

Student Well-being: A Collective Responsibility

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Dealing with Well-being Issues

JOHN ALMARODE: One of the things we have to recognise in schools -- and we often forget this because we get busy in our own classrooms, we get busy in our own content, and we tend to close the door and operate in a very siloed-type environment. First thing is there are experts in the building that can support us. So, if we are not exactly sure how to respond to a situation that has popped up, there are guidance counselors, there are school counselors, there are social workers, there are school psychologists, there are special educators. We have administrators and instructional leaders that have expert training in areas that I may not have a math or science teacher or as a humanities teacher, and so first thing is to recognise who in the building might have a different perspective and a helpful perspective on a particular student and seek them out. We're all in this together and it's a collective effort. The second thing to keep in mind is that sometimes students just need to be heard and need to be recognised as being human beings. And so, if they're seven or eight, they're entitled to a bad day, just like we are at 28 entitled to a bad day, and so letting students voice their concerns, letting students vent, giving them a chance to just be heard and give them a voice in how things are going is the second thing that we can do and one of the things we can do in our classrooms. There's a lot of research now on student voice, and the interesting thing about it is that if you ask students, they will tell you whatever you want to know. Now, they're going to do it in their language and they're going to do it in their way, but as long as we can translate it, we can quickly figure out that they may just have wanted to be heard today, and so making sure your classroom is a dialogue-based classroom, not a monologue-based classroom. The third thing we can do is exercise some flexibility. Even though the clock says 9:20, and I know I'm supposed to be in math at 9:20, we may not be ready to transition to math right at 9:20, and if we force that transition, if we force the schedule on six, seven, and eight year olds or 14, 15, and 16 year olds when they may not be at the transition point yet, it can actually create greater problems for us later, and to recognise we may not get to that today, but we're going to get somewhere today, and we're going to move forward in some capacity and let the students have some voice in how that unfolds.