

50 Years of IDEA: From Promise to Practice, Special Education's Past, Present, and Future

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[6:20] **NEKEYA IRBY:** Well, good afternoon, and welcome to getting to the core. Our podcast team has the pleasure of doing a crossover episode today with our folks from our special education department, who also hold a podcast where they bring relevant topics to our community to talk about. So we are excited to have them here with us today. I am Nekeya Irby, one of your host for today's podcast, and I have the pleasure of working with three of my colleagues that are on the team. I'm going to ask them to introduce themselves, and then we're going to ask our guests to introduce themselves as well, so everyone knows who's in the room for our conversation. **Vonetta Clark-Toolles:** Hello world. I'm vanetta Clark, tools, a member of the getting to the core podcast. It is our pleasure to host this episode with you today.

[7:10] **MARVIN FRANKLIN:** Hello everybody. This is Marvin Franklin, Ed improvement consultant on getting to the core. I'm so glad that you are listening today.

[7:20] **DR. TERRANCE SCOTT:** Afternoon, everyone. This is Dr Terrance Scott, thank you all for listening. We are looking forward to engaging and working with you all today. I am a school climate, culture and equity consultant, and I am looking forward to some laughter, some fun and some high quality content.

[7:36] **NEKEYA IRBY:** Thank you. That's our getting to the core team, and I'm going to hand it over because we've got some beautiful people that are on the front lines of this topic that we're going to be addressing today. And we have our special education consultants and director here. So I'm going to hand it over to Miss Beth. You can start us off, introducing yourself, and your team can introduce themselves.

BETH SANTER: Great. Thanks so much for having us. We're we're excited to have this conversation with you. I'm Beth Santer. I'm the executive director of special education and early intervention services, and I'm here with two of my teammates. So Celeste, I'm going to throw it to you.

CELESTE JOHNSON: Thank you, and I just caught it. So thank you so much everyone. My name is Celeste Johnson, and it's it's good to be here. Thank you for listening, and thank you for having me going it back to Theresa.

THERESA FRANKLIN: I'm Teresa Franklin. I'm also a special education consultant with our special education department, and I work on the general supervision and accountability team.

[8:38] **NEKEYA IRBY:** Awesome. Lots of experience and talent in the room today. So excited about that, and just to give you guys a little bit of context about what we're going to talk about today, five decades ago, there was a promise of what we would consider inclusivity through a law that changed the landscape, which we call idea or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. And the reason that this even stood out to me is for a number of things. One, I also marked that

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milestone on last year of 50 years. So 50 years ago I was born, but 50 years ago, this law actually came into place as well. And so when I started thinking about that, I said, you know, have we had a conversation about where we are so far, and how has this changed our classrooms, our school settings, how we handled this mandate, right? What does this look like for opportunities? We know our mandates are only as strong as this implementation, and so I thought it would be great for us to have a conversation with some of our special ed experts around what this has looked like in their system. You know, how have we triumphed? Where is the system stalled? What does it actually look like to get to the core of equity right now in 2026 so let's get into it. Let's dive into this conversation with you guys. And I want to start off basically just by asking you all to take a look back over your careers, over your lives. You know, what have you seen be the greatest impact for our students who have disabilities, and where might you be seeing some of those gaps between the intent of what idea was supposed to do and the lived experiences of our students and families. So whoever would like to start,

[10:23] **BETH SANTER:** I'll go ahead and start. And I really love Nekeya, how you framed it in terms of it being a promise, because it's something that was passed. But that doesn't mean that it's not something that's continuous, that you're always looking at. And promise is also that hopeful term, which is what we want this to be. I think ideas greatest impact has been access. And we hear about in special education, FAPE all the time. And really, FAPE is fundamentally the core of IDEA. It's a free and appropriate public education. And just get a little historical, which, I don't know how old our listeners are, but if you, if you're old like me, you will remember that. And in 1970 US schools were not all were they educated children with disabilities the same. I mean, there's some statistics that say that US schools educated only one in five kids with disabilities, and many states had laws that excluded certain disability categories. And even in Michigan, we had institutions that sometimes provided that experience, but not the same as a as an equal experience in the public setting. And so IDEA was a promise, and it was very innovative, I think, in terms of the gaps, and I'd love other people to jump in on this too. I think sometimes it isn't that, that promise of all being educated in their least restrictive environment and together as possible, some students still experience inclusion as a physical presence, but not necessarily meaningfully engaged. And so I think as educators, we have to be mindful of that, and I think also sometimes in an effort to make sure everything was fair and equal from a compliance lens, sometimes you lose the meaningful inclusion pieces of that, or the people part of that, and it can sometimes make it look uneven or a little different, if that makes sense,

[12:42] **Celeste Johnson:** It does, Beth, and just to piggyback off what you're saying, this is Celeste. Everyone Beth talked about equity and access, and I would like to continue to piggyback off what she's saying and continue to add a sense of belonging when we look at the board of education versus brown back in the back in the day, you know, I think it was in the 50s or something like that. But essentially, they really had the equity and the access. But as we continue to evolve, we began to look at inclusion as a sense of belonging. So through doctor, Shelley Moore has this beautiful visual that I wish I could show you all, but I'll try to explain it. She has these green dots in a circle, and then other dots outside the circle to represent exclusion, and then segregation, integration and then inclusion, meaning the green dots are the general education students in the colored dots are

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those who receive special education services. But it didn't stop there, because even though you are in the room, sometimes you can feel like you're not part of the room, or you're not a part of the actual lesson or activity that's going on, or you don't have a sense of belonging. So she began to continue to evolve, the dots, if you will, the green dots versus the colored dots to say we're all different. Colored dots. There are no green dots. General Education is not something that we are seeking to be like, if you will. We're all different. We all bring our own strengths, challenges and experiences to the table, no matter who you are.

Theresa Franklin: I'm glad you mentioned Shelley Moore. You all, if you have an opportunity to just Google her name and watch some of her videos, they're really great, because she does do a really nice job explaining how we all need to be educated. We're all different. But one thing that I see is that although I feel that we have made some progress, we operate in silos, and I'm so happy that we're having this conversation, because I would love for you all to jump in this as well. So we operate in these silos, and so when a student is identified as having a disability, it becomes the special education teacher's student, not everyone's student, it's everyone's student. You know, in our students, when I say students with disabilities, they're our students. They're everyone's students. They're gen ed students first, and so it's getting people to kind of adopt that mindset, and that can be challenging.

[15:36] **Vonetta Clark-Tooles:** So, I am going to hop in because you all said some things that really piqued my interest and touched my heart. So this idea that Celeste special education is not something where folks are aspiring to be a part of they're already a part of. And then Theresa elaborated on that, and I just want to share that at one of the schools that I service in the city of Detroit, the special ed special education lead teacher always says that students with IEPs are general education students first. And so when we approach special education from the idea foundationally that these students our general education students first, then we don't have to segregate or separate them from everybody else. Theresa, to your point that these are everybody's students. When we take on that mantle that all students are general education students first, we don't have the space to make those kinds of separations between, you know, what a student needs versus what another student needs. We are all striving to make sure that everyone gets what they need. And that is really what equity is about, and hopefully the ideal or the promise of IDEA.

[16:58] **Dr. Terrance Scott:** And so to piggyback off of that, my main wondering. Then goes to and this is just a comment. I've worked with districts in our county this school year who have made such comments as special ed students have more rights than general ed students. Was hard to support them. I have heard

[17:22] **VONETTA CLARK-TOOLES:** a variety of different complaints with the lack of support, whether it's under resourced or

[17:31] **DR. TERRANCE SCOTT:** lack of training for general ed teachers to support students of all different abilities. And so I guess I'm just thankful that this conversation is happening, and hoping that folks who are listening can hear the mindset shift that needs to happen in order to even appropriately accommodate the students and their families, to make them feel like they belong and that they matter and that they are going to be held to high expectations for growth as well.

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[18:09] **Marvin Franklin:** One thing I want to make, I to make a connection. Beth you mentioned, you said promise, and I know we talk about Ida as a law. I just want to, I feel like we have to also have a conversation about, where do those where do they intersect, where do they miss? Because I also know that as the law, we have said that there was a certain amount of money that may be earmarked for that. But the word promise that use, and we also know what history has shown us is we have not financially made the connection to that, to that, that gap that was also mentioned, how, how do we manage in this world between promise and law and what's next? How can we do what's right for all our kids?

[19:08] **Beth Santer:** I'm really glad that you raised that, and I actually want to make a connection between what Marvin and Dr. Scott mentioned, because there is a connection there. You know what, what is access, and what a child needs to access for one student is very different than what another student may need to access. And so I think that's why sometimes people see a disconnect, and you might hear those, those statements about special education students having more rights or maybe some people may question that they're still expected to have rigor, that having access to something doesn't take away rigor, and having needing more access to make sure that you get an equal education is. It doesn't mean that, that's more rights. It is their right to access it to begin with. And so sometimes it just looks a little different. And to Marvin's point, I mean, this does, I mean it's, it's hard to take these concepts and then when we equate it to the cost, it's where it gets sticky in the world. I think everybody theoretically believes with all of this, but it does. It does take money to pay for these supports and services. And as I mentioned, for one child, it may be very minimal support or services that they need to access equally. But for somebody else, they may need more and money has always been a conversation when you're talking about education in general, but special education specifically because, because of the that understanding, I think that has to do with that Kids have a right to a free and appropriate education and that can vary in terms of their needs. I think that in terms of money, this will be continued, will continue to be a conversation as it is in the general world as well. But I think if people understand that the root of it is access. Maybe we can understand it a little bit better.

[21:27] **Nekeya Irby:** Totally agree, the money issue is always the question, because when we have these mandates or these laws that come into place and they're truly unfunded, right, the promise of IDEA was that it was supposed to Congress said that they would pay, you know, the excess cost, like 40% of the excess cost of educating a child who might have disabilities. But we know the reality is what has happened throughout the years and maybe even from the start, that excess that they've been covering has only amounted to, like, 10 or 15% of what is actually needed, and so school districts are left to contend with. So what do we do now? Like, what do we do with the rest? How do we get the rest of that money, that funding that's necessary in order for us to truly, you know, attack this issue of knowing that it's going to cost more if we're trying to give them that free and appropriate education.

[22:28] **Theresa Franklin:** So Nekeya while, while that is true that it isn't fully funded, and honestly, my opinion is it probably never will be. We can't stop doing what's right for kids? We still have to continue to forge on. We still have to be united in how we are approaching this situation. You know,

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it's the same as if, if I need to contact my representatives, you know, when we're talking about, okay, passing bills, and you know, we want to ensure that certain things are funded, such as housing initiatives or not ending funding that goes to McKinney Vento, you know, we're all on board with that. So when it comes to idea, it can't just be those within the special ed realm. You know, not just the special ed to it has to be all of us. All of us have to get on board with this.

[23:36] **Nekeya Irby:** That idea, everyone coming together is so important. And I love that you keep lifting that for us, Theresa, because I think we have operated in these silos for too long. And so when I think about you know what it means for us to come together, what are some of the things you all have seen, or ideas you may have about how we make that the reality that Gen Ed, special ed consultants, directors, teachers, principals, like everybody's coming together towards this common goal of making sure that our children receive the best possible education.

[24:15] **Vonetta Clark-Tooles:** So Nekeya, I was going to comment on Theresa's previous statement around the funding and the resources, and so we pour so much money into athletics, right? So there are, there is players, plenty of money. Like the money is available. It's how we distribute it, and that is, you know, the equity piece that we really need to think about. But I also

[24:38] **VONETTA CLARK-TOOLES:** wanted to chime in about your question around the ideas, right? So

[24:43] **VONETTA CLARK-TOOLES:** I remember taking maybe two, possibly three, special education courses when I was studying to become a teacher, right? Bare minimum. So at its core, we need to begin.

[25:00] **VONETTA CLARK-TOOLES:** To provide more instruction to educators general education, right? Why is there even you know, this special endorsement, and I get that everybody you know can choose where they want to go, but if we invested more resources in teaching educators how to appropriately provide supports to students who need more attention, whether it's SLD or ADD, ADHD, we have the ability to train folks to know how to best support students at the outset, and then if you want to go get an additional special education endorsement that certifies you as an expert or allows you to be able to train teachers or to coach teachers. Right? That's very different than fundamentally and foundationally preparing teachers because of all of the different students that they're going to encounter anyway, right? If we're talking about inclusion, if we're talking about, you know, putting students in the least restrictive environment, we need to prepare our educators to know what that looks like, and to equip them with the tools and the resources that their quote, unquote, special education counterparts need. We need to know how to write any IEP. We need to know how to read an IEP. We need to know how to implement an IEP, and then we need to know how to communicate effectively to support students and families who come into our classroom, regardless of if they have an IEP or not.

Marvin Franklin: I'm going to go ahead and pass the bucket so you can put somebody can put \$1 or two in because you were just preaching for sure. Vonetta, one thing I want to say for sure also is we've created these silos within even the conversation that we've had for that, if I'm a general education student, the conversation that I've been listening to just now, all of the kids belong to all

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of us, and so if we have created these special endorsements or whatever, it creates an a feeling or an aura for many of our teachers, that kid belongs to or is the responsibility of and not me, because I don't have said criteria to handle that child. So it really does begin with us with the way that we have those conversations. As a former principal with 11, I had a school with 11 different disciplines, and I had the same minimum requirements as an a teacher to get my endorsement, and so I sat in so many IEP meetings. I sat in a lot of behavior plans, a lot of BIPs and a lot of other acronyms. I'm not going to give all the alphabet soup on this podcast, because that, in and of itself, needs its own scorecard. But I'm saying that to say that there are a lot of things that all of us, if we call ourselves educators, need to be apprised to if we're going to do what's best for quote, unquote, children. It kind of still brings me back to what Beth said in the beginning about FAPE free and appropriate public education. So it almost feels like it could be maybe a student from an affluent public district and another district, even if they're both general education, kids are not getting the same thing. It sounds like that could be somewhere where I could, you know, call Matz and Ruben or somebody in the legal force to help me out with that. I don't know. Just, just food for thought.

[28:56] **Celeste Johnson:** Oh, Marvin and Vonetta. I really want to just take a moment and pinpoint that appropriate piece. If I were to pull everyone on this line right now to say, what are your dietary restrictions, I guarantee you we'll have some meat eaters, not meat eaters. Some don't eat gluten, etc, etc. So to your point, Vonetta on, how do we prepare? Well, what things can we do to prepare to service any child, right? There's things that we can do, simple as what UDL strategies. I still from back in the days, have a little bit of trauma when my teacher used to call and have the read aloud, and you know, you would have to go first the next person. And I would just sit there and read the paragraph. I would count the people and read the paragraph, and I couldn't hear anything else before me because I was too worried about how I was going to sound when it was my turn to read aloud. But if we implement some of these UDL strategies, which is for all students, no matter who you are, you know, give me opportunities to read if I want. To read. Let me create a video. If I want to create a video, and that's more of my creative side. You have students who desire to eat salad versus meat, and those who desire to eat meat versus salad. So those implementing those UDL strategies, honing in hard on them, will give a buffet. And students can be able to pick and choose what they want and how they want to engage, respond, and even test or even show their knowledge.

[30:27] **Theresa Franklin:** You know, it'd be awesome, Celeste, if, if you know people from both of our departments, if we got together and did a training on Universal Design for Learning. That's UDL that Celeste mentioned. I think that would be fabulous if we did a cross. PD, but Vonetta, I did want to comment on something that you said earlier about being in college, when, when I was in college, I took all, all of my courses centered around special education. I had to step out and take content classes because they weren't offered. So the folks who were going into special education didn't get content, and the gen ed teachers didn't get anything on special ed. And I was like, this makes no sense. Like, no sense at all. So I think it would be fantastic if we kind of did a push for that, you know, at our universities, because our teachers are coming out to Marvin's point, they're coming out and they're saying, hey, well, I'm certified in this particular area, so I don't know anything else about anything other than what I'm certified in, that's an issue.

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[31:40] **Vonetta Clark-Tooles:** Puts our teachers and our students at a disadvantage. When I think about how we started this conversation around the promise of the law, right, there are lots of times that we put systems laws into place without all of the supports and the, you know, add ons and the needs that really will make it work well. And so as we have this conversation, right, what did the law say 50 years ago about teacher preparation? How did it address that, you know? How did it address the funding? How did it address and so maybe we need an amendment to IDEA, right? Maybe it's time for us to rethink and re-look at the legislation around how we educate our children, and particularly those who have IEPs or other special needs, 504s that enhance their learning experience in schools. One of the things that I'm wondering about is continuous improvement. How can we utilize continuous improvement to help Special Education move from a focus on compliance to meaningful outcomes, inclusion and belonging for students with disabilities, I see you nodding your head, Celeste, you're ready.

[33:06] **Celeste Johnson:** Yes, belonging is key. I mean, that is the foundation. You when you are in a space, whether you when you are in a space, you want to feel as if you belong, because, if not, you shut down, and if not, you don't engage the way that you should. And I even as an adult, now, I've been in spaces where I didn't feel as if I belong, and so my voice wasn't as active as it would be in a place where I feel as if I do belong. And then I can start small. You can start off. There's a strategy called the two by 2 by 10 strategy where you take two minutes a day for one student, and you get to know that student for two minutes for 10 days, 10 consecutive days. What colors do you like? Vonetta, what? What did you do this weekend? What was one thing that stood out that was exciting for you in school this week, you're getting to know that student, and as you're getting to know that student, you're creating a sense of belonging. And it's like, you know what? I missed you. You were absent on Monday, and I missed you. I want to let you know that we, we all missed you, you know? And it's just like, it can start there, and that doesn't cost any money, but it will cost you if you don't do it.

[34:19] **Nekeya Irby:** So true. Oh my gosh. And when you talk about continuous improvement, you've just, we've started to outline what this would look like if we were to redesign this law, right? Thinking about the fact that I forget if you brought it up Vonetta, or if it was Celeste back in preparation, in teacher preparation, change what that even looks like, right? Like, Theresa just mentioned it too, like, there shouldn't be that huge of a divide, because, of course, special education teachers are going to need to know content and, of course, content folks are going to need to know how to address these issues that may come up in their classroom, because they're even more prevalent now than they've ever been. The idea of bringing that professional learning together, right? For even those of us who have been in the field, you know, I'm at the end of my of my career, you know, almost 30 years in the field, I feel like there's still room to learn. For those of us that have been doing this for a while, coming together to help break those silos and then the relationship piece that Celeste just brought out. I mean, how, how much more could we use that in every classroom, right, getting to know who our students are, so they will know how to teach them. All of those are rich ways for us to really provide the fillers to the gaps that have been created. You know, with this unfunded mandate that exists with the law. So thinking about all of the things that we've just talked about here, we want to operationalize those things. And I think this conversation

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starts that it becomes the catalyst to operationalize a lot of the things that we're talking about. And we're sitting in great spots at the ISD to be able to even share this information countywide.

[36:00] **Marvin Franklin:** I love the way you lifted that. Nakia, I'm going to play a little bit of the devil's advocate just for this conversation. I know that many of our teachers sit in a position of I am being judged, because we live in a world of judgment, and there's a level of accountability that every school, every district has, and I have heard, I can't tell you how many times I'm responsible for social studies, science, arithmetic, whatever. You know, just fill in the word right here. I don't have enough time for what Celeste mentioned. And I know you say there's a pay now, pay later, but I'm not the only one who's heard a teacher at their wit's end saying, Excuse me, saying that this is too time consuming, and I don't necessarily feel like I see the return on investment fast enough, because I've got 45 minutes, and I've got a curriculum guide that I must get through, and so and so wasn't here yesterday and all of the things, how do we move past everything that I just mentioned?

[37:17] **Beth Santer:** So I'm glad you raised that, Marvin, because that's a real statement. And I think all of us that have been in local districts and school buildings have heard it. I think it does go back though, to that teacher training, and I think that if everybody had the same foundation of teaching and learning all students, I think that teachers then it wouldn't take too much time, because they wouldn't have to learn it on the fly, which none of us like to do, and it's very uncomfortable, and we all react differently to that, but we don't want our kids to suffer because of that. We want to make sure that we all have those same tools in the toolbox. And I just want to give a quick shout out, because all of this conversation about a more uniform training really our leader and cease. Dr, Jennifer Tariol, she's our assistant superintendent, and I've seen her sing that song from the same song book so many different times. And so I just want to lift that in terms of continuous improvement. To me, when the original question we were talking about how we move from compliance to something that's more meaningful, I think compliance is when you're asking what's required to do, what is required to do, and or did we do it? To me, that's compliance. To me, when you move it and it transcends to something else. It's more about, did we do what worked, or did it make a difference? But I think to answer those questions does go back to what Vonetta first raised about having a more uniform teaching training.

[38:57] **Vonetta Clark-Tooles:** Thank you so much. Beth, I was listening to Marvin and I saw you come off mute, so I was like, let me just hold on to this. But I want to challenge Marvin's challenge, right? So he showed up as devil's advocate to say, hey, every teacher like folks are saying, I don't have time for building relationships and being friends with kids. However, I will bet my paycheck that every single guest that we've had on this podcast has talked about the importance of relationships, not prompted by us, not prompted by anything other than the necessity of building strong relationships. And that is not just adult to child. That is adult to adult. We have to prioritize our humanity, because that is where the real magic of teaching and learning happens. It is in how we treat and relate to one another. So I love that we philosophically can want to opt out of relationship building as one more thing, but it is like Doctor Scott teaches in restorative practices. These are not just strategies. You have to be a restorative human, and when you become a restorative human, it becomes second nature for you to show up, loving on and leaning into and

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supporting and encouraging and building relationship with your children. That's not an add on. That is who that's your first job is to show up loving kids. If you don't love kids, and I say it all the time, you in the wrong profession.

[40:39] **Dr. Terrance Scott and Theresa Franklin:** People forget that. People forget. Okay, go ahead. Dr Scott, because I'm over here snapping my thing.

[40:50] **Dr. Terrance Scott:** I'm sitting here somewhere. Go ahead. Theresa,

[40:55] **Theresa Franklin:** I totally agree with you on the on the relationships, like, like you absolutely have to, and I don't know if we lost some of that during our whole Covid cycle, because our state complaints for special ed complaints, they are up. We are at an all time high right now, and I think a lot of those complaints would be resolved if people had taken the time to communicate with each other. I think there is something to be said about the loss for relationships and communication and human decency and belonging. There a lot of that. I don't know where it is, but we really have to get back to it, and we have to do it again. I'm going to say it, I'm going to say it and keep saying it, that we have to do it together across departments. We have to do more together, just like we're doing this podcast. We have to go out into our districts and do professional development together to support these teachers who are struggling. And we have to continue to preach, as Vonetta said, about the importance of relationships, we cannot. We can't let it decline any more than it already has. We have to ensure that, that we improve that. Dr Scott.

[42:19] **Dr. Terrance Scott:** Absolutely. Just to chime in on everything everyone has said so far. There's this thing that I say when I lead restorative practices training where I'm trying to encourage folks to shift their mindset from a deficit based lens to an asset based lens. We're looking at the strengths and what they bring to the table, as opposed to what they lack, what they struggle with. And I say you aren't here to teach math, you're here to teach children math. And the difference is, like scripted curriculum aside, if you know your content and you prioritize on relationship building, you can scaffold and accommodate. You can be engaging. You can create spaces of belonging and not ostracize. You can incentivize and not punish. And I think that we have lost sight of that, and a huge reason for that is, I believe the pressure that we put on our teachers every single day to meet X metric, to meet X requirement, to do whatever magic we want them to do with X scripted curriculum within 30 minutes, and you got 30 kids in a classroom, and all of them are different, and so folks feel burnt out and they're frustrated and they're jaded, but what we not going to do is take it out in front of our kids. That's not cool. So we got to figure out how to get back to the basics of like what it means to be a teacher of all children, regardless of their background, race, creed, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, etc, ability level, neuro divergence, etc. I think that we have lost sight of that, and we really need to double stamp that the importance of relationship building first, because the culture that you build with your students will allow them the door to trust you and what that and they'll work harder for you as a result,

[44:04] **Nekeya Irby:** Absolutely amazing. We've got to have this team back. We've got to continue to come together to brainstorm and have these conversations so that we can actually put these words into action. I'm going to bring us to a close with this last question, and we can do it rapid fire style, where you all, everybody gives an answer, but since we were talking about the 50 year

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anniversary, I want you to think about a 50 Year Vision, right? So if there's something that we could do it to bring more hope to what's happening with all of our students, but specifically around our students that are identified for special education over the next 50 years. What would that one thing be that we would try to do? What is that one thing that you're thinking, man, if there were no limits, no budget, no you know, barriers to me actually being able to do this? One thing that I would love to see happen for us as a result of us working together as educators. Give me your thoughts.

[45:13] **THERESA FRANKLIN:** Well, Dang! That was a hard question. All, all students are Gen Ed first we have, we have to continue to preach that all students are different, period. And we have to address all students.

[45:32] **Marvin Franklin:** I say we need to, yep, go ahead. More Theresa, I say we have to blow the doors off of the way that we've been doing school for the longest time, and we have to completely reimagine it, and we have to be unafraid to do it. Business in our world has done that 1000s of times, and we've they've never been afraid of scrapping it because it's not working and redesign it. It is not working. It has not been working. Some of the same problems that we're, you know. So one of the latest things we were talking about chronic absenteeism, and all of a sudden, like chronic absenteeism, is something that just popped up a post covid. No, there's a whole group attendance works that's been doing work around chronic absenteeism a decade prior to the to covid. So that's just one of many. We've gotta be unafraid everything that we just talked about, all the collaboration. We know what works within our community as bringing back humanity. We understand that taking a couple of steps backwards to go forward is the right way. We're so afraid of these accountability measures. Everybody's afraid of losing funding because they didn't, you know, cross a T or dot a, I a certain way. We do have to have some things in place, but I also believe we've gotta reimagine it and do some things differently. I was talking to Nekeya before about just snow days and the way that we were doing snow days. I believe in that in this conversation, we still need to reimagine how we do snow days, after Covid, we don't have virtual days? I digress. Who's next?

[47:23] **Beth Santer:** We are hard act to follow Marvin, but I, but I love, I picked up on all of it was great, but I love how you made the point a couple of times to talk about reimaging and being unafraid, because I do think to be an education when you are advocating for kids, and especially for kids that have complex learning needs, you have to be a little bold, and you have to be okay with being a little bold and not be afraid of what that looks like. And I think that if I were to reimagine and have a hope and dream. It sounds very simple, but it would be that it truly would be equitable and inclusive. I get very uncomfortable when it feels like our students with special education needs have to earn their way into Gen Ed. They don't have to earn their way into Gen Ed. They should be in Gen ed, and then what supports do they need for access? I would like to us to maybe change the verbiage a little bit and take it from the 1970s and bring that forward.

[48:35] **Celeste Johnson:** To piggyback off what you were saying Beth and Marvin with the reimaging being unafraid when we reimagine, we have to take a pause. We are moving a mile a minute, and we just need to pause to see where we are, get the feedback from our students, hear their voices, our families, the various stakeholders, understand where we work, understand where

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we are right now and understand where we're trying to go. And that takes a pause, so I'll start there. And the second thing is to be unafraid, to be unafraid to stretch ourselves right because it's uncomfortable stretching ourselves to find out the identities of the students that we service, and not just the students that we service, because we wish leadership will do the same right for us as we're educators in buildings as well. So we want them to learn about us as well. So we're all learning about each other, we're learning about our families, we're learning about identities, we're learning about culture, and we're stretching ourselves, and we're expanding and we are brave enough to do that and to make mistakes, because we will, but creating a brave space to do that.

[49:44] **Vonetta Clark-Toolles:** Yes, ma'am, yes, ma'am, Celeste, yes, ma'am, yes, sir to all that has been said. And I'm going to go back to my original plea for equitable teacher training, right? So allowing you want to be a teacher. You're not waiting until your fourth year to go into a school. You start your teacher education program year two, when you've gotten your prerequisites out of the way, you're in schools each and every day, and you're taking your classes at night, and you're being trained right in the way of supporting all students with the best possible practices, because what we know for sure is that the strategies and the practices that special education teachers are provided are good for all students, so we should be doing that and allowing folks to specialize in their content, but being able to be in school and apply their learning as they are learning. So changing the landscape of teacher education is my big ask and advocate advocacy for change in education.

[50:52] **Dr. Terrance Scott:** And I'll to piggyback off of everything that everyone just said. One thing that we haven't even touched on, we need to schedule a part two conversation on is parents. I think we have a golden opportunity to ask our community what their needs are, as opposed to assuming or telling them what's best all the time. I think if we censor their voices and not assume we open the door for relationship building and trust in a way that is just I've seen magic happen when folks feel like you trust them enough to ask them, or you actually want their feedback and want to incorporate their feedback for them. So I think, you know, there's a lot of parents, especially since the pandemic, where there's a lot of parents who have lost trust in education, who themselves were traumatized by schools, and they feel that their children are not properly accommodated. On a daily Theresa talked about the number of complaints that have gone up. I've heard about a number of them in Detroit and beyond, and a lot of that has to do with many different reasons, right? But I think that the main thing is like ensuring that kids are properly accommodated, asking parents, what accommodations might they need, what supports might they need? How can they be included? How can we center their voices to ensure that they feel heard and supported and that relationship built is strong.

[52:24] **Nekeya Irby:** Thank you all so much. So as we take this episode and put it into this time capsule, release it on the airways for our listeners, we hope that they saw that we were trying to get to the core of how we can reimagine a system where, you know, we're rooting everything in our equitable and inclusive teacher training, and we're creating this unafraid, brave space that we talked about for honest collaboration. We definitely want to include our parents input. So I said that's an episode 10, two through 10. We can have so many episodes on bringing the parent voice

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in there, because we know they are a primary driver in this work as well, but by building these supports for our access directly into the foundation of our classrooms, we can prove that we can make a difference where we see our students feel the sense of belonging, and they're actually getting exactly what they need, and they're prepared for the next level of life, whatever that may be, wherever they're going. So the law of idea, it gave us a mandate, right? But our collective courage is what gives the children a future. So we want you to keep listening. We want you to keep getting to the core. We thank you for joining us today, and I'm looking forward to our continued conversation and work together. Take care everyone.