

PRESENTATION TO THE COMMUNITY AT THE ANNUAL BUDGET PRESENTATION
TUESDAY MAY 11TH 7PM

TO THOSE IN ATTENDANCE HERE IN PERSON AND TO THOSE ONLINE TONIGHT, WELCOME.
THANK YOU FOR JOINING US AND FOR THIS OPPURTUNITY.

NORMALITY. IT IS A WORD THAT HAS MOVED TO THE FOREFRONT OF OUR CONVERSATIONS. WE HEAR IT IN THE NEWS. WE HEAR IT FROM GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATORS AND OUR SCHOOL OFFICIALS. IT'S A WORD BEING USED TO DESCRIBE THE "GOAL" TO ACHIEVE. THE RETURN TO WHAT ONCE WAS, THE COMFORTABLE, TRADITIONAL, FAMILIAR.

THERE IS NO MISCONCEPTION THAT THE LAST EIGHTEEN MONTHS HAVE BEEN HARD. WHETHER, YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE ABOUT HOW AND WHAT ACTIONS WERE UNDERTAKEN, THE DEALINGS WITH A GLOBAL PANDEMIC IS HOPEFULLY, THANKFULLY MOVING FARTHER AND FARTHER EACH DAY INTO THE DISTANCE OF THE PAST. BUT ITS EFFECTS ARE ALREADY BEING SEEN, ALREADY BEING FELT. SOCIAL DISTANCING, MASKS, HYGIENE AND SANITATION, THE VIRTUAL INSTRUCTION OF EDUCATION TO STUDENTS. WE SEE IT. WE LIVE IT.

AND SO, WE LOOK FOR THIS "NORMALITY" TO RETURN AND BECOME THE FINAL ACT TO END ALL OF THIS CHAOS. BUT IT ISN'T. IT IS ONLY THE START.

SEE WE CAN NOT LOOK AT THIS SITUATION AS SIMPLY A WINNING OR LOSING PROPOSITION.
BUT INSTEAD, WE MUST LOOK AT IT AS A QUESTION OF "ARE WE AHEAD OR ARE WE BEHIND".

HOW MANY TIMES THIS YEAR HAVE WE HAD TO PREPARE OURSELVES, OUR FAMILIES, OUR WORKPLACES, THIS DISTRICT, FOR SITUATIONS ONLY TO HAVE THE RULES AND REGULATIONS CHANGE, OFTEN AT THE LAST MINUTE. TO HAVE THE GOALPOSTS MOVED. TO HAVE TO RETHINK AND ADJUST EVERYTHING AGAIN FOR THE SITUATION AT HAND BUT WITH A NEW PERSPECTIVE.

IN THESE FEW MOMENTS OF TIME THAT MYSELF AND THE FOUR OTHER CANDIDATES HERE TONIGHT HAVE BEFORE YOU TO SPEAK FOR OURSELVES, I WOULD PONDER A GUESS THAT MANY ARE GOING TO TELL YOU THE WHO AND THE WHAT THEY ARE? IF YOU WANT TO KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT ME, PLEASE LOOK AT MY BIOGRAPHY, OR RESUME OR MY NOTES ABOUT MY PAST BOARD EXPERIENCES AND FUTURE BOARD GOALS THAT I HAVE SHARED WITH THE PAPERS, OR ONLINE, THRU A WEBPAGE.

BUT TONIGHT, I WOULD RATHER YOU UNDERSTAND NOT THE WHO, NOT THE WHAT, BUT THE WHY.

IF I ASK MYSELF, WHAT IS NORMALITY? HOW DOES ONE RESPOND? IF IT'S THE RETURN TO FIVE-DAY IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION, WELL THE SUPERINTENDENT AND THE BOARD OF EDUCATION HAVE ALREADY IDENTIFIED THAT AS A PRIORITY AND ARE ACTIVELY WORKING TOWARDS THAT RESOLUTION. EVEN NOW IT HAS PARTIALLY BEEN SET IN MOTION WITH A RETURN TO FOUR DAY INSTRUCTION CYCLE IN THE ELEMENTARY BUILDING.

IS IT A RETURN TO THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES, SAME ACHIEVEMENTS, AND ACTIVITIES THAT WE DID BEFORE ALL OF THIS? COULD WE, SHOULDN'T WE, QUESTION AND ALWAYS STRIVE TO BE BETTER? BETTER THAN WHAT WAS, "NORMAL"? OR DO WE SIMPLY RETURN TO WHAT WAS?

THERE IS GOOD AND BAD IN EACH AND EVERY EXPERIENCE, BUT IT IS WHAT YOU TAKE FROM EACH EXPERIENCE AND BUILD UPON IT, THAT IS WHAT IMPROVES US, THAT MAKES US BETTER.

BESIDES, WHAT COULD WE POSSIBLY HAVE LEARNED THRU MONTHS OF COVID ISOLATION?

WELL, WE LEARNED THAT OUR RURAL BROADBAND AND INTERNET ACCESS IS SUSPECT AND LACKING. THAT IT NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED AND ENHANCED TO BENEFIT STUDENTS AND OUR COMMUNITY

WE LEARNED THAT WE CAN EMBRACE NEW CREATIVE AND ADAPTIVE LESSONS AND TECHNIQUES FOR THE CLASSROOM TO ENHANCE AND IMPROVE THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

WE LEARNED HOW FORTUNATE WE WERE THAT THE DISTRICT REALIZED THE NEED FOR TECHNOLOGY AND EMPLOYED A ONE-TO-ONE PROGRAM TO PUT CHROMEBOOKS IN THE HANDS OF STUDENTS. WHEN THE PANDEMIC BEGAN OTHER DISTRICTS WERE HARD PRESSED TO FIND SUCH TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE, WITH LONG LEAD TIMES TO ACCESS SUCH DEVICES IT HINDERED THEIR ABILITY TO ASSIST STUDENTS, WHILE WE WERE PREPARED

WE LEARNED THAT VIRTUAL DISTANCE LEARNING IS A POSSIBILITY AND WHEN PARED WITH POSSIBLE PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS WITH SIMILAR COMMUNITIES OR DISTRICTS IT COULD BE USED TO OPEN UP ADDITIONAL ACADEMIC AND GROUP BASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR STUDENTS

WE WERE REMINDED THAT SOCIAL INTERACTIONS HAVE A DRAMATIC EFFECT ON STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH. THAT AN EMPHASIS TO THE MENTAL HEALTH OF A CHILD IS A CRITICAL ASPECT TO THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND WELL BEING

WE EXPERIMENTED AND IDENTIFIED THAT THE LIVESTREAMING OF ACADEMIC AND ATHLETIC EVENTS OPENS A REALM OF POSSIBILITIES TO STUDENTS, PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS IN WHICH TO ENGAGE, CELEBRATE AND STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY

AND FINALLY, WE SAW, AS WE FELT, THE EXTREMELY LOVING AND CARING TEACHERS, BUILDING AND DISTRICT STAFF, THAT WE HAVE AS THEY DISPLAYED THEIR DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT TO THE MISSION AND FOCUS OF THIS INSTITUTION AND ITS STUDENTS.

SO AGAIN, I ASK YOU, WHAT IS NORMAL?

BACK I MY DAY IT WAS NORMAL TO LEARN TO SWIM IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASS AS IT WAS CONSIDERED A LIFE SKILL THAT YOU COULD BE CALLED UPON TO UTILIZE WHEN LEAST EXPECTED TO SAVE YOUR LIFE.

TODAY NORMAL IS INSTRUCTING STUDENTS ABOUT CPR AND THE USE OF A DEFILULATOR AS A LIFE SKILL THAT YOU COULD BE CALLED UPON TO UTILIZE WHEN LEAST EXPECTED TO SAVE ANOTHER LIFE.

SO, YOU SEE, EVERYTHING CHANGES. NORMAL CHANGES. OFTEN IN WAYS WE CAN NOT PREDICT, NOR FORESEE. THAT, IS WHAT THE LAST FEW MONTHS HAVE REMINDED US OF. THAT WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO PREPARE OUR YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE READY FOR ANYTHING EVEN AS WE LOOK AND MOVE FORWARD. THAT WE CAN FORM COLLABORATIVE BONDS BETWEEN STUDENTS AND TEACHERS, PARENTS AND ADMINISTRATION TO IDENTIFY AND UTILIZE THE TOOLS, STAFF, AND FINANCES WE HAVE, EFFECTIVELY, PASSIONATELY, CREATIVELY. TO SEEK DIFFERENT AND ALTERNATIVE IDEAS ON HOW TO WORK TOGETHER, AS A COMMUNITY, TOWARDS ONE MISSION, TO ONE GOAL:

“TO BE A LEARNING CENTERED COMMUNITY DEDICATED TO THE DREAMS OF OUR STUDENTS, ENSURE EACH STUDENT REALIZES HIS OR HER UNIQUE HUMAN POTENTIAL, AND CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TO SOCIETY.”

MY NAME IS ERIK POLKOWSKI AND THIS IS WHY I AM RUNNING FOR A POSITION ON THE AKRON BOARD OF EDUCATION. TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. I ASK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION AND SUPPORT ON MAY 18TH.

THANK YOU.