

#268 — Relationships: The Secret Ingredient in the Recipe of Success, with Robin Ilac

40 min

AVID Open Access

Keywords

students, kids, relationship, classroom, teachers, connection, learn, important, building, support, staff, campus, work, robin, instructional coach, names, rena, families, thinking, community

Speakers

Robin (61%), Winston (15%), Paul (11%), Rena (11%), Paul, (1%), Student (0%)

Robin Ilac 0:00

Real relationship comes from seeing, and hearing, and celebrating our students. When building relationship, it's really about more stages of building relational capacity. So it's about creating an environment where we lay that foundation.

Paul Beckermann 0:13

The topic of today's podcast is Relationships: The Secret Ingredient in the Recipe of Success, with Robin Ilac. Unpacking Education is brought to you by avid.org. AVID believes in seeing the potential of every student. To learn more about AVID, visit their website at avid.org.

Rena Clark 0:36

Welcome to Unpacking Education, the podcast where we explore current issues and best practices in education. I'm Rena Clark.

Paul Beckermann 0:47

I'm Paul Beckermann.

Winston 0:49

And I'm Winston Benjamin, we are educators.

Paul Beckermann 0:52

And we're here to share insights and actionable strategies.

Education is our passport to the future. Our quote for today is from Rita Pierson, in her famous TED Talk, "Every Kid Needs a Champion." She says, "Every child deserves a champion, an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be." Winston, what are your thoughts?

Winston Benjamin 1:25

Still, to this day, I need my mama to be my champion, telling me I'm good at something because the world beats me up and knocks me down. So not only do children need a champion, but everyone needs a champion as we grow. So for me, I think this quote holds true. And not just that, life's hard sometimes, and especially for individuals who come from not the best background or identities that are not valued at times in society, I think they also need someone to care for them, to make sure that they see themselves as great. So this quote really stands for me.

Paul Beckermann 2:03

Just for the record, Winston, we love you.

Winston Benjamin 2:06

I appreciate you. I love you too, Paul.

Paul Beckermann 2:09

Rena, what are you thinking?

Rena Clark 2:11

I've watched this TED talk, I don't know, probably 10+ times and every time it really resonates deeply with me. And as a human, as a child, as an adult, when we feel that we belong, that we're truly seen and supported, then we have that foundation that we can build upon. And I can think through some of my own experiences. When I was unsure, and someone told me Yeah, I don't know, I didn't do so great. But even if I was unsure, and someone had that relationship and that support, then I had a much stronger foundation. And I was able to, once I had those basic needs met, then I was able to grow a lot more in those areas. And I come from a background where I have the opportunity to have relationships. And I know there's people in my life that care about me and will always be there. And I don't think that's always true for many of the population that I know I serve.

Paul Beckermann 3:07

Exactly. And Rena, for the record, we love you too. All right. Yeah, Rena is throwing a heart now. If you could just see it on screen. Well, we're excited to welcome somebody else that we love. And that's Robin Ilac, an instructional coach in the Santa Maria Bonita School District. So welcome, Robin.

Robin Ilac 3:30

Thank you for having me.

Paul Beckermann 3:31

Yeah. So glad to have you here today. You want to introduce yourself to our listeners, so they know who we're talking with today?

Robin Ilac 3:36

Sure. So I'm thrilled to be here today. This is year 25 for me, in education. Most of that has been as a social studies teacher. But just like all of us, we wear a lot of hats. So this year, I have moved into an instructional coach position. My other love is that I'm an AVID staff developer, and I'm moving into year 10 working part time with AVID. And then I think the roles that are most important to me is wife, mom, daughter, and friend. Those are the roles that give me my strength. When days are hard. And I think in education, our purest form, it's all about connection and understanding and building a better future. So those are the people that helped me do that.

Paul Beckermann 4:27

That's awesome. And I want to tell our listeners that you helped generate the title for today's episode. We kind of talked about this a little bit, that relationships are the secret ingredient in the recipe of success. So I'm going to ask you, why do you feel that way? And how does it impact academics?

Robin Ilac 4:47

I think the reason I picked that is, kind of also builds on the idea of, I don't do new year's resolutions for about six years now, I've picked a word every year. And so this year I like took a leap of faith and I picked the word joy. To be honest, it's a word that kind of scares me and intimidates me a little bit. Because I think if we're asking for joy, you think of joy is always happy, and sometimes life can throw you curveballs and so, but I want to lean into joy. And so I think building relationships is all about building collaboration. And leaning into those relationships, is that recipe of success. And I think the other takeaway, too, that I've learned is, one of the other buzzwords that kind of gets tossed around a lot is, especially during the pandemic, and coming out of the pandemic has been, we need to take care of ourselves, and we need to focus on our self-care. But sometimes, and I've had to learn this in the last couple of years with my son's journey, my 17 year old son is battling a form of cancer. And what I've learned is that there's a lot of people that love us and want to support us. And they're, they're quick to say, how can we help, but sometimes we're so in the mix of what's bringing us down, that we don't really know what we need. And so the idea of community care, and the community coming in to support us, and that's when [we] can't have community care without having relationship. And so, because I have these amazing relationships I've built with people, with colleagues, with my friends, with my family, they've been able to come in and help support us. But that hasn't happened without that sense of community, we're in this together.

Winston Benjamin 6:35

And as a person who just found out, sister, we in this community together. I'm sending mad my positive energy.

Robin Ilac 6:38

Thank you.

Winston Benjamin 6:43

Everything I can, we going to make it. That's my man, Jadakiss once said. Part of the things about life is that as educators, we kind of model how we were educated. Like, I felt love from a

couple of teachers in my experience, and I try to pass that on to my own students. So if you could take a moment, how relationships impacted your journey as a student, and as an educator in general, if you want to add that part as well.

Robin Ilac 7:18

Yeah. When I think back on my journey as a student, there's definitely some some rockstar teachers that stand out in my mind. So the first teacher that clearly comes to my head is my third grade teacher. I had dyslexia, but I went undiagnosed for many years. Because I was that category of, oh, she's a well behaved student, and she's a good girl, she's quiet, she sits in the corner. But in reality, I was sitting in the corner keeping my mouth shut, because I couldn't read. And, back then they used to do like, the butterfly group and the caterpillar group. And they'd label them these PC names, but we all knew like the caterpillars were the kids who couldn't read. And so my third grade teacher, Ms. Telleria, she took the initiative to sit with me, and give up her time during lunches. She'd invite me in and she'd worked with me, and she helped me overcome those struggles, so that she was able to unlock that magic of reading for me. And once it clicked, I have tons of stacks of books all around my house and I've never looked back. But I had to learn to read in a different way than other students, because of my dyslexia. You had to kind of rebuild your synapses to learn a different way. And she helped redirect that for me. So that's the one teacher that when my boys were little, and I would read to them at night, and I would always tell them about her. And so because I couldn't have given that to my children or my kids, if she didn't put that in me first. And then in high school, I had as a being raised by a single parent, my dad was not in this home with me. And so my relationship with my father was kind of a mixed bag of issues sometimes. So when you move into high school, and you're a young lady in high school, and you have a lot of struggles that you're dealing with, I had a I had a teacher who really stepped in and filled in that father role for me. And he was my ASB advisor. And so Mr. Rodriguez, I think about him a lot. And I'm fortunate to still be able to see him in the town I live in and stuff and interact with him. But I think there's those people who have stepped into my life and yes, I know I learned to read from Ms. Telleria. And yes, I learned what it meant to be a leader from Mr. Rodriguez. But it's the individual interactions that I had with those teachers that mean the most to me. And when I think about my role as an educator, I've always said it would be great if my students are in my class and learn to love history. But what's most important is that I want them to learn how to be social with each other, and be able to dialogue and have critical thinking, and have those difficult conversations. I think that's where I found my joy is when I, [in] my 25 years of education, when I get those invitations to the quinceaneras, when I get the invitations to the graduations, when I get invited to their weddings, you know that is my reminder, that teaching is more than just imparting knowledge. It's the bigger part. It's building that relationship and that community with each other.

Rena Clark 10:43

So powerful. And so as our listeners are listening, maybe you can dig into some strategies that you've used, or now maybe you coach around to help build relationships with students, especially for maybe newer, more reluctant teachers that haven't experienced that. What are some strategies that you might help? And then what are also some strategies to help students build relationships with one another? Kind of two layers.

Robin Ilac 11:13

Well, I'm going to say something that might be a little controversial. Because I'm a fan of professional development. And as a staff developer, I'm actually going to say that it's not all about fancy icebreakers. We, we go to these trainings, and we're kind of always introduced to the icebreaker as the beginning. But it's way more than that. Real relationship comes from seeing, and hearing, and celebrating our students. So, I think the most important thing is we have to learn our students' names. And vice versa, when we're working with staff, we need to know our colleagues' names and learn things about them. And for somebody with dyslexia, I will say that that is my challenge that I take on every year is to learn my students' names, to learn the people I'm working with. And I always apologize, because I know it takes my brain longer to learn names. And I explain to my students, it's gonna take me a while to learn your name, but I want you to help me. And sometimes the kids will giggle and I'm like, no, no, no, it's not something we're laughing about. It's just, I need help. So you're helping me learn your name, because your name is beautiful. Your parents picked it for a reason, and I want to honor why your parents gave you that name. And I think too, when I think about the strategies that we use, when building relationship, it's really about more the stages of building relational capacity. So it's about creating an environment where we lay that foundation, we learn the names, we listen, we create a safe space, so that students or staff can be vulnerable with each other. And we lay that groundwork out to build trust. And then we move through those other stages of, that's when things start to get messy. And in our classroom, that first month or so things can get messy. And if your administrator comes in to observe, sometimes they think what is this happening, but I always say that that's when you have that controlled chaos happening. And your kids are getting to know you, and they're starting to figure out what you are going to tolerate or not tolerate, all that kind of stuff. And then that helps strengthen and build the connection. And then you move to the next stage of the scope and sovereignty, you're creating this learning journey together, and you're sharing goals, and you're celebrating strengths. And then the stage four is that group actualization. That's where the magic happens. And students are being self-directed. And when they become the teachers of the information, and they're having to share with their other classmates, that's where you see the real, that we're a team, and we're solving problems together. And that's where you've unleashed the potential of the community. And then I think the other thing too, is those stages don't have to be like one and done, you're gonna move up and down those stages, there's going to be ebbs and flows, there's going to be having to do some resets. You come back from winter break, there's got to be a reset. You back from spring break, you need to have a reset. Something tragic happens in the community. We hear those stories happening in our school communities, you might have to do a reset. So I think it's more about how you model and move through those relational capacity stages to build that in then necessarily one particular strategy or game or tool that you can use. That might be controversial, but that's how I see it.

Paul Beckermann 14:40

I love that. I think that's fantastic. I'm kind of curious now too, because in your new role, you're working with adults as an instructional coach. How does relationship building work in that context?

Robin Ilac 14:53

Yeah. So in my new role, I'm also in a new district. So I left the district I was out for 22 years and came to a new district and I was so excited to move into the district I'm in. Because I'm actually working at the junior high that I graduated from. So stepping back onto that campus, now I'm now I'm an adult on the campus, not just a kid. So that's that's been like oh this is like, so weird to me. No, in fact, the classroom that I teach in is actually was the classroom I had my seventh grade social studies class in. So that's kind of a full circle moment for me. When I say staff, I think sometimes we think of just our like-minded, like our grade level content, or our grade level peers, that thinking. But really to me staff is every adult on campus working together. And I guess maybe this might be a little bit of my background, too, is some schools, I don't know in other states how they call it, label it, like we have certificated, which is our teachers. And then we have classified, which is our, paraprofessionals and all the support staff. My mom was a paraprofessional. She was a classroom, but she started out as a campus safety, moved into classroom as an aide, and then eventually finished her career as a school library, and like a media clerk. And so I've seen lots of different examples of how different schools are like, kind of like see it as like, one is higher than the other. And I don't see that. If we're an adult on a campus, we're all here supporting the kids. And so one of the things that my administrator told me when I started this position this year, is really use the time to get to know people this year. And so that kind of took a burden off my shoulders to of not feeling like a rush to get into classrooms and to observe and give feedback and visit. It was more about really helping to get to know everybody on campus, and what their roles are, and how to support student learning. And so anything that I can do to build that relationship. And we've done some fun things this year, I have another colleague who's the other coach, so I'm an instructional coach, I have an English language development coach that is my co partner. And so we've just been doing some fun things this year. We did a popcorn bar and had people pop by the staff lounge and ask questions about how we can support them. During right before winter break, we did a hot chocolate bar. Just silly things like that. But building that sense of community and having people feel comfortable to get it, to come in and interview, kind of interview us in a way, and get to know what we are there, how we can support them. And then using staff meeting time to do little mini PDs and then send out a newsletter to staff of just like, here's the great things that are happening on campus and celebrating everyone's successes and posting photos of student work. And that kind of stuff has been helpful, just to focus on building that relationship. So that then I'm not a stranger coming in to observe a teacher. And it's not an evaluative role, it's just to support. So that's one thing that I've been doing this year.

Rena Clark 18:18

It's building that foundation that we talked about. I know I support some coaches that are new to buildings, and that's our focus is building relationships. Because you can't get into some of that other things until you have that foundation. So important.

Winston Benjamin 18:33

So I'm gonna, I think I'm gonna switch up the question just a little bit, because thinking about myself as a little kid, there was some times where the building staff, not the teachers, cared

about me. There's a security guard that lives upstairs for my mom and dad right now, Chief, that like I knew if he saw me in a hallway, I was getting sent to class. How do you help build the relationship from students and staff up? As students see the janitor, they may not respect him, as students see individual[s], how do you help support that entire holistic support network, if you will?

Robin Ilac 19:17

I think it's the same way as what I started with, it's important that we learn our students names. But I think it's also important to help our students learn our names. We're not just teacher, we're not just librarian, we're not just security guard. And so, you know, and kids fall back to those titles, when they don't know. And they're not doing it out of disrespect, they just don't honestly know. And so helping kids learn our names and what our titles might be, is one easy little tweak in the system that we can make. And one thing that we have been doing this year, my partner and I, she's really artsy, I'm not. I'm the digital one. But I like sending out communication digitally and stuff like that, where she's been taking on the art projects, like putting up signage around school. And calling and identifying who people are. It's important, names on on classrooms, names on buildings, bulletin boards, that kind of stuff. It's that visual of a reminder for everyone. Oh, yeah, that's who that person is. And, or that's who I can go to for this help.

Rena Clark 20:33

Yeah, it's so important that then kids get to know more people, because they might have a connection with somebody that isn't their classroom teacher, that can be so important. And I know my mom worked as an aide, and then ended up her career as a, let's call her lunch lady, and just how important it is to create those relationships with everyone. Every adult in the building.

Robin Ilac 20:56

The lunch ladies are the best because they feed us too.

Rena Clark 20:58

Yeah. You gotta get them on your side.

Paul Beckermann 21:01

My mom was one of them.

Rena Clark 21:05

It's important. And I kinda want to dig into that next layer of connection. And I know, I often find this to be more difficult with so many students, but it's that connection between school and home. So how do we strengthen those relationships with families, especially on secondary when you have so many families that you want to reach out to or make those relationships with?

Robin Ilac 21:35

You know, there's lots of digital tools. Our district uses ParentsSquare as one digital tool that we use, that we can send communication as an open channel to communicate with our families.

And there's the sending the emails and that kind of stuff. But there's something really positive about phone calls home as well, not just for calling out or identifying behaviors that might be a challenge, but also calling out and celebrating behaviors or academics that are successful. Things that we see as positives in our classroom. I mean, those for any call that I make, where I know it's going to be a more of a challenging conversation, I try to also make sure I do one or two positives in the week as well, just because that kind of fills my my bucket of joy. But I also think there's something really special too, about having students write letters home. And that's kind of almost like a lost skill. You don't see people write letters as much. And so that's one of the things I try to have some of my students do is think about something that happened positive at school today and write a note you give, you can give each student a blank post it, or a postal card like post stamp, oh my gosh, what am I thinking? postcard? Postcard? Thank you, and just have them fill that out. They can even on the front side, you can have it blank, where they draw what they learned, turn it into a visual. And on the backside, they write a statement of what they learned and why that's important. And they take that home, or I can collect them and then mail them home. So then the parents are receiving a piece of art from their child, just something simple like that. But using our kids to then communicate with our families is a positive as well. And then inviting parents in when we have opportunities. Our school just did two, we partnered with a with a nonprofit that does artwork, and they painted two murals on campus. And we we have the murals being painted during a parent conferences. So when parents were on campus, for these parent conferences, they could walk by and see the murals being put up around campus. So looking for little things that build that connection, so that the parents feel a part of the school as well as important.

Winston Benjamin 24:07

You said something that I think we forget as educators is by sending something good home, what usually happens is that kid doesn't get woken up with some angry words, which then sends them to school in a spiral. So sometimes having that nice word going home means that a kid might get a nice word on the way to school, which could shift the interaction from everybody from the moment in the door on so I don't think we think about we know that the connection, but we don't think about the value of that connection as a positive word.

Robin Ilac 24:46

And, you know, our school has challenges as does every single school right now. And I think the challenges have only magnified or maybe we're more aware of them post COVID pandemic teaching, and they're magnified to through social media, we see it on social media, our students are seeing it on social media, the parents and community see it. So anything that we can do to also put a magnifying glass on the positives, I think is really important.

Paul Beckermann 25:19

So I'm going have you put your, your teacher hat back on, and go back to your classroom. Are there any memories that you have, like a specific relationship experience that called out the power of that relationship and making a difference?

Robin Ilac 25:37

Yes. And this student that I'm thinking about, his name is Miguel, he's pretty quiet. And normally, he would have been on paper, he would have been labeled as underperforming, you look at his standardized test scores, you look at his reading levels, that's the label that would have been attached to him. And I am not a fan of labels, as somebody myself who is labeled with dyslexia, and I try to always work to be opposite of the label, I guess. So this particular student, his grades were low, test anxiety, whenever we would have tests you'd see like that deer and headlight look on him. But during the unit on the Civil War, we were going through, and we're looking at some primary sources. And he was looking at different letters from the soldiers, letters from the slaves. And I noticed at that point in time, he kind of was showing like, there was something in his eyes that kind of lit up. And so, you know, I pulled him aside, and I was like, hey, what do you think about this lesson? And he was just saying how he had thought about how what must of these men have it felt to be so far away from their homes. And it was able to open a conversation with him that was different than what I was having with my other students. But then, you know, he was able to make that connection with these soldiers who were off fighting, and being so far from their families in their homes. And he made that connection because he was from El Salvador, and he had to leave his family. And so he saw that, Oh, this is how I'm feeling being so far removed from my family, that's must have been the same way these soldiers felt being removed from their, being so far away from their families as well. So kind of just making that connection. And then, because we were able to make that connection on that particular unit, it kind of like you could see, okay, I get this. And he, it's not that the grades were perfect moving on. But you could see that like, that light bulb kind of turned for him. And he started to participate more in class. Again, it's those little baby steps that I see that are so important, because that's that that is building relationship. There's a connection you're bringing to life these stories have historical significance for each kid. And I always say history is hard for our kids, because they're studying people that live so long ago, they don't have a connection. So finding anything to make that connection for them is important. But when I think about the my classroom experiences, that's always I'm trying to find that little, how can I make whatever it is we're studying meaningful to our kids.

Paul Beckermann 28:36

And it sounds like the fact that you sat down with him and had that conversation, not only let him make that connection to the history, but he was making a connection with you as well at the same time.

Robin Ilac 28:47

And then he was more willing to talk to me to about, you know, some of his struggles that he was facing as being in this country for a short amount of time, and what it's like to be so far removed from his family. And so that kind of opened an opportunity to have a different conversation as well.

Winston Benjamin 29:05

It's so great to hear self to text connections, and how that drives actual motivation for student learning. And I think sometimes when we talk about making connections to students, we think about trying to pinpoint particular aspects of the student to connect, but it's really opening

windows and mirrors so students can see through themselves, so I appreciate that window and mirror was applied to that student. So I'm going to ask you to do a little bit of a thing called, it's going to be a little bit of a window and a mirror for yourself. Okay. So I want you to think about yourself as a first year teacher. Boom, you're back in your classroom. Your kids are doing the thing that the kids do. What would you tell yourself? Looking back on them, what would you tell yourself?

Robin Ilac 30:00

I would say breathe. Take time to breathe? It's, it's a marathon. It's not a sprint. And so just take time to breathe. Pace yourself. This is one that I'm still having to learn after all these years, right is to prioritize your well being, you can't pour from an empty cup, as they say. And so I definitely, if I could travel back in time, that probably would be the first thing I'd say to myself as a new teacher. And it's what I have said to all new teachers that I've been able to mentor over the years. Look for look for the small wins. We're not the standardized test score. Don't wait for that score to be the big thing or the call out at a graduation speech. That's not why we're in this. But look for those moments that you can have with those individual students where there's those little a-ha's. I've mentored a lot of first year teachers in our area. And I've also over my career, I've had a lot of student teachers in my class. And one of the things I always tell them, and it's something that I wish I had done a better job of is, whenever a student gives you a note, or a little letter saying thank you to put it in a folder. So that on those hard days, you can pull that folder out. And you have all these little love notes from the kids who that's why you're doing what you're doing. And then that's like, my word for the year. That's where you savor the joy. And so find those moments to savor it.

Rena Clark 31:48

And do the digital version. I've done that. I have a folder in my email that's called this is why, and then I just kind of put those emails in that folder. So it's good to have that.

Paul Beckermann 32:00

I've got one of those too. It's your joy bucket.

Rena Clark 32:06

Well, speaking of buckets, buckets are kind of tool. So I think it's time to move into our toolkit. So thinking about what's in our toolkit for today.

Student 32:20

Check it out, check it out, check it out. What's in the toolkit? What is in the toolkit? Check it out.

Rena Clark 32:30

Who would like to go first?

Paul Beckermann 32:33

I'll just say, cooperative learning. Nobody talks about that anymore. I don't know, maybe it's an outdated thing. But I think putting kids together in situations where they struggle through a

common goal to a common end, can help them build some of those relationships in an authentic way. It's part of that scaffolding up to that, that you talked about Robin, setting up the environment so that kids are safe and ready to do that. Once they are, we don't want them just sitting in in their rows neatly in the classroom and never interacting with each other. We want them to be interacting with each other and learning together. I took a couple classes early on in my career. And it changed the way I taught, designing lessons that had both individual accountability, but also group interdependence. So that students had both of those baked into the experience and it brought a lot of kids together in a really authentic way.

Rena Clark 33:30

Is that like real world experience connection?

Paul Beckermann 33:33

Yeah, I hate to bring that into it. Anyway, there's my toolkit, I know.

Winston Benjamin 33:40

Horrible. There's something that Robin has alluded to from me, is intentionality. And I wanted to start out saying plan your work, work your plan. Like it's important to know how and when you're going to be doing some sort of engagement with a student and why, like getting to know their names. Just to get to know their names is not the point, get to know their name, so you validate their family experience. And build a pull point is the goal, validate and gain. So I think plan your work, work your plan. It's an important tool for me.

Rena Clark 34:25

I think it can be a little bit overwhelming when we say create relationship with everyone all at once, right now. So one thing I like to do is just pick a student or pick a person or pick a student from a period if you're teaching multiple periods. And they don't even need to know this isn't like their name is not on the board. It's not like star of the day. It's just in your mind. And you're going to take some time to ask them maybe a personal question or get to know them a little bit more deeply. And spread that around so that you opportunity Have you used to have some of those more intentional conversations because you have to make time for it. Because in this busy schedule of our lives, if we're not intentional, it's not going to happen.

Robin Ilac 35:10

I was going say that building on what you were saying was to be intentional about our time. Some of the best minutes are the non instructional minutes. And those are those like four or five minutes of passing period. So standing at the door, and greeting the kids at the door, saying their names acknowledging that they're in class, even if they might come in tardy, but you're excited that they showed up. And I love to have music playing as well. So it's a party in my room until they get in the room. And then that bell ringer goes, they have a bell ringer that I've posted in their online classroom, they're in their seat, they're working on the bell ringer, gives me time to take attendance, because we always know that's important. But it's just fun. And the kids want to get into class because there's some jams playing in the background, and so forth. And then what's nice too, is you can use that to build community too, because you can have a classroom

playlist, they can submit class songs to have as the intro song meet once a week or whatever, and as long as it's classroom appropriate.

Winston Benjamin 36:19

So it's time for that one thing.

Paul, Rena, and Winston singing 36:25

It's time for that one thing. One thing, one thing. It's that one thing,

Winston Benjamin 36:37

what's the one thing that's still rolling around in your mind that you're like, ah, I'm not gonna leave away with this without deeply thinking about it tomorrow. Rena, Paul, what's on your mind? What's your one thing?

Rena Clark 36:49

Because back to the beginning of our conversation, and Robin talked a little bit about your personal situation, but you can't have community care without relationship. So even if you need care, you ask for help. You need to have relationships in order to receive community care. And I think that's something we don't often think about.

Paul Beckermann 37:13

And I was dwelling on another thing that Robin said earlier, she said teaching is more than imparting knowledge. And that's the secret sauce here again, this relationship piece and how that's really the catalyst that gets us through to the other pieces. Just like you said, you were sitting down with that student and finding that connection in those journal entries or those letters. It's the relationships that's a conduit to that learning. It's so important.

Rena Clark 37:40

Google can impart not knowledge, YouTube can impart knowledge. ChatGPT can impart knowledge. I don't want to hang out with them, too much.

Winston Benjamin 37:48

Absolutely. So I have a coworker who always says this [and] it makes me laugh, because it's about the Tuesdays. Nobody likes Tuesday as a work day. It's the hardest day. But it's sometimes when you're working with kids, and you're building relationships, it's about those mundane Tuesdays that you forgot about years ago, but all of a sudden, the kid that was like yo mister, that was my Friday. It was my enjoyment. It was in place that made me happy. So I think doing the mundane things that are just out of the everyday grind, sometimes may not seem to be most important, but they are. Robin, any one thing you would like to add?

Robin Ilac 38:41

I was thinking about the work by ... Brene Brown, there you go. I'm horrible with names, see what I mean? But she's done a lot of work around vulnerability and that's that's where real courage is. Courage is being vulnerable. And I think that that's so important that we

communicate that with our students, that it's okay to show our true selves, with our students, with our staff, whatever rule we have on a campus. Be courageous, and be vulnerable with each other. Because out of that comes that real sense of community that can lead to that community care.

Paul Beckermann 39:21

Great advice. I'm so glad that you shared that you played music for your kids, because you're really active on on Twitter. And now I know you love playing music. So you're like Rockin Robin tweet. Rockin Robin tweet. Oh, sorry. It just, I had to share that little insight. Thanks so much for being with us today, Robin.

Rena Clark 39:52

Thanks for listening to Unpacking Education.

Winston Benjamin 39:55

We invite you to visit us at AVIDopenaccess.org where you can discover resources to support student agency and academic tenacity to create a classroom for future ready learners.

Paul Beckermann 40:10

We'll be back here next Wednesday for a fresh episode of Unpacking Education.

Rena Clark 40:14

And remember, go forth and be awesome.

Winston Benjamin 40:17

Thank you for all you do.

Paul Beckermann 40:19

You make a difference.