

Wildkit Way Transcript: Season 2, Episode 1

Announcer ([00:03](#)):

Welcome to the Wildkit Way, a podcast that gives the mic to Dr. Marcus Campbell, the superintendent of Evanston Township High School. Join us on this audio journey. As Dr. Campbell shares his stories and insights and has honest real conversations with people who make ETHS and our community, the incredible place it is.

([00:30](#)):

How do we as a school community show up to ETHS each day? How do we honor, celebrate, support, and see each other? In the first podcast of the 2023-24 school year, Dr. Marcus Campbell sits down with ETHS, assistant superintendent and principal Taya Kinzie, and together they discuss the strategic priorities of the district along with the commitment to be responsive to staff and student needs. Let's begin.

Marcus Campbell ([01:02](#)):

Welcome everyone. My name is Marcus Campbell. I use he him pronouns. I serve as superintendent here at Evanston Township High School and welcome to the Wildkit Way podcast for the 2023-24 school year. And I am delighted to have our illustrious assistant superintendent, principal, Dr. Taya Kinzie, joining me for the first podcast of the year like she did for the last podcast. And how are you doing, Taya?

Taya Kinzie ([01:31](#)):

I'm good. I think, I know we've talked about this. It feels like a fresh new year. We're already in week five and we've gotten such good feedback from students and from families and even from open house and from staff, and we've got lots to do, but it's been a good year already. That's

Marcus Campbell ([01:50](#)):

Good. I mean, I see you all around the building all the time. I'm sure you're getting a lot of steps in.

Taya Kinzie ([01:55](#)):

I am, which is why I'm wearing those tennis shoes.

Marcus Campbell ([01:58](#)):

That's great. So one of the things that you and I have been talking about are the strategic priorities of the district, and that is social emotional learning, racial equity, literacy, and post high school planning. And we know that those count as not as a strategic plan, but really how we are doing what we do in the district. We know that we want our kids to be able to read the word and read the world, which is our

Yeah. Well, as I think about the ways that we've identified those strategic priorities and how they're all interwoven, that ultimately so many things that we're talking about has social emotional learning centers, racial equity. At the same time they're not in exclusion. And when we're thinking about literacy as well, and even the post high school planning, and I know we've talked about this through the years of everything that we're doing right now to help students build skills isn't just about the planning, but it's about those lifelong skills, whether that's post high school planning, the social emotional learning, and all these other facets of how we're centering our racial equity, how we're centering our focus on literacy. And so I'm excited about the way that we are all as an entire school owning that and that our families are too and our students,

Marcus Campbell ([03:44](#)):

And I know that we are working on a lot of things here at ETHS, both structurally and programmatically to address these priorities. We're thinking about a number of ways to get these programming and services to the kids. And so we're really excited about that. So I'm asking ETHS community to stay a little bit tuned for that. One of the things that I was able to do during institute day is to talk about our district pedagogy. And when I say pedagogy, I simply mean what it is that we do, why did we do it, and what is our approach? I came across an old poem called In Lak'ech, and I shared it with the staff and Dr. Kinzie and I are going to read it in both English and Spanish and kind of talk about how this is also our guiding principle. Taya, you going to start?

Taya Kinzie ([04:37](#)):

Sure. All. All right. I'll start that in Spanish then. In Lak'ech. Tú Eres Mi Otro Yo. Si Te Hago Dano a ti. Me Hago Dano a Mi Mismo. Si Te Amo Y Respeto. Me Amo Y Respeto Yo.

Marcus Campbell ([04:44](#)):

You are my other me. If I do harm to you, I do harm to myself. If I love and respect you, I love and respect myself. So this has become how we do what we do at ETHS In Lak'ech and what you just heard. And you can find it online anywhere. I think if you just Google it, you can pull up the poem. But in reflecting, it's our discipline philosophy. It's social emotional learning, it's racial equity. It's the Wildkit Way. It's pretty much everything grounds everything that we do at ETHS. How are you interpreting some of that Taya and actually demonstrating that and leading that as the principal?

Taya Kinzie ([05:35](#)):

Yeah. Well, two pieces to that, right? And I think about In Lak'ech and what it's meant to us and to me through the years, and it's so perfectly dovetailed with our focus as we think about the year of how we're showing up, you even said that as part of the introduction to In Lak'ech. And that really is about the reflecting. It's really about listening, understanding, stopping to reflect on ourselves and what we're doing and thinking about that for me and then how I'm acting with compassion. So I think about that for all of us, but I also want to make sure that I'm modeling it, not because I get it right every moment, but because I want to make sure that I'm actually engaging in all of those steps.

Marcus Campbell ([06:20](#)):

You don't get it right, Taya? (laughs)

Taya Kinzie ([06:21](#)):

for naming our commitment, like you said, we remain steadfast and committed. And that really means focusing and centering all of our staff identities, our student identities and our family identities, too.

Marcus Campbell ([09:50](#)):

We certainly don't leave them at home when we come to work.

Taya Kinzie ([09:52](#)):

We do not leave our identities at home nor the complexity of our lives. Right? And so thinking about making sure that we're naming it and continuing to naming that we are honoring all identities and the myriad ways they intersect. Race, disability, ability, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, language, and making sure that we are pulling our student voice in the midst of that, our staff too, and our families pulling our families in even more. And I know we spent a lot of time doing that last year as we went throughout the community as well as pulling families into the building. So how we're honoring that is important, particularly because we want to make sure that we're speaking the truth and allowing others to speak the truth. So we do disrupt patterns of oppression.

Marcus Campbell ([10:42](#)):

And we don't always get that right either. Our educational system is built on a certain set of principles that are agrarian, and there are lots of laws that are built and set around it. But whenever we can dismantle and disrupt systems of oppression, we will. And I think that we have been working hard to rehumanize education, right? To rehumanize ourselves as staff and rehumanize the kids. We're not just these cogs in the wheel or this manufacturing or this factory personality. You got the bell rings and

And we know that showing that part of that prevention is actually also showing care for our students. We have data that tells us that when we show care for our students, it lowers depression and so many other things. And that is something that we've been focusing on with our teachers and our staff and all