



Assistant Principal *Ex*celeration

Show Notes, Episode 36: Parent Partnerships with Dr. Leigh Ann Alford-Keith

About this show:

“We talk a lot about social emotional learning and the whole child, but the whole child includes the family.” These aren’t my words. They came from today’s guest when she appeared on the show back on episode 25. We went on to discuss what a partnership is, and how teachers’ thinking needed to change. We concluded by noting that the first step in building better partnerships was to view parents as equal partners, not adversaries. It was a rich episode, but we only scratched the surface of parent partnerships. Today, we get below that surface with our very special guest, Dr. Leigh Ann Alford—Keith.

Notable Quotes

Dr. Alford-Keith:

“We talk a lot about social-emotional learning and the whole child, but the whole child includes the family”

“If we tend to think of only events as opportunities for family engagement or strictly the conferences as opportunities for family engagement, then that is also a structure that is creating barriers, because truthfully, any day is an opportunity for family engagement.”

“We have to be doing our diversity, equity, and inclusion beliefs work. That has to be a necessary component if you want to work on family engagement work, because you need to be able to have those reflections about what privileges you may have, your positionality, and what biases you may be having”

“Many of us have been in meetings where the family’s input was not really solicited, and questions were not really asked, and the family was expected to agree passively with the educators at the table.”

“We need to yield to families because there are things that they know that we don’t know. And I think of that most with culturally sustaining pedagogy”

“It is a both-and, not an either-or. You don’t have to think of engaging families or supporting your teachers. You can think of ‘how will engaging families support my teachers’”

“The community can lend knowledge that the educators don’t have”

“You will have to prove that you seriously want their input”

“Families don’t leave your school if they feel like a part of it. They leave your school because they feel like you’re not part of it”

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“Journal for Research on Leadership Education: Stanley and Gilzene, Listening, Engaging, Advocating, and Partnering (LEAP) A Model for Responsible Community Engagement for Educational Leaders”

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/19427751221076409?journalCode=jrla>

“What structures in my school need to change so that we can partner with families?”

“The parent is not mad at you. They are mad at you and you are a representative of the system”

“As a school leader, you the person in the position to make adjustments to those systems in order to create a partnership orientation”

“It is not about doing more, it is about doing it differently”

Frederick:

“The 6 dimensions of organizations is a really simplified model of organizations, that, if you think about a pyramid, the top of the pyramid is purpose and that is what should drive our organizations”

“The work of leadership then is actually using change processes to create better alignment in your organization. If you really step back, that’s why we do change, that’s why we do leadership. It is all about the idea of creating an organization where our people, structures, and resources are all aligned with what we’re trying to do.”

“I have heard a number of my special education friends talk about how much better their IEP meetings were the last couple years when they were having them remotely because parents felt much safer, because parents were in their home, they were much more comfortable, it was much less physically intimidating, and they were much stronger participants. And that’s a great example of something that we can do that is very simple”

“The kids that are the most vulnerable are the ones that most need their families involved”

“Every family has a history of interaction with the school system”

“I need to invest in the community before I ask them to invest in me”

Links:

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