

students, and then building upward to reflect how we want the students to become adults, and then becoming those adults ourselves so that we can guide them to be that - it's a fantastic approach and it sounds like it's a multi-generational plan that Iowa's taking.

Roorda: Ya, it absolutely is and specifically to our district I can say it is very iterative. We take a lot of things out, we float them for input, we come back to refine and revise; so I feel very solid on our Portrait of a Learner and duplicating that process for Portrait of a Leader which we're in the infancy stages of that, then we can back-map to say, looking at our data, where are our kids shaking out, are we meeting those expectations, are we not meeting those expectations, and then we can build our professional learning plan around our data that sets up where we're really doing well and where we need to bolster up.

Mullen: Now do you feel that other communities, if they were to take the same path that you're taking, as a state, as a school district, with this Portrait of a Learner and a Leader; if other communities were to follow suit, and this is a tough question I realize, but do you feel that they would in turn create something very similar, if not almost the same as far as what types of aspects, what types of word choice, attributes, character traits, that their own Portrait of a Learner would become, or do you think that each community going through this process would end up with a product very unique and different based on their community?

Roorda: I hate to say but I think it depends. I think there are going to be some pieces that are going to be consistent across all, because we're really looking at those 21st century skills, those executive skills and function skills, and once again the state of Iowa has done a great job, we have those 21st century skills identified for us through the Iowa Core curriculum, so I think that probably there would be threads of similarity amongst all the districts but then I think there might be descriptors within those domains that might be unique to a community and a district. I think it's kind of both - that would be my perception of what would happen.

Mullen: I agree because I often consider states like the State of Washington versus the State of California versus the State of Maine, and everyone's taking a similar approach but nobody's saying this is the absolute right way to identify exactly what we want out of our students. But they still seem to have that trim, like you're saying, these 21st century skills are throughout all of these states. It really seems like everyone is getting to the same goal in their own way.

Roorda: Ya, I would agree with that, just because there has been a lot more upsurge in conversations around social-emotional learning that we need to pay attention to that a lot of the similar vocabulary is coming out, but I do still think there's value in getting out and vetting within your local community their values and perceptions and that way it's everybody's document. That's one thing I'm really proud of with our Portrait of a Learner - it's not a school-based document, it's our community-based document and we have folks referring to it out in our community because they were stakeholders within those concessions so I think that's really cool in fact.

Mullen: That is very cool. I love the community aspect of developing those expectations for students as they're becoming our workers, our humans, our citizens, and in fact for states that may be starting that conversation for themselves and may want to look to Johnston School District for advice and support, is there a place where they can go and find this information and more of it?

Roorda: Absolutely! You are welcome to always go to our Johnston Community School website. It's www.Johnston.k12.ia.us and there's our resources section and it will have for parents the parents section and the students section, the Portrait of a Learner.

Mullen: Fantastic. I have to thank you for speaking with me. This has been really enlightening to hear school districts really putting to task, social-emotional learning being so important, that you taking those steps and making it happen - it's really great to hear and I'm excited to see what Johnston does in the future.

Roorda: Well, Greg, I appreciate you letting us share our story. It's a story in progress, which is true probably with all schools and people across the country, that social-emotional learning is that foundation for our kids. They have to have their social-emotional health in check in order to be ready to be productive learners. So we really take that very seriously in our school district and our state and it's very important so I appreciate you giving us the platform to tell our story.

Mullen: Thank you very much, Ms Roorda, for being on the program.

Roorda: Thank You.

[End Interview]

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