

Lucy Laney Elementary: Looking back and moving forward

Written by Terra Mayfield
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It's noon at Lucy Laney Elementary.

The hallways are filled with little faces, folded arms, and stomping feet. A flat screen television that serves as the school's bulletin board hangs high in the main hallway. A vivid mural depicting the north Minneapolis tornado gives the tragedy shape and color from the students' perspective. The aesthetics of the school are wonderful and appealing to the eye, but make no mistake; the children walking these halls come from neighborhoods that have a history littered with high unemployment rates, unstable housing stock, rapidly escalating crime centered around an epidemic of youth violence and just about every other indicator such as lower test scores and lower graduation rates that points to achievement gaps in education.

"The majority of our students are African American and they come from families that live below the poverty line," said Mauri Melander, Lucy Laney principal.

Melander has been the principal at the middle school since just last year and she agrees that the neighborhood has many challenges and mirroring the neighborhood, the school has its issues as well. Lucy Laney has struggled with low standardized test scores but according to Melander, the real test is getting a child to focus on learning when they have so many other issues that they are dealing with.

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