

Community of Practice: The Unsung Hero in Developing Educational Leaders

Host: Julie Keane, PhD, CL0, Participate

Guest: Ken Simon, EdD, deputy director of leadership, Institute for Educational Leadership

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00:01:17.960 --> 00:01:33.039

Julie Keane, PhD: alright, because I know that ken you and I could talk for hours. This is going to be a challenge, I know, but a a fun one. And we have a lot of registrants today. So for folks who

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00:01:33.130 --> 00:01:44.280

Julie Keane, PhD: are not here right now. We will be sharing a recording, and I will probably be saying that for a while. But let's get started. I'm a Julie King. I'm the chief learning officer here at participate.

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00:01:44.300 --> 00:01:59.740

Julie Keane, PhD: and together with purpose driven organizations, we help people learn and work better together through inclusive and engaging online community practice. And Ken is gonna really be telling us a lot about that today. And I'm really well pleased to welcome you through this webinar

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Julie Keane, PhD: in our lifelong learning conversation series. And it's one of my favorite things I get to do in my job. And this virtual conversation series offers an informal opportunity. These are really conversational. They're not too long. We don't. We have a couple of slides, but generally we don't torture you the slides, and it's really an opportunity to learn from a range of experts on topics related to empowering lifelong learning.

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00:02:22.910 --> 00:02:44.839

Julie Keane, PhD: Before we get started, I just wanna share a few Ca technical notes. Captions are available for the webinar. Please let us know in the QA. Function. If they're not working. We have my wonderful colleague Christine, who's there watching that also please? Submit questions to us, even though this is not that long. We do really wanna open up to QA, and certainly have time to do that.

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00:02:44.840 --> 00:03:09.660

Julie Keane, PhD: and we'll monitor that throughout this session for those of you who know me. I I'm happy to get interrupted. I'm from New York, so just go ahead and do it. And Ken is also the same and we will be using the chat function to share resources. Kenneth, here with the Institute for Educational Leadership, they have such a long and deep expertise in so many areas of work. So we're gonna be sharing resources from Ken and from his organization

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throughout the Webinar.

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Julie Keane, PhD: Alright. So for those who are here before we begin, I'd love. We'd love to get an idea of who we have at least with us in the room today. So we're gonna pop up a quick poll and just take 30 s to answer the question on your screen. And and just let us know who's in the room

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00:03:31.410 --> 00:03:41.070
Julie Keane, PhD: this is my biggest struggle ken with teaching. I'm the worst. Wait time ever would not get a badge for that.

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00:03:54.920 --> 00:03:55.640
Hmm!

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00:04:00.170 --> 00:04:01.090
Julie Keane, PhD: What do we got?

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00:04:01.220 --> 00:04:15.150
Julie Keane, PhD: Alright? So a pretty nice spread some some folks from nonprofit and some post secondary and a lot of some k 12 folks are really across the board today, Ken. So that's really great. Gonna close that

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00:04:15.360 --> 00:04:41.199
Julie Keane, PhD: alright. So let's get started. I'm thrilled to welcome today's featured guest, Dr. Ken Simon. He is deputy director of Leadership at the Institute for Educational Leadership, and first, just a little bit about the Institute, the Institute for Educational Leadership partners with under resource communities to equip leaders to better prepare learners of all ages for post, secondary education, training, rewarding careers and civic and community engagement.

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Julie Keane, PhD: Can we know each other almost like 10 to 15 years now. But you have over 30 years of experience in the education sector, and you just been dedicated to providing all students with access to deeper meaningful learning experiences. And you began your educational career as a social studies classroom teacher, always the best training. Yeah.

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00:05:00.100 --> 00:05:15.660

Julie Keane, PhD: And we've held role as curriculum and instruction leader, coach district leader, professional development provider, and have been instrumental in leading the development of 4 new schools. So I hope for everyone on here. What a great opportunity it is! It is to have Ken here.

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00:05:15.720 --> 00:05:37.879

Julie Keane, PhD: You've worked as a school designer for expeditionary learning, and contributed to the creation of Mesa, a 6, 12 gate funded small school you were. And this is when we met before in our former lives doing a lot of work around global education, the former chief learning officer for World Savvy? And you're an experienced workshop facilitator, a published curriculum writer and I know we both have

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Julie Keane, PhD: a chapter in a similar book on micro credentials. And we're gonna try to save some time to really dive into how micro credentials is supporting your work. But let's I'm gonna pass the mic over to you. So welcome, Ken.

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Ken Simon, EdD: Thank you, Julie. Just listening to that. I feel bit bold.

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00:05:55.690 --> 00:06:00.110

Ken Simon, EdD: Thank you, though I appreciate that quite.

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00:06:00.440 --> 00:06:13.450

Ken Simon, EdD: It's such a pleasure to be here. This is I love this notion. You guys name this of the community of practice as a unsung hero. And I think that's right on

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00:06:13.610 --> 00:06:17.309

Ken Simon, EdD: yeah, we'd love that community practice piece.

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00:06:17.320 --> 00:06:35.920

Ken Simon, EdD: And I just wanna make a comment school reform we're we're all been sort of both victims and perpetrators of school reform in various kinds of ways. And it's been in some ways it's been so dominated by forces outside of ex of local communities.

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00:06:35.980 --> 00:06:40.929

Ken Simon, EdD: And so it's such a great opportunity to come here to talk about

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Ken Simon, EdD: a transformation reform work that's really community based. And really get this thinking about the importance of the community in playing a role powerful role in the transformation.

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00:06:52.920 --> 00:07:20.229

Julie Keane, PhD: Yeah, so let's start with some just for for folks that are here. Who I mean institutional for educational leadership, and I'm gonna call it. I yell for the rest of the webinar just for the you know, time factor is has been around for so long, has just been in community and schools for so long. And I I've noted in all my iterations of work that I've done would you share your focus and just the context of il and sort of what the mission is at the organization.

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00:07:20.480 --> 00:07:34.650

Ken Simon, EdD: Sure, I've been here for about 5 years now. Not quite. And came actually to work on a grant with in partnership with East Carolina University.

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Ken Simon, EdD: Il and East Carolina. We're sharing a seed grant that supported principals from all over the country on on instructional leadership, and then eventually came on to sort of the main area of iel a couple of years ago.

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Ken Simon, EdD: It's it's a great organization we have. Obviously, we've got multiple things that we do where we start off our origin stories. Wonderful in the 19 sixties

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Ken Simon, EdD: around federal and social and state policy around education. We do work in workforce development, parent engagement support, immigrant and refugee communities, youth, leadership, community schools. And we.

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Ken Simon, EdD: how's the the coalition of community schools. So it's sort of a lead in my work is really focused. Right now, my work is focused on educational leadership more specifically, school and district leadership. And

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Ken Simon, EdD: that that sort of that's the who, the what is really around. Co, right now, what we're calling collaborative and shared leadership.

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Ken Simon, EdD: And for us, that vision is really about schools as democratic spaces where leadership and power is shared among parents, students, teachers, community members and administrators. And so that's been the focus of my work for the last 2 years.

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Julie Keane, PhD: yeah. And I I'd love for you to really extend that, you know, in this, in today's sort of obnoxious. We sort of dumb discourse around what democracy is, you know how, how, in how important that is as a foundational, theoretical model for educational leadership. So can you sort of expand on that educational leadership approach specifically around

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Julie Keane, PhD: the co collaborative shared leadership, community practice and cohort model. And really something you talk about a lot. Which is that leadership as a practice.

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Ken Simon, EdD: Yeah, thank you. For fall Democrat leadership has been around a long, long time, talks about it. Others have talked about for quite a while.

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Ken Simon, EdD: and I think it's making a resurgence now, partly for

what you said

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Ken Simon, EdD: about

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Ken Simon, EdD: Democracy right now is being talked about in our country in a very dumb way or not a very powerful way for folks, and so wh what much of what I describe here is gonna be about community schools.

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Ken Simon, EdD: But at the same time we think about this in terms of all schools. And we've also seen that the research I teach a class to that at a graduate school class that's for non educators on collaborative. And it is. It is something in business, in medicine that is really taking off in, at least in the way we think about leadership.

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Ken Simon, EdD: It's important to note that when we what you said about sort of leadership as action. We think about leadership as action. And we think about leaders as role

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Ken Simon, EdD: and what we're really talking about is that is that it. This notion of leadership as action and leadership as role really reaffirms our belief that anyone in the organization can and should lead

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Ken Simon, EdD: and assume precision based on expertise and motivation.

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Ken Simon, EdD: So in that way leadership is distributed.

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Ken Simon, EdD: and in a sense that leaders who are playing. Those who have leader roles are facilitating that, and there we use the term we use. Sometimes I use the the metaphor around being a linchpin.

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Ken Simon, EdD: knowing holding everything holding space for that kind of leadership. We also, the second part of this that's important to us is is that this issue about leadership and implementing shared and collaborative leadership is a complex problem

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Ken Simon, EdD: in that W in what we mean by a complex problem is is that there's not necessarily a right way to do this. And that's up to communities. So when we work with school leaders.

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Ken Simon, EdD: we're really working with them to really lead that charge around collaborative and shared leadership, and really are the facilitators of that as they expand, what leadership and what power looks like in their school

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Ken Simon, EdD: and power looks, and how communities can assume really begin to assume and build those schools that they really need for their their students.

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Ken Simon, EdD: the the other thing that is really big for us that we really play on quite a bit is that leadership is not a style.

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Julie Keane, PhD: Ship is not something that people walk in and say, oh, today, I think I'm going to be a collaborative leader.

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Julie Keane, PhD: right? Right? We see leadership as a way of being as a live experience.

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Ken Simon, EdD: And so when we think about what are leaders. And and when we listen and talk to leaders about what they tell us that they really need.

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Ken Simon, EdD: we really think about this as as whole person

transformation at the leaders.

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Ken Simon, EdD: that our program is really focused on, not just the intellectual and knowledge piece and the practices, but really it's intellectual, it's social, it's emotional, it's also ethical.

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Ken Simon, EdD: And we really try to help leaders surface. What is their moral objective? Why are they doing this work.

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Julie Keane, PhD: And we find that that really really helps leaders

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Ken Simon, EdD: really begin to see practice in a different light and to see their relationships in a different light in their schools and with their communities.

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Ken Simon, EdD: I think finally, the last person, the last part of this. It's really important for us. I think it's

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Ken Simon, EdD: it's really central to all this work

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Ken Simon, EdD: is that we believe that

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Ken Simon, EdD: democratic leadership that is shared and collaborative

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Ken Simon, EdD: is unnecessary condition for equity. For to sustain equity over time in buildings. We all probably know that we have been in situations where equity is episodic, where equity work is episodic.

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00:14:22.860 --> 00:14:25.170

Julie Keane, PhD: And next year we're gonna do this.

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Ken Simon, EdD: What we're really looking to do is that as a shared and collaborative leadership, we're really looking to put equity at the center.

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Ken Simon, EdD: And it's really we're bringing. We're bringing in new voices or voices at the decision making table

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Ken Simon, EdD: and sharing power among teachers, families, students, community members. So it's a large. What we're asking

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Ken Simon, EdD: people in formal roles to do is is a pretty large in. So yeah, and I think that's why our work has been so aligned, can, even even prior to you know, our collaboration, you know, formally with our organizations. Is this idea trust?

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00:15:13.580 --> 00:15:16.259

Julie Keane, PhD: So in order for someone to really

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Julie Keane, PhD: not see it as a 0 sum game, right not to see. Oh, I'm a leader I'm supposed to lead, and then to to feel like seating power becomes kind of a 0 sum. Game takes, I think, a lot of trust, and that, you know you sort of strengthen when that is truly shared. And I think the other thing that

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Julie Keane, PhD: it speaks to me about is this idea of communities of practice is actually really a framework

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Julie Keane, PhD: right? And I think you've taught me a lot about this, too, which is. And this kind of leads to the next question, which is the actual, the what that you were talking about, and the what bleeding into the how, which is like getting them to center it on their mission, their moral compass of. You know that teaching and learning is really an emotional practice. It's a political practice, it's a social practice.

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00:16:03.450 --> 00:16:26.900

Julie Keane, PhD: And so what is the actual practice look like, because I think that's been really interesting for us. To support you even in in some technology components, is, what are you actually doing? How are you designing? It's really a learning design question, bringing in different leaders. How are you mentoring them, coaching them? How are they collaborating with one another across on school. So

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Julie Keane, PhD: just if you give a couple of minutes of really the nuts and bolts that would be, I think, super helpful for folks.

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Ken Simon, EdD: Yeah, it's really important for us that that sort of the philosophy that we bring to the table is reflected in this piece in what the actual technical aspects of the program are. And

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00:16:45.350 --> 00:16:57.490

Ken Simon, EdD: so if you come to this program as a school leader. you'll be in a cohort with not 8 or 10 other people. and that cohort will have an experienced leadership coach.

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Ken Simon, EdD: And so right there we're, it's we're creating that community of practice right away. A small group of folks who have common interests who are coming together to to really change both their practice. But also what's happening in their schools?

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Ken Simon, EdD: And so currently, we and I just wanna throw this in. We currently have 5 cohorts going on right now. And they're in New Mexico. And we're also have a unique partnership with a a New Mexico based organization called Swift.

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Ken Simon, EdD: and that partnership has really allowed us to really be able to take that philosophy and bring it to life in the program the Co. The cohorts go through in this particular

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Ken Simon, EdD: piece. The cohorts are going through 2 8 week

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Ken Simon, EdD: for lack of a better term courses, though they don't look a lot like courses that you normally take. We completed the first in the fall.

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Ken Simon, EdD: The group is currently in the middle of their second one. In fact, tomorrow, our Thursday night, we'll meet with the whole cohort to really find out where they are.

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Ken Simon, EdD: And during that 8 week time the leaders will have cohort meetings with their group. They'll also have one to ones with their coaches where they can really begin to talk with each other.

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Ken Simon, EdD: Present evidence, get feedback and really focus on what's happening at the school level.

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Ken Simon, EdD: So that brings us to the other part of the model, which is where most of the work happens, and that's at the school. They have a small group that they'll work with at the school. It's gotta have they? They need to have teachers, students, families, community members all represent it.

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Ken Simon, EdD: In this small group that they're putting together. And they have an action space. In this case, they've selected in this this particular 8 week period. They've s the not alone. They've collaborated with their small group to select

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Ken Simon, EdD: topic that they need to go through a decision making process with and along that way they're collecting. They're working with that group

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Ken Simon, EdD: to to do this work. But they're also collecting evidence about what's happening. So right now, they're sort of in that phase where

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Ken Simon, EdD: they're collecting evidence on the topic. And they're bringing that. And the whole group is collecting evidence on the topic, and they're beginning to suss out what are. Some are of the different types of opportunities around the decision that we want to consider

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Ken Simon, EdD: credentialing work when we were mostly working with K. 12. But adult learning in general is the

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Julie Keane, PhD: the underpinning of action research in your work. So action research being such a a a strong and effective model and teacher education, which is, how do you get that sort of meta cognition for educators to actually look at how kids are learning.

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00:20:25.460 --> 00:20:40.249

Julie Keane, PhD: If you're a leader looking how your teachers are learning. This is, you know, really understanding that the the whole school is a learning community together, not just for children, but for the adults in that space. And the idea that you can build professional learning that

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00:20:40.610 --> 00:20:48.589

Julie Keane, PhD: honors the expertise and knowledge that teachers and administrators have, so that you collect evidence and then reflect on it.

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00:20:48.640 --> 00:21:16.419

Julie Keane, PhD: And I think this is, you know cause. Again, this is gonna lead into one of my favorite conversations, which is around digital badging and credentialing. Because I really am passionate about its role in communities of practice? But because it was a very effective technology when we launched it. Almost 50, 1213 years ago. Which is the how do you capture that action? Research, the collecting of evidence and the reflection. So can you talk and I know it's already.

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00:21:16.510 --> 00:21:31.950

Julie Keane, PhD: you know, 10 min. But I don't see a lot of questions yet, so we have. Some time is talking about how you're seeing credentialing work in the way that you just described the model where

you are now and where you think you wanna take it? Given how the program is structured.

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00:21:32.480 --> 00:21:48.770

Ken Simon, EdD: First a shout out to participate and and to you brought us along and brought me along. Actually, you and I have had multiple conversations over the last 2 years about this micro credential stuff. And we have sort of

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00:21:49.290 --> 00:21:59.259

Ken Simon, EdD: created some divergent pathways because of our work with you. And so we're super appreciated. the the

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Ken Simon, EdD: basically we credential are we provide micro credentials. That's probably not the best way of saying that we provide provide micro credentials to leaders through the program

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Ken Simon, EdD: and what they're doing to earn. That is, they're doing weekly reflections.

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Ken Simon, EdD: Then they do a poster which is their final reflection, but also really seeds sort of the way forward for themselves. What are they gonna do in the future?

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Ken Simon, EdD: And one of the things that this has helped us do is something that we're really passionate about. And in understanding the credentialing piece has helped us talk about sustaining this work as opposed to just learning it and trying it out.

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00:22:49.000 --> 00:22:55.650

Ken Simon, EdD: And we we see that in. There are 3 ways that we shame this work.

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00:22:55.720 --> 00:23:03.240

Julie Keane, PhD: I was just reading that. Read Christine shameless Plug.

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00:23:03.340 --> 00:23:04.820

Julie Keane, PhD: I know

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00:23:04.900 --> 00:23:15.750

Ken Simon, EdD: there is several ways that we sort of. Think about this work in how it impacts a school. And and but

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00:23:15.870 --> 00:23:25.719

Ken Simon, EdD: and and for us, right now, we're in the early phase of this. So our idea is is that people who are in our micro credentials. Once you complete the micro credential

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00:23:25.850 --> 00:23:39.810

Ken Simon, EdD: and and receive a badge, we moved you to sort of a community. You stay with us to a community practice that is really working together, learning together, continuing that work and learning.

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00:23:39.810 --> 00:23:59.849

Julie Keane, PhD: And I think that is the 2. Again, I think the 2 particular affordances really is this idea of transparency and sustainability of the program. And I and I do think, you know, not leading with the technology, but leading with that goal in mind, those goals in mind.

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00:23:59.850 --> 00:24:19.080

Julie Keane, PhD: Then I think you know, the technology really supports that there are 2 questions in the chat I'm going to have and I think Christine is brought up Ricardo. So thank you for that, Ricardo. And this is really a good question, I think, is around collaboration while maintaining on accountability.

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Julie Keane, PhD: You know, has that come up for the leaders that you're working with and in in, you know. Unfortunately, a minute or less, you know. What do you think about how you. how, how you do that, how you build that in the accountability, along with collaborative leader leadership.

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00:24:34.280 --> 00:24:51.909

Ken Simon, EdD: it is. It is an issue that we've confronted and we're told right up. We had this conversation with our New Mexico folks. So we we look at it. We're part of our work moving forward. This is a

slow process is to work with district folks about what shared accountability look like.

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Ken Simon, EdD: and how does that? How do we, as an organ? How do? How do schools as organizations really begin to think about what shared accountability looks like and how that might be. The next step in this process for all of us.

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00:25:13.580 --> 00:25:36.389

Ken Simon, EdD: Ricardo's question is is right on point to one of the challenges. And at the same time principals are really, really finding different ways of having sort of shared accountability on site and at the same time creating systems and structures to support that.

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00:25:36.630 --> 00:25:45.840

Julie Keane, PhD: Yeah, I mean, I do think that you know, with with shared leadership, I just think it's that. Buy it, you know. II think you feel, you know, as opposed to it, being

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00:25:45.900 --> 00:25:50.370

Julie Keane, PhD: a punitive accountability system, it just seems to me that if there's shared leadership

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00:25:50.590 --> 00:26:12.819

Julie Keane, PhD: shared collaboration that you know hopefully you would come to a place of shared accountability because you care about it. Accountability is also about moving beyond buy end to ownership right? Collaboratively. Come together to own this work and these spaces.

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00:26:12.970 --> 00:26:19.469

Julie Keane, PhD: Okay, we have another critical question. Mark Otter wants to know if the beard is new. I don't think the beard is new.

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00:26:19.480 --> 00:26:21.930

Julie Keane, PhD: Your beard it is

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00:26:22.010 --> 00:26:31.649

Julie Keane, PhD: oh, it is new! Mark mark is so much he is very

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00:26:31.880 --> 00:26:32.960

Julie Keane, PhD: yeah.

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00:26:32.990 --> 00:26:53.619

Julie Keane, PhD: alright. Well, of course this went. I mean any sort of at last thoughts, I guess I guess back to just that recognition piece, you know, I'm seeing in terms of the recognition even that leadership coaches can do. I think that's kinda interesting, you know, as we collaborate with you further on the community as a practice of recognizing all of the roles

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00:26:53.630 --> 00:27:09.870

Julie Keane, PhD: in this work. So your coaches you are how those leaders that may come into a cohort and then continue with the community of practice, may then prove to be coaches for for newer cohorts coming in. I mean, I think there's so many opportunities to expand the model.

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00:27:10.230 --> 00:27:12.009

Julie Keane, PhD: Yeah.

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Ken Simon, EdD: yeah, we yes, we definitely think that there are lots of opportunities for us to expand the model. We also think that as we're expanding this work and bringing more and more people into this, we'll get better at this, and we'll figure out we'll be able to really take this work deeper. I do wanna leave with sort of

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00:27:35.540 --> 00:27:43.059

Ken Simon, EdD: couple of things really quickly. First thing is is that a lot of this work at the school level

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00:27:43.060 --> 00:28:10.150

Ken Simon, EdD: is about transformation. It's not small changes that you make. And I sort of wanted to. I did. We do this through. Trans, it's in a sense, transforming relationships that folks have at the school platform level. We do this through transforming systems and structures. And ultimately, we want to transform the culture so that it's based shared and collaborative leadership.

128

00:28:10.190 --> 00:28:19.449

Ken Simon, EdD: I will. I will sort of end with this little piece about a couple of. I think it was on Friday I got a text from one of

our coaches.

129

00:28:19.730 --> 00:28:25.619

Ken Simon, EdD: and they just finished a one to one with a principal who had

130

00:28:25.640 --> 00:28:39.230

Ken Simon, EdD: really really was trying hard, she wrote in one of her reflections, I'm a top-down leader. That's how I was trained. This is really hard. And then the text from the coach was so and so

131

00:28:39.250 --> 00:28:58.450

Ken Simon, EdD: came to us and said, She's had a huge transformation, and the light bulbs went off for her and started this something at her site, and she said, by the end of the call we were all in tears, and we really

132

00:28:58.450 --> 00:29:23.479

Julie Keane, PhD: the folks we have utmost respect for school and district leaders who are. Yeah, especially right now, I mean, I think we can all say that you know. We have to have these schools backs, you know, and I really love that. So I want to. Christine is reminding me. We only have a couple of minutes like 1 min left. There's gonna be can you please take a few seconds to reflect on your discussion and answer a poll question?

133

00:29:23.500 --> 00:29:32.849

Julie Keane, PhD: There's a link in the chat as well as this QR code. We'd love to hear any reflections you have. About our conversation today.

134

00:29:32.990 --> 00:30:02.490

Julie Keane, PhD: And also just as a reminder while you do that, the recording will be shared and following days via email. And that will be for everyone who signed up. And then please look out for details for my future webinars, which is so exciting. We're gonna be talking to benjamin Young, and he's a strategist program manager Mission amplifier at New York Academy of Sciences. I get to like talk to people who are just smarter than me all that time. So, anyway, it was wonderful to talk to you, Ken, and I really appreciate

135

00:30:02.490 --> 00:30:08.480

Julie Keane, PhD: your time today, and just all of your thoughts. And

it's really we're so. We just love working with you.

136

00:30:08.520 --> 00:30:14.130

Ken Simon, EdD: Alright, yeah. Have a great day, everyone.

137

00:30:15.180 --> 00:30:15.990

Julie Keane, PhD: Bye, bye.