

Episode 9: Classroom and Coaching with Ryan Richards

Transcript

00:00:02.61

thestaffroompodcast

And welcome to another episode of Teacher Talk, an ETT podcast. And we are excited to have Ryan Richards here to talk a little bit about middle school, a little bit about teaching, a little bit about ah teaching, coaching, and teaching again. ah One of the reasons I'm really excited to have Ryan on the show is Ryan is gonna be one of the first guests that I have worked with in a collaborative fashion in in our board. And I'm really excited to have this connection, one in the classroom, and then bring it back to the podcast space.

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ah Ryan I'll introduce you quickly as a a middle school teacher here in Toronto But if you want to let our ETT audience know sort of where you're teaching ah Sort of a brief lowdown on how long you've been teaching and then we'll get into some of the more detailed content

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Ryan R

so ah Well, first of all, I just want to say ah thanks for having me and the opportunity to continue a conversation that we started, sometimes it seems like years ago, but fantastic conversations. And we talked about that whole piece that keeps education moving forward, those great conversations. I met Mr. Cheney at, I was teaching at Sierra Marchant in the Lawrence and Weston area, TDSB, of course.

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Ryan R

And um you know again, a part of our experience is connecting with amazing people and being able to have those conversations, those shared experiences. Sometimes it's a little bit of commiseration in terms of sharing what went well in your day and what is still a work in progress. um But yeah, that's that's how we got started. That's how we got here. So i'm I'm encouraging and excited about continuing that conversation. Let's just chop it up.

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Ryan, I love the fact you brought up that a lot of our collaboration, we didn't actually work in partnership very often in my role as a coach, but I think we had three or four just great conversations.

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thestaffroompodcast

And you're right, it's those conversations that sort of keep us as teachers and educators motivated and inspired, because we know in sort of that isolation of teaching, sometimes it can really wear you out.

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Ryan R
Yeah.

00:01:50.96

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And sometimes just having that vibrant conversation where you know you're not necessarily looking for definitive answers, but you know you have someone that you can keep the conversation going, and just keeps you engaged in your work.

00:01:56.00

Ryan R

Yeah,

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thestaffroompodcast

um

00:02:00.84

Ryan R

yeah absolutely.

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thestaffroompodcast

Let's start a little bit about middle school because ah because I have no experience teaching anything else.

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Ryan R

Well, yeah.

00:02:06.96

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I've been 23 years and I said I'm pretty good with grade eight.

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Ryan R

Yeah.

00:02:10.14

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I don't know if I could handle a grade four. I certainly couldn't manage a kindergarten without some support. But I would love for you to share a little insights in maybe our listening folks that maybe they're teaching a kindergarten or maybe they're teaching a grade four.

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Ryan R

yeah

00:02:21.47

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some insights into what the middle school teaching and learning space can look like and as a teacher how do you sort of come away from a lesson or a learning experience you say yeah that landed well our students were really into it they got something from it a little bit more than beyond engagement but you really feel like the lesson the learning had impact what does that sort of look like in the middle school space i know very wordy question but hopefully you find two or three things you can just go with

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Ryan R

Yeah. Well, there's ah there's there's a lot of a lot of pieces there. And even before we get to that, you know, whether it's, you know, all these pedagogical pieces, the three-part lesson plan and consolidate this and consolidate that, you know, one of the things that and that, you know, you get all of this stuff from Teachers College, all the dos and the don'ts and whatever, then you get the reality. But one of the key pieces is, especially when you have those young people that need that extra support,

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Ryan R

being there at the door before they come into the classroom. So whether they're coming back from French and they're coming in hot for whatever reason, or they're just on that trip, um really that foundational piece is recognizing their humanity. And sometimes it's those, like, I hear what you're saying about the lessons and all that, and we'll get to that. But when you get into those pieces where you need to recognize that that humanity, it's having those quiet conversations where you pull somebody aside and be like, hey, how's it going? What's happening? or whatever or you're looking a little bit tired today, what's been going on? And really, it's how you preface that lesson. You preface the child for that learning space that you want them to enter in. Because you know you could spend all night, and I'm sure other teachers can connect where you do all that work to prep this amazing lesson plan, and it flops. And you're like, come on, man. This is brilliant. Why are you not jumping into this? There's all this interesting stuff, and sometimes it's like, hey, they might not be with it.

00:04:12.37

Ryan R

Or it also might be, they're not in that space to tag into that at that moment. And so there's also that that those humbling experiences where, you know what, this lesson might be okay next week.

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Ryan R

this might They might be hot on this lesson at the end of the week, but right now they're not they're not with that. So that also becomes, like they they don't teach you that in Teachers College. You figure that out after you've had a couple lessons just bomb and you're less like, number one, it's like a gut punch.

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thestaffroompodcast

Mmm.

00:04:36.41

Ryan R

because you put you yeah It's a good lesson. And you have to tell yourself, it's not me, it's them. But sometimes it is you, right? And it's that element of humility. I've been humble humbled a couple times and I've blamed them a couple times to be honest. Those pieces too. um But that piece of about seeing them as human as humans, a part of that is recognizing that, you know, and we'll talk about these pieces when we're looking at, well, but what are some misconceptions in education?

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Ryan R

For me, I see it as an investment in young people, and that's the work. So it's not about curriculum. It's not about PPR or PPM or whatever these rules or whatever. I sit in the staff meetings. I don't know what you're talking about. And I'll probably never read that document if I'm honest. But seeing those young people as somebody that we're investing in. And so when I look through that lens, what content am I bringing forward?

00:05:30.44

Ryan R

How am I inviting you into that learning space and then situating myself also as a learner in that space? And um it takes work. It takes work to, I find, ah for young people to take leadership in that space where I regularly say to them, it doesn't matter what I think, it matters what you think. Because they sit there as baby birds and they they're waiting for you. And I'm like, hey, I'll put it out there. Because normally it's in my classroom. You say, listen, your teachers and all aren't always right.

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Ryan R

And you're going to come up on teachers that they're not they're not always super smart either. But you need to be in that space to engage in a conversation. And I gave them examples where we have people who are educated both at the elementary, ah secondary, and and even in the in in the at the university, post-secondary level, that are teaching things that are like, no, we need to come at that again.

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thestaffroompodcast

Thank you.

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Ryan R

And if we stop at that space where they have these credentials and they're the teacher, um And that's it. And I say, well, you're not going to roll into their room and put your feet up on their desk. I think you're going to get anywhere. But have you prepared yourself to be a part of a conversation?

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Ryan R

And that's how I look at it beyond just one. And feel free to jump in because I will talk to you here off all day because these are these are my thoughts, right?

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yeah

00:06:48.19

Ryan R

Beyond any one lesson plan, are we preparing the young people to challenge, to have a conversation, to share their thoughts where it's like, well, well hold on a second. here What do you mean by that? Can you explain it to me a little bit more? Because on the surface, I don't agree with that. Let's have a conversation about it, right? um I was super excited. We had ah an opportunity. they The CI, which was our local high school, they had this day where they brought in the grade 8s. And so we in the afternoon, we went into different sections. And we split them into groups.

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Ryan R

different groups went into different sections. And my group that I was sitting with at the time, they were with a teacher that taught the humanities. And I'm like, he was a teacher of philosophy. I'm like, I teach you philosophy in high school? I'm like, who o I need to, I need to audit some of these classes.

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Ryan R

um and just be a part of that space and being part of that learning. And I was really excited about that because that's the work where I'm trying to push them out into the real world, but there's still academic spaces they can get into ah before they get into post-secondary, whether it's university, college, the trades, or whatever it is. Because as I say to the children, i you get out in the real world, nobody's giving you marks, right? And then so what?

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Ryan R

Right. And, and, you know, I say things that might be a little bit contrarian in my classroom. But and I have to be careful because I i had ah one of my wonderful girls and ah we shared jokes with it afterwards. And I ended up having interesting ah conversation at the the parent teacher conference where. I don't want to say I deemphasize marks because I'm also them if I didn't have to give you marks, I would. Right. We live in a system where we're judged by some mark on a piece of paper. And there are some there are some problems with that. But that's another that's another podcast for sure.

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Ryan R

Um, where, you know, uh, but, and what I said when I talked to him, but well, marks don't matter in the real world. When you get out there, nobody asks me about my, my, you know, my double major from whatever university I'm not going to shout them out because they

already got my money. Um, or my bachelor's are better or whatever I'm doing. They matter about what you bring to the table, what you do, your thoughts, your actions, the quality of your character. If you're lucky. Now that's another conversation where, you know,

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Ryan R

A lot of our children like to talk and got to got a gun I have to pull them aside and I said, listen, if you're lucky when you go out in the world, you will be judged by the words that come out of your mouth. What are you putting out into the world?

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Mm-hmm.

00:09:11.93

Ryan R

The other side of that is you're judged by other things. And one of those things, if not both, needs to elevate you. Now, a lot of that is somebody else's problem.

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Ryan R

what you're responsible is for what you put out into the world. And so those are conversations we have. So to bring it back to your question, and I'm going to let you jump in because I said, I don't want to, this is your thing. And I'm, I love talking to, you know, we had that conversation back and forth.

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shit

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Ryan R

Um, I already ever said this is enough. We don't even have enough time today. Um, but those, that's, that's the meat of it. Like, and and it's, it's having those engaging conversations.

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Ryan R

So yeah, we're going to, we're going to teach you math. I teach math and I teach science and the curriculum says, thou shalt learn these things, right? But if we're, for example, if we're in this grading science curriculum, and we're looking at um looking at ah water, I mean, on a space value, of like water is a ah unit in science, good Lord, especially when you're in May and June, i am I going to make this exciting and engaging for you somehow when you're looking out of the window?

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Ryan R

I'm looking out the window too. um But I mean, hey, is looking at a critical question looking at is access to clean drinking water a human right? Is it a human right? Because naturally you might say oh yeah it's a human right absolutely okay well if you have a human right to it then who's responsible for that right and so there are so many questions and if you go on the other side oh no you don't you don't have that as a human right Now we can dive into some deep learning.

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Ryan R

So well we can look at water purification of all of those things, but we can look at it in a real world context in both ah the the Canadian context, because we look at what the they historical injustices that have been enacted with our Indigenous Canadians um that go up to today, right?

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Ryan R

We see even with, you know, unfortunately, I think it was a Toronto school that had that issue with the Grassi Narrows rally. There's a context for that.

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Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

00:11:13.02

Ryan R

There's a context. There's a shell of a political context which around that, which I find very distasteful. um And now we have that culture of fear. We have that culture of fear, right? And we've we've talked about having that courage in the classroom. So when you talk about those was lesson plans and how do we engage these young people, we got to be engaging with things that matter. We have to engage with things that matter. And so there's this pushback. um And again, we've we've talked about it and, you know, there are certain parties within our system, there's certain parties within our social political atmosphere that believe that education, like pre-industrial age, is ah is a factory pipeline to a job. We had an education minister that was promoting that bunk. And to me, that's offensive because I value these children as much more than future taxpayers. They have to be. And so whether it's the engineer,

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Ryan R

whether it's the mechanic, whether it's the artist, right? They all have value and and investment in them as as as human beings, because whether you're a mechanic, an engineer, an artist, um you still have to be a quality person. You still have to think about, well, how beyond the fact that I go in and I i function in my area of genius, um how is it that I plan to impact the world? I just go into a job, some woman or some man tells me when I need to show up,

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Ryan R

I deliver some deliverable, they pay me this fully transactional piece. um But is that it? Right, dr Dr. West talks about going from womb to the tomb, right? But what's happening, what of substance is happening ah in between, right? and and And looking at, well, what is the value of what you bring? I'm not talking about this, because somebody will stand and say, you know, when they decide to pay you, you're trading your your time for money.

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Ryan R

right And somebody's telling you how much that's worth. I encourage the young people to elevate yourself to the space where you can value your own time. right So that's why that's why I love what you and Pav are doing. um Shout out to both of you because you're functioning in your area of genius. Yeah, you have the classroom and that's what you're you're paid for. and gu You get paid to be, yeah again we'll get away from me, miss me with that garbage. okay yeah Yeah, you're paid to be a teacher.

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Ryan R

And I don't think people understand what that means, but we can talk about that later.

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Mmm.

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Ryan R

But it's everything else, right? Everything else I want for the young people. What are you doing with your time and your talent and your passion? Because you're not necessarily going to be compensated for that from your job, right?

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Ryan R

And and I'll say to them, yeah, if you're lucky, if you work hard, we want to elevate ourselves into space where we have the right to choose. right And I say, and I try to connect with them on that space.

00:14:06.59

Ryan R

My parents were immigrants to this country. They came here and they did what they had to do so that I can start from a space where I can have a few more options if I do what I'm supposed to do.

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Ryan R

And I want them to see that because it's just like, otherwise, it is nothing wrong with going in. Your job is your job. You work nine to five. God bless you. Okay, we're good with that. But

there is a strata above that where, you know as much as the people in the street saying, Freedom!

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Ryan R

Freedom to what? Freedom from what? That's a conversation for another day.

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thestaffroompodcast

Mm.

00:14:41.57

Ryan R

um But some part of that freedom is the freedom to choose, to define as much as you can and you know call it Providence, other things happen, those things you can't control.

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Ryan R

But in the spaces where you can control, have you situated yourself in that space where you your education is your platform but your choices that you make based on your platform, based on the relationships you have, based on your commitment to being a part of a society where you actually want to contribute something, whether that part is your family, whether that part is your community, whether that part is society at large, how how how have you prepared to take whatever it is that you've got to do something in that space that matters? um Just as I'm thinking about, I'm gonna pause because I see you listening. I know you, you've got to have something. I've been talking for a long time,

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Ryan R

Um, but I, I love literacy. I don't, I don't teach language anymore. I mean, we're all language teachers. That's what they say. Um, but I, um, I, I was, I health as well. So they, they're, they're working on a growth mindset posters. Um, I said, be inspired, don't create something pretty. We talked about what media is media is a construction. We talked about the idea that millions of dollars are spent to create something, to communicate a powerful message. So what is your message to the world?

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Ryan R

And they were kind of like, oh, okay, we can't just draw a pretty picture because that's not good with him. So a lot of them are coming up to me and they're asking me that ubiquitous question. Is this good? I'm like, I don't know. what what What do you mean? What is good?

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Ryan R

um How do you feel about it, right? um And I know that they're trying because they've been hardwired to do this. And I'm like, okay, well, they're success criteria. I showed them some examples that I think are brilliant from young people like themselves.

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Ryan R

But they thought about it and they wanted to communicate a message. And that's the brilliant piece. ah But the piece that I wanted to share with you was I shared this picture book that I have, the story of Ella Baker, Lift As You Climb, right? And I love when i when i when I taught language and I use that story. Yes, we're looking at the history of ah the civil rights movement and and the elevation of of black people through challenge and overcoming oppression. um And certainly there's a lot of other pieces because there's a patriarchal society and and all of these other pieces. Apologies to the anti-vocal people, but that's,

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Ryan R

That's history coming from a female perspective.

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00:17:03.38

Ryan R

I don't want to get you off the air, so I apologize. You can edit that out.

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yeah

00:17:06.42

Ryan R

um But I shared it with one of my young girls, and I said, just read this. And because like she's asking me, she's like, I don't know where to get this inspiration. And she's looking at me, at Mr. Cheney. She's like, Mr. Richards, inspire me.

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Ryan R

I'm like, oh, just put that weight on my, you want me to inspire you? What is it you want me to do? And she's just looking into my eyes, and I'm looking into her eyes, and she's just waiting. And I'm like, this needs to come from you.

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Ryan R

you have brilliance, you have genius. What are your thoughts? What matters to you? And I said, hold on, let me, let me find this book for you anyway. So we went off to the thing and she was in something in the gym. And then I came and I brought her the book and I said, okay, this is my book. Take care of it. But go home, read it. Just see what you think. So I'm

interested to see what she comes up with. But lift as you climb. That's the one that sticks with me. Lift as you climb. And I take that as I go out into the world. Not that I'm up here because I'm not, but I look around and I see other people and I'm like, what moves can I make that elevate you? And I got to do that personal work to elevate myself. Right. So that's a part of it. Because I think about it. I got to be making those moves because I'm trying to tell the young people to do it. They've got to see me making those moves. So shout out to you and Pat. Shout out to Mr. Morris, who's writing his book. Shout out to a memory of Mr. Jay Williams.

00:18:23.07

Ryan R

who was also doing that work that other people could see. And I wanted to shout that out because it matters. I'm not just saying that because it's your impasse podcast. I appreciate you both on a level where you're using your passion to um elevate other people and you're doing something with what you got. And that that seems like a simple thing, but it's not a simple thing. It's not even a common thing because of complacency, because of real real issues where it's just like, yeah, like we talk about teaching And I, for real, this is the last thing I wanna pause.

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Ryan R

But you know this, you've got family and and you know, you've been around longer than I have where, especially being in middle school, you you deal with some stuff.

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through.

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Ryan R

You gotta leave enough in the tank so that your kids aren't getting what you didn't give to that kid in third period because you're great, smash that car to see that humanity, but it's still taking something from you.

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Ryan R

You need to have enough left where, you know, Your child isn't getting it because you didn't give it to the the kid in third period when he messed up again, or she messed up again and you knew they're going to mess up after lunch, but you've got to give them grace. And that's a part of, if I'm bringing it back around to your original question, those are the parts. So away from lesson plans and whatever, it's that humanity. That's in the whole piece. That's in the whole piece. Everything else, yeah, wherever you are and you're learning, we'll deal with that. But can I deal with you on a human level?

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Ryan, those are a thousand gems. You need to start your own podcast probably in about 15 minutes after we've finished recording because you you model exactly what you're talking

about. You keep talking about, you I hear lots of people say, let's have a courageous conversation. I said, but if you ever had one, do you actually facilitate them? And when you engage in them, are you open to learning together?

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are you open to as i always talk about you know we always want student voice but are you prepared when student voice doesn't match your sort of predetermined bias or what you expected as the outcome i said that's the real test of how committed i am to student voice and choice when do they have a perspective or they see a fallacy in the way i'm teaching that maybe i didn't anticipate and i'm and am i going to honor it and i love the fact you talked about that middle school space for me is that it's not that we don't have valuable conversations at each level but i always find that adolescent learner they're just starting to figure out who they are they're starting to understand this this this concept of of identity and self-awareness and with some self-awareness comes a notion of what are other people about and i love the fact you talk about

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Ryan R

yeah

00:20:49.08

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In the world, your marks tend to be, it's like a gate, it's gate kept. Your marks provide you access to certain spaces right or wrong.

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Ryan R

yeah

00:20:55.76

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And how we facilitate that in the education space, it's it's sort of like, yes, I wanted to sort of downgrade the play of marks, but then I always wonder, but who am I putting sort of in the front lines of that?

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Ryan R

Yeah.

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Because in my very safe position as a teacher, it's easy for me in grade eight to just say, I'm not going to worry about marks. And then maybe set my students up to go into a grade nine or grade 10 or grade 11 or grade 12.

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And in the system, those marks become required.

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Ryan R

Oh, yeah.

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thestaffroompodcast

And so I feel sort of say anything you have.

00:21:18.47

Ryan R

Yeah.

00:21:20.72

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It's like I want to make sure that we don't fixate solely on marks, but I don't want to sort of build my own reputation on i' going gradeless or markless and then know that those students later on, they're likely going to get hammered because the system's not changing.

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And I think you and I have had this conversation as much as we want to challenge the system.

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Ryan R

and

00:21:37.05

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We are the system and and we we play this game.

00:21:38.83

Ryan R

yeah

00:21:40.87

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um But I just love that talk about bringing it back to humanity. I love you talk about passions. because And thank you for sort of highlighting some of the work Pavan I've done. But I know you also have a very creative spirit.

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thestaffroompodcast

And I know you've been building some really fun educational t-shirts. It's the same kind of idea. You have a passion for teaching and learning. Let's go.

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Ryan R

There it is.

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Let's see it right there. and we'll make sure we put your handles in um so people can go and grab.

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Ryan R

Yeah. yeah

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It's the same notion like when you leave the nine to five you don't leave the nine to five you're still thinking about how can I impact the community or how can I give back to the community or how can I keep this community going and I think that's a special um character trait of many teachers as as much as you want to make it a nine to five or maybe you don't want to maybe that's the wrong vernacular but it becomes more than the nine to five it becomes these passion projects you talked about

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Ryan R

yeah

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giving grace to your students but then when you go home do you have the same grace for your own children as you made that comment i said 23 years in i would probably say i probably gave so much to teaching that i didn't have the same patience for my own children that i probably should have because i was worn out from the day showing as much grace crafting as much energy as i can and then you get home and you don't have that energy so you really highlight that especially for for younger teachers is that you you've got to

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Ryan R

yeah

00:22:49.45

Ryan R

Yeah, for sure.

00:22:56.40

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It also reminds me of one of the things my first vice a principal said to me is on a Friday night as a brand new teacher, and teaching in Rexdale, trying to craft the perfect lesson. And he walked into my room at 5.30 in the Friday he said, what are you doing?

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I said, oh, I'm just working on a spelling activity because spelling, you know, spelling books, textbooks are really important back then.

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Ryan R

Super critical.

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And he goes, he goes, you 100% recharged and happy with a 75% prepared lesson is a far better teacher than the reverse. And he said, stop what you're doing, go home and come Monday recharged. Like you said, showing up at the front of the door, reading the body language, sort of talking with your students a little bit. So then we come into that learning space. I love the beginning you talked about just because a lesson flopped in the moment isn't necessarily because the lesson of itself flopped.

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The dynamics of the room change daily. So that lesson that's no good today might be an ace three days down the road when you're tapping into your students, having those conversations. And I think um just by your amazing rant, I'll call it a rant because I like rants.

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Ryan R

good

00:23:54.97

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It models what what conversation is because often I often think it's performatively given. Let's have courageous conversations. Let's have conversations. Have you ever participated in one? Do you allow a lesson to be derailed?

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to just facilitate that conversation and i can tell just by the way you're speaking and i've seen you teach that this is what you do it's not just a performative gesture of let's have courageous conversations this is how it looks like this is what i'm willing to commit to and like you talked about ah we want our students to make an impact in life and then you can choose the scale is it an impact in your family And then an impact in your community. Do you want to go a little bit bigger? And if you can't communicate your ideas and your intellect through conversation, how do you market? it Which comes back to, I was thinking about when you have a mark. Your mark's literally just ah an access point because no one's going to reference your marks ever again to see how intelligent, how intellectual, how much you can shake the room with your conversation. How you speak is everything. You talk about what words are you projecting when you come out.

00:24:48.65

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more than the words. What experiences are you sharing? What intellect are you showing? So someone says, oh, I need to listen to this person.

00:24:54.93

Ryan R

yeah

00:24:54.95

thestaffroompodcast

I talk about this all the time in my class. Absolutely. I want to hear your voice, but you better make sure when you give your voice that it is something that is substantial and it's lasting. And people are going to go, whoa, this person knows what they're doing.

00:25:05.84

thestaffroompodcast

This person has passion. This person has intellect. This person has a level of likeability that I want to be connected with. ah Fantastic. That's me trying to summarize in five minutes, Ryan. What you would you put across in 15?

00:25:17.35

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I wanted to talk about coaching not that we really have to, but you and I have both sort of had a very similar path in that we were teachers, and maybe in being in the system seeing what was going on we had an inspiration to maybe see if there was another path, another way to impact, and we both have sort of shared that journey of going.

00:25:33.13

thestaffroompodcast

ah Into that central space and then we sort of ventured back into the classroom oh I would love to get just a little vibe on maybe that experience one as a teacher and when you think of our our teachers listening There are access points to go beyond the classroom that can possibly broaden your perspective or enlighten your perspective um When you think about your journey of going into the central space and then back out of the central space back to the classroom Sort of those two pillars, what brought you into that space? What did you gain from that space? And when you came back into the classroom, why did you want to come back into the classroom? ah Did you want to come back into the classroom? Because course we can also talk about that central system, I would argue is important, but it's flip flops all the time into what positions are being offered and how you can make it actually a viable long term system.

00:26:18.03

thestaffroompodcast

ah system changer because i would probably argue myself is that it's so we have these coaches this year then we disband and we re-brand them somehow it's like how do you build any consistency although foundationally i like the idea of these central spaces again

because i'm talking as a teacher you're talking about pd how do i get pd you expect me to document i always thought that as a coach i i never felt really effective i never felt i really made an impact but i also believed

00:26:20.40

Ryan R
right

00:26:28.98

Ryan R
yeah

00:26:43.93

thestaffroompodcast

systematically that this is the most viable way to get current research and pedagogy into teachers hands not so that they have to use it so they just have another tool on their belt I think of the thinking classroom I don't necessarily love thinking classroom but I never would have been gifted the opportunity to learn it if I didn't have a learning coach sort of invest the time in me and now I use it as a warm-up activity I use it here and there and it works really well But I think, how did how do we get teachers these information so like fundamentally I'd like the idea of the learning coach coming in, giving some teachers some guidance but I don't necessarily know how effective it is. And so when I left that space. I felt, I felt like I learned a lot, definitely a lot was invested in me in regards to PD.

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thestaffroompodcast

um I felt I broaden my understanding of the system as a whole and then where does it really benefit when I came back in the classroom like I felt like I had more to offer as a teacher so ah that's my my long-winded right so if you could pull out a question or extract a question there just talk about that learning that that that coaching experience to getting in to getting out and where are you now.

00:27:33.32

Ryan R
Yeah.

00:27:36.48

Ryan R
Yeah.

00:27:43.76

Ryan R

but Yeah, I mean, ah we have we have a lot of shared experiences from there. I was listening to you. If I start from the beginning, but I'll try and be concise, ah really what's,

00:27:58.47

Ryan R

oh wow, it's tough.

00:27:59.54

thestaffroompodcast

hey

00:27:59.71

Ryan R

Cause there were so many pieces where like, like what I want to throw at you was like mental health, satisfaction in your job. That's that's a podcast in itself, right? um Where for me, I i needed something else.

00:28:15.39

Ryan R

um I wanted to keep learning, so it was just something that I tried. And um the the coaches, I was i was a model school coach, a model school is teaching and learning coach, focused on math, literacy, and STEM. And I remember sitting with my colleagues and I looked around the room and I was the least experienced, possibly the youngest, but I was say the greenest, I don't want to offend anybody, I was the greenest,

00:28:45.13

Ryan R

um All of these people had done other roles. Some of them were on their way to go to admin. Wonderful people. there Many of them are are wonderful administrators now. That was not me.

00:28:57.49

Ryan R

So I was there and I'm like, I applied, I tried, I'm here. I know if I say imposter syndrome, you know exactly what I'm talking about where you're there. And I'm like, everybody seems to know what's going on and they're they're been with it.

00:29:09.33

thestaffroompodcast

Thank you.

00:29:10.15

Ryan R

And I'm just like, So that was my entrance into being a learning and coach. And when you talk about the the role of it and the experience, you know, we learn about the distinction between PD, which has become ubiquitous and people sit there and some people take out their newspaper and some of them are, you know, it's like staff meetings.

00:29:30.50

Ryan R

um But to this level of professional learning and professional learning was something different. Professional learning is what you and I did in the hallways when we were sharing, sharing, learning. And that's what I hear you talking about.

00:29:42.13

Ryan R

And so, um but you know, the actual role of of of being a teaching and learning coach at that time, you know, beyond the imposter syndrome, there's always that pressure because when you walked in the room, there was the expectation that you were the expert and it's like, okay, I've been teaching for five to 10 years. You've been teaching for 15 to 20. Like, I want to learn from you. I walk into a room and I'd be like, look at these amazing things you're doing. Can you tell me about what you're doing here?

00:30:11.37

Ryan R

Um, and then because I had 12 schools that I was responsible for, I can pick up something from over here. and There's a teacher over there who's doing this.

00:30:16.71

thestaffroompodcast

Mmm.

00:30:18.29

Ryan R

And, and that's my lens. That's how I saw it because I wasn't super experienced. There were some, like you could, you get a sense of who I am. So that's what I came with into the classroom. And I've done some things and tried some things so I can share that with you.

00:30:32.24

Ryan R

Um, or share that with the the people that I was in the classroom with, or if I was facilitating or participating in professional learning, I could do those things. So iPads were just coming out in one seat. So we did all of those sort of professional learning workshops. But the actual learning was when you go in and try it in the classroom. So that was kind of, that's how we learned about the role where it's, can I support you in learning how to be a part of professional learning? Because you know, when we talk about the experiences, I'd never, I'd been in the few schools that I'd been in as a teacher, um but I went into other buildings and there were teachers, they both teach grade four, they don't talk. And I was like, what? And at that time they were talking about the culture of fear. I saw it. I saw it and I don't want to be overly negative. I always say that my my time in as a so coach was 90% good.

00:31:30.03

Ryan R

right And then there were other things where I remember it was October and one of my first experiences was I was sitting with in the office with a principal, just first introduction and this is what we're doing and you know what are your expectations, what is your plan for your school and so forth and so on that you've been going to sip. And I remember she she walked me into another teacher's classroom and she said, what do you notice? And I'm looking around and I quickly realized she, you know, she wanted me to critique and and basically tear down this teacher. And I remember going back and we had wonderful meetings with like, our Thursdays was our day where we would meet with our, our CCP and the the

instructional lead was a wonderful administrative now. um And then my colleagues and i I was open and honest and I said, look, you like,

00:32:26.79

Ryan R

This person took me into a room and wanted me to criticize the the teacher's classroom and tear them down. That's not my job. Like I'm not going in to fix other teachers. These people are my colleagues. Like if we want to participate in learning, that's what my understanding is because I'm learning about this role as well. And so, um you know, that was the shadow side of it. we We had some issues in that space, but there are already issues in that space when I talked to the the teachers there and and got the sort of the lay of the land, sort of felt out the culture of the school. And I'll leave that there because there were problems with the system that, you know, that that person ended up being promoted to superintendent there. Again, that's one of the reasons when I look at the system and that's how we function and that's the type of person that you move forward.

00:33:17.82

Ryan R

just to sort of lead ahead. It's like you go back into that space where you can control what you can control, which is investing in young people, connecting with your colleagues and supporting with them, not only on the educational side, but supporting the social emotional wellbeing. There are times when I need it, where they'll see me in the staff room. They're like, Mr. Richards, what's wrong with you? And I'm like, how bad do I look? but and um But there's that piece as well where you can control that because you you've seen it, you're talking about it. You see things in the system that don't make any sense.

00:33:46.03

Ryan R

But we continue, we persist, and we function as a part of that system where certain things need to stop, right? Because that's the only way they'll get fixed, but we prop up the system, right? I use the example where we saw the the the abuses that were happening in the healthcare care system during COVID, right? And the way that we have a system that's chronically underfunded and so forth and so on. But if youoc you saw during COVID, you had emergency room personnel and nurses who were looking after more patients than they should be.

00:34:15.84

Ryan R

Right? And the government knew this, but it was allowed to continue. Why? Because those, because I call it like a sweat equity, right? Where you know that those people won't let those people down and they will do the work even though you're not doing what you're supposed to be doing.

00:34:26.24

thestaffroompodcast

Mmm.

00:34:30.14

Ryan R

And so they persisted, right? And so those things persist. And so it's the same thing in education where it's oftentimes we see challenges where, and now I will say for myself personally, I will see that um people are struggling and people are suffering as educators in the building. And not only, I'm not just gonna but speak of other places, because I do talk to people in other places. And it's like, well, we get an email with web links about mental health. I'm like, no, that's a real person there. And I think we've talked about that, if I remember servinging correctly, and I'm like, that's a real person there that needs support, right? and And so those are the things we're bringing it back to the sort of the teaching and learning space

00:35:13.69

Ryan R

Um, that was the shadow side of some of it where you got out and you got to see more of how the system work when you leave your classroom. I've sat in rooms where I had wonderful conversations with vice principals, principals, um, superintendents, right? I got to talk with the superintendent, multiple of them, but, um, superintendent of, uh, model schools at that time, she was a fire brand too. And we had some wonderful conversations that I remember one time I said to her, you know, there were so many places around the board that are on fire.

00:35:43.71

Ryan R

Um, there are issues there, like how, how do we persist when we know where the problems are and, and what's being done about it? Cause it's been, and she said, Ryan, you just have to be patient. And I understood where she was coming from. I also know who I am. And I'm like, you remember when I talked about those quiet conversations where before they come in the door, that's something you can do right now where.

00:36:10.71

Ryan R

I'm saving you this period. I know that you probably get in trouble how many times a day and you deserve it. But in this space, I can connect with you, do that check-in, and we can have a positive experience now. Right? And that is so valuable. That is so valuable. And so when you talk about why we went back to the classroom, i'm not ah ah I don't want to say a lot. my In my head, my frame is ladder climber, but sometimes that sounds,

00:36:38.25

Ryan R

Not the majority, but I don't mean to, be because we need great administrative. So shout out to all those people who are worthy, who have gone on, but I'm not that person. And my experiences out in the system confirmed that for me.

00:36:50.71

Ryan R

So that was something that I got from it as well.

00:36:50.93

thestaffroompodcast
Mmm.

00:36:53.27

Ryan R

um I love the sharing. I love that you talked about the learning that we get, that we we're meant to share with other people. we We sat in sessions where people from Apple came in and taught us about the way they learn in their spaces and how we can bring that into educational spaces.

00:37:07.47

Ryan R

stuff like that is valuable, learning from people and in other and in in the other panels. Like I had an opportunity before I went into coaching to teach in a K-8 school. What a wonderful experience, because I never wanted to teach small children. um And I remember one of my first experiences, um you know, in teacher's college, it they they they frighten you because it's like, I can't touch anybody, ah da dot blue pages, and and that's all valid. Don't touch children.

00:37:33.86

Ryan R

I got to say that officially, um certainly, right?

00:37:35.36

thestaffroompodcast
yeah

00:37:36.92

Ryan R

um But I remember I was teaching, my first position was grade five, right? I got surplus for my at school when I was high. I was teaching grade five. The children were wonderful. And I never would have thought that I would have liked to teach children that young.

00:37:49.82

Ryan R

And then I went to middle school and then I was teaching halftime and I ended up supplying halftime. Shout out to my principal, then she got my supply list. So I was teaching halftime in primary and junior grades.

00:38:00.45

Ryan R

But you walk you you go in there, you do a lesson with iPads and whatever, say, ah, Mr. the Richards, ah, dah, dah, dah, dah, dah. And these little ones will come out. And I remember, I had a teachers college in my head, but they come on, they grab onto your leg, and they're like, ah, you're like a superhero walking down that hallway.

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thestaffroompodcast

yeah

00:38:15.04

Ryan R

You're like, um at this point, I'm like, hey, do whatever you're gonna do, and when you're done, let me know. And I'm going, boom, I'm gonna have a mortgage one day, right? But it's that change in perspective and understanding when you get in there.

00:38:25.42

Ryan R

And and so just just to break it down, there's so many pieces, but um Yeah, like the the the learning space, sharing learning, being a part of professional learning. um I think we've talked about it as well. There's a lone loneliness that comes because you're isolated. you're You're going into someone else's space. Some people are happy to see you. I had colleagues who, the principals were not happy to see them when they walked in the door. And it's just like, wow, but but that's from the office.

00:38:55.11

Ryan R

Right. And then you had other people I've sat in offices with principals and oh, this is what happens to school. This is what we'd like to do. Great. Let's, let's go. What can we do? And so there's a loneliness when you're out there. Um, that Thursday was an oasis where we got back together and shared learning. That was our professional learning day. Um, and then we had partners that we can connect with as well. So that was positive terms of why I left. Um, yeah, I think it was that space where The learning was great. Connecting with my colleagues were amazing. Our Central Corning principal was amazing. I think she's gone on to be a superintendent. Shout out to Helen Fisher. She was wonderful. um you know the admit our Our program administrator is wonderful. She's that she's a principal now as well. Wonderful. and And of course, our illustrious superintendent. was just was It was such a rich environment and rich learning experience.

00:39:45.11

Ryan R

But when you wanna get back to doing your thing, you wanna take those amazing things you've learned and like, okay, let me, I'm i'm re energized again. Let me try this new thing that I've learned. And I guess going forward, it's like, how do we how do we do that every day? Because i I look at myself now, am I still learning in the same way that I was learning then? No, um a different I'm in a different space in my teaching, a different space in my life. And so I can honestly reflect and say no.

00:40:12.82

Ryan R

um I don't want to be that person that's stagnant, that's not learning anymore. And so you sort of, depending on where you are and the connections that you have, are you that person that's going to drive your own learning? Are you like, i' yeah, I got into this thinking of learning classroom and I'm trying it as well. And it is successful. Um, if you have the right questions and engagement and encourage it the right way, do I do it every day? No, unlike you where you find the right way for the students that you have in front of you. Um,

00:40:41.56

Ryan R

But it's that piece like after you leave coaching, are you still driving your own learning? Are you still willing to share and communicate? Because you can still do those things. um You know, it wasn't all rainbows and sunshine.

00:40:53.57

Ryan R

and And people didn't always understand why you were there. And I'm going to end on this because it still makes me laugh. I go into a room and people would be like, Oh, can you fix my smart board?

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thestaffroompodcast

you

00:41:03.00

Ryan R

Like, uh, that's not really my job. But here I go. I'll look at it for you. Right. All right. iPad it like okay well like and When I say it's not my job, it's like, I'm not trained to do that, but I may have done it before. So let me see what

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Ryan those are such great ah experiences you shared and and you're right and when you when you talk about teacher expectation of what the learning coach is doing I don't even necessarily like I I believe a teacher they have they bring a lot of different things to their classroom experiences so you don't know how they're gonna ah how your presence lands on them but I also wonder how well our system communicates what those roles are supposed to be and you highlighted that one quote it's always something I had to think about like Uh, we were always sort of given the monitor. You have to make sure you tell people we're not experts in this space. We're not experts. We're not experts. And although fundamentally I sort of believe in it, but on another part, I don't because as a teacher in 22 years, the amount of professional development and we can phrase it however you want, but learning get given to me.

00:42:01.15

thestaffroompodcast

Very, very small.

00:42:01.26

Ryan R

sure

00:42:02.58

thestaffroompodcast

And I only, and I will preface, I was only in the learning coach space for maybe six months. I didn't start at the beginning of the year. And then the year was cut off to become a supply teacher. So I don't necessarily bring you three years of experience.

00:42:12.01

Ryan R

you know Yeah.

00:42:14.24

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So I might have, I might miss some things. But I always thought in that six months, like you talked about, I was a part of so many rich conversations, explicit professional developments that absolutely surpassed, accumulated all my PD in the 22 years.

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It was vibrant. And so when I gave when I was given the position that I'm not an expert, I said, but but on one level I am, because the board, as a coach, was investing so much more in my growth, now for a greater purpose of sharing that learning, and maybe you don't call sharing the learning expertise, but I would it's difficult to then walk, all right, I found it uncomfortable to walk into the classroom and then pretend, but we're equals in this space, because if the amount of that's being invested in me, it's not that I'm better than you, but it's different. And so it's acknowledging that yes, I'm not an expert, but

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the board is investing a lot in me so that I can show you some tools like the thinking class or more use of we video or something like this where I bring in a resource just so I can show it and maybe collaborate with you to work with your class a little bit so you have that tool and then you pass it on to another teacher so that notion of not being an expert I always sort of figured tried to to negotiate that because I never wanted to go into a room and say I'm just like you because that's not true because as a teacher I know I know how much now especially that I've done both if you're a learning coach and come in my space I know how much PD you're being given you're a wonderful resource you're the best you're the best access for me sort to to get at a resource whether it be an assessment resource because I assume you've gone through PD you've gone through modeled experiments you maybe haven't done in front of a class but I think as you as a teacher you and I as teachers

00:43:39.71

Ryan R

yeah

00:43:44.12

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ah so going back to even your first response at the beginning, we have to be okay trying stuff in class that may not work. We got to get the vibe, the the lay of the land with our classes. So give me as many as tools as you can. And then I wonder if our board is sort of holding on to the notion that our learning coaches don't want to be defined as extra, but

equals and learning together. I don't know if that's really accurate either. Yes, we are learning together, but we're learning something different.

00:44:05.78

thestaffroompodcast

So I loved your idea that you would go into one class, see three great things, go into another school and say, but they're not doing these things.

00:44:06.06

Ryan R

yeah

00:44:11.42

thestaffroompodcast

Let me show you, or not even show you, just say, I've seen this. And the teacher, teachers are really good at, you know, mimicking, if I use thinking classroom pedagogy, mimic something that's going on in another room.

00:44:19.42

Ryan R

Yeah.

00:44:22.32

thestaffroompodcast

And so I really liked that. So it's like, it's like, two yes, we're co-learning together, but we're co-learning different things. You're gifting me your experiences and being able to then see how these activities work in front of Students because one thing in the cult coaching space is yes, you have the great pedagogy and yes You model all these activities, but you model it with a bunch of other learning coaches So nothing's gonna disrupt that since situation We know when we're in the classroom the one kid that shows up at the back up after lunch with a Big Mac combo That's a real factor for how my thinking classroom activities gonna run for the next 15 minutes So I want to see that see that in practice

00:44:42.03

Ryan R

yeah right

00:44:50.13

Ryan R

yeah

00:44:54.78

Ryan R

Yeah. yeah yeah

00:44:56.96

thestaffroompodcast

um So I as you told your story I sort of shared the same thing you talk even a little bit briefly that coaching space is very one that the job titles are always changing and I think the system really needs to to make if you want a teacher to believe in them I need to know that that coach in that position and all their expectations are going to be the same for three or five or ten years so that I can rely on it I think of my coaching position it lasted even with not me being in it, that position itself only lasted 12 months, there's nothing else that even resembles it.

00:45:26.79

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And I go back, and I think the teacher saw me come in the room, especially a teacher with an experience, you sort of say, is this job really good to exist in three months? and And if it is, how much capacity do I have the teacher do I have to give with someone like that?

00:45:33.89

Ryan R

Yeah.

00:45:37.57

thestaffroompodcast

So I really think our board needs to, one, make these positions more foundational and more predictable on their long-term use and then I also it's it's you're right it's no knock on people but it's a very lots of ah movement in these spaces because there's lots of great teachers that want to do something more so they go into the coaching and you're right they sort of see a vision they see where they can make more impact and they want to go up to principal vice principal ah superintendent and all of a sudden those positions become really

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Ryan R

Yeah.

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loss of movement So if you've got job titles that are constantly changing and people that are constantly changing, are we maximizing what should be a really great way to to change education? And i is so system wise, I believe in it. But then in execution, I don't necessarily think we're maximizing what that can offer for for teachers.

00:46:22.94

Ryan R

Yeah, I think that, and that's a mic drop. I think that it really is a complex situation and I'm gonna preface it with this and I'm gonna be succinct to you, you know, I said it before, is the idea that when I went into a space or when I worked, whether I was facilitating a learning session or being a part of that learning session or being in a classroom, I know, I'm a teacher, I know what, they can have an amazing experience, but I know what teachers want.

00:46:52.59

Ryan R

Teachers want, what is that concrete strategy ah tool website that I can apply right now or next week, right? And that's fine, I get that. and You know, a part of, and I'm gonna push back, right? I wanna challenge you here. I'm gonna push back on, because my my ah memory of what we were also trying to do, and this was sort of the the real work, is to build those learning communities.

00:47:22.67

Ryan R

And so, yeah, absolutely bring in WeVideo. That was for you, for me at that time, of iPads were being introduced. So how could we use iPads with literacy, iPads with STEM, pedagogical documentation, all of those things.

00:47:35.47

Ryan R

So those were that's sort of the sexier version of it, the the tool or whatever. But foundational to that was how do we build that those professional learning communities? Because that's what's going to go long beyond you know when the the iPads have gone out of date and now we're into Chromebooks and Chromebooks are out of date.

00:47:48.73

thestaffroompodcast

Oh my God.

00:47:52.14

Ryan R

But do we understand how to learn as a professional community, right? We were learning about collaborative inquiry and supporting it, it and the administrators were were ah facilitating their own collaborative inquiries. But do we actually have that happening where there's professional learning and professional sharing? Because that will outdate any of the technologies, any of the amazing things that I might have done, but are we able to keep learning?

00:48:15.83

Ryan R

so That's one piece where, for me, that was the lens where I looked at where that was also a part of the work. Some of the people that were coming in were like, just give me the good stuff. And I get it. I get it. Here's the other piece and the other layer when you're talking about that structural that that structural piece. Here's the complex issue that I have conversations about. And I ah believe that we've talked about my memory fails. A lot going on is the idea that those are human beings in the classroom. And so there are different people in different spaces and there are some educators that are functioning on the level of survival, on survival. And so when we're talking about it, whether it's they got stuff going on outside the classroom, they got those one or two students that are taking 80% of their energy or some combination of that, or they're having a problem within their building, we're having real conversations, problem with the administration or whatever is happening,

00:49:15.40

Ryan R

And it's like, are they in that space? Are they supported so that they can do that deep, rich learning that we need to get to? Because some people, if we're honest, if we're having a real like real talk, some people are just getting by day to day. They're just getting by whether my child's sick, I'm going through divorce, I'm having a problem with a colleague. My administrators got me in a six, seven, eight split because they want me out of the building. Can we say real things?

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thestaffroompodcast

Yep.

00:49:46.82

Ryan R

Like, that's what it is. And I'm going to come in and tell you about critical, critical consciousness and whatever. And you're like, you're just trying to get through the day so you don't do something drastic.

00:49:58.28

Ryan R

Right. And so are we supporting as a board? When you talk about that structure, are we supporting our teachers, not with the web links?

00:50:08.78

thestaffroompodcast

who

00:50:09.30

Ryan R

Don't tell, just don't tell me about the web links. Are we supporting such that we can do this work that they need to do. Because I see some people doing amazing things. And I'm saying, how are you finding the time?

00:50:21.30

Ryan R

I look and see, I follow you and Pav on Twitter. And I see all, I remember I was following last year what you were doing with your, I don't know if you call it your student counseling or how you've repositioned that.

00:50:30.87

thestaffroompodcast

Yeah.

00:50:32.66

Ryan R

And then I see the this year looking with the um female identifying students with STEM and all of these things. And I'm like, do you eat lunch? are you eating are you Are you eating in between like your three-part lesson plan?

00:50:45.89

Ryan R

Like, here's my first part. Here's my mind's on. You talk about it for five minutes.

00:50:47.89

thestaffroompodcast

a

00:50:49.16

Ryan R

And that's what I'm doing. Like, what are you doing those things? And I take my hat off to you, but at the same time, I'm not going to denigrate that teacher that's not doing it because they might be doing the best that they can just holding it together.

00:51:01.94

Ryan R

There might be people somewhere in their position where it's like, hey, here's what I'm going to give to education now, whether it's after five years, 10 years, 15 years. Here's what I'm going to give to education.

00:51:12.49

Ryan R

And here's what I'm going to take what I have left. And it's going to be for my family, what I'm doing in my community and whatever. And that's real too. And so, yeah, please jump in.

00:51:23.92

thestaffroompodcast

Oh Ryan, those are gems and I want to highlight that early on in my career I used to sort of put this marker of how much I'm doing to build some some esteem or some glory and it sort of I was chasing sort of glory early on.

00:51:36.01

thestaffroompodcast

Later on in my years I realized my ability to do these things are predicated on a lot of factors that are beyond my troll and I have some privilege. I've been at the same school a long time.

00:51:43.56

Ryan R

Yeah.

00:51:45.18

thestaffroompodcast

i ah The last time you talked about the six, seven, eight split, 23 years, I've never been given, never not been given grade eight as my teachable, and it's always my first choice.

00:51:54.06

Ryan R

I salute you.

00:51:54.69

thestaffroompodcast

And so, and then, you know what, Pav and I, we talked about wanting to team teach, can this be facilitated? And our administration made it happy. These aren't things that I did. And then so when you talk about we do, what we do a lot of student council stuff.

00:52:05.05

thestaffroompodcast

but also I get to teach curriculum and content. Now I know it constantly changes and evolves, but predominantly I'm in a space where I'm really comfortable, I'm really confident, I'm not getting shaken around by the people around me and it allows me to do these things.

00:52:18.45

thestaffroompodcast

And I am i am very aware of the privilege that I have in my space. One, I do a good job and so there's no reason necessarily to shake it up, but also it's beyond my control because there are teachers in this school board that do great job and they don't get that privilege, they get moved around.

00:52:32.69

thestaffroompodcast

They're worried about being surplus.

00:52:32.98

Ryan R

yeah

00:52:34.40

thestaffroompodcast

I even think of our current negotiations with ETT and TDSB and teachers of 10 years you want to move around.

00:52:37.68

Ryan R

Yeah.

00:52:40.07

thestaffroompodcast

Do you know much I get to do? Not because I'm a great teacher, but because I've been there for 20 years. My community knows me.

00:52:44.98

Ryan R

yeah

00:52:45.69

thestaffroompodcast

There's not a child that walks in my classroom that I haven't taught the brother, the sibling, the cousin, and they all live in these multi-generational homes. What does that facilitate with me? It allows me to do a lot more of these extracurricular projects because a lot of the the relationship building or the nitty gritty along with teaching is sort of, it's its it's already taken care of.

00:53:03.57

thestaffroompodcast

So um it's really, really, i and I work really hard. All teachers work really hard, but just my outcome doesn't necessarily indicate that I'm working harder than other people.

00:53:14.03

thestaffroompodcast

There are a lot of other things that are in place.

00:53:15.25

Ryan R

Yeah.

00:53:16.36

thestaffroompodcast

And so when I go back to that negotiation piece, we shouldn't be just arbitrarily deciding, I'm going to move a teacher that's been in the school for 10 years because ultimately most of what I do that's really successful is a byproduct of having been there.

00:53:16.65

Ryan R

Yeah.

00:53:27.92

thestaffroompodcast

for a long time. And I think it goes contrary to everything we know about relationships. My relationship with my student is also an extension. My relationship with the community. You want to go and drop me in another community and think I'll have the same impact that'll be able to inspire and nurture minds.

00:53:39.51

Ryan R

Yeah.

00:53:41.41

thestaffroompodcast

All of a sudden you talk about putting all these teachers in sort of like a very guarded position. and I don't really think so.

00:53:45.66

Ryan R

Yeah.

00:53:47.02

thestaffroompodcast

So one, I appreciate that. Now also say it's also Twitter and we all know as teachers in that space, you don't often necessarily show your failures all the time. So always with a grain of salt. um

00:53:56.64

Ryan R

yeah

00:53:57.57

thestaffroompodcast

Um, there there are days that where you struggle and at the end of the day you're just like, ah and then you're going to full find me a tweet, find me a tweet, look for a picture of something that went well this afternoon so I can just almost affirm for to myself that, you know, I did some teaching today amongst all the other ah noise that goes on.

00:54:09.26

Ryan R

good

00:54:13.54

thestaffroompodcast

Uh, so again, rich conversation. This conversation has been fantastic. I already feel revitalized going into tomorrow. Um, Now we can bring back this conversation that sort of coaching dynamic, but I think we've we've touched on it really well. I'd love to expand because you are so in tune ah with teaching and perspectives. And I've always been, as much as you think I'm just, I'm listening, I'm not politely listening. I'm listening because you were dropping gems that I know that later on i go say I was part of a conversation. We talked about this, isnt this and this.

00:54:44.27

thestaffroompodcast

I think that quite often in this political space there is so much that is not known or seen and if you've been listening to this conversation you probably already have 30 things that you have learned about what's going on in the classroom you hadn't anticipated. If you could you know share to the general public something about what's going on in teaching that is just being really misinformed or misconceived or looked over what is it that you may want the general public to know that just is just being hidden in sort of this very political space we are with and ultimately maybe that's more in the social media space maybe in the day-to-day grind when we talk with people around I've never talked with ah ah a parent in my community that doesn't think the teachers aren't aren't doing great things but you know if you get absorbed in that just

00:55:15.86

Ryan R

Mm.

00:55:25.87

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social media space, the political space. You can just think, does anyone have any idea what we're doing? I would love if you want to touch touch on that. Just share something that you would say. This is what the the teaching experience is like. Although for the last 50 minutes, you're getting real insights and real gems onto what teaching is like.

00:55:41.86

Ryan R

Yeah, there's there's there's there's so many levels to to to to come at that and and tackle that. Again, if ah what what just comes to come to me is, if if you look at, for example, ah Dr. West, Dr. West, and i says and i'm but i'm gonna he talks about telling the truth. And so um he there's a quote that I share with his students, and I'm going to paraphrase because I want to get it wrong, but he says,

00:56:10.76

Ryan R

there there is a there is a price to pay for telling the truth. He said there's a bigger price to pay for living a lie.

00:56:17.67

thestaffroompodcast

Mmm.

00:56:18.01

Ryan R

And so um when you when you ask that question, you know, my mind goes to, if we start, if we look at, I don't even want to say the top because that's sort of this sort of structural piece, but if you look at the words that have come from the former education minister, Holy Ignorance, if you look at the words that have come from the current premier of Ontario, Holy Ignorance,

00:56:40.26

Ryan R

um in terms of understanding what's actually happening in the classroom. What are you talking about? Don't you say things that don't qualify. You you you hear it in a particular from the particular part of the political spectrum is use of the word indoctrination. right Let's have some real talk and let's start there. right and so I heard about it and I said, I don't want to just push back and not know what I'm talking about, I have a sense of whatever, but let me look at let me look at what the word means to consolidate my understanding humbly. And indoctrination speaks to presenting only one point of view with no opportunity to discuss any other other opportunities ah other points of view. but You can't consider them, this is the only way that is correct and that's it. And I said, is that what's happening in schools?

00:57:34.94

Ryan R

Uh, that doesn't happen in my classroom. Where are they talking about? And then my next point was, well, hold on a second. That sounds like parenting. That sounds like organized religion. Uh-oh. That's the definition of what it is. And so when we, and and eight I'm not knocking parents, I'm not knocking organized religion. they Each has their own challenges. It's not an easy thing. But if we're going to be intellectually honest, that's what that is.

00:58:04.85

Ryan R

That's not what's happening in the clip and in the classroom. And so when we talk about the challenges of what's actually happening, listen, we live in Ontario, we have a human rights code, period, full stop. Wherever you are in your journey, if you don't recognize that those rights are rights for everybody, well, that's that's between you and whatever power you believe exists out there.

00:58:29.83

Ryan R

Right? But we are required to uphold the Ontario Human Rights Code. And so there's there's a level of ignorance and because you have a base and you can spew it when you're coming from the Office of the the Ministry of Education, when you're coming from the Premier's Office, you have a pulpit and you got a lot of people saying, yeah, yeah. And so, well, what's actually happening in in the classroom? Right? You hear the ridiculous nonsense if you look down in the South about apparently teachers are performing surgeries on their prep and then sending the children home as some other gender. What? I don't have that kind of time on my prep. I will have 10 things on my list. Performing surgery is not one of them. And if I could perform surgery, would I still be a teacher? I like the kids. Surgery money is something different, right? and so

00:59:23.54

Ryan R

That's one piece of it where you're dealing with, well, do you actually understand what's happening in the classroom and understanding that, yes, there are some challenges in the system. There are some challenges amongst educators because they are humans. And do you always have the the best humans being educated? I'm not going to lie. No, you don't always have the best humans being parents, right? Some of us are are really not even some of us. We're all on a journey and I don't want to sound all flighty and whatever, but we're all a work in progress. So I'm talking about the people that are trying, the people that are trying. We are a work in progress. Even those educators that are like, oh, people are like, oh, yeah that's that's a great teacher and whatever. That person is still trying. They're somewhere on their journey from that first day where when you're starting, you think you have to be a perfect teacher until

01:00:13.08

Ryan R

23 years in where it's just like, yeah, it's not about me being perfect. It's about me connecting with my kids and building a positive learning experience. And so that's what the learning is. The curriculum is what it is. And so, yeah, if a parent, and I'm a parent as well, is looking into the classroom. I'm looking, well, is a child having a positive learning experience? But also wearing both hats. I also recognize and understand that If we only did our job, if our job was

to just teach, whereas you have the Doug Ford's and others of the world who will just say, just shut up and teach, or that woman that said shut up and dribble to LeBron, same sort of thing, we could deliver the content with paper. Here's the lesson. Boom, boom, boom. Here's where your test is. Write the test. But I just sat in in on the on the PD day in the training giving

01:01:10.80

Ryan R

ah listening to the the presentation on suicide prevention. What? They didn't tell me about this in Teachers College. That has nothing to do with the three-part lesson plan, but I need to be looking at that child that might be sleeping, that child that might be upset. I gotta be looking out for human trafficking now as well. Like we're sitting in this, because now, you know, the ministry's scared the public of, oh, these are the things we need to know what's happening in these and these professional learning sessions on their PD days.

01:01:40.95

Ryan R

Like, listen, parent, you can come in and sit right beside me. There's no secret, but now we've got to publish it and and whatever. um And again, that fear mongering bit. But these are the things that's happening in addition to ah delivering curricula. In addition to, and again, if you're me, and I'll speak for myself, but having talked to you um and got a sense of what you do in your program, a lot of that is mentoring. A lot of that is mentoring, especially those who who need that support, especially those who were where they are in their journey. um Education is not at the forefront, right? If you have students who, you know, I don't see them five days a week. What's happening? Well, they have things going on in their environment, and I'm not going to beat anybody out. So we'll leave it there. But I don't see you five days a week. Right. And so

01:02:36.30

Ryan R

Because we care, we're looking at how can I support you, even in spaces where you know that there's only so much I can do. So when I see you, I need to make sure it's a positive experience, it's a positive learning environment. And for you and I, who are at grade eight, and this is a continual pattern, you know that that lived experience means that there are also learning gaps. And so when I see and I'm looking ahead and I'm looking into your future and what it's going to be like sitting in that grade nine class,

01:03:05.25

Ryan R

But you've been missing, you've been MIA, not by any choice of your own, but life circumstances. Yeah, that's what we're dealing with, not just dealing with curriculum. And i don't you and I'll share this experience in ah and a limited space. you know i had ah you know I had the experience of one of my students who, not not while I had that student, but years afterwards, um his mother put him in the ground.

01:03:35.88

Ryan R

And, you know, I look back at the the journey of that, and I say that with respect, um where when the student was, when I was connected to the student, before I had the student, the student was, you know, that student you heard about.

01:03:55.36

Ryan R

If I was in grade eight, I would have heard about that student in in grade six.

01:03:57.28

thestaffroompodcast

Mm hmm.

01:03:59.40

Ryan R

And it's just willing out, you know, da-da-da-da-da, cussing, da-da-da-da-da, whatever.

01:04:07.74

Ryan R

No, that's the one thing. is The other thing you can I'll jump here, but it since my mind's going all over the place, that thing where you're now that that's a little bit of humor, so I'm not going to say that, but. um You know, I came to contact with that student for a year. I was teaching that student and you know. we We we we had a good relationship. We whatever we got to where we got to academically. We got to where we got to on a human level and.

01:04:37.71

Ryan R

That student left me, that student went on to high school. I remember getting an email in grade 10 and um no there were there there were times where I had to give that student i had to give that word to the student. right And it was like, yeah, you've been volatile in the past and I'll deal with you on a level, but when a line is crossed, I'm going to give you that word and then I'll bring it back because I care about you.

01:05:03.55

Ryan R

think um I imagine, I think with it was grade 10, that student had sent me an email and said, Mr. Richards, everything that you said would happen to me, happened.

01:05:20.46

Ryan R

And I took no joy in that. There's no, I'm not that guy, I need to be right. That's some old foolishness. I'm like, dude, email me, what do you need? What's going on that's happening? I didn't hear from that student again.

01:05:34.75

Ryan R

um Fast forward a couple of years, student came back with ah another student, whatever. Hey, what's going on? yeah andda da What's happening? Right. This is how high school turned out. OK, not the best. What's going on now? Oh, I'm doing X, Y and Z. I'm like, oh,

that's great. OK, now we're moving, now we're cooking with gas. And that's the last time I spoke to that student. And I remember I um I got it, it was on the weekend. One of my colleagues sent me an image, I think it was from CB24, and they said, is this so and so? I said, nah, nah. And I'm looking at it, it's the reporting of this person, it's no longer with us. And I'm looking at it, I'm like, nah, nah, it's not that student, it's nah. And I went into school and people was talking about it, because in our community, we care about our students when they go out and people talk, and we have connection, as you said, with the community, with the parents,

01:06:35.37

Ryan R

I said, no, it's not that student. And then he was confirming with that student, right? And so, yeah, when you want to talk about what's actually happening, it's not this, not that anti-woke garbage, it's not the, not the, oh, yeah, do you, do you have some teachers that are on their journey? I'm going to acknowledge that, like, yeah, some things are not the best. Like we need to be honest and have real conversations and, and, um,

01:07:03.63

Ryan R

you know, whether they're in their fifth year of teaching or their 15th year of teaching, teaching, you're you're learning, right? and i' And I'll share this that actually happened in my class last week. But for the teachers that are there that are trying, understanding that there's a person there that they're dealing with it, like, oh, you paid all this, you should be some of the things you're not paid to do. Listen, I had a teacher who I heard about this and whatever a student in their face, in their face,

01:07:32.95

Ryan R

said, I'm going to put a voodoo curse on you, your husband, and your children in your face. What is that? Nobody wakes up in the morning and, uh, and, and, and expect. like Like sometimes I joke around people, it's like your mortgage flashes but in front of your eyes. Cause it's just like, here's my mortgage over there. Here's you child, wiling out mortgage. You, you need some support, right? And so,

01:08:03.07

Ryan R

you know, these are the things where you have people who care about your kids. And, um you know, I frame it in this way of partnership, right? What we do is, yeah, I can deliver curriculum, but there's also that mentorship where I'm encouraging you to invest in yourself. right So for that student that when I spoke only quite a while ago, that heard me talking about marks,

01:08:29.80

Ryan R

Really, the purpose of that is that when they leave, and that student is going to be brilliant, she's a beautiful child, articulate, and whatever, sky's the limit, but my vision for her is that when she's left university, that that learning continues, whether somebody's giving her an

evaluation or not. or You have a love of learning, you have a love of it engaging in deep thinking, right, from the womb to the tomb.

01:08:57.57

Ryan R

in richness so that your life is full. That's it. That doesn't go on a learning skills comment. You can't fit it in the box. And if I'm saying that, oh, it's not covering responsibility, initiative, whatever they make us write about, yeah, those things are important. What are you doing when you go out there to impact the world? What are you doing where I talk about with the young people? You're going to have to go out in the world and compete with people who these things that I'm saying come naturally to them.

01:09:25.60

Ryan R

not born that way, but they've been cultured that way. They've been groomed that way. So how are you preparing yourself to challenge? right That's why I posted, I think it was last year, there was a young man, he was 16 years old, I think he came from South America, graduated from U of T. I just put it in the post in the Google Classroom and I said, what do you think? What would you ask him if you could interview him? What do you wonder about? I don't know what comes from that, but read the article. What's the difference between him and you?

01:09:56.91

Ryan R

Right? And just thinking about that. Right? And so, I mean, there are so many things, right? That's, I mean, the whole of the level where, where, you know, education is used as a, as a political tool, whatever, for whatever reason, it becomes, and and ah and again, if we go into deeper levels, it's very, very dangerous. You see it's happening more around Canada. is anti-intellectual, where if you have education, if you're if you are a professional, then somehow you become the enemy. Somehow there's something wrong that you're doing because you're doing that. We have in Ontario, we need to watch it. And again, I don't want to politicize. I don't want to get trouble. You can edit this out. But you heard it from the mouth of the Premier, where he attacks the judiciary. You see that down in the States. It's very problematic. It's very problematic. And so education becomes a target where

01:10:49.30

Ryan R

it can't just be that pipeline to getting a job because our children are too valuable. And I don't mean as an asset, I don't mean as a, you know, you see what's happening in Ontario now. Yes, it's projected that we're gonna have a shortage of um ah skilled labor in the next 50 years. So now the job of education is to funnel these children into ah middle class, and there's nothing there's nothing wrong with it, but to to to funnel them, that's the problem, funneling them into middle-class ah trade skills jobs. Again, there's nothing wrong with those jobs already. Support them. If that's your area of genius, be brilliant in that, but to funnel them in there to fill a need in Ontario. That can't be it. That can't be it. Because I said, if if Ontario needed grave diggers, then we'd be funneling these children, and not me personally, not you, I believe, but the system would be funneling these children in to be grave diggers.

01:11:47.00

Ryan R

Right. You see how much money is being invested to support this trade skills and so forth and so on. But we don't have that in health care. Well, well, these people, there's an economic dollar value to these people having jobs and becoming at large. Right. But these these young people have brilliance. They have areas. They have passions. We're not talking about that.

01:12:07.48

Ryan R

It's like, well, we we're going to need engineers. We're going to need mechanics. Go and do that, right? That's, that's dystopian. We read those stories to the children and discuss about it, but we're actively living in it now. But maybe I'm, maybe I don't know. I'm just, maybe I'm woke. Maybe that's the problem. I don't know what it is, but eyes and ears, Ontario educated tells me you're looking at it. Let's talk about it, right? Let's at least have the discussion.

01:12:31.83

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Ryan notes was one sad, beautiful, and just a really great ah take for people to know that ah on many different levels, it's not it's not just funnel the curriculum. The students are ready to absorb it. Our students are human beings, and they come with a wide variety of human issues. And as the teachers in those spaces, you need to navigate. You don't even need to. You want to navigate those spaces. You want to be there as a human being for another human being. And these things are the things that are just forgotten stories untold stories to assume teachers walk in with some indoctrination agenda that they want to spew over. They just don't. They want to be humans in their space and they want to treat them like humans. ah Ryan, thank you so much for dedicating so much of your time for this episode Teacher Talk with ETT. This has been a real

01:13:18.26

thestaffroompodcast

truthful conversation a real model ah experience of what great dialogue can look like and of course Ryan I think you probably agree with me but I won't tell you will but this conversation isn't the end of the learning hopefully it just sparks a conversation for somewhere else say I heard this what do you think these are my thoughts because a great podcast doesn't tell you what to know it just is come back to your comment about and it's not that you have to be right is I want to be right and if I want to be right then I need to have these multiple conversations so that I can affirm that my knowledge is on the right spot so I Thank you for gifting us some of your insights and ah gifting me some of your insights and having some of these conversations again That I did miss and so when I go back to my coaching, there are a few relationships that I remember There are a few people I stay in contact with we video never gets talked about podcasting a little bit But ultimately it's these few people that come back say remember when we did this together.

01:13:29.36

Ryan R

Nope.

01:14:07.80

thestaffroompodcast

I still use it this year I modified it this way and this was the response and and this conversation here, you know You and I have stayed connected with ah a brief message here or there a retweet and the like of a tweet here or there. And ultimately, it's come around to this great conversation. And I would say for me, this is what coaching was about. This is what I got out of it. I got to reach and connect with other teachers elsewhere. And I'm a better teacher for it. So thank you for that.

01:14:30.57

Ryan R

ah but Thank you for having me. i always As always, I appreciate the conversation with you.

01:14:35.02

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All right, everyone, we'll catch you next time on Teacher Talk and ETT podcast.