

I. Transcript from 9/11/2023 Conversation with BAC Commissioners and new Cleveland Metropolitan Schools CEO Dr, Warren Morgan took place. Key discussion points below:

Commissioner Peak: Doctor Morgan, how's it going?

Dr. Morgan: "It's been it's been good; it's been busy but great, especially to be here at East Tech; when I was here before, this was one of the schools that I supervised, the central neighborhood Glenville neighborhood it's always near and dear to my heart, so it's been great to be back. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but the biggest focus that I've been really focusing on is listening to our stakeholders and doing a bit of hiring for our executive leadership team and just really preparing to report as we've been out in the community listening."

Commissioner Bialosky: What has been the most surprising?

Dr. Morgan: Nothing has been surprising, my experience in leading in urban school districts across the country, working in policy at the White House and also at the state level, these are some of the issues that surface in public education, so things such as safety are something that comes up quite a bit, parent engagement, a lot of people that want to make sure that we not only get the right size of the district but that we also have the right programming in schools. Also making sure there's equitable access no matter what side of the city you live on so you hear some different things around there are programs where they're so far, I have to travel that far, or my neighborhood doesn't have this program."

Commissioner Bialosky: Are some of the trends showing the east side has gained less from the recent initiatives than the west side of the city?

Dr. Morgan: What I can say is no; some of our newer buildings are on the west side rather than on the east side. Some of the programs in terms of pathways and high schools, each high school, including this one, has different pathways, but maybe some of the high demand, if you're talking about like engineering, aviation, or STEM, most of those, are on the west side. We really want the community to help dictate what the community wants in our schools, so I'm also hearing a lot about what people would consider vocational education. That's like the old word for but a lot around what I would call pathways, and there are some programs or pathways not available in schools, such as cosmetology.

Commissioner Bialosky: Is tracking problematic for students? How do students get to choose where they want to go?

Dr. Morgan: "It needs to be the programs; the program needs to be available and accessible, so it should be the interest; if a kid says, hey, I love putting things together, or I love science in math, great, choose that program. It's high quality. But it's not tracking them and saying, this is the job you must choose. And even if a kid, let's say a kid enjoys cosmetology, and that's a program they want to do, and it's a skill they pick up, it's a skill that they pick up, that they're now trained to do that, they want to do that, but it's not saying you're going to be a barber or a profession for the rest of your life. These are the things we need to look at about the workforce development but making these choices for our kids too soon is wrong, especially when we're not asking kids in other neighborhoods and other schools to make the same choice."

Commissioner Schuster: It seems to me that neighborhood schools are an opportunity to preserve neighborhoods. You know, there's always something going on around the school. It sort of livens up the neighborhood, gives opportunities, and can become a center for people to go to and take advantage of. Why do we never talk about just plain old neighborhood schools anymore?

Dr. Morgan: I would say we do have neighborhood schools within our district, I think, what you're also getting at with open choice. We also have families who can choose wherever they want to go. I would like to see, I mean, one of the goals I have, this really big picture when I think about what I want to accomplish as a CEO and my team year is to make sure that there is high quality, accessible schools no matter where a kid lives."

Commissioner Bray: Will the PACE program be continued, and have we exposed students to jobs around climate change and green jobs?

Dr. Morgan: I will start with your first question about the PACE program; one of the things I've been asking is for impact, and just what our return on investment is and how many students are involved in it, so there is still more to come. I have no plans right now to change any of those programs, but I am looking at everything and just seeing, you know, the impact of seeing what we can have. I also haven't had a lot of conversations around renewable energy or also builds our pathways they can come about, and so that's something that would be interesting to really look at to see what pathways even nationwide are being developed in high schools.

Commissioner Bialosky: Any financial updates?

Dr. Morgan: "Our financials are just one of the things we're looking at as I continue to do our listening tour and even just assess where we are as a district. You know the district

has been you've been extremely blessed by having the federal ESSER dollars, those were the Covid relief funds, and so there was a lot we were able to do over the past several years and a lot of different things we were able to do to provide for our scholars, next year the district that will be making decisions on moving forward on what goals are important and what areas we need more support in. I can imagine that coming forward I will be coming to this group to share exactly."

Commissioner Schuster: Do you know how the district went from kindergarten to eighth grade? What are your thoughts about it?

Dr. Morgan: There are pros and cons to both models and research that supports either one of them. I would like what the community wants to be our guiding light. Not only what the communities are asking for but also where we're going. So, when we set goals around what we are looking for in terms of post-secondary readiness, what are the goals we're looking for in terms of ELA and math proficiency? If we set those targets and really figure out the strategy that will help us get there, that'll help us dictate where we are going.

Commissioner Peak: What do you think about as we look at buildings that may not be useful for the school district? How do you look at it? You know, maybe some of the buildings are more meaningful in the community than those eye sores.

Dr. Morgan: I'm all for it, and it's a prime opportunity for the district to partner with our Councilmen and women around what are some of the needs in the community and what are ways you know some of the buildings can't be repurposed so when there are great examples like what happened in Longfellow it works.

Commissioner Schuster: Are there studies to show what is the best use for school buildings?

Dr. Morgan: I think we need clear strategies and clear goals for the buildings. The goal dictates the strategy.

Commissioner Peak: What are your thoughts about Collinwood High School?

Dr. Morgan: "So well, I was there and of course it was one of our warm warmer days of this school year so far and we still have some buildings that do not air conditioning and so it was always just my style of leadership if there are things we're going to be asking our kids then it's something I can do as well and I also wanted to make sure I can assess it for myself so that was really helpful for me and I was able to see a hardworking team there, small but mighty. There weren't many students there, to be honest I don't think that there were even a hundred kids there that day in that large building but

everyone really hardworking and really caring for our kids. When I go into any building I'm always asking questions of the principal like "What is the enrollment?" "What are some of the programs what are some of the things that you're doing?" I'm in the beginning process of assessing how I feel about Collinwood and I know that there's been a lot of energy there over time. I know right now, at this moment it's a highly underutilized building and so you know whenever you're looking at utilization based on square footage and how many kids and it's highly underutilized.

Commissioner Peak follow-up: How can we repurpose these buildings? Maybe there are some other opportunities as well for that building to be maintained, not just looking at it as a school building but something else, a multipurpose space.

David Riley: "We look at public-private partnerships and this requires a lot of creativity, so that's when we roll our sleeves up, you know, get organized."

Executive Director Houser: Does the District have a plan to rectify the buildings that don't have central air?

Dr. Morgan: We have some operations goals and financial goals we are looking at as well.

Councilman Starr: The district has a high graduation rate, but only 10% in my neighborhood have a post-secondary degree. Most of our kids are not at their reading grade level. I think a K-8 model is hurting our children. What are your thoughts?

Dr. Morgan: Our graduation rate, though we made some traction on it compared to large urban areas, we are still on the lower end. Even with the graduation rate, we can do better, and the big part of that is on track measures along the way. Now with the new House bill students won't be held back and there are also studies that show when kids are held back and also demotivate them to move along. So, a big part of it is making sure there's grade level content taught at every level, and once again, the goals that we're talking about there are actual goals; smart goals have tracking suits along the way so everything you share with me it resonates with and it's important.

Commissioner Bray: What about tutoring? I thought Say Yes was supposed to help with helping students along the way.

Dr. Morgan: Tutoring does help; we are looking at effective strategy in high dosage tutoring at the district. There's also been some funding at the state around tutoring and so there are some providers who have been helping with that. The ACE program is awesome, and it is supposed to have support on the way so perhaps those metrics and Say Yes has been a great partner with their work with College Now.

Commissioner Peak: How do you feel about safety in new school buildings? Elevators, air conditioner, cameras?

Dr. Morgan: Our safety measures in terms of the step the district has taken over time is ahead of a lot of districts, our safety measures a lot further, and so safety is always something they just top them by for us, you know you know we have not had any um major incidents to start this year but we're constantly looking at those procedures I know Chief Dotson is working on some additional measures around not only just entry but also cameras with things that cameras can do to help us monitor our buildings and keep it safe. The biggest thing we've been dealing with of the past year has been around the safe passage, and so we're grateful to the mayor's office that they've really helped, and each of our different boards has really helped about actually two in from school those are where the incidents that happened last year and the ones that unfortunately ended in fatalities wow. We were, too, in from school, and so there's been a lot of partnerships with RTA, you know, other entities within the Cleveland police department to help Us think about that safe passage, and we have another partnership this year with the mayor's office around the Safe Passage.

Chair Don Brown: What's on your list that you can call the year successful?

Dr. Morgan: First, one of the things I've been telling every group I've talked about is the **three C's**: clarity, so, clarity of where we're going, **clarity** of purpose, **coherence**, how do all the systems within the district align to meaningful goals. And then **core**, which stands for the instructional core, what are we doing to ensure that we support, protect, and accelerate what's happening between the teacher, the student, and the curriculum the teachers teaching? So, it's really around those three Cs a year from now, though what I would say successful looks like. (1) Engagement is big, really connecting with the community, and I mean talking with our families, talking with students and even just community members our community is so smart. Our community knows what our community wants and so I get so many just gems of knowledge whenever I'm just listening. There's a lot of alignment around what the community wants and some of the things that I know need to happen. A year from now, I will be able to have a detailed report as to what I've learned and the listening to and how that's informing the next steps (2) I would have my team fully hired, particularly the executive leadership team and (3), to this point around goals that we do have clear measures of what we're looking at over the next five years and also how that looks like year by year.

Commissioner Bialosky: What percentage of the leadership team was placed in what was left to do?

Dr. Morgan: There will be a team of seven, and we have three in place now. We're in the process of filling the Senior Chief of Education position, so we can talk about academic ownership. Chief of Staff, General Counsel, and Chief Communications.

Chair Don Brown: You've mentioned engagement a few times, and I think, on a personal level, you're very likeable, and you won't have any trouble doing that, but do you have any other unique strategies that might get the community involved in decision making?

Michele Pomerantz: We also found the community needs maybe something that I've been part of earlier two years, and I was pleasantly surprised to see coffee and coffee chats today. I think that Doctor Morgan is listening in such a safe place. It's creating a relationship beyond just that one that time for, and the community is thankful.

Dr. Morgan: So, the coffee chats have been helpful. We're doing town halls, which would be larger. We've also done small groups of different groups, so, like when we met with the past years, there was a group the pastors, and we did listen to our that we're using a platform called Let's Talk.

Commissioner Schuster: In similar-sized urban districts, it seems to me there's always something to be learned from others either when they make mistakes or when they do things great. How do you go about forming yourself? I guess there's no overarching organization.

Chief Karen Thompson and Dr. Morgan: Council of Great City Schools - I think is one of our strongest partnerships, and they'll come to Cleveland and help in the office. They're just terrific, they help with working on the audit that's coming up. That audit is part of my entry plans I could say that it's a safety and security audit so they're partnering with us to look at our schools, look at how we compare to member districts and share what we're doing well but also give us recommendations so that's good.

Commissioner Schuster: I have noticed in many new schools that the library doesn't have any books.

Dr. Morgan: There's been a huge investment, I think, with the district in partnership with Cleveland Teachers Union to make sure that we do have libraries or at least functioning libraries where kids can't use them to check out books, but just as much as we want to invest in libraries and the importance of it, we have to realize and put all of us in this category, even though all of us probably range from different generations, the way we utilize libraries is so different the way our kid's access information now.

No Public Comment

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 PM

Photo from the 9/11/2023 meeting on page 8:

