

00:00

Speaker 1

Foreign. My record is 32 days of suspension in one day. That's more than one kid. Obviously there's a big thing that went on and I have 32 days of suspension that day. I didn't have a whole heck of a lot of joy. I don't find any joy in sending kids home unless absolutely needed to. It came through a conversation. One person said to me something about is my experience in middle school. And I said just very honestly, unfortunately, this is a place that I work, not a place that I'm passionate about. And that's when it hit me like my joy had been sucked out of it.

00:41

Speaker 2

Your counselors are heroes. They're also stretched almost 400 students to one. That's insane or cheery. Helps every kid build a career plan without adding to your counselor's plate. That's leverage. That's real support. Check it out for yourself at BetterLeaders Orchard Careers. That's BetterLeaders Orchard Careers. Still scrambling for supplies like it's 1999 ODP Business Solutions streamlines everything from pencils to projectors so you can focus on what matters. Making an impact. Visit [ODP business.com education](http://ODPbusiness.com/education) to learn more. That's [ODP business.com education](http://ODPbusiness.com/education) IXL takes the guesswork out of lesson planning for teachers. IXL's ready made lesson plans are aligned to your textbooks and state standards so teachers can turn to IXL for the exact content they need to help their students. You can get started today@ixl.com leaders that's ixl.com leaders most professional development is forgotten by lunch, unfortunately.

02:06

Speaker 2

And that's because it's built for everyone and no one. At the same time. Kids First Education prepares PD in a different way. They design every session around what your district or campus needs, what your priorities are. This episode is brought to you by Kids First Education. You can see how it works at Kids First LLC leaders. That's KidsFirst LLC leaders. The best leadership coaches, they don't hand you answer. They help you discover the insight yourself through curiosity and inquiry. Questions that help you see your situation differently. That's exactly what digital Danny does. And you can get started with him@myprincipalcoach.com RUCKUS that's myprincipalcoach.com RUFFUS all right. And Bill, welcome to the show.

03:10

Speaker 1

Hi Danny. Thanks for the invite. I appreciate it. Glad to be here.

03:14

Speaker 2

You know, this is super fun for me. I've been really looking forward to this conversation. We have worked together forever. You know And I feel really honored and it's been an incredible opportunity for me to be behind the scenes supporting you in whatever way I could. And I think know just a quick, like history. I mean, you were in the Mastermind. You transitioned to one one and you also have been using Digital Danny too. So I, I want to give that context to the Ruckus Maker listening or watching because you've been in the system, right? You know it, you know it just as well as me, to be honest. But what I love is that, like, you can talk from your experience. You know what I mean? I always feel like I'm super biased. Right. Like Mastermind's awesome one one coach. It is great.

04:07

Speaker 2

Digital Dandy, wonderful. But you know, if you believe so, you can say those things. But yeah, I think where I want to start before we get into like, how, not even how, but like what you've been able to achieve, I guess, and the challenges you've overcome. Can you just give like a brief context of kind of where you're at, what you're doing these days? Yeah, I'll stop there. I won't, I won't pile five questions into one. So let's start there.

04:33

Speaker 1

Yeah, no worries. No worries. Once again, just thrilled and excited to be here. It has been a long journey. I'm Bill. I'm a current middle school principal, but transitioning back to my true love and my joy elementary. I'm a former elementary principal two times over. And so now here I am, back at it through the guys and through the help of Mastermind, all things Ruckus Maker Digital Danny. So you name it. At the beginning, I, I was hemming and hawing. I'm also a husband and a father of two and I was, I wanted to join Mastermind. I've heard about it. I listened to the podcast kind of over and over again. The challenging part was it's not the right time. It's not the right time. It seemed as if I had a lot of excuses, right? Honestly.

05:20

Speaker 1

And then one time, mowing the lawn, got the podcast in, just making my lines right, mind numbing activity. And I realized, I said, you know, maybe I should

try. And so obviously I set up a phone call with you, Danny, and we made it work. And I can honestly say it's something that's transformed my administrative outlook, my leadership outlook, and what you always say, when we get better, everyone else gets better. And I can honestly say it, all the buildings that I've been and the districts I've been in, Mastermind the. The one one coaching and now digital Danny has taken me to the next level and I feel so much more prepared and playing. So anyway, that's just a little bit about me.

06:05

Speaker 2

Yeah, thanks. Thanks for that. And I'm curious, I'm guessing, like, you heard about the Mastermind and that kind of stuff through the podcast, Would that be right?

06:12

Speaker 1

Yes, yeah, through the podcast. And then obviously when you were on others podcasts as well, I heard you talking and so, yeah, so I, I said I've got to get into something. I was craving it. A lot of administrators could tell you this. I think this is across the country, maybe the world, that there's a lot of PD that we'd like to do. We just don't have the time to do it right. And I think I was falling in that rut. I also was just earlier in my administrative career where I was just going through the motions, reading a lot of books, trying to check off things, but I didn't have somebody that I could connect with because I didn't want to bother other people because I know that they were busy.

06:50

Speaker 1

And so I would just try to navigate this world alone, which can be tricky. And that's when I decided to just jump right into Mastermind. And boy, am I glad that I did.

07:01

Speaker 2

Yeah, me too. So. So one of the, maybe the major catalysts, but one thing in terms of life and leadership prior to Mastermind was just that isolated, you know, doing it on your own piece and you wanted that connection and the perspective from others, it sounds like. Was there anything else that sort of got you over the hump? Because I heard you too, sort of saying time was a challenge. Right. Like a blocker for you, at least initially. Right. Like, how are you going to fit it in? And let's be real. I mean, the Mastermind's a time investment. You know, it's a weekly experience. It's an hour a week. We do read

books. You know, it's a pretty. It's a doable pace. A book every two months. So it's not, you know, like crushing pages, but there is an investment there, one one.

07:46

Speaker 2

That's an advantage. Right. Because we meet on your schedule, you know, and then digital, Danny, is just like, oh, that's, you know, that's an app, so you could do it whenever you want. But yeah, I'm curious how you got over that time challenge and if there was any other catalyst that pushed you to join.

08:02

Speaker 1

Yeah, you know, Danny, I'm just, I'm A. I'm a driven person. I always want to do more and more. And I just felt like where I currently was with the district status was I wasn't getting what I needed.

08:14

Speaker 2

Right.

08:14

Speaker 1

And so if you're not learning, then you're just, you're falling behind. And so I was just going through the motions and doing the same thing that I'd done every year, attending all of the professional development that the district would provide, which was great at the time, but I wanted more, I wanted deeper, I wanted leadership secrets. And, and so there is a time commitment also a cost. Right. So let's not.

08:35

Speaker 2

Let's.

08:36

Speaker 1

It is what it is. So. And so I had some conversations and I made some things work budget wise, and then I just jumped in and it was. I got to this point where there has to be more, right. There has to be more to this leadership thing than just survival.

08:50

Speaker 2

And that sounds terrible when you say it like that.

08:53

Speaker 1

Yeah. Well, you know, when school starts, right. The bell rings, the crowd is coming, whether we are ready or not. And the challenging part is whether you're ready or not. And so do you stick to what you always done and that's comfortable and that's traditional, perhaps, or do you try something different that you've always wanted to do? And with the opportunity from my superintendent, who gives me just a lot of freedom to try new things because he knows that if I'm trying something new, I'm. I'm learning also modeling that for my staff. So to get over that hump, I just said, enough is enough. There has to be more. And so that's when I did that and obviously just look at some budget stuff. And now I've kind of switched over from personal budget to the school budget. Right.

09:37

Speaker 1

There's grants out there for a lot of administrators to do professional learning. And so now my district has seen the benefits that mastermind one one coaching and then digital Danny has provided where now they're paying it for me. So there's lots of grants out there and different opportunities to make it work.

09:55

Speaker 2

Wow. So I don't know if I realize that or not. I guess what I'm hearing you say is in the beginning you were actually using personal resources, you know, financial resources, and then you figured out a way to build that into the school budget or ask for approval and that kind of thing. Did I, Did I get that right?

10:12

Speaker 1

Yeah, yeah, you're right. Right. And as a dad, right. I'm thinking of college. At the time, my boys were still in elementary, middle school. And I'm thinking about college. Right. I'm trying to save some money and then I have things that just break down around here or flat tire or. And so I'm just cautious of that. Right. Maybe the old dad thing. However, I thought, well, how can I do this? Well, how can I not do this looking back? And so it's been a great return on investment for me exponentially. And then obviously a variety of schools that I've been at, not only elementary, but the secondary level too. And now going back to elementary, knowing what I didn't know then, but knowing what I know now, thanks to Mastermind, the coaching and obviously digital. Danny.

10:57

Speaker 2

Yeah. You hit the trifecta because you've touched and really explored and gone deep in all those different areas. So it's kind of. I don't think I've ever been able to ask this question. You know, you've tasted all the baskins and robins, right? The three flavors of better leaders, better schools, at least right now.

11:19

Speaker 1

Yeah.

11:19

Speaker 2

So I'm just, I'm super curious from your perspective, like, what did you like about each. Each sort of way of we supporting you on your self mentorship journey? You know, like, how are they different and what'd you like about them? Right. Because they are different. Mastermind, one one, they show Danny.

11:37

Speaker 1

They are. Yeah. So when I jumped into Mastermind, just really excited and I started it was once a week and as you mentioned, the books were doable. I could fit in my timeline, which also spurred something else. Right. And now I was reading for something. But I also had accountability in the Mastermind. I knew that the following Wednesday my people were going to be there. One thing that you do that I absolutely love is that hot seat. And that's where we come and we sit and we talk about something that's to us. And it is freeing to talk about something, to know that it's a confidential area that I can share openly. And people get me. Right. So on the other side of my screen, people understand because they're living it.

12:16

Speaker 1

And then also vice versa when they were sharing their stories about, you know, situations that they were dealing with students and parents. I'm thinking on the other end, thank goodness that's not me. Holy cow. I thought I had it bad. Right? So there's some misery loves company type of thing. But I loved connecting with people more than people. Just from the great state of Michigan. It was all over, right. So we had People from New York to the west side. I, I learned about people who were rock climbers, how they got up at Uber early in the morning to start that process. Meanwhile, I'm just trying to get up early enough to get things going here at the house. But what I really loved was that camaraderie that were all together, that were learning from each other.

12:56

Speaker 1

There wasn't anybody that was one upping anyone else. It was true, it was genuine, it was raw. And that's what I really love because once I saw that, then I felt comfortable to start sharing some things as well. Right. Within the fines of confidentiality, of course. But yeah, just scenarios and situations and say, hey crew. And putting myself out there too, being vulnerable. So saying this is what happened today, what do you think I should do? Right. So this was before Digital Danny. This was kind of like the beforehand of Digital Danny, maybe the premise of what came. But the Mastermind for me was a great place to connect. It was accountability for me too. And it also helped me just understand and look at leadership from different perspectives and then also stay connected. All connected with a good book too.

13:43

Speaker 2

Yeah. So, yeah, how about one one? So that's the Mastermind. Like how's. Yeah, how do you experience one one different than the mastermind?

13:50

Speaker 1

The mastermind I had ended up, I was at elementary when I started Mastermind and then I ended up switching and going over to secondary land, middle school land by choice. And at that time I decided that everything was brand new. I'm going to need to know somebody one one. And so that's when I reached out and I did leave the Mastermind, which was extremely difficult decision. Right. But we had a quick phone call. I told you what the plan was for me and what exactly I'm going to need because I'm an early childhood guy. And so for me to go up to middle school, I was like a fish out of water. I needed more than just once a week. Right. And a good book and some stories to help me re. Rejuvenate. I needed a whole heck of a lot.

14:31

Speaker 1

And I, after the fact, now that I'm. I'm going back to elementary, it's not all that different still. Same situational stuff and leadership stuff. But the one one is when I could really focus in on and I could, Danny, I could say, all right, here's what we're going to talk about today. I need some help with this. And one thing that I've always enjoyed was Mastermind. And then the one one coaching along with Digital Danny was, you never give the answer. You always pose a different question. And the question helps me realize what that answer really is, because I know that better of a context. But you never gave me the answer. You always

gave me insight. And so that was something that really helped me excel at the middle school level as well. Once again, fish out of water.

15:13

Speaker 1

Walking into this and all of a sudden thinking, oh, I got into something here that's significantly different as far as age range, but collectively, leadership style, it's all really the same. Kids just want to be seen for the most part and known that you know them. So that's what I started to do, Right. Just build those relationships, much as I did in preschool and kindergarten and. And so on. So the one one for me was more of like a coach right here in my pocket that I could pull out and say, danny, we need to meet. I've got this on the topic. And I would come with a list of things and we would talk about them.

15:52

Speaker 1

But once I said, you know, once again, you never told me the answer, you always led me to discover that answer on myself and help me to slow down. Right. And really examine my assumptions.

16:04

Speaker 2

So I love slowing down. You know, it's always like, what's the rush? And there is urgency. Right. I mean, we want to make an impact. We only have the kids for a certain amount of time.

16:13

Speaker 1

Yeah.

16:14

Speaker 2

But also, like, I, you know, the. The counterintuitive idea to go slow, to go fast. You know, I was talking to a principal I think I'm gonna start working with and her team and new. New to the setting, the context, the building, and just really wants her admin team to gel. Right. To be on the same page so that everything's going to flow from there. Right. Just like the saying, right. When you get better, everybody wins. It's the same thing with that central leadership group. It's just gonna. It's just gonna have so many exponential, you know, value by getting that team working together. Something else that you kind of like triggered in me too, is like the difference between coaching and consulting. Right. Consultants say, you know, here, I've analyzed it. Here's the problem. Now do this right? Coaches say, well, tell me more.

17:04

Speaker 2

Right? And they ask questions and they help you figure out the answers. I think that's really important too, because the way I've. I finally figured it out and, you know, shout out to my. My friend Corey. I remember I was so excited. I said, bill, I think I have the word for what we do now. Like, because it's never been pd, right? It's never been professional development. It's all. Everybody that's come through the system has said this is different. Right. It's not like what everything else we experience is whether that's going to a conference or live events. So different. Or the PD that gets brought in for a system. But that's the difference between what I now call permission based development. That's what most professional development is, right? We're telling you what you need.

17:51

Speaker 2

You know, you're waiting on our timeline, so on and so forth. And what we do at better leaders, better schools is self mentorship, right? There's no curriculum. Bill's the curriculum. What Bill is working on is the curriculum. We just come alongside you and figure out, well, how can we achieve the things that are important to Bill? And that's different from Shannon, which is different from Dom and Demetrius.

18:13

Speaker 1

Right.

18:14

Speaker 2

And everybody else. So I love that approach. It's super fun too, and exciting because it's like, I don't know what we're working on today. I'm gonna find out when I log in, right?

18:25

Speaker 1

Yeah, yeah. And I've got my legal pad full of stuff, so.

18:28

Speaker 2

Yeah, you do take a lot of notes. I love that. I really appreciate that. So.

18:33

Speaker 1

Well, Danny, I, I love what you've mentioned about the permission slip, right. And so I've got, as I mentioned, I have two boys and we did some zip lining one time. Well, in order to do ziplining, I had to sign off as dad, right. I had to give permission that they could do that. I took that same premise. It's something that we learned in Mastermind and I applied it to my staff, right. And I gave them permission. I gave them permission to slow things down. In this fast paced society, we're all interconnected one way or another. And after I gave them permission to not do something or to take a little bit more time or whatever it was, the room just went. Because I wasn't coming in as the administrator saying, you need to do more, you need to do this.

19:16

Speaker 1

This is a deadline. I was actually reading the. And giving them permission. So when you say that you do give us permission and when we get that permission, guess what we should do? Give that out to others too. So just your case in point, you know, those permission slips are valuable and our words hold a lot of meaning. So don't be afraid to give permission to others.

19:37

Speaker 2

Cool. I have one more one one question before we get to digital Danny, But I'm just curious. We've worked together now, year for years, one one. Can you remember a moment that it was like the most impactful for you? If you can, I don't know. And if you feel comfortable sharing.

19:54

Speaker 1

Yeah, yeah. There's a lot of things that would come up and what I would do is I would just, I'd take notes when situation would happen and say, well, I need to talk to Danny. I would take some more notes, I would do some more reading, I would do some searching online and I would also talk to my colleagues too. The challenging part with having those conversations is, well, some of the stuff you don't want to share with colleagues because you could be embarrassed. Right. Or I should know this, right? That old inferior, complex thing when, guess what folks, we're all doing our very best and that's okay, right?

20:23

Speaker 2

Yeah.

20:24

Speaker 1

One thing that stood out was I was making this transition from elementary to middle school and I, I wanted to do this, I wanted to see exactly what it was like. And Danny, with your experience in middle school, I remember you saying, oh man, it's gonna smell up there. I said that, daddy. You are correct, sir. Yes, it was. But you know, when I made the choice to move up to secondary, I was a fish out of water, as I mentioned. But our conversations that we had, you gave me that confidence to say, no, you can. And you kept, I kept saying, but I don't know if I can. And you kept saying to me, Danny, why not? How come? What makes you think that? And I didn't have a leg to stand on.

21:11

Speaker 1

It was just some of that self doubt after that agreement that okay, I'll go up to secondary and give this thing a whirl. And it was an eye opening experience for sure. But one thing that really stands out, Danny, was just that conversation that we had is you kept building me up when other people were saying, oh yeah, it's going to be great. Great isn't something that's going to help motivate me. Right. We were talking about things that were heavy on my heart about moving in the transition piece. But you kept saying, who says you can't? What makes you think you can't? You think you can't take what you've learned in your experience already and apply it just in this facet. And so I've always held on to that, just wanting to know and like that I can do it.

21:50

Speaker 1

And so that's one of the many things that stands Out. But that's one true line that stands out through all of it was just your encouragement for me when I didn't think I could. You said, yeah, you're going to be just fine and here's why. You're going to take this and maybe apply it this way and lo and behold, four years later, it's worked out.

22:09

Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah, you did a great job. All right. So now you're moving back to elementary. You also have access, you know, to Digital Danny as well. Obviously different than one one and working with me as a human in real life, but I think he's pretty good. And so what have you been chatting about? Because I know you're in transition mode. Yeah, chats. Like, what is helping you do? You know, is there anything he's helping you decide and like, think differently about?

22:41

Speaker 1

Yeah, yeah, I, I, I love it. I'm excited. And an opportunity came up and as I mentioned, I, I, I was middle school can be wearing and tearing on. You have a great group of teachers, great support as far as the office. I have a co principal that's with me. We were dynamic together. The challenging part is something was tugging and I wanted to go back to elementary. Didn't know how, didn't want to switch districts because who likes filling out all that tax document stuff and forget it. So this is my 11th year in administration, my 25th year in teaching and education itself. And one of the challenge was I wanted to go back. But this time, going back, I've got some years of experience under my belt from administration. Right. But I didn't want that to be overconfident.

23:29

Speaker 1

Oh, here's what I'm going to do now. Because as I was starting my career in elementary, I was cutting my teeth on leadership. Right. There was a lot of stuff I was learning on the fly because unfortunately that's just the way that it is. It did my best. But now with Digital Danny, I thought, okay, knowing what I know, let's go back. And one thing about Digital Danny is once again, it's just like you, right? It's like having you in my pocket saying, okay, I don't want to bother Danny because I know he's got all this stuff going on. The challenging part is how do I really maximize and have somebody to talk to about this transition back. Although I've done it's different. And now I need to go back and look at this differently. So a couple things come to mind.

24:11

Speaker 1

Like I have to interview for a few new teachers left And so imagine this. I have to interview for a building that I don't know, for a place, people that I don't know, for a job opportunity that I don't know, Right. And so I have to really rely on other folks, some of the staff that's there at the new building I'm headed to. And so I've had to really dig in and say, okay, put my notepad away and say, let's look at this differently. So the decision was made earlier in the year, around springtime, that I was going to be headed over to elementary, which gave me an amazing opportunity because it's within my same district. But I had this ample time. I had four months of connecting that I could do before August hits. When August hits, you know, August brings August things.

24:58

Speaker 1

And so I was able to connect. So one thing that I did was I started tapping into Digital Danny and I started asking Dan, okay, here's what I want to do. And Digital Danny said, hang on there, tiger. Let's go back and feel you're trying to get through, right? So instead of me saying, what should I change first? You

know, Digital Danny was asking me, well, what kind of things do you. I need to understand before I change anything. Which led to some of those conversations that I was having with staff members and grade levels. And one thing that I realized is that my experience was a strength, but it also had me arriving at, well, solutions that I already had in my mind. But it's a different school and a different time and a different place.

25:43

Speaker 1

And I don't know if I would have necessarily slowed down once again, unless I use Digital Danny, because what works at one place doesn't necessarily work for another. And so then I just, I slowed down. I started meeting with the grade level folks, the staff started being with the office staff and just started listening and really asking them some questions like, what are you most proud of? Where do you feel stuck? What do you think is something that we should never change here? And really getting a chance to understand the whole environment. And Digital Danny was able to help me once again. I would pose what kind of questions should I ask to a first grade team? And Digital Danny would ask me, well, what do you want to learn? Right.

26:23

Speaker 1

Once again, doesn't tell me this is different than LLM, right, a ChatGPT or a Claude where they want to give you the correct answer to keep you happy. Digital Danny gives me the answer in a roundabout way, but now I'm doing some really slow and really deep thinking to help arrive at that answer myself. So that's one thing that came up that I really enjoyed that you know, that I now slowing down and even digital Danny, I, as you mentioned before, I take a lot of notes. When I went in, when I met with folks, I didn't take any notes, I didn't take an iPad at my phone. I just gave them an undivided attention and really started listening. And that was a suggestion for digital Danny, leave the notepad beside just go and be present. And that's what I did.

27:08

Speaker 1

And wouldn't you know it, my brain remembered what I needed to and started finding some connections too.

27:14

Speaker 2

So yeah, how did the staff, did you notice a difference like, you know, just in terms of like how they were engaging with you too? Because you were there, you were on, you were fully present.

27:25

Speaker 1

Yeah, yeah. I tried to obviously be respectful of their time getting out at secondary I get out a little bit earlier so I, I was meeting with them after school and so what I would do is I would just have a list of maybe five or six questions, right, open ended and then I would just listen and I, I think they were taken back because I, I didn't have any notes and I told them, I said look, I don't have anything to write down. This isn't an observation, I'm just listening, I just want to hear you talk. And I think without any kind of device in my hand, whether that's a pen or pad or paper or iPad, that they were open and they started talking a little bit more free, right.

28:04

Speaker 1

Because I wasn't jotting everything down and they told me that after the fact too. And so basically I was just shifting from arriving to this new school with my answers to arriving with more curiosity. Right. Tell me about this place. What do I need to know? Yeah, it was a good start. At least to now is in the summer trying to plan and prepare for what's coming.

28:29

Speaker 2

That curiosity piece that's such a, well it can be an overlooked tool depending on the leader, you know, but just being open minded and curious, you're with the people you work with, then often they have solutions and you know the things that you're looking for that would be shut down if you did arrive with the answers, you know. So kudos to you to taking that approach. Does your school operate on conveyor belt mode? Does it push the kid to the next grade, the next test, drop them off at graduation and hope they figure it out? We all feel that model and it's cracking orchard helps you do school different students explore real careers, some they've never even heard of, and it builds a step by step plan tied to their grade and their goals.

29:23

Speaker 2

It connects what they're learning today to where they actually want to go. That's the work and you can check it out at BetterLeaders Orchard Careers. That's BetterLeaders Orchard Careers. ODP Business Solutions, formerly Office Depot Business Solutions Division, has been a trusted partner for schools for 30 years. At ODP Business Solutions, we're by your side to meet your evolving education needs. Let's talk about what keeps Ruckus makers up at night creating engaging learning spaces while juggling budget safety protocols and those endless supply

lists. Here's the game changer. ODP Business Solutions helps you tackle it all. We're not just another vendor. We're your strategic partner in transformation. Want to turn a tired computer lab into a STEAM innovation center? We'll help design it. Need to keep eight schools stocked and spotless?

30:25

Speaker 2

We've got sustainable solutions that scale looking to upgrade from whiteboards to interactive displays will guide you through the entire process. And the best part? You can get it all from a single supplier that helps you simplify ordering and streamline budgeting while staying compliant with easy access to cooperative contracts. However you want to advance, ODP Business Solutions has 30 years of experience helping districts like yours get ahead. Visit odpbusiness.com/education to learn more. That's odpbusiness.com education Teachers love the support that IXL provides in the classroom. And Ruckus makers love it all as well because IXL also gives school leaders meaningful insights on every level. Put your finger on the pulse of student performance with IXL and its dashboard to drill down to see progress and growth for individual students. You can even customize reports to hone in on the information that matters most to you.

31:35

Speaker 2

IXL helps ruckus makers make data informed decisions that will benefit their students. Growth Goals get started today@ixl.com leaders. That's ixl.com leaders think about the last district wide training your team sat through. Was it built for your schools or pulled off a shelf and dropped into your calendar? Kids first. Education starts the other way around. They begin with your priorities, your data, your classrooms. Then they build professional learning around that using the C3 approach. Collaborate, create a real plan and commit to seeing it through. That's why nearly all educators they work with told them that sessions were connected directly to district priorities and 98% left ready to put it to work that week. Principals and district leaders you could build something that actually fits. And you can learn more at KidsFirst LLC leaders. That's KidsFirst LLC leaders.

32:49

Speaker 2

Here's something I tell all principals I work with. There's two sides to every coin. The story you've been telling yourself about your campus, our parents don't engage, our teachers. They just won't change. This is just how it is here. That's not necessarily reality. It's just one side of the coin that's a story you decided to be true. But there's another side to that story and to that coin that is

equally valid. One that probably positions everything you're saying in a much more generous light. The language and the story you're telling yourself, it really matters. It's the same situation, but depending on the lens and the perspective you take, you are a completely different leader. That's one move that Digital Danny is built for to make with you. He's not going to agree with your comfortable story.

33:46

Speaker 2

He's going to push on you right in the way that I would with the same questions drawn from 10 plus years of experience coaching school leaders just like you. That reframes the entire game. It can be a game changer for you. Get started with Digital Danny and reframe the story you've been telling yourself@myprincipalcoach.com Ruckus get started at myprincipalcoach.com ruckus. Yeah. And with. With Digital Danny too. So are you more like you working with him on the computer, tablet, your phone? Maybe it's a mix, I don't know.

34:31

Speaker 1

Yeah, yeah. I'm usually computer and I'll go through and I'll start a conversation and then what I love about it also is just I can pause it and do whatever else I need to do and come back to it and I can pick up where I left off right back. And. And it's been great. You know, one of the things it's helped me with, you know, some vision work too, right. Some of the deeper stuff, not necessarily the relationship stuff, but my vision work. Right. I'm trying to create a new vision for me to walk in and ready. And what it's helped me to do is really dissect some of these different things, you know, what does it mean to achieve at high levels?

35:05

Speaker 1

Well, it sounds nice on paper and looks nice, but it has to be more than something that we just put on the wall, right? So Digital Danny's been able to help me kind of dig down deep So I haven't tried it on mobile device yet. But the computer, that's where it's at for me right now, to be honest.

35:23

Speaker 2

I mean, that's where I work with him most of the time too. Although he's available mobile and sometimes I do like yesterday I sent a video showing a former Mastermind member, actually. He's like, what is this Digital Danny all about? So I'm like, let me show you. And I did that. I recorded on the phone. But yeah, I use it mostly on the computer. I really appreciate you bringing up

the LLM points because, like Digital Day is different. Like chatgpt at this point. Gemini Claude Perplexity. Let's just keep it to those four. But they're really answer tools, right? Like back in the day with Google, that was search, you know, and then you searched for answers. Now LLMs just provide the answers. They also are built in a way that it really makes you feel like you're the best in the world, right?

36:10

Speaker 2

Like, oh, ChatGPT will say, Bill, you did it again. That's another like, brilliant idea.

36:17

Speaker 1

Yeah.

36:18

Speaker 2

And man, it feels good in the moment, right? But you start to believe that all your ideas are great, right? Which is a bit problematic. And then you put in the, you actually execute really very mediocre plans at times, right? Because, you know, we're almost like, oh, I got the answer in like three seconds, you know, and maybe I just believe that this AI is like so smart because it's connected to all this stuff. And then I implement and I get a result that's like lousy, right?

36:46

Speaker 1

That.

36:46

Speaker 2

Now that's not always true, but that does happen. That's a problem.

36:50

Speaker 1

Yeah.

36:51

Speaker 2

The second big problem is, and I don't know if you've experienced this with AI, it'll, it'll give you the wrong answer with 100% confidence, right?

37:03

Speaker 1
Yes.

37:04

Speaker 2
Drink the cyanide, it'll be great, right?

37:07

Speaker 1
Like what?

37:09

Speaker 2
You know, and that's an exaggeration, but directionally it's true. So again, Digital Danny is not an answer tool. I think it's a thinking, reflection, self mentorship tool because it will ask you questions, it will have you go deeper, and for some people that's going to be a turnoff, which is totally okay. But the folks that do want, do play in that deep end type of thing, they're going to love it. I'm curious, have you ever stumped Digital Danny? Because he should say, oh, I don't know the answer. Have you experienced that or not?

37:43

Speaker 1
I, I'm not that deep Danny. No, I haven't. I would stump digital Danny. I, I, I haven't. Yeah, but now I'm curious.

37:52

Speaker 2
Well, well, the thing, because here's the other thing, right? Like the other LLMs, the way AI works is it has a context. Just think of it as a, well, you think about, you love baseball and the boys play baseball. So you have what's inbounds, what's a fair ball, what's a foul ball. Right? So for AI, the context is just everything that's in fair territory. Right. And so it pulls answers from all of those places and that's how it forms the answers for you. Digital DNA is different than other LLMs because it's not connected to the Internet, just searching for the answers and let's be honest, searching at times average mediocre areas and then providing an average mediocre answer. You know where ChatGPT might be? A primary care physician. I like to say digital Danny's a heart surgeon. Right.

38:45

Speaker 2
Like you should only be talking to him if you're a school leader. If you think of yourself as a ruckus maker, you want to do school different. You're on the

journey of self mentorship. You want to create a campus experience worth showing up for. If you want to do those things and see yourself that way, he's great. Right? But if you're asking stuff outside of that, like, I've never been awesome at like data analysis. That's not my jam. Right. And so go to ChatGPT if you want a spreadsheet analyzed, come to me. If you want to go deep, right. And do the self mentorship, do school different stuff. So, yeah. Does that make sense when I want to share it that way?

39:23

Speaker 1

Absolutely it does. Like, obviously it keeps things inbound. I like what you said too. Right. Like it's really for school educators. Right. I'll just call them educators all together because that's the context of it. And when it does give you that feedback. Yes, it does take time, which might be a turn off. Once again, sometimes we just need answers right away. The challenging part, when we make answer, when we make decisions right away, there could be challenges that come with those without doing some deeper thinking. Right. So if you are looking for something in an instant, best bet is maybe to go someplace else. But with digital Danny, I can go deeper.

39:58

Speaker 1

And so I don't know if you've ever had a presentation that was given to you and said, hey, you know, for me it was Bill, I need you to give this presentation to your staff. It was created by central office. Super. I get it two days beforehand, right? Oh, great. Let me try to figure out what exactly we're talking about. Well, when I'm presenting it, I'm trying my very best, but people can know that's not Bills, right? That's not the screen. Not because of the. But because I wasn't built into it. When I go to Chad GPT, I'm looking for something that I need to create that's really a data analysis component.

40:30

Speaker 1

When I go to digital, Danny, that's what I'm doing some deep work as I'm breaking things down to get to the raw of what exactly am I doing and why am I doing it. That takes a little bit more time, but when I do that, I'm more vested into it because I keep putting questions in and I keep thinking out loud as we keep working together. So that's one thing that really stands out that I just, I really love. It takes a little bit more time. But Danny, it's like talking to you. I think one time we connected afterward and I said I feel. Did I tell you this already? No, wait, no, that was digital, Danny. Sorry. And then when it gives me responses too, right?

41:06

Speaker 1

There are links in there and some of those links are to substack or they're to articles or they're to podcasts. I can click on those and it'll take me to it, right? To the person that I know that I'm talking to on the other end. And really it just brings it all together. And so.

41:19

Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah, I don't think I, I described the fair and foul, I think, well, like the context window, but I didn't, you know, the digital, Danny, it's one one coaching, transcripts, masterminds, book content, some podcast content. Anything that's a one one or mastermind. Everything's been anonymized, right? Like that's pseudonyms, locations, all that kind of stuff taken out. But there's lessons, right, that are learned in those sessions and that's how helps provide some answers. But that's the context in case a ruckus makers are curious about that. Yeah. So anyways, basically he should be stumped if you ask things like outside of school leadership stuff. Right. Or if I haven't trained him on. I think what I'm hearing is everything you've been asking is stuff I've trained him on. Right. But if it is outside of that, he will say, oof, that's outside of my wheelhouse.

42:13

Speaker 2

And then I get flagged. And if I do have answer that's worth sharing, I can now train Digital Danny on that question. But if it was like, hey, what's Danny's favorite kind of cupcake? Hopefully he doesn't give answer. Unless, who knows, maybe I've talked about that on a podcast. But probably, you know, probably not.

42:29

Speaker 1

But Danny, to the point of leaders can't all have the answers. Right. So to really have this true. Like, how great is Digital Danny saying, I don't know. Right. As an administrator, I can say at times, I don't really know.

42:44

Speaker 2

I don't know about trying to figure it out.

42:46

Speaker 1

And so that's a, that's something powerful that we may end up with. I don't know. And that might be what we need at that time. Right, Right. Yeah.

42:55

Speaker 2

And leaders who's like, think they have the answer for everything. Yeah, I don't like those guys. You know, it's like, because it's, it's bs, it's fake, it's totally.

43:06

Speaker 1

Yeah.

43:07

Speaker 2

It's just not real. You know what I mean?

43:09

Speaker 1

Yeah.

43:09

Speaker 2

Tell us, tell us. Super interesting.

43:14

Speaker 1

Cool.

43:15

Speaker 2

Well, I, I've enjoyed this discussion, you know, thanks for sharing and. Oh, actually, I want to give you a tip. And if Ruckus makers are still with us, one thing that Gene park, one of our coaches, he's been a Mastermind member. Now he's coaching for us. He's still, he's still a principal of elementary school, just like you. He's kind of doing a power user thing that you might enjoy, but he'll put a question, like a similar question in ChatGPT and Digital Danny, but he'll basically, he'll bring answers from ChatGPT to digital Danny and say, okay, now what's the good stuff here? And what do I need to cut? Right. And that. And then that kind of speeds him up in. It's almost like a mini Mastermind, but with LLMs now. Right. Like getting feedback from different sources. And it's just.

44:08

Speaker 2

He says he's loving that, like the back and forth between those tools, just knowing that they have different uses. Right.

44:14

Speaker 1

So I like it.

44:16

Speaker 2

You should maybe try that out.

44:17

Speaker 1

Interchange those ideas. Yeah, okay.

44:19

Speaker 2

That's right. So I think lastly, I know it's not ready yet, but you've wanted to put out a book. You've got a lot of wisdom and experience over the years, leadership wise. I think we'll invite you back to the podcast when that book is ready and it's published and Ruckus makers can go out and get it. But yeah, maybe talk about the book for just like a minute, like what you're hoping to achieve. And then is there like one lesson from the book you might just share with the audience, right, that they can put in their back pocket and maybe take action on?

44:55

Speaker 1

Yeah, well, for sure. I was inspired by one of our Mastermind members that was with us, Jessica Kabien. I read one of her book, Principle Imbalance and Not in Imbalance, in Balance.

45:08

Speaker 2

Yeah, the good one, not the bad one, right?

45:10

Speaker 1

Yeah, that's right. And I read it and I felt like her stories were so real. I felt like I was having an honest conversation with somebody. Right. Not on my Wednesday night at Mastermind. And so my boys are a little bit older now, and now they're in college and out of college. And so I'm an empty nester with my wife and I needed to find something to do. And so my thought was, what if I

could just put together my experiences throughout my years. And so that's what I started to do. And so I, I, I went through and just started looking at my journals and started going back through and remembering things. So then I started putting them all together and I, they're real, they're raw, they're not all wins. Right.

45:47

Speaker 1

But I also think that aspiring administrators or current administrators need to know they're not all going to be wins. All the days aren't going to be short. Not everyone's going to be cheering your name. And so I just was being really raw with that and just put it all out there. And yeah, so I'm working through it. And one thing that came through was for me was serving with joy. If you're not serving with joy, you need to find another opportunity, something else or some, maybe a different grade level, a different building. Finding your joy is going to make you who you are. And because you're more than just an administrator. Right. We all have different titles. For me, it's, you know, brother, son, husband, dad, uncle.

46:29

Speaker 1

But I, if I didn't have joy on day in and day out, I need to make an adjustment. And so throughout this whole book, it's helped me, I'm calling it right now kind of a working title, Lead with Heart, Build with Purpose, and Serve with Joy. And so each of those categories has my stories from how I led with Heart and how I tried to lead with heart and I failed and how I tried to build things and then serving with joy is about those everyday things. Trying to find the joy even when the day goes haywire. So yeah. So once again inspired by someone else in Mastermind, that kind of led me on this journey.

47:05

Speaker 2

Let's double click real quick on that joy piece though. So, like, how do you measure? How do you know? Right? Like how do you measure? Oh, I am experiencing joy. I enjoy this job. I'm bringing joy to the campus. You know, how do you figure that out?

47:19

Speaker 1

Yeah, great question. Right.

47:21

Speaker 2
In.

47:22

Speaker 1

In middle school, My record is 32 days of suspension in one day. That's more than one. More than one kid. Obviously there's a big thing that went on and I had 32 days of suspension that day. I didn't have a whole heck of a lot of joy. I don't find any joy in sending kids home unless absolutely need it came through a conversation. One person said to me something about is my experience in middle school. And I said just very honestly, unfortunately this is a place that I work, not a place that I'm passionate about. And that's when it hit me like my joy had been sucked out of it. Yeah, it came right out. And I almost covered my mouth. Right.

47:59

Speaker 2
I didn't.

48:00

Speaker 1

And she looked and I said, unfortunately, this is a place that I work my other experiences, it's always been a passion. And I don't know if it was just having a bad week perhaps for having overwhelmed and need to do some one one coaching with you, but that's what really spurred it was how do I know what the joy is? And Danny, you and I both know, administrators out there know too. Every day isn't joyful, but every day has joy. And most kids that we interact with, they don't care about your mortgage or a flat tire. They don't care about other issues that you might be having. They want to come to your school and get an experience that no one else can provide.

48:38

Speaker 1

And even if it's a gentle high five from a, you know, a six foot one man that shows a gentle kindness, that might be the only experience they have with male role models in their life. So. So that's how I always look for the joy. I always end my day. Three things that really went well so that way I could come home and put on my other hats too.

48:59

Speaker 2

So, yeah, like a journal question, what went? Wow, three. Three things. And writing that down. Yeah.

49:06

Speaker 1

And sometimes I've got to Dig. Sometimes I've got to dig and find the joy for sure. But it's always there. It's always there because we get the opportunity to lead a building and lead staff and when we can say no one else wants this job, I don't know. That's not true. There's a lot of people who want to be in the position that we're in, and I have to keep reminding myself of that. Along with middle schoolers, brains aren't fully developed, so I had to keep reminding myself of that too, to find the joy.

49:33

Speaker 2

And they smell. And they smell.

49:35

Speaker 1

Yes. Oh, mercy. Do they?

49:38

Speaker 2

So I love that answer's so profound and I don't want to spend too much time unpacking it. But, you know, we sort of started this conversation about the idea of slowing things down, especially in order to go fast and create the results we want. But if you're not, if you lack that ability and you're always hurried, you're always rushing, there's no way you have the, like, the mindfulness, the self awareness to like, there's at least half or more principles would say the same thing that you would say and it wouldn't. There would be no impact. Yeah, right. Yeah, but. But you caught it. You're like, oh my gosh, right now. Gratitude journaling, three things every day of joy short probably only takes, you know, a few minutes. It's not like hours. And.

50:24

Speaker 2

But by doing that consistently right, day over day, that strengthens a joy muscle, a gratitude reflective muscle that only serves you in the campus. Right. And then to your point, it creates that campus experience worth showing up for that kid that needs it, you know, and there are a million people who would trade, you know, positions with you and switch lives in a minute. Like, and probably for everybody who has the resources and ability to listen to the show, that's true. If you zoom out. Right. Globally, you know, and really think about it, there's a ton of people who would trade positions with you despite all the challenges that are very real going on. Right. I've got them right now too. But there's a million

people who switch positions, so that just puts you in such a better headspace. So. Yeah. Awesome.

51:19

Speaker 1

Fortunately, but unfortunately, you know, it happened. Yeah, but. But now I know and what to look for.

51:25

Speaker 2

So yeah, right on. That's a great place to kind of end the conversation. Just, you know, we covered a lot of ground today. You know, what's one thing you want a ruckus maker to remember before we go here Wow.

51:40

Speaker 1

I would say leaders, they don't need to prove that they have every answer, right? We just need to be willing to reflect and ask different questions or better questions and just keep growing. Right? So my growth might be different than someone else's. Okay. I'm still growing right. Just at the place that I am in life. Also my journey in administration. So remember, leaders, you don't need to prove that you have every single answer. You just need to be willing to reflect, ask different questions, and continue to grow.

52:15

Speaker 2

Hey, Ruckus Maker, thanks again for pressing play. I hope you enjoyed today's episode as much as I enjoyed creating it for you. And before you go, if today's show shifted something in your mind or sparked an idea about how you could do school different, then I think you'd be a great fit for what we call the Ruckus Maker Mastermind. The Mastermind is a private community of innovative school leaders who meet weekly to grow, reflect, and disrupt the status quo. You can create the campus experience your staff and students deserve. Applications are now open and go to betterleadersbetterschools.com apply to put your application in.