

[Recording starts 0:00:00]

Vicki Davis:

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Larry Ferlazzo:

"Our students are unique individuals bringing their unique histories and gifts and assets and challenges."

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: Hello, remarkable teachers. We have one of my favorite people, Larry Ferlazzo. @larryferlazzo If you follow me on Twitter you know I share a ton of his stuff because he's an amazing classroom teacher and has so much to share with all of us. So Larry, today, we're thinking about classroom management. I know you can think of, Larry, teachers who just can't hold a classroom. What do you think is wrong when teachers just can't – I don't want to say can't, but currently aren't holding the kid's attention and helping them focus.

LARRY: Well I think, first I got to start by saying we have a mutual admiration society for all your great work, Vicki. I think there are several aspects related to classroom management that new teachers and even teachers that have been in class for a number of years have experience as big challenges and I think there are several points, I think the one big point is you want to have great relationships with your students, leading with your ears instead of your mouth, learning what makes them tick, what's important to them. Helping students see that you genuinely care about them and their goals.

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Marvin Marshall, <http://amzn.to/2oBOcEN> who's written a lot of great stuff about positive classroom management has written what I think is the one best line that I try to get in mind all the time, "Is what I am doing now going to be helping build a closer relationship with this person or pushing them away?" And keeping that in mind all the time doesn't mean you can't have hard conversations whether individually or with an entire class.

But the key is what is going to be the final result.

VICKI: Have you ever seen a teacher, though, that seems to have good relationships but they don't really learn anything in the class because they just kind of kickback and talk about football or sports or whatever?

LARRY: Clearly some teachers aren't good judges of the line between a personal friendship and a public relationship. I was a community organizer for 19 years prior to becoming a teacher and the idea of public and private relationships are really critical across the board particularly in the classroom. I know that in a public relationship my job is to teach, I want to be caring with the students but the bottom line is I'm responsible for creating an important and effective learning environment. It doesn't mean I can't joke around about the basketball games and it doesn't mean I can't play basketball during lunch time. But it does mean that I am responsible for ensuring that students have an engaging lesson, that they have to experience Daniel Pink <http://amzn.to/2oBKcEx> talks about the important of intrinsic motivation but he says that even when we want to develop intrinsic motivation, there is, what he calls, baseline rewards everybody expects.

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A clean classroom, an engaging classroom environment and engaging them in a safe learning experience. If you don't have those baseline rewards nothing is going to happen. You're not going to have intrinsic motivation, you're not going to have any kind of motivation.

VICKI: I love that example, I've actually been watching a video series by a psychologist, best-selling author, Henry Cloud, <http://amzn.to/2mS73z3> and he says that leadership is like a boat and behind the boat you have two wakes. You have the wake of the task and the wake of the relationships that you leave behind you. And that great leaders have strong, tasks, accomplishments and relationships. So it really is about both, isn't it?

LARRY: Yeah. And I think when we don't recognize it, when we go too far over on one side or the other our students suffer. Just today, I had a conversation with a student. A student just shouted out in class, "I'm bored." So after class I said, "Johnny, is it okay for you to think about what you said? And he said yeah. "Is it okay for you to tell your friends after class what you're thinking?" He said yes. "And is it really okay for you to say what you said out loud in the classroom?" No.

I mean, that's the importance, I think, of recognizing public and private relationships. Public and private arenas that are needing to respect and honor and teacher those different arenas and that division.

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VICKI: So Larry, do you ever think – because I had some issues today, I had to deal with two. It seems like after we've been teaching as long as both of us have, this would get easier. You know I found that it doesn't necessarily get easier. I guess I know more tools but does it ever get easier to you?

LARRY: I agree with you, we have lots of tools but our students are unique individuals bring their unique histories and gifts and assets and challenges. And when you put a group of new students together, those challenges and assets and experiences mix differently every year. I don't feel like it gets easier. I think I become a little more confident in how to deal with the changes and the new challenges that occur. But I feel tired every night when I leave class.

VICKI: Me too.

LARRY: And I don't think I feel any less tired than I did when I started. It's not all just due to me being older.

VICKI: Yeah. It's hard work. So as we finish up, Larry, let me ask you this. So a teacher is listening to this today and they're not happy with how their classroom is at this moment. Where do they start?

LARRY: Well, depending upon the grade they teach, my favorite tool in a middle or high school is what my principal calls a walk and talk is I arrange during my prep period with the teacher who has my regular students, that I come in and pull out a student to take a ten-minute walk around the school where we try and talk with them and find out how they're feeling about things, what are their goals, how can I be a better teacher for them, how they think they could contribute to being a more effective student.

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And it's possible to do that over a period of a week with most of the student in one of my challenging classes. Now, just this week, I read a thing in Harvard Business Review, a question to ask is, "Who else can benefit from what you're doing?" And I asked a few students that question this week – a few students. When they were talking about their classroom work, of how the work that they do can help others.

VICKI: So remarkable teachers, Larry has given us a lot to think about. And I recommend that you pick up the first of his three part series, *Helping Students Motivate Themselves* as well as all the other books in his series. They have chapters on classroom management and so many other things in there that are very helpful for us teachers because, you know what, we don't ever truly arrive and we have to always be learning. And actually this walk-around idea is one I'm fascinated with that I'm going to try, Larry. So thank you.

LARRY: Great. Well, thank you, Vicki.

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