

Margaret:

Good morning. Welcome to our Facebook live chat with Dr. Shank. It's great to be here this morning. It's hard to believe. It's September already. It's been a busy couple of weeks in the district and a lot going on this week. So we'll get right to the news and the updates.

Dr. Shank:

Sounds great.

Margaret:

We had a board meeting on Wednesday and there were a couple of things that we wanted to share from that board meeting. The first was, we had some fabulous presentations from some of our elementary schools, highlighting the work that they're doing around high-reliability schools. We've been talking the last couple of weeks about high-reliability schools and the districts work to move and become high-reliability schools. And Jim, maybe you want to talk a little bit about that work, and maybe some of the highlights from the presentations to the board.

Dr. Shank:

We had two schools present, did a very, very good job. Edgemont and Ethel Boys were the schools that presented and shared some data on how their school is doing and the process that they're using to be a certified level-one in the high-reliability school's process. So when you think of high-reliability schools are working towards... To ensure that they are completing each of those categories that are within there. And there are five levels that ensures a guaranteed and viable curriculum, that it's a safe place to attend school, that there's collaboration, that there are various factors within the art and science of teaching.

Dr. Shank:

They certify that and there's a process that they go through. It's not me, it's not Margaret that's certifying the schools, it's actually the Marzano Institute. And so it's a very research-based reliable process that our schools are going through. And the great news around this board meeting is, we have two schools that indicated the other night that they are ready and they're going to go through that certification, and they were pretty excited about that. So more to come on high-reliability schools, I know you're working on a website piece on that.

Margaret:

We are. And we hope to have that posted early next week, that'll give a little bit more information about those five levels. It'll also provide just some more background information about the whole concept around high-reliability schools. And the reason that we are working so hard in this area is to increase student achievement and make sure that all of our students are learning and that all of our students are being successful. So it's really, really exciting, and it's great to have so much energy and focus around that work and those goals.

Dr. Shank:

That's right. And I know you're going to talk about this in a minute, but because we're very focused on high-reliability schools, the board took some additional actions the other night, and we're going to go over those. So why don't want to start with-

Margaret:

The first was a resolution around HRS and, and PLCs.

Dr. Shank:

That's right. And so what's in policy now is that we will walk through those five levels that we'll implement those in our schools and also use the default model of professional learning communities. So some pretty important pieces to making sure that we're focused on the right things, which is learning.

Margaret:

And I think that resolution also shows commitment from not just the district administrative staff and the district as a whole, but also the school board that just is a real commitment to making sure that we're focused on helping our kids be successful and that all students are learning across the district. So that's really, really exciting. And then the other action that was taken with some changes to the calendar to allow for some opportunities for some stock training around HRS .

Dr. Shank:

That's correct. And oftentimes when you roll out an initiative in any institution or organization, some people will get trained and then others will have to wait. And so our initiative with this is to try to make sure that everyone's trained at the same time, that they received that information. So we modified the school calendar just a bit and that'll happen in January. So January 17th is Martin Luther King day, students are not in school. However, staff are usually doing professional development type work. So we're going to capture that day for HRS and PLC work. But we also asked the board to give us a second day and that's the 18th. So this is an announcement to parents that the 18th will be a non-school day at school. It was declared as a virtual learning day, and we will get more information out on how that'll occur. We've got a few months to prepare for it, but the whole idea there is that the purpose for it is to get everybody on the same page at the same time with the high-reliability schools model and get that I guess, more equally implemented across our system.

Margaret:

And there's always so much energy and excitement. I think when you can have the entire district learning and working together around some of these important ideas. So I think those are going to be two great days and that school calendar we have updated, and we have posted the new version of the calendar on the district website. So if that's something that you keep on your fridge, you may want to just download that and print out the new copy and we'll provide updates and reminders as we go. Like we always do, but that's just something for parents to be aware of. The other exciting things that happened at the board meeting were around facility planning.

Dr. Shank:

They were, and we were able to again, get engaged with the cooperative strategies, the board approved the cooperative strategies learning process that we'll go through together, input from our community. So their focus is, well it's, I guess it's probably more three-pronged this time around it's going to do the same things that they did before, but we've also asked them to focus on the supplemental plant facilities fund levy. They're going to look at our facilities again, they're going to look at our boundaries and how it is that we serve our students within our current construct. And then also make

recommendations around what it is that needs to be accomplished in terms of Iowa Falls high school, Skyline. These things that are still there that we have not been able to address yet.

Dr. Shank:

So we're looking forward to that. And so I would say stay tuned because you'll be asked to participate, and we really want your participation. I would ask that if you're involved, to please become so, we need everyone's help. These are the community schools, these are your schools if you will. And we want to do what's best for our students, create environments for them, where it is that they can succeed, find success and feel like they're being supported by their community.

Margaret:

It's very, very important and we'll have more information once we get that timeline set. But in the meantime, we have posted information on the district website where you can go back and look at the work that was done previously. And in 2019, when they came in before they... I think that that project took about nine months. I think we had three community meetings, there were a number of other ways that parents and patrons provided input through surveys. We also had a steering committee of community members that helped shape and build those recommendations. All of that information has been collected and is posted on our district website, and also on our school websites.

Margaret:

So if you go to one of our websites, you can look for that little news article about facility planning and click, and go back, and just revisit some of those recommendations. And then also just become a little bit more familiar in the process, but there's going to be very similar opportunities. We'll have some more community meetings, we'll have some more surveys and outreach. And again, there are some just really critical needs that we need to get addressed in the district. And the only way that we can do that is really by bringing the entire community together and working, arm and arm to come up with solutions so we can get some of these issues fixed.

Dr. Shank:

We really need people to become champions for their schools and advocate for the things that they think will be best for their students when they attend those. And that not only includes the learning process but where it is that students come to school every day, I think is important.

Margaret:

Absolutely. So we're really excited about getting that, getting that work underway. Now, we did get a number of questions... And before today's Facebook live chat, so we'll get started with those. Well, one question was about... To the CRT, that idea's been in the media. I think we addressed that question last time in our last Facebook live chat. But this week there was a question just about what's that balance between teacher's personal beliefs and then expressing those in the classroom. If you want to try and address that.

Dr. Shank:

I'll do my best to do so. We're fully aware that teachers, staff members. They have first amendment rights and they don't necessarily check those out the door when they walk into a school building. However, they are required by policy, the code of ethics, the laws that are associated with what it is that

occurs in a school that are set by the legislature, the rules that are set by the state board, and they need to follow those. So you still retain your rights, but to do the things that are correct, I guess I would say within the rules and the law is that you're able to come in and teach. But what you can't do is express your own personal political beliefs upon children. And it's pretty clear in each of those types of settings within the policy, within the ethics.

Dr. Shank:

In fact, I took time to print these off and I always want people to be aware and educated around these issues, especially when they're so prominent in the news. And sometimes the best place to go is at the source. And I think last time I spoke to... Please become familiar with the standards associated with US history, the things that are being taught at any high school level type of current events. And I think you'll come across those things pretty clearly that, the political activities that teachers are allowed to do are somewhat, I would say constraint around the ideas that the sharing and the espousing of your own political views is not allowed. And so that's something to be very aware of.

Dr. Shank:

I know that over in Skyline high school, principal has been very clear about this statement. It actually, I think, is in their handbook and some syllabus says all classroom studies will be curriculum-related, objective and impartial, in compliance with state and federal law. And so that's something to consider that we work on and try to make sure that everybody is informed around those things and do our best to comply. And so that's a long answer. I apologize, but we're doing the work to make sure the kids receive the education that it's intended for them to receive.

Margaret:

And again, the key thing is just getting informed. Sometimes those headlines, whether they're on Facebook or in the news, they don't actually capture what's happening in the classrooms. So becoming familiar with not only those standards but also policy. We've got clear policy that's been in place for forever about if there's objections or concerns about what's being taught in the classroom. It's easy to get those addressed right at the source point in the schools.

Dr. Shank:

That's correct. And we want to reinforce one other thing and that's in... Because the question will come up, "what happens if I encounter some issue that I may disagree with?". And we need everyone to understand that if there's something going on in a classroom and you have a concern that you express with the teacher, and if it doesn't necessarily get resolved with the teacher, then you take that to the school principal and work towards resolution. We always want to give people an opportunity to resolve problems, but work together in collaborative manner to do that.

Margaret:

No matter what the problem is, we do have a little infographic that we've got posted that helps parents navigate the system. Sometimes parents may not know how to address something and they can, start at the school with the teacher and then go from there. That would be another place where people can get more information. So we also had a couple of questions this week related to COVID and just how that's looking in our district. And we've had relatively few cases so far, which is great news.

Dr. Shank:

We're still in good shape, and we hope that we stay that way we reported. And one thing I want to make sure is that people understand we'll report midday on Monday, and people say, "why are you waiting till Monday?" And the reason being is sometimes not all reports are submitted as quickly as real-time. It might take a moment for a principal to do that as they work through the process, and so we might not see it. And so I've talked about, "let's do this Monday and look back towards how it was that week planned.". But so far things are looking very good. On Monday, we reported six cases. There's not been a tremendous number, and we'll get those to you Monday, but we're holding our own. We're doing well. It's not zero, if you're wondering, there are some cases, but not enough necessarily to make any changes in our plan.

Dr. Shank:

Of course, we're doing everything we can to be careful, and we want kids to be in school. And so that's our number one as we're going to do everything we can to stay in school, stay safe and try to keep things as normal as possible because we feel that's a great benefit to our students. And so far, I think there's lots of happy feelings, lots of good things going on around school, just with my walkthroughs and things that I've done. There's a great vibe if you will, about what's going on with school.

Margaret:

And we did get one question... Our focus is really being in-person learning and operating schools as close to normal as possible. But there was a question while you were reevaluating information, if COVID cases increase. If there's new guidance. And I think we said that our plan is a living document and that we will make adjustments as we need to.

Dr. Shank:

That's correct. So we've watched the data. It's my favorite topic every day, I wonder where we're at with COVID and will COVID interrupt and interfere with our learning processes. And so, as things evolve, we would certainly make adjustments as necessary and needed. I think it's important that people realize too, that there are other illnesses right now that are of concern. I heard from East Title Public Health district yesterday that we need to be careful with SARS-COVID-two. It's out there amongst us, and RSV is an interesting... I guess I would call it an outbreak. I don't want to use that word, but there's enough going on to cause some concern. And so just be aware of that amongst your own children, that there are these other things that are happening to.

Dr. Shank:

Go ahead.

Margaret:

And I think that those basic health guidelines that we've heard so much about over the last year and a half, of washing your hands, staying home, if you're sick, trying to keep your distance, coughing into your elbow. Those are really critical with COVID, with SARS, with any of those as well. And then also, as we head into the kind of cold and flu season, is to keep those things in mind so we can all stay as healthy as we possibly can.

Dr. Shank:

I know we had a question about reporting and what that might look like. So let's clarify that if we will. I don't know that you've done it yet, Margaret, but on our website, on the tile that's there, that talks about our back to school plan. You notice a link and it takes the individual to the plan.

Margaret:

We did add that link this morning to go right to the data as well, so that,

Dr. Shank:

That'll sit there. And I want to reiterate for me and for the decisions that need to be made around operations, that the thing that's most concerning to us is current infection rate what's going on by the numbers within our own schools. And that's going to feed our information. I want everyone to understand that we need to be clear about how that information is received, and we are only given what we're given. And so if there are cases out there that go unreported, for whatever reason, somebody doesn't want to either get tested, or there's no report. That in itself, I guess, gets in the way of making sure that everything's accurate and perfect. And we just know that not all the data that we receive is as timely, I think as people might want. And it might not be necessarily as... I don't know if it's not inaccurate, but it may not include every case that's out there.

Margaret:

It's really just a point in time, just a snapshot.

Dr. Shank:

That's it.

Dr. Shank:

And so just keep that under your hat, if you will. And understand that if there's six cases like we reported on Monday. Some of you might think, "Well, no, there's got to be more because I heard this or I heard that", and it very well could be. It's just that case hasn't been documented, it hasn't been reported and so therefore it may be different. It might look different and that's a common theme around the state. It isn't necessarily here or in our neighboring districts where I came from [inaudible 00:18:29], it was the same thing. Those cases came in as they did, and people would say, "Well, I know there's more than that.", and I said, "There probably could be." So anyway, long speech on that too, again.

Margaret:

Well, and also... I mean, every district is reporting data differently or including different information in the metrics that they're reporting. And it really is going to differ from district to district and each district has to decide what information is most relevant and correct. A couple of other questions about what... The first one is about the quarantine periods, whether we may rethink the quarantine policies or quarantine guidelines that are currently in place in the district.

Dr. Shank:

Right. And it's a great question and I appreciate it very much. I would tell you that all things considered with COVID have to flow through what's best for kids. And if we end up in a quarantine situation, that things become, I think like, some last year, not necessarily here, but around where we're quarantining

healthy students, multiple times. There has to be a reconsideration of what it is that we're doing because our number one charge is to educate kids. And if they're healthy and they're being sent home because of contact, then we're going to have to look at what we're doing. You're going to hear me say most often that our procedures and our processes must support what it is that we're trying to do first, which is teach. We can look at those and reevaluate what we're doing, but we also want to make sure that people feel confident on the other side, that when someone needs to be isolated, that we're doing the right thing there as well.

Margaret:

And then the last question was just about masks and why can't teachers ask students to wear masks in their classrooms.

Dr. Shank:

We're still following the CDC recommendation, and I use the word recommendation because that's, what's in the language for mask-wearing. Masks are recommended in the district at this time, that would include any of our entities, be it a classroom or a department or wherever it may be, out on the field or whatever the case may be. It's still recommended meaning that if you'd like to wear a mask, you can, and if you're not wearing a mask, we ask that you follow the other types of guidelines that are out there. But at the moment, there's no mandate.

Margaret:

Great. And then you did get a little bit of information from Eastern Idaho Public Health about the possibility of booster that is coming up.

Dr. Shank:

Very good. Great question. The commentary there is, it's coming. So there'll be a booster shot that's in the works, I don't have a date for that type of rollout. It's just more or less, it's coming, stay tuned. The follow-up question is that will we do a clinic and we will, we'll make that available to those that are eligible to do so. Now, when I say eligibility, I want to bring up too, that it's becoming clearer, I think every day. And it was a comment from yesterday that the age five to 11 vaccination is coming. So it's a matter of getting it approved and then available and out to parents that want to have their students vaccinated. So I would stay tuned to that, it's coming. I think vaccination is the key, and it has been in our past history. When you look at MMR and some of these other things, it's vaccines that helped us help us get out of that.

Margaret:

We heard from a joint statement from all the hospitals in the region, really encouraging folks to get vaccinated. And again, that is... And also we've heard that from the governor so, that's definitely a key piece. If you're fully vaccinated, then quarantine is really not an issue. So that would be something else to think about for especially those high school kids. So we'll move on to some other questions. I think those... just want to check my phone... but I think those are all of the questions that we've attach... I mean, that we've received around COVID. But we did get some questions, other questions. One is about the ELL kindergarten program. We used to have a kindergarten program specifically for English language learners. And that was discontinued about two years ago. We got some questions about why that was done.

Margaret:

And the reason we did that was because the number of students who were qualifying for that program, and you had to meet certain qualifications in order to take part in that program, had declined. And we also started expanding the number of extended day kindergarten programs that we were offering in schools across the district. And we were able to fund those with the special K-three appropriation from the legislature, that's really focused on that K-three literacy and reading. So we were able to offer those same opportunities in schools, across the district. And it actually increased the amount of instructional time, those little kids received, because we didn't have to transport them from one school to another. They were able to receive those services right in their home school. And I think kids are just generally more comfortable in their home school.

Margaret:

So while that program went away, the services to those students and the commitment to making sure that we're building their language skills and their reading skills did not go away. As I said, those extended-day kindergarten programs have been great and they're across the district so, that's a good news... Is thing on that. We did get a couple of questions, there are a lot of parents who are planning for the future. So we've got a couple of questions about the school calendar for the 2223 school year. Do we have a first day of school yet?

Dr. Shank:

I'll have to look and see, I don't know that we do. The calendar work hasn't been completed yet, but I would suggest that you look at your calendar. It's probably going to look somewhat the same and you can plan around that date now, but be prepared in case there's a change.

Margaret:

And we usually try and get that final calendar out, December/ January so we'll definitely keep you posted on that. Another question is parent-teacher conferences. Do we see parent teacher conferences coming back? They're not scheduled and embedded in this year's calendar, but is that something we might think about in the future?

Dr. Shank:

Okay, anytime there's a change you want to evaluate to see how that change went. And so I would say that where we would be in the evaluation process, probably we'd have to take a look at it at the normal PT conference time period, and see if we're following up on what it is that we said we do. And so I think probably, later on, we'd have more of a statement, but if it fails I mean, that's the question... Is would we go back to the same? And I think it's a possibility I'd hate to land on today and just see how it goes. The idea there is that of course we want to have more engagement, more involvement and not less. And we end up with less than, that's not necessarily a good thing.

Margaret:

The whole idea around making that change was making sure that communication was happening throughout the trimester and throughout the year, rather than just on one or two designated days in the school calendar. So I know our teachers are always working hard to connect with parents, whether kids are doing fabulously or it may be if they need to struggle and our teachers are really trying to reach

out and connect with parents. So we'll keep doing that. One more question. Is the district ever going to offer a Spanish immersion program and what would I as a parent need to do to make this available?

Dr. Shank:

Well, that's a great question. I would just say as of today, since coming in, that hasn't necessarily been a topic of conversation currently, but it's not something that we would perhaps not investigate. So I would say continue to ask that question and we'll see where it is that we go with it. But right now there's not necessarily a plan to do so, but there might be value around adding that.

Margaret:

And we're constantly evolving... I mean adding new programs, new offerings. So, to K-12, it's amazing the array of opportunities we have for students in the district, from pre-K all the way to college credits in high school. It's pretty amazing. We definitely have a lot going on. We have our hands-on with what we're offering now, and we also have lots to celebrate too.

Dr. Shank:

We do, there's a ton going on. Lots of great things going on in our schools, athletics is doing very, very well. I heard this morning, I was down speaking with our Sharon Cole, our music person. And she shared with me that it looks like it's our 40th anniversary for the musical and seven brides, and seven brothers has come up as an option. So there'll probably be more information coming out on that. So 40th year and then a wonderful musical to boot, pretty excited. I hope I didn't steal anybody's [inaudible 00:27:55], but I liked that type of activity that we have.

Dr. Shank:

And student engagement is so important. We want kids to be able to express themselves and use their talents and abilities and other environments outside of the classroom and when they do so, and they have a multitude of opportunity in front of them, they just do better in school. And so we want to make sure that we're doing everything that we possibly can. Which means I'll lead into a little bit. We've been talking about career technical education a little bit too, and how it is that we can expand and work through our programs that we have. So we're going to do that.

Margaret:

Exciting. And then we also have coming up on the 21st, the state of the district address. Do you want to mention that people can mark their calendars and then we'll provide more information that maybe give folks a sneak peek?

Dr. Shank:

Very good. So on the 21st, we're going to do our first state of the district address for the year over at Iowa Falls high school in the little theater. And what we'll do there is we'll talk about where it is that the district's performance is. Where it is that we are going and whether the goals might be around that type of progress. So there'll be multiple looks at it, it'll be student performance. We'll probably talk a little bit about financial. We'll talk a little bit about facilities. Each of the goals that we've been discussing since we started and give people an opportunity to ask questions there. And anyway, looking forward to doing that, that's the first one. We'll do several many across the district and in the community, as well as doing

This transcript was exported on Sep 13, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

some online things. But the whole notion there is hopefully get people together, talk about learning, talk about why we exist and how it is that we can get better at it.

Margaret:

That's the key. That's the reason we're here.

Dr. Shank:

Exactly.

Margaret:

So it doesn't look like we got any other questions for this week, so want to thank everyone for joining us today. And again, just a reminder that we do download these videos and post them on the district website. If you have a friend or neighbor who doesn't Facebook, please encourage them to watch the video, they can do that on their own time. So have a wonderful weekend, and thanks again for being with us today.

Dr. Shank:

Thank you.