



Nat:

Welcome back to another episode of Reach. Teach. Talk. With the move to remote learning and teaching if you're in Los Angeles and across the country and in many countries around the world, a lot of teachers rightfully are concerned. It's not so much that they're concerned about, I got to hit this benchmark in my curriculum or I've got to make sure that my kids are going to pass this ... the AT test in May or get this score on the SATs. Rightfully many teachers are concerned about that, but more importantly, what I'm hearing from teachers is, "I don't know what my relationship with my students is going to look like in this technology-based platform. I built the past two thirds of the year, my classroom to reflect the ethos and the character codes of conduct and all of that. And now I'm in my bedroom or I'm in my office or I'm in my den at home and I don't have this shared space anymore. And I'm very concerned that this is going to be a deficit for my teaching, a deficit for their learning."

Nat:

So I've been thinking about this a lot in the past couple of weeks while we've been making this move to remote teaching. And I came across an article in the LA times very recently, which was despondent but not surprising. Which is talking about how there's 15,000 students the LAUSD school system that have not checked in or signed in or been present for their online or remote classes.

Nat:

And it was a depressing article, but it actually ... there was some wisdom to it as well. And the wisdom came from this professor Tyrone Howard, Dr Tyrone Howard, who said, "Teachers' relationships with students before the closures could affect whether some show up." And he also said, "The ones best able to take their lessons online already had strong relationships with their students and their families."

Nat:

And the reason why I found this to be an encouraging quote actually is because those of us who are in the trenches, those of us who have taught, those of us who teach, those of us who get into teaching, that's the number one focus. It's this social emotional. It is the true relational connection between them and their students. That matters most. And the reason why I say this is kind of inspirational is because we are in a time that we're actually focusing on this now. We're hearing from the teachers who are concerned and we're hearing that they're concerned again about losing that connection. And we are being reminded through that concern that connection, this relationship between the teachers and students is what matters most.

Nat:

And dr Tyrone Howard, who is the professor of education at UCLA. He's the director of the black male Institute and Pritzker Family Endowed Chair in Education to Strengthen Families and Children is here with me today to talk about the power of relationships when it comes to the learning experience and also how this change to remote learning and teaching has had an impact on that. Both perhaps surprisingly positive but also in a challenging lane.

Nat:

So Dr. Howard, thank you so much for being with us today.

Dr. Howard:

Thank you for having me on today, Nat, how are you doing?

Nat:

I'm doing all right. It was a rainy morning, but now-

Dr. Howard:

Yes, it is. Yes, it is.

Dr. Howard:

... the sun is coming out.

Dr. Howard:

But we'll get through it. We'll get through it.

Nat:

Let me start with this. What does the term mean to you, Dr. Howard, what's does the term remote teaching mean to you? I'm curious about just what images it might bring up. Positive or negative.

Dr. Howard:

Yeah, so for me it brings up a host of images. I think remote learning means that we're going to have to reconsider, rethink, reconceptualize the very way in which teaching and learning takes place. So whereas we have been accustomed to teaching and learning taking place in the traditional classroom setup where students are in the same space as their teachers now remote teaching. I think about this very format that we have set up right now, as you and I had this conversation. I think we're talking about teachers being in one part of the city, their students being in another part of the city and the very way in which we are going to engage is going to look, feel it can be very different.

Dr. Howard:

And I think that's in and of itself, not necessarily a bad thing. I do have some bigger concerns about the issues tied to access and equity and availability of the mechanisms or the tools that young people need in order to connect with teachers. And so that's why I think this notion of relational trust and relational connection is so important. Because I think that teachers who have those connections probably stand a much better chance of having those social intellectual, capital for lack of return to get those students engaged.

Nat:

Now you write a lot. You write a lot, you speak a lot about how teachers can best achieve this social capital, this relational trust with their students. And by the way, I got to plug this book, All Students Must Thrive. Just came out last November, right?

Dr. Howard:

Yes, it did. Yeah.

Nat:

It is absolutely fantastic. And it's not just Dr Howard's wisdom, but there's several others who each have a chapter of their own, which all contributed toward this, what we're talking about today. It's all about helping students thrive. It's all about the teaching role as the teacher as a coach, the teacher as the humble, not the humble servant so much, but because there's strengthened in this humility that you write about and speak about, but it's this idea of being human, right? In the classroom.

Dr. Howard:

It is. It is. And I think that sometimes gets lost in this work that we do. I think that this very well and that so much of our focus and the narrative in education is around testing, testing, testing standards, standards, standards, raising the academic bar, improving academic outcomes. All of which we both know are incredibly important in terms of how we think about the purpose and function of school. But part of what we try to talk about in the book is that there are some real significant impediments that serve as real obstacles for students to learn. And I think oftentimes we tend to either not know about those obstacles,, or we choose to minimize those obstacles or we choose to act as if they are just bumps in the road, that students just have to demonstrate grit to get over them and there'll be just fine and have that survival of the fittest kind of attitude.

Dr. Howard:

And part of what we try to talk about is that when we talk about wellness and what we call critical wellness and holistic approach to connecting to the humanity of all students, it means we have to have some hard conversations to understand the circumstances that students are in. And I mean when you talk about testing and learning and standards and things of that nature, what does that mean for the student who has been experiencing homelessness for the last six months? That student has many more pressing things on his, her or their mind than a test on Monday morning when they've been sleeping in a car or sleeping in a shelter for who knows how long.

Dr. Howard:

For the student who is suffering from food insecurity, we know that students cannot focus, they cannot memorize, they cannot learn to their maximum levels if they come to school hungry every day, which many children do.

Dr. Howard:

So part of what this relational trust is about is understanding, knowing, and being empathetic about some of the circumstances that our young people are going through. Because if we can tend to those matters first, I think we can very well see some better outcomes in terms of students' performance in schools. But I think sometimes schools operate from this idea that we just need you students to check all those problems at the door, come on here and learn.

Dr. Howard:

And I think what students are telling us and their own unique ways, you can't check poverty at the door. You can't check homelessness at the door. You can't check abuse and neglect at the door. Those things have a profound influence on young people physiologically, psychologically, emotionally, in ways that we cannot even begin to measure. And so we have to be in tune with that.

Nat:

You know what I'm thinking about is among many things is the role that we put on as teachers in the classroom. And I speak a lot about how that can be a very distancing role. If you're trying to be perfect in

front of your students every day, there's a distance there actually. And students can sense that, but you're trying to put on this role as the expert. I hadn't thought until you were just speaking just moment ago, Dr. Howard that students put on a role as well.

Nat:

And perhaps what you're advocating here is ... and I'd be curious about how perhaps this remote platform can help diminish this role, this focus on a role. But you're saying, look, students can't check their lives at the door. Every student is coming into your classroom having had breakfast or not having been having had a good eight hours sleep or not, working a job outside of school or not with one parent or grandparent or guardian or not. And all that does matter. It sounds like what you're saying is all that does matter.

Nat:

So I'm wondering about how this move to a remote teaching and learning and I'm thinking about the students who have access. We can talk about many that don't and that impacts as well later. But is there a way that perhaps we can capitalize on this and eliminate in a sense this door, the classroom door?

Dr. Howard:

Yeah. So I think ... I'm glad you made the distinction on this one Nat. Let's start with the students who do have access. Because I do think when these serious situations arise, we have to ask ourselves what is the learning opportunity that we can find in them? And so as it pertains to the remote learning, one of the things we've oftentimes say is that really effective teachers are able to connect to students in ways that are not just centered around their academic identities, but also tied to their personal and social identities, their lives outside of school, their lives in their neighborhood, their lives at home, their lives within the context of their family dynamics.

Dr. Howard:

So given that, here you have the perfect opportunity to take really a bird's eye look into the lives of your students. I've heard a number of teachers who've talked about the fact that as they've done the remote learning, they've been able to actually introduce their teachers to younger siblings, to nieces and nephews who live with them, parents that had not met teachers are now able to see firsthand some of the adults that their children work with.

Dr. Howard:

So if you look at it from an asset standpoint to say this is an opportunity for kids who do have access to the proper technology, you get a glimpse into their lives. But also keep in mind on this Nat, this is a two way street. I don't think that we as educators should say, students open up your lives, open up the window into your reality, but then we're not wanting to open up that same window into our lives.

Dr. Howard:

So I think for teachers it can also be an opportunity to say, "Well look, I've always told you about a pet that I have in my house. So well, here's my pet. I've always told you about my son and daughter, here's my son or daughter." So I think it really gives us all an opportunity to get a better glimpse into the lives of each of us, because we talk about our lives, we talk about our loved ones, our family, our friends. And I think with remote learning you can get a smaller glimpse of that. That can help to form I think some better connections and better bonds.

Nat:

Let keep going with this conversation topic and I can ask you a question and again, focusing on students who do have access. It sounds also that you're advocating for an empathetic connection or an empathy based connection with your students. Does that make sense to you? Like this idea of ... because if you're going to learn about me, I'm going to learn about you. You just said this is a two way street. And to me, whenever I hear two way it sounds empathetic, but when I hear one way, it sounds sympathetic and sympathy can be patronizing, can you explain that a little bit?

Dr. Howard:

Right. So I think that part of what we want to move away from is the very point you just mentioned. I think you really hit the nail on the head. I think the sympathy approach is that we feel sorry for students because they don't have certain types of material resources, they don't have the kinds of attributes in their lives that we think they should have. And it's oftentimes very, I think judgment-centered, if you will. And I think if you are operating from that sympathy standpoint, once we are sympathetic, we tend to judge, we tend to feel sorry for students. And then I think a byproduct of that is lowering our expectations, not challenging students, not holding them accountable. And I think it's basically a fast track to failure.

Dr. Howard:

Whereas on the flip side, I think that empathy means that I'm going to try to somehow take myself out of my position and try to understand your world. Let me see what it's like to walk in your shoes. Let me see what it's like to live in your world. Because I think if we did that as educators, we might be a little bit more patient at times. We might be a little bit more understanding at times. I think at times we might be even a little bit more thoughtful about the things we say about the ways we interpret student behavior. Because in many ways we just don't know what students go through, they show up in our schools every day. We don't know what they have to endure to be in our classrooms. We don't know the psychological stress they might be carrying it from life circumstances.

Dr. Howard:

And so the empathy part is like we're not lowering standards, we're still holding students accountable, but we're doing it in a way where we understand their circumstances. And to that, I would say teachers need to understand it. Because one of my concerns has always been the following that, I talked to teachers and what you typically have ... and you've heard this before, you're an educator, you're a seasoned educator. Many educators who are at the elementary level will say, I teach students because I have a core number of students, 30, 35 students a day. I'm with them six, seven hours a day for 180 days a year. So I have much more of an opportunity to connect with them.

Dr. Howard:

I have found that secondary teachers are more likely to say, I teach algebra, I teach physics, I teach geometry. So they tend to think of their work as teaching a subject matter and not so much as teaching young people. And I get it. In fairness to the secondary educators, you and I both know you can very easily be in a situation where if you're teaching six or seven periods a day, with 30 kids a day, you can be teaching in excess of 170, 180 close to 200 students daily, and you don't have them for the entire day. You may only have them for 45 minutes.

Dr. Howard:

So it's harder for many of those secondary educators because they just don't have as much time with their students and they have far more of them. But nonetheless, I think there's still some unique ways that they can tap into understanding who students are to try to form those connections.

Nat:

Absolutely right. And I'm thinking now, look, we're in a situation where the next eight weeks of school, it's pretty much, there's me an asterik on this transcript. Like it's not spring 2020 no matter where you are in the country, no matter how many years out, there going to have an asterik next to that and say, you know what? This was during the coronavirus. This is a pandemic. This is unprecedented period of time and learning. And for cities like in LA or in Boston where I'm from originally, I know that they are not emphasizing grades at all. And in fact because of the limited access to remote learning. They're saying, look, you know this is about engagement, this is about teaching but not recording grades, right?

Dr. Howard:

Mm-hmm(affirmative).

Nat:

So wouldn't you agree this presents an opportunity then for teachers to do exactly what you're talking about? I'd love to hear your thoughts on this because mine are oriented toward this idea that this is a chance to almost reset with those students who are in your class and attend their more class day by day, kind of reset that connection and focus more on the connection.

Dr. Howard:

Yeah, no, you're spot on with that and I think that that's the message that we've got to continue to sort of drive home. Because I've talked to countless educators across the country and when I've talked about relational trust and one of the responses I frequently get is, "I would love to do all those things you're talking about. However, I've got the six week benchmark coming up in two weeks. I love to talk about those issues, but guess what? I've got AP tests and I've got to prepare my students for. I would love to do more of the relationship building pieces that you talk about. However, I've got to cover these number of standards in the next X number of day." All of which I understand because teachers feel like they don't want their students under prepared or unprepared for assessments if they're going to be taking off.

Dr. Howard:

So what would it look like? The question goes if those things weren't hovering over your head, what if you didn't have the state testing coming up? What if you didn't have the AP testing come up? If those things we're not a part of your sort of purview, if you will, it would give you an opportunity to spend more time into the relational trust building that you and I had been talking about. Well, here we are and this is where I see again in these unfortunate circumstances come opportunities to redefine and reconceptualize how we do this work.

Dr. Howard:

So I would strongly encourage any educator who's out there. Yes, states across the country and districts across the country are doing the very thing. You see, we're sort of taking a step back and saying, we're not going to test. We're not, when I hold students accountable to the state or district wide standardized tests like we have in the past.

Dr. Howard:

So this is still an opportunity to learn. There's still an opportunity to engage, but it's also an opportunity to really start to get to know students in ways that many educators have never gotten to know their students. And this is where you can take the time out and not feel the pressure from the upcoming benchmark or not feel the pressure from the upcoming testing. So I just hope that teachers take the

opportunity because who knows when we'll ever have this kind of a window to really begin to sort of invest personally into our students in ways that we typically want to, but we may not have the opportunity to do so with the typical day to day schedule that we oftentimes find ourselves in.

Nat:

I love that you described this as a window of opportunity here and this is absolutely a onetime window of opportunity and I'm hoping that there are educators out there who are going to be ... and researchers who are going to be assessing and really kind of investigating and exploring what this spring 2020 has produced in terms of what really matters and engaged learning. I want to get back to something you mentioned earlier, which is the role of parents and or guardians and what this platform can actually do to help strengthen that connection and why is that important?

Dr. Howard:

Well, I think the parent connection is huge on many levels. Number one, what we know is this; many parents have a very, what I would call antiquated notion of how schooling works today because for many parents, it's been decades since they've been in school. And so we tend to this to operate from the standpoint that school is by and large the same kind of setup, format, processes that we were accustomed to as students. But you and I both know that schools and the way we deliver content and instruction and assessment changes rapidly. It changes with new technologies. It changes with new approaches. It changes with new research.

Dr. Howard:

So I think this could be an opportunity for parents and caregivers just to develop a bit of a glimpse into what students have on their plate. The level of depth and rigor that some of their courses are asking for them, the timelines that they are being asked to complete certain tasks in, the collaborative work that they are oftentimes being expected to carry out.

Dr. Howard:

The ways in which they engage with their teachers, the academic language that is oftentimes a staple in these exchanges. So I think for any parent or caregiver who's out there, one, I continue to hear a number of them, have a new found appreciation for teachers if they've been able to stay home and do some remote learning with their students. They see and understand that teachers have a difficult job and now many parents and caregivers appreciate that more. But I also hope that parents and caregivers will take this opportunity to get to know teachers, to introduce themselves, to ask how can I help or was my child best in this particular class or in this particular subject area? I think it's an opportunity for parents to learn more about this.

Dr. Howard:

But I will say this, and I want to caution because as we talk about parents and teachers and caregivers connecting to help support students, I do not want to lose sight of the fact that even in this window of opportunity, as we've talked about, there's a national or global tragedy that we're dealing with here and there are people who are losing loved ones. There are people who have loved ones who are not well physically. There are people who have loved ones who were in the hospital. So we need to also remember that even as we're trying to talk to students about learning, that there are going to be some families, some students who can't focus and think about learning the way we might want them to because they have a loved one who they don't know if they're going to make it or they've lost a loved one.

Dr. Howard:

And that's the part that we have to keep at the forefront. So I've asked many educators to just rethink everything right now. There are students who will not be engaged. There'll be students who will not connect because they're thinking about their own health, safety and wellbeing. Some students are thinking about their grandparents that they have not seen, and sometime because they're respecting the social distancing norms. So I'm just asking us to also think about the moment we're living in and what that may mean emotionally for a lot of our students and to be sensitive to that.

Nat:

Dr. Howard, you oftentimes speak of the classroom as what I would call a haven. And what you've used words similar to Haven or a place of a stability, a place of peace, even a place of comfort while also being a place to challenge. Because we both know as educators it's only through real challenge and struggle that you learn, that you have longterm attention. Learning is never passive.

Nat:

But I'm thinking about that as you were speaking because this ... Would you agree that this is a chance for us to use the new classroom, this remote classroom as a way to build those connections and to learn ... You're going to learn about your students' families and, but also to create this secure environment in a way. And I'm thinking about how we're all psychologically and emotionally impacted by this pandemic and we're the adults. One can only wonder how these young ones are processing this.

Nat:

And I'd love for you to speak a little more. And in other words, I continue what you were saying earlier because it's so important, I think that this message is communicated why it matters so much for us to have that view of our remote classroom as also very much a place of safety for our students during this time.

Dr. Howard:

No doubt. Yeah. One of the things we know, and this is not something that I think comes as news to anyone who's been in education for any period of time, is that familiarity helps students learn. Consistency is vital to doing well, knowing what to anticipate and when to anticipate it, helps to provide a sense of calm and comfort for a lot of students. Many of us as adults are creatures of habit. We have routines, we have processes, and the minute those processes are disrupted, we are very much out of our comfort zone and so we're all living because of this pandemic and a very uncomfortable, uncomfortable and unnatural reality. So we're trying to figure it all out.

Dr. Howard:

Our kids are no different. They're trying to figure it out too. But I think one thing we have to look for is what can we do to create some levels of familiarity in the unfamiliar, if that makes sense.

Dr. Howard:

And I think one of the things that for many of our students that is familiar is connectedness and consistency with adults and peers at school. It may not be in the physical presence that they may be accustomed to, but if you spend over 80, 100, 150 days a year, seeing certain people, your teachers, your peers, that becomes a part of your day to day routine, that becomes part of your familiar structures. So this is where the remote learning can still provide that.

Dr. Howard:

With all the uncertainty going on in the world right now, all the craziness that we're all having to deal with, it will give some students some sense of just solitude. Knowing that from eight to 10, I'm going to see my favorite teacher who always knows how to help me bring a smile to my face, who always tells me that things are going to be okay.

Dr. Howard:

And I look forward to seeing her or him or that person every single day at this time during the week and it brings me some sense of calm. It brings me some sense of sort of peace. It helps me to realize that you know what, I can get through today and I cannot stress that enough because the more things are uncomfortable, the more things are out of the ordinary, the more things are out of typical day to day, I think the more de-centered we all are. And I think these moments in the remote classroom can be a small way to kind of help center us for some period of time in ways that I don't think we can quantify.

Nat:

That's beautifully said. I'm thinking about the ... We've all seen those episodes or the footage of teacher parades going through the town, like the main street going by their students' houses and waving and that is exactly what you're talking about. Is that the importance of seeing my teacher, knowing that they're still there even though we're not sharing space together, and how important it is with this remote platform to value that. The routines, the eight to 10 in the morning, read aloud. Like I'm going to see my teacher who I love or I'm going to see my teacher who I'm finding a lot of humor, watching him struggle with the technology or the one who's got a little kid screaming in the background every day we have class. You said earlier, these are new branches of connection that are possible through this kind of more open approach [inaudible 00:24:45] this spring. But it's not perfect. And I'd love for us to end with a question that I've got here, which comes from actually your book, the new book, All Students Must Thrive.

Nat:

And it relates to this because we've been talking about how this remote platform can help students who have access, but there are students who don't. But before I leave it to you to kind of ... I'd love for you to use this as a platform to explain why it matters so much and what we can do about what are your thoughts about what we can do to provide access to every student.

Nat:

But before that, or if you can perhaps weave in the distinction between equity and equality, because that to me connects to what I'm assuming you might be wanting to say about it.

Dr. Howard:

Absolutely. Because you know, we use these terms equity inequality interchangeably or synonymously as if they mean the same. But I've often time challenged that notion. I think equity is something fundamentally different from equality where I think equality seeks to give everybody the same thing. And I oftentimes have said if we give everyone the same thing, we would still have inequality.

Dr. Howard:

So equity is about meeting people where they are. It's about being okay, providing some additional time support services, resources to those who historically have not had it or contemporarily have not had it. So that might mean that the inputs are going to look different for some students compared to others. And I think this equity versus equality issue was very timely in light of where we are with the pandemic. Because as we've talked about moving into more remote learning platforms, there's oftentimes been

this narrative that suggests or carries on as if everyone has access to internet. Everyone has access to high speed internet. Everyone has access to devices, and you and I both know that that is just not the case.

Dr. Howard:

So equality would say, well, let's just give everybody in the school a laptop, which some districts have done. Okay, we can give everybody in the district a laptop. But that doesn't take into consideration that I may not live in a hotspot or I may not have access to the internet. So I have laptop here, but it does nothing in terms of connectivity to the learning. So this is where equity says we need to be intentional and we need to be unapologetic about making sure that if we know that there are students and families that don't have the means to be able to provide internet access that we talk to different, I think companies that provide that kind of support. Verizon, AT&T had been some of the companies that are providing hotspot access for certain families.

Dr. Howard:

So it's recognizing that if we say we want students to learn, some students and some families are going to need more support, they're going to need more interventions, and they're going to need more basic kinds of ingredients to make that learning come to fruition. And the same thing can be said for those students. Again, I mentioned those students who are experiencing homelessness, who may not have a quiet welded place to sit down and open up a laptop. If I'm at a shelter, if I'm living in a car or God forbid if I'm living on the streets, that's a big, big challenge in terms of how I might access content information.

Dr. Howard:

So I just think we've got to be sensitive. We've got to be empathetic again to the realities of unfortunately a large number of our students. We know in a district such as Los Angeles Unified, over 80% of the students in the Los Angeles Unified school district fall under the guise of what is considered poverty. We know about 15% to 20% of those students fall in what's considered extreme poverty. So it's a reality. And I think that the district has done a phenomenal job with making sure that basic needs in terms of food and nutrition are being a state focus. Because we know many of our children schools might be the only place where they are receiving two and sometimes three meals a day.

Dr. Howard:

So I think we've done a great job there and I think they're taking steps not only here in Los Angeles, but also across the country to ensure that we're doing a better job of being sensitive to, mindful of and aware of the technological gaps that exist and not holding students accountable, but trying to do everything we can to try to ensure that students have access to hotspots. They have access to technological devices, and they have access to high speed internet that will allow them to still engage in the learning even as they're going through these trying times.

Nat:

Dr. Howard, if I can leave you with one piece of advice I guess you would give to the teachers who may be listening or watching here and who still are anxious about this. What's like the one piece of, of like unapologetic advice you would say to these teachers as you ... [inaudible 00:29:10].

Dr. Howard:

What I would say to them that as first and foremost allow yourself to be human in this moment. So many of the same concerns that we talked about students having, teachers have them too. Teachers are concerned about their own health and wellbeing. They're concerned about the health and wellbeing of

their children in some cases. They're concerned about the health and wellbeing of their parents and grandparents and sometimes they're caught in between sort of the ... they're in the middle. They're thinking about how do I care for others while I also am trying to care for myself and I've got folks who depend on me who are not tied to my profession, family members who are needing my time and attention.

Dr. Howard:

So give yourself the time and space to mess up when it comes to technology. Allow yourself the time to say, I don't know what I'm doing right now. Allow yourself to sort of say, I'm not going to require these 10 things for students to do. I'm going to just require three or four of them to be done. Allow yourself to say to your students, "You know what? Right now, I'm really worried or I'm scared or I'm worried," or whatever. The range of emotions that you might have. Be that person. Be authentic. Let students into your own emotional soul, if you will, so that they can see the humor, the humanizing part of who you are. That's what forges relationships. That's what makes connection. When people are willing to be vulnerable and say, right now I need help, right now, I'm not feeling well right now, I'm not all the way here.

Dr. Howard:

Because guess what? There are many of our students who show up in our classrooms via virtual platform or in person who feel the same way at times, and I think the way you feel that bond or feel that connection is when I can see your struggle in mine. When I hear you say that you're worried because you have a grandparent who's not doing well and I have a grandparent who is not doing well. Now we've got something in common and that helps to build better sense of understanding, trust, mutuality, and I think that's what I would tell teachers in this moment. Give yourself the opportunity to step back and if you are not your best right now, it's okay to not be your best because we're in a place and a space right now we're all trying to figure out what's going to happen the next day, let alone the next week or the next month.

Dr. Howard:

And just to also try to remain as upbeat and as optimistic as possible try to tell we'll get through this. It's not going to be easy. It may take time, but we'll all get through this. And there's something to be said about having us all feel like we're in this together. This interconnectedness that we feel is sometimes the very thing that we need so we can feel like we're not so alone or isolated during these challenging times.

Nat:

Wow, that's beautifully said. I'm just saying all these skills that you're bringing up, these communication, collaboration, building a team, creating together this new existence. All of this are skills that, my goodness, I'm thinking my future will be enhanced knowing that students have been taught these skills through being, through a teacher's action and response to this incredibly surprising and unreal really situation that we're all living through. The human element matters, the relational matters.

Nat:

And Dr. Tyrone Howard, thank you so much for being a guest on today's episode of Reach. Teach. Talk. I'm inspired. I'm feeling like 10 times more positive actually not in a Pollyanna way because you-

Dr. Howard:

I know, I know. Absolutely.

Nat:

You make a really good point, both in your book here, but also in your online lectures that I've seen, where it's not about like putting on the rose tinted glasses. Just what you were just saying a second ago. We're going through this hardship together but if we can still ... it doesn't mean we can't still offer hope and as the only adult in the room or the only adult in the virtual classroom, a remote classroom, we still have that responsibility to offer hope and positivity. But there's a difference between that and being a saccharin and being less relatable [crosstalk 00:32:54] instance here.

Dr. Howard:

My friend and colleague [inaudible 00:32:56] refers to it as hokey hope. We don't want to offer the hokey hope, we want to offer realistic hope. That's sort of tied to a set of realities that we know are serious and daunting challenges that lie before us. But we still have to hold on this sense of real authentic hope that says that we believe, that we will ultimately get through this, which we will.

Nat:

Which we will. Authentic hope leads to thriving, leads to authentic strength. And thank you again for this very authentic conversation. Dr. Tyrone Howard UCLA School of Education. Real pleasure to have you with us today. Thank you.

Dr. Howard:

My man. Appreciate you, Nat.

Speaker 1:

You've been listening to Reach. Teach. Talk. With Nat Damon. If you'd like to recommend a guest for a future episode, you can send your suggestion or questions to nat@reachacademics.com.