

Wildkit Way Transcript: Season 2, Episode 3

Announcer ([00:03](#)):

Welcome to the Wildkit Way, a podcast that gives the mic to Dr. Marcus Campbell, the superintendent of Evanston Township High School. Join us on this audio journey. As Dr. Campbell shares his stories and insights and has honest real conversations with people who make ETHS and our community, the incredible place it is.

In this episode, we explore the ETHS district goals and their significance in shaping the experiences of our students in their high school journey. Dr. Campbell is joined by ETHS Board President Pat Savage-Williams and ETHS staff member Alicia Hart. Together they discuss how the district goals serve as the driving force behind meaningful outcomes for ETHS Wildkits. Let's jump in.

Marcus Campbell ([00:57](#)):

Hello, Wildkits. This is Dr. Campbell, superintendent here at ETHS with yet another podcast, and I'm glad that you are able to join me. And I also have some new guests joining me today. And this is our Board president, Pat Savage-Williams. And in the middle here is Ali Hart, our new student transition coordinator, and I'm happy to have both Ali and Pat with us in this podcast. And we're going to be talking about district goals and how the district has come about adopting a new set of goals, how our Board of Education went about doing that, and Ali's here because we want to talk a little bit about how those goals get implemented and what they look like in a day-to-day sense here at ETHS. And so Ali's going to help us with that. So I'm going to have them introduce themselves and share their pronouns. And then we're going to get started. We'll begin with Pat.

Pat Savage-Williams ([01:59](#)):

Thank you Dr. Campbell for that introduction. As you said, I'm Pat Savage Williams. My pronouns are she, her, hers, and I am honored to serve as the president of the Board of Education for this amazing district.

Marcus Campbell ([02:14](#)):

And we are honored to have you, Pat.

Alicia Hart ([02:17](#)):

I'm really glad to be here. My name is Alicia Hart. Everybody calls me Ali. I use she, her pronouns, and I'm the New Student Transition Coordinator, which means I have the joy of welcoming new students and families to Evanston Township High School, best job ever.

Marcus Campbell ([02:33](#)):

And Dr. Campbell, he, him, superintendent. And we're just going to jump right in. So Pat, the Board myself and along with the Board of Education, went through a process for adopting a new set of district goals. And so can you share a little bit about how the goals came to be this time around?

Pat Savage-Williams (02:57):

So as you know, we have goals, and it was time for us to renew the goals, and we knew that was coming up a year out. So we spent time thinking about how to get information from our stakeholders because we wanted to make sure that the district goals don't just represent a small part of our district, that they are really a part of the whole district. So we wanted to make sure that our goals reflected who we are, what we value as a district, as a Board, and really connected to the students. We were always looking at the academic achievement outcomes of our students. What can we do in order to make this academic experience a positive one for our students? So that's what we looked at and we spent several months talking to different sets of people, teachers, students, community members. We did a survey just so that we could get as much information as possible. And then we finally took all that information, sat down as a Board, and just went through all of the goals and the language and wordsmithed like crazy. The superintendent search process, as you very well know...

Marcus Campbell (04:22):

I think I was a little familiar with that.

Pat Savage-Williams (04:25):

...had taken place prior to that. One of the big parts of that was community engagement. So we were able to hear from different parts of our community in these small focus groups and get information that we were able to use as our base for our goals. So that was really helpful.

Marcus Campbell (04:52):

It was a very, very smart thing to do, to have that as a sequence in the process, hire a new superintendent and then use that information to really develop district goals and have that process almost one and the same. Yeah,

Pat Savage-Williams (05:06):

It was a pretty thorough process. I feel really good about the information we collected and the amount of data and anecdotal stories that we had to choose from.

Marcus Campbell (05:20):

And so Ali is here because she's talking about how does the district "live and breathe" these goals. People think that the Board runs the school. The Board is a governing body, and they set a framework for the district, and the administration actually carries out those policies and those procedures. And so Ali

here as a staff member can share a little bit about how when the Board sets a goal for the district, how do we do that in a day-to-Day Ali. I don't think I've ever called Alicia a day in your life. In my life.

Alicia Hart (05:59):

Well, I mean, I think in that same way that we have goals that are at a district level, that when they practically get to the teachers, students, and staff, maybe we don't always know that that was directly the result of a goal, but it's an important connection to how we're building our community engagement, being fiscally responsible, all of those pieces. And so as we get the guidance and it's shared down, we're trying to interpret, well, how do I meet that goal within my area, my sphere of influence, the way that I do things. So a community engagement example is fairly easy for my line of work. I'm really connected, but then there are ways like fiscal responsibility where I have to think a little bit more creatively. And so I'm excited to share some examples about each of those areas. When we work with new students and families, we're able to connect to all of those goals, but that practical work is so important to making the district goals a reality.

Marcus Campbell (06:53):

Yeah. So let's talk a little bit about goal one then. Pat, can you share just the thinking behind Goal one and then Ali, what does that look like? Goal one is equitable and excellence in education.

Pat Savage-Williams (07:05):

Absolutely.

Marcus Campbell (07:07):

Why that goal and Ali, how do we put that into place?

Pat Savage-Williams (07:13):

You're right. Goal one is equitable and excellence in education. And it is the first goal for a good reason. It is the most, well, they're all very important goals. There are four goals total. This is the goal that is directly connected to the academic achievement of our students. And I'm just going to read it because all the words are so important. It reads as an anti-racist institution and recognizing structural racism as the most devastating factor impeding the achievement of students. As you can see, this goal is directly connected to the data that we are constantly reviewing around the academic achievement of all of our students. We disaggregate our data by race because we want to know, how are kids doing and are we meeting this goal?

Alicia Hart (08:12):

Absolutely. And one of the ways that, I mean, any data that I look at within my area that's evaluating the success of what I'm doing, we're going to disaggregate by race. We're going to look at these identities

and ensure that we're meeting the needs of all of our students and families. So that's one practical way that I'm using this. But another way that you might feel this impact as a student or community member is if we think about Wildkit Futures Day. So every year as part of Wildkit Futures Day, we have our freshmen class spend the day, the ninth graders with Calvin Terrell. And so it's a way that our ninth graders get introduced to this foundational equity work and how we as a district try and be about that. And so that's a great day with students. And then each year in the evening, we invite our parent and community members to come and be a part of that as well. So that's just one example of how we're engaging students and families and being a part of that understanding.

Marcus Campbell (09:07):

Yeah, that's a great example, Ali. And having the kind of conversation with students that Calvin has where he talks a lot about anti-racism and hate and all of the isms and phobias that come. It's really important. Goal one is also sort of the frame for why we do a lot of the things that we do. And sometimes I guess it gets a little controversial, but we're okay with that because we know that we have a lot of students that need the same opportunities, that all students should have the same opportunities in our district.

Pat Savage-Williams (09:48):

I go, one encompasses the values that we have as a district, and I would hope that this is one of the places that someone can look on our website and see that goal, recognize it is a district goal, and really understand a lot about what the beliefs and practices of ETHS

Marcus Campbell (10:14):

Are. And let me just say, and Pat, I've said this to you privately. I'll say it publicly too, I don't think I've ever seen a district with a goal like this. Yes. It just doesn't exist. And so evanson has always been progressive and on the head and the lead, and a lot of things that's happening in education. We've done that for the last 60 years, and this Board is no different. And in writing a goal specifically like this, and I am definitely appreciative as a superintendent to be able to work in a district where the Board of education would draft a goal like this and maintain it.

Pat Savage-Williams (10:50):

Absolutely.

Marcus Campbell (10:51):

So goal two, which also is an important goal about wellbeing, and we're going to move through these quickly, but we needed to spend a lot of time on goal one because that's where we spend a lot of time.

Pat Savage-Williams (11:02):

We do. We spend a lot of time on that goal.

Marcus Campbell (11:03):

It's foundational.

Pat Savage-Williams (11:05):

But you're right, goal two is also extremely important. It is around student wellbeing, and we've learned a lot about student wellbeing in the last few years. We know how important it is. We've always known how important it is. So goal two is to provide an environment that is centered around student wellbeing. That is the goal.

Marcus Campbell (11:25):

Very straightforward. So what does that look like, Ali?

Alicia Hart (11:28):

Yeah. Well, I mean, I'm a member of the student services department. I get to work with our counselor, social workers, psychs, that team, which people, I think often attribute to the team that provides the student wellbeing, but it is an "all of us" goal within ETHS.

Marcus Campbell (11:42):

It is an "all of us" goal.

Alicia Hart (11:43):

All of us are part of supporting that, but I think our department really brings that energy to this work, and I think that's particularly important. I also have the joy of supporting our freshman advisory study hall and sophomore advisory study hall and looking at our four year advisory model at ETHS and the way that advisory can really provide a model of support that brings the team and family and student together to really make sure a student is connected and cared for in ways so that they're able to be academically successful. And I think that is just foundationally what the wellbeing goal is about.

Pat Savage-Williams (12:20):

Right!

Marcus Campbell (12:21):

Yes. Centering student voice and focusing on student wellbeing is something that you have taken as a part of your work for many years I've known you, but also part of our larger staff. I think every teacher, every staff member plays a role in student wellbeing, and that's something that is not new to ETHS, but it

has definitely, definitely been critically important. The years just prior to the pandemic we found, and actually now after the pandemic, and then with so much happening in the world today, it's still such an important focus for us along with Goal three, which is around fiscal accountability. Pat, you want to read that one too?

Pat Savage-Williams (13:05):

Absolutely. So this is our goal for us to really think about our values and how we spend our money. So this goal reads prioritize equity, integrity, and transparency in our financial stewardship by employing value-based budgeting. So as a Board, we talk so much about what we believe in and what we value. So this is our opportunity to make sure that we put our money where our mouth is, basically. So that's extremely important.

Marcus Campbell (13:45):

Yeah, that's what we do. We provide the resources to where they're needed. That's essentially what that, and being responsible with taxpayer dollars,

Pat Savage-Williams (13:56):

Being responsible, yes.

Alicia Hart (13:58):

When we do things like campus tour days with new families or current families who join us and even community members on those days, it's really a joy for me to be able to walk people through incredible facilities and highlight these amazing resources that we have available in our school because of the fiscal responsibility and the support that we've received from the ETHS Foundation to help ensure that. So it's really a gift to be able to take all of that responsibility and make it visible and tangible to students and families as they visit us on those Saturdays.

Marcus Campbell (14:31):

I'm glad you mentioned the tours. We just recently held our Distinguished Alumni Awards, and so we take all of the distinguished alums through the building, and I cannot tell you how our alums who graduated from here in the '60s and the '70s and the '80s have come back to ETHS and have marveled at what we as a district have been able to maintain the kinds of programming and facilities and what we're doing now. Most schools in this country don't have a planetarium. We have a planetarium. And you look at the programs and they will say - a lot of kids don't realize it while they're here - when you go out after you graduate from ETHS and you begin to talk to your peers about what their high school experience was, it will not compare to what students get right here at ETHS. And we have the Board to thank for that. We have the taxpayers in Evanston to thank for that. And it's just a remarkable thing that we're able to accomplish here at this high school.

Alicia Hart (15:29):

Yeah, it is one of a kind.

Marcus Campbell (15:31):

One of a kind.

Pat Savage-Williams (15:31):

It is one of a kind.

Marcus Campbell (15:32):

Absolutely. I guess lastly is our community engagement and partnership goal. You want to read that one?

Pat Savage-Williams (15:37):

Yeah, certainly. Well, this is important as well because we live in a community, we live in Evanston, and it really does require all of the efforts of our community. And we recognize that many agencies in Evanston really take part in our district. We are really considered the lighthouse of our community. So the goal reads, strengthen family and community partnerships through communication and engagement. So this is my "It Takes a Village" goal. It does take a village.

Marcus Campbell (16:17):

Yeah. We are a family-driven community. I like to think of ETHS as the center of our community, and we are, I'd say that. And the amount of students who attend the school whose brothers and sisters, families, grandparents, all who've gone through these hallways, have created a real sense of pride for ETHS, which also reflects in the level of partnerships and how many people in this community really want to support us and advancing these goals and reducing these racial disparities in supporting student wellbeing. There's so many partners in town who are looking to help us achieve these goals. And Ali, you want to share a little bit about that, too?

Alicia Hart (17:09):

Well, and I think about our families, particularly parent engagement, and I think about our Latino Advisory Committee, our ETHS Black Advocacy Network. Those parent groups that we partner with- our boosters. The boosters are so critical in helping stay connected on behalf of their students, but on behalf of other students, as well. And being in the Welcome Center, this is where many of those parent groups meet.

Marcus Campbell (17:33):

We are in the Welcome Center, everybody,

Alicia Hart (17:36):

So that many of our parent groups meet in this space, feel connected to our building and facilities, and really help to give us constant feedback about what we're doing that's working really well, what can be improved, and how we can be successful as partners. We also work with agencies in the community, nonprofits. We work with middle schools. I work with all of our feeder schools. The District 65 schools.

Marcus Campbell (18:00):

District 65 is definitely a partner.

Alicia Hart (18:02):

All of the private schools in the area as we try and transition students and have them build that sense of belonging here in ETHS. So they're critical partners and help us to have really great attendance at our Incoming Freshman Information Night and Course Request Night and helping get students connected and academically successful and ready. So incredible to have partnerships like that, to really make our students high-school ready and hopefully for us to then be able to send them on that post high school trajectory. So we hope that our students are seeing themselves in our school, in the staff, and also in those partnerships that we have, as well.

Marcus Campbell (18:42):

And we are always appreciative of the efforts of our partners who have access to resources to assist us in making sure that all of our students are careful and are getting the high quality education. Well, I want to thank both of you for joining me during this episode. I hope that this was informative for our community, for our students and staff and our community members. And thank you, Pat. Thank you for your work as a Board member. How many years have you been on the Board now?

Pat Savage-Williams (19:17):

10 years.

Marcus Campbell (19:18):

10 years.

Pat Savage-Williams (19:19):

And I also want to thank the other Board members. Absolutely. I feel like I have an incredible Board, very committed. It is a great Board. Definitely committed to this work, to the equity work, to these district goals. And I just really feel like we're such a strong team. Team of eight.

Marcus Campbell (19:42):

Team of eight.

Alicia Hart (19:44):

It's great to work in a district where the Board is setting this kind of high expectation with clarity, right? Yes. So that hopefully we can achieve this for all of our students at ETHS.

Marcus Campbell (19:53):

That's right. And thank you, Ali, for all of what you have done these many, many years in your role and even prior to that role as a teacher. Thank you for what you do and for all of the thought that you put into making things like our district goals and reality every single day.

Alicia Hart (20:16):

It's genuinely my pleasure

Marcus Campbell (20:17):

I know it is. You work like it is. And thank you all for joining us, and until next time, thank you. Thank you very much, everybody.

Announcer (20:27):

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