



# Rural Schools' Adaptations, Improvements, and Innovations During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching - Summit 2021

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# Session Objectives

- Share processes and resources that might work well in other settings to improve student outcomes particularly during significant disruption like the pandemic
- Share strategies to mitigate obstacles for improvement, particularly those that relate to equity imperatives in rural contexts

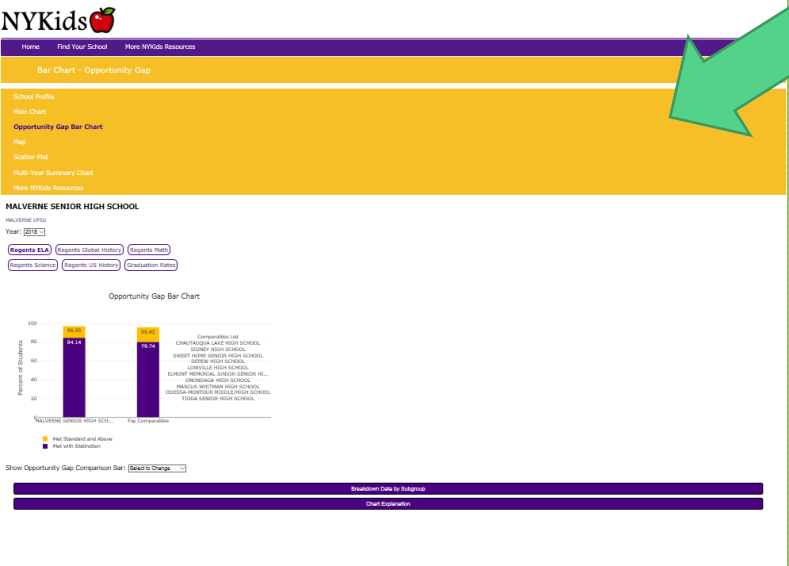
# The Context



# Fort Plain Central School District

	ES	Jr-Sr HS	New York State
<b>Grades Served</b>	K-6	7-12	K-12
<b>Total Enrollment</b>	410	358	2,598,921
<b>Free/Reduced Price Lunch</b>	69%	62%	57%
<b>African-American</b>	2%	2%	17%
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	5%	6%	27%
<b>White</b>	88%	86%	43%
<b>Other</b>	5%	6%	13%

# The Partnership



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**RESOURCES**

Home Resources

Direct Support for Schools Improvement Tools Research-Based Resources

**Direct Support for Continuous Improvement**

**The COMPASS-AIM PROCESS**

*A unique resource for system-wide continuous improvement*

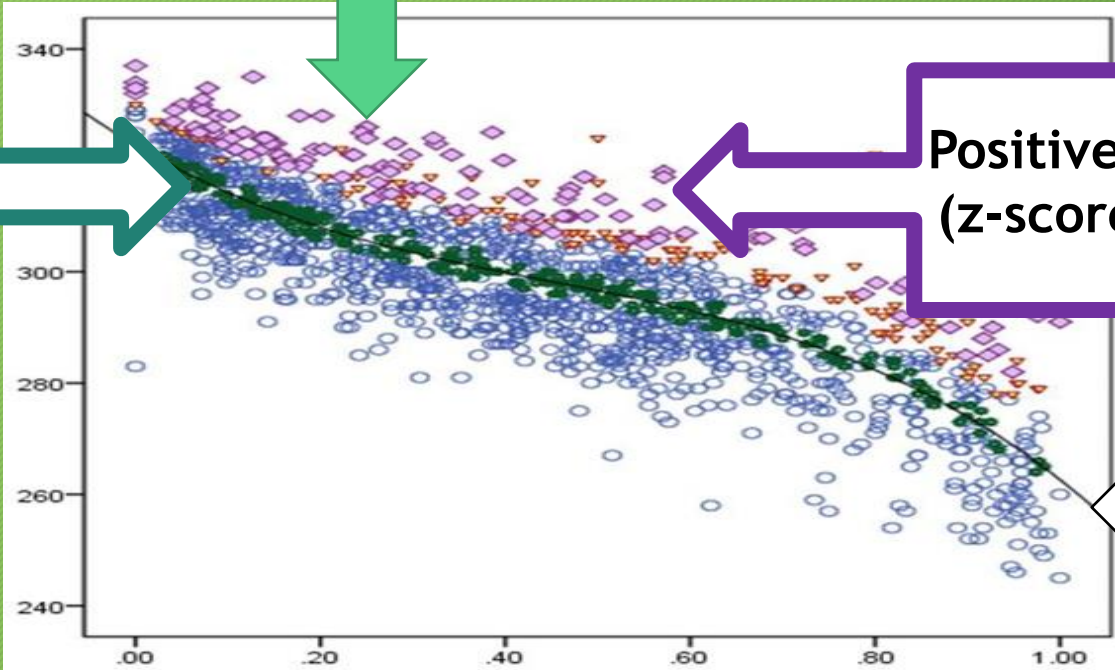
**COMPASS is a direct support school improvement program that:**

- Enables educators to demonstrate professional growth and development within the APPR system.
- Contributes hours toward New York State Continuing Teacher and Leader Education (CTLE) requirements.
- Assists in district and school planning.

**COMPASS Institute's multi-step process will help your leadership team:**

- Take the pulse of your school by comparing your practices to those of odds-beating schools (a school climate survey is provided).
- Select levers for improvement by examining practices of odds-beating schools through case study analysis.
- Determine action steps and plan for evidence-guided decision-making using improvement science tools (e.g. causal analysis; driver diagramming).

**Learn More about COMPASS**

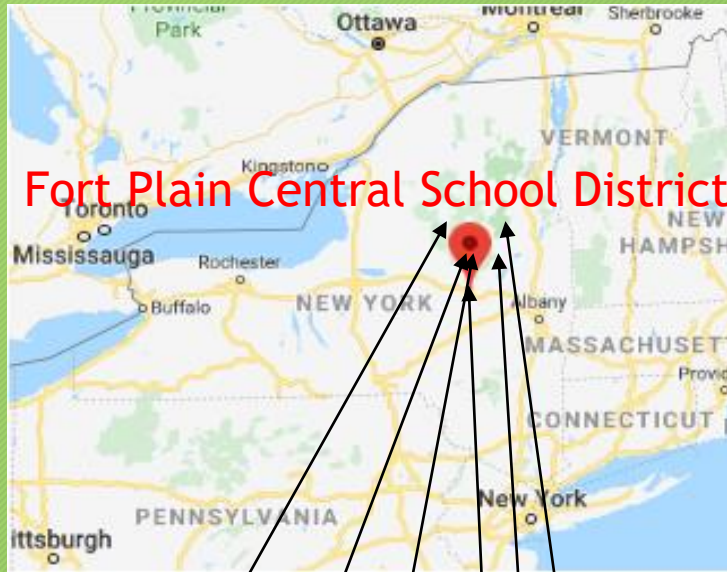


**Typical Performer  
(z-score > < 0.05)**

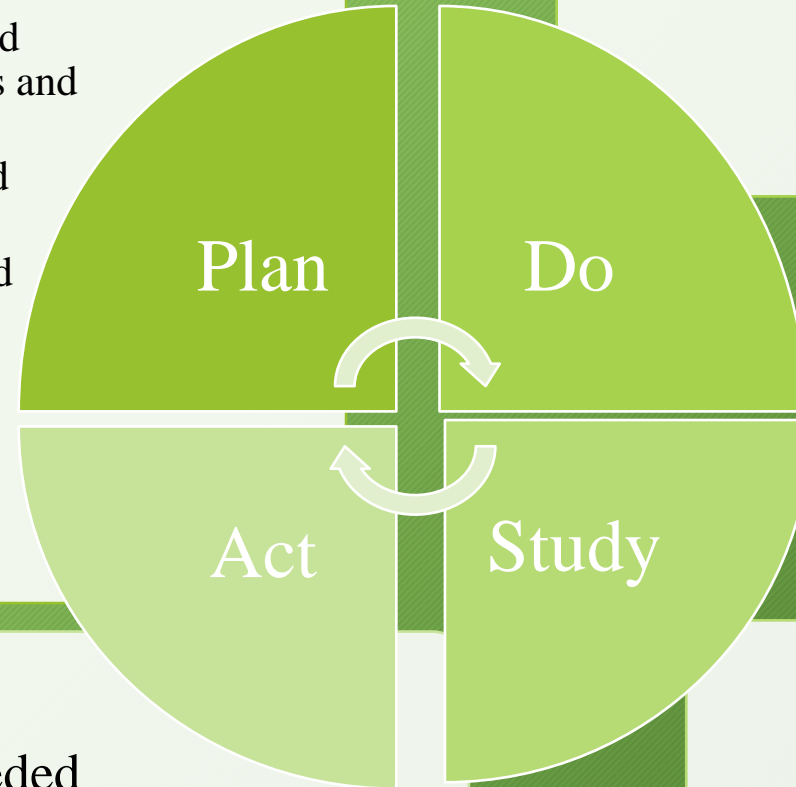
**Positive Outlier  
(z-score > 0.5)**

**Expected Performance  
(z-score = 0)**

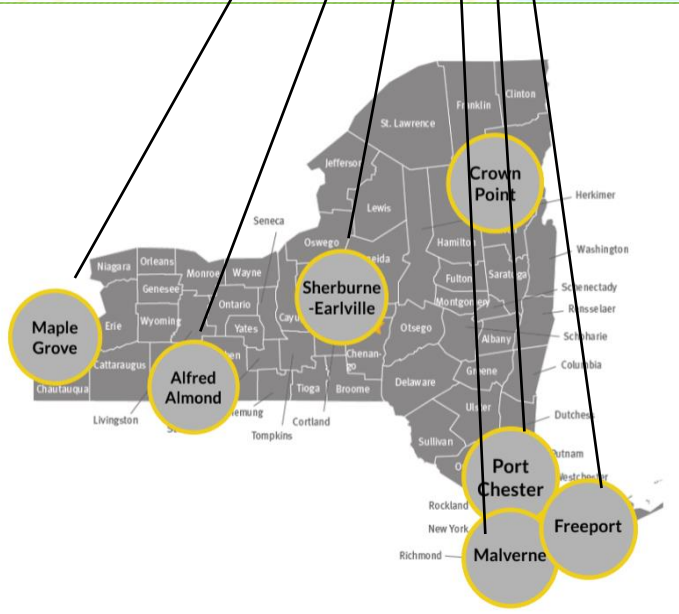
# COMPASS-AIM: A melding of positive outlier research and improvement science-based processes and tools



- **Compare** processes and practices to evidence-based practices identified in positive outlier schools
- **Assess** priorities based upon local constraints and affordances
- **Select** evidence-based practices to test
- **Set SMART** goals and near term AIMS



- **Action Plan**
- **Implement Plan**



- **Recalibrate** as needed and continue cycle

- **Monitor** ("check the pulse")

# Fort Plain Junior-Senior High School (7-12) and NYKids

- Duration of involvement in RPP:
  - Team formed 2015 with new superintendent. Team meets throughout the year (a minimum of 4 times) with intensive summer planning sessions
- COMPASS team members:
  - Principal, school counselor, middle level teachers, high school teachers, special area teachers, teaching assistants



# The Backstory

# 2018: Questioning process - Once we have a SMART goal ask:

- What are the potential action steps for this goal?
- Who is involved and how can they be engaged in implementation?
- When would the work towards this goal take place? Deadlines?
- What would the evidence of success look like?
- How will goals be shared within the Fort Plain Jr.-Sr. H.S.?

## *COMPASS ACTION PLANNING WORKSHEET Element #4 – Driving a Whole-Child Intervention Loop/Attendance*

Fort Plain Central School District

2017-18

School: Fort Plain Junior Senior HS

School Team: COMPASS

**SMART Goal:** To improve student attendance by the end of the 2017-2018 school year as evidenced by the following priorities: monitor student attendance, support students social and emotion well-being, and foster positive parent communication.

Specific Activities & Action Steps	Who is Responsible	Time Frame or Target Dates	Results - Evidence of Success
<i>What steps will be initiated to achieve this SMART goal?</i>	<i>Who will be responsible for initiating or sustaining the action step?</i>	<i>What is a realistic time frame for each phase of this activity/goal?</i>	<i>What evidence will you present to show that you are making progress toward your activity/goal?</i>

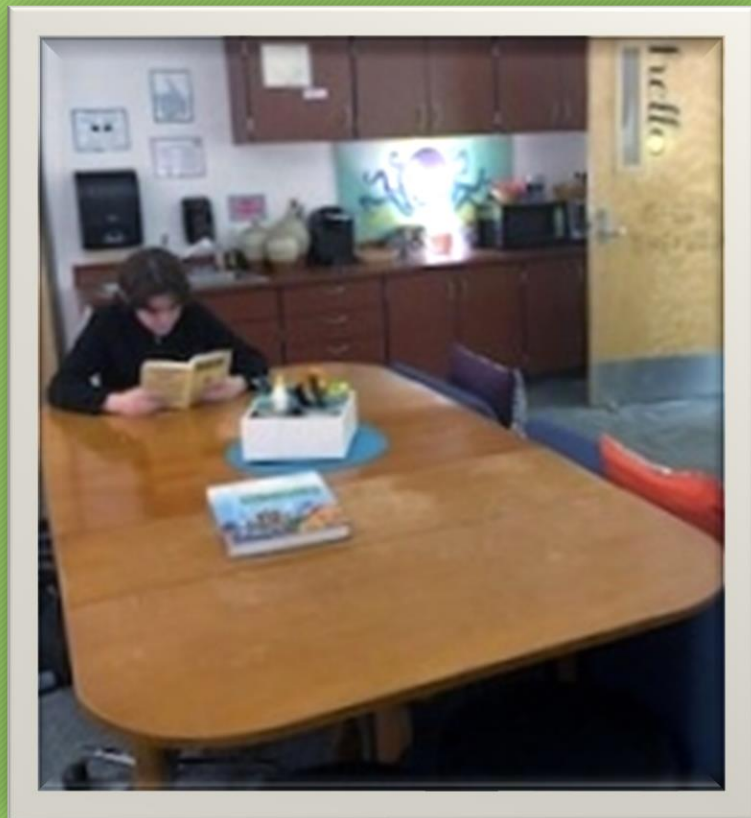


# Academic Coaching Center

“ Our goals are achieved through initiatives that are developed by the team to make change happen within our district...The social/emotional piece was instrumental in providing the framework to establish this trauma sensitive classroom which continues to flourish with the support of our administration and Board of Education.” -COMPASS team member



*The ACC isn't just a room to me. Personally, it feels like home. - ACC Student*



# The Pandemic

# Meet the improvement team...

Videos from the Fort Plain “Dish Dogs”

[Google Man](#)

[Sign in, maybe](#)

[Quarantinville](#)

[Quarantown](#)

[Online Show](#)

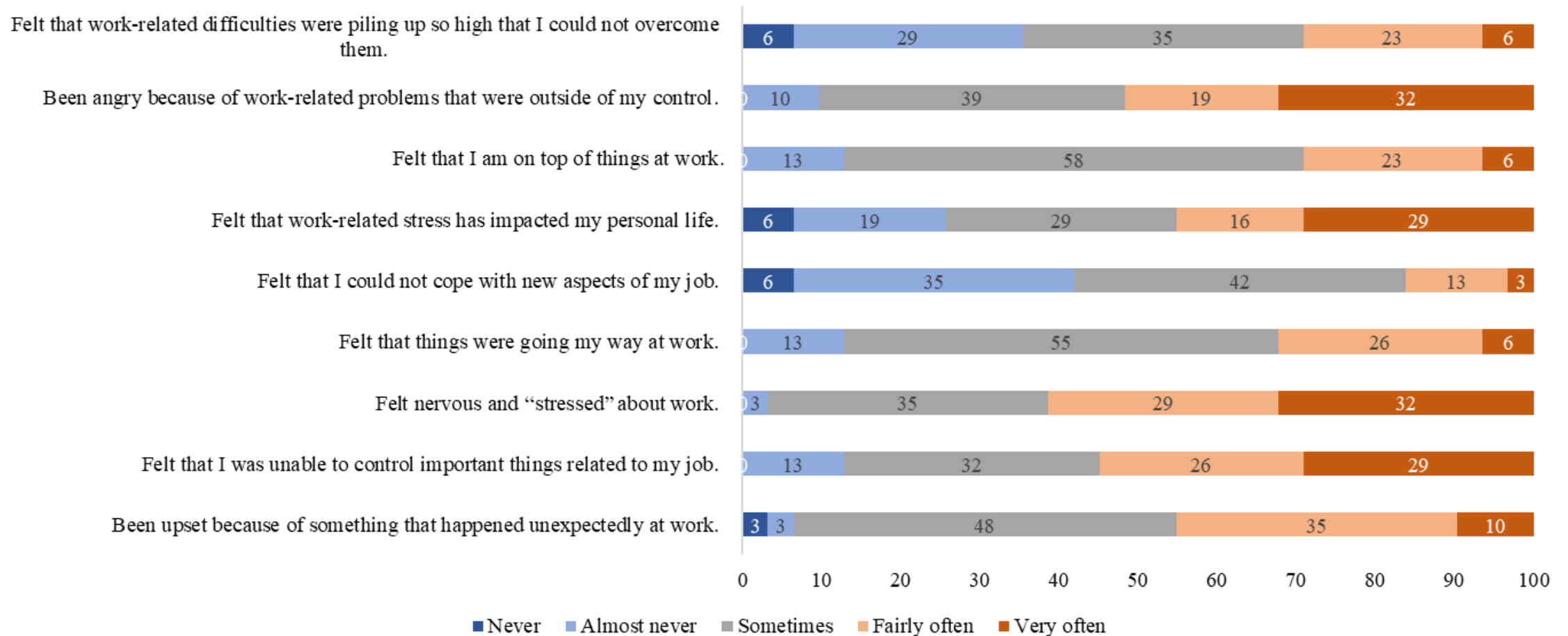
# Assessing status in 2020: survey results... putting the oxygen mask on educators...



- Within the context of COVID-19 pandemic, questions arise as to: What are the indicators and causes of occupational stress in the education workforce?
- Are some educators experiencing secondary traumatic stress?
- Are teachers experiencing changes in job satisfaction? What about principals?
- What are the contributing factors to these changes?
- What factors mitigate occupational stress and changes in job satisfaction during extreme disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic?

# Survey results: Stress indicators

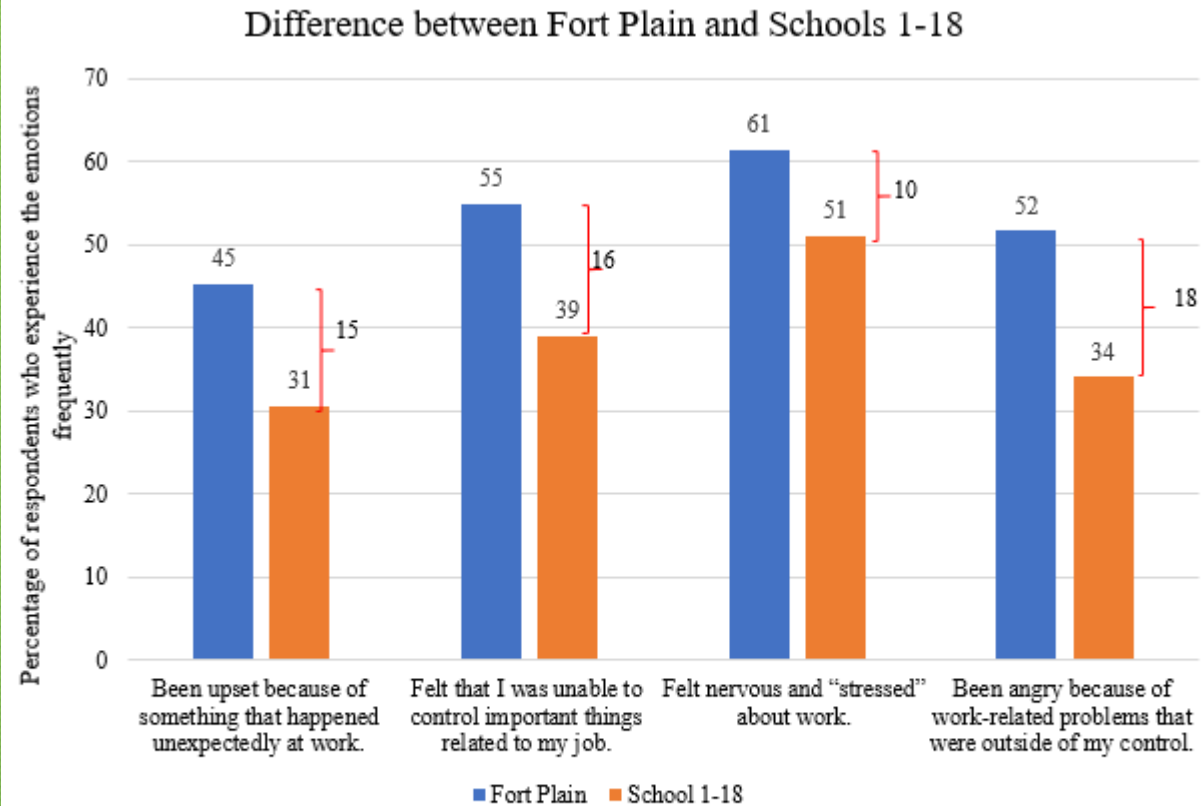
## Fort Plain HS





# Early Interpretations...

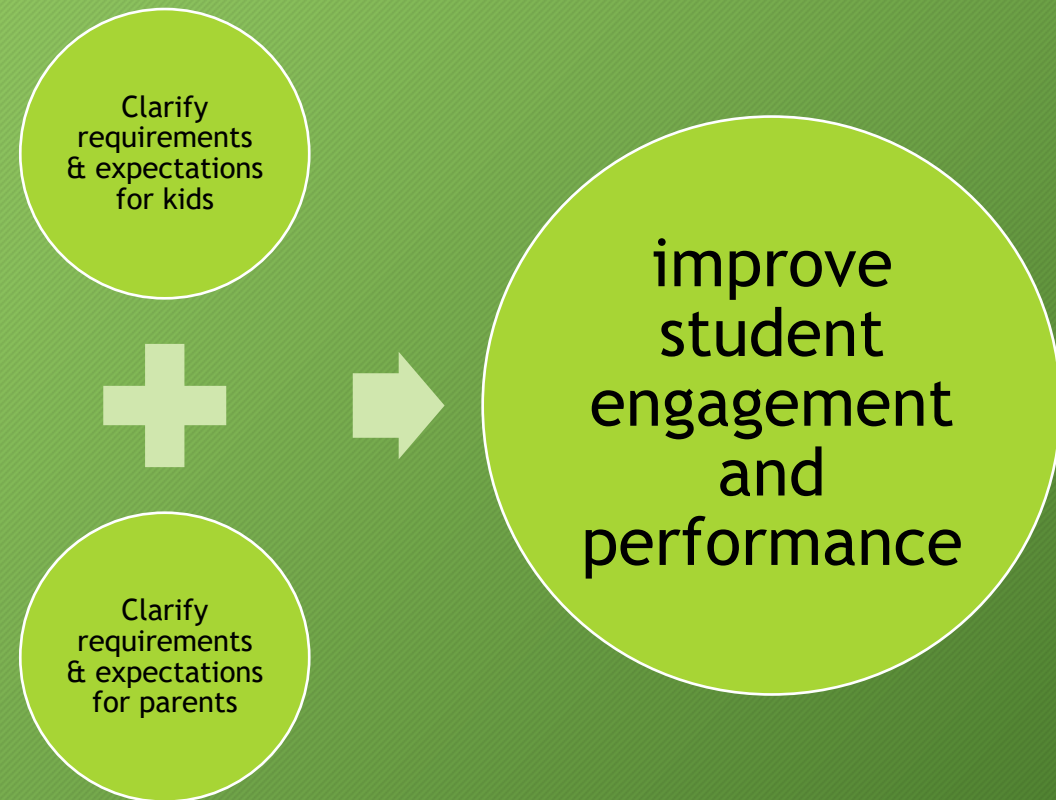
- Fort Plain Junior-Senior High School staff (in comparison to staff in the first 18 schools participating in this survey on occupational stress) expressed a higher level of anxiety and stress related to their work.



# Fort Plain's greatest needs: Student and Parent Engagement (Feb. 2021)

Change ideas discussed:

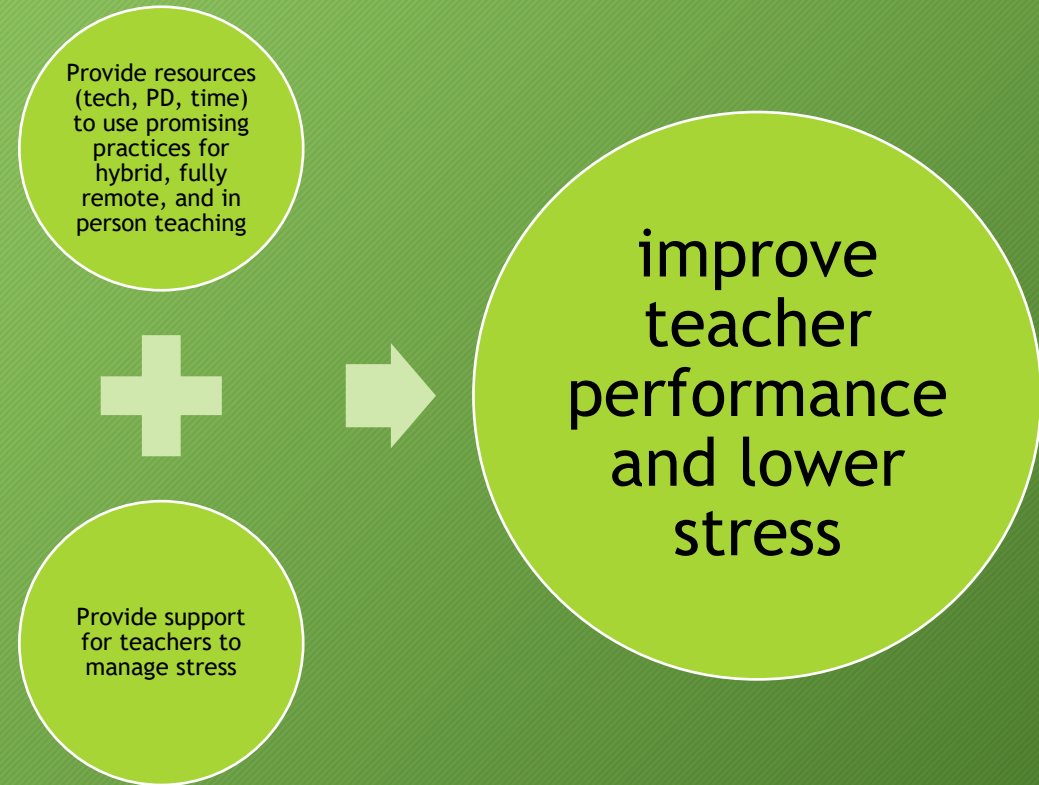
- craft a requirements and expectations FAQ for parents (ask subset of parents for input and clarifications)
- craft a requirements and expectations FAQ for kids (ask a subset of kids for input and clarifications)
- Provide explanations for the requirements and expectations and welcoming to partner with parents in an email



# Fort Plain's greatest needs: Teacher Stress and Well-being (Feb. 2021)

## Change ideas:

- Make school fun again (ask teachers for ideas)
- Provide avenues for teachers to share practices - what is working for what students?
- Provide teachers with resources/technologies for instructional improvement for remote and hybrid teaching?
- Craft model lessons that meet fully remote and in-person synchronous instruction - use discussion and chat boards etc. ?



*Revisit values - what do you want your tone to be with kids and families?  
Perhaps a reiteration of this would be worthwhile - a “We believe...”  
statement to anchor*

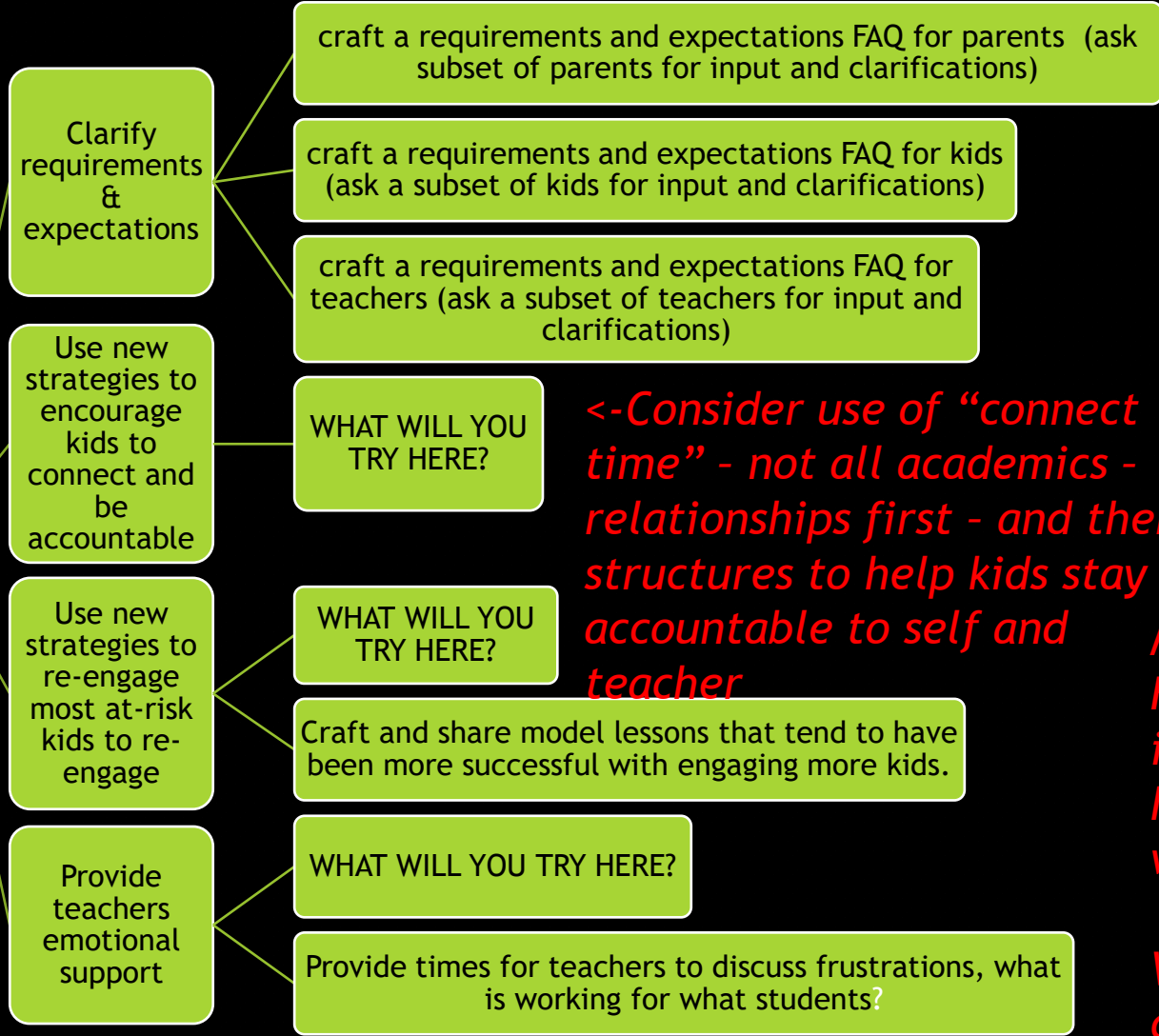


*Refine your goal  
statement -  
keep in mind  
focus group  
responses*

Improve student and teacher  
engagement and  
performance

->

*Consider setting in motion  
your plan for the  
inevitable intervention  
that will likely be needed  
over summer and in fall  
for social-emotional  
effects and learning loss*



*<-Consider use of “connect time” - not all academics - relationships first - and then structures to help kids stay accountable to self and teacher*

*Measurement Plan?  
How will you know  
if the things you  
have tried have  
worked?*

*What data will you  
collect and when?*

# Trying Change Ideas and Measuring Progress

## Faculty Feud Survey

Thank you for participating in the Faculty Feud game. The COMPASS team hopes you enjoyed it. We are asking for one more favor and that is a little feedback from you on your experience. Thanks again.

After experiencing the game would you be interested in more games in faculty meetings?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

What did you like or dislike about the game?

## Faculty Survey

The COMPASS team would like to ask every faculty member to take this survey. For any of the short answer questions, please provide an activity for a future faculty meeting. It is mandatory.

This form is automatically collecting email addresses for Fort Plain Central School District users. [Change settings](#)

What's something you really resent paying for? \*

Short answer text

What food have you never eaten but would really like to try? \*



# Pause and jot...

- Consider one thing about FPCSD's experience of the pandemic that resonates with your own experience of the pandemic or another disruptive event (or experiences of those in an organization with whom you work).
  - What does improvement science offer with regard to how to tackle the most complex or “wicked” problems we need to address in education settings?

# Students' voices



After quarantining- my friends have changed. They're not the same. We don't hang out as much

Every day is the same thing

*Teachers understand who is trying to make an excuse and who has a legitimate reason for not getting work done.*

*With only 4 classes - I can leave school. I used to have to stay all day - now I have an opportunity for a job.*

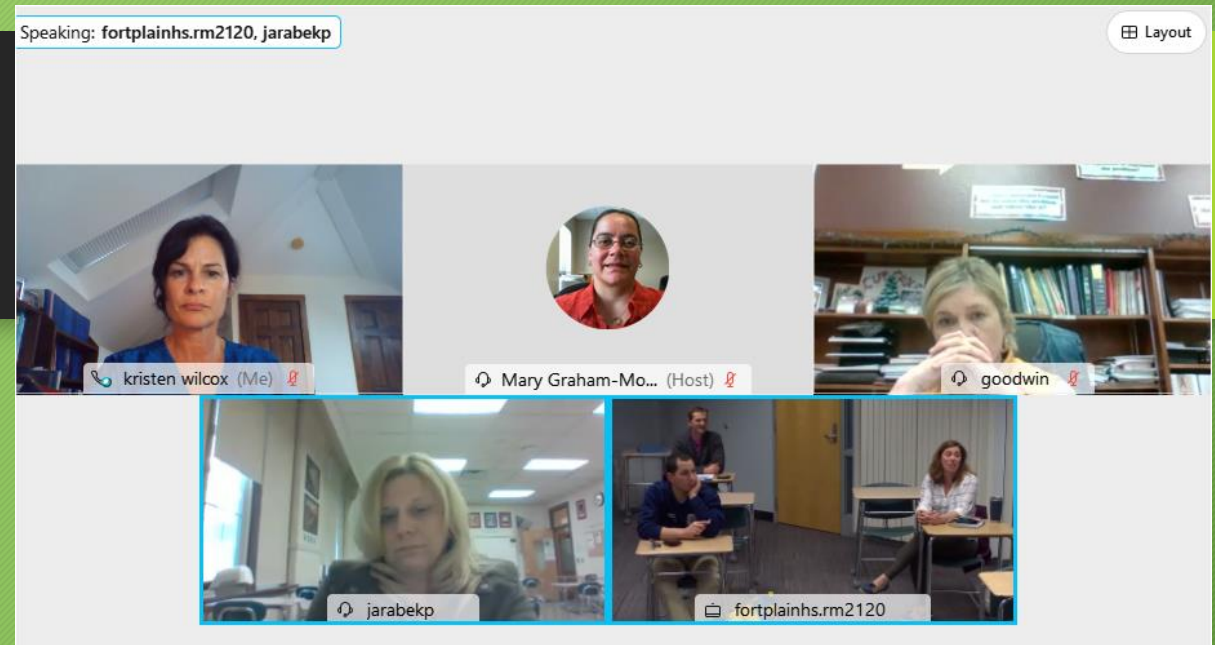
# Teachers' voices

“True story. One of my students told me the other day, ‘My dog ate my Chrome Book’.”

“It’s the sheer mental exhaustion.”

“I can’t do this another year.”

“I am cutting down on content and depth - to make sure they understand the stuff they need for the regents exam - some would call it teaching to the test - I would call it survival at this point.”





# Parents' voices



... the lack of extracurriculars and sports has been very difficult... physical activity relieves a lot of stress and anxiety - with the weather changes activity is increasing and this is helping

Bullying is absolutely terrible.

being able to see their assignments - I can say - is this done? Is great

Major kudos to the teachers - working remotely has been pretty seamless.

Tackling greatest needs

(April 2021)

Aims:

To improve student and educator relationships and wellbeing

To create positive anticipation for the fall term

To improve communications and processes around closing learning gaps across grade levels

Drivers:

Student connections and engagement

Faculty and staff engagement

Student re-engagement

Parent re-engagement

Teacher and staff communications

Professional learning opportunities

Change Ideas:

Student delivered announcements

Messages for seniors posted in cafeteria

Compliment cards for students and staff

Student engagement activities during lunch

Encourage class competition (spirit week)

Faculty feud, dinner theater, chat & chew

Fall moving up day/field day

Video conferences and forums

Focus groups

Parent "walk-throughs"/open house

Faculty meeting "parking lot"

Focus groups

Targeted PD on gaps

Planning time over summer/share best practices

# Summing up and what's on the horizon...

- the RPP provided tools (surveys), strategies (theory of improvement mapping) and a support structure (co-facilitated meeting times) during this particularly disruptive time to help the Jr.Sr. High School team navigate challenges posed by the pandemic.
- The RPP worked with the COMPASS team to bring in diverse perspectives and knowledge bases including the necessary attention to social-emotional and motivational aspects of children's, educators', and school leaders' work and drew from the RPPs' ongoing research and connections with other positive outlier schools in their network to support improvements and innovations

# Pause and jot

- Consider one major take-away about how a RPP can work to mitigate the negative consequences of disruptions in a rural school.
  - How does the rural context pose particular facilitators and challenges for RPP improvement work and what are the lessons learned from this case with regard to how to sustain RPP rural school relationships?

# Thank you!

## Related research:

- Wilcox, K.C., Lawson, H.A., & Angelis, J. (2017). COMPASS-AIM: A university/P-12 organizational intervention for continuous improvement. *Peabody Journal of Education*. doi: 10.1080/0161956x.2017.1368654
- Wilcox, K.C., Lawson, H.A, &. Angelis, J.I. with Durand, F., Schiller, K, Gregory, K., & Zuckerman, S\* (2017). *Innovation in odds-beating schools: Exemplars of getting better at getting better*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Thank you!

<https://ny-kids.org/>

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November 6, 2020

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