

Betsy Kindall:

I am Betsy Kindall.

Nicole Fairchild:

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Stacy Moore:

And I'm Stacy Moore.

Betsy Kindall:

And this is Arkansas A.W.A.R.E., a project to advance wellness and resiliency in education.

Hey everybody, welcome back. I know a lot of you guys are coming back from being out from snow and ice. We're going to touch on some of the things that Stacy and Nicole talked about last time about liking your students. And we're going to kind of converse about that a little bit because we are talking about really defining what that means to like someone or to like your student and is there a difference? What's the difference between if your students like you or not? And about the value that we place in them in relationships. And we've come to understand that that means different things for different people. Definitely.

Nicole Fairchild:

Yeah. So we talked last time about finding something that you like about a student, and if you listen back to the last episode, we even talked about smiling eye contact. Is that something that you can offer? But when we got back together with Betsy, she had some different ideas about what it means to like somebody. So we want to start by defining some terms because when we say find something you like about a student, it doesn't necessarily mean that then they become your favorite and you want to take them home with you and go to McDonald's for an ice cream after school every day.

Betsy Kindall:

Yes, true. And I think it is the overarching goal here in our last few episodes is to reiterate the fact, and you guys gave some really great examples of how to do that last time, how to find a way to connect with those students and make sure that that student feels valued no matter what, when they are in your classroom, which is ideal obviously, but that will also help rapport. It will also help build any kind of relationship you have with that student, which will ultimately end in a higher level of performance. That's the goal.

Nicole Fairchild:

Yeah, definitely is the goal. So tell us when you heard us say, "I like you, Betsy.", you were thinking something different.

Betsy Kindall:

Well, I have been in a classroom when I was a student, which is different and we'll talk about that, but when I was a student and I had a teacher who was a really great teacher, I did not like that teacher. But you know what? I still learned a lot in that classroom. And I think that's a testament to that you no

matter what, as a teacher, if you are out there and you're listening and you feel like, well there's this one student, I just... There's nothing there. We can't find anything. I think that should be a testament that if you can think about one teacher that you might have had that you didn't necessarily like and you still learned, it's a testament that you can still create that kind of environment for your classroom where your kids are learning and they feel safe, which I think is super important.

But as a teacher, I think as you're listening, you're thinking, well, I have this one kid, and literally there's nothing. I think that sometimes you're going to have kids that come through your classroom that are that way. And I think if that is where you are, you need to listen to the episode before this one because you guys gave some really great examples, you talked about posture and you talked about eye contact, how to engage that student and let that student feel valued and to relay that feeling that you're trying to create in the classroom.

But I will be honest, it is a little uncomfortable for me to say, "I'm going to like all the kids in my classroom.", because I don't know that I could say that sometimes I taught high school. It would just be really hard to say that. Do I value all of them and do I value who they are and do I want what's best for them? And do I want us create a safe environment? I do. I do want to do that. And so I think using the strategies that you guys talked about last time is going to be super helpful for those teachers that are in that spot.

Stacy Moore:

I'm wondering if this whole concept of like is somewhat related to our society today and the concept of liking things on social media, I don't know. Is our definition of changed because means I'm giving you a thumbs up, whereas for some of our students we are not necessarily saying, "You're doing a great job and I'm agreeing and getting on board with you."

I don't know, it just made me wonder that. And so again I think what Betsy said when she was a student, she didn't always like some of her teachers. And I would say absolutely. We've talked about you can't make somebody do anything, so I can't make students like me. But my question is this, if you out there think about a teacher that you knew didn't like you, how would it have changed if they did? How would it have changed your experience if they did find a connection with you? If they communicated somehow some sense of I value you, I even kind of like you as a human being, not as a friend, I care. would that have made a difference? Because I do think it's different teachers liking students are not always going to like their teachers, but I do think it's different in teachers and in behavior change and trying to be an avenue for learning that we try to keep that open. And so one way we do that is by showing we care.

Betsy Kindall:

Yeah, and I think you add, we opened up with some terms and definitions because exactly that. I do think that there is a difference. You can care about a student and not always like them. And I know that that's probably a very unpopular opinion, but I think there's probably other folks out there that think I care about what happens to this student. Again, I want what's best for them. But yeah, I think defining what like means is different. And it's really funny that you use that thumbs up like on social media aspect. That was interesting.

Stacy Moore:

Well, when I was looking at the definition of like that popped up and I thought, okay, that's a newer way that we talk about liking a lot now and is that influencing how we're seeing that?

Nicole Fairchild:

Well, and I wonder what it would be like to be a student in a classroom where you felt like the teacher just always scrolled by you. Never even bothered to give you one blessed little blue like. Never, never, never, never. And I think the problem I have is that I think the prickliest kids, the kids that have the most behavior issues, it is just, it's tucked in there, it's just hidden under there a little bit.

And unfortunately what that means for us as adults, we need to figure out a way to look past some of the stuff they're throwing up to distract some of the tornado that they're setting into motion and get down to what's really going on. And so for me, that's a little bit of a what can I figure out about you that I like? What can I look for? What can I figure out? And I wonder, Betsy and Stacy, if it's possible too that Betsy, you're thinking about this more as a secondary teacher where you have less time to do that, more kids to deal with and less ability. Whereas my heavens, if you're in a first grade classroom and you've got those babies all day long, I'm thinking, you better figure out something you like about this little guy. Even if he throws tantrums or else, I don't know how we move forward.

Stacy Moore:

I also think though, when I was in high school, when I was in eighth grade, ninth, 10th and the 12th, that it was super important for those students. That's almost where I see where I would encourage teachers to find something they liked about that kiddo because it was more impactful. It wasn't more impactful than it is with the younger ones. That's not true. But it was just as impactful and super important for their development and their future that they had people on their team because they had racked up years of negative experiences in school and they really needed somebody to reach out a hand to see them, to not scroll by them to connect with them or it was going to go downhill even more.

Nicole Fairchild:

We talk about one buffering adult being the biggest resiliency factor out there for kids. And the truth is the kids that need that one buffering adult the most are probably going to be the hardest to like.

Stacy Moore:

And need it the most for sure. Yes. As educators, they're not always going to like us because as we've talked about, we're the ones who have to set the boundaries, to have to set the expectations, to do love and limits, right? Firm and kind. And so they're not always going to like that firmness or that boundary or the fact that we're having some type of power, whether perceived or granted or whatever. So we know they're not always going to respond favorably despite our efforts to connect. So what do you guys think in those cases? If it's true that 10% aren't going to like you, no matter what advice do you have there?

Nicole Fairchild:

Well, I think that's where we even come back to the concept, we've talked about quite a bit about fracture and repair. It's when we never do the repair. And I think the repair process, even if it's just a queue for safety, like I've had to set a boundary with you. I know you don't like it. We've had to set a limit. I've done it without shaming you. I've done it without being super angry with you. So I'm still firm and kind right now. You may not like that a whole lot.

So the repair doesn't have to be an apology for setting the boundary or asking for the thing or whatever. The repair can simply be that kind attentive eye contact that says, "You're still safe here. We're still good." And I think that's the kind of thing that we, the adults have to be able to do. And so we might call

that finding something you like about the kid so that you have the capacity to do it, or we might call it something else. We might call it valuing that student intentionally even when it's tough, but whatever we call it. I think that thing right there is the beginning of most of the most impactful behavior changes that we see when we hear these stories.

Stacy Moore:

I think it is the 1,000 repetitions that if they don't like us, I still think we keep doing what we're doing. Maybe there's trust broken, maybe there's been difficult relationships, maybe they don't know how, or maybe they're not at a place, supposedly as mature as we are, we hope that we're in a place where we have greater skills to draw from experiences than they do. And so in my mind, I'm also that it's my responsibility to keep trying to form that connection. Doesn't mean I'm going out of my way and spending 20 minutes talking to them. But it does mean, like you said last time, Nicole, where it's the smiling eyes, this brief interactions because as we talked about last time, you are doing the relationship. You are, by the way you are being, by the way you're interacting. And so keeping that more positive toned is maybe the efforts that you just have to keep continuing.

Nicole Fairchild:

So if you're out there and you're listening, maybe this clarification has helped you, maybe last episode bristled against you a little bit and you've thought, good golly, these people are crazy. They think I need to like every single kid in my classroom. And so maybe this little bit of clarification helps. I don't know. Do you think we've said enough about that, Betsy?

Betsy Kindall:

I do. Because I agree absolutely that it's important to do the rapport. It's important to have good rapport with the kids in the classroom and find things that you like about them. But for me at least, it's another step to say that I like every kid in my class. That's a really hard thing for me to say. But maybe for me, just like anybody out there listening, it means something very different. As Donnie says, the scale for me is different than it might be for someone else.

So as you're listening out there, if you're like me and your scale is a little bit different, you have a hard time saying, "Okay, I'm going to like every single kid." Hopefully we've offered some clarity. But we recognize too that hopefully that you do value the students in your classroom. I know I do. I would always value the students in my classroom and I cared about them and I wanted what was best for them. But it was a stretch to say the other, and maybe it's just semantics or a language situation, but that was really hard for me. So if you're like me, we hope this episode offered a little bit of clarification and some additional discussion points that you can have with some of your peers about the kids in your classrooms.

Nicole Fairchild:

Well, and maybe it was relevant this week when maybe you were at home with your family and you were like, I need to try to find something I like about these people right now. I don't know, maybe that was... Was that relevant for anybody?

Stacy Moore:

It's definitely a testament, do I have the skills to keep liking everybody in this household?

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Betsy Kindall:

That's fabulous. We hope you tune in next week as we continue our conversation and skill sharing. So we'll see you guys next week.