

*This interview was conducted on September 10, 2025. While every effort has been made to capture the conversation accurately, it may not be entirely correct. For the most complete and accurate understanding, please listen to the full episode on TheMontclairPod.com.*

**Farnoosh:** Ruth B. Turner. Welcome back to school and welcome back to the Montclair Pod.

**RBT:** Thank you for having me again. I appreciate it.

**Farnoosh:** We are all parents here. How was your first week back at school as superintendent?

**RBT:** I honestly love back-to-school time. It is what I call our new year. I love the energy being able to see students and also the fruit of all the summer planning and things of that sort.

I was very pleased with our opening day. The team worked really hard, both in the buildings and central office to make sure that we were ready to receive ours. Scholars and overall, I thought it was a wonderful opening. I got a lot of positive feedback from the staff saying something about this year felt different, and we were just really, it was exhausting, but we were very happy to welcome students and to be able to interact with them and cheer them on was a wonderful opportunity. So we're excited.

**Farnoosh:** You mentioned this summer, I know that you're about three months into the job and you did dedicate a lot of time this summer to listen and learn to families and the community, and we're wondering what were some of the themes that came out of those meetings this summer that you will be implementing this school year, potentially?

**RBT:** So part of the listening and learning it's actually a hundred day plan, to get to as many stakeholders. As I possibly can, we're documenting the feedback, we're getting some of the concerns that they have, and really mapping them out to see patterns and to be able to evaluate what systems are effective, what systems need to be restructured, provide excellent CU customer service to our community. So it's been a lot of doing that. And November, during the November board meeting, I will do a presentation of all the feedback, whether it's in person survey and how that's going to inform our action plan moving forward.

**Mike:** And as the year begins are there any specific changes or improvements that parents and students should expect to see? Have there been tweets to lunches, for example

**RBT:** and. In a small way. It's really difficult coming in July one, so much is already in motion. It really takes a whole year to plan for a school year. It really does. And one of the things I did not wanna do is coming and make major changes without really understanding how systems are working here honoring some of the historical work that's taken place here. So I don't think you'll see substantial change, but one of the changes that I. Have underscored what my team is. This idea of us being responsive and responsible. And I know some people might say that's like low hanging fruit, like making sure that we're connecting with our students, with our parents, right? Responding to their concerns, making sure that we're meeting with them, responding to their emails. Things of those sorts you'll see immediately in terms of the food. We still have the same food service vendor, but we have been working with them. Even I have to say, my first day Lauren and I went to every school that we possibly can, I think two or three that we went on Friday. I have to see things for myself a lot of times because I recognize that our perceptions are reality, right? And some folks are saying, this is the best thing that's ever happened while you have another 10 folks saying this is the worst thing that's happened. But as we toured the school met with students, I was very pleased when I smelled food, like fresh food being cooked for lunch. To the point where we made a comment like. We're hungry and I went to the kitchen. We saw f fresh vegetables being cooked. We saw potato wedges not frozen, seasoned them and being cooked. So we're working with our vendor to ensure, along with the guidelines, we have very strict guidelines from the USDA that we are providing the most nutritious and hopefully. As delicious as it possibly can be with our restrictions to our students so that, they're able to have a satisfied belly and they can, pay attention to instruction and have the energy that they need to do the hard work of learning.

**Farnoosh:** Earlier you were saying that you wanna respond and react to a lot of the parents and everyone's emails. What are some of the best ways for people to get your attention? And what are the things you wanna hear about most, right? Like at your level, what are the issues that you wanna address? Because there's some things that can probably be resolved with teachers and faculty, but when we're talking superintendent, what are the issues that parents should be bringing to you?

**RBT:** So I would say we have our email NPS feedback at Montclair k12 nj us that we are checking all the time. It's being jotted down in our Google spreadsheet that's going to give us, after the a hundred day of as complete picture as possible. What I would. Expect to come to my level is systemic changes, not necessarily individual concerns. Now, individual's concerns if they don't get resolved at the school level, with talking with the teacher, talking with the administrators,, certainly then it should be central office to help families. But in terms of systemic changes or

systemic concerns. I would hope that still discuss with the principal, but also make us aware of it. So as we are planning and re-imagining what schools will look like at Montclair, we can take that into consideration.

**Mike:** Now I guess the big issue that came up this summer, and that's on everybody's mind, is this \$11 million budget deficit. Can you tell us a little bit about that situation, what about it? You've had some time to digest it, obviously and explain to folks how we got here and what we're doing.

**RBT:** Sure. It hasn't been scheduled yet, but we will also have a follow up to that town hall meeting to talk about any additional. Information that we have and also what our plan will be to address the deficit. So just as a recap, Dana Sullivan, who is our interim ba and myself, we started July one. And we were hearing a lot of any smart superintendent on their first day, they wanna know the financial health of the district, for yourself. You wanna know because you have so many ideas, so many things you wanna do and it takes financial resources to do so a couple days before I started, I was reviewing financial records and things of that sort. As we began that work, it was very clear to us that things would just did not seem to really add up in a sense. So the more we looked into it, and I ensured that her time was freed up to just concentrate on that the ba, the previous BA had responsibility for food service, transportation, building some grounds. I took that all the way, gave it to our assistant superintendent to say, I need the team to focus strictly on the financial wellbeing of the district to really dissect and have a clear understanding. Of what situation we're in. And it takes a considerable amount of time. We're talking about through a lot of purchase orders and a lot of financial records and things of that sort. And then we're getting invoices from folks that are saying, Hey, you still owe me money. And I'm talking about, I'm not talking about 10,000 here, 5,000 here. And we started keeping a record of all that and reconciling those invoices to purchase orders, what was paid out, what wasn't paid out, things of that sort. And that's where we added the numbers. S six regionals, no secret. We owe them right now, \$4.5 million from previous year. Not this year. We are current. On our payment to them this year, but \$4.5 million that we still owe them. There was payments to the utility companies that is still owed.

**Farnoosh:** Salaries. There's teacher salaries. 2.3 million employee benefits. Just a technicality, how do you not pay teacher salaries? How does it get to a debt of 2.3 million? What? It's if I don't, if my employer doesn't pay me, I don't know.

**RBT:** Everybody got paid, so everybody got paid. So let me just make sure that we don't create that myth. Everybody got paid. There's never been a time where we did not make payroll. What happens is just think about your personal budget. So let's

say it was budgeted. For \$50 million, but it's really \$60 million. So what happens since in a lot of these instance, and I'm not going to give my thoughts maybe I will, my thoughts and opinion. What I think happened is that you're building a budget and for whatever reason, you under budget so that at the end of the day you have a balanced budget. So there's a practice of where. Previous accounts would carry over to the next year because those invoices, you can't pay invoices if you don't have the cash flow to pay them. Does that make sense? So you did pay insurance, you paid salaries, but there were other things that you were not paying that then carry over year after year.

**RBT:** So other things didn't get paid as a result of this. Under budgeting for salaries, we just owe people money.

**RBT:** We owe people money. Yep.

**Farnoosh:** We've read about potentially taking a loan from the state. Can you tell us a little bit about that and is that something you're seriously considering and what is attached to that? There's oversight that comes with that. Are you worried about that, potentially?

**RBT:** Very good question. So part of the things that we've been doing from the time finding out that, oh my goodness we have a legitimate deficit that has carried over to the 25 26 school year. And just to give additional information, and we also had to look at the 25, 26. Current budget to ensure line by line that it was appropriately budgeted. And no surprise teacher salary is under, budgeted, healthcare is under budgeted. So even in the 25, 26 school year, we are facing an additional deficit of four to four to \$5 million. Just to give the whole picture. And again, this is going to, we're also gonna share this again in the next town hall. I just wanted to have a more clearer picture along with a plan, not just coming to a community and saying, Hey, this national. So if we are looking in totality about \$18 million to make us current. Is what we're looking at from previous year to the correcting the current budget year, if that makes sense. And this is after being conservative and making some reductions that we possibly can. So one of the things is there's no conference in travel. We've cut that out for this year. We've also looked at cutting. Back in whatever else we can, whether it's supplies, I ca I don't have the list in front of me. What I'm telling the systems that we have to live within our budget. And I'm gonna be very honest with you, I don't know where the disconnection is. We have a legitimate deficit and we cannot behave as if we don't have a deficit. And this is the part that is really concerning for me, that sometimes I'm still getting folks upset about. Certain cuts that we've had to make, but I don't know how they expect us to address the deficit. We can't keep on operating as if we don't have a deficit, and I

think that's good. Part of the historical problem here is that when there has been a request for something that is outside of the budget line, for whatever reason, previous administration would cave in, that is irresponsible at best. And the community has to be in support that we have to be financially healthy. It's, I always tell folks things about your own life, right? It's difficult living in debt, right? Not being able, living paycheck to paycheck, not being able to know whether you're gonna be able to pay your mortgage or your rent or your car note. So I have a responsibility as a superintendent, unfortunately, to be the bad guy in most cases, to say. Even though people will say in the past we've always figured it out. No, we haven't figured it out. Because we've just kicked the kid down the road.

**Farnoosh:** My blood is boiling for you. It's also, it is boiling for the many taxpayers in this town. And so where are we on the financial audit? Because this is inexcusable to some extent. Like how is this happening? It seems like this is a pattern. There have been claims that there was fraudulent activity. We're not saying there were, but like how are we gonna get to the bottom of this?

**RBT:** Lemme clarify that because it's easy to have an opinion when you have no clue of the appropriate information. I will be the first. I'm a true teller. There has been, we even have a person assigned to us through the state to help us through this. She herself, one verified that the deficit that we're claiming is in fact true. We're like, hooray, great. We knew that. And the other fact is she sees no evidence of fraud. And I wanna be very clear about that. There's no evidence of fraud. Fraud is one of the most easiest things to find. You follow the dollar, right? We followed every dollar. There's no missing money, right? We followed every single dime. And as I said, it is really incompetence, it's bad accounting. And it's also, and I wanna stress this, it's also administration's inability to say no.

**Farnoosh:** What are they afraid of when they say no? What is the fear? You have no fear in saying no. I get that. I get that, and I love that. Why?

**RBT:** I can't have a fear and say no, because I have a greater responsibility. I don't have a responsibility to one family, 10 families. 15 families, I have a responsibility to over the, over almost 7,000 students in our system. And one of the reasons I would hope that I am the superintendent, 'cause there's a level of trust, right? That I have to do this. But what I tell folks is that I would love to do A, B, C, D. We don't have the resources to do it and folks are going to have to really support that, right? And I think it's time for the community to think why is it that we've had a revolving door?

Farnoosh: What do you think about that?

**RBT:** I would like the community to tell me that I'm, I've been here two months. But I can tell you, everything in organizational psychology says, you gotta feel there's a problem here. There's a problem here. I'm talking about a collective problem and we have to begin to work together and not against each other. I'm not saying no because I want to intentionally harm students or not, give this particular club the club that they want. I'm looking at the bigger pictures that we do not have the resources.

**Mike:** Cutting clubs and small ticket items is one thing, but we have a real substantial deficit here, and it sounds to me like you're gonna have to clean house in a major way in order to balance the books.

**RBT:** But we can't, so I have a, I have an issue with that, and I'll tell you why. I've, I have worked in educational administration for many years. I worked with very complex systems. There is barely any fat to trim. Trust me, I'm a true teller. As a matter of fact, in some areas we're understaffed. Buildings and grounds being able to keep up with the needs of our buildings. We are understaffed, right? But we have a budget deficit. We can't, there are programs and resources we don't have because we don't currently have the resources to do so when folks say that, I'm telling them, show me right where we could trim, quote unquote what fat there is to trim without compromising. The educational opportunities that our students are going to get. And I welcome anybody to walk alongside with me on that. So that's a concern that I have. But to your point, Mike, is that when you say, cutting clubs is, should be something that we all should support because I'm trying to avoid cutting personnel and cutting any core instruction to our students, but I'm still getting pushback about that even though we have a deficit. So help me understand that.

**Mike:** So this is a revenue issue it sounds like in your mind, as opposed to. A a cost cutting issue. There's no, there's nowhere. I'm sure there's places to cut, but efficiencies to be found,

**RBT:** and we're working on that. We're working on that. We're looking at our transportation, our routing systems, right? We're looking at making sure that we're timely in RFPs ahead of time so that we can get the best cost saving contracts and not impact services. Again, when you come in July one that's already done, the timeline is gone. So we are looking at those that will hopefully save us, money down the road. But I also have to be concerned about fund balance. We have no savings in a sense, so I'll speak plainly. I have to find a way to build that up, right? We're gonna need capital reserves, our buildings in order to, to continue making improvements and maintenance of our buildings. There is a lot that we are facing and that we're going to need as a community to come together. And be on, on one page.

**Mike:** You've got this \$180 million bond.

**RBT:** Let me clarify the myth around this bond referendum. We're having a town hall meeting October 16th, and it is all things bond referendum, right? So we are inviting the community to come, whether in person or virtually to learn about our bond referendum, how much money, what we've spent it on so far, the bond referendum is great. It was necessary, but we're talking about. Replacing roofs, which is very expensive. We're talking about boilers, which are very expensive and outdated. HVAC, right? It. There's tons of other things that we also need that the bar referendum does not address because there's not enough money to do

**Mike:.** And, but there's no chance that the bond referendum fills in this \$18 million gap that you're not gonna, can you borrow from? That's not possible, I assume.

Farnoosh: Can the town allocate more money to the schools? Has there, have there been discussions with the new town manager on that potential?

**RBT:** The mayor was really gracious as I sat with her when I discovered the deficit and I associate with our county folks to say, Hey, we're we have a deficit here. We're, we have a problem. And she invited us to come to a finance committee meeting, and Dana and I went and we shared, gave them all the information as we've done with the public and asked for their financial support. I was really hopeful that we would get maybe a million or two. Again, the mayor was very supportive in, even in her plead with us to that committee, to my disappointment. A week or so later, I followed up and, we were told that they're not able to help us, which was very disappointing. I did share with them that, we are married in the sense that families choose to live in Montclair, and I've heard it over and over again because of the educational opportunities, because of the diversity of the community and that our success really impacts them. But nevertheless they would not or could not help us out. Financially, I did bring up pilot monies and again I know there's been a lot of talk throughout the years within the community. That is something I honestly feel that we need to really look at

**Mike:** Can you explain to listeners what that is?

**RBT:** Pilot money essentially is financial resources that the township receives and they also build their budget around it. So it's not as if, sitting and it's comes through having construction and housing available in the area and getting those financial resources through those opportunities and oftentimes. School districts will get some of that allocation. It could be anywhere from a million to 2 million, but I'm not exactly sure what has been the reason why that hasn't really taken place in Montclair. I think and I don't wanna speak for the township, I think it's the sense

that it's one pot of money that they're already using for the township, and that there is not. Perhaps enough to allocate to the school district. Again I'm not exactly sure, and I don't wanna, give the improper explanation for their stance on whether some of that pilot money should be allocated to schools. But that is something that we'll continue to explore. And the other thing is, I, there's so many folks, so many people who are said, we wanna help, right? I'm a parent. I live in the community. I wanna help. What can I do? What can I do? And I've thought a lot about that, right? I joke around and I tell people, let's pass the collection plate. That would be really helpful, right? If we could fundraise \$18 million, that, that would be great. But aside from that, one of the things that I really thought about is I think we need to organize our collective efforts and really begin to address our lawmakers around how schools are funded, because we're gonna continue. We are gonna continue to have this problem, right? Teacher salaries increase just like the cost of living increases, healthcare increases, insurance increases. Even if we stay flat, we're not gonna be able to keep up. So I think about the greater collective effort to really look at how schools are funded and what we can do in terms of advocating with our lawmakers to say, we need to take a look at this is not working for schools. It's not just us. If you see schools around New Jersey. And I've had the pleasure of talking with some of the superintendents where every one of them is facing some level of financial hardship for the most part. So when we think about long term, we really have to take a look at school funding and, because unlike anything else a school cannot really generate revenue. At least not that I can think of in a substantial way.

**Mike:** Do you feel like all the big stakeholders, whether it is you mentioned the town, but there's also the state, there's the teacher's union. Does everybody really get this?

**RBT:** No, I, I don't, I, Mike I, I don't get the sense that there is deep appreciation for the, I don't know, limitations that we are facing. So that's a, that's a. Deep concern for me because every day I'm getting folks writing to me every day, writing to me not to say, Hey, I understand you had to make this small adjustment. Small adjustment to help save somebody. I understand that. I don't like it, but I understand that. No, what I get is, don't do that. Give me this back. We need this back. And I don't know what the thinking is that, to take it from where unfortunately that leaves some folks unhappy. Again my job is not necessarily to make people happy. I honestly mean this. My job is to make sure that our almost 7,000 scholars come to school. And that they're able to read, learn and enjoy the social aspects of schools and to support their whole development. And sometimes that means having to make some choices. These are not even tough. We're not even up to the point



where we're making tough decisions and I'm getting major pushback. That's a concern for me. That's a concern for me.

**Mike:** Did you understand this situation when you first started interviewing for this job?

**RBT:** Nobody did. This was stuff that we uncovered. I had this information. Nobody did.

**Mike:** You basically figured it out when you started going through the books over the summer? Absolutely. Before, really?

**RBT:** Absolutely. There was always concerns every school district, like we, we have to tighten our belt. Not a deficit. But we may have to think about, tough decisions, but a already inheriting a deficit in all honesty, because even this year's deficit is due to decisions made last year by previous administration. We're looking, sitting with about 18 million. That's not anything that I've done,. Sure. To occur, as I said it, it was not my doing, but it is my responsibility.

**Mike:** Speaking of which, obviously our priority is to right the ship, but there's gonna be. Calls for accountability for this and like, how did this happen? And

**RBT:** let's stop that. I think it's a distraction. I'm just gonna be very honest. I think it's a distraction, right? We know how it happened. I don't know how many languages to say that and what we know what happened. I'm a hundred percent certain, and as I said, even now, we have our auditors. We had a great meeting a couple of days ago with department of Education, with the auditors, with our county folks. We know what happened. Anybody looking at the books knows What happened is what I said is, and I stand firm in this, even only being here two months, one is bad accounting. So we talk about, and I don't, I'm not how qualified what, understanding of accounting that the previous BA really had. And then a lot of it boils down to is administration not being able to say, no, we can't do that. Decisions were made after the budget was adopted that provided services outside of the budget. So I'll give you an example. This is just a made up example, right? I'll use something very benign. Let's just say our field trip budget, a clean number is 200,000, right? And then I get requests from five schools that they have to have this field trip and we have parents calling and now this is gonna be an additional a hundred thousand. I'm just using something for night. Instead of saying, I'm sorry, we can't do that. It's not within our budget, they would say,. We'll figure it out.

**Farnoosh:** Just what you said deserves amplification because I don't think we can hear it enough that we did not spend within our means. That needs to be amplified

because as a personal finance author preach it from the hilltops. Louder for the people in the back. Let's move on to talk about communication. I think we've done a lot on the budget and I think thank you for sharing candidly, so much already before you have this public meeting, this follow up. As a parent, I think there's a lot that can be done at the district level and even at the school's level to make. Communication more equitable, frankly. So one PDF sent to you at night talking about how parent night is in three days is a little troublesome, right? Because we want parents to be involved and that's a personal anecdote, but there's so many like that. And communication I think is something that is another low hanging fruit. What are your plans to make this more. Of a communicative district where people, whether you have a language barrier, whether you have really bad wifi, whether you're just really busy and can't read, 50 emails to know the important things as a family.

**RBT:** , I'm trying to model that. I do believe that, as superintendent before or as you make the demand of the rest of the system, you also have to model that. And in doing so, I see many of the challenges, right? Time is always a challenge. It is. I remember last night a couple of us, not just me, finally at nine 30, I was like, I have to stop. I, the people, folks were like, by eight o'clock, they're leaving right? Time is so much that needs to be done. So much that needs to be. To be communicated so much to plan that. I'm trying to set the example of communicating in various different ways and communicating consistently and planning ahead. A lot of a lot of the issues here is that, although. Let's say for example, I'll use something that I can control. Administrative retreat happens every year. Oftentimes administrators are not even informed what the date is until July and so forth. So for me first is setting the example by sharing with them their calendar for the year. And recognizing how much they appreciate that. Imagine how your families would feel, right? Having this information in a school calendar ahead of the year and communicated over and over with. So that is really important to me. Clear, transparent communication is really important. And as I said, I like, for example, what you just shared with me. I don't know that. I don't know that schools, some schools, let me just say, informed the parents a couple days prior. I'm still learning that. Is it because that person was also a new principal in that building who came in July one? Is it, what are the reasons? So really working with our principals, and I'm really excited to do that. To talk about these concerns, and like you said, low hanging fruit. Something that we can make an immediate improvement on is figuring that out. Working with our communication director, not just with central office, but with all the schools, utilizing some of the resources that they have to ensure that their websites is up to date, that every form of communication we can possibly use that we're utilizing it is something that is in the works.

**Mike:**, it seems like so much of this stuff, even the budget stuff is process driven. Like you, if you have a process for communicating to folks, for establishing the budget, then people aren't making it up as they go along to some extent, and people are doing the best they can. We're not saying that it's intentional that they're willfully doing this, but when a real process for this is lacking, then you're gonna have a different process for every person, and it makes. Everybody crazy a little bit. Lauren and I were talking prior to our appointment today 'cause we had our one-to-one, looking at surveying folks to see what is the best mode of communication for you. I remember years ago I did that in a previous school district and to our surprise folks were like, text me overwhelmingly.

**RBT:** , sure. 80% of our families and caregivers said, don't email me. Don't call me. They said Stop the robocall and text me. what was interesting? We had this data. I was excited to share it with the system. Let's pivot. And we were still calling, we were still emailing. And I said, hold on, wait a minute. Why are we still only doing 5% of texting when 87% of our family said text? Text me.

**Farnoosh:** We have a pattern of surveying parents and not taking into actual account the results IE our calendar. So that doesn't surprise us so much, but I agree. Let's make this the year that we listened to parents when we survey them.

**RBT:** Let's talk about that. 'cause I'm glad you brought that up as an example. First, let me get back to the fact that we will be surveying parents and I apologize folks are fatigued, but I promise you that. If we can do it and it makes sense, right? And it's not gonna create harm to somebody else, we will take your considerations. And so one of the things I wanna know is that how do parents wanna be communicated? Do they wanna email? Like I'm an email person, I'm, I'm a parent too. And I used to tell the teachers if it's urgent, text me, but email me. I read my emails, it gives me a chance to see them black and white. So we wanna get an idea. Do our parents prefer newsletters, emails, phone calls, robocalls, and whatever they tell us, especially if it's overwhelming number. We are going to do that. We're gonna share the survey, and I think you've seen that transparency with me. We're gonna share the survey and we're gonna say, here's, after looking at the survey, here's what we're able to do. But going back to the calendar, 'cause I was surprised probably my first week here that I received a couple of emails about the calendar. And I have to be very honest with you because that's all I know how to be. I have never seen so much interest. I'm just gonna say that. A school calendar. What I'm accustomed to is the superintendent administration working along with their counterparts throughout the county or the city, share about school calendar. And it's pretty much similar and we present it to the board. The board generally votes for it. Rarely do they say, go back and reconsider this. I've never heard of a calendar committee. I've never heard seen the

energy around the calendar. So when I first got here, I recognized that it was important for folks. However, I was also very honest in saying right now that is not a priority for me. We, we were dealing with the budget thing opening of schools. I said, but we will have to address that, once we got schools open, once we figure things out. So that is something that we're going to have to address. And I remember being in the tail end of that because I think I might've been here for a board meeting or visiting prior to my start July one, about the adoption of the calendar and what I did appreciate at that time personally. An, an individual in which equity is very important was the idea that, how do we determine what holidays are more important than others? How do we profess the appreciation of diversity, right? And perhaps leave some other groups out of that. So again, it is something that we're going to have to work through. The school calendar, recognizing that I'm very much aware everybody's not gonna be happy with whatever decision is made.

**Mike:** I think that's the issue. You're gonna survey people and get a lot of opinions, and I think what's most important is after you've done that, whatever decision that you make, that people feel that whatever you're doing is gonna be done consistently and across the board. So it's predictable and they know how it works. So they're not guessing. And 'cause you're never gonna make everybody happy when you do these surveys, you're gonna get different results and you're gonna make your decision and it's gonna be informed. But at in the very least, people wanna know how it's gonna work, whether you're talking about calendars or lunches or school supplies or what have you.

**RBT:** . And I recognize there was a survey prior to. My start, and I do have those materials that have been provided to me. And like I said, when the time comes, I will thoroughly look at those as we begin to plan for the calendar year, recognizing that everybody's not gonna be happy.

**Farnoosh:** We're gonna wrap here, and I wanna end on a hopeful note and maybe ask you what you're optimistic about. We know what your work in involves. We know the hard work is a lot. And so like anybody, we need like a guiding light, like a silver lining. What is that for you this year?

**RBT:** So what I am optimistic about is I am a firm believer in the science of hope. If I did not have hope I would not be here. As I tell folks, we make decisions and we end up where we're supposed to be. That I'm a firm believer in that and I'm optimistic that if we are open and honest. Are willing to recognize that everybody's not going to get everything that they want, but everybody should be able to have what they need. That I'm optimistic that as a community we can solve this problem. I really am, and I can't stress that enough that it's gonna take all of us. You certainly can't just be

looking at me. That's impossible. But I do believe, I do honestly believe in the collective wisdom, and that if you define a problem. If you put the energy to solving it, any problem could be solved and it will be solved. It just takes time and patience and all of us rowing in the same direction. Please don't leave us. That's all we ask is

**Farnoosh:** please stay. Don't leave us. Don't leave us. Don't let the door revolve again.

**RBT:** No, I will not. I'm a firm believer in my parents raised me that when you make a commitment you see it to the end. So I've always said, as long as the community's willing to have me, I'm willing to serve. I'm not afraid of complex systems. And as I said, I'm optimistic that we're, it's a storm that we're in, but sunny days are ahead. They really are.

Superintendent Ruth B. Turner. Thank you. We appreciate you And come back anytime.

**RBT:** Yes. Have me anytime. I'd be more than happy to come. Thank you