

Ep #173: Attracting Ideal Teachers



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 173.

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.

Hello and happy Tuesday my empowered leaders. How are you doing? Happy 4/20/21. I just noticed that today is the middle of April. Although I'm recording this in the middle of March, I am looking at my notes here. I just want to wish you a very happy middle of April. I hope the weather is beautiful by then. We've had kind of a cold but dry winter here in California. I'm ready to be outside. So looking forward to it.

I hope you guys have had amazing spring breaks. I know some of you have them in March. A lot of you have them in April. It could be, I don't even know when Easter is this year. I haven't even looked at the calendar because we're still not gathering. At least as of March. So I don't really know. I don't even have an Easter basket out. I have no idea when Easter is. So if Easter's around the corner, happy Easter. Enjoy the day.

All right. Let's get to it. We are talking about attracting your ideal teachers. How fun will this be? So many times we inherit when we land our first job or we move to a new school or we've even been in a job for a while, right. We have thoughts about our teachers. Let's get real. We have teachers we love, teachers we like, and teachers we feel a little more neutral or a little more negative about, right?

A lot of times our brain wants to tell us that it is out of our control the kind of people we get. We think thoughts like, "There aren't enough good teachers out there. Or there aren't enough teachers to hire. Or we just have to take what we can get." These feel very innocent. They seem really true. Like

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when you go to a job fair and it's like whoa. There's not that many people. There's not that many rock stars. I hope I get good enough people. I've got to get somebody for that third-grade position.

When we think like that, we're thinking in a scarcity mindset. We're thinking there's not somebody out there. That we just have to take what we can get. We have to pick up the pennies, right. Versus thinking that we have abundance, that we have great teachers, great staff. That there are amazing people out in the world, and that they want to work with us.

So let's talk about how to attract your ideal teachers. A lot of you are in the hiring process right now. You're thinking about the positions you need to fill, and the people that you want to fill them. Why not try to attract the best of the best? They are out there. I promise you.

So being the person who's hiring, we're going to kind of flip the table now. So a couple episodes ago, I talked about being the ideal employee. The attractive interviewee. The person who wants to get hired. We're going to turn the tables this time, and we're going to talk about how to be the attractive employer. How to attract the best teachers by being the best employer. The person who that teacher wants to work for. The person in the district that is the ideal landing spot for the teacher. Does that make sense?

So we're going to talk about understanding who you want to hire and why you want to hire them. Then how to become the district and the position and the principal that that perfect person wants. It has to be a want match, okay. They have to want you. You have to want them. So first of all, as you're thinking about the positions you have in your school for next year and the people who will be working with that person in that position, you have to be very clear about what it is you want.

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Now, sometimes it's easier for us to know what we don't want than what we do want. So if you're finding it challenging to ask yourself, "What is it that I want in this third-grade teacher? What kind of person? What kind of personality? What kind of skillsets? What kind of mindset? Do I want a male? Do I want a female? What kind of role model do I want? What energy do I need on the third-grade team?"

When you're thinking about all of that, sometimes you know exactly what you want and that's great. Sometimes you know what you don't want. Perhaps you had a teacher in that position that was not a want match. My coach, Brooke, always talks about being in relationship with people. I think of it as you're in a relationship with your teachers, right? It's not a relationship, but it is a collegial relationship and there needs to be a want match. They need to want to be at your school, and you need to want them to be at your school. So what kinds of things do you want in a teacher and what things do you not want?

So step one of attracting your ideal teachers is really finding out about yourself. What don't you want? What do you want? What are hard nos for you? When somebody comes in to interview and your brain's like, "Nope, not a fit." I want you to know that ahead of time. I want you to know what an oh my gosh absolute yes. You know how you get the excitement when somebody comes in?

I remember my friend Tyler and I. He actually was hired as the principal for the school I opened in the district two years prior to my moving back to my home school to be the principal at my home school. So Tyler and I always teamed up to hire. We had a great process in my district for hiring. I absolutely loved hiring. So much fun. So Tyler and I would sit there. We would know each other's little looks. We would know if it was a yes or a no. We would either be both no or we'd both be a yes, and we're like fighting for who is going to offer the position to this person. I loved it.

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So you really need to know what you want and you don't. I want you to think about it before you get into the hiring position. In that day where you're hiring or those moments when you're in those interviews. Know right away what you want and what you don't. Okay? If you're knew and you don't exactly know, just give it a go.

Now when you're thinking about what you do want, I want you to do the same thing as I mentioned when you're trying to attract your ideal position. Who is that ideal teacher? So step one is knowing what you don't want. Step two is knowing what you want. The more specific you can be the better. I don't want you just to focus on tangible skills. I want you to consider all of the soft skills such as resiliency, open to learning, able to set new boundaries. You can teach teaching skills, right.

Anthony Mohammad, who is one of my favorite people, taught us will and skill. You can teach skill, but it's harder to teach will. If people don't have the will to learn, the will to change, the will to grow, the will to evolve themselves, you will not find it easy, simple, and doable to teach them the skillsets that they need to learn.

So be very mindful. You can't just go in and change somebody. You have to be able to attract people who want and like evolution. They like evolving. They like changing. They like growing. You want somebody who's into professional and personal development. Okay.

It's just like a romantic relationship. When you first start dating and you think someone's super cute, but they have some annoying characteristics. So their mindset's a little off. You're like, "Oh, they'll change." No, they won't. I promise you hiring a teacher is very similar to a marriage because you go into contract with them. You're in it for a particular period of time, at least one year unless something very egregious happens. But you're in it for a year. You're in it for a contractual period of time.

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And because we have this interesting thing called tenure, which is different than any other field that I'm aware of, we not only are in contract with them that first year. Once they are tenured, you are in a marriage like contract for life. So when you're making decisions, you have to think for the long term, the long haul. Is this person going to be a fit not just for this year? Not just to quickly fill that position so you can check the box and say you're done hiring for the year.

You have to be mindful. Is this a lifelong partner in education for me? Do I want to work with this person for the next 30 years? Do I want this hire on my watch? So when the district looks back and says, "Who hired this person?" Do you want to be proud of that hire? Yes, you do. So be thinking about what you want and why you want it. Don't just quickly hire to be done with it. I know. When it gets to the summer and you have a lot of positions open, you're like, "Good enough. Good enough. Come on in. Let's go." I've made that mistake. Only once, but it never serves me well.

So know what you want and what you don't. Then third, of course you have to know why. Here's what's interesting. Why you want it is a very interesting question because it brings up lots of thoughts. Notice what comes up for you. Notice if your expectations are too high. When we're new leaders, any of us. Especially actually veteran leaders. I think the more veteran I got, the more particular I became. That's because my expectations were raised.

Now, there are times and places where you have to check yourself because you have to notice why those expectations are really high. Is it because your school environment is performing at that level? Or this is mostly what happens. Is it because your brain is saying, "I just want somebody who knows what they're doing so I don't have to mentor them. I don't have to onboard them. They can just step in and do the thing."

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Notice if you're hiring because you want to just hire somebody who you think can run with it and will not require any of your time, energy, or attention. Be honest about that.

I had a principal who signed with me last year and we're still working together. One of his first tasks was to hire a teacher. I think I've told this story on the podcast before, but it resonates so well with this theme today. That his brain was set on hiring a veteran teacher. Had to have a veteran teacher.

When we got into the why, it's because he believed that veteran teachers would inherently be better teachers than new teachers. At a deeper level, he thought a new teacher meant so much more of his time and energy required. A new teacher would need more onboarding time, more mentoring, more coaching, more questions, more neediness. Because he was new, he didn't want to hire somebody new because in his mind it was going to mean more effort.

But in the interview process, and there was a panel. It wasn't just him making this decision. The panel wanted the new teacher. The new teacher kind of blew the interview out of the water. His brain really struggled to reconcile, "Wait a minute. I thought the veteran teacher would be the best fit. That's not happening. What do I do?" There was all this struggle.

Notice those little background beliefs that are playing that are saying veteran teachers are better. Or male teachers are better. Or female teachers are better. Or people with this degree from Stanford or whatever are better. Just notice all those little things when you're looking through resumes and whatever process your district uses to screen people. Be aware of what you're screening for and why you're screening it, and if you like that reason. Okay? You just have to like your reason.

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If you decide very specifically, very intentionally that you want to hire a male teacher for your fifth-grade position because you have seen the value of a male adult mentor in these children's lives and you love that reason, go for it. Just like your reason. But understand why you're doing it. Understand the background story in your mind before you start hiring.

Now here's where it gets fun. Before you go into the interview, you have to decide who do you as the principal need to be in order to attract your ideal teachers? You're not just hiring. Those teachers aren't walking in the door and selling you on them. That's not the only thing happening here. You are also selling them. If you want to attract the top-notch teachers, you need to be a top-notch principal. You need to be somebody that people want to work for.

So you need to think about what are the attributes a top-notch teacher is looking for? Get inside of his or her brain and think. When you are an awesome teacher and everybody and everybody wants to hire you, what are you looking for? What do you want? Then you've got to work to be that principal. You can't just expect five-star people to walk into your office and you hire them and then you provide two-star service. It doesn't work like that. They're out the door. They're going to go find a place that they love to work at.

I have a client right now who's doing this. She's in the process of this. She's given five-star service to her district. She's very underpaid. Even with the pay raise mid-year, which is unheard of but through coaching she got a mid-year raise. And because she did the work. She applied the coaching work is what I want to say. Even so, she's undervalued, underappreciated, and she's in the process like, "I'm out. I'm a five-star principal. I'm going to go to a five-star school." You need to be the school and the district and the principal and the leader that attracts five-star people. Okay?

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You have to sell that teacher that saying yes to your offer is the best decision they have ever made hands down. You have to be the principal they want to work for. You have to want them, and they have to want you. This is the want match. So you have to rise up to the level of people you want to attract and hire. So your focus in this step is to think more about you and more about your culture and how you're going to sell your school.

What's awesome about your school? I want you to think about all the ways that your school's amazing, and how you are amazing, and how your staff is amazing, and your school community is amazing. You've got to sell yourself to the five-star people. Two-star people will buy in. If you're a four-star school, a two-star person is like, "Yeah, sure. I'll upgrade." You want to be five star and you want to attract five star. Okay? Even if there's a gap between where you're at and where you want to be, you can work your way towards becoming that five-star principal and creating a five-star school environment.

Finally if you want the top teachers, you have to believe that you're a top principal and that this is the place to work. You have to come up with reasons as to why your school is the best offer. Why should they say yes to you? What do they get out of being a teacher under your supervision? How will you cultivate them? How will you evolve them? How will you help them create work life balance? If you don't have work life balance, they will not have work life balance. We have to be an integrity and match what we offer to our teachers.

You've got to believe in them. You have to believe in you. You have to believe that your offer is the best offer on the market for them. That is how you create that want match.

Then finally when you're ready to go, you know who you want, who you don't, why you want them, what you're looking for, how you're going to measure. Oh, that's something I forgot to add. You need to understand the

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criteria. How will you know that's a five-star person? What will you look for? How will you know? You've got to be ready to go because they're going to be off to the next interview. The best offer is going to win for these people, right?

So you've got to get out there and put your amazingness in the world. Get to work at selling you on why you are a five-star principal, why your school is five star. Attract those five-star clients. Then you've got to make them want that offer of employment. Make your offer so irresistible that they say yes on the spot, they sign on the dotted line, and they get to work. Then when you have them, you have to be that five-star principal. Over promise them and over deliver to them. You are creating demand. People want to be at your school.

Imagine a school where there is a line out the door of teachers just dying to apply and to submit an application to your school. That only the best of the best comes to your school. You can create that demand. You can be that school, that principal. I don't care wherever you're at. Private, public, elementary, high school. Any of it, right? It's like the Ron Clark Academy. There are people knocking on his door to get in, and only so many kids can. But they've got kids lined up. They've got families lined up; teachers lined up.

Create that for your school. You can do this. It's all about the energy and the mindset in which you approach teaching and learning and leading. Deliver what's in your control. What do you know you can deliver as a principal? How can you blow their mind and become that five star empowered principal and that empowered mentor to these five-star teachers? Okay?

Do you have any questions? Reach out. Talk to me. I don't bite. You guys, coaching is a solution. I'm telling you. The doors are open. I'm taking on 20 new principals. That's it. I can't take on anymore. It's too many. Get signed

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up right now. If you sign up for coaching now, I coach you clear through the end of your next school year. So let's jump on. The sooner you jump on—I only want five-star clients here because I'm a five-star coach. So let's do this. I love you guys. Have an amazing, empowered week. I will talk to you next week. Take care. Bye, bye.

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