



Title

Shownotes: www.coolcatteacher.com/e130

From Audio File: 130-Basil-Marin

Friday, August 18, 2017

Vicki: Today we're talking with Basil Marin [@basil_marin](https://twitter.com/basil_marin) about five ways to help at risk children succeed. What an important topic, Basil, and how do we start?

Basil: Right, so, thank you for having me here today. I think when we look at the five ways to help at risk kids – again, we must think about, “What is the best way to reach these kids?” These children grew up in different ways from you as a teacher, and they just need to know that you care. I love the quote, “Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.” So, for me the five topics that I would like to cover today... first starting off with **Belief**. You know you have to believe in yourself, and also understand that other people are going to believe in you as well, and that will push you towards your destiny.

Vicki: We have a saying in our family, “You gotta believe to receive.” If you look at Hattie's research, teacher expectations are right up there at the top of the list. Isn't it hard, sometimes, though, to look at kids and adjust our belief about what we believe they can do? What are some things we should believe about them that can help us adjust that attitude?

Basil: Yes, absolutely. So, one of the first things is you have to understand that student's interests. So sitting down and having a conversation with them about, you know, “What do you want to be when you grow up? What are some of your challenges? What are some of your areas that you're really good at?” and just kind of learning the student first. You have to know where they are before you can take them to where they need to be. And so, just that belief, “I was also a struggling learner as well, we can work together.” That's what really helped me in the classroom as a teacher, kind of bringing myself down from this pedestal, and saying, “Hey, I'm on the same level as you, and I just want to help you get to where you need to be successful.” So just having that belief and powerful, positive conversation.

Vicki: What's our second?

Basil: Alright. So the second is **Relationships**. Relationships are key, and again I think every educator should listen to the TED Talk by Rita Pierson. Relationships help form everything in the school, and then positive school culture and moving things forward.

Vicki: I say this all the time on the podcast, so all the listeners are probably tired of hearing it, but “You gotta relate before you can educate” don’t you?

Basil: There it is. That’s the main ingredient.

Vicki: OK, what’s our third?

Basil: Alright. So, the third is you must have a vision and set realistic goals. I think for me, you know, at a very young age I was always goal-oriented, and I knew where I wanted to go, and that just help me to propel through my career as an educator. We must then model that for our students and help them understand, “OK we want to get out of high school and then we want to graduate, and then are we going to go to a trade school or are we going to a college? What are your next steps?” But they also, the most important part is they have to be realistic.

Vicki: So, Basil, you know I’ve heard some educators say, “Well, THAT child, it’s not realistic for THAT child to go to college.” Now, is that what you mean by realistic, or what do you mean?”

Basil: When I say realistic, there’s kind of a different layer to it. We know if you’re a great teacher you will know your kids. So, for some kids we do understand that OK, them going to college might not be for them, so then that’s when you have to implore other ideas in terms of trade school, you know for our females they’re going to go to cosmetology school. You still have to give them a craft to be good at. And then some kids are your struggling learners like myself, to talk a little bit about my experience. I struggled in school, but I still had someone that believed in me. My goal was to go to college, I was a little hesitant, but they believed in me, and they helped me to get that extra cushion to get to college. So, you still have to go back to that first initial things I talked about, belief, and you have to believe in the kid and tell them, “You can do it, with the supports that are here, we can get you what you need.” So, it can go both ways, it can go both ways.

Vicki: OK, what’s our fourth?

Basil: The fourth one is professional development. I think it is very key to always be in a position of growth, always wanting to better yourself. You can do that by reading books, and I have three good books that I have read: *From Good to Great* from Jim Collins, *Start With Why* from Simon Sinek, and *Mindset* by Dr. Carol Dweck. Those books will help you as an educator to take yourself to the next level. Also going back to school, earning a higher degree, or listening to podcasts like this. This helps you to understand and to formulate your sense of what it takes to be a good educator.

Vicki: Yes, and you know, all professional development is personal. My strategy is innovate like a turtle. Two to three times a week I take 15 minutes and learn something new, and a lot of times it is through podcasting because I’m really, really busy. But we have to decide we’re going to do that. We can’t wait for somebody to schedule our PD for us.

Basil: (agrees)

Vicki: So, what’s the fifth?

Basil: The fifth one is find a solid mentor. I think this another one of those key things that really helped me to achieve my success at such a young age. You want to find someone that is where you want to be

and just glean and take from them as much as you can. Just be around them, go to conferences with them, sit down and have personal conversation – either informal or formal – and just kind of pick their brain about how did they get to where they were. If they a great mentor, they want to teach you everything they can to help you to get to where you need to be.

Vicki: The old saying goes, “Don’t wait for somebody to take you under their wing. Find somebody amazing and climb up under it yourself,” (laughs)

Basil: There it is. (laughs) There it is.

Vicki: So, all of these things, you know, are about helping at risk kids, but what about the challenges emotionally on a teacher? Because you know, at risk kids – hurting people hurt people – and sometimes it can be emotionally challenging for a teacher to work with kids who are at risk.

Basil: So, again part of that goes back to that personal development, so listening to podcasts like this would give you certain strategies to help these at risk students. Again, I think it all comes back to -- you have to start with your “Why” as an educator. Why did you get into education in the first place? And the things i, for our student achievement, student development. So, those students who are in the rougher places and have more turmoil or emotional things they have to go through, that just means you have to develop a stronger relationship with that student and get to know the deep crevices of who they are so that you can bring them up out of those situations to help them to reach the general curriculum and to be successful academically. Sometimes it just means that you have to hear that student out and practice active listening when they come in the door. They might tell you about what happened at home or what happened over the weekend. You just being a listening ear and building that relationship will help you be successful as a teacher. Understanding the kids, I believe is the first step. I think the second step is that you have to model for those kids what it means to be a good person. You might be the first positive person they’ve seen and they want to be like and they want to emulate, but you have to show them how to do that. And then I think again, that going back to that belief and saying, “This is where you started from, this is where your mom and dad have come from, but you can pull yourself out of that and change your trajectory, change your future.” But as we talked about earlier in the podcast, (saying) “That’s up to you, and you have to want to be that agent of change for yourself. But I’m here to help you as your teacher and as an educator in this room.”

Vicki: OK Basil, as we finish up, you say something in your work, “Failure is not a dead end.” Give us a 30-second pep talk as teachers about how failure can’t be a dead end for us or our students.

Basil: Yeah, so I think failure is just an opportunity to look at the situation again and do it again more brilliantly. And so as educators we have to understand that it is our job to reach all of our students in the classroom. So if a student is not getting what you’re teaching, again, you need to think about a different way to reteach that lesson, a different way to get it to the student. I want you all to understand that I am a product of a great teacher understanding that I needed some extra support and help, and they were able to help me to understand that, you know, “We’ll get this a different way. You’re not slow. You’re not dumb. I just need to teach to where you are.” So I want all educators to understand that all students are reachable. It takes time, patience, and relationships. If you’re able to do that, you’ll be able to reach those at risk kids, and one day the at risk kid will come back to you and say, “Mr. So-and-so, or Ms. So-and-so, thank you so much for what you did for me. Now I am, you know, the vice president of this company, I’m in college, I’m doing certain things.” And I had the pleasure to do that with my teacher in ninth grade. I was able to call her up the last week and say, “I’m a new assistant principal.” That was a product of what she did for me way back in ninth grade.

Vicki: I love it that you went back and you thanked her. That is remarkable. I think we as teachers need to go back and thank our previous teachers. I was actually just mentioned in a Georgia Tech magazine talking about my favorite professor, who's now in his nineties, and you know just having that relationship and going back and saying, "Thank you for what you did!" That's the kind of currency that we need to pay each other as teachers, because we are transformed when we have amazing teachers. And we transform kids every day!

Basil: (Agrees.) And that's what we do again. That should be our mission and vision. Again, students are going to come to you and say, "I can't do this." As an educator, it is your job to say, "Hey, let's remove that apostrophe, let's remove that 't'. Let's make it "I can." That's what you do as an educator. You help the student see it in a different way and have belief in them and let them know that anything's possible through hard work and determination.