TEXT ON SCREEN: Connecting with Improvement Planning

BRENDA WILSON (Superintendent, Ottawa CSB): You know when we look at the research, the most important person is the teacher in the classroom but the second most important person is the principal in terms of looking at the student achievement data and looking at what makes a space a learning space where students are using inquiry and using the four C's in collaboration and learning those skills of their strengths and weaknesses coming together with other people's strengths and weaknesses to make that collaborative decision-making and they're creating new knowledge and creating difference kinds of products and the process of learning to learn has become a very big focus. And I think if you have a principal who is working with the teachers in the building, in addition to the educational assistants, the custodian, the office administrator, that whole school approach to collaboration, building consensus and then what do the new pedagogies look like when you walk into a classroom. So the big difference, I've noticed in my work with the leaders in our buildings, is that focus on understanding what the change in pedagogy, over time, looks like when you walk into a classroom. Does the principal understand the observation and able to reflect on the practices that have a lot to do with how students achieve in the long run?

It's very important that our principals commit themselves to the learning that their teachers are doing and that the principal can identify which teachers are on the journey to achieve their own personal learning goals and how can we facilitate that through our professional learning community. So sometimes the release time you give can go to teachers on your own staff working together to co-teach and co-plan but quite often now we might want to send teachers to a learning session, maybe on technology, maybe on the use of technology, maybe on a mathematics network where they're working with other schools. We also have partner schools and many of our schools work in triads so that they know that the learning that they're doing can be shared across the system but the learning that they need can also come from across the system. So we have a great alignment, I think, in our Board from the Board improvement plan being created from the school improvement plans which are created from the needs of our schools collectively but also the autonomy to improve your own school and focus and measure the things that you're working on but they come from the big ideas that are coming from the Ministry directive and I think the school effectiveness framework has brought us together with that. So if you use choose the indicator of success that is around 21st century learning in a classroom or if the indicator of success you're focused on is using rich tasks that allow for student voice and student choice, connecting things to the real world, if that's what our school is looking at, it aligns with what our system is looking at and it aligns with what the Ministry of Education is looking for.