportunity to take a hard look at standardized testing, and the harm it has caused in our communities. We should be looking at growth instead. With colleges/universities moving away from SAT/ACT, this is a perfect time to make these changes. Standardized testing often gets in the way of building empathy, mental health, and relationship work.
 2. This is an opportunity to amplify personalized learning. This includes greater flexibility for students. Reduce/eliminate the rigidity around grade levels - give students more ownership in their education journey. When we go back in the fall, assuming that we'll have a hybrid model, those who struggle with distance learning (both teachers and students), should have more opportunities to meet in person than those who are achieving in distance learning.
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1. Board members need to lead the equity and anti-racist work and can't leave administrators vulnerable given that some of the decisions made may not be popular with the dominant culture of the district.
 2. Know our students and define the supports, especially given the burden on our students of color whose families are essential in this pandemic.
 3. What does personalized mean during COVID?
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1. We need to rethink how we define what success looks like. We should rely less on traditional testing and assessments and more on outcome based and competency based systems. This would provide a natural way to personalize learning for all students and make the learning environment much more engaging and interesting. This is not to say that we move away from our current standards, but just to envision success in those areas differently.
 2. Also, do we need to continue to define completion of a class credit as the number of hours a student has actually been present in a classroom? With all of the technological advances in the past 15 years, we should consider moving beyond seat time as a definition of completion.
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1. Access to tech and internet for all
 2. We need to focus on student engagement and learning vs handing out tasks
 3. Want boards to help with community feedback and funding advocacy

Adult PD needs to

1. include work on mindset and include both teachers/school staff and school board members and framed in a non-shaming manner;
2. be explicit on the work that WE (collectively state wide) need to do because black lives/education matter....yes, all lives matter but black students' educational experiences are in danger; and
3. we need accountability so as we are embracing and learning we have a matrix to ensure movement forward.

1. Better and deeper PD followed up with high accountability and high support. Stamped From the Beginning could be a required teacher/admin prep text.
2. True personalized learning that looks at the whole student
3. Truly equitable allocation of resources
4. NOT the status quo, our system is built to get what it gets.
5. Better systems to build deeper connections with families.
6. Close all technology divides (1:1 AND broadband access)
7. Unified lobbying to establish these legislation.

1. Importance of Relationships—Students: Distance Learning showed us where relationships were missing or where the strength of the relationship in the classroom fostered consistent engagement. What if we had a Concierge role in our districts? This role would provide more personal contact with our families to find out how they are experiencing our schools and identify what's missing for them. The role could provide a more holistic level of support and would be more personable. Staff: the need for more collaboration between teachers
2. Moving forward—identifying specifically where white supremacy culture characteristics show up in our policies. Student advisory groups and parent advisory groups for policy review.
3. Reflecting on how white supremacy culture shows up in our board meetings—process, decorum, how the community is able to share public comments, the scheduling and timing of it, etc.

1. COVID-19 has created ways for educators to connect with students personally, at the time that is best for the student/family and over the means that fit with the family needs. This only works with equitable access to technology, bandwidth, and flexibility in the “work/school day”. Hurdles include potential impact on contracts and work to do with unions to ensure that teaching and learning can fit within the parameters we are dealt. In addition, we need to have staffing levels to meet the needs of students through personalized learning.
2. Important partnership with our school board to ensure that education continues at the highest level we can achieve regardless of the manner in which we teach either online, in-classroom or a hybrid of both.
3. Support of the whole student and family. Learning cannot happen until we fully support the mental health and wellness of our students and families.

1. Create and support clear roles and responsibilities for all board and management to align within roles in a way that truly supports everyone.
2. Gather voice, along with the distance learning areas of success and challenges in a systemic way that ensures improvement
3. We need to take action based on our student voices and partner with them in ways that feel authentic and creates shared accountability and ownership.

1. We need better state infrastructure to increase our capacity for professional development around the 9 pillars of Reimagine MN...think of Quality Teaching Network of the past.
2. In order to support the mental health and healing that will be required before students can begin to work on academics we need to look at ways to ease the transition to fall—possibly starting the first day of school with your former class/teacher, then transition to new class on the second day of school.
3. Parents need help to better support and supervise distance learning, to better understand the technology and understand guidelines for screen time. There is a concern about too much screen time.

1. FEEDBACK from our students and families.
2. RELATIONSHIPS are critical, including community building. (Ex. Restorative Circles)
3. We need to improve PERSONALIZED LEARNING (differentiation, mental health supports, synchronous time with students, office hours, personal connections)

1. Create a thorough and thoughtful student check-in system that covers social, emotional and academic components. To accomplish this, we need to leverage adults differently.
2. Encourage school boards to adopt and use an equity lens to review and modify policies to address systemic racism.
3. To prepare teachers to integrate more student voice in the classroom, including the ability to initiate and thoughtfully facilitate conversation on race.

1. Make technology available to EVERY student, including training on how to use it, i.e., SeeSaw.
2. Use in-home visits to ascertain the issues that students are experiencing in their learning process, like language barriers and lack of technical knowledge (like hotspots and what their purpose is).
3. Look at EVERY issue before the school board through an equity lens.

1. Identify state policies that have made inequities greater. Have to listen to those who are harmed. We go back to same old practices.
2. Still have to challenge the white privilege, implicit bias, blindspots, the feeling that a white person alone can answer the problem is a privilege ... making assumption. Have to listen to the people where the trauma is happening.
3. Student voice in policy making, how to make it real and not patronizing

1. What would happen if we flipped the system and serviced hard to reach students first? In DL, it showed us that still students that come in last are still last — access to devices, as example.
2. All communication is also a privilege. Need to change system so that every kid has access to equipment, teacher, learning environment that is equitable.
3. Need to do better bringing voices that really represent all students to the decisions and changes. How do we tap into the community better, as board members, we have a vital role in this. How we gather input needs to look different. What if we assessed all current task forces in our districts? All groups gather for various reasons, but do they represent all students. Rethink how we do committees and the work for the district, maybe it needs to look completely different. No task forces unless they meet standards of equitable representation. We have to look at process in assessing WHO is there and HOW we are going to implement changes and its impact.

1. Using tools that want to create linear / data outputs WITH work that acknowledges that changing hearts and minds is not binary / linear, but holistic. In other words, recognize the limitations of evaluative tools.
2. Majority white districts have an obligation to educate community on how if EVERY child is succeeding (in a number of ways), every child, even those who are succeeding in traditional ways, will be better for it.
3. Creating an ally affinity space for white / other students / families to build their skills to match their will to make changes to be more anti-racist

1. Intentional outreach to families. That should be the foundation of everything that we do. It's the intentional outreach on a consistent basis that needs to be there as a base.
2. Start at the learning level, being very mindful of those connections and partnership with families, whether they are in school, participating in hybrid, or at home full time doing distance learning.
3. We should have a framework that is proactive, not reactive. Access: in our minds, it's about having the device/tool. There are persistent inequities even when our students have the tools. How can we rethink and innovate for our families and our current educators? If we only focus on devices, we are NOT done. What do we need to support EACH student based on their needs? We have a responsibility to create a learning plan for each student. What is still available for staff to ensure that all staff have the knowledge and tools to support all students.

4. This is not the time for leaders to work alone or in isolation. This is the time for shared leadership and high levels of teacher collaboration. Watch individual ego during times like these. Make sure we are utilizing staff to their best talents and abilities – perhaps making shifts in staff responsibilities.

1. We need to define what we are even measuring
2. In program areas i.e. AP/IB participation aligned with demographics of student body
3. Community approach
4. Student report/voice

1. Create and support clear roles and responsibilities for all board and management to align within roles in a way that truly supports everyone.
2. Gather voice, along with the distance learning areas of success and challenges in a systemic way that ensures improvement
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1. Help teachers know they have a robust feedback loop that is working in their classrooms
2. Measure the opportunity gaps that lead to the learning gaps.
3. Help school board members learn how to think about equity and measuring in ways other than standardized testing

Other comments:

- 'family' student groups of 10 (all different grade levels) were formed at one of Hopkins' elementary schools and were very powerful when we were able to meet on a regular basis. The groups met outside of the classroom; the leaders were NOT the students' usual classroom teacher but provided another adult relationship, as well as a variety of student relationships that would otherwise not exist within the building.
- Perhaps a resource is not graduating students who really have not fully met the standards. That doesn't mean they continue coming to high school. It might mean the district uses the revenue generated by the student to contract with tech college etc to continue their education. Students have a right to an education til age 21. Let's give them that right.
- Survival became central. We need to refocus on metrics around what excellent & equitable mean in Distance Learning / eLearning. DL did allow for more 1:1 between teachers and students to better understand each other. For some, DL works better. The role of the Board becomes asking questions such as "what is the experience like" and focusing on both ends of the bell curve. We need to continue SEL supports. The Board role can include individual lobbying with legislators and providing cover to

administration when decisions may be unpopular with families (especially if they need to be made because of guidance from MDH). Also, the Board role can include policy review of SROs and discipline.

- Policies: Step out of the comfort zone, be open to new ideas. Listen. Defer decision to those who are the experts. Be leaders and set a tone. Be kind, be trusting, and be willing to change. There is a lot we have to recognize that what our plan was may need to be changed. Excellent communication is a priority.
- Existing relationships were a benefit last year, one of the bigger concerns or areas of focus is building relationships with new teachers in a digital setting.
- MTSS Multi-Tiered Systems of Support has been critical, especially during distance learning. This group met daily in one district. This was beneficial for academic interventions but more importantly for engagement.
- There was a strong need for synchronous and asynchronous learning. At the secondary level, we need to rethink this. Our students at the secondary level really wanted direct instruction combined with small groups and activities.
- Students want to collaborate on authentic work, that was built in to our in person learning, but was really lacking in the distance learning format.
- Some districts experienced more success connecting with students at the elementary level. There appears to be a need to support students emotionally to address anxiety prior to a school year. One strategy could be a personal reach out to students ahead of the school year.
- Distance learning has expanded some of the existing disparities in our educational system. What are our policies that need to be examined that have the potential to change the student experience, regardless of the format we use when we return to school.
- Distance learning created an opportunity or need for students to start working, some full time. This created a need for flexibility from teachers, many of whom stepped up to meet this need.
- School boards have the responsibility to govern and not manage. Hopefully, the path forward will increase the communication between district leadership and the school board about the change that is happening.
- What is the role that a board can take to finalize and implement policy change. Ideally this will happen in conjunction with district leadership.
- Some of the biggest concerns for the fall are social and emotional. This could feel like PTSD for students and for families, both from COVID-19 and from George Floyd's death. There should be support for teachers who are working through these issues in addition to serious gaps in learning. Instructionally, we will need to start the year understanding our students current state both social emotionally as well as academically.
- What is the connection between this work and the work at the legislature. The legislature is a political body, responsible to their electorate. There is a need to make sure that body is informed about this work.
- We already are working with our legislators. (I've been in touch with them throughout the spring as board chair about how things are going in our district and what we're seeing/looking for/etc. We have strong and consistent relationships w/ them.)

- How do we make more and better resources available to the students who need them most (e.g. EL, Special Education etc.)? There is a need to distinguish equitable from equal.
- Huge access issue in terms of internet access and to a lesser extent (depending on the district) tech. From a policy perspective, we need to look at how we can work to guarantee every student across MN has the opportunity and ability to access reliable internet.
- Concerns about gaps in staffing, attendance issues, etc. come fall.
- Reevaluating and reimagining assessment and curriculum: how do we support students and empower them in demonstrating their brilliance? How can we support students in delving deep into their interests, cultures, etc.
- Breaking bad habits and replacing them; empowering staff to do it differently with confidence
- What is equitable and excellent education. As Joe questioned, did we have it before distance learning? The meaning of equitable and excellent education needs to be reestablished? What is being asked of our schools and educators by the State?
- Essential to show grace during this period of change and challenges, but why wasn't that always part of the conversation?
- A positive: Distance learning resulted in parents and students really seeing how much teachers and staff care about the kids.
- Distance learning kickstarted new initiatives because choice was removed from the equation. This is true for staff and for families who suddenly had no other option but to tackle a new way of doing things.
- Funding is an ongoing issue that needs to be addressed. Particularly with respect to transportation and other key issues that schools are grappling with.
- Listen to feedback from students
- Eradication of achievement gap, establishing anti-racist policies
- Boards need to be united
- Student voice and employee voice is important, especially employees of color
- Be sure students feel valued, safe & heard
- Look at data in different ways – our measures have not included all students
- We need to move forward to make state-wide policy changes to eliminate opportunity gaps
- There are two areas of focus: qualitative measures are critical in addition to test scores. We can't give up on student achievement, but also progress monitoring.
- Social Emotional screeners and documentation could also be part of this work. We could also include student interviews and messaging.
- This has to be a comprehensive grouping of measurements. Progress monitoring is key. Feedback from stakeholders: staff, students, families. The qualitative data can lead to quantitative improvements.
- It is important to benchmarking qualitative data to demonstrate growth. Growth is a critical component of any measurement system.
- Measuring culture and climate to demonstrate that all students are clearly heard and reflected in perception data is key for this work. Connectivity, empowerment, support, are words to use in this measurement tool.

- Equal Opportunity Schools is an organization that has helped some schools build better connections between students and teachers. School districts have also taken intentional steps to build relationships with families. This requires a shift in priorities for both policy, resources, and time.
- Eden Prairie had all of the tech in place, but the problem/challenge was instructional practice and building relationships
- We have an affinity with those of the same gender and race – and that is not reflected in schools and underserves our children of color, especially male and black
- Superintendents know systems, data, structures, teams.... But the stress comes with DOING the work with the board – who are we as a board, who are we serving?
- During this time of COVID and social unrest, we must serve our students by prioritizing relationships over testing
- Board members who are predominantly white and don't look like or share the same backgrounds as their community must use their position of privilege to listen, research and amplify those voices – it is up to those who gain from the system to make it equitable for everyone, not up to those who are underserved
- Board members need to lead the equity and anti-racist work and can't leave administrators vulnerable to take the heat for the bold decisions
- We need to support our families during DL especially those of color who are essential workers and need support
- Building relationships is key to move forward
- Struggle with what is board work versus management work, who makes decisions and who is responsible for leading the work?
- Board role versus management role. We should be in collaboration. Strategic planning creates opportunity to identify clear initiatives
- Wondering if strategic plan aligned to Reimagine Minnesota plan
- How do we have collective voice with government to support the state wide tech deficiencies and possibly receive state wide support for all students?
- How do we step back to review what has been learned in distance to improve education overall in a way that does not increase the gap and allows student voice to support improved learning
- How do we debrief distance learning (and in other areas) and ensure we provide the space and expectation to reflect and capture the learnings? How do we hear voice, then act on it?
- How do we use the promising practices that were very individual to create systems to support all students? We found systemic inconsistencies that led to inequities across the district. How do we bring people back to better to support all students and elevate the system to serve all?
- Are we being systemic in our wellness work to ensure that all students are supported through relationships? How are teachers reflecting on their own biases to change behaviors and then student outcomes?
- How do we engage all voices and families in the conversation? How do we ensure partners are at the table supporting, particularly those that have not typically been effectively engaged?
- How do you circle back to report to the public how you heard voice, then took action in a way that shares your work in an accountable fashion that builds trust and ownership?

- Let's be strategic in making changes that can occur immediately along with making long term plans to support those that take a longer time to achieve
- How do we ensure that failure is not an option and that structures supports are created for everyone?
- Board members working to work on aligned vision and define board role versus management.
- How do districts align their work with Reimagine Minnesota plan?
- The needle is moved in the development of curriculum and programs that are inclusive of all students. Student experience is at the center of our development of curriculum.
 - We will know we are doing a good job with equity strategies when students tell us we are doing a good job. Students will let us know that they feel safe, feel valued and are thriving from an educational outcome standpoint.
- Active affinity spaces for students to be humanized in their learning experience.
- Policies that are antiracist and allow for antiracist ideas to thrive.
- When all students feel franchised, when the community comes along.
- Disruption to the system. Be willing to handle the push back. Keep moving forward not back.
- Look at the data and make sure that it is changing for the better.
- We need a definition of equity. Systems that are in alignment to ensure that all children can become strong and positive members of society.
- How are we measuring success now and how might that change? What are the measures that we will use that are equitable?
- There needs to be multiple measures used to evaluate and inform instruction along with student progress. Assessment should go back in the hands of teachers to use to serve students.
- There is outcome data and we need to celebrate a wide range of achievement, not just the "top". We need measurement that realigns to all students and affirms them.
- How do we decide what is celebrated? How do we bring voices to the group to engage about what and who is celebrated? How do we make sure that the students and other voices are there for the dialogue?
- There are options in grading for equity. How do we support and acknowledge all students and change systems to support all students?
- Multiple measurements, not one single measurement will work for all districts or all students within a district.
- Take the opportunity now to re-evaluate our use of testing and grading as measurements, knowing that they are not designed to meet the needs of all of our students (ex. ACTs, MCAs, book "Grading for Equity)
- Student and community voice (ex. superintendent student advisory committee, student board members, student voice in strategic planning)
- Survey data from students – what do we do about it? Who has been marginalized in the past, and how has that changed? Never underestimate the voices of our younger learners.
- We need staff that reflect our demographics. Students need to see themselves in our staff.
- Parents voices need to be heard. How connected do they actually feel to our schools and the work their children are doing?

- Once we have the data, what are we going to do with that? How can we improve the learning and experiences?
- Understanding our biases. Having a culture where conversations about race are happening and in a safe way.
- Self reflection. We need to be anti-racist. Systemic racism: how can we dismantle systems?
- We need to create safe learning opportunities for staff in the area of educational equity?
- Step out of the comfort zone, be open to new ideas. Listen. Defer decision to those who are the experts. Be leaders and set a tone. Be kind, be trusting, and be willing to change. There is a lot we have to recognize that what our plan was may need to be changed. Excellent communication is a priority.
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Consider a **children's cabinet** to ask them to describe what it will/should look like and use their language to describe success and solicit input from students and community members over time. **Achievement results** (MCA and other) will improve. Re-think assessments used for students to demonstrate learning. Measure within our own district - individually and systemically. What progress are we adults making in our practice and race consciousness? People are going to vote with their feet; **parents will choose to enroll their children in our schools** (across all demographics). When we triangulate the data, we will see **fewer disparities** and positive patterns (attendance, etc.) Clarity in defining success and measures is critical if we're going to know what's actually working and when we need to shift our efforts to a more effective practice.

Relationship building to have the connection. Having a personal advocate to balance the technology and the need for a relationship. Who is the personal connector for the parent and child. Recognize parents are working from home, being educators. Consider privilege situations and social aspect of being online may not work for some children. social connection did not work because of the platform. Students with special education needs. Can PI strategy helped? Some students thrived in a DL environment. Understand equal is not equitable. There were some students who were never able to connect online. Community advocate. Co-creating virtual classroom communities. The element of kids in child care. How do students have voice in the curriculum? Lead with wellness. Address trauma, learning needs and think about the extraordinary disruption and George Floyd's murder. Are students feeling safe.

Policies:

Per pupil funding to meet inflationary costs. Don't overlook the individual local boards role to develop policy. Seat time is problematic in DL, requirement of days and hours for instructional time (e.g. seniors who were finished in May), competency based bill, innovation and to discover new ways. Untwist funding connected with seat time- turning over October count and the state's ability to take away educational funding. Districts need to have levy authority have to go out for levies to get enough money. Vote- support legislative funding. Online classes for families to help them understand how educational funding works.