

Student Well-being: A Collective Responsibility

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Creating New Possibilities

NOGAH KORNBERG: There's a quote attributed to Henry Ford that says, "If I'd asked people what they wanted, they would've said a faster horse." What he meant by that is that you can't always ask people to solve their own problems. Because what they'll do is they'll look at what's already existing. And they'll say, well, this other school had this challenge, and this is what they did. What if we do that? What that negates is the unique context of the school. It actually silences the voices of the people in that community. Instead, what we need is we need shared experiences. We need all these stakeholders to be able to come together, and together create new possibilities. Because if we just look at what's out there now, we're not affording ourselves the space to think of, what else can we do? What is new that will work for us in a way that is interesting and impactful? The way that we work with integrative thinking is what are the tools that create those shared experiences? So, for us, something like the pro-pro chart, looking at the benefits of opposing model, allows us to bring in multiple stakeholder perspectives. Because there are so many times when a student might just have a different thought of how a problem can be solved than maybe a principal would. And how do we put both these ideas on the table as something to be valued, and together as a community say, what is good about each of these? What do we see now that we didn't see before? And use that to spark new ideas. One of the things that I found really interesting is in a workshop I did recently in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, a teacher had a really thoughtful question. She said, "Do students feel like they're losing out?" Because if they're coming to the table with an idea, it's really easy to say, well, if the idea that we end up with is not the original idea I had, will they feel discouraged? Will they feel unheard? Will they feel unvalued? And there was actually another teacher in the room who had done work with use before who said, actually, it's quite the opposite. What he's observed with the students is they feel like they're gaining. Because not only is their idea being heard, not only is their idea being heard, and the best of their idea being moved forward, but they've created something new to them. And that confidence that it builds in who they are, and their perspectives, and their creativity, really allows for this community to come together and believe in the answer that's been created. The other piece of this, when we think of all the stakeholders, is too often, if people haven't been involved in the process of creating this better answer, this innovative solution, they feel it's being imposed on them. When their voice is part of the process, when that perspective is embedded in the process of creating something better, then what we have is people who see themselves in the better answer that's being created by that community.