

## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Angela Kelly**

[The Empowered Principal Podcast](#) with Angela Kelly

## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role

Hello, Empowered Principals, welcome to episode 79.

Welcome to *The Empowered Principal Podcast*, a not so typical, educational resource that will teach you how to gain control of your career and get emotionally fit to lead your school and your life with joy, by refining your most powerful tool: your mind. Here's your host, certified life coach, Angela Kelly Robeck.

Well hello there, my Empowered Principals. Happy almost 4<sup>th</sup> July. It is a couple of days before the 4<sup>th</sup> and I hope that you all have something very fun planned for your holiday weekend. We are going to keep it pretty chill here in Santa Cruz. And actually, we're praying for some warmer weather, you guys. Come on.

Do you know that the beaches on the West Coast in the summer can actually be pretty cold and foggy? It tends to be foggy and cool in the morning. The fog will burn off for a few hours and we'll get a little bit of sun, but it doesn't get much warmer than the mid-70s. And then it cools off again at night. So we don't get the warm summer mornings and the warm summer evenings like y'all do in the Midwest or on the East Coast.

Not a lot of people recognize this unless you live here or you're from here. And this summer has been pretty cool, with the exception of – I think there was a real extreme heat wave that happened while I was back in Iowa visiting my family, so I didn't get to enjoy the heat. So please, send me some warm vibes for this Independence Day. I hope that we have a beautiful day.

Hey, I want to let you guys know something; a week from today, I am going to be on a plane to Spokane, Washington. I'm so excited. I am heading to the NAESP Annual Conference for pre-K to eighth grade principals. And I am going to be presenting next Wednesday. I am so excited.

[The Empowered Principal Podcast](#) with Angela Kelly

## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role

Most of you probably know NAESP stands for National Association of Elementary School Principals. And I am so honored to have been invited to speak at this event. And I hope that many of you will be attending. If you are going, be sure to come by and meet me in person. I can't wait. I'm so excited.

My conference session is on Wednesday, July 10<sup>th</sup> at 1pm in the Spokane Convention Center suite 300C. I'm going to have print copies of my book available at the session. And if you join me live, you're going to be entered to win a free copy of the book. I really, really hope to see you guys there. If you're not able to make it and you want a print copy of the book, all you have to do is email me directly and send me your address, your mailing address, and I'll send you a copy, how about that? That's just because I love you all for being great listeners and being empowered leaders.

And, by the way, did you know – I have so many things to tell you guys today – did you know that The Empowered Principal is also out on audiobook? So if you prefer listening to books in the car – like I do, I consume them voraciously – you now have the option to listen to The Empowered Principal versus having to read it.

And I know y'all have a stack of books in your nightstands. You want to read over the summer, you intend to read all of your professional development books over the summer, and maybe you get to one or two of them.

Listening to audiobooks is one way to actually finish reading what you've started and I love Audible. You can get it on many platforms. I use Audible. I think The Empowered Principal is on Audible, so you can download it today and get to reading. It's so, so good.

Okay, so, we are entering into a new month, which means that it's time for a new podcast theme. This July, we are focusing on leadership overall and

[The Empowered Principal Podcast](#) with Angela Kelly

## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role

the aspects of school leadership that you'll most likely be faced with at one time or another.

Many of you listening out there have just accepted your first leadership position and you're probably feeling both really excited and really nervous about how to begin. Others of you are in it. You're in the thick of it. You're trying to do it all and fix it all. You've been at it for a few years, and actually, the longer you're in the position, the more you realize how much there is to do.

So either way, I want you to spend this month addressing real life topics that will come up in your role as principal so that you can use the podcast as a resource whenever you find yourself dealing with one of these leadership topics.

To kick off, I thought we'd do a Q&A style so that we can cover a few different questions that I get most often from my listeners and my clients. So, let's dive in.

Number one, I got the job, now what? For those of you who are brand new leaders, you're going to be spinning in excitement and anticipation of that new job. First of all, congratulations. Being hired is a big deal. It's scary to have to go and interview and face rejection. And I know a lot of you out there have been interviewing and not getting jobs and feeling very frustrated and very down or disappointed and it's okay.

It's a big deal to just stand up and own that interview and allow yourself to be rejected from time to time. And eventually, you will get a yes. So for those of you who got the yes, congratulations. You're going to jump in. You're going to have a ton of ideas about what you want to do and how you want to start the year. Your head's going to be spinning in excitement.

## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role

You want to do it all. And because teachers tend to be doers and we are people who like to take tons of action, you're going to have to slow your roll. You need to intentionally set aside some time to do some thinking and some planning; not just in terms of what you want to do and accomplish, but what you want for yourself as a leader.

So, before you get into the throes of your work year, I want you to slow down and take a moment to do some planning; not just in terms of what you want to do and accomplish; not the doing part, but what you want for yourself as a leader.

Take a moment to set your intentions and create a vision for yourself as a leader. Ask yourself, who do you want to be as a leader? Who do you want to become in your tenure as a leader? How do you want to show up on a daily basis? How are you going to be different and unique from other leaders? How do you want to feel every day as a leader? How do you want to be remembered as a leader? And how can you create this legacy, this feeling, this intention as you begin your career?

You also want to think about how you will take care of yourself and handle the challenges that will come your way. Now, you can never know or anticipate all of the craziness that's going to come up for you, but you can certainly count on it happening. Right, leaders who have experience.

You can't dream of the stuff that comes up on a day at a school. You just can't. So you have to know that it's coming, but you can't know exactly what's coming. And one way to brace yourself ahead of time is to establish your previous accomplishments so that you can remember that you are capable of doing new and challenging things.

Even in the worst of times – and they will happen – you will get through. You have done hard things before in your past and you've survived. You have been criticized before. You have failed before. You have made

## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role

decisions and ineffective decisions. You have made mistakes before. You have done all of these things and they're going to happen again. And, might I remind you, on a much larger scale now that you're a principal, and you're going to want to have a plan for what to do when things don't go well.

Think of this in terms of how you're going to handle your emotional response to when things don't go well. This job is extremely triggering and extremely emotional and you're going to have days that absolutely crush your spirit.

I want you to just recognize that it will happen and decide ahead of time in terms of how you're going to comfort yourself and face the next day with some energy and hope. Plan how you will prioritize your commitments. You are not going to be able to do it all, so don't start the year believing or having the thought that you are going to be the one who actually gets it all done.

This is exactly how new leaders become disillusioned and feel burnout in their first year. You're going to start working longer and harder if you believe that you should get it all done and you have to get it all done and that you are going to be the one to prove to yourself and others you can get it all done. You're going to start working longer and harder and find out that there's just more to do. It never ends. That's why it's work.

So, your job is going to fill the amount of time that you give it. It will creep in as long as you allow it. So if you give it eight hours, it's going to take you eight hours. If you give it 10, it's going to take you 10. Do you see what I'm saying? It's going to creep into the amount of space you give it.

So, if you allow it to, it will creep into your evenings. Then it's going to creep into your mornings. Then it's going to creep into your weekends and into your breaks. It will gladly steal all of your time away from you. So,

[The Empowered Principal Podcast](#) with Angela Kelly

## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role

when you think you're going to get something all done and you set that expectation up for yourself, it will communicate out to your constituents and they're going to start having that expectation of you, which is going to put you in a spin cycle of never having enough time, having to do more, and sacrificing all of your time and energy in order to meet the needs of everybody else.

Remember this; school leadership, it's a job. It's not a life sentence. You need to plan ahead. You need to know there's going to be hard days. You need to know that you're going to have to have an emotional plan for those hard days and you're going to have to learn how to set loving boundaries around your time and your energy.

So, for you new leaders out there, congratulations, you got the job. I invite you to plan ahead; not in terms of what you will do, but in terms of how you want to think and feel, okay.

Alright, question number two, how do I start the year off with my staff? What should I do and say? So, my rule of thumb is to make your new job about them, not about you. When we're in our heads and we're thinking about how we want to be perceived and how we want to be liked and how we want people to follow our lead, we are thinking about the job in terms of us not them.

The job of a school leader is to be of service and to have a servant's heart. So being new, you have to establish yourself with others. You have to allow them to get to know you. They're not going to like you and follow you and trust you until they get to know you. And I've talked about this before. There's a process. They have to get to know you before they'll like you or trust you.

And think of it in terms of this; think of how you approach a new boss. Let's say a new district admin is hired and they are directly in charge of you or

[The Empowered Principal Podcast](#) with Angela Kelly

## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role

you report directly to them. How do you approach them when they're new? Do you trust them right off the bat or do you wait to see how they engage with other people?

You want to just be a normal human and have normal conversations as a leader. Don't think of yourself as being any different from them. Your titles are different, but your humanness is the same. Connect with people on a very human basic level. Keep it simple. Don't complicate matters. Don't try to be this big huge energy and come in trying to get to know people and do all the things and handle everything at once. Just come in and connect with people on their level.

And to that end, if you focus on always being of service, your teachers will gravitate towards you. They have really intense jobs and it's important to remember that they are just as stressed out as you are. They need you to understand what being in the classroom is like and to remember that. And your support is so needed and it is so appreciated.

This doesn't mean that you always have to say yes to them or bend over backwards to please your teachers. Your job is not to get them to like you or to get them to follow your every whim. So many of my clients want to be liked so desperately by their staff that they'll say yes to anything, they'll do anything and they will waver on decisions because they want to be liked so badly.

Your job is not to be liked by them in the sense that you want to earn their respect or earn their following. Your job is to really be of service to them, and through that service is how you generate influence, it's how you generate trust and respect and a following.

So you can be of service and have boundaries around your time and energy. And you do this by establishing authentic and natural relationships with them. Just let them know what you've got going on and ask them how



## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role

you can be of help. And listen ferociously and say yes whenever possible. Saying yes feels good for you and for them. And when you do have to say no, please let them understand why. Be honest with them.

And if you can't do something or you can't get to something when you said you would and you have to kind of break your promise to them, communicate that with them. Be honest. They're going to respect you so much more for being honest, open, and willing than if you were to try and control or dictate, or if you're trying to cave into every person's whim just to be liked. Do you see that?

So, there is one thing that I've learned about teachers, and that teachers dislike a doormat leader just as much as they dislike an overbearing or controlling leader. So they want you to be right in the middle. I get it, they want everything, parents want everything, students have their needs. Everybody has needs; you have to balance your needs and their needs by being as human and open and willing as possible.

And here's another aspect to consider; don't ask for input of your teachers that you are not willing to include or to take on. So, teachers are asked all the time what they want in a school leader, which if you were to collect all of their feedback to you, it will summarize to you walking on water. Know this.

They have intense jobs. You have an intense job. They want support from you and they want to tell you the bazillion things that they want you to be able to do, some of which have conflicting priorities, right? Like, they say one thing but they actually want the opposite. Then they want you to do that and they want you to do this.

So know this; when you're going to ask for feedback or you're going to solicit input, don't ask for input that you're not willing to deeply consider and consider implementing. Now, you're not going to be able to implement

## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role

every piece of feedback you get, so you want to be very thoughtful for the kind of feedback you request, how you're going to process that feedback, and then what you're going to do with that feedback.

So, in terms of what you're going to say with your staff and what you're going to do with your staff, be mindful of how much you ask for them. Because you know how that feels, when you are asked to give input and a decision has already been made or they completely ignore it or it's never talked about again, they don't acknowledge that feedback. You feel like, why did I even bother doing that? And then you're less likely to give that feedback again in the future. And you're certainly not going to be as honest or forthright with your feedback. So consider that for your teachers as well.

Furthermore, when someone comes to you with a problem and wants you to solve it for them, what you can ask them is this; what do you need help with in this moment? And the reason I word it this way is because you're not going to be able to help them entirely, and you shouldn't be expected to solve the entire problem for them. But offering some support with the small things are what people will remember you for.

So it's not about doing everything for everyone. It's about the way that you make them feel in that moment, and what teachers want more than anything is to feel loved, heard, appreciated, supported, respected. They want you to be reasonable. They want some kindness and understanding, but they also want some consistency and a firm decision.

Think of it as being an ideal parent or a mentor. You are mentoring your staff. They are your – not your children, but they are your team and you want to love them and guide them and support them and give them positive energy and feedback and love.

Humans in general all want the same traits in their leader. So whatever it is that you want to have in your leaders, try to emulate that as you become a

## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role

leader for others. Be the leader that you would want for your principal or your district office administrator.

You don't want a pushover and you don't want a tyrant. So be that person. And think about it this way; don't you want a leader who gets enough sleep, that she's refreshed and energetic and thinking with clarity? Don't you want a boss who takes time for themselves and self-cares for herself so that she is 100% available to you when she's with you?

You have to be the example that you want for your staff. The way you treat yourself is the way that they're going to treat themselves. The way that you treat them is the way that they'll treat you. We're always a reflection of what we believe, so focus on believing thoughts that help you serve your school and your staff with ease and grace and clarity.

Question number three, I need to fix school culture. There's bad morale on the staff; what do I do? First of all, don't focus on fixing them. This is an error thought. It's an error in the way that we're approaching. And when we think we have to fix somebody else, then we are asking the wrong kind of question.

We're not going to problem-solve effectively when we believe that somebody else is broken and we need to fix them. The way that you approach this is to lead by example. You focus on how your energy can be the agent for change. Don't ask how you can change them. Ask how you can be the example of positivity, high vibes, and success.

Respect them unconditionally, even when they're behaving badly, and hold people accountable to respectful and supportive interactions. It is possible to hold people accountable in a gentle and loving way. If you have your own children at home, you can think about how you parent your most precious ones.

## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role

When you think about your kids, like, you want to guide them and love them and hold them accountable, but you want to do this with as much gentleness and lovingness as possible. You don't teach kids how to be good people by berating them for feeling bad.

So when your staff is in low morale and there's a lot of bad vibes going on, the reason that that energy is low or negative on campus is because they're feeling bad. It's about the way that they're thinking. When your staff culture is toxic and morale is low, it's stemming from the way that teachers are thinking. So it's imperative to understand those patterns of thinking and thoughts and provide them with some hope. Give them different thoughts to consider and to ponder and to think about. That's where the energy shifts.

They're in a place of this thought loop pattern that's going on and on for so long that their hope is low and their energy is low. Most school cultures are derived from the belief that nothing is going to change for the better. They've lost that hope. And it's your job to show them that change is always an option and that it can happen in an instant.

Your energy has to be the biggest energy on campus, and I mean that from a space if you have to hold positive energy even when others aren't. You can't let that energy bring your energy down. You have to rise above it and be that biggest positive energy on campus. And they will follow you if you lead.

Number four, I'm so overwhelmed, there's too much to do and not enough time. How do I get it all done? My friends, I have not met a school leader who feels that they have more time on their hands than they know what to do with. Time is the most valuable asset we have. It's what we revolve our entire lives around. Everyone has it and no one gets more of it than another human. We all have the same amount of time.

## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role

And the key is to understand that time is not happening to us or against us. It's simply a construct of the human mind. It's how we wrap our heads around our own existence. It's pretty wild when you think about it. But if you break it down, it's simply how we structure and manage our days, our weeks, our months, and our years. But at the end of the day, it's all just a mental concept.

When you think about time, the way you choose to think about it is going to bring you either stress or peace. If you believe that you don't have enough time, you are going to run around all day in stress, which will cause you to multi-task, work longer, and ironically, you end up buffering and avoiding taking action and procrastinating, which then results in having less time to accomplish what you want.

So, what if instead you decided that you had plenty of time to get your work accomplished? If you actively worked to believe this one thought, there's plenty of time, you would find yourself planning out your day, allowing time for interruptions, knowing that they're going to happen, constraining your energy and work on what you actually want to accomplish. You're going to focus on one thing and use your time to create, serve, and get busy at accomplishing tasks.

When you think about how it feels to be accomplished, you feel pride, peace, joy. You have a lot of positive emotions that come with accomplishment. So you have to come up with a thought that gets you the feeling of accomplishment before you've accomplished it because that's what puts you in motion to do the work to get the job done.

You'll feel like you have plenty of time when you do this because you're focused on what got done or what's getting done versus what's not. Do you see that shift? It's subtle, but powerful.

## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role

Time management, you guys, it's such a significant topic for school leaders that I'm going to be dedicating an entire month to it. I will teach you the tools and strategies for managing your thoughts around time so that you can manage your schedule.

There is so much work to be done on this topic. And let me just give you one tip right now – and this one thing has drastically changed the way I approach my workday and it allows me to generate feelings of accomplishment which then drive me to better manage my time. And that thing is this; have only one task that you must accomplish per day.

Most of us do this. We write down a laundry list of 20 or 30 things that need to get done. We have this big to-do list in front of our eyeballs and our brain sees that list and it does into lockdown and it will procrastinate and buffer and avoid because it's so overwhelmed. And what happens is you end up getting so much less done.

We look at that list and here's what we do – the brain is so tricky – it looks at the list and it's like, okay I want to get a bunch of these things done, so I'm going to find the easiest one, the most appealing one, the one that can get done the fastest, and it's going to do those over the ones that are most significant and meaningful.

So, instead of writing the laundry list down – and if your brain needs to get it out of its system, write the laundry list, but you only get to pick one thing to do per day. And here's the caveat; it's only one thing, but that one thing has to get done. So you put it on your calendar and you do that thing no matter what.

This will be very interesting for you to practice. You're going to avoid. You're going to fail. You're going to have to work late at night because you procrastinated all day long. And if you want to commit to yourself and do the one thing you said you would do; you have to do it no matter what. But

[The Empowered Principal Podcast](#) with Angela Kelly

## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role

practicing this one thing – and I think there's a book called *The One Thing* by Steve Chandler, fabulous book.

The one thing is this; do that one thing, and then whatever else gets done is cherry on the top, right? You will fail at this many times. I still do this in my business. I still put one thing on the calendar, I schedule the time it's going to take me. I put it from, let's say, 9am to 11am and I make myself do it then no matter what.

If, for some reason, I do get an interruption between that time that's unavoidable, I still have to go back in my day and get that one done. If I get it done first thing, awesome. I have the whole day and I can pick one more thing to get done.

What you will learn through this process is the art of time management and how your brain plays games with you and tricks you time after time into doing the things that have less meaning and impact, but you get that kind of, like, immediate gratification rush because you get to check something off your to-do list.

So, I'm going to spend a lot of time on time management. I will do a full-on month around time management. But try the one thing and see how that works for you.

And one last thought for you new school leaders; you have to believe in yourself. The school can only grow and evolve as much as its leader does. You have to do the work on yourself and your school will follow. It's not about what you need to fix in your school. It's not about the people. It's not about the programming. It's not about the campus. It's being able and willing to do your own thought work.

## Ep #79: Stepping into a Leadership Role

Belief in your staff, in your students, comes from your brain, not from them. You have to believe in them. You have to believe in you. You have to believe in your mission. It's not about the how. You can never, never know the how until you do the how. So you have to believe in your mission, believe in yourself, believe in others before you accomplish the how or the what.

It's about the belief in the possibilities and believing that you are capable right now in this moment of being an impactful and empowered leader, you have to believe that just a little bit more than you doubt yourself. So if you believe that you're capable 51% and that you worry and doubt yourself 49%, you're on the right path.

So, my empowered leaders, there are so many more questions that I could not get to today. I hope this was helpful. And tune in next week. We're going to talk about leadership fraud.

If you aren't as happy during the school year as you are when you are on summer break, then you have to check out what principal empowerment can do for you. It's my one to one personalized coaching program where we take concepts from the podcast and we apply them to your specific situation.

This is how you become the most empowered version of yourself, and not just as a leader at work, but in all areas of your life. Join me today to become an *Empowered Principal*.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *The Empowered Principal Podcast*. If you enjoyed this episode and want to learn more, please visit [www.angelakellycoaching.com](http://www.angelakellycoaching.com) where you can sign up for weekly updates and learn more about the tools that will help you become an emotionally fit school leader.

[The Empowered Principal Podcast](#) with Angela Kelly