Podcast: Reframing – Leading from Love Rather Than Fear

We often need to reframe our mindset or the way we define a problem in order to make real progress. In this first part of a series on reframing, Steve examines reframing from a focus on fear to a focus on love. How do our choices and decisions change if we shift from minimizing the negative impact of the pandemic on students to maximizing students' opportunities?

Read Adam Fishman's blog, "Reframing The Climate Problem: Addressing The Root of The Issue" here.

Listen to the Wallace Foundation Podcast here.

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PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Ad: 00:00 Take a deeper dive with Steve Barkley in one of his five books. Available in electronic and printed format, add Steve's books to your district resources or to your personal collection at barkleypd.com/books.

Steve [Intro]: 00:14 Hello and welcome to the Steve Barkley, ponders out loud podcast. Instructional coaches and leaders create the environment that supports teachers to continually

imagine grow and to cheat. They model an excitement for learning that teachers in turn model for students. This podcast is dedicated to promoting the important aspects of instructional leadership. Thanks for listening.

Steve: 00:38 Reframing – Leading from Love Rather Than Fear. This is the first of a three or four part podcast series that we'll look at reframing – reframing the problem or reframing the mindset or both. Reframing allows one to look at a situation through a different lens, a different framework. A simple example of reframing is when a student approaches a teacher and makes the statement, "I can't do this." The teacher responds with, "not yet." Getting the child to reframe that current lack of success to being permanent, to instead being temporary.

Steve: 01:42 In this podcast, I want to focus on a reframing from fear to love. What happens if we lead from love, if we teach from love rather than leading or teaching from fear? I was introduced to this topic of a reframe by Adam Fishman, a friend, and the founder of a Onora. Onora is an organization whose goal is "fixing the climate crisis and helping build a better future we all can smile at." Here's some of the statements I read in a blog that Adam had posted, and I'll put the link to his blog in the lead-in to this podcast. As you listen to some of his words, consider if they raise a reflective thought for you back at looking at how we approach things in school. Adam wrote, "through a long process of emotional turmoil, reflection, education and wise counsel, we learned that we had to reframe the climate problem if we wanted to truly address the root cause of our ailments instead of just temporarily dealing with some presenting symptoms. In short, we had to look at the problem through a different angle and challenge our assumptions." Adam said that they uncovered that they might be attacking the wrong problem and actually, perhaps, using the wrong language. "Fighting against" climate change and a "war" on greenhouse gasses might be part of the

problem in making progress towards the desired outcome.

Steve: 03:47 He cited a feeling that often fighting this war made one feel like what they were doing was never good enough. When I read that example, I recalled being asked by Adam to be a field tester on a site that he was first building. And one of the things that was on the site was an opportunity for one to complete a survey to identify your your carbon footprint. And my footprint was horrific because of all the airline flights that I was taking across the ocean working in the US and living in Europe. Sure enough, by the end of the survey, I was about ready to give up on the fact that there's anything I could do. Adam shares that in the midst of this frustration, a friend planted a seed that changed the way he's going about his work. The friend simply asked the question, "what would happen if you lead from a place of love, rather than from a place of fear?" Bottom line that that creates in his work with the environment is instead of simply trying to live with as little harm as possible, we choose to live our lives to maximize the good, to leave things better than we found them.

Steve: 05:29 Adam's blog caused me to ponder, as students are returning to summer programs and returning to school in the fall, is it possible that educators discussing learning loss are leading from fear rather than from love? How do our choices and decisions change if we shift from trying to minimize the harm of the pandemic to maximizing our students' opportunities? Not looking at going back to normal, but ahead to creating things better than they had been. I listened to a podcast from the Wallace Foundation and I'll put that link in the lead-in as well. The focus of the podcast was on partnerships between schools and communities working together to build the best possible supports for students. As I heard them discuss a desire and a set of actions for developing students' skills and competencies academically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively – and I would add physically, I sensed that that would take a focus of love over fear. A focus

on creating for learners, a true sense of personal agency.

Steve: 07:15 One of the panelists in the podcast shared that even our use of the words “out of school programs” and “afterschool programs” versus “school programs” suggest a division. And I think division is often driven by our focus on fear and that we blend the lines and we build much more collaboration when the focus is on love, on a desire for making things better. Here’s what students need to be finding as they return to school and enter an environment and practices that are truly supportive. Relationships have to be key. Relationships amongst students and with staff and with the community. Relationships that help build the building morning and safety for the student, they should be finding rich instructional content in the world around them and they should be challenged by that content. Now they need all the supports that go along with that.

Steve: 08:34 And in order to provide the supports, it means that we need to know students. We need to know them as individuals in order to be able to provide the maximum support. As I think about building a program around love, a favorite example comes to mind. I had the opportunity to watch my wife as a school administrator design and implement a change in the cafeteria program in her elementary school. She transformed the cafeteria from standing in line institutional style to family style service at a table. Students entered the cafeteria and found a seat at tables of six to eight. At the table where everything the students needed to set the table, serve lunch to each other, socialize and clean up. A great example of fear needing to be overcome by love was when teachers helping in the cafeteria had a tendency to want to step in and take control over serving and pouring to avoid accidents happening. That fear drove the wrong behaviors and a love for the opportunity for the kids to learn is what really needed to be created.

Steve: 10:24 As school leaders plan for their staff’s return,

I think we need to look at the same critical elements that our students need to
find. Creating relationships among staff, between staff and administration, between staff and parents, staff, and students. Creating a feeling for staff that they belong and are safe, that they are challenged in their learning by the desire for educator learning to positively impact student learning. And all educators are going to need support in this process, which is going to require school leaders knowing staff in order to be able to respond to the individual needs in the support that we provide. As you bring your leadership teams together, as you think about the professional development and the coaching that you want to be providing teachers, when you think about the important programs that you're implementing for students and parents, consider, where might we take an approach driven by love and a desire to make things better rather than by fear and a worry about avoiding or minimizing a negative impact. I'd love to hear your thoughts on actions that are frequently driven by fear rather than love and how that might change. Consider dropping me a note on barkleypd.com. Thanks for listening.

Steve [Outro]: 12:19 Thank you for listening. You can subscribe to Steve Barkley Ponders Out Loud on iTunes and Podbean. And please remember to rate and review us on iTunes. I also want to hear what you're pondering. You can find me on Twitter @stevebarkley, or send me your questions and find my videos and blogs at barkleypd.com.