

Ep #219: Staffing Decisions



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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

Ep #219: Staffing Decisions

Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 219.

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 and happy Tuesday. How are you today? I've got a really quick little episode for you. This conversation is based on a coaching call that I had with one of my clients. Because I know you are making staffing decisions in February and in March, but this came up and I wanted to share it with you as soon as possible so that it can help you if you are making staffing decisions with your team.

Again I've done this a couple of times where I jump off a call and I want to share with you what's going on in the lives of other principals because I know if they're experiencing it, so are you. So this is about staffing decisions, right? Number one, I want to talk about teacher resignations. So many teachers are resigning. There is a teacher shortage. That's the circumstance we're dealing with. That's the situation we are facing. You are going to have lots of thoughts about it.

One of my clients had four teachers resign over the holiday break. They just said, "I can't come back. I can't do it." So she was left with four positions open and had to deal with this. So she had lots of thoughts and feelings about the teacher's decision to resign. I mean she had to hustle and figure things out, that was definitely one. But her thoughts were around why can't they hang and grow up and be adults and follow through on what they said they were gonna do, on their promises, on their commitments. The brain is very upset, very judgey, and is in resistance. It doesn't think they should be resigning.

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

Ep #219: Staffing Decisions

I've had a couple of people say it feels like it's contagious. Like even the best teachers are now starting to wonder is this for me? Should I do this? All of a sudden the whole staff is contemplating whether they should be a teacher or not. You're thinking through yourself holy moly, what am I going to do if everybody quits?

Well, come up with a plan for that. What if everybody quit? What if every single teacher quit, what would you do? The reason you would be upset that teachers made a decision to quit and go home and take care of themselves mentally and emotionally, you're going to judge that because you're thinking they should step up and be the adults in the room and be here for kids. I also want to encourage you that if you're worried that you're going to lose teachers, come up with a plan now. Be thinking about that. Know there are less teachers available than before.

I don't even know that that's really true. We think that that's true. We don't want to lose the people we currently have because it's a known. It's comfortable. It's safe. We trust them. We don't want to have build up a new team. We feel like it's going to hinder our own goals as a school leader. Like I'm trying to create X vision here. When people leave, I have to rebuild and I have to regrow.

Yeah, that's true. It happens in sports all the time. Your best team players, they get enticed by other teams and they leave. Quarterbacks leave. Running backs leave. Your superstar people leave. You've got to rebuild. The coach just doesn't throw up his or her hands and walk away from the team because somebody left. You know that that's a part of building a team, same is true for you.

People are going to resign. There's a lot of people considering it this year. Instead of being in resistance to that, look at what you're thinking and feeling first because there's going to be resistance. There's going to be

Ep #219: Staffing Decisions

judgement. We want to be open to understanding these people. Why might they be leaving? Why is that a good thing for them? For kids? For you?

Because judging them, thinking they should be different or they should be acting differently than they are, it doesn't change their behavior. It doesn't change the decision. So you judging them isn't changing their behavior. It isn't helping you or them. It's just making you feel worse. So just notice that.

If teachers are resigning or teachers are discussing with you, I might not be back or I'm considering leaving. You're like no, no. This is a good teacher. You'll want to convince them. You'll want to get in convincing energy. It's going to feel very graspy and very needy. People don't like that. They don't want you to try to coerce them into a decision or sweet talk them, kind of placate them into why they should stay. They want you to be open to just hearing them and understanding them. Because it's not your decision to make as a school leader. It's their decision to make for their career.

Yes, you might be disappointed to lose a good teammate, a good teacher, or a good staff member. Even a good paraprofessional, a good custodian, anybody. All of your team is equally important. You might be disappointed or sad that they are leaving, but can you hold space for their decision? Can you allow them to decide for themselves as adults what they want to do with their life right now? Can you hold space for that?

Understanding them doesn't mean you're agreeing with them. It just means that you're allowing them to own their own decisions and their actions. That you're not trying to manipulate, control, tell them what to do in any sort of way. You have to think about your emotions versus their emotions. What's your job and what's their job?

Ep #219: Staffing Decisions

Here's another thing. Several of my clients are telling me their teachers are so exhausted. They're so stressed out. They can't do one more thing. So the principal in an effort to help those teachers feel better, to relieve them from their emotions, they're running themselves ragged trying to do all of the things. That's not your job. You're not a therapist. You're not a career counselor. What's in it for you and what's in it for them, it's their job to make decisions about their career, and it's your job to make decisions about yours and your school.

People are gonna go off and make all kinds of decisions. You could have to hire a whole new staff. That might happen. It's okay. Nothing's gone wrong. You're just rebuilding your team. Be willing to slow down and let that process happen. I also invite you to consider the blessing of teachers who resign. If people are resigning because they're unhappy and they're super stressed and they don't want to be at work, you don't want that teacher in a classroom with students.

You want to find somebody who wants to be in that classroom. You want somebody who's willing and who wants to be there. I'd rather have somebody in a classroom who wants to be with kids and doesn't have the skillsets or maybe doesn't meet my like pie in the sky expectations or my current vision. I'd rather have somebody who loves kids and wants to be there than a teacher who's really skilled and is burned out and frustrated and exhausted all the time, or is putting her physical and mental wellness in jeopardy.

Somebody else's breaking point is not for us to determine. It's not our job to tell them to suck it up or be an adult or get your emotions in order, in check. Be here for the kids. You might feel that way about you, and that's fine. You can totally feel that way and feel totally committed to them. So you want to see the blessing in letting teachers who don't want to be there, giving them the agency over their life to make that decision.

Ep #219: Staffing Decisions

You can listen and honor and understand them and say, “Best wishes. I wish you well. Good for you to make this decision for yourself.” Then you go get to work at rebuilding your team. We want to understand here the value of mental and emotional wellbeing. It looks different for everybody, and as school leaders, you have probably built up your emotional resiliency muscles because of the experiences you’ve had in school leadership over the last couple of years.

Teachers may not have those same tools or level of experience or resources. Whether those resources were internal or external. So just consider these people are making decisions about the value of their mental and emotional wellbeing, and that’s okay.

It’s also equally true that we can be mentally and emotionally well as an educator during these times. There are people who are going to be fit for the job. You have to trust that that’s possible. You have to trust that the people who are going were meant to go and that people will continue to come in. You have to believe and trust the process. It might be rebuilding and it might slow you down in your mind, but the only reason it feels unhappy or uncomfortable is because of that.

Okay number two, I have a different client who was kind of stressed out about a situation between a grade level where there was siblings working together and there was some tension between teachers and paraprofessionals. The principals thought was I need to fix this. I need to change this up. I need to move these people around.

My advice to you is if you’ve got a situation where there's some conflict on your staff or conflict within a grade level and you're thinking to yourself I need to nip this in the bud. I need to move these people. I want you to slow yourself down and ask yourself, “Wait a minute. What's the real

Ep #219: Staffing Decisions

problem here? Is this a problem that I need to fix? Do I need to go in there and change this up? These are adults we're talking about."

This case was interesting. These people on this team have been working together for eight years. So something is working. If you have a group of people who've been working together, maybe they don't like each other or maybe there's conflict from time to time. If they've been working together, they have the capacity to work together. They've been doing it. So there's something that is working.

If this is a new situation, like it's the first year this group has been together. It's been a disaster. They're not happy and not jiving together. Isn't that interesting that they don't have the skillset to figure out how do I work with somebody that I don't love? You don't have to be everybody's best friend to be collegial and professional. That's an interesting thing to notice, and perhaps working on that as a team, how do we work with people that are different than us or who have different opinions than us and building up that professionalism in our staff might be something to consider.

In this case, the principal wanted to go in and fix the problem and move people around so that the problem would be gone is what she thought. There was an important component missing from this thought process, and that was involving the adults. Asking them what are their thoughts and feelings? What's going on for them? What do they think is working? What do they think needs adjusting for the year?

So if you're going to consider moving people around because you think there's conflict or somebody doesn't like somebody else, you want to really think about that. What's going on? What is their steer cycle? What's working for them? What's not? Maybe they don't think it's a problem. maybe they don't mind the conflict. Sometimes people like a little drama.

Ep #219: Staffing Decisions

Sometimes people are just really direct, and they're not afraid to have conflict.

You don't want to make decisions as a school leader about other people's careers without asking them, involving them. Because what will create drama, what will create conflict is when you go and move people based on assumptions or something you've heard or something that you think is happening, and you're not including them. You're just making an assumption and moving them. You want to just have the conversation.

The reason you don't have that conversation, the reason you would avoid that conversation is because of the discomfort you believe you will feel in having it. So schedule a meeting. Decide the purpose. What's the purpose of the meeting? What's in it for you? What's in it for them? What is the intended outcome of that meeting? What's the intended outcome for the teachers involved? Yeah.

You want to decide with your staff what's best for the team based on what they think is best, based on what you think is best. That conversation, you want that to take place. You don't want to presume and start moving people around. Because they're gonna be like, "Why did she move me? Am I not good enough? Did I do something wrong? Why did they not move? Are they better than me?" Like you're gonna have so many questions that come up.

Versus sitting down. You can do this with every grade level. Hey guys, it's time to talk about staffing. Where do you want to be and why? What's working with this team? What have you been able to accomplish? What are some obstacles you've overcome together? What are conflicts you've been able to handle? Are you comfortable here? Is this what you want? You're not promising them to give them every little thing they want. No, you're just saying I'm taking this input so I can make an informed decision about

Ep #219: Staffing Decisions

staffing. I will make the decisions, but I value hearing and understanding your perspective, what's coming up for you.

You might get some very inciteful information that you didn't realize or you didn't know, or you thought something was happening but it wasn't. So I just invite you. As you're thinking about staffing for the year, one thinking about your thoughts on teachers resigning or other people resigning and what that means about you and your school and how fast you want to build your school.

The reason you want to go fast is you think the future is going to be better than where you're at now, and that's never true. There will always be a problem to solve, a conflict that's going on, a parent that's going to be unhappy, a teacher who's leaving, a teacher who's new, a teacher who's veteran. There's always going to be change in school.

Think of it like a professional athletic team. There's always people coming and going every year, and it's the leaders job, the coaches job to maintain the culture and the climate of that team, even when people are coming and going. Then within those teams, right, you're going to have those smaller units of teams, which are your grade levels. What are the dynamics there? How do we set people up for success? How do we teach them the tools to be able to manage when conflicts arise?

What should they do if there's a conflict? Like tier one, tier two. First you go to that person. If that can't be resolved then you go to the grade level meeting. Then you can't resolve that then you're going to come to me. Like you want to give people a step by step clear simple process for handling conflict as adults on campus. They've never been taught that. So you want to teach them that.

Ep #219: Staffing Decisions

So these are just like spur of the moment on the spot thoughts that I've had about making staffing decisions as teachers are resigning, clearing up your thoughts about what you're making that mean for yourself and your school. A lot of people have drama about what it means for the kids. You've got to clean that up. Just know that it's okay for teachers to come and go. Question the belief that teachers coming and going is worse for kids or worse for the school or worse for you. How is it better? This might be a little cleansing right now in education. That's okay.

Somebody said to me the other day, "It feels like we're crumbling." I'm like yeah, we are. The system is crumbling a little bit, and that's good. It's a good thing. We're rebuilding. The institution of education is in a rebuilding period. It's okay. You're okay. They're okay. People who are going to go, go. People are going to be coming in.

If you accept that and make that a part of your plan, you're going to give yourself more time and space to create that vision that you're aiming for because you're going to include the time it takes to onboard people and to release other people and to move people around. So be thinking about all of this as you're deciding your staffing for next year. Then as much as possible, get their input and feedback so that you can make informed staffing decisions for your upcoming year. All right? Have an amazing week. Talk to you later. Bye.

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-

Ep #219: Staffing Decisions

dash-with-me to learn more. I'd love to support you in becoming an empowered school leader.

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.