

**Ep #438: The Future of Education:  
Emotional Intelligence in Leadership  
with Melanie Ann Layer**



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**With Your Host**

**Angela Kelly**

## **Ep #438: The Future of Education: Emotional Intelligence in Leadership with Melanie Ann Layer**

Angela Kelly: Hello, empowered principals. Welcome to episode 438.

Welcome to *The Empowered Principal® Podcast*, a not so typical educational resource that will teach you how to gain control of your career and get emotionally fit to lead your school and your life with joy by refining your most powerful tool, your mind. Here's your host, certified life coach Angela Kelly.

Well, hello my empowered principals. Happy Tuesday and welcome to today's podcast. I have an incredibly special guest. She is near and dear to my heart. I've known her for almost a decade now, but we have become mentors.

She is my coach, my mentor, and I have worked with her in different capacities, but in the last few years, she has really helped me evolve personally and professionally. She has so much insight, so much wisdom to share, and I asked her to be on *The Empowered Principal® Podcast* to tell her story and to share her wisdom with us. So, Melanie Ann Layer, thank you for being on *The Empowered Principal® Podcast* with us today.

Melanie: Thank you so much for having me. It is an honor to be here. Thank you.

Angela Kelly: Oh, it is my delight and my privilege. I would like to just ask you to tell a little bit about yourself. So some of the listeners may not know who you are, and you have a beautiful story, a beautiful journey, especially as it relates to your educational experience and how you were able to create success in your life in a more non-traditional way. And I would love for you to tell that story. So let the listeners know who you are and your journey.

Melanie: Okay. I'll go intuitively. There's a million ways that I can tell the story, that I have told the story because depending who I'm speaking to,

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there's different points that matter. But I think for this, one thing that maybe is important to know is that both of my parents came from families that did not have a very solid education. And their parents struggled very much to help them have the lives that they could give them as best as possible, and they were not easy lives.

And so both of my parents also did not have the, you know, greatest education and wanted that for their kids more than anything in the world. And so from being very young, this is what I knew my parents wanted for me. They wanted me to go to school, they wanted me to get a really good education so that I could get a really good job, so that I could be safe, and so that I could have a life that was better than what they feel they could provide based on their limitations.

And it was very difficult for me because very soon in my journey in the education system, I felt like I was not good at that. Something would happen for me where, like when I was a little kid, I used to love school, but it was all about arts and songs and it was all about like creating things and as soon as it became about remembering, studying, and exams, something happened.

It's as though, no matter how much I would study, I would get to the exam and everything would just exit my mind. It didn't matter how many hours I studied, it didn't matter how hard I worked. The minute the stress of this is the moment hit me, my brain would wipe.

And I feel like this got increasingly difficult as my parents were also going through some really difficult times at home. I was the big sister and so trying to help my parents out as much as possible with the babysitting and the sooner or later, my dad actually asked for financial support and then I ended up getting a job. I was helping kids at my school study and do their homework after school and study, like learn English because one beautiful

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thing I have, I'm French Canadian, and so I went to French school. All my friends were French. My dad is from Quebec and my mom is from England.

So I always could talk in English with my family with my mom, but I didn't really have any kind of education in English whatsoever. And my mom was so excited to send us to private school because there was an English curriculum even though it's in Quebec, Canada, and she was so excited for us to learn English. And I'll never forget the first English lesson I got. My mom was like, "What did you learn?" And I was like, "Pizza toppings."

Angela Kelly: Oh, that's cute.

Melanie: She's like, "You learned pizza toppings?" And I was like, "Yes." And so I really did not get an education in English whatsoever. It was the kind of spoken English you would speak at home in a bilingual family. And so I kind of started a business where I would help kids finish their homework and study for their very simple basic English.

And I was able to help my parents as they navigated some really difficult financial times with that job. But with taking the financial responsibility on as my, as this, you know, 11, 12-year-old kid, and then after my job, I would take my brother and sister home, we'd take the late bus and then I'd cook dinner for them and help them do their homework and then put them to bed.

And so my life wasn't really about me, it felt. But yet, it was measured like it should have been. So whenever I fell short, everything I fell short in were the things that I knew I had no control over which was the exams, the schools. It didn't matter how much I studied for myself. It's the minute I sat in front of the paper that it all went away.

And so I just started working harder at everything I knew I could do that was good, and everything else started to slip. And I started to hate school.

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Hate it. I had one teacher in high school that I thought was interesting. He was a history teacher. He was hilarious. He told stories about history and I, I forgot I was in history lessons when he was the one teaching. I would just get lost in the storytelling and then the bell would ring and I'd remember everything. But it was the storytelling. I remembered nothing else. Everything would just exit my brain.

And so I didn't actually graduate high school. My parents were so disappointed. And it was so painful for me to have done so much to support them and for me to still feel like they were disappointed. It just felt like, I'm out. So I just felt like my life, this is my parents unfortunately had hammered this into me for so long. If you don't have an education, your life will be hard. You will struggle. Things will not come easy and it will be really bad.

And so that's what I imagined my life would be. And so for a good time, that's exactly what it was. It was really hard and I got jobs where, you know, I was the manager in a clothing store, you know, making minimum wage plus because I was the manager, trying to get as much responsibility as possible to maybe get a job in a bigger clothing store and kind of made my way up like that until eventually I found sales.

And I realized that if I loved what I was selling, I had so much fun. It was so easy for me because when I loved a product, I knew everything about it. I would use it, I would love it, and so I was very passionate. And so I became really good in sales, whether I was selling makeup or whether I was selling fashion, clothing, whatever it was. As long as I could love it, I'd have the time of my life. And then one day I found a career that was fully commission, full sales commission.

No salary. As long as I sell, I make money. And I fell in love with that job. I became like a trainer for that job. And it was so interesting because the

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way I was trained, I found very difficult. I was supposed to learn a script by heart, which felt like school. The minute I got on the stage, my brain froze. I really struggled with it, but I made it my own because I loved the product.

And when it was my turn to teach, I taught the people very differently because I, instead of using the curriculum that I was taught, I taught based on how I learned it. And I had the best salespeople in the entire company worldwide. We had the smallest unit with the most powerful salespeople, and I had taught them all my way. And so for me, the way I explained it was always like, sales are, it's emotional. You've got to connect to it like the lyrics to a song. It's art. Like people have to feel, even when we're selling, no matter what the product is, it's got to feel like something.

And so everything became more emotional for me, and I realized that my mind, my brain just did not really work with the whole like logical way of doing things. And so I just decided I was not meant for the school system, but I could succeed in sales outside of that. And I got all excited and I brought this boyfriend I had into the system with me and you know, he became the manager, he organized everybody, I was the trainer, I trained everybody, and then that relationship was terrible. So it eventually broke apart and he sabotaged that opportunity for me unfortunately.

And when I was 25 years old, I ended up going bankrupt and just losing everything I had and sleeping in the front seat of a Honda Civic in the dead of winter. And it was just such a scary time because it felt like I had done exactly what my parents said would happen. Like they had said, if you don't get the education, you're going to struggle, everything's going to be hard, everything's going to fall apart, and then it did.

And so it was so difficult for me because I also knew I was not good at it. It was as if I had nothing else I could do because going back to that was not an option. I was 25 years old now, already so sold by the fact that I was

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incapable of that. And so what ended up happening was somehow I decided to do some personal work on myself. And the kind of studying that I was doing was all emotional studying. It was all coming from belief systems and like the mental aspect of who we believe we are as people, leadership, communication, emotional intelligence, processing emotions.

And I realized that was in fact a really big issue of mine and one of the reasons why exams became so overwhelming is that my brain, when it gets over emotional, stops being able to function with logic. And so I was able to strengthen my emotional system and all of a sudden I was able to remember things. My mind started working differently. I started remembering things and when it mattered the most. I found myself having conversations with people where I could remember word for word what I'd read in a book from page to page and all of a sudden I could remember things I'd never been able to remember.

I taught myself English at a higher level. I was able to speak properly. I was able to spell properly from being, failing French and English in spelling. All of a sudden, I can speak, I can write. I found passion for something. I attached emotion to what I was learning and suddenly there was a different version of me that emerged. And so I at first was supporting people in learning emotional, relational, leadership, just learning from a place of emotion and it was extraordinary the results I was seeing. And eventually I started merging sales to that.

And I got invited to be a sales trainer in all kinds of different industries and was able to teach people who were, let's say, illiterate in sales, how to really become extraordinary salespeople. People who had difficulties with leadership becoming extraordinary leaders. People who had difficulty with money becoming really great with money because the way that I teach actually was starting to land with people who said, I've never felt this way

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when I've learned before. I've never heard about it this way. I've never felt this way. It's never been this way.

And I felt really empowered by that because suddenly it's as if everything that I had been through was for something. It was for me to develop this new way of teaching, was for me to develop this new way of relating back to people. And so over time, I've met some incredibly important people in this world, people who are part of the education system, important people like you who empower principals in the school system and who have a really solid impact on the educational system, who are hearing my story and are saying, "You know, things are actually changing or do need to change. And we've already started pivoting and we're already seeing these certain things."

And I've been able to have my hand in some really important conversations that I believe are already shifting things in the world and that's such an incredible thing because from going from someone who feared that without an education, I would never amount to anything, to being someone who basically created my own understanding of how to educate myself to then eventually having an impact on the educational system, that is a really important arc and something that I am very excited by.

Something that I think is so wonderful that we're able to even have these discussions because I can just think of that young girl going through all this emotional turmoil, had there been an adjustment in the school system for me back then, I may have had decade of advance for my life. You know, I may have not needed that decade. But then again, I might end up being a part of why things change and then it'll be, have been an investment of 10 years. I'm all about that.

Angela Kelly: That's wonderful. It is an incredible story and it is a story that belongs to many children where the institution, as well intended as the

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individuals are who are in those classrooms and who are leading those schools and those districts, they have great intentions, they love kids and they are there for the right reasons. However, the system itself is structured in a way that has created a very specific way of learning to a specific type of learner in a specific type of environment.

And so we've pigeonholed, you know, who basically goes through the, you know, the threshold of success and who feels like they will not be successful because they don't have the credentials or the certifications, the, you know, the graduation diploma, those kinds of things. And we have, you know, created a narrative where it's all or none. It's this or nothing.

And you were able to break free from that narrative, which was, if you don't have these degrees and you didn't graduate and you didn't go on to college and get this particular degree in sales, for example, then you wouldn't be successful as a saleswoman. And here you are as a multimillionaire in sales, professional development, personal development, developing people and teaching them in a way that is so relatable and so understandable because it's visceral.

It goes beyond a textbook and a curriculum and a pacing guide and a, you know, a test that we are implementing as forms of measurement in our system. This goes into internal dialogues and internal identity and energies that allow us to connect with people and with concepts in a way that allow us to progress in multiple ways. Like there are endless facets to learning when you are tapping into the individual and into their talents, their strengths, their own magic.

Melanie: Yes. What I really do love about what's happened for me is I remember when I first started with the whole emotional mindset, leadership, self-leadership approach, my dad said to me, "If you want to do this, why don't you go back to university and do it properly? Like go get a

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degree in psychology." And I remember just feeling in the pit of my stomach like, I don't think he understands. I did not go to school to spite you. I did not continue my journey to spite you. I would have done anything to make you proud. I can't. Like that's not it. I know it's not.

And at this point now, I've been doing this work since 2013 and I think we've calculated just from the courses that I've done. There's like, oh my gosh, like tens and tens of thousands of hours of me speaking on camera in the last 13 years. That doesn't count the one on one calls. It doesn't count the in-person things. It doesn't count, like I have spent lifetimes inside of one life inside of these last 13 years speaking with people at what matters the most to them.

Every conversation, a conversation about a desire or something they are struggling with and my entire intention is to help them get closer to that thing. And every single conversation has brought me closer and closer to the understanding that people struggle to believe they're capable of things, and that is the first barrier to receiving it time and time again. And so you take children who imagine that they're incapable of learning and you add that barrier so early on in their lives. They carry that for a very long time.

And it develops not just in the school system, it becomes and it shapes who you believe you are. If I don't believe I'm good at learning, it doesn't just discredit the school system, it discredits everything. I think I'm not intelligent. I don't think I'm a good leader. I don't think I can provide for a family. I don't think I can do much at all. And it just starts to imprint so early on. And so a lot of the work that I end up doing with people is reframing a lot of those beliefs. And it's so crazy because you could go down a very solid path to get there.

And I believe that there are incredibly talented people that have a curriculum that's been built over decades and decades and decades, and I

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don't discredit any of that. I think that for the right fit, the right people that function that way, that there's a reason that this has been working forever. But there's also a reason that so many people fall through the cracks. People who've done the same thing over and over again for years and nothing changes.

And I've seen the most incredible thing happen with the people I've worked with is sometimes all it takes is one conversation. Literally, like it doesn't take learning. It takes being spoken to like a capable person, which is so wild because that seems like the simplest thing. But for someone who has been spoken to like they're incapable for most of their lives, it unlocks something that's quite extraordinary.

And so what I'm working on and what I'm excited about for the future is to really see that there are different people who learn in different ways and it's not the way that existed up until now is the best way and everyone else needs an alternative way because they're incapable. It's more like there was only a way created for one type and the rest of the world kind of deserves other types. Not as an alternative because we're incapable, but as a priority because that's what's best for us.

Because I do think that being taught something as an alternative also gives us a sense of I need special treatment because I'm not smart, instead of what's your preference? And I can only imagine had I, you know, growing up if I would have known like, what's your preference? What do you value? How do you learn best? And it wouldn't have been this is good and this is bad. My beliefs about myself would have been completely different.

And so I've built a huge company and, you know, I help people with things that I should probably have a psychology degree in order to help someone achieve that, but I haven't needed that. A business degree in order to be able to help someone do that, but I haven't. A finance degree in order to

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help someone do that, but I didn't. Like there's, even writing, speaking, like so many things that I would have needed to go through the school system in order to have the credentials in order to, I just put in the hours, like more hours than I wonder where I got them sometimes.

But in doing that with all of my heart, what I've come to realize is that there's just many different ways to learn. And there isn't one that's better than the other. There's just one that's better than the other for me. And there's one that's better than the other for you. And it isn't like if your brain doesn't function with this, you're not capable or you're not adequate. And I do believe that in the way the school system has continued for a long time, that's the belief a lot of students are left with is that if they are not adapted to the way, even if there is an adapted way, it's adapted because they're incapable. And it starts so young.

Angela Kelly: Yes. It is the identity that gets built around the identity of a student and who you are as a student. And when you learn in kindergarten, in first grade that you are behind grade level, right? People will say you're below grade level. You're performing below the line. You build this identity, I'm not a reader, I'm not a writer, that means I'm not literate, that means something's wrong with me.

And now we put you into intervention and that confirms because now you're separated from the mainstream that something is wrong with you. And then you and these children belong here and they belong there and they're going to continue on and you're going to have to be held back and so you can learn in the way you were meant to learn, but that way isn't the mainstream way.

That's how the system is set up currently. And obviously my mission is to evolve that, is to expand that and to enhance learning for all and to expand the purpose. And really, I feel like we are at a beautiful time in education

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because life is asking us to ask the question, what is the purpose of education and what is it for and who is it for? And we have the opportunity to express ourselves in ways that isn't just the mainstream anymore and to not throw away, I love when you say you don't have to throw out the old paradigm to create a new one.

The institution of education itself has roots and it's founded in those roots and instead of trying to throw that out or to work against it because what's happening now with kids is they're either like, "Oh, I'm a student, it's meant for me and I go down this path" or "I'm not a student so what's the point? I'm being required to come to an institution that has told me I'm not capable of doing the required tasks and to learn the required information, so why am I here?"

And then we get into, well, attrition rates and we get into, you know, attendance rates and now we're struggling with getting kids to want to come to school. And what I hear you saying is if we were to open ourselves up as educators into just exploring these different concepts at a more individual level, that we might be able to tap into identity work at a very young age and reprogram, well, not even reprogram, just not program them as non-learners.

Melanie: And that's so well said. And the other part of that is that people ask young kids how things are going at school all the time. It's the first question, you see your nieces and nephews, you say, "How's school?" And if they don't like it and they don't feel good, it's the first thing anybody asks them inside and outside of school. And the thing is when you, you don't feel good at school or you're not good at school, people know about that.

And so I also remember having some of the kids that struggled in my class, other kids, like their parents didn't want those kids to hang out because it's like, oh those kids don't study or those kids aren't good at school. So we

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want you to be friends with the scholars. We want you to be friends with the ones who do really well in school.

In a relationship, you know, first question at the dinner table when you have a new boyfriend, you know, "So, how you do, how do you do at school?" It's like, it's the whole thing. It's not just in the school system, it becomes who you are for everyone. Everyone wants to measure you based on how you're doing. Are you a good influence on my child? Are you a good influence? Are you smart? Are you good? Do you care? And it's so difficult because that is such a one way to look at the world.

And unfortunately, a lot of the people I knew that were so good at school, I've seen over the years post not being able to find the jobs that they wanted or, you know, getting frustrated with they've studied, they went all the way down a path, years and years of studying, student loans galore just to find out they don't even like what they're doing once they've, they're there and they want to pivot and it's like so much invested and then they don't even know if that's what they want to be. And so it feels like there's so much good in the way that the school system is built. If it has survived this long, there's no question about that.

But I just wonder how much it has changed in comparison to the rest of the world changing. Isn't there a sign there that it hasn't followed a curve the way the rest of the world is learning and expediting so quickly? How is the school system not evolved more?

Angela Kelly: Yes. That is definitely a question that we talk about in my programs and with my one-on-ones because the world is evolving at rapid rate, right? Technology, AI, you could get online and have any of these conversations around the like how exponential our world is changing in terms of communication, connection, and the beauty of technology.

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And what I see education doing is trying to just input technology on top of the old foundation and just use the same foundation but then add technology. And what we're finding is that kids aren't learning better because they now have Chromebooks or they now have laptops and computers and phones. They're actually more disconnected, more disengaged than ever before.

And you bring up a beautiful point around your, you said you had nieces and nephews. And I was an educator. I was a teacher, elementary teacher, I was a school principal, a district leader, and I have one son who is now, he'll be 27 on April 24th. And I watched him go through school and he conformed to the system. He was this beautiful little spirit and I watched him conform. And as an educator at the time, I was proud of that. Now in hindsight, I feel differently, but he did, he conformed to the system. So he was one of the top students. He performed for the school. He learned in the way they wanted him to learn and he was miserable. And it broke my heart.

And as a parent and an educator, I started to, there were cracks in my belief system that were starting to chasm because as a teacher, I was proud of him and you know, he was the good kid and the quiet kid and the studious kid and the A plus kid. But as a parent, it felt wrong. And I started to see light come through where the way that I was teaching and the expectations I had and my belief in the educational system as an educator was separate from how I was feeling as a parent. And I couldn't have seen that difference until I became a parent.

But what it taught me was I want no child in the future to go through whether they are struggling, I saw the pain in the kids that were struggling. I saw it in their eyes. I saw it in their hearts. And I saw their identity just slip away from them and their spirit. And I was a kindergarten teacher. When my son hit kindergarten and then and beyond, I saw him performing and conforming and he was equally unhappy. And I thought to myself, "Who's

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happy in this scenario? Teachers don't feel happy, principals aren't feeling happy. The students, whether they're successful or not, are not happy. Something's got to give here. Something is off."

And that's where I found this work in terms of the energetics of leadership, the energetics of learning, the identity, and that's, you have really impacted my work as an educator because you've expanded the way I think about leadership, the way I think about teaching and learning. And my mission, my heart is for the children of the future. I do not want my grandchildren one day, should I have them, to have the same experience that Alex had and that I had and that you had and that millions upon millions of people have had through our school system.

So when you think about your nieces and nephews, Melanie, and they're so precious, and you think about them entering into the current system, what is it that you wish for them? What is it that educators might be able to bring to enhance the experience and the identities of students moving forward in our current system that would enhance their experience as a student?

Melanie: So I'm going to give you multiple answers.

Angela Kelly: Great.

Melanie: What I hope for them the most from the bottom of my heart is that their journey at school is the least important thing about them and that they know that. I hope that they find a way to love it and that they make it through and that they enjoy learning, but I hope that in their lives, people ask them about their favorite color, about their friends, about what they love, about that they laugh with people, that they make memories with people.

Like I will never ask my niece how school is going unless she wants to talk to me about it. I ask her about everything else about her life. I know who

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she is. I don't know about her school life, but I don't, I want to be the one person who never asks her about that. On the odd chance it's not her favorite thing, she'll have one person that does not care about that.

Like I want there to be more people in children's lives that do not go the easy route and only know about the people, the kids that they love based on, "What grade are you in now?" and "How do you, do you like school? What's your favorite topic? Are you good at school? Do you like school? Do you have a lot of homework?" Like, I just, I wish for them a world where people care about them as people, even as children more than they care about how they're doing at school. That's the first thing I care about.

The second thing I hope for them is that they get teachers who chose this profession because they genuinely want to make a difference. Not people who chose it because they would get a really great maternity leave. This is speaking from Canada or people who would get the summer off and it's convenient when you have kids or people who like the schedule or people who think, "Well, this is the only thing I can do based on the education that I have."

I hope they actually get teachers who chose this profession because they wanted to make a difference. Brave, bold people who are looking to make every school year better than the last one because they're learning something with what worked with their last group of kids and what they can improve. People who actually care about the profession itself. I hope that for them.

I also hope that there are people developing new curriculum, people creating new ways that it's going to evolve for them, that they're going to see a different school system than I saw, that they're going to tell me about things at school because they want to tell me and I'll think, "Oh my gosh,

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I'm so happy. This sounds so cool. I wish I would have had something like that." I wish that for them.

And above all else, what I really hope is that they develop skills outside of school so that if they do ever find that this system does not work for them, that they do not worry, that they pivot and they go be extraordinary because it's not the end. No matter what happens, it's not the end. There is another way. You know, whether kids find that out in the school system or afterwards, outside of it, there's still another way. And so my hope is that they find that if that's not the way. And if it is the way that they have the time of their life, that they love it and that they evolve into what they want. But those are all the things I hope for them.

Angela Kelly: That is really the humanity of education. It is bringing humanity back into the field of education and not letting curriculum companies and testing companies be the dictator of who we are, why we're here, what we are doing, how we are doing it, how we are progressing, and developing humans. We are in the business of human development. That's what education is intended to be. And it has become, I know, there's many influences, external influences on education that have educators pressured.

But I love that you brought this up because I can only imagine we have some listeners out there who are tangled right now. They got their knickers in a knot and they're upset because you're saying school's not the most important thing when educators have been taught to believe that education is the most important thing. And you're also saying education's not the end all be all. If this doesn't end up working for you, there are alternatives out in the world. You don't need the degree.

And I think we're seeing that now with the invention of the internet and YouTube and you can go online and learn just about anything from anyone

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anywhere. Is it as curated? Probably not, but that's probably the point, is that it's not as curated and that you have choice and you have a voice in how you learn and who you learn from and what you learn and the topic and the way.

And I think that's a beautiful thing. So it invites us, school leaders, I'm speaking to you right now, it invites us school leaders to open ourselves up to more than just what currently is, to expand ourselves as leaders, to lead us through the change and to be open to the conversations we're having around the energetics of leadership, the energetics of teaching, the energetics of studying and learning and being a student.

I teach a lot about identity and I learned that from Melanie, my own personal identity as a coach, as a mentor, as a professional development expert, and a mentor for school leaders. But I speak to that also in terms of the identity of teachers and students. And we don't have to buy into the one identity, which is, this is who I have to be as a principal, this is who I have to be as a teacher, and this is who I have to be as a student. And if it's not that, then I'm out. It doesn't work for me.

I think that we are the people who are in charge of the experience that we're having and that we can create that experience for students keeping in mind our own experiences as educators and bringing back the humanity, as you discussed, in that this one curriculum isn't the end all be all. This one class isn't the end all be all. I've had to tell teachers, "You're not going to save every student, but they, luckily, they have 12 more teachers along the line."

So looking at education more expansively, it's not this one grade level make it or break it. It's not this one teacher or this one class. We are a collective. We are working together. We are teaching and learning together, and we are developing as children and as adults because the learning

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doesn't stop at 18 when you get the diploma or not and walk out the door. The learning continues on and on. And this is an example.

And Melanie, this is one of the reasons I asked her to be on this show is that she is an example that is outside the box, that is outside traditional education, and she is an example of what is possible for children who aren't currently working well in the current system. But educators out there, the ones whose hearts know there's something more in teaching, know there's something more available to provide for students and for leaders out there. You're listening to this, hearing her story, knowing that there is more we can do.

We do have more power than we think to influence and to have impact and to not allow school to only be one narrative for one type of child. And Melanie's story is the perfect example of that. There are students out there who've gone all the way to PhD like you said Melanie, and they're very unhappy.

So can you discuss a little bit about the work you do around leadership, energetics, relationships, communication, and how you would see that integrating into a system that is founded on its current foundation, but bringing this into the current system to enhance the experience for both educators and students?

Melanie: Well, I want to address one little thing you said first, and then I want to answer this question because I wouldn't exactly answer it the way you've asked it and I want to explain why. So first thing I also want to say is that because of the way the school system is created right now, when you said, you know, a lot of the teachers, they can't save every child and they get really attached, like they want these children to succeed.

I do think that the other part of this is it's very difficult for teachers when a student is failing or when multiple students are failing because it's like their

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job is to make sure that the kids go through the curriculum. But it doesn't empower teachers to pivot much. It doesn't give them the right to say, "Hey, let's change all of this." It's like this is the way and if the way isn't working, I still can't change the way.

I just need to somehow make the child succeed no matter what, which is so difficult because when you're a kid, you don't know the difference between someone trying to get you to understand something because they care, because it's their job, their mission, because that's what they've got to help you with versus because you're not getting it and you're not good enough and they're impatient with you. Like you don't know the difference.

And so I do think it's also increasingly difficult for teachers when they don't have access to anything to pivot to because only having restricted access to certain things and it's like these are the tools, make them work, that also becomes really draining, especially when you know the responsibility. If it feels like you're responsible for a child's upbringing almost. Like a lot of these kids, they're spending most of their waking hours and most of their supportive hours with a grownup in a classroom.

And for a full year, these teachers care about these kids, they want them to succeed and when the kids hate the topic or don't like school or don't feel good there and don't want to listen, that is exhausting for the teachers and they're not really given other options. So there it's also something to recognize this isn't like who is, what is the problem? Is the problem the students? Is the problem the teachers? Is the problem the school system?

And I think that this is where the answer to your next question comes is that I really believe that the issue is that there is no long-term vision collectively happening with all educators. There's a lot of it is trying to fix what's happening and that doesn't work right now. And I always talk no matter who I'm working with, whether I'm speaking to the head of a huge organization

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or whether I'm speaking to someone who's running a smaller organization, it's always about the grander vision.

You've got to go out as far as you can first and then change things that are possible to change sooner and then other things are scheduled for a few years from now and then other things a few years from now. But I think that anytime I have a conversation about the school system, what people are hoping for is something that they could do right now. And the fact is we can make small like adaptations right now, but I don't actually think that's what's going to change everything.

What's going to change everything is people who have been doing this work for multiple years, who have had so many students, who have so much wisdom, who know so much about the school system, coming together and saying, "What do we want to see in the next decade? And in order for this to look like this in the next decade, what can we change in the next five years? And for that to be there in the next five years, then what's our three-year plan? And then what's our two-year plan? And then where do we want to be by this time next year?"

And I don't think we can change the school system just by saying, "What are some small adaptations that we can make right now?" I don't know that we can get to where we really want to go making tiny little shifts. There needs to be a question like, what is the way that's missing?

And I've contemplated this because I've watched so many people come into my work swearing blind that they can't do this. "I can't, I'm not meant for this, I'm not good at business, I'm not good at money, I'm not good with people, I'm not good at this," becoming millionaires within a couple of years. Sometimes in a couple of months because there's something that happens when you start actually working with the brain of a person that works in an emotional loop.

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And so what I found is that the people who have a mind that functions in an emotional loop, what does not work is to have many different topics of conversation in the same day. That doesn't work. This is like just look at humanity as it is. What is the number one thing people do? They get stuck on social media and they scroll nonstop or they watch Netflix nonstop.

There is a large majority of the world that the way that they do best is in a momentum loop. It means that you've got to create a meaning and that meaning has to have something that comes next and something that comes next and something that comes next and something that comes next that all makes sense and it's all connected.

And so I've thought about this before, what would be the ideal for a person like me, a mind like mine, and the ideal would be that all the subjects are somehow tied together and that the projects are evolving based on the level of skill that's required, but everything's connected. So something that would be, for example, in the first year, you're going to be learning how to make a recipe. Well, in order to be able to learn how to make the recipe, you have to understand the history of where it's from. What country does it come from?

You've got to understand why those ingredients come from that country. So now you understand the country a little bit more. There's reasons to do the research. There's reasons to see what it looks like. Then what type of climate that food grows in or whatever it is, and then, okay, how do you make it? Then math, this is what milliliters look like. This is what, you know, this is what grams look like. This is what this looks like. This is how you weigh it. If you did this minus this, what would you get? This is how all of a sudden there's a reason for learning this.

Even if it needs to be like, we want six tomatoes. So we're going to give you 10 tomatoes. If you wanted six, how many would you take away? Four.

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Like you would make it make sense with a whole thing where everything you're doing includes multiple things so that children aren't just thinking, "I am learning this because I need to be good at this." They're saying, "How do I create this whole thing? I need to have a piece of math. I need to be able to read the instructions. I need to be able to do this. I need to be able to do this." Like all the parts come together.

And it slowly but surely creates more, "I care about this." There's more connection to everything you're doing as you're doing it. Then eventually, maybe you learn how to bake, then maybe there's a bake sale, then you decide how much did each ingredient cost and how much time did it take and then how much should you charge for each thing? And then maybe there's a bake sale and how much to wrap and then they make their own little logos in art school and maybe and then how much money did they make and then they count the money and then how do they put the money away?

And then eventually maybe they've got to figure out how to get an apartment one day and what does it look like to have a credit score and what does that look like and what does it mean? And everything's connected. And so year after year, all the projects are connected through a multitude of subjects. And so I'm learning about new places in the world, not just because you're showing me a map and you're saying, "What's that called? What's that called?" I'm saying, "Oh, I didn't realize that, you know, guacamole is avocados and this particular recipe of avocado is from Mexico and that this exists there because there's sunshine and this."

Like I didn't know that. And when I do know that and I know how to make guacamole and I know exactly how to make it, I know how to measure it and I know why it matters, I feel excited to talk about that because it's an emotional thing. And if my family ever went to Mexico, I'd be so excited because I know about all these things.

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And so it's connecting things because when I see children now, kids now playing games, like adult games, what they love the most is all the connections. How does it work? What does it mean? They know all the characters and all these shows that they watch. They know all the things. If it matters to them, they remember it. But then they're needing to sit there and remember all the provinces or all the types of clouds and it's like, is there really not another way to create momentum?

Because when I look at the way a lot of my clients learn, there's a momentum, which means the more we talk about it, the more they care. The more we talk about it and the more they realize it touches other parts of their lives, the more they care. The more we talk about it and they realize it impacts more parts of their lives, the more interested they are to read about, learn about, hear about the other parts that are coming next if they complete this piece. Now they're like, "Okay, this is done. Can I learn more about that? Can I learn more about that?"

Different people are more interested in the next progression than other things. Like maybe some will be more interested in the baking and some will be more interested in the business and some will be more interested in the measuring and the science part.

And so all of a sudden you're seeing the preferences, you're seeing people come alive. Is it the artist, the scientist, the mathematician? Is it the organized one or the one who was just so excited to bake something? Like what's emerging from the child? And then you actually get to figure out how to place them next year. And it's like, "Let's have a conversation with the teachers. Let's look at what happened."

But there would have to be room for the teachers to think. There would have to be space for creation. There would have to be conversation in the

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school about what goes next and where do people go and there would have to be something that would be occurring.

But it's like while everyone is separated and they all have the same curriculum and they've got to nail everything on the head and it's like if it's measured right and they succeed, it's a thumbs up and if the kids fail, it's a thumbs down. No matter how many little pivots we make, we're not really developing another solution. We're just kind of adapting, which is still better. But we do think that what leadership really is, what's the vision?

Angela Kelly: Yes.

Melanie: And my dream would be that by the time a child is 10, 11, 12 years old, they have so many things they're passionate about at school. They have so many things they're passionate about. They're already thinking about what they might be when they grow up. Not because of what they're learning, but because of what they are so excited about. They love things. They want to try stuff out. They are interested in stuff. They don't understand like I think kids should understand about money and business way earlier if they're excited about that. It changes a person's life.

I speak to so many people on a daily basis who've had, you know, difficult childhoods where they've had to be involved in the money making earlier and although it was traumatic and difficult, they're so grateful that they understood sooner how to generate that money. It was unbelievable how helpful that was.

I feel like there's so many conversational topics that are completely intertwined with real-life things when you're making breakfast and you're putting this much cereal. What's a serving? How do you know? Like we could be doing so much more connected work where the kids just get in that emotional loop because when I look at what takes a woman in my world from, "I, I not graduated school and I make minimum wage" to "I'm a

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millionaire," the difference is the momentum loop of this makes me feel like I get it, this makes me feel like I understand it.

And it makes me feel like if I don't understand this, I could pivot here, I could learn this instead and all of a sudden I'd circle back and finally understand this part. It doesn't feel like there's only one way. It feels like I can trust myself that if this is blocking, there's somewhere else I could go and eventually circle back. Like if I'm not understanding the math of the recipe, well if I screw up the recipe and I eat it, I'll realize, "Oh, I put too much of this and this." Now I'm understanding science. Now I understand science, I care about the math more. Okay, now we're back into that. It's like not all the paths are linear like that. Sometimes I only care about something after I care about it.

So you're trying to explain to me that you need this amount of solid and this amount of liquid in order to create this and I'm trying to figure that out with my mind, but it isn't until I've got pizza dough dripping through my fingers that I care about the ratio.

You can talk to me about heat, you can talk to me about measurements, you can talk to me about math, you can talk to me about all these things, but it isn't until I'm, you know, maybe eating something I've made or collecting money from a bake sale that I'm going to be able to give to a cause that I've researched because of all this that I've understood that I care about what next year's project is going to be because I get it and I like it. I want to, I care about the countries, I care about this and I care.

And I think that for a lot of people, a lot of kids, the biggest issue is that they don't know how to care about things. They're not being taught at home how to dream. They're not being taught at home how to believe in themselves necessarily. Not everyone has that opportunity. You know, not everyone has at home an imagination, a feeling of I can do anything, a

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feeling of dreaming or creating. And so if you were to bring that to school, a lot of these kids would come alive for the first time.

A lot of the kids that go to school just learning, they're lacking a passion of any kind anywhere, and then they're just trying to be given information. It's not landing. Some kids are so happy at home and they're overflowing and their parents have time for them and they say, "Tell me what you learned" and they have so much fun and they take them and they travel with them and their mind is full and it's an imagination overload and they already understand about so many things about the world and you add education to that and it's just an overflowing thing.

But for other kids that feel a little empty and not important, you add an education with a grading system, you don't realize how dull their life is, what's missing. And so if there were a way to add more emotion, more connection, more care, more imagination, more creation, more responsibility, a lot of these kids would come alive and be some of the most extraordinary learners, but not scholars necessarily, artists, scientists, innovators, visionaries.

There's no space for that early enough to make kids not already think they're not good enough by the time they could even imagine they have that in them in the first place. So I think that if there were more identities than just a scholar, and I know that there's arts and crafts, you know, an hour of arts and crafts or an hour of physical education, but it's not connected to anything.

Angela Kelly: Right.

Melanie: So if in a school project, making the little logo that goes on the, you know, baking muffins that you've made and you made the most beautiful muffins and the most beautiful logo and at the end you sold the most because you had the greatest sales skills and you made the most

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beautiful looking cupcakes, like wouldn't that be awesome for you to know at seven years old when you've struggled with making the recipe and you've struggled with everything else, that you're good at that?

And it's wild to me how rapid things start to move when people feel like they can do something. And so sometimes you're just working against what kids are good at because I think back to myself and I'm like, I knew every single word to the Backstreet Boys and the Spice Girls by heart. But I could not remember 13 provinces.

Angela Kelly: Yes.

Melanie: Like how do we not question this? How is that not...? The kids are capable. My niece, five years old, knew every character of Peppa Pig, all of them.

Angela Kelly: Yes.

Melanie: But couldn't count in order.

Angela Kelly: Right.

Melanie: So if we actually see imagination, emotion, care, connection, momentum, a storyline, multiple things coming at once, stimulation instead of concentration.

Angela Kelly: Yes.

Melanie: What would we create? And if it were like, "What's the 10-year plan? How close can we get to that in five? Three, two, by next year?" And people came together and said, "Let's try it." Then we'd get closer to it. And I think honestly, listening to a podcast episode like this and thinking about it is already a step forward.

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Even people getting mad at it because I've, I've had conversations like this that go so well and I have conversation like this that don't go so well. People are like, "You know, you're an anomaly and you were able to, you know, good for you. You know, you did it your way, but..." yeah and I'm like, "Cool, except I've trained thousands and thousands of women to do extraordinary things in this way that I'm an anomaly in. So why are we waiting till women are 40 years old?"

Angela Kelly: Right.

Melanie: When they could have known they were capable of things when they were seven?

Angela Kelly: Yes. You speak to that so eloquently and the bottom line I'm hearing is, it would be lovely if we stop teaching in isolation because what learning is connecting dots, it's connection. It's an emotional connection to create an intellectual connection, an understanding intellectually, cognitively of what is happening in the world around us and why. And when there is an emotional connection, there is an intellectual connection. But when we teach in isolation, it drops off the meaning.

There is no meaning to two plus two is four. Why do I need to know this? What does it matter? And can't I use a calculator for that? Who cares that I need to know this? But when you are running a bake sale and you need to learn how to make muffins and brownies and whatnot, two plus two really matters, but there's a reason that it matters, like you said.

And it's the experiential, it's the kinesthetic learning, it's the full body encompass learning that occurs when dots are connected throughout the day, throughout the lessons and it sounded like project-based learning where we have a project. There might be smaller projects going on. There might be a larger project that goes for the entire school year. Maybe there are semester projects that are going on. But when there's a project, you're

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bringing in all of the disciplines and they're integrated together which creates an emotional connection for the student.

And I would venture to say that also brings students together because now it doesn't matter if you know how to learn in isolation or not. We're all learning together in the project-based learning model and in the connection of and the integration of learning. So everyone's learning with purpose, with understanding, with intent, with connection, with value, because they're now seeing the value of the learning. They want to learn.

Like you said, your niece knew all the characters of Peppa Pig. She saw the value in learning those characters and understanding them and being connected to them. She felt something emotionally versus 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or doing it in French, however, whatever language she's learning her numbers in. Like it was an isolation. It didn't matter. There wasn't a meaning to it.

Melanie: No, like my little nephew is two and a half years old and he's two and a half years old. And he said to me this weekend, "Auntie Lenny, when I woke up, there was chocolate on the floor like this."

Angela Kelly: So cute.

Melanie: He took his time, but two and a half years old. "Auntie Lenny, when I woke up, there was chocolate on the floor like this for Frankie." And I said, "That is amazing. Did you, did there, was there something at the end of it?" "Yes. Frankie got a book. Frankie got a toy. Frankie got..." and he explained to me all the things. And later on we were playing and there was this book and there was these 10 ducks.

And I said, you know, there's 10 ducks and he went, "1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 11, 14, 12, 9." And I just thought it was so funny because who cares? This two-year-old took his time and explained to me that when he woke up in the

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morning, there was a trail of chocolates and when he got there, he had a toy and a book and a this. And then he counted 1, 2, 3, 7, 10, 9, 11, 14, 9. Because that's the thing. What is captivating is what I care about.

And so if I spend most of my living days in a room where I have to listen, I can't even be telling you what I care about. I have to be listening to what you're telling me I need to care about. Can you at least tell me in a way I care about it?

And if on top of that, you're going to measure my intelligence based on how much I remember of what you told me, that you've told me I need to care about, can you at least tell it to me in a way that I enjoy? If my entire life is based on whether or not I understand it. And if I don't and you felt this and most of the people that came before you felt this, how long until someone changes it or do we just keep doing it this way?

Angela Kelly: Yes.

Melanie: So my real connected feeling to this is that the school system will change when someone says, "Let's rework the whole thing. Let's try something else. We've already got this one down pat. Like we've got this one. Whatever stuff is coming up is not because this one needs fixing. It's because another one needs to emerge. You can't fix this one anymore than it is. It's like it's pretty much set. But what else is available?" And who knows? Maybe in developing this one, even the ones who are good at this might say, "Kind of like that more." You never know.

Angela Kelly: Right.

Melanie: But I feel like this is a way that also prepares people's brains to be far greater when they come into the real world because one of the things I'm constantly helping women with is juggling. They are very good at running their business as long as there's no kids in the house. And they are

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very good at being organized as long as there's no money problems and they're really good at thinking about what they need to budget as long as no one's talking to them about something else because how we're taught from the beginning is, now we're talking about math.

Everyone concentrate, no one say anything, listen, focus, math. That's not how we need math later. We need math right now. Are the bills going to work? Because math plus emotion goes together as a grown up, but not in school. And then we wonder why we all kind of struggle with all the things that need calculating.

Like how do we isolate emotion from mathematics and then expect grownups to be functional? Because that's not how it works. Like the topics that go together actually go together. So when you think about even the clouds, you think about you want to learn about the clouds, you want to think about the different climates, but you want to learn that why? Like what does it really matter?

Like if I'm looking outside and it's cloudy, I don't know what kind of clouds are what, but if I want to try to grow a certain thing and I'm like, "Oh, there's no point in me buying this because this climate doesn't do it because it needs this kind of rain and this kind of clouds and this kind of thing." Then it would matter to me.

And I'm seeing so many people like, "I bought myself this plant, the plant died." But I'm like, "But where did you get the plant?" "You know, I bought it at the store. They have a million plants." I'm like, "Yeah, but where did you put it?" "Well, I put it in the window." "But that's not a sun plant. That's a shade plant because it's from this area of the world where there's, you know?" "Oh, this needs so much sun. How do you know?" "Well, it's a rainforest plant. You need to water it. How much, how do you know that?"

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"Well, it grows in tropical climates." "How do you know that?" "I've been to tropical climates."

But grown people killing plants because they're putting like really lush green plants in a corner with no light because they're, it's not, they're not even thinking about, "This is a plant. I should be able to water it and it's the day it's enough." But it's like, no, where are you putting it? There's so many things like where am I learning about biology? Where am I learning about the clouds and the mountains? Is in a classroom with no clouds, no mountain, no plants.

So how am I supposed to care about any of that stuff? If it is important, then let it be important. Let have schools have gardens. Let's explain why certain things can't grow here. Let's say we would love to have this plant, but we can't because if we had it here, it would die because, let's explain that. Let's have winter activities and summer activities because we explain that in certain climates we can do some things and not other things. Like there's so much to learn.

And I really do believe that when you become a grownup and you've got to be able to understand science because you're cooking dinner and you don't want it to burn, while you're figuring out your finances and you need math to make ends meet at the end of the month, and you're putting out a report for something or you're putting out an important thing on your website or whatever, you need to be able to think and write and have something in the oven and the math be mathing all on the same day in the same moment right now.

But in the classroom, French, English, science, and math are one after the other and nothing interrupts any of them. So we have short tempers and an inability to do two things at once. Of course, it's how we're brought up. That's how we were taught everything.

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Angela Kelly: Yes.

Melanie: So what would happen if we mixed it? Then maybe we would have people that are able to focus on two things at once.

Angela Kelly: Yes. And the integration, what you're saying is that integration of learning, if we start that from the very beginning, that is who will, we will become. We will just know, we will become that person. That will be the identity of the student is that they handle a multitude of information from different curriculums, from, you know, different disciplines as we say, all at once, which is what life is.

Melanie: Yes. Like I would love to see even in physical education having like relays where you've got to be running through something and you've got to remember the list you were given while you're doing, you've got to do 10 laps of this and then you've got to run over there and you've got to climb up there and come down there and you have to remember the list you went with because that would be helpful when you need to be shopping with three little kids and you're running through a grocery store and you've got to remember the milk, the oranges, the apples, the, like wouldn't that be helpful?

But it's like, no, when you're doing the physical education, you don't think of anything. You just hear a whistle and you run as fast as you can. What if we put, there's more relays. There's things, you know, if it's like, okay, we're going to do the bake sale, but you've got to go run for the ingredients. We need you to be able to multitask. You're stressed about running and you've got to remember what you need.

And that maybe comes in a little later on in the educational thing, but it's like you've got this much time to run with your basket. You need coordination, dexterity, and all the things, you need to be able to calculate

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how much money you have, how much of all the ingredients you need and you've got to remember what you need at the end. Go.

And these are not just marked. Like at the end, you don't just get marked like, "Oh, 10 out of 10." It's more like, here's what we learned about you. You were excellent at remembering this and this. Here you got really emotional. What happened there? Like these are the things that would change the educational system is to actually look at what do grownups lack that children could be being trained for pleasantly from the beginning that would still integrate everything they need to learn, would probably make them better at learning it and actually help them use it when they grow up.

Angela Kelly: Yeah. It's like the right of passage you were speaking of in one of your programs where we don't integrate right of passage into our schools and conversations around different developmental milestones that children go through. But I think this is one way to actually celebrate it and play with it a little bit and have fun because how much more fun is it to go through all of those and have to go to the market and remember and okay, what did I remember?

And I loved when you said the question about we're not getting a mark of 10 out of 10, we're looking at, here's where you excelled, this is what was, you know, it felt natural to you, and this is where you got emotional. What happened? Because that requires that identity reflection of what was going on for me personally that, you know, not in comparison. You're not saying little Jenny passed the test and you failed the test. Jenny just didn't get emotional in this aspect of it, but that's Jenny's business. What happened with you is, you know, there was some emotion there. What came up?

Such a great question for students to be learning about introspection and, you know, connecting with themselves and not being ashamed that they got emotional at that part of the project, but to, as an exploration of why.

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Melanie: And I will say, in doing this work and developing this work, I've often had people tell me, "I wish you would do it for free. You know, I wish that you could offer this course around communication for free. I wish you could offer this course around women's empowerment for free. I wish you could offer this for free. I wish you could offer this for free." And honestly, I really hope one day it is offered for free. But the fact is, there needs to be in the world a group of people who are willing to put themselves on the line for things to change. That is just the way it is.

I did a lot of this work for free before I was recognized as valuable. I did a lot of this work for free until eventually people started speaking out for me and saying, "Gosh, you need to hire this girl. Like my life has completely changed. I've, I've achieved more within a few months working with this person than I have during an entire semester of education. Like this is unbelievable. It's just amplified everything I know, everything I do." But I took years of my life to shape this before it became what it was. And the people who are investing in it see the value in it, but the whole world does deserve it.

And so the other part of this is to say, you know, some of the teachers that are listening to this, you may want to like find other teachers that are willing to do this and come together and create some sort, some kind of like Montessori school, you know, something that is not quite the way it is and give it a shot, extracurricular. If you're passionate about the education system and you're doing it for passion, it's not just for, you know, the job that it is because if that's why you're doing it, this wouldn't be interesting for you.

But for those of you who are like, "Gosh, this would be my dream to be a part of creating this," maybe it's extracurricular. Maybe it's something that you start doing, you know, during the summer. Maybe it's something that you bring, it may be that some parents are willing to pay for their kids to

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have something like this happen until it's a proven system until it can be presented as a actual curriculum. But this is the thing that's difficult is that changing the curriculum that's already been accepted, first of all is difficult, and second of all is not creation, it's just fixing and that's never the same.

I really think for something like this to be birthed, there would need to be a bunch of very intelligent minds coming together and saying, "Okay, what is important in first grade? What are we really measuring as a success marker for first grade? What can they do? They can write out the letters, they can read. What is important for them to know? And how could we bring all those topics and move them into integration more? And how do we then bridge that with year two? And then how do we do that? And how did it work?"

And every year coming together and just bringing it, like it would take some people to decide to take this on and to really build a concept. And there are people who would pay one million percent, especially entrepreneurs, people like me who know like, I would put my kids through that before I'd ever put them through a traditional school system. There just is going to need to be people who are brave and who take a shot and saying, "As long as these children can graduate the same way, if they're able to do the things, like, can we get there?"

Angela Kelly: Yes. And then some. I think about when you talked about first grade, what do they need? What I think about what are people complaining about that kids don't have or that they're lacking? Let's start there because most of the time, especially in the early years, it's not as much academics that they're complaining about. That's just like on top, that's just the surface, but really what they're worried about is self-regulation, social skills, communication skills, being able to express themselves without hitting or biting or tantruming or something.

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Like those skills, those early developmental skills, if we could actually focus and prioritize internal emotional understanding and regulation at an appropriate level, bringing kids up along, their academics will flow, but we are fighting against a system where they're expected to grow intellectually and academically, but there is no curriculum and understanding of or modeling of emotional regulation, emotional connection, and self-discernment and then building up an identity as a student, as a teacher, as a learner in our system.

So when you speak about the integration, I can see puzzle pieces. You know, I think of like kindergarten, they're putting together pieces of a puzzle and instead of giving them one piece and saying, "Understand the big picture with this one piece, figure out the rest," you're saying, "Let's work together to build the puzzle so we can see the vision all together." But then that kindergarten is actually just a subset of a bigger puzzle, of a bigger puzzle, of a bigger puzzle, of a bigger puzzle.

But when you're giving kids individual pieces, "Here's language arts, now here's math, now here's science, now here's social studies," and none of that connects, it's like you're giving pieces to different puzzles and you know, what is this? There's no comprehension, no understanding, and then we complain that there's no comprehension and understanding.

I really love that you're inviting people, there's two phases I think. If you're currently in education, there is, you're working within a system. You need to put up an under construction sign and you need to like work with the system you're working with, but also be under construction and be having these conversations.

So I think people within the system can put up the, "We're under construction, still open for business, but we are remodeling as we go, tearing down, re-examining, revisioning, and going with the new updated,"

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and there are people who will step out and build from scratch as you were saying in that invitation. And there's, I think there's two kinds of educators, the ones who want to do the under construction model and the ones who want to like build from scratch from the floor up.

My work with leaders has been within the system and I feel inspired to like invite a group to explore what it would look like to just, if we could start from scratch, what would we do taking in the humanity of education and the development, the human development process? I think that's where we need to go back to, right? We are in, as I always say, we're in the business of people, we're in the business of human development.

And what you're expressing Melanie and so beautifully, I hope that this has been for the listeners an emotional experience, an invitation to explore what you know to be true about teaching and learning, which is, we don't learn in isolation. We don't learn effectively in isolation, may I say, but we learn through integration, connection, collaboration, and building the puzzle pieces together so that we can see the vision and expand that vision as we go through school.

And Melanie does this work. I just want to add this. Melanie does this work at an individual level. She does it at group level. She does it at corporate levels. She does it for institutions. She does this work very comprehensively. This is why I have selected her as my mentor. One thing I love about Melanie is she has helped me connect the pieces that were not available or present in my formal education.

They are things that even if I had strived to achieve my PhD, so I do have my master's in education. I had planned to get my PhD. Life took some unexpected turns, but I feel like I have a real PhD in life having worked with you and will continue to work with you in future endeavors. So Melanie, if

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people want to learn more about the services you offer, the work that you do in the world, where would you direct them?

Melanie: Well, if we're speaking of people from your community...

Angela Kelly: Yes.

Melanie: I would probably have them reach out directly to me on social media or even like email [info@alphafemme.com](mailto:info@alphafemme.com) and to really talk about which skills they're most lit up by working on right now, and my team would really be able to tell them where and what. What I do find is the most valuable with what I do is the ability to start retraining your mind to think like a leader, an innovator, a visionary, a person who can affect change, because what limits most people is the belief that they can only do with what they've got.

When in fact, we are able to create new resources just by thinking differently. And so being in certain programs that talk about leadership, you know, that talk about emotional regulation, emotional intelligence for women, like just communication, it's wild what it'll open. I think you do one program, you realize my, my teaching style and then you go, I would like to know more about that or I would like to know more about that. I think it's a path. And I think just in touching whatever you touch with me first, you'll realize there's something in what I said you wish you could go deeper in.

And if it was all linear like this and you had to wait forever before you got there, you'd probably give up and then you might realize something else about the school system. I think it's just coming in and realizing a different way of learning and saying, "Whoa, this," just watching other people learn in a different way and saying, this, I can see how this is entirely different and seeing how everything's connected and it kind of creates this snowball.

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So wherever you would feel drawn to start, I think, you know, talk about what you care about and you could come in for money, you could come in for relationships, you could come in for whatever you genuinely feel that you care about and then watch the snowball effect occur as everything I speak about is connected and you just instinctively know what your next move would be. Because I think that's how we learn the best is we go with what really matters to us and the connection gets made with what the next progression is.

And just one little thing I wanted to say based on what you shared just before about having the under construction. I loved that vision. And what I really saw, which would be so incredible, because ultimately, I don't think anything can just be changed overnight. That's what this conversation really is about. It's saying, "Can we even think about what is the ideal? Like let's look at the whole curriculum and let's create an ideal and let's reverse engineer the whole thing and go backwards and see what we could do."

And even if we don't do it, what how would it affect things now just to think about it differently? But I think having a mastermind space or a connected space with people who can kind of get behind this under construction model where it's like every time you test something and it works, you share it with a group and you say, "I just want to let you guys know today or this year, I tested this with, you know, second graders. We did this exercise. We connected this and this together. It was a hit. Try it out. Let me know what happens."

And then a bunch of you try it and then you say, "This worked. This is what we found. This is how we refined it. We love this so much, we did something in grade one where we did this and this and that prepared them for grade two. This is genius." Like just testing little things and giving each other that feedback and trying stuff and like just being connected in a space where people are genuinely trying something out. Even if you only tried one

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new thing a year, two new things a year and then learned through proxy, like what are other people trying? You don't have to try it all.

You can watch other people try. I'm going to test this grade, that grade. You might be so surprised what happens just by being in proximity to other people's testing. So I would really encourage the under construction phase and I think that being under construction with a collective community of people who are letting each other know what they're testing would actually have a ginormous impact on the educational system. So I just wanted to point that out.

But the big difference here is not learning in the mind, it's learning in the being. So I am learning to do this because I need to know how to do this because I am growing up and I'm going to need to know all this information because it matters and I'm already using it and it's already helpful and I can already see why I'm here and I can already see how this was helpful already. I learned something last week, I used it this week. I'm the one that wants to tell my family at the dinner table what I learned because I'm so excited about it.

And I think I can help them with what I learned today. I could help with dinner, I could help with laundry, I could help with groceries, I could help with anything. I'm starting to learn how everything works. I feel like I'm a part of this family. I'm excited to have my own home. I'm excited to have my own things. I'm excited because this is all working for me. I feel like all of it makes sense. I'm understanding. I'm getting it. I'm learning it. I'm proud of me. I'm becoming something. I am something. I am something and I'm becoming something.

That is what over time, over and over again, that being reinforced, this is important. You knowing this matters today. And when you grow up, it's going to matter even more. This is going to help you with raise your kids.

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This is going to help you have a beautiful home. This is going to help you stay healthy. This is going to help you, you're learning it now for now and later, for now and later. You're becoming this. You're already becoming this. You're not learning now for later. You're becoming this for now and later.

It's bridging an identity gap that has people take ownership of their life so young that I think we're going to have less problems with the way too grown-up stuff that's being presented to these kids at home, on TV, on the internet because regardless of whether or not the education system changes for this, what kids are being presented now and at the age they're being presented it is very different than what it was before. The games are different, what they're seeing on the internet is different, the behaviors, social behaviors, people on the phone, communication, connection, it's all going down massively.

And so if at school, there's a structure that's being built, it's going to raise their ability to handle all of that stuff. And that's the vision that I really see is unfortunately, not everyone is being parented at home and taught at school. A lot of these kids are getting all of it at school, all of it. And so the more connected it is, the more chances these kids have of thriving. The more disconnected it is, the more disconnected they are and then it's harder to get them to care about anything, which is harder on the teachers, harder on everybody.

It just makes it a job and then it's harder and harder to remember the passion of why you came into this in the first place, and it's no good. But if teachers start coming together and creating curriculums that make kids love school, there's going to be a, there's going to be a change in how teachers are paid too. I think that as long as this is just a government curriculum, it's being paid based on a governmental allowance. But I think that if this gets developed as something bigger than that, then it will also be paid differently.

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Like there are people out there that would pay very differently for their children's education. And when enough people are speaking with their money because this is how the way the world works, when enough people are speaking with the money, that's when the world changes. And this is why I am so inspired and motivated to help women really become stewards of money so that we can move the money where it's supposed to be because I do think with enough resources, the education system could absolutely triumph within a few years.

We could make a such a big change, but we invest differently. Women invest differently. We see things differently, we see what matters differently, we think differently, and up until very recently, most of the power with the money has not been in the hands of women, not to the extent that I am seeing this change occurring now, more and more millionaires popping like popcorn in my world, means investing in things that really matter, means being able to give back to the things that need the resources.

And so I think this is just a collective vision that all of a sudden being a teacher is one of the most well-paid jobs, but these teachers are not just delivering curriculum. They're genius masterminds that are constantly innovating based on children's behavior.

They're like the greatest behavioral analysis, they're constantly innovating and creating, they're connected to each other, they get support, they create a network of innovation, they, and they get paid accordingly and they feel so much more fulfilled and there's so much more opportunity for wealth and for growth within the education system and like this is how big my vision goes.

And I'd love to be, you know, to have my energy all over that and to be a part of that happening however I'm invited to do that and will be my honor

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and my pleasure to do, you know, more of these conversations and, but I mean, I'm a well of ideas and I have so much passion for this.

But whether it's the resources, whether it's the curriculum, whether it's, you know, just the mentality of the people outside the school system, the parents outside supporting what's happening on the inside, whether it's the structure of what allocation is offered for a curriculum change in the world, like what even is the resource available for that and how do we change that amount dramatically? I just, I feel like there's things to touch all over the place and it's just our job to do it or else it's the next generation's job and the next one and the next one and I mean, why not us? Why not now?

Angela Kelly: Exactly. I feel that. I feel the vision. I feel it in my body. I feel it in my bones. And this is why I invited you to speak because your vision is so grand and it is so full of potential. And this is why for any of you who are listening, I genuinely refer you to Melanie's work. It's so multifaceted whether you're a leader or whether you're a teacher or a parent or even a student.

You might be a teenager out there who wants to learn differently than you have been learning. You want to learn in a new more expansive way. I highly recommend exploring Melanie's work. There's something for everyone, no matter what facet of life or leadership or professionalism you are seeking to expand or to learn more about, Melanie has it available.

So Melanie, thank you for your time today, your wisdom, your presence, your energy, your love, your passion for learning, for teaching, for expanding the experience of education for not just the leaders and the educators, but for our families and our students as well. It's just been an honor to have this conversation with you today.

Melanie: Thank you. Thank you so much for having me. This just flew by.

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Angela Kelly: It did. It did. Wow. Yes, this is probably my longest interview. So I am delighted and we may be having more based on what we just shared today. I feel like this is just opening the door to many more conversations around all of the possibilities that lie ahead for educators. So there you have it, empowered principals. This is just one of many conversations to be had with Melanie Ann Layer. She is the CEO and founder of Alpha Femme and she leads women to be highly successful, highly impactful, and women of influence.

And I am just proud to be one of the Alpha Femme members. And I look forward to working with each and every one of you to expand your school, to create impact and leadership influence in whatever capacity you are serving in the field of education. So thank you all. We look forward to more conversations and have a beautiful week. We'll talk with you next week. Take good care. Bye.

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