

Ep #127: Possibility



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello, Empowered Principals. Welcome to Episode 127.

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, empowered leaders. Happy, happy Tuesday. And welcome to June 2020. Happy summer, everybody. It is so great to have you here with me today. And for those of you who have been following me for a long time, I just want to say thank you. I want to say how much I appreciate your time and your effort and your wiliness to expand your mind, to explore your thinking, to think outside the box, to imagine all the possibilities that school can be, not just for students, but for teachers and school leaders.

We're going to be talking about possibility in the month of June. This is a great time for you to be thinking about all the possibilities that might feel like impossibilities right now, but to explore the concept of what possibility is and to understand that every single thing on this planet, every idea, every product, every service has all evolved from, at first, being impossible, to not even being a thought, to be honest with you. And then, exploring how impossibility becomes reality and the process form impossibility to reality.

So, in June, we're going to explore concepts. We're going to talk about possibility. We're going to change the way we're thinking and feeling about education and how this is the perfect opportunity and the perfect timing for us to explode and blow up what we currently believe is possible in education.

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So, for those of you who have been following for a long time, thank you very much. And to those who are newer to the podcast, welcome. We're happy to have you here. I cannot wait to explore possibility with you. And I ask that if you love this podcast, if it's something that is refreshing to you as an educator, please share it with your friends and your colleagues. We want people to know that there is a different way to think about the way we lead our schools. And that this time more than any time in history is the perfect opportunity for us to embrace the concept and the idea of possibility.

So, let's dive in. I want to talk about the way we are thinking about education; our past thoughts about education, what we think about when we think about the past in education, what we're thinking about our current life in education, the current status which is this remote learning situation, and then what your thoughts are about the future.

So, I was talking to one of my clients and I asked her, "Where are your thoughts today?" And she said, "Well, it's the end of the year..." I'm recording this in the middle of May, so it's the end of the year. And she basically was just simply thinking about all the to-dos she had to do and take care of between now and the end of her school year.

And her brain felt like, "Okay, I've kind of transitioned through the chaos and the crisis. We've now been on lockdown for a couple of months and schools we know, for sure, are closed." So, her brain was able to relax a little bit as she got everything settled, and now it was checking the boxes.

"We have to take care of staffing issues. We have to take care of end-of-the-year procedures. We have to take care of how we're going to celebrate our kids who we're promoting up to middle school." And it became kind of a matter of fact.

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So, there's this current situation that we're in, this little mid-transition between the past and the future. And then I asked her, what are her thoughts about the upcoming year? And she said, "Well, I don't really have any. I haven't thought about it."

So, I invite you to consider all three. What do you believe to be true about education before remote learning and school closures? What are you thinking right now? And what are you thinking about the future?

And the reason I want you to do this is I want you to see how our thoughts either gravitate to going to the status quo and this is just the way it is, or they gravitate towards the possibility of what could be, the excitement, the adventure, the unknown, the desire to change something you finally wanted change for so long but didn't feel like the system would allow it.

I call it the institutional oppression. It sounds very grave, but what I mean by that is I remember thinking back to when I was a school leader and I used to believe, "We can't do that. The institution itself, the system of education just doesn't allow for us to go that outside of the box." And I remember this being a very limiting belief for me.

"We can't do that. We can't not have grade levels. We can't not use the curriculum that the district told us. We can't get rid of the bell schedule, get away from it or get rid of it." And I'm not saying all of those things are good or bad. My brain wanted to explore possibility, but the limiting thought would come in that that's not possible. It's impossible.

So, I want you to think about, what are you thinking about the past? What was life like before this? How was school leadership, you know – what were your thoughts about it before? What are you currently thinking? And then, what are you thinking about the future?

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Are you not going to the future because you're avoiding or resisting what might be happening in the future? I mean, we don't know what's going to happen. There's so much uncertainty. And our brains are like, "I don't even want to think about what's possible because it might be terrible. It might be bad. We might hate the new changes. We want to go back to the past."

So, what our brain does is it looks back to the past. It doesn't see the pain that you've been in, in the past. It doesn't remember the struggle or the problems and challenges that you were trying to solve back then. It just sees, "What I remember from my past is that I knew what to expect. I had systems and routines in place. I knew what I was doing, or I thought I knew what I was doing. It felt comfortable. It felt safe."

So, the brain shifted, when you were currently in that situation back in your past, you had thoughts and problems and challenges and struggles and you had certain emotions. But now that you're thinking about it from your memory and you're comparing it to the problems and challenges you have now, that's because the brain thinks that whatever it's dealing with in the current moment is the worst thing, is the hardest thing.

So, the past looks very rosy because it's only choosing to remember the comfortable parts, the safe parts, the parts that felt good. And we want to go back to that. When, in truth, it was 50-50 back then, just like it is now. Different 50-50, we've talked about this before, in our current.

But what I really want your brain to push and think about is the possibilities of what's coming. Now, your brain is going to do one of two things. It's going to think of all the terrible possibilities or it's going to think of all the amazing possibilities.

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And most likely, because we're on survival mode – at least I feel like I am and a lot of my clients are and my friends, we're all just kind of getting through, I'm really challenging my brain to stop wanting to just get through and look for opportunities to thrive.

Because I think about, if I choose today to find ways to thrive, if I can thrive now while I'm in quarantine, if I can thrive now when I feel like I don't have the freedom to go wherever I want or do whatever I want, how can I thrive in my current reality? If I can do that now, I will learn how to do it in the future when the new problems come.

I guarantee, you guys, there will be a tsunami of new problems coming our way. I personally believe that the medical industry is the first wave, the first tsunami wave that is dealing with the physical disease of this pandemic. And I believe that when schools go back in session, we are such a critical part of our communities, that schools will become that second wave. They will receive that second wave, that tsunami wave of emotional and mental needs.

And there will be a crisis in our schools in terms of caring for not just our students and our families, because they will have been traumatized through this experience. We're going to have to be able to help our teachers who have been forever changed, who have completely new thoughts and emotions about teaching and learning than they did before this.

So, there will be a wave that comes through our schools which is going to require us to respond in a completely different way. And it may sound really scary to think of it that way, but I also think this wave can bring out amazing change.

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So, I don't know about you, but one of the things I love to think about in terms of the future of education is how this will require us to discuss and to bring into the conversation and to the forefront of our priorities the concept of emotional wellbeing. How will we help students transition back into school?

Regardless of the how-tos, of the mechanics of how it's going to look, six feet apart, more cleaning, there's all these how-tos that your brain wants to kind of spin on. I'm talking about the culture, the conversations, the way in which we do business at our schools. That future, it holds a lot of unknowns and uncertainty.

And it could bring up fear. But I invite you to consider tapping into the part of you that thinks about, "Wow, this is exactly what we've been asking for in education. We've grown tired of focusing on test scores and numbers and data and assessments and pushing kids and putting the pressure on them to perform and do more and be more and be perfect. We've been begging and asking our educational politicians and leaders who are making these decisions for us to slow things down, to consider the emotional and human aspect of teaching and learning. And now, we've been put on hold and we have nothing but time to think about what could be possible for our schools."

So, let your brain play with this and have some fun. What could be possible? If you could dream up an ideal school situation, like if you could design an ideal school and you could bring in all the components that you believe you would need to create highly functioning successful teachers and students and families, what would your school look like? How would you design it? How much fun would it be to blow up the old model and to bring in new possibility?

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When you get into that energy and that space, your brain starts to kind of unravel a little bit. It starts to pop. It starts to think about, “Wow, I’ve always wanted to know what it would be like to be able to work from home. I just want to work from home.” And now, we’ve got the opportunity. Now, we see the pros and cons of that.

I always wondered, what would it look like if students needed to travel for their families or they were going to take an independent study, what would it look like to remote learn for them? And now, we have some ideas.

I always wondered, what would it look like to be able to provide services to families who don’t have access to things that all of us have access to? And now, we’re exploring those possibilities. There’s a lot of enthusiasm and excitement and ideal situations that can come out of all of this current situation, the current life of education. And we can create our future life in education through our thoughts, through our possibility thoughts.

So, play around with this. imagine what it would feel like to create possibility. And I also want to mention how this moment is the ideal opportune time and the perfect opportunity for all of our voices to be heard, for us to speak up and decide, from this point on, what do we want to prioritize in our schools? What does make a child successful?

Is it academics? In part. But dig deeper. You know. You see. You’re on the frontlines. You know what’s working and what’s not working for your kids, for your teachers, for your families. You know the resources that are in dire need and those that are just there because we’re told that we have to have them there.

You guys know the truth. You know what works and what doesn’t. So, allow yourself, especially while you’re at home and you have you and your brain

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to hang out with. Play with that future. What does it need from us right now?

Here's how I see it going down. It starts with impossibility. It's not even a thought in our mind. For example, people back in the 1920s, they were not thinking about how much email they had to respond to or the pressure to be on social media or making sure they looked good for their Zoom video or feeling like they had it all pulled together while they were working from home remotely. It wasn't even a thought.

The problems and challenges and technology that we're dealing with right now, it wasn't in existence. It wasn't possible for them to think about because it was never a thought. Then, we have ideas, we have problems, and we're looking at these problems and we're saying to ourselves, "How do I solve inequality? How do I solve the gap? How do we close the gap in education?"

And we've been chasing the gap and believing we need to solve the gap by pushing more standards, by trying to extend our school day and make kids learn more and make them learn it faster and expand their exposure to more and more and more and more. But we know now that that approach isn't the perfect approach. It's not working for all kids. It's not working for us.

So, once we are in a situation, in our current situation and we're looking out at the problems and the challenges that we're facing, we will have an idea; an idea of an impossibility that might one day become possible. And we talk about it from being not even in existence, to what would it be like if we could somehow figure this out?

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And all of a sudden, we get into problem-solving mode and we are exploring what's possible. And from there, we go into what's probable, trial and error. We have some ideas about what's working and what's not, what might work, what might not. We've tried some things, we know, we can throw that out. We know we need to add this. we get into probability and the likelihood that it can change.

And then we get into the phase where things are as good as done. We are expecting them to be done. They're not quite there, but we see the finish line. We believe it's possible and we're working towards it. We're problem-solving and tweaking. We're going from the big problem down to the little tweaks, until finally, we get into reality mode.

So, what was once impossible goes through the process of possible, to probable, to good-as-done, to done. And then, it's reality. That is what I'm excited about. And I want you to explore those ideas, think about what you believe might be possible for students, possible for you as a leader. Get into that mind space and get that energy flowing into your body that tells you, "What are the things I wanted to do but never felt were possible? What if I could do them now?"

And why is now the best time to invest in your brain, in your thoughts, in your ideas? What do you want to come alive in education? What impact do you want to have as a leader? And how do you want to feel when you go back to school?

We have no idea what will be. We get to create it with our thinking. Your thoughts about what's possible is what creates the reality of what will become possible. Does that make sense? It's so exciting to think about.

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Alright, I will let you go. But I want to leave you with this. Investing in this now, investing your time and your brain energy and your space and really exploring and questioning what you think is impossible and how it might become possible one day, investing in that now will forever impact the outcomes that you have for your future. So, what are the benefits, one year away, five years away, 10 years away, 20 years away on yourself, on your career, on your community, and on education if you decide to explore possibility over impossibility?

I will leave you with that. Go get impossible. Think about it. Explore with it. Play with it. And know that your ideas can become reality. Have an amazing possible week. I'll talk to you guys next week. Take care. Bye.

Hey, principals, listen up. I've created a professional learning program for you and your team to build your capacity and lead your staff through the empowerment process. I've designed a personalized growth experience for you and your school. You'll learn how to apply the leadership triad to empower your staff and students.

This is the moment where the perfect time and opportunity meet. Education will never be the same and I have the tools to help you navigate the change. To learn more, sign up for a free consultation at angelakellycoaching.com/programs. I'll see you on the inside.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *The Empowered Principal Podcast*. If you enjoyed this episode and want to learn more, please visit 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.