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Vicki Davis:

At the end of today's show, I will tell you more about my newsletters for remarkable teachers.

Laura Penrod Stock:

"But this is really not the time for the teacher to be in control, this is really about the student taking charge. I'll tell you, it's exciting, I love it."

Vicki Davis:

The Ten-minute Teacher podcast with Vicki Davis. Every week day you'll learn powerful practical ways to be a more remarkable teacher today.

VICKI: For a wonderful Wednesday today we're going to be talking to middle school teacher, Laura Penrod Stock [@tweetmeego](#) about student-led conferencing. So Laura, what does student-led conferencing look like in your classroom?

LAURA: Wow. Well, it certainly changed a lot and it changes now regularly with all the new technology that we use, so many different apps coming out. We strive really hard in my classroom to not make it a cookie cutter process. One of the challenges for teachers to put portfolio projects together is to really allow the students to shine and to be unique with that portfolio while maintaining some consistency, obviously. And this is whether it's a project portfolio or a student-led conference portfolio. I'm very, very motivated that student-led conferencing is the opportunity for a student to truly reflect on who they are, where they are and where they're headed and what makes them a good, strong person and not just a student – especially in middle school.

VICKI: So describe for us, what does your student-led conference look like? How many times a year do you have these, and the parents come in, and what do you talk about, how does it work?

LAURA: Well, again, we've seen this changing a lot with the advent of new technology.

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Ten years ago the students were still using paper folders, then we had established a couple of labs. So suddenly when you started looking for student best work, that's usually what you want to include in a portfolio and students would have it on flash drives, or it would be on a hard drive down in the computer lab or it would still be on paper at the button of a locker. And so it was really kind of chaotic, but the idea is still the same, we want to be able to capture that best work wherever it is. I try

now to work to have the students reflect throughout the entire year. And we're only doing them once now, we used to do them two times a year, now we do them once.

And in 8th grade we have decided to coordinate those 8th grade student-led conferences with their 9th grade registration and that has been incredibly important. Even with the advent of technology, we still invite the parents to come in. And, Vicki, that was one of the most exciting things for me was when we first started implementing technology. We saw parents who typically would not come to the school, maybe a little intimidated, did not have a good school experience themselves. We saw them coming into the school to participate in these conferences at a much high level and that was really encouraging.

VICKI: Let's just pretend like you're getting ready to do one of these conferences. And the parent comes in, the student comes in, how do you open it and get started?

LAURA: Well, we've prepared the students, they know exactly what to do. When we had the paper folders they were all in boxes and organized in alpha order. Now, students are creating their portfolios using a variety of different technology.

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We booked the media center, in the case of the registration, student-led conference combination. Students would meet their parents for registration, they would go and they would register for the classes for next year and then the students would bring them into the media center and we would use Chromebooks or the lab and kind of spread them out. And the students would open up their portfolio. Some of them are doing some blended portfolio, still, using some paper instead of just shooting pictures of some of the things they've created.

And then they would sit, and they would talk for about 15 minutes, and it's really between the student and the parent. We have a teacher present to answer some questions. But this is really not the time for the teacher to be in control, this is really about the student taking charge. I'll tell you, it's exciting. I love it

VICKI: So what are some of the things that the students will say to their parents in this student-led conferences?

LAURA: Sure. We encourage them, we help them formulate some thoughts about a script to actually teach them how to be prepared. You know, these student-led conferences to me are one of the most critical tools we can implement to prepare our students for college and career readiness, for job applications. When you think about the portfolios and presenting yourself, I automatically think about LinkedIn. And so this is our kid's opportunity to put together their own little LinkedIn and then learn how to present it.

So we year them talking bout, "This I what I'm going to show you." We're going to talk thorough some of my academic work. I also want to reflect on some other things

like attendance, behavior, test scores, those of things. And it's a conversation, I n up being very student-led conversation.

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The parent has an opportunity to ask questions. We groom the students to say, "Can you hold that question right now? I'll finish this and I will be happy to answer your questions at the end. So we love to do that, we really put the child in charge.

VICKI: So what do you think are some of the biggest mistakes that schools might make when they do a student-led conference?

LAURA: I think the two biggest dangers are making every child student-led conference exactly the same, that's that cookie cutter idea. And it's through no fault of anybody, really. If you wait till the last minute you have no choice. If you're going to help these students to meet a deadline and you only decided to allocate a certain amount of time just before the conference.

To try to put to put it together, it becomes very scripted, everyone is alike, everyone is alike, everyone has the same academic project in there. That to my, really steals the authenticity. So that's one of the dangers. The other thing is I think it's really important. I'm a huge advocate for teachers. What we do in the classroom is amazing and it is true out pedagogy that out students are being innovate and going. So it really starts with pedagogy and we have to have whatever it is we're doing in the classroom prepared that that student is going to produce their best work and we might want to save that and have them back in September, tit the conference might not be until February. So you have to have a system and a mechanism to be able to capture works all of those best works at the time and then allocate time throughout the rest of the months until the conference, to really allow the students to reflect and choose best and decipher through that

VICKI: Now, you've actually crated something yourself that you and your school are USD and you're going to share it.

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So tell us about our freebie today that you're going to share.

LAURA: So if you go to www.mymeego.com and click sign up now when it comes the time for you enter the coupon you'll enter 10MT and you'll be in. if you're the only teacher that has joined from your school, you'll create your school. And you can invite other teachers in any grade on your team to join in and you can begin collaboration just amongst teachers.

VICKI: Cool. So teachers, I really want you to think about student-led conferencing. Is your school going to head in that direction? If so, it sounds like we need to start thinking about it now if we're going to do it at the end of the school year. But I think this is a very important part of having student voice. So a wonderful way to celebrate Wednesday.

Hello remarkable teachers, I have a newsletter just for you. Twice a week I send out lesson plans, freebies and links. You can sign up by texting the word Coolcat to 444999. Again, if you're here in the U.S. you can text Coolcat – that's C-O-O-L-C-A-T – to 444999. If you're not in the U.S, just go to coolcatteacher.com/newsletter.

Thank you for listening to the Ten-minute Teacher Podcast. You can download the show notes and see the archive at coolcatteacher.com/podcast. Never stop learning.

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