

Ep #174: Onboarding Teachers



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principles. Welcome to episode 174.

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 my empowered leaders. Happy Tuesday. Welcome to *The Empowered Principal Podcast* for those of you who are new. I'm so happy to be here with you guys today. So happy that it's April, and I'm so happy that we are moving forward in our lives. I can't believe it. This is so great.

It's been a wonderful week. You know, it's been crazy. Because I have been expanding my network, expanding my reach, expanding the number of clients I'm seeing, doing professional development. I am just all over the place. Having a blast. Having fun. This podcast is just, it means the world to me. I love it so much. I love all of you listeners. I love how we're evolving the way we think and lead in our schools.

Now this month we're talking about being the best version of yourself, being the best version of yourself as a leader, and helping teachers be the best versions of themselves. It's just a lot of fun. It's a much more fun way to approach the job versus thinking it's misery and it's terrible and it's hard and people hate me. I'm never good enough. People are never satisfied. We're not going to think about all of that. We're going to think about the good stuff. We're going to think about the best teachers and the positive things and the solutions. It's so energetic and it's so fun. I just hope you're enjoying the podcast.

So the podcast has been kind of taking a turn for me. I went into this phase of lots of interviews. Next month, oh my god you guys. Next month is going

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to be so good. I have some amazing people lined up for the podcast. These are Instagram influencers, and I'm thrilled. I can't believe they said yes. I've been reaching out to some wild people thinking I have no shot. They're saying yes.

Next month we're going to talk about positivity and fun and making the best of life as a leader. So I just love the podcast. That's all I can say. I can't get enough of it. So here we go. End of April. Let's do this.

Today we're going to talk about onboarding new teachers, connecting with them, building relationships with them, creating an inclusive environment. I'm going to make this short and sweet guys. I love teachers. They are angels on this earth. They go so above and beyond. They are brilliant. They are talented. They are giving and generous and loving and kind. I just think it's one of the best professions in the world. What an honor to be a school leader who gets to lead people with the capacity to love and to give and to receive as big as teachers do.

So today we're going to talk about onboarding them. Getting those ideal people on your staff, and then making sure that they onboard and that they want to stay. Okay. Last week we talked about getting them and attracting them and getting them hired. This week we're going to talk about how to deliver for them. Okay.

The best tip I can give you for onboarding new teachers. I'm not going to talk about specific step by step onboarding. You guys can look that up. You can google that. What I'm talking about is the mindset and the energy behind the onboarding process.

Number one, I want you to believe that onboarding matters. That it's important. That it's a valuable use of your time and energy. Because I'll

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admit. I'm going to be straight up. If I have former teachers listening, they can vouch for this. I was going 200 miles per hour.

I know I hired really good people, but I failed them when it came to onboarding. Because they were so good, the thoughts I had were this person's amazing. I'm going to let them run with it. I trust them. I think they've got this. They don't need me. Which might have been true in my eyes. I believed in them so big that I let them fly. I will say that there's a part of that approach that actually helps them become bigger, better, stronger, faster because they have to fly on their own a little bit.

But when you've got new teachers, come on. Like I was a little too hands off for them. Because I hired such good people, such amazing teachers that I didn't stop to get inside their brain. I didn't think about where they were. I didn't think about the gap of where I believed in them and where they believed in themselves.

So I believed that they were going to perform at a five-star level and that they didn't need my assistance. Their belief in themselves was far below that. So there was a gap between what I believed in them and what they believed in themselves.

So the best tip I can give you is that you have to slow down, and you've got to get into your teacher's brain. The people that you hired, particularly if they're new to teaching, you have to think like they think. What are they thinking right now? What did you think when you were a first-year teacher? It's scary. If it's your first real adulting job, you're afraid. You don't know what you're doing. There's little humans coming into your classroom, right?

So they have to set up their classroom, figure out systems that they've never had to implement before. They have to figure out how to implement them. They have to deal with parents. They have to deal with their new

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grade level team. They have to deal with kind of the bully teachers that are on campus who think they know everything, and they've been around forever and they're blowing off the newbies. Calling them freshman or whatever, right. Like there's a whole culture they have to navigate. They are the little freshmen of your campus. They're the kinders of your campus.

You have to get in their brain. What does a new teacher most want from you as a principal? From her or his colleagues? From the classroom, from the custodian, from the secretary. We need to get into their brains. We need to think about where they're at, how much belief they have in themselves. Not that you're going to handhold every step of the way, but you want to deeply know your people.

The deeper you understand what a teacher's thinking or feeling, the better you can anticipate how to help them and solve problems and put systems in place that just mitigate all of their fears and worries. You want them to be as welcomed, as invited, as comfortable as possible. So your culture has to be inviting, your culture has to be inclusive. You have to be aware of what new people feel when they come on to campus.

So I want you to do that background work for yourself. What is a new teacher thinking and feeling? Walk your campus. Physically go through your campus.

If you were new, try to put yourself in their mindset. "If I'm brand new, I don't know where the copy room is. I don't know where the bathrooms are. I don't know if I'm supposed to use that refrigerator or that refrigerator. Can I put my lunch in there? Is there water available on campus? Bottled water? Soda? Whatever. How do I use all the machines? Where's the fax machine? Am I allowed to talk to the secretary during the day? Is she a person who wants to be interrupted or not?" Like there's so many nuances.

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“How do I contact the custodian if something’s broken in my room? How do I use the phone system? How do I log in? Do I get a computer?” There’s so much, right? I want you just to get into their brain. What are their thoughts, their fears, their worries, their questions? Where do they go for solutions? What do teachers need to know day one when they walk on campus? How can you streamline this for them? Just get into their heads a little bit.

Then two, have a plan for connection. Last month we talked about the value of connection. Why it’s so important to be open and be connected and build a network. The same is true for your teachers. You want systems set up so that when you onboard a brand-new teacher, there is a system that immediately allows them access to colleagues, to asking questions, to figuring things out, to move forward in setting up their room, getting their technology ready, getting their plans ready, knowing where the supplies are, getting their lessons prepared. All of that.

So what is in place for that inclusive environment? If you are a staff of all females and you hire a couple of gentlemen, how are they going to feel included? Or if you are a primarily white staff and you hire a person of color, what are you going to do to help them feel included? How can you ensure that you have connection networking types of systems and activities that are going to help them bond with their colleagues? These are things I want you thinking about.

Because we just are worried about filling the position and getting that person up and running. Then we want to be handed off. That’s now how people, especially five-star people, that is not how they want to experience their first teaching job or even their second or third teaching job. So things like peer mentors, instructional coaches, staff luncheons that welcome new people. Having a welcome gift. Maybe PTA gives a little welcome basket.

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There's all kinds of clever ideas. If you go to Pinterest or you go to Facebook, there's a bazillion ideas out there. Do the ones that work for you or that provide the most value. This is probably the driving factor. Which systems give that teacher the most value? How do they get connection the fastest, the easiest, the quickest, and the most stable connections? You want them to feel like, "This is home. This is where I was meant to be. This is exactly what I was hoping for."

Number three, you want to tap into their desires. Hiring a human to do a job is not about you meeting a goal. It's not about you raising test scores by hiring a five-star teacher. You need to have a one-on-one conversation with that person and tap into their desires. What are their goals and dreams? What do they hope to accomplish? What drives them to do this work? You want to know that teacher as deeply as possible because it establishes connection and compassion.

Then you know also what motivates them. What drives them? When you understand like what is their biggest fear? What is their biggest worry? What's their biggest hope? What's their biggest dream? What do they want to accomplish and why? Why did they want to teach first grade? Or if they're in first grade and they want to teach third grade. What is it about third grade that is inviting? Right? You want to understand that.

Then you want to say like, "I get it. First grade wasn't your first pick. Thank you for choosing our school. I'm going to make first grade as easy as possible for you, and we're going to try to get you up to third grade. Or you might find that you love first grade. Let's love first grade this year, and we'll see if third grade's going to be a fit for you in the future."

Then finally, you want to keep them motivated. It's not just about onboarding them at the beginning. It's about having a consistent

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relationship over the course of time, over the course of the year and letting that teacher know. Because you all know.

You've all seen that new first year teacher graph where there's this anticipation, excitement, and they're building up kind of like a roller coaster. It's going up, up, up, up, up, up, up, and then they hit around I think it's like the end of September/October. Boom. By the way, this happens to new principals too.

You go up the anticipation roller coaster and then the emotions crash around the end of the first trimester. They're so exhausted. They're so burnt out. They don't know what they're doing. They've tried everything. They've probably had their first angry parent. They've probably had a tiff with a colleague at some point. That October/November timeframe, that's really a tough time. You've got to be aware of that. You've got to know how to keep people going.

I know this conversation is across the board. We all have this. Just keeping it in mind as a new principal not to only be in your head about being new, but about helping them stay motivated.

You want to know that everyone gets discouraged at times. Everybody's human. Everybody gets into the overwhelm cycle where there's a lot of work to be done, you feel the pressure, you overwork in response to the overwhelm. Then you overwork to the point of kind of feeling burnt out and exhausted. Then you underwork because you just can't keep up anymore. Then the work builds up again. It's this cycle that goes round and round. Everybody gets caught up in that. Being new feels really hard, and you can get caught up in that overwhelm cycle.

So keeping a connection with your new teachers throughout the year and just knowing. Knowing the course of the emotional roller coaster they go

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through. Understanding the mindset they're in in the beginning and then in the middle and then in the end helps you stay in touch with them. Then when they feel in touch with you, they're going to feel more connected, and they are going to be more sold on why your school is the best fit for them.

So really, it's as simple as that. It's a matter of getting into their brains versus your own. Understanding their perspective and seeing your school and your school culture. Kind of the campus itself. Like the physical hard tangible things, like what they need to know how to do. The systems and dismissal and lunch and buss and all of that and duties. But it's also the emotional energy that's on campus. Getting in their brain, knowing what they want, having plans for connections with them.

I'm talking about the connections on campus. The custodians, the secretaries, the support staff, the instructional coach. If you're in a middle of high school, sometimes you have department heads or leads. Like getting those people connected. Then you need to personally connect with them. So there's connections outside of you and then the one-to-one connection that you create with them.

Then knowing what keeps that teacher motivated by understanding their dreams and desires. What do they want to experience? How do they want to feel at the end of their first year? Why do they want to feel that way? If they could accomplish one thing, what would it be? Okay? This is onboarding for new teachers. If you have any questions or concerns or thoughts, please share them with me. I would love to connect with you.

Don't forget. If you're ready to have a one-on-one coach and if I'm your perfect coach and you're my perfect client, we are a want match. Let's connect. Let's get started. Have an empowered week. I'll talk to you next week. Take care. Bye.

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If this podcast resonates with you, you have to sign up for the Empowered Principal coaching program. It's my exclusive one to one coaching and mentorship program for school leaders who believe in possibility. This program is designed for principals who are hungry for the fastest transformation in the industry. If you want to create the best connections, impact, and legacy for yourself and your school, the Empowered Principal program was designed for you. Join me at angelakellycoaching.com/work-with-me to learn more. I'd love to support you in becoming an empowered school leader.

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