

Student Well-being: A Collective Responsibility

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The Teachers Role

JOHN ALMARODE: One of the things that often pops up in conversation is, well, oh, so we're all equal. In other words, I'm not the possessor of the knowledge, and so, it's all of us in this together. Well, yes and no. Keep in mind, teachers are experts. Teachers are professionals. We have been trained to not only have a grasp of the content that we're teaching, but also, we're experts in how to teach it. And so, at no point should we give students control over learning in that they get to pick the content, they get to pick the strategies. That's what we-- we are professionals. And so, our job really is to set up an environment where we use our expertise to determine what is the learning target today? What do I want my students to learn? What does success look like? How will I know, and how will the learners know that they are making progress and have met those success criteria? What checks for understanding am I going to put into place so that I can monitor their progress through the learning? What tasks will I design that allow them to explore, unpack, discover, make meaning of that content? How will I adjust those tasks for different learners who are at different places in their progression? And so that is my job as the teacher, and that is a piece of this that I should, as a teacher, and we should, as professionals, refuse to give up. I am the expert in the room on teaching. You are the expert in the room on learning. We just want to make the students the experts in the room on learning. And so, there's a very big difference in treating everyone as being on the same playing field, versus recognizing I am the teacher, I am the activator of learning. My job is to create an environment where you progress through the learning process and take ownership of the process. We do not want to de-professionalize teachers. The idea that we can take students and plop them into an environment, and that they will somehow find their way out is back to the Cadillac analogy. There is no research to support it, and what research does support it says that it doesn't work. What is the biggest factor in student learning? It's the teacher. It's the decisions of the teacher. It's how the teacher sets up the environment. It's how the teacher makes decisions once we're in that environment. We are the professionals. And anything that de-professionalizes us has got to go, because the research says it does not work.