



*Improving life and leadership of assistant principals*

## Assistant Principal Podcast Content Episode Outline

Show title and release date: Mentor Me, #99, February 14, 2023

### Show Description:

In my junior year of college Dr. Bob Kelly said to me, "I predict that someday you will earn your doctorate." His statement planted the seed of an idea that had not been there before. In 1994 I enrolled in a Special Education course at the University of Findlay. That course was taught by Dr. Jan Osborn, who not only pushed me to get that doctorate, but supported me every step of the way, and continues to mentor me to this day. Dr. Jacque Jacobs hired me at Western Carolina University and helped me grow into a servant leader by being one herself, and by intentionally nurturing the best I had to offer others. And Dr. Rob Knoeppel took me under his wing when I was my most broken and damaged, and taught me that it is okay to not be our best, that it is okay to take the space to heal. These four people were mentors to me and to countless others. Today we will dig into what it means to be a mentor and how you dear colleague, can grow your ability to mentor others.

### Insert Show Intro

**Celebrations:** As I record this episode, I am in the midst of celebrating my mother's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. She has made the long trip out from the foggy shores of San Francisco to the smoky mountains of WNC. She has always and continues to be a support and inspiration for how to live life well. I can also guarantee that she has read more issues of my daily email than anyone alive! Happy birthday mom!

### The Big Idea

What is a mentor? What's the difference between mentoring and coaching? What's the difference between mentoring and leading – are all leaders mentors? What does it take to mentor others?

John Maxwell, a though leader in leadership, said "Leadership is influence, nothing less nothing more." I agree with the first part of this quote – that leadership is indeed influence. But I think Maxwell missed something when he stated that there was nothing more. It seems to me that leadership is an intentional act designed to achieve a specific outcome. I shared a couple weeks ago a quote from the esteemed Dr. Jacque Jacobs:

"Being in the left lane of a superhighway with a string of cars behind you does not make you a leader. It may just mean you're slow and too stupid to get out of the way."

The important point is this: when we intentionally influence someone to act towards a specific outcome, we are exercising power. Without power, there is no leadership. If you have been reading The Strategic Leader daily emails or listening to Five for Friday in recent weeks, you have heard me discuss three forms of power:

- Legitimate
- Expert
- Referent

Understanding these forms of power can help us understand the difference between leadership, coaching, and mentoring. As with so much of what I do, this is an oversimplification, but by simplifying it we wind up at a place that is more accessible and easier to enact.

Leaders in formal positions hold legitimate power. Legitimate power creates an unequal power dynamic with the formal leader holding more power than the “follower” and thus sets up a mentoring possibility as followers inherently are “looking up” to their leaders. [Insert: not fully comfortable with this, but...]

Legitimate leadership isn’t enough, and it isn’t a necessary prerequisite.

Expert power as a facilitator of coaching. In coaching, either the coach or the coachee may take the lead, but the emphasis is on the technical outcome of the topic of the coaching.

Referent power as a facilitator of mentoring. In mentoring, the mentee will almost always take the lead (I think) and the mentor reacts to the needs as expressed by the mentee. When mentors are teaching, the relationship is still the primary focus (I think).

Formal leads to increased opportunity but mentoring requires referent power. I have two goals for the content this month:

1. Encourage you to strengthen the relationship between you and your mentor (or establish one if you don’t have a mentor)
2. Help you begin mentoring others

How to become a mentor?

- Remember legit power helps but is not a prerequisite
- Be aware of your own influence and opportunities to mentor others
- Focus on building your referent power:
  - Be a lighthouse
  - Be present
  - Listen and learn
  - Support people in growing in the direction they want to grow



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- Be transparent, be vulnerable
- Be invested over the long term

### **Summarizing (The big takeaway)**

1. If you have a mentor, invest more time with them and express your appreciation. Also recognize that mentoring is a mutually beneficial relationship.
2. Cultivate your referent power through presence and listening, and be mindful of opportunities to build mentoring relationships with others.
3. If you don't have a mentor, find one! Every great leader had mentors helping them all along the journey. If you know someone but are hesitant to ask them, forward this podcast to them and ask them to listen, then follow up. If you don't know anyone, get involved in a leadership community. There is The Principal's Desk which is free on Facebook, and lots of wonderful consultants run virtual communities in which mentors can be found. Community gets you a network of peers from diverse backgrounds and experiences and access to experienced leaders who are dedicated to serving school leaders like you. (plug APEx). Do not talk yourself out of a paid community because of price – speak with the appropriate person in your district to see if you can use PD funds (website/APExpd).

### **Show Outro**

Well Colleagues, this brings us to the point in the episode where it is your turn to participate by making an intentional choice. If you do nothing, then you have spent the last 30 or so minutes being entertained. But if you do choose to do something, then you will have made an investment in your own leadership. Repeat call to actions from above:

1. If you have a mentor, invest more time with them and express your appreciation.
2. Cultivate your referent power through presence and listening, and be mindful of opportunities to build mentoring relationships with others.
3. If you don't have a mentor, find one!
4. Forward the show link to a colleague and say "you have got to listen to this, I want us to talk about it"
5. Identify the one big takeaway or question from this episode and share it with me. You can share a written, audio, or video message with me by emailing me at [frederick@frederickbuskey.com](mailto:frederick@frederickbuskey.com)

Thank you for including me on your leadership journey. Remember that you can walk more with me by subscribing to my daily leadership email and Quadrant2, my monthly micro-journal. And if that isn't enough, we can walk further together in APEx, my virtual paid community for assistant principals. APEx helps you network with other APs and participate in group coaching with me! You can learn more about APEx and my other offerings at my website, [frederickbuskey.com](http://frederickbuskey.com).



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I look forward to seeing you again on Friday when we recap this week's daily emails.

I'm Frederick Buskey and thank you again for joining me on this episode of the Assistant Principal Podcast. Remember to subscribe so you don't miss a single episode. Cheers!