Angela Isenberg: Welcome to, I've Tried Everything. A podcast series focusing on behavior support in schools. I'm your host, Angela Isenberg. Our special guests for the series is Melinda Marquez.

Melinda Marquez: Hi, I am the coordinator for school improvement and accountability here at Region 13.

Angela Isenberg: Today we're going to talk about classroom management and navigating, what are we expecting from every classroom on campus in the world of classroom management? If pulling in from what we did last time in the series we talked about discipline matrix of what is a classroom manage behavior versus office. If we're going to ask teachers to manage behaviors in the classroom, we need to give them the tools that they need. I'm thinking about a situation that I had in the classroom and I definitely needed some tools in my tool belt in this arena.

Angela Isenberg: I had just asked the students to get into groups and they were supposed to grab the materials and go to their group. I'm doing my thing. I turned back and all the sudden this one girl, she's probably 5'10, was just beating the crud out of this poor, scrawny little ninth grade kid. I'm like, how did this fight happen in like two seconds in my classroom? There was no way I was going to step in the middle because she would have flattened me out like a pancake if I would have intervened.

Angela Isenberg: So, I am hitting the black button, that infamous black button on the wall, I'm screaming for my colleague that was across the hall and I'm going, “Miss [inaudible 00:01:30], Miss [inaudible 00:01:32].” I'm yelling for Miss [inaudible 00:01:33] to come over. She said that she was teaching and she is like, “Boys and girls do you all hear that [inaudible 00:01:39]?” Because I'm yelling, “Miss [inaudible 00:01:41] come over.” By that point, by the time she got there, the office had not responded to my 50 taps on the black button and a boy had stepped in and separated that situation up.

Angela Isenberg: So thinking about it, a new teacher, there were things that I should have done that probably would have prevented that fight from the world of classroom management. If I would have taught students the expectations before going to pick up the materials, we probably wouldn't have had that issue of students grabbing what somebody else was going to grab or whatever that that might've been. Melinda, what did you expect every teacher, when you walked through your campus, what did you expect every teacher to have in their classroom?

Melinda Marquez: Well, one of the biggest pieces whenever you're walking in as an administrator, what you can see if you want to have an immediate see, would be some kind of reference, or an anchor chart to the campus wide expectations. Because if you have the strong system on campus, it's not just for hallways, restrooms, cafeteria, it also needs to be in the classroom. What's expected in the classroom. So you would want to see those anchor charts, referenced charts on the wall.

Melinda Marquez: But not only are they on the wall, but are teachers using them whenever they're redirecting students, are they just decorations hung up at the very top corner in order to comply with a checklist or are they being used by the teacher to really redirect that behavior?

Angela Isenberg: It's always fun as an observer to go in and the teacher do something that they've never done before or reference something that they've never referenced and the students are looking at them like, “I have no idea what she's talking about.” That ever happened to you in a walkthrough?

Melinda Marquez: It has. I'm not sure that, especially our new teachers, because when somebody comes in their classroom. When I first started, maybe teachers weren't, they weren't used to having anyone in their classroom. Of course that culture changed really quickly, but at the beginning teachers weren't used to having someone in. So when someone would come in, they would try something new just to maybe show that they were following some of the procedures, but they really hadn't implemented them before.

Melinda Marquez: But it was quite apparent whenever teachers would do this, because I would go ask a student and say, “What was that?” The student looked at me and said, “I don't know, the teacher's never done this. I don't know what's happening.” So that was a good cue that maybe that teacher hadn't been implementing those systems.

Angela Isenberg: That's got to be one of those awkward moments for teachers going, “Shh, shh.”

Melinda Marquez: I do that all the time.

Angela Isenberg: When we think about classroom management, we think about what we're expecting across the board. There is nobody that's going to say, we don't need relationships. I think relationships are a hands down non-negotiable in our classrooms and on our campuses today.

Melinda Marquez: That was something that we built around everything. As a classroom teacher, when I was a teacher, one of the biggest pieces to mind was building a community within the classroom. So it's not just about the relationship the teacher has with the child, but what are the relationships that the children have with one another? So you're building that community within your classroom, but then expanding that out to a campus from a principal perspective. So important for the principal to have relationships, for the students to have relationships with one another. I mean it's just critical.

Angela Isenberg: You were telling me the other day that one of the greatest practices that you really enjoyed implementing right toward the end of your time as a principal were circles in the classroom. Tell me a little bit about how you guys utilize community circles.

Melinda Marquez: That was something that we just started to implement, like you said, one of my last years as a campus principal, but a lot of the teachers really took ownership of that and they had morning circles. That's where those teachers were able to build that community within the classroom. Not only did we do it... the students did it with the teachers, but we had teachers who were working, it was circles with one another as well. It was pretty powerful strategy.

Angela Isenberg: It really shifts that momentum from thinking around what are students doing that are wrong to let's build relationships and focus on what students are doing that's right.

Melinda Marquez: The students hold one another accountable once they build that community within their classroom.

Angela Isenberg: Yeah. I think restorative practices is hands down, if I were going to go back into classroom today, it would be the number one thing that I put into place for building relationships and building class community in a way to naturally help redirect some of those behaviors that are happening. When we think about classroom management, we think about some of the greatest Ted Talks and presentations. Rita Pearson is, or was, unfortunately, she passed away just shortly after her Ted Talk, but that is a Ted Talk I recommend everyone watch.

Melinda Marquez: Yes, it is so powerful and I've seen it probably 20 times, but every time I watch it, it gives me chills and it makes me want to share it to let everyone see just how powerful her message is.

Angela Isenberg: I like the section that she says, "Children don't learn from people they don't like." We all have examples, if you've been in education long enough, we have examples of how we got a student to do things for us that they wouldn't do for other people because we had that relationship with them. Unfortunately, some of our most challenging students on the campus have the best relationships with the administration. So, going to the principal's office is, even though they're going to get in trouble when they go, it's a treat for them because they know they're going to somebody that cares about them.

Melinda Marquez: Right. As an assistant principal is probably where I had the most powerful relationship with those students who you call them frequent flyers, they're in your office quite a bit, but I used those relationships to my benefit because whenever those students would come in, I could really have a heartfelt talk with them and one-on-one talk with them about their behavior. It's not, they don't have their walls up. They know I'm coming from a place of caring and support.

Melinda Marquez: I'm not just this is a principal that's going to give you a consequence and move on, but I'm really concerned about this behavior. Let's talk about this, why is this happening and what can we do to prevent it in the future?

Angela Isenberg: So thinking about, we have established that idea of relationships and class community, there are five key variables that I feel like every classroom teacher should have in place. That is structure and organization as one variable. Looking at the structure of your classroom, classroom rules, social contract, whatever that you're utilizing, linking those to your school at expectations, if you're doing positive behavior interventions and support on your campus, really looking at the arrangement in the classroom.

Angela Isenberg: Can you get to every student and provide individual feedback to every student? I've been in some classes that have some unique arrangements and the only way to provide feedback to that student is to talk over the desk of another student. So structure's important. Do we have an attention signal to signal when it's time for them to listen to the teacher and eloquently be able to do that? So that you're maximizing time. I've been in and I'm sure that Melinda, you can give examples of classrooms where you heard, “Guys listen up for just a second.” Shh, shh, shh.

Melinda Marquez: I've heard that. Yep. Lots of shushing.

Angela Isenberg: Listen, give me just a second.

Melinda Marquez: Hello.

Angela Isenberg: Yes, clap. Okay, and it's just not uniform. It's...

Melinda Marquez: Yeah.

Angela Isenberg: I was probably the most interesting attention signal that I saw was a teacher that had a doorbell around her neck and it was a middle school teacher. She would ring her doorbell whenever she wanted their attention. So the students ended up stealing her doorbell. They passed it around the room and was like ringing it from different places in the classroom. Of course these students were really ingenious, I think, because they pass it to their next student in the next class.

Angela Isenberg: They kept ringing it throughout. It took her three class periods to find her doorbell. So I kept telling her, “Your attention signal can't be tied to something. It has to be you.” I think the only person that should have an attention signal that is not themselves is a coach when they're out there on the field or in the gym, but really utilizing the power of you in the classroom.

Melinda Marquez: As a campus principal, we had a campus wide attention signal that we used and then each teacher was required to have an attention signal. They could use the campus wide, which was may I have your attention please. So anytime I had the students in front of me, at one point we had up to a thousand students in our pre K through four campus, but that was an attention signal we use. But every teacher was required to have one and they needed to let me know which attention signal they used. It didn't matter what they used, but they needed to have one.

Angela Isenberg: Yeah. So that's really thinking about those structures. I kind of look at it as the foundation to the house. If you don't have good structures into place, anything else that you build in your classroom is going to fall because the structure's not there. So really thinking around routines and procedures. Elementary I think has one of the challenges of the transitions that are taking place on an elementary campus. Let's line up. The amount of time instruction is taken away for transitioning from one activity to the next specials, recess, lunch, so forth, so on.

Melinda Marquez: Yeah, you can lose a lot of time with that and that's why most elementary campuses that I know nowadays they are building the time and at the beginning of the year to teach those procedures. There was a lot of pushback from people saying we need to get right into the curriculum. We got to start teaching those teaks right now. That guys, if you don't have those procedures lined out and students understand how much time you need to line up, it's going to eat until, a lot of your time. I'm Melinda Marquez and we'll get back to today's episode in just a second.

Melinda Marquez: If you like what you hear in this episode, hop on over to whatever platform you use and give us a rating and a review. It helps people find our podcast and helps us know what we can improve upon. Thanks. Now let's get back to the show.

Angela Isenberg: One of the districts in our region here at 13 I think did a really great job for setting success up for their district and their teachers on their campuses. They said the first week of school should be spent 80% on behavior and 20% on academics. So it was teaching those routines, those procedures, building those relationships. The second six week or second week of the beginning of the school year was 50/50. 50 on academics, 50 on behavior. The third week was 20% on behavior, 80% on academics. So it was kind of a slow build toward that academic success where we are building that front, loading that behavior management. Then coming back and revisiting that after breaks.

Melinda Marquez: Yes.

Angela Isenberg: After, Thanksgiving break, after Christmas break, spring break. It's really important because people tend to fall back into their old ways. Cut to that rule of thumb. If students have been gone for more than two days, you probably need to review your procedures and routines. So thinking structure is there. Then we moved to teach expectations. Our second variable. Really, how do we teach students behaviorally what we expect from them? I think that academics, we have really worked on helping teachers to identify those success criterias, those learning objectives and thinking through what do we want students academically to get out of this lesson, this activity?

Angela Isenberg: But I think the thing that a lot of teachers lack is the ability to eloquently tell students behaviorally what they expect. When should I talk? When can I talk? How loud can I talk? When do I get to ask to go to the restroom?

Melinda Marquez: Mm-mm, that sounds like CHAMPS.

Angela Isenberg: It does a little bit. So Dr. Randy Sprick created a classroom management system called CHAMPS. It refers to conversation, help, activity, movement and participation. I kind of look at that as a tool, as a great tool for classroom teachers to go by. I told them the CHAMPS acronym is for you. The expectations are for the student. Whether or not you use an acronym that's completely up to you. What should it look like and sound like during this activity, during this direct teach, during this transition? What should I expect to see for my students during this time and how do I teach them?

Angela Isenberg: You can't just say, “Oh, I'm going to tell them,” because every student doesn't learn by telling them. You might have to role play. You might have to have a visual in your classroom. Thinking around, we don't have a one size fits all approach for academics, right? I mean, we have manipulatives, we have cooperative learning, we have direct teach. The same concepts should be used in the world of behavior. How are you making sure that we are teaching those behavior expectations in a way that will resonate with the students in your classroom?

Melinda Marquez: Right. You're teaching to those individual learning styles.

Angela Isenberg: I think people forget about that. We kind of live by the, they should know how to do this. They're in the fifth grade, they should know. They're an 11th grader, they should know how to behave. I was on a campus one time and I'm doing a staff development. I had set expectations to be gone for an hour or whatever for lunch, and I had maybe a fourth of the staff that was back on time from lunch. So they had given me a lot of pushback on this need to teach expectations.

Angela Isenberg: They said, “We're high school. Our students should know what to expect, they should know what to do.” They got back and I said, “Guys, it seems as even adults, we need to have clear expectations.” They weren't very happy with me, but it was a, “Hey, as a red flag, as adults, we need to have clear expectations.” How many times Wanda did you have to go and remind a staff member that they had duty?

Melinda Marquez: Oh my goodness, yes. That happens. That happens.

Angela Isenberg: It's not like that, as adults we have evil plan to thwart somebody, but we get busy, we get wrapped up, we get pulled into a conversation and so we just need to be reminded of expectations like our students do. The third variable to look at is observing student behavior. Really thinking around how are we circulating, scanning and really listening to what students are saying. In some realms we call this withitness of knowing what is truly happening in the classroom.

Angela Isenberg: Probably the funniest story with this was a campus that I pulled up to and they had portables. These kids are calling out of the window of the portable. I'm like, I didn't even stop by the office to check in. I just went directly to the portable, classroom teacher was in there and I was like, “Excuse me sir, there are some students that were crawling out of the window.” He said, “Who were they?” I said, “I am so sorry sir. I'm a guest on a visit on campus. I'm not quite for sure.” He said, “Well I don't know who I'm missing.”

Angela Isenberg: I said, “Oh, okay, well that would be withitness.”

Melinda Marquez: That's the opposite of withitness. Yes. Most definitely.

Angela Isenberg: So, when we think about observing student behavior, it's that proximity management, looking at how are we using proximity and moving throughout the classroom to observe student behavior, but also doing it in a way that is a proactive approach. If you've been in education long enough, you might've remembered the fish philosophy. If you remember the Seattle fish market where they created those videos.

Melinda Marquez: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I do.

Angela Isenberg: It's been a long time, but they had four kind of philosophies of choose your attitude, make their day play, and be there. I like the idea of be there. When I'm in the classroom and when I'm supervising students, I'm there in that moment. Because if I'm walking past a student that is misbehaving and I don't address that behavior, I'm endorsing that behavior. So, really being in the moment and observing that. Interacting positively is the next variable. Thinking around how do you interact positively with your students?

Angela Isenberg: What's the ratio of positive to negative? What are some positive approaches that you guys did on your campus to help increase those positive to negative ratios?

Melinda Marquez: One of the strategies we implemented was a positive phone call home from administration. So, I had, it was myself and then I had one and a half APS. Every week on Fridays we made positive phone calls home. So teachers would recommend, we used a Google doc, teachers would put their name, the student's name on the Google doc, the reason why they wanted a phone call home. So we made it a priority to sit down, pick up the phone and call parents. So they could have a positive phone call from the administration.

Melinda Marquez: Got a lot of great feedback from parents on that because the first time the parent picks up the phone and it's the principal there's like a panic over the parents, but for them to hear that their child did something great in the classroom and I just wanted to call to let you know how proud we are of that student. It really did change the perception of the campus administration team and the school culture all in all when it came to parents.

Angela Isenberg: What a great idea. That not only helping the students see you, but parents see you in a different light and you're helping support your classroom teachers with, “Hey find students that did the right thing this week so we can accentuate the positive.” So, I really like that idea. Well done Melinda.

Melinda Marquez: Thank you.

Angela Isenberg: I'm going to use that for my future training. So really thinking around how are we positively interacting with students and when you think about a classroom, you typically have more students in your class that are compliant, meeting expectations, but unfortunately it's like we have our radar on top of our head and we're looking for the kid that's doing the wrong thing instead of all of the students that are doing the right thing. Really honing in and making those students stand out and their behaviors stand out. So the last one is correction and really looking at how are we correcting student behavior?

Angela Isenberg: What is the menu of consequences for this classroom? We talked last time about the discipline matrix in our last podcast in this series, and we talked about having a menu, having ideas of how the teacher can handle those classroom behaviors, but I think it's the immediacy of doing it and it's the individual interactions. Melinda, do you have any stories or any examples of maybe how a teacher got this wrong or a teacher got this right of how they corrected student behavior?

Melinda Marquez: There was a lot of... There's been talk around correcting the behavior in front of everyone in a very loud manner and I don't know if that... No, I do know. I do know that that is not the right approach to that, but I think teachers were thinking I'm going to do it in front of everyone and kind of use embarrassment as part of that intervention or consequence, but it really is better to pull the student out. That's where those relationships come in.

Melinda Marquez: If you have a good relationship with that child, you should be able to pull them out and have that conversation with them about their behavior. Then decide what to do from then, but not to do it in front of the entire class.

Angela Isenberg: When we think about that, it's a shameful practice. When we think about how that we, how shame manifests with different people, we think about the compass of shame from restorative practices. When you feel shame, you go into one of four spots, you either just withdraw, you attack self. Like I'm so stupid, I shouldn't have done that. You might go into complete avoidance. That's truancy, eloping, could be thrill seeking behavior, drugs, alcohol, or you attack others. You do the turn the table, the blame game, or maybe verbally, physically attacking somebody else. When we think about shame-

Melinda Marquez: But that's where those power struggles come into play. So, teachers, they wanted to stay away from power struggles, but yet they're shaming some of the children right in front of their peers. Really some of those kiddos that is their first instinct is to fight back. It becomes that power struggle where no teacher wants to be.

Angela Isenberg: Yeah. So when we're thinking about classroom management or we're thinking about filling the tool belts of our staff on our campus. It is really thinking around how do we correct behavior in a way that we are showing empathy because this students are coming with sometimes a lot of baggage and a lot of things and sometimes they're reacting to situations that have happened in the past, but that's their way of reacting. That's what they know. One of the practices that I shy away from, I ask people to shy away from, is the clip system.

Angela Isenberg: One of the challenges with clip system in the classroom is that we're publicly putting your name with being bad, right? So we say, “Melinda, you're down. I'm going to put you on death black by 8:30,” kind of thing. So the other piece is we make you do the walk of shame. So not only am I going to move your clip and I'm going to make you go move your own clip down. So really the thing I hear from teachers, it's not about their need for this clip system. It's the need for how do we track behavior because we want to make sure that we are able to communicate with parents around what happened.

Angela Isenberg: We also want to communicate with principals with what's occurring in the classroom. For some people they rely on that clip system as a way to then reflect on behavior from the day. But there are other ways to do that, that you could do where that you could even have some type of system where you kind of jot down just a check mark on a behavior. Like maybe we're working on listening this week and so I'm going to check whenever I see Melinda needing some help with listening or I'm going to flip it to the positive.

Angela Isenberg: When I see Melinda doing a great job listening, I'm going to go by and I'm going to put initial on the post it on her desk. So at the end of the day I can see how many students got initials today for listening that we're working on. So, it's kind of flipping that idea of how do I correct and how do I give positive. Sometimes correcting somebody is by showing somebody else that they're doing the right thing. “Melinda, I really like how you're being positive.” So that's a positive for you, but a redirection for somebody else.

Angela Isenberg: So those five key variables, again, were structure and organization, teach expectations, observe student behavior, interaction and correction. Interact positively in correction. So as a campus principal, I would look at those five key variables and say what are the main pieces of those five key variables that I'm looking for? How do they fit within our evaluation system? So if you're using T tests, how do they fit under the domain of the learning environment and managing student behavior and classroom routines and procedures?

Angela Isenberg: So thinking around how do these all link together, what am I expecting? Then how to train the teachers on that. Tell me a little bit about some classroom management trainings that you did for your staff.

Melinda Marquez: We did implement CHAMPS, so that was a school wide system that we implemented. We also did the PBIS system. We were able to implement that campus-wide as well.

Angela Isenberg: When you did training, was it whole staff or small group?

Melinda Marquez: We started out whole staff and then asked if anybody needed, felt like they wanted additional information or as we are creating the system, putting the system out. That is the easiest part, it's that monitoring and implementation piece. So once we monitored it to see if it was being implemented, then we would do some maybe tier two trainings for some teams.

Angela Isenberg: Yeah. I think it is, how do you provide support? Ongoing support. I think it's a misnomer that I can sit in a classroom management workshop for six hours and then be proficient in managing my classroom. Sometimes it's, how do I get support, how do I ask for help? What does that process look like? A lot of teachers are scared to ask administration to come in and give them some help in classroom management because it might look bad on them to phone a friend for help.

Angela Isenberg: So how are some of the things that you alleviate some of those fears? Was it, did you do things that like set up teams where that maybe within their team that they got support or was it really just work on your end to make sure that teachers knew that you were more than just an evaluator?

Melinda Marquez: It's all about the campus culture and climate. Once again it goes back to relationships. Relationships with the principals and the students, but the administrative team and the teachers. It's not a us versus them. It's a come to me and let's work this out together. It's, you've got to have that kind of culture.

Angela Isenberg: Yeah. So I think we're seeing now a trend here that it's more than just one specific group to another, it is how the entire campus is working as a unit in order to be successful. So, thank you so much for joining us today in our podcast series of, I've Tried Everything. We've talked about classroom management today going through those five key variables. Really thinking from a principal's perspective, what are we expecting from every classroom teacher and then how do we communicate that information to our staff, and train them and support them as they venture into building their classroom management systems.

Angela Isenberg: Our next series in the podcast is going to be on consequences versus interventions, and how do we navigate. When is a consequence, when is it an intervention? So, thank you very much for joining us today, Melinda. Thank you for joining me. I really appreciate it.

Melinda Marquez: Thank you. I'm glad I'm here and I guess we'll see all the listeners next time.

Angela Isenberg: All right, bye. On next week's episode, we're going to talk about consequences versus interventions. If you liked what you heard today, don't forget to subscribe, rate, and review us. I'm Angela Isenberg.

Melinda Marquez: And I'm Melinda Marquez, and we'll see you next week.