**Angela Isenberg:** Welcome to I've Tried Everything, a podcast series focusing on behavior support in schools. I'm your host, Angela Eisenberg. Our special guest 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 be talking about classroom interventions versus consequences. When you think about the difference between a consequence and an intervention, a consequence is a one and done. You provide a consequence, you're expecting that behavior to stop. An intervention is something that you would try over time.

**Angela Isenberg:** I went to a campus and working with a teacher, it was probably about four weeks into the school year and she said, "I've tried everything, I've tried everything."

**Angela Isenberg:** And I said, "Okay. Let's list all the things that you tried."

**Angela Isenberg:** She had a good list of stuff that she had been working with, classroom contract, preferential seating. She did quite a few different things and so then I asked her, "How long did you try that?"

**Angela Isenberg:** And she was like, "I tried it for one day and it didn't work. It didn't stop."

**Angela Isenberg:** And I think that's the challenge that a lot of educators have is that they expect immediate elimination of the behavior when they've tried an intervention. The best way that I can equate this, Melinda, is thinking about going to the gym. Do you lose your desired weight the first time you go to the gym?

**Melinda Marquez:** No.

**Angela Isenberg:** Don't you wish that you losed to your desired weight the first time you went to the gym or you had the exact tone of your muscles that you wanted the first time you went to the gym? We expect that results for behavior, right? We expect immediate elimination. Just like if it doesn't happen when we go to the gym, we should not expect for it to happen when we go into the classroom, we shouldn't expect it to do at once and it just be perfect.

**Angela Isenberg:** When we think about routines, have you ever seen any self-help material that says you should try this for how many days before it becomes a part of your routine? Anything that you ever read about self-help or like 14 days to make a habit? Seven days.

**Melinda Marquez:** There are so many times that you have to put something into place before it becomes a habit or a routine.

**Angela Isenberg:** Yeah. And the standard that we see as 21 days.

**Melinda Marquez:** Oh, I was off. Okay, 21 days. Yeah.

**Angela Isenberg:** But that's all right. 21 days, three weeks. You can kind of start getting into it after a week, but you're like, "Okay, but can I keep going?"

**Melinda Marquez:** Mm-hmm (affirmative)

**Angela Isenberg:** By the time you hit about three weeks, it becomes a part of your routine and procedure. So when I think about interventions in the classroom, you think about you have to sustain them over time. What are some interventions that you guys did on your campus and the classroom, tier one interventions that classroom teachers utilized on your campus?

**Melinda Marquez:** We've talked about this a little bit, but those building relationships, building community within the classroom, we did have behavior contracts. We use preferential seating, we use proximity. So some of those pieces we were able to implement campus-wide.

**Angela Isenberg:** Yeah. And I think some of the, the newer ones out there that I see a lot of people putting into place is a calming area in the classroom. A place where students can go take a break. Sometimes you could look at that as a classroom management technique, but if you're utilizing it for one specific student to go to the calming area, when they start getting upset or getting anxious over the material. And they're utilizing it as a way of ongoing support, that's an intervention. That's when we're looking at, hey, we're seeing is utilizing the calming area, decreasing the behavior that that student is having. Whenever they feel anxious about the academic work or whatever that's leading to that behavior.

**Angela Isenberg:** You have to look at it as how do we separate the child from the behavior. Really look at how do we manage those behaviors and not manage the child? Right?

**Melinda Marquez:** Mm-hmm (affirmative) mm-hmm (affirmative)

**Angela Isenberg:** If we could control student behavior, I wouldn't have a job. Honestly, there would be this special wand and you would say, "Bippity boppity, boop, behave." And all would be great. Right? You would never get a referral as a classroom principal or as a campus principal, you would just be like, "Whoa, that's great. It's fabulous. I have my magic wand and all is great." But it doesn't happen that way. I mean you really have to think around how are we addressing the behavior and how are we helping to decrease that over time.

**Angela Isenberg:** One of the things that I usually give as an example is let's take a student that beeps. It's just a silly kind of example, but let's say during my ELA block of time or my secondary second period, if I'm in a period kind of setting and I have them for 45 minutes. So if I just take a frequency count of how many times the student is beeping, beep, beep. And so this kid beeps, let's say 19 times in 45 minutes. It gives me some baseline data for how frequent the behavior is occurring. And it gives me a starting point of what I can do to address those behaviors and say, "Okay, well let's think about the student, think about what intervention might work well with them." And then I say, "Well, maybe I'll do an individual reinforcement system with them." Maybe I'll do something where if they don't beep for so long, I go over and give them an initial and when they get so many initials, they get some kind of preferred either activity or a preferred tangible item or special interaction with somebody on campus. But there's some type of individual reinforcement happening.

**Angela Isenberg:** I would want to keep that intervention for three weeks. The trend that we typically see is that the behavior might stop initially and that initial stop might happen for a class period. It might happen for a couple of days and then the behavior will come back and sometimes the behavior will come back more than what you started. And so you're like, "Well that didn't work. I give it up."

**Melinda Marquez:** Mm-hmm (affirmative) mm-hmm (affirmative)

**Angela Isenberg:** Or it didn't initially even stop, so I give it up. That didn't work. I've tried it. It's three weeks of consistently doing it because what we see with that consistent implementation is that eventually if that intervention is appropriate, the behavior will decrease. So let's say that now we're three weeks later, we'd collect some more data and we say child is beeping 11 times in 45 minutes. Is my intervention working Melinda?

**Melinda Marquez:** Well it decreased the behavior but it didn't make it go all the way away, which I can see how some teachers would want it to be completely eliminated.

**Angela Isenberg:** Yep. And I think that's the struggle is that we've reduced it. So the intervention is working, we are seeing gains in the intervention that we're doing. If you guys in the world of academics saw an increase in reading fluency by a small amount, but you saw an increase, would you consider continuing that intervention for academics?

**Melinda Marquez:** Yes, absolutely we would. Yes.

**Angela Isenberg:** So if we see that in the world of academics, we should think about that in the world of behavior as well.

**Melinda Marquez:** Yeah, that makes sense.

**Angela Isenberg:** So thinking around how do we keep that intervention going and then continue to do it? If we saw a small decrease, we would start thinking like was there enough of a change to justify continuing? There's more behavior data that you could take, because you could do intensity like is it just the beep, beep or were they like beep. Like right so you could look at the intensity piece but sometimes just frequency of knowing how many times did they do it. And thinking through different interventions of how you could address that behavior.

**Angela Isenberg:** So it's about knowing what an intervention is. Intervention is over time you have to try it, you have to click data and you have to assess whether or not we're seeing improvements, a consequences, a one and done. If you just had to list like five consequences that you typically saw and your teachers utilize what were five different consequences?

**Melinda Marquez:** I'm Melinda Marquez and we'll get back to today's episode in just a second. 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:** What were five different consequences?

**Melinda Marquez:** Of course an office referral and then for us it was ISS. Our teachers would send the child to another teacher's classroom to sit. I do not like this one, but some teachers had children, write as a consequence, which was, we shifted that culture pretty quickly when we found out that was happening. But just things like that.

**Angela Isenberg:** Yeah. I think it would be important as a campus principal to really help almost create a menu of consequences of hey, what do we support on this campus? Because if there as a punishment making students write and you're working on writing as your academic focus. You don't want that to be a consequence because who then wants to pick up a pen and start writing as like, "Oh I can't wait to write in writing class." Well, that's a consequence on our campus.

**Angela Isenberg:** So really thinking around how could you come together as a staff or even in small groups and then create a menu of consequences that you could support. If you had to Melinda, create that kind of menu and you were put back on a campus today, what is a strategy that you would utilize to create that? Would you do it whole campus or would you do it small group?

**Melinda Marquez:** I think using that campus behavioral team, if you have that team or even your campus leadership team, your campus improvement planning team. You have lots of different teams on campuses that can be utilized. I don't think it's necessary to create a whole new team to do something like this. Just use the teams that are already in place to create something.

**Angela Isenberg:** So if you're using PBIS and you have that as a process on your campus, you could look to your PBIS team to help create this menu of consequences. If you have a campus improvement, everybody should have a campus improvement team, but utilizing that leadership team and that way, taking that information back and I know that one of the key pieces to any menu of consequences is to have the principals eyes on it before it goes out to staff. To make sure that you support everything that's listed on the paper.

**Melinda Marquez:** Right. And not just that the principal supports it, but is it in line with your vision, mission, values and goals for the campus? Will it line up with that campus culture?

**Angela Isenberg:** Oh, I like how that you bring in that mission vision and that why into the really looking at does it fit within that. The other piece really thinking through on those consequences is, are they consequences that would help support behavior, right. Are they natural? Are they some logical consequences? Are we tying them together? Is it making sense? Sometimes people will give a consequence because they kind of like just are at their wit's end and they want the consequence to hurt, not physically hurt. They kind of want the tear to like trickle down the eye. When you give the consequence because you're frustrated with behavior.

**Angela Isenberg:** And so you want to inflict that frustration back on that person that is doing the behavior and then kind of go, "Oh see that's why you shouldn't do that."

**Melinda Marquez:** Mm-hmm (affirmative)

**Angela Isenberg:** And I think that that is kind of one of those dilemmas that we kind of look at. When you think about interventions, a good pool of interventions that I think a lot of people don't realize is those conversations that you have with students. If you make it more of a conference and you sit down with them, you write out things like what's working for you? What are some challenges in the classroom? What are things that you can do as a student to help address that? What are things that I can do as the teacher to help support that? How are we going to come back together and see if these things are working? That could be an intervention.

**Angela Isenberg:** I think sometimes people think interventions have to be this like big and takes a lot of time. And a lot of investment. Just really helping even doing goal setting. I did a goal setting for my son. You're going to love this one, Melinda. I got a call from my son's teacher in April and she was just so frustrated with him. It was the first contact that I'd had from this particular teacher the entire school year. So I had done a Meet the Teacher Night and that was the last time that I had seen this or talk to the teacher.

**Angela Isenberg:** So it's April, he's in sixth grade. She is frustrated. She calls in the middle of class and so all of his classmates are around and she proceeds to tell me like, "He thinks every day is opposite day."

**Angela Isenberg:** And she's really frustrated. I said, "I can hear that you're frustrated, I'm not frustrated."

**Angela Isenberg:** And I said, "Okay, you're not frustrated. I get that."

**Angela Isenberg:** And so her consequence was to call me in the middle of class. Right. She wanted to have that immediate and she asked, "Do you want to talk to him?"

**Angela Isenberg:** And I said, "No, I'm good. I'll talk to him this evening. I appreciate you giving me a call about this. I can see that it's frustrating that he's talking when he's not supposed to be." And so being the behavior manager that I am, he comes home that night we talked about it and I said, "Okay Nick, what are we going to do to address this because obviously you're talking is impacting class and impacting learning for other people." So we did a goal setting, I created a goal for him and we had a longterm goal and we had short term goals and things that he was going to do to work toward those goals. What he needed from the teacher in order to meet those goals and then a plan for followup of how that we were going to make sure that he was doing that.

**Angela Isenberg:** And I think it was a tool for the classroom teacher. Whenever we sent it and I emailed it and said, "Okay, we've come up with a goal setting." She was kind of taken back like she didn't expect there to be ... She thought I was just going to give a good talking to and I was like, "No, we've got to have a plan because if this behavior is so challenging, we need to have something to help support him."

**Angela Isenberg:** And it was the fifth, six weeks whenever I got the phone call in and he had met his goal, his goal was to get a positive report from the teacher home every week. So she would email me or call me that he would increase, be on tasks during work times and improve his grade longterm. And so he met all those expectations. He met all those goals and so I was going to take him off of it and he said, "Mom, it really worked for me. Can we keep it in place the last six weeks?" I was like, "Sure."

**Angela Isenberg:** So sometimes thinking like those like small interventions that you wouldn't even think twice about putting into place, they can actually have a huge impact on behavior in the classroom. So goal setting, planned intervention or planned discussions, doing some strategic in the classroom. You said preferential seating was one of the things that y'all did where you're giving students an alternate place to be.

**Angela Isenberg:** Those are the kinds of interventions that you would want to try. Do it for three weeks, assess, see where you're at, and then go back and say, "Do we keep this intervention in place or do we need to go back to the drawing board and find something else?" When you look at those interventions, Melinda, we've had lots of conversations about things that you did on your campus, things that worked, things that didn't work. If there was something that you would want to put into place, if you went back as a campus principal. What is something that you might focus on as a campus principal as going back into that realm?

**Melinda Marquez:** I think one of the biggest things that I see now in my role whenever I go onto campuses and with districts and speak with administrative team is the SEL piece. Those SEL lessons. We had those, but maybe we didn't name them as SEL lessons and they weren't quite as uniform and succinct as I've seen now in some of these campuses. So that would be something that I would like to implement.

**Angela Isenberg:** So folks that are going SEL, what's that?

**Melinda Marquez:** Social emotional learning.

**Angela Isenberg:** Yeah. I think we get so caught up in our acronyms and education that we forget, like everybody doesn't know what those are, but yeah, social emotional learning is really on par with what our legislators were pushing out this last legislative session. On looking at trauma informed practices, really looking at mental health. Social emotional learning, tie very closely into those two preventative approaches to helping students to be successful and having lessons for how that you're going to teach expectations or how you teach them the skills. I live by the motto that if they knew better, they do better.

**Melinda Marquez:** Mm-hmm (affirmative)

**Angela Isenberg:** And how many times did you think that as a campus principal to teachers, if they knew better, they do better?

**Melinda Marquez:** Yeah, that was a big piece for us too, that we had to teach teachers that they had to teach these skills because teachers come in and they focus solely on academics. They know they have to teach the TEKs, but we as teachers and administrators have to know that we have to teach children about these skills as well. Teaching academics is just a piece of our jobs.

**Angela Isenberg:** Man, you couldn't be more right, Melinda. I just tell people that you weren't hired to teach a grade level. You weren't hired to teach a specific content. You are hired to teach that grade levels, academic content and behavior. You are hired to teach that content and behavior. Our job in education is to teach behavior. It's our job. I mean, we could get into a whole philosophical conversation around isn't that the parent's job? Shouldn't they be teaching their children how to behave? And in a euphoric world, that'd be lovely. But Melinda, have you ever interacted with an adult that didn't have social skills?

**Melinda Marquez:** Absolutely. We had parents who came in and then you see why the children act the way they do. Yes.

**Angela Isenberg:** So thinking around that we have parents that are not modeling appropriate behavior. You have some parents that are working two, three jobs just to make sure that basic needs are being met and they want to be more present in their children's lives. But they're just trying to make sure that there's food and shelter and the things that the child needs in order to survive are there. And so those parents are relying on us to help them out.

**Angela Isenberg:** And then we have students in our educational community that don't have parents. When you think about those students, we're the most consistent adult and those children's lives. It's staggering to look at the school to prison pipeline data and the data that looks at our inmates on death row and in the state of Texas, we have 68% of our inmates on death row that at some point in time had been in the foster care system.

**Angela Isenberg:** So when you think about the impact that foster care and the lack of that consistent adult have on the longterm effect, it is our job to teach behavior. We have to be that person to come in and provide that stability and that those opportunities for growth. And on the flip side of it, is if you have a staff member on the campus that doesn't maybe have some of the SEL skills by teaching it, maybe they're learning it at the same time, right? How many times would you have thought if they had some self-awareness, maybe there wouldn't have been some issues or this wouldn't have gone that far to the referral.

**Melinda Marquez:** Mm-hmm (affirmative) Yeah. Yeah, that sounds right.

**Angela Isenberg:** I still think that there are some times that I need to be more self aware. So if you think about the five competencies of SEL, it's at self awareness, self management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making.

**Angela Isenberg:** I think those five competencies for anybody in today's society. They need to make sure that they're going back to those and saying, " Am I being a responsible decision maker right now?" And we tell a student sometimes make good choices, make good choices, but have we taught them the choices of how to make ... Which choice to choose.

**Melinda Marquez:** Right, which ones are the good ones?

**Angela Isenberg:** Yeah.

**Melinda Marquez:** Yeah.

**Angela Isenberg:** Because they're making a choice.

**Melinda Marquez:** Yeah.

**Angela Isenberg:** Sometimes they're just not the positive one. Right? So I think about navigating that world of consequences versus interventions. Consequences are one and done like buddy teachers, reflection sheets, moving in the class, loss of privileges, things like that. We have an array of consequences that we could utilize to best fit the actual infraction of which one might we choose or, which one might work best for that student.

**Angela Isenberg:** When we switch to the world of intervention, we're looking at something that we sustain over time that we are collecting data on and that we're going back to. Are we teaching the skills that we need to teach to students in order to help them to be successful? Casel.org is a great resource for SEL, so I highly recommend people go to CASEL and look at, there's information about social emotional learning, the competencies as well as curriculums that could support social emotional learning on a campus.

**Angela Isenberg:** On next week's episode, we'll be talking about multi tiered systems of support and how to navigate a multi-tiered process. If you like what you heard so far, don't forget to subscribe, rate and review us. I'm Angela Eisenberg.

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