



Podcast Discussion Guide for Instructional Staff



Orange County
Public Schools

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EPISODE 029

Topic: [Giving Thanks and Understanding Students' Needs \(https://bit.ly/3612w2r\)](https://bit.ly/3612w2r)

Guests: Becky Watson, Walker Middle School Principal, and Christine Cleveland, Homeless and Migrant Education senior administrator

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- Every school in OCPS has students who are in great need. Do you know how many students are on free/reduced lunch at our school? How many are a part of the McKinney-Vento program, considered homeless? How many families are migrant workers?
- Do you know what services are available for our students and who to go to? (Have staff members in charge of coordinating assistance give a synopsis and perhaps one misconception about their program.)
- (For non-Title I schools) Has anyone here ever worked in a Title I school? What do you feel is different between that school and ours – both positive and challenging aspects?
- Were you surprised to learn that Becky Watson, an OCPS principal, grew up homeless right here in Orange County living in a tent without electricity?
- Besides Becky's background, what surprising fact did you learn by listening to this podcast that will inform your pedagogy?
- COVID-19 has added quite a bit of vulnerability – whether it's loss of income due to unemployment, food insecurity or mental health concerns – to many families this year. Who do you think are the most vulnerable students in our school right now? What are you doing for these students and how can we support your efforts?
- Becky and Christine both train educators on working with students in need. Their goal is to bring to surface misconceptions that educators have in order to serve these students and their families. What type of assumptions or biases have you had that you may be rethinking after listening to this episode?
- "If you are experiencing homeless and teachers don't teach you differently, you won't learn. You can't be a mediocre teacher and make a difference for students who have those kinds of struggles in their lives." That's a profound statement. Let's break it down together.

- Are the expectations we have at our school ones for which we offer enough support to those most vulnerable students?
- Have you watched *The Florida Project*? Those who have, share with us what you learned.
- Is there a major need at our school that we could find a solution for – such as the breakfast trays for students who don't have a desk that Becky mentioned?
- “What you focus on, you get more of.” What are we focused on at our school, and do we need to revise or expand that focus?
- They talked about home visits, which are certainly more difficult during this pandemic, but do you feel that would be something that we should [start or ramp up, depending on your current outreach] here at our school?
- Communication is key. Are their families of your students that you've had a hard time getting a hold of? How can I help you with that? I want them to be comfortable asking for help at our school.
- Listening to families and what their needs are is important. Do you think we are providing the right supports to the families in our school? Is there an area where we can do better?
- It can be overwhelming to think about the needs of our students, but as mentioned at the end of that podcast, let's think about one more way we can reach one more student here. If each of us do that, together we can make a huge difference!

Related Materials:

OCPS Supports: this is a one-stop shop survey for OCPS families to connect them to social service, mental health and/or homeless education assistance. <https://bit.ly/3kWEM3K>

General Email for any questions of Migrant or MVP programs: helphomeless@ocps.net

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