



*Improving life and leadership of assistant principals*

## **Assistant Principal Podcast Content Episode Outline**

Show title and release date: 10 Simple Steps to a Better School

### **Show Description:**

Back in episode 44 I shared the story that drives me in which I talked about Kelli, an assistant principal who was overwhelmed with discipline. I visited her around 10:00 o'clock on a spring morning in her rural elementary school and she already had seven office referrals. When I asked Kelli how many of those referrals reflected teacher problems more than kid problems she said five.

The bad news was that there were five kids getting in trouble who shouldn't be getting in trouble and that Kelli was being overwhelmed and prevented from doing her job of developing teachers. The good news was that if we could find a way to get Kelly into those teachers' classrooms we could stop the cycle. The best news is there's a way to help those teachers with minimal cost, minimal training, and minimal effort.

### **Inset Show Intro**

#### **Celebrations:**

Today I'm celebrating that I'm actually putting into word an idea that has been kicking around in my head for many years – the idea being the focus of this episode on how we can dramatically improve life for many teachers, kids, and school leaders, without spending a lot of money or even investing he amounts of time.

I'm also celebrating that I am recording this at all. This show is a minimally viable presentation of my idea and I almost didn't share it because I wanted I to be more polished, but I just don't have the time. I've overcome my perfectionist nature to just share my thoughts.

#### **The Big Idea**

I coordinated new teacher support programs for seven years in Northwest Ohio and much of that support was directed at helping new teachers establish sound classroom management practices. Throughout my time as a university professor, I continued to do workshops with practicing teachers on classroom management, especially on developing teaching and reinforcing classroom procedures. At the same time my work in principal licensure programs at Western Carolina University and Clemson University provided me with lots of opportunities to have conversations with principals, assistant principals, and aspiring assistant principals, and classroom management was always a big theme.



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In a conversation last week with one of my assistant principals who's participating in the journey five stage professional development adventure going from being an urgent leader to a strategic leader we had a lengthy conversation about a teacher that she's struggling with who is struggling with classroom management. Every other assistant principal on that call was nodding their heads in understanding as we discussed the situation

So, after years of working with and listening to new and veteran teachers and school administrators I believe that there is a way forward that is relatively simple, requires very small investments in new resources and very small investments in new knowledge. In fact, my goal with this podcast is to give you the foundational elements of an approach to improving classroom management throughout your school that you could begin to act on tomorrow.

My plan is to outline 10 steps that you can use to makeover classroom management and some discipline practices in your school. I think the best way to use the content in this podcast is to share this podcast with your teachers with everybody involved in classroom management and discipline in your school. As you listen, imagine sitting down with your teachers and hearing everything that's in here and being able to have a very critical discussion about classroom management and discipline. I'm advocating for sharing this podcast with people because it's a lot easier to have an open and honest discussion about what a third party said, a party who is not in the room. This is important. I'm not in the room and because it's not content that anybody in the room is invested in, you can have a much more open dialogue which is essential to establishing the kind of environment that I'm talking about.

so, as we get into it just imagine that you are sitting in the room with your teacher colleagues and other administrative colleagues listening to this together and having the discussion on the value of what you're about to hear.

In my work with new teachers veteran teachers assistant principals and principals over the past 25-30 years I've seen some consistent problems regarding classroom management and school discipline and so I developed these ten steps well that's not I've stolen these ten ideas from leaders teachers and schools where they are doing great work with classroom management I've stolen these and put them into a package of 10 points and I think if we can implement these 10 points or at least the majority of them we can see a dramatic improvement in teachers abilities to manage their classrooms and a decrease in discipline referrals.

The 10 steps to reshaping student behavior:

1. Establish common language around core concepts such as discipline punishment and management
2. Develop healthy perspectives and a healthy mindset about teaching students how to manage their own behavior

3. Build good classroom procedures, learn how to teach and reinforce them, and how to support students who struggle with following through
4. Monitor implementation of procedures for fidelity through an observation process and framework and support
5. learning to take the iceberg approach with student misconduct
6. Learn to view student misconduct through four quadrants of the disciplinary matrix
7. Develop clear strategies that are appropriate to working with students' misbehaviors located in each quadrant
8. developing implementing and reinforcing A disciplined event flow chart or standard operating process
9. embedding restorative discipline practices into the MTSS framework
10. building non consequential alternatives for supporting kids who are highly stressed and struggling

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

What would be the challenges to implementing these things:

- I think most people would welcome having a shared understanding of concepts of management and discipline, and I'm handed them to you to either adopt or adjust, so that should be easy.
- Getting the right mindset might be a challenge. Everyone is stressed, so many things that aren't personal, like negative student behaviors, can feel personal. Still, having common language and frameworks can help.
- Learning how to build good procedures is pretty simple and there are many resources that already have solid procedures available for free.
- Now for the hard part. We need to get better at teaching teachers how to implement, teach, and reinforce classroom procedures. It isn't enough to hand an overwhelmed teacher a procedure and say "use this." We need to model, co-teach, and then follow up with specific observations to determine where procedures are breaking down. We need to be able to teach teachers how to anticipate problems, and how to use three tiers of feedback to build students' competencies for following procedures. Finding the time to support means school leaders have to manage their priorities, and this is the most difficult aspect of the plan. Introducing a set of procedures into your classroom can be stressful and feels risky for teachers who have not received training and support, so the ability of leaders to bring that support and encouragement is the tipping point of all of this.
- I could keep going, but I'm going to leave it here.

### **Show Outro**



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If you listen regularly, you know I like to ask listeners to go implement something they've heard from the podcast. Here's what I would like you to do – share this podcast with some of your teachers and staff. Schedule a time to discuss it and talk about the 10 points I have outlined.

If you and your teachers would like to proceed, to take action, email me. If there is someone out there who wants to use these concepts to improve their school, I will provide you with the materials and some training videos – for free – but only if you have shared this with your teachers and if they – or at least a pilot group - think this is a good idea. I don't know if this is a hair-brained idea on my part – present 10 simple steps and encourage people to embrace them – but it feels worth taking the emotional risk of putting my ideas out there.

Thank you for including me on your leadership journey. I hope to hear from you soon. You can email me at [frederick@frederickbuskey.com](mailto:frederick@frederickbuskey.com).

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. Cheers!