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Episode #37: Interview with Allyson Kangisser and Jessica Watt

Becky Lewis: Hello, fellow educators and welcome to episode 37 of the Leaders of Literacy podcast. I'm your host, Becky Lewis, and helping me wrap up this conversation around supporting mental health in the classroom today is my co-host, Sara Hutchinson, along with two school counselors from Ohio County, West Virginia: Allyson Kangisser and Jessica Watt. Today we're going to talk about how an important partnership between school counselors and classroom educators can support students when it comes to mental health education in the classroom.

This is the West Virginia Leaders of Literacy podcast, where we engage in educational conversations to strengthen early literacy in West Virginia. Are you ready to become a leader of literacy?

Hello listeners! Thank you for joining us today, and, Sara, thank you for coming back onto the show as we continue our conversation on West Virginia Tiered System of Support.

Sara Hutchinson: Hi, Becky. Yeah, thank you. I'm really glad to be back on the podcast today. We're going to be joined today by two people who can really extend our conversation on what mental health tiered supports really look like. I have two guests actually with us. I have Jessica Watt and I also have Allyson Kangisser who are both school counselors from Ohio County, West Virginia. So, Jessica and Allyson, thank you so much for taking the time to join us today.

Jessica Watt: Thanks for having us.

Becky Lewis: So, to get us started, Jessica and Allyson, could you each tell us a little bit about your role, your school, and the students that you have in Ohio County?

Jessica Watt: Sure, I am a school counselor-- a Title 1 school counselor at Madison Elementary School, and I have been here for 15 years. I deliver prevention curriculum, help coordinate Tier 2 and Tier 3 services for students, collaborate with community resources, support our schoolwide PBIS program, support our staff, do crisis intervention, manage our expanded school mental health program for a school of about 260 students grades preschool through five. We are a Title 1 school. We have three special ed programs and serve many students that come from low-income homes with lots of high needs on Wheeling Island in Wheeling, West Virginia.

Sara Hutchinson: Awesome, Jessica. Thank you so much for introducing yourself. Allyson, would you care to tell us a little bit about yourself as well?

Allyson Kangisser: Sure, I am the school counselor at Woodsdale Elementary School in Wheeling, West Virginia also. Jessica and I are actually past coworkers. We used to work together, and now we just collaborate together. Here at Woodsdale we have about between 400 and 500 students year to year currently we have about 415, and it's PK through five. We also have some additional community preschools that we're affiliated with, but I primarily work with the K through five groups. Our school's really neat because it's very diverse. We have a lot of different types of families here, mixed levels of socioeconomic statuses. We have suburban families. We have rural families. We have urban families.

We sort of have all these different pockets of communities that are very close to our school, and we sort of just all kind of roll together.

Sara Hutchinson: Great. Thank you both for expanding upon that. I really think it's helpful for our listeners to really get a glimpse into the community that your school is in because I think that we have so many diverse districts that I'm sure listeners could hear bits that they resonated with their own classrooms with their own schools. And, with all that being said about your schools and your roles, do you have anything else to add that can really clarify for our listeners how your role differs from that of the classroom teacher?

Jessica Watt: I think, that as a school counselor, our role is different, and that we work on more of an individual basis with different topics than the focus on academics. Feelings, home situations, more time for phone calls home and meetings with parents, helping children with more difficult personal problems. School counselors know community resources that can be brought into classrooms, that can be connected to families and students to help them process and handle and learn to cope with some of life's more bigger challenges that are often a barrier to what the teacher is trying to do with academics in the classroom. Teachers know their students very well and will often pick up on things and then refer them to the school counselor for more intensive interventions.

We have the offices and the space in the classrooms that sometimes children need privacy to talk about issues that they might not feel comfortable or it might not be appropriate for them to share with their peers in a classroom setting. So, when teachers know that a school counselor can be a wealth of resources for them they can call on us to help with all kinds of things that make it easier and better for them and their kids in the classroom.

Allyson Kangisser: Yeah, I agree with Jessica. I mean, our teachers do so much already for our children. They know the kids, they refer them to us, and then we're sort of that bridge that connects what the child needs to a community resource. So, like Jessica said, if they just need to talk to someone, we have the availability of space to do that, if they need to call home, or if we need to call home, we can do that at the drop of a hat, whereas a teacher is, obviously, with the classroom engaging with twenty other students that they can't always give that individualized time to that student.

Becky Lewis: Thank you for describing that difference, and I did not know how to utilize my school counselor properly before the role that I'm in now, and it's really important work because I didn't know all of the community resources that were available to my families or to my children. So, I really like that you're describing that role for teachers who would be like me and Sara in the classroom and not understand that.

So, thinking about your work, can you describe the process that you use with working alongside classroom teachers-- like looking into your schedules and your responsibilities? What are some of the best ways for teachers to collaborate with school counselors at their own schools, to support students? And I know that schedules will vary, and amount of time spent there will vary, but what are some general ideas? And let's start with you, Jessica.

Jessica Watt: Well, just this morning I had to get on the walkie talkie and ask a teacher to call me on my cell phone so that I could discuss something I didn't want all the kids to hear me say over the walkie talkie. So, I think sometimes it's just on a needs basis, but I think that we work really hard, Ally and I, to

be open and available whenever needed. When the more serious things come up and teachers need that support. Our teachers stop by the counseling office on a daily basis to share concerns. It can be done through email. We send a text, we use our walkie talkies, we talk to each other on our cell phones however we need. I might get a text from a teacher: "Hey, when you have a few minutes I have an upset student in my classroom. Would you please walk up and get her and bring her down to your office?" And, so it's just a very open lines of communication, and I think that just from getting to know your staff, and you become friends with each other you feel comfortable reaching out however you need to. And it's really nice to work with teams of people where there's just an open line of communication like that.

I think the staff at our schools knows that there's a lot of staff, there's a lot of students, and there's one or one and a half counselors in the school, and so everyone is very understanding that if we're dealing with a crisis situation or already have a queue sitting outside of our office to talk with us, and we're not immediately available to help, that they can wait, or there's other staff that can step in to help address those concerns if it's something that's more immediate. So, we're just really flexible and have open lines of communication with each other.

Allyson Kangisser: Yeah, I agree with Jessica. Now as for collaborating on like Tier 1 preventions and things like that, they know that they can meet with me, they can write me an email. I forgot to mention some of my roles here of being on like the PBIS team, of being on the leadership team, and the map team, and all those kind of things that we take on as school counselors. That they can join that committee and we can collaborate on those kinds of things. I think that's really important to know that, hey, if you want to talk about a big picture kind of thing, let's do it in a more formal setting. If it's more of an urgent like immediate thing, shoot me a text and I'm going to be there.

So, there's a lot of different ways we can collaborate. You know, I'll stop in the classes sometimes and surprise people and say, hey, I wanted you guys to know that this is going on and be ready for it, and I know the staff that can handle that, and I know the staff that can't, and I'll give them a heads up. So, it's getting to really know the people you work with and what they need and how they want to communicate with you so that you can be there for whatever the situation is.

Sara Hutchinson: Yeah, I'm really glad you shared that because, I mean, those are just so small little steps that I could have taken, you know, having the counselor's phone number at hand, reaching out to them, getting to know them as a person, and that's something that I could have done that hopefully our listeners can kind of reflect on their own personal experiences and maybe use that as a catalyst to start a relationship-- to start a conversation to receiving that support. And, you know, teachers can oftentimes kind of work in silos, and it's really great to know about what supports are out there, especially for those really challenging situations.

Becky Lewis: Yeah, I completely agree, Sara. And, Allyson, you brought up the tiers. You started to talk about Tier 1. So, in our last episode, Sara and I discussed this--the West Virginia Tiered System of Support framework, and its inclusion of mental health in all three of those tiers.

We also shared an NPR document that referred to the most effective plan for this support, which included school staff working together to create a safe and caring environment, knowing and reporting to the school specialists such as counselors when these early warning signs are observed. And, in this episode, we kind of want to expand on that idea and talk about universal social emotional learning. So,

in your words, what is social emotional learning, or SEL as we like our acronyms in education, and how does it relate to mental health?

Allyson Kangisser: Yeah, so for us social emotional learning is basically the foundation of our program of being a school counselor as you're trying to figure out how am I going to teach children to recognize their feelings, to know how to get along with people, to adjust to difficult situations, so, you know, that's at the core of everything we do, and it obviously directly it relates to mental health because if they can learn some of these skills now, hopefully as they get older and, you know, they go through puberty and they become adults and all those kind of things that they'll know how to cope with stress and challenging situations.

So, for us what we really focus on is the Tier 1, which is, in my school and I'm sure in Jessica's, is the planned set of curriculum or lessons that we're implementing in the school. So, I always used some sort of evidence-based curriculum for my Tier 1, so I know the children are learning it all the way through for the year and then also growing up on it from year to year.

Jessica Watt: I couldn't agree with Ally more. We take time to systematically build upon skills from kindergarten through fifth grade in elementary schools for academic content, but that oftentimes behavior instead of being looked at as something that's thoughtfully taught year to year to children. We just expect them because it's a rule that they follow it and they do it, but it's not. It's not always what is modeled in their home lives or a part of their home set of values that is taught. And it's not something that kids come to school knowing how to do.

But we expect that from the behavior side of it, and so it's so important for them to learn how to recognize and manage their feelings, learn to make safe choices, handle conflict, recognize the difference between a mean moment and a bullying situation, identify trusted adults who they can go to help them with their conflicts and to help them set goals, and to very purposely teach children how to self-regulate--not just say sit down, be quiet, calm down, but teach them how to do that. And so, I feel like universal prevention, or Tier 1, has moved us from being more punitive and punishing in our behavioral talks with children to more interventions, and let's understand where you're coming from, and let's teach you how to do what we're asking you to do. And so, if schools are looking to start implementing any kind of multi-tiered system of support that universal prevention at Tier 1 is where you begin because it reaches the most kids. It's for all of the children.

Sara Hutchinson: Yes, definitely, and I really appreciate how you both just so eloquently tied together those three domains of academics, and behavior, and mental health because it's undeniable that they all really depend on one another. It made me think of a podcast that I recently listened to that's linked in our show notes with Dr. Lorea Martinez who is an SEL researcher and educator. And one of the big things that she shares, is that a misconception of SEL is that it's always separate from academic curriculum content, and I, I think that that's really interesting for us to think about when we're looking at Tier 1 is in looking at what we're already doing-- what are our already happening instructional practices? What are our routines? How do I embed those SEL skills? I think for teachers to be able to find those opportunities, they have to know what those are.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning or CASEL (which is another acronym for us to add to the list). They support five core competence areas which include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. So, knowing that

it's really critical for our listeners to know these and be ready to look for opportunities to embed these, can we have a conversation to bring out what each of these really mean and how teachers might build them into their classrooms? If we if we look at the first competence area of self-awareness, how would we define that to our audience? What would we look for or what would we want to see within our students?

Jessica Watt: Student self-awareness is when they can recognize their emotions, strengths, and challenges. Helping students to look within themselves to see what they're good at and how they're feeling just makes them be more aware of how they're behaving. And one thing that teachers can do is set class goals or personal goals with students to help them become aware of what they're good at and what they want to grow in and focus on as a strength. And then just checking in with kids about progress of goals and how they're doing with what they want to grow in in those ongoing conversations helps keep self-awareness alive in the classroom--that's just something simple that teachers can do in their rooms.

Sara Hutchinson: Yeah, I think that's great, and, you know, it's probably true that many students' vocabulary for describing those emotions is limited, so, again, being able to give them the words to really be able to understand how they're they are filling, I think, is huge. So, thank you, I think that's really helpful to kind of get self-awareness in our mind.

When we move into the second competence area of self-management. How would we define that, and how might it be different from self-awareness?

Allyson Kangisser: Self-management is when a student recognizes that their emotions may be a barrier to their learning, or concentrating, or their decision making. So, we're really trying to focus on modeling self-management in healthy ways as the adult in the classroom. So, showing up and being honest with students showing that: "OK boys and girls, I'm a little stressed today. Let's all take a deep breath." You know these are the kind of things we can do to model self-management, and then also giving them the words to say it back to us--maybe like that math lesson was really hard and you might say well let's get our brains feeling positive again. What affirmation can we recite together? So, you're kind of just using that language back and forth to help them manage their self-bodies, maybe helping them calm down throughout the day. It's that recognition, those positive statements, and then the act of trying to calm down would be the best way I would describe self-management.

Sara Hutchinson: Yeah, I think that's great, and I think it connects to what you all had said earlier about when we have a child that misbehaves, and we ask them "calm yourself down" or you know something along those lines it's really pointing to the value of teaching those self-management and sometimes can be referred to self-regulation skills. I appreciate that.

And as you go into these competence areas, they shift from self to that connection with others. Moving into social awareness, how can we help our audience understand what this skill looks like?

Jessica Watt: Social awareness is showing care for and empathy towards other people, and empathy is something that takes time to cultivate with little people. The best way to teach children empathy is to notice when someone is showing care and concern for others and using it as an example. We like to make a big deal out of empathy and kindness at Madison. We often call kids out on this type of behavior as role models and make positive phone calls home to their parents or send a note home and really

make sure everyone knows that the child is making a good choice. It really reinforces that behavior and helps them to repeat it again in the future. As you get to know one another better through class discussions, like during morning meetings, they understand one another better and they have more compassion for each other. For example, if a student shares, I'm having a really hard time this morning. I'm feeling tired because I had a really rough weekend, then there are peers in class know that and they can be more compassionate and patient with them throughout the day.

Sara Hutchinson: Yeah, and then you can easily see how having that empathy then is just naturally going to move into that next core competence area of actually having relationship skills. So how can we further that? We have empathy, we are developing that social awareness--how does it play into our relationship skills?

Allyson Kangisser: I think relationship skills are really hard for students. We all know as adults having relationships can be challenging, so to expect kids to do it, I think is really hard. But a relationship skill is basically when students can make friends, work together, and solve problems as a group. We try to talk about class expectations. We try to talk about the norms for group work, and it's just kind of getting kids to, again, like you said, the empathy, the self-management, the self-awareness--you know these things. Kind of all I think tie together when you come to relationship skills, and we do try to teach the kids to use I-messages when those relationship skills are off track because as we know, in a relationship, when something gets hard, it's never your fault--it's the other person's fault. So, trying to get them to say, "I feel upset when we argue" or "I feel angry when we can't share this toy." It's taking the pressure off the other person, and it's putting the responsibility on the child themselves. So, practicing trying to listen and understand what people need--it's just kind of meshing all those things together.

Sara Hutchinson: Yeah, I think that you really showed how each of those really depends on the others. They don't really exist in isolation at all. You're going to find elements of each of these within the others, and the final one that CASEL recognizes is responsible decision making? What would you share with our audience about that skill?

Jessica Watt: Just helping students know that they make good choices. We focus a lot on good choice making our PBIS program (our school wide positive behavior, intervention, supports) and try to reinforce that because when we see kids making good decisions, we point that out. We make sure that others know about it, and then it just helps to cultivate that positive environment that makes it more possible that they are making a lot of responsible decisions.

Becky Lewis: And as you were going through, you and Allyson, and talking about each one of those key components, I could see little snippets of things I did in the classroom as a classroom teacher but didn't realize I wasn't making those connections. Like I did have a student one time where he would get flustered. He's like I need to have my own space--to remove myself, and we had a space designated in the classroom for him being self-aware and knowing how his emotions were. But you know, I didn't understand that connection to the social emotional awareness, so it's really good for our listeners to hear because I think they are thinking that this is a bigger task than what it really is because they're already implementing some of these practices into their classrooms naturally, without realizing it.

Allyson Kangisser: Well, Becky, what I thought too. With you saying that that teachers do naturally do most these things--just not purposefully. So, with the morning meeting or the tier one universal lessons--whatever method you're using, the thing is that you're purposefully trying to hit all those points. It's a

lot to ask that every child is self-aware, self-managed, socially aware, has good relationships. I mean, we don't expect children to be perfect, and we shouldn't expect ourselves to be perfect either, but I think just having that thoughtfulness of like, "Ok, how am I going to emotionally support the children this year?" Come to the school counselor, and we can figure out what best works for you. So, it's a lot to ask for, but I think when you think it out, you're doing a lot more than you realize.

Becky Lewis: Yeah, and I love that you brought back up morning meetings because I was a fourth-grade teacher for many years, and morning meetings wasn't really something that I thought of in the intermediate grades--it was more of a primary grade level activity. I know now with doing research and looking into it further that they're really a great way to create that safe and supportive environment at the start of your day. We discussed this in our last episode a little bit, but if morning meetings are new to some of our intermediate teachers or any listeners that are in our audience, could you all describe some examples of the components that you might typically find during a morning meeting to help directly support social emotional learning?

Allyson Kangisser: Sure, yeah, the way we do morning meetings at my school, we do it K through five, so the curriculum is a little different for each grade level, of course, but the structures are similar across the school. They typically have a greeting--the kids love the greetings; they like to make up new ones or celebrate the ones they already know. There's typically an activity or a topic that's done, and then there's some time for sharing. As well as the teachers, usually, if they have a little extra time, that's when they'll do their announcements (if they're not already on the board), and a preview for what's happening during that day, so it's sort of like sets up the day to be successful--like here's our expectations--here's something positive to consider.

So, this routine really gets the kids kind of in a-- I don't want to see a good mood-- in an even keeled mood, so they're not coming in hyperactive to their academic times, and they're not coming in like to sedated and tired--they've kind of woken up a little bit. It kind of evens everybody out to start. The topics vary pretty widely. Throughout the week typically the topic is all the same for the entire week, and then there's a new topic the next week.

Sara Hutchinson: I definitely--with what you're sharing, it so resonates with me because I was a first and second grade teacher, and everyone in my building always knew that I was incredibly passionate about morning meetings and how much it helped me to get to know my students, but also helped me to be ready to teach as well, you know? It calmed me down and helped me focus and get to know my students, and I really explained that to them as I developed those SEL skills for myself right in front of them. It takes a little bit of vulnerability to do that in front of your students, but it's really powerful for them to know some of the struggles and the things that you're working through, so in thinking about a teacher who may not have this developed, it could be intimidating to think about. I was wondering if you had any small tips for someone to just start taking some baby steps toward something like a morning meeting?

Allyson Kangisser: I've seen morning meetings introduced in a lot of different ways in schools. Some schools, like mine, did a schoolwide implementation where everybody sort of jumped in and started it. I've also seen people take smaller steps. Another school that I work with they did like a pilot in one grade level. They had two teachers starting with the program--I believe they were in fourth grade-- just to kind of see if the curriculum made sense for their school. Then once they realize they started to like it, I think they picked up with some of their special education teachers-- kind of reinforcing the skills with

students who needed it, and then they sort of expanded it into more grade levels. I believe next year they're going to add a few more grade levels—again, to make sure they're comfortable with it and it makes sense for everybody, and then I believe they were going to go into a schoolwide implementation.

You have to do what works for you and what makes sense for your school, but I think the really important thing is that whatever you decide, you need to make it a routine so that relationship building happens. Whatever you pick, whichever method you decide, you have to be consistent. I don't think it's fair to say, "Oh, we're going to try it this week, but not next week," because that's not building the skills or building the relationship for the students. If you say, "Ok, we're gonna do it Monday, Wednesday, Friday," then just do it Monday, Wednesday, Friday. And that's okay because you're getting used to it--maybe that's all it works for your school's resource schedule or your special ed students' schedules or whatever the situation might be. I think consistency is the key and starting small is always more doable than starting whole schools, so I'm 100% in support of doing what you can now and then growing on it later.

Sara Hutchinson: Yeah, definitely and then it just starts to snowball. Once you start to work into a morning meeting whether it's small or large or wherever you're at, you start to find those pockets of time--even beyond a morning meeting-- to develop those skills whether it's on the playground or whether it's as students are first coming into the classroom or when they're struggling with something in the classroom. I think that with keeping this in mind, it really kind of points back at ourselves as really being that model for our students at all times in the day.

I've read that schools are really more effective when they cultivate that SEL skill competency in the adults that work there as well. And I can imagine that this SEL development for adults goes hand in hand with self-care. I found a quote actually that I wanted to share that is actually from Michelle Obama which really speaks volumes about not only educators, but I think our world in general right now. She said, "We need to do a better job of putting ourselves at the top of our own to do list." Do you all agree with this?

Jessica Watt: Yes. We have some of the most stressful jobs in the world as educators, and we give, and give, and give to everyone else and are always last on our own lists. Oftentimes our own families are put second to the needs of our students at school. It is very important that we take care of ourselves so that we can continue to be our best and to be able to give to these little people. Dysregulated adults will never keep children regulated. We have to do that as models, but also just chemically when we're putting out that negative energy, our students are going to feed off of it. If they don't feel safe, they're not going to trust us, and then they're not going to learn. It's very hard to do that though--it's not that easy.

Allyson Kangisser: Yes. I agree with Jessica big time. I mean, I think it's such a challenge. I see so many educators suffering from stress due to supporting high need students. It's almost become that feeling depressed or anxious is normal in this profession. I think this is something personal that no one can fix for you--there's not like a magical self-care kit that they can just do and it's going to go away. So, I think what we need to do since we always tell the kids, "Who is your trusted adult? Who do you go to when you have a problem?" We need to ask for help too. I ask for help from my coworkers, my principal, my friends, my family. One little act of self-care every day can make a big difference. Now, like Jessica said, that doesn't always happen: we go to the bottom of the list; our families go to the bottom of the list;

"well, I've got to stay a little bit longer;" "I've got a kid that's in crisis;" "I've got to be here;" "I'm going to miss soccer practice"--whatever the situation is, we have to ask for help. That's the big thing for me is if you're not okay: if you're feeling depressed, anxious, nauseous, headaches, whatever you're experiencing (which I see and hear about all the time in educators), please ask for help. Please go to someone. I'm not saying everybody needs a therapist, but I am saying everybody needs someone to talk to. You know what I do for my self-care might not work for Jessica, and she might think that I'm crazy for even suggesting it but having those conversations I think is really important.

Sara Hutchinson: Yeah, I definitely agree. I know being a new teacher at the very beginning of my career, I really struggled at times because I did put my classroom in front of almost everything. I really did struggle for many years, and I really wish I would have had some of the self-care practices that I have now back then. We can keep building our toolkit as we go, finding the things that work for each of us.

I know that our time is getting close, so I have a couple other questions and one is around the idea of knowing that teachers are going to find so many resources for tier one and universal supports, for morning meetings, for social emotional learning. And I just can't help but think back to what you had mentioned earlier about this very intentional build across the years.

We have the College- and Career-Readiness Standards for English language arts, and we have them for math that are very strategic and build from year to year. But we really do have that for parts of the social emotional learning piece as well with our student success standards and Policy 2520.19 which is for kids in kindergarten all the way through twelfth grade. Some of the skills that we just discussed from CASEL are included within those success standards.

So, what I'm wanting to ask is how important is it that our social and emotional learning content strategically build from grade to grade, and what are some ways that we can ensure that that happens?

Jessica Watt: I'd say it's as important to build from year to year on social emotional learning as it is in any academic content area. You have the blessing in an elementary setting that we have the children for the largest chunk of time that they're at any other level. If you have them in preschool, you literally have six or seven years that you can teach skills and build a social emotional language within the child that they can then carry on with them to middle school where it can be reinforced and then to high school where it can continue on then for a lifetime. And I would say that the easiest way to have this happen is to just work with your school staff to decide what you need and then choose a program that helps teach what you feel is the most beneficial for the needs of your specific school population--and there are so many programs out there.

Allyson Kangisser: Ok, this goes back to like what I said before about having the ABC's of building the skills, just like reading or math, you build it over the years with different examples every year and it grows and expands. We have to do the same thing with the social emotional learning. I think it's really important, like Jess said and like I said before, just keep building on those same skills, but obviously maturing it and changing the examples from year to year so that it's more relevant to their current age.

Becky Lewis: So, we're winding down on time and I always ask a final question, that's a tip or piece of advice, and I'm going to be a little more purposeful about the question that I ask this time. Sara's mentioned that when you all first spoke, you discussed several different curriculums that you use with different populations and for different purposes at your school. So, I want to focus on what advice do

you have for teachers and for schools when it comes to selecting the resources and figuring out what is right for their population and their purposes?

Jessica Watt: I would say come together as a staff and talk about what challenges your students face and what needs to be taught to the kids to help fill those gaps. For example, at our school, personal safety, drug and alcohol education, and just being a friend and making good choices are some things that are very important for our student population. From knowing that's a need that we have, we researched programs that would help deliver that content. These kinds of programs sometimes can be expensive, and so knowing what community resources you have out there that already have grants whose purpose is to put these kinds of programs into schools--so getting help with your funding. I would say just looking into what do we need? What program would help deliver the content we need? And then who can help us get that program for our school? And then definitely having something that's consistent from the earliest grades all the way through fifth grade is very important.

Allyson Kangisser: I feel that you don't have to be an expert in this--you don't have to go in being like: "I'm a professional--I know what we need." I always talk to other counselors, I talked to teachers, I talked to the community agencies that support us about what's available. What's out there? What have they seen be successful? Because I can't know everything. I mean, it's not like there's commercials for these things that you know what to buy, so I think you really have to talk to other people and what's really valuable for me is being part of different committees at my school, or we get together and we talk about what the school needs like I'm on the PBIS and we talk about curriculums all the time. So really just figure out what are your goals is the number one step.

Becky Lewis: For links to all the resources discussed in this episode and for additional information, please visit our website at wvde.us/leadersofliteracy. Click on "podcast" and click on the show notes for episode 37.

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Thanks for listening.