Good Afternoon

My name is Tod Morris. I am principal at Rayen Early College Middle School in Youngstown. I have been a principal in Youngstown for 8 years. I have been a teacher for 20 years. Prior to House Bill 70, our district struggled academically and in district management. Battles between our local school board and district leadership were in the news constantly. Opening school with staffing and programs in place became a struggle. Under house bill 70, we have clear leadership at the district level. We have someone who can move through the red tape to make decisions on what is best for students. We now make decisions based on data. Academic decisions are made from NWEA district assessments. These assessments help make strategic decisions on intervention, lesson planning and differentiation. Our weekly teacher based teams are fully involved in analyzing data and making academic decisions based on that data. As administrators, we have weekly data calls where we look at academic and discipline data.

The implementation of our instructional framework with the use of gradual release of responsibility as an instruction approach has been a great success. All of our teachers have been trained in this instructional approach. All district leaders have been trained in monitoring its effective use. Instructional coaches have been provided to give teachers support. Prior to HB 170, we did not have a curriculum map or scope and sequence.

As principal, I have heard of only good things from our parents on our school district leadership and in the way that our schools have been operating.

The district has held over 100 parent meetings to assist the district in meeting the needs of our students. Parent involvement in our schools has increased dramatically with at least two parent events every month. Parents have direct lines of communications with school leaders and teachers.

Over 90% our students left our ninth grade academies with all ninth grade credits. Almost all of our high school graduates from Chaney, East, and Youngstown Rayen Early College High School have received $6,000 dollars YSTAR Scholarship money for college from the Youngstown Foundation.

We have doubled the size of our Early College Middle School program to increase the opportunities for students in this program.

We have dramatically reduced the number of suspensions and expulsions and instituted programs of restorative justice, social emotional learning curriculum opportunities, character trait study, PBIS framework, and second year implementation the MTSS process.

The greatest taking from the whole house bill 170 experience is that the focus is now on students and not adults. All of our conversations are based on how we can best help students succeed academically.