

Transcript

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I suppose a a real sort of highlight of um this time we're spending together is to hear from Madison local schools in

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particular um Andrew Divitson who is the assistant principal there in the high school and Jennifer O'Brien who's the

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attendance officer and I know that um they have really accessed the resources of their state support team in their

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region but then um they I feel like you all are really good at accessing

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resources just like I heard you talking with Dr. Sheldon. Um, and we have got to spend some time um, just talking and

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learning from Andrew and Jennifer, but also um, providing um, any insights that

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we can to sort of help them as they are continuously improving their work um, with with families to support their

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students. So, um, with that, so if anybody doesn't know where Madison Local Schools is, I guess if you can picture

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Route 71 going up from Columbus to, um, Cleveland and then about part of the way

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up there, a little bit south of Ashland and a little bit north of Mansfield. And, um, I'm really excited to hear from

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you all today. So, thanks for being here. Thank you. Can everybody hear me? Okay.

1:08

Yep, we can hear you. Awesome. Cool. Cool. So, um,

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Jen and I have kind of like a loose outline for what we wanted to share today and there there's a lot that we

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could talk about. Um, and so we'll maybe for the first part of our session here,

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we can just kind of tell our story and then we can leave time for some questions at the end. I think Whitney

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sent us some questions that came through um leading up to our Zoom session today.

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Um, Barb andor Whitney, if I wanted to share some slides, can I do that?

1:46

Yep. You should be co-host. So, at the bottom, you'll just hit the share icon with the arrow up.

1:52

Okay. All right. Here. Here we go. I'm sharing some slides. We are actually

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presenting um next Thursday in Columbus for um

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Charting the Life Course. I'm not sure who's familiar with that, but we might um talk a little bit more about that in

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depth later. But um Barb was saying um you know where is Madison? Well, I've

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got a map for you. There you go. Right here. That's where we're at. So there's 71 as she was saying. That's where we're

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at. There's Ashland. There's Mansfield. So that's us right there. Richland County. Um that's our school. Um we are

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called Madison Comprehensive High School. And what comprehensive means is

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uh we are unique in that our high school has many career uh tech options right in

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house. So our upper classmen, they don't go to a separate school or something like that. If they want to study

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something in uh the world of trades, they get to do it all right here. So, there's a lot of great things happening

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at Madison. Um, a little bit about our demographics. Um, you know, you can look

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at demographics from so many different ways, but here's just a few, um, bullet points. So, we have about 800 students.

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I think our enrollment, I don't know what it is off the top of my head, but let's just call it 800 students. Um,

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I think it's like 840. 840. Okay, good. Jen is the fact checker

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on that. Good. Um we have a diverse

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um population in terms of like where are kids coming from. We have rural areas in our district. We have suburban areas and

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we have city areas. So it's kind of a mixed bag there. Um ethnicity

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demographics. You can look at that right there. Um and then in regards to students with disabilities, there's our

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our stats right there for you too. Um, I have another slide and I'll probably

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turn the share off uh shortly, but this will kind of get us started here just in

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terms of telling the story. Um, this is not everything that we've been doing.

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It's just some highlights um that will kind of steer our our session here. So,

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Jen, I'll jump in. you add color commentary as needed to or set me

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straight if I I go off course. So, um our journey with family engagement I

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think is going back almost as long as I have been at Madison which I think this

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is my fourth or fifth year something like that. Um, and

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the work that Jen does with attendance and truency overlaps with a lot of the things that I do on a day-to-day basis.

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And so several years ago, we were talking about we got to get a team together. We got to

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do more. We can't just always be talking about punitive interventions with

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addressing um, attendance concerns. And so that idea had been in the back of our

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mind for quite a while. Um and then I think we had got plugged in with um the

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stay in the game uh conferences at some point a few years ago and those have

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been some of our our favorite professional development opportunities that we've been to. Um, and a lot of

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what we've learned at the stay- in the game conferences pertains to attendance,

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um, chronic absenteeism. Um, and then there's also a very big

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component of family engagement that's embedded in in that um, world. Um at one

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of the stay in the game um conferences we went to I had the privilege to sit

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next to one of my no my favorite uh state support team seven se seven uh

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consultant her name is Ann Ditlibson that's my wife but she's also our our SST person and I think the the very

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beginnings of where our family engagement team came together probably was at that conference where

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me and Jen and Ann just started to talk about what we could be doing at Madison

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and Ann said, "Hey, if you want to do this, I'll see if state support team 7

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can um work with you." And so, a lot of

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the origin story can be traced back to working with Ann and uh her colleagues

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uh with the school. Um, from there, Jen, where should we take

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it? What happened next? Uh, I'm thinking, you know,

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conversations that we had about some ideas and then I think Ann, well, as far

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as like charting the life course, I think you all already were like connected up with that way before I was,

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but I think we started talking about like some things that we could do.

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um you know to try to get like you were saying to get a team together to kind of

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fix the chronic absenteeism problem. Um and we learned at that first conference

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we went to in Columbus that like there were schools that were doing it that

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were going and doing home visits and to try to get the numbers of chronic

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absenteeism down in their schools and they were having success with it. So we were like what and you know how do we do

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that and how'd they start and then we just started asking questions and and digging. Um, I think I think questions

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is how a lot of the things that we do came about from like me going, "Andrew, look what I read. Look at this research

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and look what this is doing." And then you would be like, "Wow, I was talking to my wife last night and she was

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talking about, you know, our state support team and how they could uh support us and, you know, maybe even

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help us start a team and start a project that could reduce chronic absenteeism."

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And I think it just kind of snowballed from there. Yeah. Last year, beginning of last year.

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Yeah. I can kind of jump, we can just bounce back and forth, Jen. I'll kind of

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keep the the narrative moving forward, if you will. So, um, we keep mentioning

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charting the life course. We'll unpack that further here in a second. But yeah,

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I think um my wife Ann and I we talk shop a lot at home um about school stuff

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and when she shared u a little bit about charting the life course with me and like the very short

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explanation for charting the life course, it's a collection of goal setting tools, if you will. and there

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are tools that can help you build relationships with students and families and we love it. We think it's great. So

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when Ann told me about that, um I was like, I got to know more. I want to do it. And so our school counselor and

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myself met with Ann at her office and she gave us the crash course and we piloted

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using those tools with our student leadership team. Um and that eventually spread into other realms where we use

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those tools with um students with disabilities and IEP settings. Um our

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current director of student services, Bill Roth, he even used that with his athletes on his track team um in his

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classroom. He he tried those out and then that became that um collection of

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tools became a big part of what we do with our family engagement team. So, um,

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uh, I guess working with state support team 7, what can I tell you about that? One of the big things that they kept

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emphasizing was go slow to go fast. And I think for people that are on this Zoom

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right now, I I can't emphasize that enough. Um, you have to start somewhere.

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And maybe it's just two people or three people like it was kind of from the beginning, me and Jen. and um Kelly

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Carpenter with the charting life course stuff. Um, and then just

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if you find someone that's interested or takes notice of of the work that you're doing, just start building that team and

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find people that are passionate about the work rather than making it about

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mandating things or um, you know, demanding people's time to to commit

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when they're when they're really not in it. And then over um the course of like your meetings and home visits and all

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the stuff that you'll start doing, you're going to see that people want in on it as well.

11:02

Um I guess Yeah, go ahead. I was just going to say um we also kind

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of separate but kind of united with that whole family engagement team thing and

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SST7. We decided we were going to start doing home visits. Yeah.

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And we we just jumped off the diving board and we were like, how do we where

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do we start? Well, at that point, we were about this point in the year when we start looking at what seniors are at

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risk of not graduating. And so we start, that's where we started. We're like, let's go. We had

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kids that just stopped showing up to school. So we're like, let's go get them. Let's go find out, you know,

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what's the problem? why aren't they coming? Um, several of them I can't I think kind of gave up hope. So, Andrew

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and I would go to our guidance counselor and say like, "What can I bring to them that will give them hope?" Like, "What

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what plan can we put in place to get them back in the door? Is it too late for them? How can we address this with

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their them and their parents?" Um, sometimes it was like trying to fix the

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relationship between the kid and the parent because they were 18 and they wanted to go do their own thing and the

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parent was against it. But I mean, there's all kinds of situations. But sometimes we would show up and just say

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it's not too late for you. Um, you just you have to come back to school though.

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We have a plan for you in place, but you have to come in order for that plan to work. um we want to be there to cheer

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you across that stage at the at the graduation ceremony. Um we would just

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say as much positive as we could. I mean obviously they were at home sometimes not doing the greatest things, making

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bad choices, whatever. We never went with a punitive [clears throat] motive. We always went with a restorative

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motive. How can we restore the relationship between you and the school? How can we encourage you, you know, to

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come back? And I think once families and students

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started seeing that, um, that's when it started to actually make an impact.

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That's good. Um, Jen, I can maybe share like an anecdote or an example of one of

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our stories. Would that be good? All right. So, we can have some fun with it. I've got a story about a

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parent visit at Wendy's or pushing a car in the snow. First one to respond in the chat is the one I'm going to share. Do

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you want to hear about pushing a car in the snow or Wendy's? What do you want to hear about? Both. Ann says both. Snow.

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Joshua Priest says the snow. Okay, we can do that one. Um, so with the home

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visits, I guess building off of what Jen said is one of the things that I can't

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emphasize enough is be bold, be confident, but also co that

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with be respectful, and be humble when you're meeting people where they're at.

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And I would also say like never make it about like some kind of

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tourism where you're just looking at people's unfortunate situations and gossiping about it or something like

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that. It needs to be done with the utmost respect. Um so with all of that

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um there's a very at-risk family that we've been helping along the way this

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school year. Um, and there there's poverty, there's probably some substance

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abuse stuff going on, and um, the student that goes to our school, um, he

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has got hygiene issues and there it's just complicated. Um I think a couple weeks ago, maybe even

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longer than that, few weeks ago, um right around the time we had that big snowstorm, we had to have a formal um

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hearing over Zoom with the juvenile court u representative. And it came out

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that the mom said, "Hey, I'm struggling with transportation. I I can't get my son to school. I can't get to the

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grocery store." And in that meeting, I think Mrs. O'Brien and I were thinking the same thing. Let's let's see if we

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can do something to help this student. Um I mentioned that we have a comprehensive high school and part of

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that is we have an auto tech program and we just got the idea. Let's see if our auto tech program can help this family

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out. And we went and talked to the shop teacher and he said absolutely. I've

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been wanting to help the community more. Our career tech director was 100% on board and he said we want to help the

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community more with our our resources. So, um, we called the mom back and she's

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like, "Yeah, I've got the part you need to fix it, but only thing it doesn't

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start." And so, we brought our team, our student services director, myself, and

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our career uh, coach counselor um, and Mrs. O'Brien. We went out to the house

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and and we also got the battery pack to jump start the car. Um, Mrs. O'Brien and

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I, we worked on the car. She cleared off all the snow. I crawled through the back of the car to put the jumper cables on

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it because it was a weird car where the battery was in the back. And then uh Mr. Roth and Liz Hicks, they ran an IEP

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meeting off to the side because we'd been struggling to get some paperwork done. So, we got the car started, but

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there was some complications with unhooking the charger and it was

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it was tricky, but we got it done. um with all the snow, then the car was

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stuck in the snow, so me and the student services director had to push it out while the mom was like driving it and

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like trying to get it out of the snow. Um finally made it out. I think by the

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time I hit the road, the the tire was going flat and it was just it was it was

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an adrenaline adrenaline rush. I'll just say that. Just getting the car back. Um,

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we got the car repaired, functional. I'm not saying it's perfect or whatever, but

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it it's wheels to get from point A to point B. And the mom was so grateful.

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Um, you know, couldn't thank us enough. Meant the world to her that we we helped

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her out in that very practical way. Um, but that specific day or situation that

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was built upon I don't know how many times we went out to the house before that, maybe four, five, and numerous

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phone calls. And I think even parents wanting to accept help or being willing

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to accept help from the school in practical ways, it takes time and it

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takes vulnerability and relationships being built just to get to that point

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where they're willing to accept help when they need it. Um I was going to say she wouldn't even answer the door the first couple times

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we went there. Yeah. And then and then it got to the point where we'd knock on the door and

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like, "Hey, it's it's the school." And then she'd come out and then I think one of the times we were there she wanted to

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show us her cats and show us some remodeling she was doing and like each time it was just more and more

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real down to earth and and just connected I guess is another way to say it. So um we have numerous stories like

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that where just cool things are happening and I can tell you this like for people that are on the fence should

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I do the home visits? Should I not? Just do it. You will find that those moments

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are going to be the most rewarding, most meaningful in your day, your week,

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perhaps your school year. That situation where you helped the family out their car, like I don't know. It didn't get it

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hasn't got much better than that this year. That was about as good as it's it's been for us in terms of just knowing that you're making a difference.

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So, um, start small. Start with a couple people

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that are willing to do it, try it out, and then just build build off of your your momentum.

19:09

Um, how much time do we have left, Barb and Whitney?

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About 5 to 10 minutes. Okay. um we could talk about um how how

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we have all these different voices representatives on our team for a couple minutes and then um

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maybe roll into some some questions. So, um

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the team has grown. I think it just started with half a dozen people or so and I think we're now up to like close

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to 30 people on the team maybe. Um

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and that includes probably half the team being student representatives.

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Um, we have people from the community, um, parents, grandparents,

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um, that have all brought their perspectives to the table. Um,

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last night at a schoolboard meeting, I mentioned him before, Bill Roth, our student services director. He has talked

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about how meaningful the family engagement team has been to him because

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he's been able to have a direct line of communication with parents and families

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and grandparents to hear where they're coming from. Um, so I I think

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previously the idea of having community partners and and family partners on teams has kind of intimidated me a

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little bit because of logistics and liability and all that. Like I'm pretty

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down to earth person, but like I was worried about confidentiality and all that. And if you want to know more about

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um how to work around that, you can reach out to me directly if you'd like to. But there's a way to do it and

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there's a way to still have very meaningful dialogue while keeping things professional. And the same thing goes

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with students. You know, how do you have professional conversations about data and

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not do, you know, give away personally identifiable information? So, um,

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yeah. So, that that's been good as well. Do you want to hear about our data? Maybe Jen can talk about our data that

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we just ran. Um, share something with them really quick. I can mention what we kind

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of mentioned the other day and then but we're getting some questions popping up in the chat. I'm seeing um our our data

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when we first looked at it when I I was trying to pull data to show like how

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much of a difference it's made from last year to this year this time like all of the efforts that we've made. Um, has it

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made a difference? And I think I was telling Andrew, maybe Whitney, yesterday when she visited us, that big picture

22:02

numbers weren't showing what we were hoping they would show. Um, as far as

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like the school's chronic absenteeism as a whole last year versus this year. Um,

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and and that's without like playing with every little tiny nuance of like how many students there were last year and

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how many students there are this year and the percentage differences and all that. just big picture, it just didn't look like it was that big of a change.

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Um, and so then we started looking at individual student data. Um, the

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students we've actually either, you know, done home visits with or we've met

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one-on-one with while they're in school to use some of the charting life course

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tools or just do some get to know you conversations with them. Um, and each

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one of the students we looked at, the percentage of chronic absenteeism decreased.

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Maybe not by a huge amount, some of them by a big amount, but but we saw

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improvement in every student we looked at. We don't have our whole list yet, but there was some improvement with

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every single student we looked at. So, that was really encouraging. Um, and as Andrew was saying, like go slow to go

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fast. like it's a it's a long game, not a short game, uh to make the

23:23

improvements. Um and then Andrew, do you care if I answer that first question?

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Yeah, I'd love to chime in on that one, too. And I think it's a a good kind of connection to what you just shared.

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Okay. like um regarding the home visits um the only advice um I can think of is

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or the only thing I can say to that is like that we kind of didn't think we had the capacity to do it. We just started

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with like, "Hey, I'm the attendance officer. You're the assistant principal. We care about our kids. What can we do?"

23:58

Well, research is showing that home visits work. Why don't we give that a try? It wasn't like we had some master

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um plan to follow. We just were like, "Let's just go see what it does for us. We'll just try it." And and we I think

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last year we went every single week after our first time going. We're like, "When are you free?
let's go out for an

24:19

hour and we we can hit like four to six homes in an hour. It's it's not that um

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much of a time sucker or anything. So, um I would just say like Andrew said

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earlier, just to do it, just start it and do it with two people.

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Yeah. And our team grew after that because other people started hearing, you know,

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that we were doing it and they wanted to get involved. So, I'll I'll share a couple more things

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about that. So like if capacity means do you have the time to do it,

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it's going to feel like one more thing at first, but once you start engaging in this way, it's going to
be

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the most meaningful part of your week. And it's something that I feel like administrators and
attendance officers

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need to bring perspective to their jobs and to provide like a a deeper level of

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meaning. So like it's it's an investment. And then another thing and it

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pertains to what uh Mr. Sheldon Steve was sharing earlier. Look at the data like is it doing what
you are hoping it

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would do? You have to like nerd out a little bit and check yourself like well is it working

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or not? Um and so do I have the capacity? Look at the data and see it as

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an investment. Um, do you want to do the

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incentive question? Yeah, I I think as far as that goes, um,

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we Andrew and I did kind of discuss that the incentives part of it, we haven't quite figured that out yet. It's

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something we talk about. Um, other than like students get a, you know, perfect

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attendance thing at the end of the year. Um, we have had a little bit of

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incentive with one fun thing we did, our RAM pride bingo. There were things there

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were things on there about like literacy and attendance and we're hoping to

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incorporate some more um micro what did you call it Barbara? micro

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microventions, sorry, micro interventions in that where we get students to go back to parents to get

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parents involved with that. But um and can you tell us just explain that bingo a little bit more how you got

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started and how you're going with it? What what it is? It's just a bingo card we hand out and

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the kids um kind of kind of got the idea from something I saw in Stay in the

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Game. Um and then we just expanded on it. We made more bingo spaces and like

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if you attend one of the bingo spaces was like if you have perfect attendance for a week you can get that signed off

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on. Some of them I had to sign off on as the attendance officer. Some of them were more behavior PBIS stuff oriented

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and Mr. Ditliffson had to sign off on some and then some were like um help

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your mom do the dishes or um read a chapter of a book or read for so many

27:29

minutes. I don't remember what they were but we were trying to incorporate it with literacy and attendance and next

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time we're going to try to incorporate math. Um and

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I I forget what the question was. Oh, incentives. So then we did like, you

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know, if you got a bingo then you could go to Mr. Ditliffson and pick a prize.

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Like we did some things like that with students. Not so much um anything much bigger than that. We're still kind of

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playing around with ideas. Um so all the prizes were donated by

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community partners. Our uh gym teacher, Mrs. Stephie, she's become a very

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important part of our family engagement team and she collected all the donations and we got more than enough to to give

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out in terms of prizes. And I will tell you this, like I was a skeptic of this

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idea at first. I'm like, I don't know guys, like I don't know bingo, is this dorky or what? But for one, just like

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the walkaround data like was kids were actually into it and the kids that

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needed it were into it the most. Um there was a couple students that are on

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our list or on our radar for chronic absenteeism and they were the ones that were like looking for that grand prize

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and they they really connected with it. Um and then I think we had a follow-up

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meeting with Barb and Whitney and that's where we got even more ideas to take it

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to the next level. So, we're going to run it again in March. And so, we'll be adding some some things to the bingo

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squares to just make it even better. So, just like the home visits, if it's

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research based, if there's a good chance it's going to work, just try it. And so, the Ramp Pride bingo, I wasn't too sure

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about it, but we went for it. It was a success, and I think it's it's going to be one of our our tools in the toolbox

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for a while. And I see Whitney linked um kind of a a

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starting point if you're wanting to do something similar. That's where we got our idea from. Uh stay in the game.

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What other questions [sighs] do we have?

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Kim asked if you had a resource that you used to develop your processes and procedures for conducting home visits.

29:52

Um well like like best practices I think

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there's research out there and I think um a couple of thoughts there. So a lot

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of the things that Steve was sharing earlier about home visits that it's not punitive. It's there to build

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relationships. I mean that's researchbased. Um Mrs. O'Brien

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fairly recently was in graduate school. So, a lot of the things that she was um

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getting into pointed us in that direction. Um and then part of it for me

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was just asking people what they did and how did that go? And one of the people I

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talked to was our school resource officer like, "Hey, is it safe to be doing this? What what what is your

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thought on us going to this neighborhood or that neighborhood?" And we got some advice on best practices. And um

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the short answer was he's like, "You guys are fine. Just go with another person. Let them know that you're there to help. Don't go at night and you're

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good." Um, but yeah, I don't have like a specific article or anything like that

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in mind, but I know that there's research out there and and and

31:05

there's probably like, you know, what to do and what to not to do, but um, do you

31:11

want me to talk more about that or I think actually like you sharing your story gives me some ideas of helping you

31:19

develop like a one pager of like what you actually did. Um, I think people are

31:24

just really inspired to hear your story and want to replicate it. Um, so that's really helpful. I want to

31:31

get to Ann's question before we turn it back over um to our team. Ann,

31:37

hey, this is Ann Ditliffson from State Support Team 7. Um, hopefully you guys can hear me. Okay. Um, I just wanted I

31:45

don't have a question. I just wanted to mention a couple things about uh

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Madison's family Madison High School's family engagement team. Um first, they

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did a really good job with giving space for students and family members. Um

32:04

family engagement, obviously you want to include family members, right? But they

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they included family members that were non-district employees, which I think

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makes a really big difference, too. Um, and they were really intentional about

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their student selection. Um, it was it's a very diverse group of kids with lots

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of different um, perspectives and experiences. Um, and also one other thing about that

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is it's not like they're not like a token family representative or student

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representative where we just have them written down on the agenda and it looks good. Like they are actually fully

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involved, their opinions fully matter. Um, they are they and they really do

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feel comfortable. I I love love to see them um fully engaged and um

33:02

volunteering, wanting to do different things on the team. Um but yeah, that's

33:07

been really beautiful to see. And uh just one other really quick thing is I I

33:14

just know how meaningful it is to all the members of the team to be on the team. And one quick example is I do some

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work with Bill Roth um the director of student services for something completely different and we've been

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meeting and um we we have to make sure that our meetings are before the home

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visits because he really loves to do those home visits and doesn't want to miss out on it. And that's something

33:39

that's really beautiful. It's not just something to do to check off the box. is

33:45

something that people are genuinely passionate and love to do. That's all. Thanks.

33:51

Thanks, Ann. I was going to just add one more quick

33:57

thing based off of the questions that were given to us ahead of time. Um, a

34:03

lot of the stuff was about how to build the culture and the practices and um in

34:10

order to prevent chronic absenteeism and truency. I think what it comes down to

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is kind of what I said before about looking at the data. I think we have to

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look at the students as individuals. I think there's no like perfect formula

34:27

that fits all students. It's not like a one-sizefits-all. Um there's probably formulas and you

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know um templates out there for like how to go about doing family engagement things and all the stuff that you have

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to do the home visits and the whatever. But I think bottom line is looking at

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the humanity of the student and the humanity of the family and what barriers

34:51

they're facing and what can we do to help break those barriers down to get them in the door more. Whether it's the

34:58

they're thinking how they think or don't think about attendance or school or if

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it's like a physical thing like a car not having transportation. Um all of those things and there was a

35:11

question about transportation. We we haven't investigated using community transportation for our students yet.

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That's something possibly that might come down the road if we, you know, get a chance or, you know, we just haven't

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come there yet. But we did, we are trying to connect our students with what we have to offer them. And sometimes

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it's a listening ear and sometimes it's something that could actually fix their problem or help them fix their problem

35:38

um or give them the tools whether it's the education or the literal tools to to

35:46

fix the problem. So I think just look at the look at one

35:51

individual student and start from there.

35:57

It's good. All right. Uh, Whitney, Barb, anything

36:03

else? Wow. Wow. You had me at the snow story. Um, so that was um, you know, you two

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are are clearly um, I think, um, I love how you're you're

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going about you're just getting started and you have these students that you

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really want to see succeed right in front and you're just thinking about how do we help that to happen? But you come

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about it in such a um and I would say researchbased but also

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such a a an appropriate human way of being respectful and kind um and you

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know re maybe healing a some of the bonds that have been broken. Maybe um

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trying to break some of the stereotypes that the school is here to be one more thing that's telling me I'm not doing a good job as a parent. Um, but just being

36:57

like human like alongside saying, "How do we do this together?" And I love the idea that you walk in with a plan, too.

37:02

Um, there's just so many good things there. I I just want like the whole country to hear that. So, we'll figure

37:10

out how to do that soon. Um, you all just keep at it. What great work that you're