



52 NIGHT HERON - CHAPEL HILL, NC 27517 - P: 800-874-1100 - E: PHIL@LEARNINGFORLIVING.COM

Sounding Off On School Culture

Five takeaways from this week's School Culture By Design Podcast

Guest: LaVonna Roth, education consultant, speaker and author

- 1) **Fun ideas you can replicate at your school** | A. *Instead of denying technology, embrace it!* A school in New Jersey made a charging station for student's cell phones from a piece of wood that they shaped like a surf board. Students can leave their cell phones to charge during class. B. *Create a large "give one, take one" board in a common area on campus.* The board has sticky notes all over it with words of encouragement. Students and faculty can take one that they need to hear that day, and then leave a new one for someone else.
- 2) **Shift the culture from "my school" to "our school."** Let your students have ownership in their school and create a culture that makes an impact on everyone. If you're a teacher, have your students help figure out their class's "bill of rights." And it will likely be different for each class period – but that's the point, because it's centered around what those particular students need and value. Students often come up with more strict rules or guidelines than teachers do – and since they are the ones that came up with the rule, they're more likely to follow it.
- 3) **Get to know you students' stories.** When I go into classrooms where I see that students are excited to be there and ready to learn, I know it's because they care about their teacher because their teacher has taken the time to get to know their story. When students feel safe, it creates an environment where they can focus on learning.
- 4) **Give your students the power of choice.** If a student feels they are listened to and valued, they are more likely to show respect and listen to you. Give them choices. It can be over little things: do you want to take your test with a pencil or pen? Want to sit in the front of the class or the back? Do you want to sit on the floor or stand? Giving choices over small things shows students that you respect their thoughts on things.
- 5) **Encourage and support your administrators!** Create an environment where everyone who comes to that building feels de-stressed. Administrators have a tough job. Invite them to come into your classroom. Ask them to help you teach one day or to give you feedback! Tell them your class is working on a project and ask them to jump in and help work "with us." Most of them spent many years in the classroom and it helps you and the students see them in a different light.

Book recommendation: Dan Thurmon: "Off Balance on Purpose", Dr. Brene Brown "Braving the Wilderness," Peter Brown "Make it Stick"



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