



Takeaways from Conversation with Administration Panelists

Seth Daub, Principal of Orange County Public Schools Academic Center for Excellence, FL
Kimberle Lewis, Principal of Cordova Elementary School, TN & 2021-2022 President of NAESP
Michael Roth, Superintendent of Upper Moreland School District, PA
Barrett Wilkinson, Equity Specialist in Portland Public Schools, ME
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Question #1: How do you navigate pushback in your school communities so that all students feel safe and affirmed?

- Keep your efforts student focused, centered on student needs.
- Build relationships and trust with families, let them know that you are here to protect and care for all students.
- Lead activities with parents, such as a community forum to learn about trans and gender expansive identities. Portland Public Schools leads a parent university, which includes recordings of conversations on different topics.

Question #2: How do you navigate a situation where a student comes out at school, but isn't out at home?

- *Barrett Wilkinson*: The student is our number one. They're the priority and their being able to access their education is our responsibility.
- Schools can build collaboration and help caregivers and parents understand another dimension of their student.

Question #3: What approaches and best practices do you use to get staff buy-in, especially in a non-diverse community?

- *Kimberle Lewis*: It starts with informing our staff. We have seen the numbers of how young people and young adults who are trans are treated, often harassed, mistreated; and how suicide rates come into part of this discussion...And even though we may not be in a very diverse community, it doesn't mean that it doesn't impact our community.

- It starts with knowing how attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ people impact the community in general.
- Create the opportunities for staff members to understand the concept of identity.
- *Michael Roth*: Having those conversations and starting to realize that we are all more than sometimes what we outwardly appear to be helps to just start to break down those walls.

Question #4: Have you engaged in an audit of your libraries are your curriculum looking for inclusivity so that LGBTQIA+ students can see themselves and feel validated? If you have done that audit, what did that process look like for you?

- Scenario 1, *Seth Daub*: Not yet, adding to the to-do list.
- Scenario 2, *Michael Roth*: No, but individual teachers and administrators are identifying needs within their classrooms and communities.
- Scenario 3, *Barrett Wilkinson*: Yes, currently undergoing a library audit. Soon to focus on revision and alignment around health content curriculum and inclusion of LGBTQ identities.

Question #5: What professional development opportunities have you offered for your staff to learn how to best support LGBTQIA+ students?

- Bring in external organizations to facilitate trainings for principals and assistant principals (e.g., Equality Florida).
- Lead book studies on subjects specific to the school community.

Question #6: What specific plans have you put in place with regard to supporting transitioning students, such as with bathroom plans or plans for pronouns? How have you managed any difficulties that might have come with these situations?

- *Kimbrelle Lewis*: Student identified a change they wanted to make with their gendered uniform. The leadership team met with the parent and student, and led conversations with teachers.
 - “We are anticipating this year of just continuing to work with the student as the student makes the decisions about how the student would like to be addressed gender wise and pronouns. And we’re just moving forward with talking with him. It’s completely in his hands and in our plans to support him in how [the next steps] happen.”
 - “Students were very clear in their acceptance and how they were not going to make it something that stood out or that they thought was a change that needed to be discussed in a negative way.”
- The student drives what is right for them.

- Policies help guide what to do in order to be responsive, but students can identify the specifics (e.g., “I just want my teacher to know”).
- Have a safety conversation about what will be most supportive for adolescent students who may not have support at home.

Question #7: Imagine it’s the year 2050 and we are in a new world. What does it look like or feel like to be in a school where every trans and non-binary student feels safe, valued, respected, and welcomed? What needs to change so that future can exist?

- *Michael Roth:* Organizations and districts and schools have changed in such a way that they are less structured and rigid and more of a perspective of being learning organizations so that the schools are seen not as the places that have all of the answers, but help to generate the responses and generate the answers to questions. We are all products of our systems as we've been brought up, right? I was brought up in a system where the teacher said, “Welcome to school, boys and girls.” That’s been reinforced over and over into my paradigm into who I am. In order to shift that, I have to be pushed, I have to be challenged, and I have to think differently about it to come up with different perspectives. I worked with a principal who referred to all students as friends. So it wasn't, “Welcome, boys and girls,” it was, “Welcome friends,” which I thought was a very nice way to help to change that perspective. So I know that may be a little idealistic, but that's what we want to be when we're involved in education, but breaking down some of those structures and developing the systems to be more from a learning responsive stance.
- *Kimbrelle Lewis:* A lot of our data comes in by subgroups and some of those subgroups include gender. Our whole approach would have to change: our approach to how we look at data, how we look at, of course, gender, how we greet, how we think about uniforms with our uniform policies and that the environment is much more welcoming to diversity. Many of us in the past have thought of diversity just as including race and culture, and that has to change including for myself and we have to expand our knowledge. The wealth of resources that would be available within the schools and the community would be tremendous in 2050, and that our students would help to lead these discussions and continue to help lead the change and that those voices are heard and recognized and young students and students of all ages. I look forward to a time to where there's much more communication and transparency in the way we have those discussions and in who leads the discussions and what our schools look like whether it, as Michael mentioned, they look diverse or not. We know that they are, and that that can be embraced much more.
- *Seth Daub:* The young ones now that are young are so much more accepting and that makes me very excited about 2050. I'll be old by then. I'll be hopefully definitely retired.

In 2021, in my personal opinion, I think it's the adults that are the ones that are in the awkward stages and not understanding and some not willing to understand. But I think in 2050, I'm excited because I think by that point, I think it's happened before then, but everyone is just going to hopefully blow everyone away. I like to look on the bright side of things and I'm just excited that, like I said, I think the kids are just going to continue to love who they love and be who they are and embrace. I'm also excited that in 2050 people can be who they are and not lose jobs or what-have-yous in their careers. So I'm hoping to have more openly members of the LGBTQ+ communities as principals and district leaders in 2050 which will just even help the next generation coming up.

- *Barrett Wilkinson*: I completely agree Seth. I feel like a lot of young people now are like, "Ah, gender? What?" They just don't need to have the conversation in the same way which is really wonderful. We have plenty to learn from them directly. So I would say that what I would like to see at that time is it's not just for students, but for the adults in the system too, because we have trans folks who are educators and working in the system and that both students and adults feel like they are valued and celebrated for their multiple and intersectional identities. And that's work we've got to be doing now to build that. The other thing that came to mind was just that our curriculum, like what we actually teach, has to reflect the stories and experiences of LGBTQ people, which has been largely buried. As many other groups who've experienced marginalization, history is often one dimensional. That's work we have to do now because it takes a long time to move that. So that's the other thing that came to mind for me too.