

PEP Talks: Episode 7_2020-2021-Developing Leadership Skills & Self-Esteem in Girls Transcript

[00:00:00] **Olivia Haas:** [00:00:00]As we look across various sectors of society, we continue to see women underrepresented in leadership roles. For example, women make up only 7% of Fortune 500 Chief Executive Officers. Among the largest non-profit charities in the world, a slim 18% are led by women, though they make up 75% of the nonprofit workforce.

[00:00:28] Currently, Australia ranks 50th in the world for the number of women in national government. Canada ranks 52nd, and the United States is down the list at 67th. Women make up an estimated 75% of public school teachers, but are only 30% of the total number of school board members, principals, superintendents, and chief state education officers.

Women account for less than one-third of employees around the world working in scientific research and development. Only 26% of computer scientists are women. And even more disheartening: women account for only 13% of engineers.

The leadership statistics are even more dismaying for women of color.

Yet according to a recent benchmarking study of women's leadership, "when women leaders are present, revenue is greater, sales are increased, and impact and reach are more extensive." So how do we educate girls to become women who are prepared to rise to the highest levels of leadership?

Hello, and thanks for tuning in to PEP Talks: Podcast on Educational Possibilities produced by the National Coalition of Girls' Schools. I'm your host, Olivia Haas.

[00:01:42] Today, I'll be talking with my guests about how to build leadership skills and self-esteem in girls. Joining me are Janelle Bradshaw, Chief Executive Officer of Public Prep, a network of tuition-free single-gender charter schools for elementary and middle grades throughout New York City, and Tamara Albury, Principal of the Young Women's Leadership Academy in Fort Worth, Texas. Tamara's school is part of the Young Women's Preparatory Network, which consists of nine—soon to be ten—public girls' schools across the state of Texas, serving students in grades 6-12. Both the Public Prep and YWPN schools support underserved areas with a high percentage of low-income and minority residents.

Before speaking with Janelle and Tamara, I've asked NCGS Executive Director Megan Murphy, to share what's coming up at NCGS. Thanks for joining me, Megan.

[00:02:35] **Megan Murphy:** [00:02:35] Megan. Oh, thanks so much, Olivia, you know, the entire NCGS team is gearing up for really exciting 2021 virtual conference. And that's going to be held June 21st through the 23rd. And we offer this annual conference every year in June. And this year we're going to be convening hundreds of girls, school educators, trustees, researchers, advocates, really from [00:03:00] around the world. To discuss the critically important topic of building communities of belonging at girls' schools.

[00:03:07] Um, you know, Brené Brown is quoted as saying, fitting in is about assessing a situation and becoming who you need to be to be accepted. But belonging, on the other hand, doesn't require us to change who we are at all. And I think that girls schools were really founded to address inequality and inequity. And we're seeing our schools acknowledge this and take actions to eradicate in many ways.

[00:03:36] Uh, during the Building Communities of Belonging Conference, we're going to explore how girls schools can embrace and value diversity as sources of strength and opportunity. And weave together stronger, truly inclusive communities. We want to encourage as many of our girls school representatives as possible to participate in these really important [00:04:00] conversations.

[00:04:00] And so we're offering both a small group rate for seven to 10 registrants from a school as well as an all school pass for groups of 11 or more. Um, so please do join us. Um, we're anxious for you to hear from some international only recognized keynote and featured speakers. There are going to be 50 different breakout sessions and 20, um, speed, uh, innovating, inspire sessions, um, for you to have that this really important conversation.

[00:04:33] And if you don't think that you're going to be available, Um, on June 21st, the 22nd or 23rd, that's no problem because anyone who registers for the conference will be able to access all of the conference programming at their convenience. It's going to be available on demand through December. Uh, registration is open through June 16th, at ncgs.org.

[00:04:57] And we do hope to see you online [00:05:00] at the end of June.

[00:05:01] **Olivia Haas:** [00:05:01] Thank you, Megan. I know it's going to be a really amazing event. We can't wait.

[00:05:06] Janelle and Tamara, thanks so much for being with me today and welcome to pep talks. So let's jump right in by clarifying what we mean by leadership. When talking about girls and young women, we know from our NCGS research that 93% of girls school grads say they were offered greater leadership opportunities than peers at co-ed schools.

[00:05:27] And 80% have held leadership positions since graduating from high school. How do you define student leadership at your schools? Janelle, would you like to start us off?

[00:05:38] **Janelle Bradshaw:** [00:05:38] Well here at public prep we first start with thinking about how do we promote student voice and agency in our classrooms. And those are those small opportunities where our girls get to have different roles in small groups.

[00:05:52] They're able to engage in discussions and debates to really understand different perspectives and critique [00:06:00] each other's opinions. We think that makes them stronger, critical thinkers. And also, uh, providing them with opportunities, lots of opportunities for writing. Uh, and free-thinking. And so just this notion that your ideas matter start from the very youngest ages at four years old, when they walk through our doors, as well as reinforcing all of the ways in which and pathways that they can be successful.

[00:06:26] And so we tie that to our core values of sisterhood, responsibility, merit, and scholarship. And one of the things that's unique for us when we think about leaders is trying to really break barriers so that our girls see that when they are the first, they should never be the last. And so really thinking about pushing yourself, we like to say being brave and not perfect, uh, as we're taking risks to be leaders for our girls.

[00:06:57] **Tamara Albury:** [00:06:57] One of the great things I believe that we do on our [00:07:00] campus is that help our students to understand how to earn a place in the room, how to earn a place at the table, how to stay at the table and how to at every chance challenges the status quo for women specifically and women of color. And so as we look at how we define leadership, it's more about the things that create a great leader. Being empathetic, having humility in addition to that strong academic program, which allows them, the opportunities to enter those rooms because they meet the basic requirements to enter those rooms.

[00:07:33] Leadership is really about providing our students with the opportunities and the skills to change the status quo at every level.

[00:07:40] **Olivia Haas:** [00:07:40] So leaders definitely don't always have to be the girl who runs for student government. Or who volunteers to start a student club. There are classroom leaders who drive collaborative team projects, for example, or what I like to sort of think of more of those quiet leaders.

[00:07:55] Research has shown that programs at girls schools focus on the development of [00:08:00] teamwork over other qualities of leadership, while the qualities of confidence, compassion, and resilience, also ranked prominently. How do you support and encourage leadership in every girl, Tamara? Would you like to start?

[00:08:13] **Tamara Albury:** [00:08:13] So in for our program, what we do is we make a very strategic, intentional point to give our students voices at every turn, whether it's starting a club, whether it's advocating for another student.

[00:08:28] In addition, we also make sure that our students are exposed to a variety of different philosophies, which reinforce those characteristics that you spoke of by providing them the space and the support to meet all of our girls, specifically, girls of color. Where they are, where they constantly meet that negative social messaging.

[00:08:44] Those self-imposed unrealistic expectations of perfectionism, the imposter syndrome and things of that nature.

[00:08:51] **Janelle Bradshaw:** [00:08:51] Oh, I think, uh, Tamara shared so many amazing, uh, definitions and I would wholeheartedly concur again. [00:09:00] I think it starts at the very beginning with making sure that our girls are celebrated. Uh, we like to say that our schools are places where all all kids, but especially our girls are seen and heard and valued. And it starts with really thinking about building her confidence so that she feels comfortable taking risks. I think the most amazing thing as a product of all women's college is understanding that the most creative artist is always a girl.

[00:09:32] The smartest mathematician is always a girl and from a very young age, You were forming a sense of self and identity that really is without limits so that when you are in a coed environment, you have the intrinsic and internal determination that you can do it. I think it's also important to make sure that we are sharing those powerful, personal, personal narratives for women writ large, but also women of [00:10:00] color.

[00:10:00] What are the ways in which they have made choices about their lives to ensure that there are opportunities providing a wide range of opportunities so that you are not just limited to thinking this is the only pathway, uh, but that you have the agency and opportunity to expand and broaden your horizons.

[00:10:19] And to say, I may not see a girl in this field or in this occupation, but I'm going to be the first one to do it. And this will be like to say, turn around and reach back and make sure that you are not the last.

[00:10:34] **Olivia Haas:** [00:10:34] So you both touched on this. But I would love to hear some specific examples of how leadership opportunities are integrated throughout your schools.

[00:10:42] **Janelle Bradshaw:** [00:10:42] Again, it starts very early. Every week. We have an opportunity to celebrate and highlight a girl who is a distinguished and utilizing our core values. We call them the star of the week. And at the end of the trimester, there are community shining stars. Those are [00:11:00] girls who are exemplifying our core values of sisterhood responsibility merit and scholarship. Uh, and those weekly celebrations are important because it affirms in their identity that when I contribute to my community, right, this idea of responsibility, I'm doing the right thing. Even when no one is watching that these are really important opportunities and teachers are able to celebrate.

[00:11:26] These are the attributes that you have. Uh, exhibited that are contributing to you being celebrated and being a role model for your sisters, your sisters, not only in your classroom, but your sisters and your grade. And as you get older, your sisters who are younger than you. So fourth graders and fifth graders are role models to our kindergarten and pre-K and first grade sisters. And we think that's so very important. We want to make sure that we're empowering them in small and big ways with opportunities to provide [00:12:00] feedback and exact change. Uh, we also offer a host of summer college experiences. Again. This idea that if you can see it, you can be it.

[00:12:09] And it is so important. We've heard from so many girls of color who will be the first in their families to go to college, that when they are on the campuses of Smith, Cornell, um, Stephens, NYU, and they're doing college level work. And whether or not they get college level credit or the experience, it tells them and reinforces for them that they can do this.

[00:12:36] They can, they can succeed and be successful. There are also those small moments. You talked about Olivia inside of the classroom where girls are leading breakout rooms. And this has been one benefit actually of COVID and remote learning and Zoom learning is that we have been able to create breakout rooms.

[00:12:56] They were happening in our classrooms, but they can also happen virtually where [00:13:00] girls are at the center of their own learning. So three or four or five girls are in a

group and they're leading the discussion questions, the roles, et cetera. Um, and in our middle schools, when we're introducing Socratic seminar, it's very teacher directed.

[00:13:16] At the beginning of the year with the teacher posing the questions. And towards this time of year, we want the students to really take ownership and start posing questions to each other. Again, this idea of ongoing discourse, debate, challenging ideas and assumptions is what's leading to, if I want to make a change, I can look out into the world and say, somebody else should do it, or I can step up and say, no one is doing it.

[00:13:43] I'm going to be the one. Who's doing it. And what we find is that our eighth graders who are moving into high school and college, when those lessons are learned at the youngest ages, they carry with them through high school and beyond. And that's what we think is contributing to the [00:14:00] high levels of success that we're seeing beyond, uh, their all girls experience in K through eight.

[00:14:06] **Tamara Albury:** [00:14:06] I concur with Janelle. Uh, it's very important that our students are provided with leadership opportunities from the very beginning in that we really do give them the building blocks to be the leaders of tomorrow. It takes a variety of different forms. One of the things that we have started doing, uh, tours pre COVID, a lot of our sixth graders and they have the opportunity really to give tours to stakeholders and share what they're most proud of.

[00:14:31] The other thing that we really on our campus and our program that we really hone in is the idea of let the students do it. If we have any opportunities at all, we definitely provide opportunities for our students to get their hands dirty. So to speak builds a real world opportunities to really see how things, how things work.

[00:14:52] We do this in our elective courses or extracurricular opportunities. We have student council, which a lot of our students are very much so active [00:15:00] in which really gives them a leadership program. That's external, but what we provide here on campus and when we're bringing in are, are. partners our partnerships we really focus on that real world leadership programming, providing them to women in the C suite, providing them with those stories of breaking the glass ceiling and what that entails. It's. As I said earlier, it's very important that our girls truly see here, uh, and touch who they will be, who they can be, um, not limiting their possibilities in the future.

[00:15:36] We also will look at leadership. I think it's really important that the adults in the building also model leadership for our students. I think a lot of times what happens is we speak leadership, leadership, leadership for our students, but then we don't necessarily always model. And so one of the things that I really challenged my teachers to do to be models.

[00:15:55] To be modeled and to be leaders in that area of expertise, [00:16:00] not just within the campus, not just within the city, but within the nation. So one of the things that we're also, uh, very much so incorporate into what we do, the community service aspect, not just being a leader within the walls of our building, but being a leader within your community .

[00:16:15] **Olivia Haas:** [00:16:15] So confidence and self-esteem are essential to taking on leadership roles and its many forms. What are the building blocks for fostering confidence and self-esteem in girls.

[00:16:25] **Tamara Albury:** [00:16:25] At 90% of our students are students of color. They are black and Brown students. I think one of the things that's very important is the idea and the building block of having a self, a positive self identity society, bombards our girls from very early ages about their worth, about their value, about their capabilities, about what they are able to do, what they are able to be in life.

[00:16:49] By providing opportunities and experience of acceptance and empowerment. There's a reinforced reinforces the idea that I can do it. I can be it. Um, we also provide a positive, [00:17:00] um, a culture of positive feedback, not just focusing on achievement, but that idea of the growth mindset, the idea of with effort, I can continue to grow.

[00:17:13] I think also the other thing that we do is we name those stumbling blocks. It's one thing when you're able to name those stumbling blocks to name those negative messages. And so when you're hit with those negative messages, you're able to see them for what they are and know that it's not you, but it's external from you.

[00:17:28] And so beginning in sixth grade, before our students begin. YWLA, we have our students read Confidence code for Girls, which actually was something I came across by attending an NCGS conference. And so that is the touch that, that is the foundational texts that we use throughout middle school, because middle school definitely is a very crucial time of identity of, of empowerment.

[00:17:53] Uh, and so with that text, our girls are able to kind of reinforce and understand that I can be confident I [00:18:00] can grow in my confidence. It's not a fixed point. It's something that I can continue to grow in and work on and exercise that muscle to really be that leader.

[00:18:10] **Janelle Bradshaw:** [00:18:10] Uh, there there's very little, yeah. Like to add to that, that was such an amazing, uh, response, uh, to Tamara I wrote some notes here, uh, for, for our own girls, uh, to take back to New York. I do think that, uh, just in addition to the positive self identity and the. Uh, ideas around growth mindset that it really, really, really is also equally important, if not more so to have real examples of women, uh, from a variety of experiences that can demystify success.

[00:18:47] And so I think particularly for girls of color, uh, but women, young girls in general, but young girls of color to see someone who looks like them, I cannot. Um, say what it is [00:19:00] meant to have vice president, uh, Harris, who not only looks like our girls, but has a similar story and trajectory that they can identify with, uh, that now for their first time they're saying to themselves, Oh, I could be president, um, that this is now a possibility.

[00:19:20] Our goal is to really unleash and unlock for all of our girls. What are they most passionate about? It's one of, um, our core values that we want you to find your thing while you're here. Um, and this idea of it can be in a variety of different spaces and places, um, starts first with. Understanding what's possible, but also having a support system, we heavily utilize our alumni who have been on this journey to come back and speak to our girls.

[00:19:52] We, uh, have near peer relationships, uh, to talk about the high school experience to talk about college. These are [00:20:00] all really important building blocks. And we haven't mentioned our families, but for us, families are real integral partners in this work. Uh, and so making sure that they are not just, um, coming along for the journey, but really have a true seat at the table that they are, uh, implementing and raising ideas that matter most or that they're hearing from our girls so that we can adapt our programs to adjust.

[00:20:26] Um, to the types of conversations. And so again, given the pandemic, we've been able to, um, have joint conversations with our families and our scholars around all of the things that are happening in the community and not having those conversations in silos. Right? Like how can we as a community talk about what's happening, um, in our country.

[00:20:49] **Olivia Haas:** [00:20:49] So much of what you both are talking about is related to role modeling from peers and teachers, administrators, working professionals, et cetera, Tamara, a research study out [00:21:00] of Cornell University found that students at girls' schools demonstrate greater confidence in female leadership and become increasingly interested in leadership positions themselves in comparison to the girls at co-ed schools who become less interested actually in leadership positions with age.

[00:21:18] How do you think a girl centered environment place into development of leadership skills, confidence, and self-esteem in young women?

[00:21:26] **Tamara Albury:** [00:21:26] So one of the things I, I definitely wanted to say is as throughout this podcast, as I answer this question, what is bubbling up to the top for me is just how very similar Janelle's school and my school is in terms of what we do for young women and what we focus on, which I think irrespective of where our schools are located.

[00:21:45] There are still very similar. There's still, there's still an underlying message is an underlying foundation. As it relates to young women, there is, um, that brings me joy on this, on this rainy day. Um, what I, what comes [00:22:00] to mind when you, when you ask this question? There's a song by Sweet Honey in the Rock.

[00:22:07] Uh, that's entitled in my grandmother's house there are no mirrors. And so this, the song talks about the singer and how in her grandma's house, there were no mirrors. And so when it came to her value in her beauty, it was all in how her grandmother described it to her. There were no, there were no self-deprecating messages.

[00:22:29] It was all the positivity that her grandmother poured into her. And as a result that fed into who she was and who she grew into be. And so that's what I would say is so important about a girl centered environment, because in that environment, you don't have the mirror of those structures that tend to default to men.

[00:22:51] It really does help them grow into who they would be without those constraints, those social constraints. And in this environment, the other thing [00:23:00] too, uh, and , he wrote a book about moving the center and how we have to move the center of what we deem as the standard. And so at all girls schools, when it's a girl centered school, that's moving the standard, moving the standard to meet young women and meet their needs.

[00:23:16] It's all about them. It's a great thing, being born, a woman, but there's a lot that comes with it. It's a great thing being born, a woman of color, but there's a lot that comes with it and to be in an environment that truly allows you to grow and bloom where you are. And by moment, that is, that is structured just to make sure that you reach your highest height.

[00:23:35] That's a great place to be. And I feel like if more students really had that opportunity where the world would be.

[00:23:42] **Olivia Haas:** [00:23:42] Janelle the Cornell Study focused on our youngest learners between the ages of three and 10. How do you foster leadership in girls as early as elementary school?

[00:23:52] **Janelle Bradshaw:** [00:23:52] Her pre-K program is actually for younger scholars or co-ed programs, but beginning in kindergarten, we move [00:24:00] into single-sex and environments.

[00:24:02] Again, those building blocks that we've already talked about are really, really important, allowing for students to have those small moments, girls, to have those small moments, to have choice and agency within their classroom, everything from, if you know your reading level, you have the choice to choose the books that are interesting to you and your teachers also going to push you to read books that are not interesting to you because that's how we create a comprehensive holistic children, right.

[00:24:31] By not just reading all of the books about dinosaurs, uh, but expanding our horizons. It also looks like within our curriculum, there are opportunities where our girls are creating their own knowledge bases. And so there's a unit actually on a building a school. And so girls are working together in teams to think about.

[00:24:55] What is it that they like about their current school and sort of the functions of [00:25:00] that and what if they want it to design their own school? What would that look like? How much would it cost? Um, how would they present that to get the funding that they need, uh, to have an incredible space? And so these are those moments, right?

[00:25:15] Where they are making choices and having decisions that are really, really important. Uh, we also think about in our upper grades, Um, what are some changes that they want to make in their schools? And so we've been doing some piloting around the idea of letting our girls decide how do they want to spend some money on recess toys, how they want to organize recess and sports.

[00:25:43] Again, we don't have formal student councils in our elementary grades, but we do want to give opportunities for girls to make decisions that impact their community. And allow them to make change. And what we're seeing is that when those opportunities, uh, expand [00:26:00] year after year after year, when they are in co-ed environments, they are the first ones to raise their hands because they know that their voice matters.

[00:26:08] Um, it just becomes part of the norm. And again, I think that's, what's so special and unique about all girls environments is that there's. Nothing else to tell you that there isn't, this isn't the way to be. And so when you are, um, in other places and spaces you really own

and have the confidence that you can do it because you're part of a community that is constantly reinforcing, not just your specialness, but your place in the world.

[00:26:37] And I think that's a really distinct and important characteristic, particularly when you're supporting girls of color. You deserve to be in the room. It's not just nice for you to be here. You deserve to be here.

[00:26:53] **Olivia Haas:** [00:26:53] So a recent study by Dr. Charlotte Jacobs, uh, out of the university of Pennsylvania's graduate school of education [00:27:00] actually found that 48% of black girls self-identify as leaders, which is the highest of all racial and ethnic groups.

[00:27:07] Yeah, bias is a key barrier to them being able to embrace this identity and engage in different forms of leadership. What do you think is happening in our schools that's keeping more black girls from moving into leadership roles?

[00:27:21] **Tamara Albury:** [00:27:21] I think it's very hard for our black girls to move into leadership roles when there is a cultural power that is being the gatekeeper and irrespective of who the person is in charge utilizing that culture of power. That's oftentimes what happens. And they're at a disadvantage because generally speaking, if adults are making the decision in which these, these, these students are able to have roles, have leadership roles, unfortunately time and time again, they're left off those lists.

[00:27:56] Just from experience. When I asked [00:28:00] teachers to give me a list of students for this leadership opportunity, by and large, I have to go back and make sure that black girls are on that list. And not necessarily just black girls, but black girls of a variety of different shades. Right. I think a lot of times it goes even deeper than that.

[00:28:19] And so when we are providing leadership opportunities as leaders, we should be color conscious and not color blind because when we are not women of color blind, then automatically black girls are left off of those opportunities. What happens is when you think about it, they have that fire, they have that desire, but after so many nos and so many doors being closed. And so many opportunities being not offered, the voice gets quieter and quieter and quieter. As leaders it's our responsibility to make sure that when opportunities are being presented, that [00:29:00] black girls have an equal opportunity to be a part of those lists and that they are on those lists and that they are represented and they are participating.

[00:29:08] **Olivia Haas:** [00:29:08] Janelle. I saw you nodding your head. Yes, enthusiastically throughout, uh, tomorrow's entire response. What would you like to add?

[00:29:16] **Janelle Bradshaw:** [00:29:16] I want to build on something that Tamara talked about, which I think I get to support as the CEO of Public prep. We're reading as a seminal texts, Culturally Responsive Teaching in the Brain by Loretta Hammond, uh, for our teachers and our leaders and this idea of creating classrooms, where there are warm demanders, there is a role, a very specific role that teachers and leaders can play.

[00:29:43] In counter programming or counteracting the negative self-talk that is happening in girls' heads, where if they're not chosen for a role, that's the end, versus if there's something that you feel that you [00:30:00] deserve and you're not getting it, we want you to feel

comfortable and confident asking why. Uh, and seeking change because sometimes adults make mistakes.

[00:30:11] And I think, uh, when we talk about our core values or core values are for adults as much as they are for children. And so what that means is when we make mistakes, that we are honest and transparent. With our girls to say, we messed up, we made a mistake. Here's how we're going to fix it and invite them into the process to share their ideas so that we can fix it and work on it together.

[00:30:35] I do also would add in terms of thinking about this research and was happening for. Our girls that it is also important that we have conversations with them, but also with our teachers around the impact of colorism. And so I mentioned earlier a star of the week, uh, we certainly, uh, is, uh, is an important part of our culture, but we also started to [00:31:00] notice that certain girls were being picked first.

[00:31:03] And so we had to have some conversations within our community around. If we have a criteria, how are we applying that equally? Is there some bias that's happening internally that we may not know about that we need to surface? And how do we ensure that we are sharing lots of representation for all of our girls?

[00:31:24] Um, in all of our rooms, I, as Tamara was speaking, I was thinking about hair, love the book and the movie. Uh, but just this again, this, this piece of, do you love every part of yourself, uh, from your hair to your skin, to your body? Uh, to the things that you're interested in, those are all of the things that we want, our girls and particularly girls of color to fully embrace, uh, and not try to hide because when you're trying to hide any one of those pieces, you're not being your full self.

[00:31:55] When you're not your full self, that's going to impact your confidence. And self-esteem when [00:32:00] you are in, when that's impacted, that's going to impact what leadership roles you go after. Um, and the final piece of, have you seen enough people go after those things, have we had enough conversations where we have instilled in you that even, if you don't see someone, you can do it.

[00:32:19] And how do you build communities around you to support you when you are the only one in the room? Because I think that is an important part of the personal narratives that comes out when women are speaking to other women when I was the only one, here's what I did to form a network, to support me, to give me feedback, to continue to push me.

[00:32:40] And here's how I figured out how to get other women in the room. Uh, we love the, uh, Justice Ginsburg quote, how many women are too many on the Supreme court. And I think she probably said when there are nine, right? So this idea of. One is never enough, but you keep going back [00:33:00] and getting more and more until the diversity of thinking is such that, um, everyone's perspectives are represented.

[00:33:07] **Olivia Haas:** [00:33:07] I really hate to bring our conversation to a close, because you both have provided so much thoughtful insight and reflection to your answers, but we do need to bring it to a close. So let's talk about something really fun and uplifting. I would love

to hear some examples of successful leadership development that you have witnessed or experience with students at your schools.

[00:33:28] Would you each like to share maybe two or three stories of students who took on perhaps a non traditional leadership role and what were the outcomes that you observed in that student's growth?

[00:33:39] **Janelle Bradshaw:** [00:33:39] I was trying to narrow it down to just two or three. So I'm going to start with our chess team. And I think our chess team represents a lot of the attributes that, uh, Tamara was describing earlier, which initially the list that came to us where our high performing girls and we really wanted our chess teams [00:34:00] to be inclusive.

[00:34:01] And so we actually widened the net. The principal did a lot of work on that. I can't take credit, um, and widen the net to include a variety of achievement levels, including, you know, girls with learning disabilities, girls who were struggling with reading girls who didn't speak English as a first language.

[00:34:19] And what we found is that through the chess tournament, For some girls who traditionally would have been excluded, they found their thing. And by finding your thing in your passion, it bled over into other things and passions. And that's what this work is about. Um, us helping girls find their thing. And my second story that I want to leave you with is actually a one that we just heard from one of our alumni who.

[00:34:47] Uh, is going off to college in the fall. And so when she was with us, she, again, struggled as a reader and a writer. Um, in middle school, we work really hard to find the [00:35:00] high school that we think is going to be the right fit high school for them. And for her, it was a performing arts high school in New York City.

[00:35:06] LaGuardia high schools. I may have heard of it from fame days. Uh, and so when she went there, she again was really passionate about the arts and theater, and that was her pathway back into the academics. Um, she has applied and received a full scholarship to college, but what she said to us was if it wasn't for girls prep believing in me, um, when I was not the star student, um, telling me that I could do it.

[00:35:36] Helping me figure out which high school option would be my best option. Um, that is what gave me the confidence to persevere and to become a star student. Again, growth mindset is not about. Uh, did you get an, a it's about, what did you learn from failure? You know, one of our names, sakes is Serena Williams and one of her quotes [00:36:00] is "I learned just as much from when I lose a match, if not more than when I win."

[00:36:05] Right. This idea that it really, the learning is really in failure. When you can get up, you can keep walking, but if you're down on the ground, right, like. Most important thing is to get back up. And so those are the examples and the messages that we want. I would want to leave with this group. Just the idea of increasing opportunities to girls that you don't think could do it because guess what?

[00:36:29] They might surprise you. And they aren't listening the lessons that you are imparting in them. Um, they're holding on to them for years to come. And so it really is our,

uh, our job as educators to make sure that we are cultivating and developing and supporting, um, our girls and pushing them to be their best selves.

[00:36:53] **Tamara Albury:** [00:36:53] I'm just, my, my heart is so full. This, this podcast is making my heart full on. So I thank you. I really just, I thank you. [00:37:00] Uh, the work that we do is definitely hard work and, and it takes a dedicated people to make it a reality. And when I think about this question, what came to mind for me was a student who really took it upon herself to be an advocate for her classmates this past year and a half has been very challenging for everyone.

[00:37:20] We have had to be innovative. We've had to re-imagine everything we've had to pivot. Those are all the buzz words that I keep hearing, you know, Right and left. And what we had to do really is focused on how we do education and how it really needs to change as everyone right now, everyone is living in trauma.

[00:37:40] We are leading in trauma. Students are learning in trauma. Teachers are teaching in trauma and the structure of how we normally. Assign assignments and provide our students with those supports had to change at any rate out just before Christmas break, I received a very long email that was sent to [00:38:00] myself and several teachers from one of my juniors advocating for her sisters.

[00:38:06] And the idea of how we were doing school was not working for her. And it was not working for her sisters requiring students. We are virtual as well as in person. Requiring students to have their cameras on assigning assignments on the weekend. Things that we normally did while we were in person and really what the adverse effects of those requirements were doing to her sisters.

[00:38:33] A lot of our students come from a variety of different backgrounds, requiring them to have their camera on means exposing. Their lives that they traditionally did not have to share while they were in person making them extremely vulnerable, because we want to see their faces and don't want to speak to little black boxes on the screen.

[00:38:51] Right. She shared that that's something that we didn't think about. The whole idea of assigning assignments that are due on the weekend, [00:39:00] meaning that students don't have that natural break. They are not working from home. They're living from work just like we were when we were virtual. And so being mindful that there are brain needs, natural breaks, we need a way to decompress from the pressures of, of, of pandemic and of the world and the idea that we are always accessible.

[00:39:23] And so while we were still maintaining as if we were in person. We didn't have the opportunity to really think about what our, our structures were doing to our students. And so she advocated that she wanted to meet with administration to speak about this, the social emotional tragedy that was happening to her students.

[00:39:49] So we met as a group and we came up with a variety of things and a variety of different changes to what we were doing to help assist and be mindful of those things. [00:40:00] One, not necessarily requiring the cameras to be on, maybe to be on, to check in

for the day assignments wouldn't be due on Monday morning, meaning students had to work all weekend.

[00:40:11] So those are, those were some things that we changed and that whole idea that we see you. We see you. We hear you. You are a valued is very important because the world doesn't always see them. And so continuing that messaging that if there is an issue, We're here to be solution oriented. We are not fixed.

[00:40:33] We are not doing education to you. We are doing education with you. And as we are cultivating that, that, that ability for the heart to be a leader and for her sisters to be a leader, it takes different forms. And it's all those little things that we put in place to make sure that all of those building blocks are in place so that when they are out in the world, they know how to be seen.

[00:40:54] They know how to be heard, taking them through that process where. When [00:41:00] they want change, this is how you go about achieving change, right? It's not just a matter of expressing yourself. It's about being heard and change occurring. Those are two different things. I think sometimes, um, girls don't have the opportunity to participate in that process and specifically girls of color, they're aware of how to be seen.

[00:41:19] Or how to be heard or how to express themselves, but truly be seen, truly be heard and truly affect change. A lot of times those processes are not in place. And so definitely providing an environment where they feel comfortable to say that, you know what? I know if I say this, I will be seen and I will be heard one other thing real quick story that.

[00:41:39] We started this year. Um, I had a teacher and as a leader of an, of an organization, uh, we are very busy. We are meetings. We are, you know, we're making things happen. And a lot of times we don't always have the opportunity to really spend time with our students. And so a teacher shared with me that they really wanted the sixth graders.

[00:41:59] They don't see me [00:42:00] enough. That's that was their complaint. So I made it, I reflected on a commercial that I remember seeing years ago when it was a mother and she was sitting at a desk and the little girl was sitting next to her and the little girl asked her mom, well, what are you doing? And, or what's in the book.

[00:42:14] And the mother said it has important people in it. And she said, am I in there? And then the mother wrote her name in the book. So I reflected on that when I heard, when I heard my students say that and I made sure that my secretary put them on my calendar. So we have a standing meeting every two weeks because they are that important and nobody stands in front of that meeting.

[00:42:36] And so at that meeting my students take my sixth graders, take turns presenting to me issues that they have suggestions that they have their first, their first suggestion was that on Friday they won the opportunity to wear a spirit shirt. So right then and there, I changed the policy. I sent it out right then and there to the faculty.

[00:42:55] We're going to have Friday spirit shirts and college shirt day. And so those kinds of [00:43:00] things to see that, you know what my voice matters. Someone is listening. And so

then we also have a debrief session after that to see what goes, what went well, what didn't go well and to move from there. And so it's really about those small things.

[00:43:13] My sixth graders are so funny. They asked me a question, well, what are your goals for next year? What do you see? I'm creating monsters, but that's okay. That's for the world to deal with. It's my job. To create them with a problem to deal with them. They will be a force to be reckoned with. And that's the thing, right?

[00:43:29] That's what makes girl all girl school so special. It's because we're able to do that. We're able to really do school on levels that really just cultivates, cultivates those, those leaders of tomorrow. The legacy that we're building every day, every year it's it's it's, there's not even a, there's not a dollar amount.

[00:43:50] It's just so invaluable and it's needed. It's needed in a society where it doesn't often happen. It is so needed.

[00:43:57] **Olivia Haas:** [00:43:57] Tamara, what a beautiful, [00:44:00] um, example of modeling leadership yourself for you for your sixth graders. So I love that and I just love the image of them being in your office and taking you to task, making sure that you are on top of it. It's fantastic. I can't thank you both enough for your, your thoughtfulness and your time and for sharing your expertise today. So thank you.

[00:44:26] Thank you.

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