

Ep #226: Staffing Assignment Conversations



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 226.

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 principals, and welcome to the podcast. I've got a really good topic for you today. I'm excited to jump in. But first, I want to invite you to a webinar training that I am hosting this afternoon, Tuesday April 26, at 4:00 p.m. Pacific/7:00 p.m. Eastern time. The title and topic of the day is how to enjoy the last eight weeks of school. This is really dedicated to my clients who have been coming to me very concerned, very overwhelmed, very tired, and they're not enjoying the experience of the end of the school year.

This time of year is meant to be celebrated and enjoyed. This should be fun and lighthearted and happy. This should be a wonderful time for you to celebrate your students and celebrate your staff and yourself, and all of the accomplishments and all of the hard work and all of the things that you've done that were really hard and you made it through. You want to celebrate those times.

So I'm going to teach you how to enjoy the last few weeks of your school year. Join us today, April 26th. Can't wait to see you. If you are listening to this and it's after the webinar, you can email me at angelakellycoaching@gmail.com, and I will send you the link to the replay. How about that?

All right, let's dive in. Staffing assignment conversations. Many of you are at the point of the school year where you are making decisions about staffing assignments for next year. You're having to hold conversations with

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your staff about where they're going to be placed for next year. So I'm going to break it down into three phases of this conversation and how to prepare for each one. The goal of this topic is to help you clean up, why you're doing what you're doing, having those conversations without any fear or doubt or worry, how to hold space for people's emotions in this conversation. This is gonna be so good. Okay.

So phase one is all of the things you need to do before you hold the conversation with a staff member. So step one is making clean decisions as the school leader. The first thing you need to keep in mind is your goal. When you're making staffing assignment decisions for next year, you want to ask yourself what's my goal? What is the purpose? How am I making these decisions?

So when you look at what the goal is, what do you really want? Why are you making these decisions about staffing assignments? It really comes down to ensuring that the right people are in the right spot on the train. This has to feel very aligned for you, but it also needs to feel aligned for the teacher. This is the goal. You want this decision and this conversation to be a win/win. You want it to be a great match for your school and for your grade level team and for the students, but you also need it to be a win for the teacher.

So when you think about the goal of making a decision around staffing, what you really want at the end of the day is for people to want to be in the position that they are assigned to. You want them to be happy about the assignment, and you want to feel like you have made the right decision. That they are a fit for the position for which you've assigned to them.

Because happy teachers, happy people, people who are happy to be in the position that they've been assigned to, they bring so much more to the table. They're not caught up in the drama about not wanting to be there and

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being in resistance. You want these decisions around staffing assignments to be relational in nature. You want to make relational assignments.

What I mean by that is building a relationship with your teachers so that you understand where their talents are, what they're good at, what their skills are, but also what they're interested in, what their desires are, and what they want for their career. We're not just moving pawns around on the chess table. These are human beings. They have thoughts and feelings about their job and about their career. We want to take that into consideration.

So ideally, you want to be having conversations with your teachers all throughout the year. You want to be asking them, how's it going? What's going well? What's a problem? How are you feeling? What are your ideas about how to make this better? You want to be building those conversations up throughout the year. I just want to say like if you're new or you didn't think to do that throughout the year, not to worry. You can still go through this process from this moment on, okay.

Now, let's talk about unclean decisions so you can identify the difference between when you're making a clean decision about staffing assignments and unclean. Unclean decisions about assignments sometimes come from external circumstances. What I mean by that is oftentimes, or sometimes, your district officials, somebody up in the district office or at central office, decides this is where you need to place your people. They come down, and they tell you put these people in these positions. Move these people around. Change these assignments.

When that happens, or if that has happened to you, what you're going to have to do, you're going to have to spend some time with yourself asking yourself your opinion. What do I think of these changes? You're going to know. Either you're going to feel like yeah, that's a really good decision. I

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see the value in that. I see why they're thinking this way. I see why they suggested this. You're going to feel aligned to that decision.

Sometimes you won't. Sometimes you will be thinking to yourself don't you trust me? Don't you trust that I know what's best for my teachers? Why are you telling me this? I don't like this. I don't want to have to change these people. I don't agree with this.

There are two things you can do. Number one, you can sit yourself down and look for the agreement. See if you can find the alignment in their recommendation and look for how it might be a good thing for your school and a good thing for that teacher. See if you can see the truth in how it might be a good thing.

But if you truly can't see it, then you want to muster up the courage to ask. To say, "Hey, I need more clarification. I'm not seeing why this decision was made or why you're recommending that I move this person. Can you help me understand?" See what comes up. Perhaps it will make more sense to you upon clarification. Or you might need to say like I just don't see how that's a fit. Here's what I'm thinking. Here's where I think they might be a fit. What are your thoughts? Bounce your ideas back and forth.

Even if they tell you you have to do it and you disagree, you want to get to a space where you can align yourself to this is why I'm going to follow through. I'm going to follow through with what I was told even when I disagree and come to peace with that before you talk to the teacher.

Because if you go in with that with the mindset of like I don't agree with this, and the teacher's like I don't agree with this, and you're like I don't either. Now it's kind of an us versus them mentality. You're gonna get yourself in a little gridlock there. Okay. So, unclear decisions happen when you're told what to do, and you don't reconcile that prior to the conversation.

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The other thing that happens when you make unclear decisions, it's when you're basing your decision on how you feel about a person versus using data to drive your decision. We either like a person and we don't want to upset them so we don't move them, even when the data shows that it's evident that they might be better fit somewhere else. Or we like them and we move them to what they want because we like them, and we want them to have what they want even when we know deep down it's maybe not the best placement for them.

So notice if you're making decisions because you like somebody and you don't want to upset them or you want them to have what they want, but the data doesn't match the assignment decision. On the flip side, when you don't like somebody. If you're making a decision because you don't like somebody and you either move them simply because you don't like them or you don't move them because you don't like them, and you don't want to deal with them. You don't want to spend the time with them and having conversations with them and having to deal with maybe their tantrum by making a move.

When you avoid discomfort because you don't like somebody, just notice those types of decisions. So are you making decisions based on your emotions and other people's emotions, whether you like them or don't like them? Or are you making decisions based on what you think is best for them, for your kids, for the school? Okay.

So when you're making decisions about staffing changes and staffing assignments, you want to make sure that you're making clean decisions. That you're making decisions in their best interest, what is best for them. And perhaps what's best for them, it might not be in the immediate sense. It might be a longer term benefit.

They might not like the immediate change where they have to pack up their room and move to another room and learn a new curriculum, learn a new

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grade level, and be with different people. They might not like all of that. But in the long term, you can see like this person doesn't love the whole end of year testing. They want to be in second grade where they don't have to deal with the test. I know they don't get that, but they'll get it come testing time. You can help them see that ahead of time.

But you want to make decisions about people's skills and talents and preferences so that they are in the best spot for them and their career. Then once you make these decisions, you have to decide and love your reason for your decision. As you're deciding, loving your reason is very important because it's going to ground you as you hold conversations with the teachers who may not love your reasons or your decision, right.

So you're going to go into a conversation. You want to be very grounded and very intentional about why you decided, the reason you decided. You want to be sold that this is the best decision for them so that when you speak with them, you can share with them all of the reasons why you think it's such a great idea for them.

Many times teachers feel like we're just moving them around because it's easier for us, and that we aren't taking them into consideration. I invite you to take their perspective into consideration, and then showing them how this decision was made with them in mind. Okay.

The more you're sold on why the decision is a good idea and you trust that decision is the right idea, and you see the value in making that decision. The impact of that decision is not just about you. It becomes not even about students and staff, but it's about the teacher who's moving.

When you're sharing that with him or her, you're going to feel so much more confident and grounded in that conversation. Not only that, you will be so certain that this is a great move for them because you have already done the work ahead of time to see the value of that change for them,

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what's in it for them. So this is going to make any conversation about changing assignments feel so much better for you.

Number one, clean decisions. Clean up your mind, and make decisions from data, not feelings. Number two, be sure you love your reasons, and be sold on why the decision is a good decision not just for you but for the teacher.

Now, this doesn't mean that the teacher has to love your reason or that they're going to see the benefit right away. They might still be upset or hurt or angry about the decision. They might be in resistance. But when you know that you've made the decision out of love and what you believe is best for them in the long run, the better you are able to hold space for them as they're processing the information, taking it all in, and really seeing how their future is going to go. Then coming to terms with it. Okay.

So that's kind of phase one where you're prepping yourself in your mind and making very clean decisions before you have conversations. Then phase two is the actual sit down have a conversation part of the meeting. So you're going to schedule these meetings.

One of the things I want you to notice is how you're scheduling the meetings. Are you procrastinating them? Are you planning them ahead of time? Are you feeling secure and confident and ready to have these meetings? Notice if you're dreading any meetings.

So one of my clients was telling me like, "I noticed that I put all my meetings on the calendar, but I put the ones that I was dreading at the end. I was procrastinating them." So just notice. Are there any teacher meetings that you're not looking forward to? You want to ask yourself why. You want to know what you're thinking before you go into that meeting so you can clean it up ahead of time.

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So if you are feeling any kind of trepidation or worry or fear or nervousness, ask yourself what's going on with me? What am I thinking that's triggering these emotions? You don't want to skip this step. Because going into the meeting, feeling this way is going to result in that meeting going exactly the way you think it's gonna go, which is not how you want it to go, right?

For example, if you're having the thoughts like what if I say the wrong thing? I don't want to say the wrong thing. I have to be careful. She's really sensitive. I'm going to hurt her feelings. She's not going to be happy. She's going to go out and talk to the staff. Then there's going to be all this staff drama. If you're going into a meeting like that, your brain is going to be uneasy and messy and clouded. You're going to be really nervous.

When you go into that meeting, that teacher is going to feel that energy. They're going to know, "She's not really sold on this idea. She's feeling nervous about this decision, which tells me she doesn't trust it, and she has some doubt about it." Then that person is going to push back, and you're going to get a person who's upset with you potentially. Then the result of that is you're going to be like, "See? I said the wrong thing. I should have been more careful. She's not happy. Her reaction is exactly what I thought it was going to be." Maybe you blame her, right.

But what's happening is she was just uncomfortable knowing that you were uncomfortable. What I want to offer is that when you're uncomfortable knowing that the teacher might be uncomfortable, you have got to be willing to allow that teacher to be uncomfortable or unhappy. Ground yourself in knowing that your decision is the best decision in the long run, even when they're upset. So you want to hold space for their discomfort.

A lot of times we avoid that. We don't want other people to feel bad. So we don't have the conversation, or we kind of come at them too directly. We hit them. We kind of broadside them with information. They're like what's happening right now. They're in shock. Then they're upset with you for not

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having prepared them for this conversation. So what you're thinking will energetically impact that conversation. It's going to impact the outcome of that conversation.

So if you're feeling nervous and you don't want to be feeling nervous, here's what you can do. Think about how you want the conversation to go. So envision that conversation going really well. What if you walked into that conversation, and they were happy to hear your suggestion? They're excited for the move. They want the change. Maybe when you go into that meeting, it's exactly what they wanted, but they were too afraid to ask for a move. Because you might think that they were incompetent, or they couldn't handle the grade level they were in. So they were afraid to approach you. It could be equally true.

We always go to the dark side and say like oh, it's gonna be terrible. They're gonna be miserable. No, sometimes teachers want a change. They're just afraid to ask for it, or they're not consciously aware that they want the change until they start thinking about it. They're like, "Oh, wow. Yeah, actually, that sounds really fun. I'm excited. Thank you so much." That outcome could equally happen.

So if you're nervous, I want you to imagine them wanting this change, and how they might respond to you suggesting it. They might be so grateful that you mentioned it and that you considered them. When you're sold and you're telling them, "This is why I think you're going to be a great fit for this team. You can be a leader on this team. These are the skill sets I see in you. This is the potential. This is going to add to your career experience."

When you can sell them on why this is the best thing for them, they're going to go home and start thinking about how great it's going to be. All of a sudden, they're in the same energy. They're excited and relieved, and they're looking forward to the future. So I want you to consider that that outcome could be equally possible.

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Now, I don't want you to go into a meeting blindly believing that it's just going to be roses and daisies without any preparation. So don't not prepare thinking it'll be just fine. I don't not gonna worry about it. So be prepared for them to be excited and relieved, but also you want to think about what you're going to do if somebody has an emotional intense reaction.

You want to be ready for any action that they might take, right? You want to be prepared for the happy ones and the relieved ones, and they're super excited, and you're going to celebrate with them. But you also want to know in the back of your mind, what are you going to do if somebody cries or if they verbally attack you, or if they yell at you, or if they storm out, or if they go silent? Because sometimes these things also happen.

I like to think about these kinds of situations as though I'm dealing with a student. When a child is having an intense emotional reaction, we know as adults that they're in fight or flight. We know they're not acting from their prefrontal cortex. They're in their reptilian brain. We can allow a child to express big emotions and hold space for them, which just means giving them time and patience without getting sucked into their emotional stress and attacking them right back. We ensure that that student feels safe, and that others around them are safe.

We know it's not effective for us to deny their emotion or to downplay it. We don't tell them don't feel that way or grow up or just stop it. It's not effective. It's not effective for them to be told that they shouldn't be feeling a certain feeling. No feeling is off limits because we're on planet Earth, and we're all humans on the planet and all the emotions are equally acceptable. They're all okay.

Emotions aren't the problem. Where we want to be thinking about is how people react to those emotions and if they get physically violent or emotionally, verbally violent, or even mentally violent with themselves or with you. That is where you want to create boundaries. So it's not the

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emotion that's the problem, or that can create a problem. It's the reaction to that emotion. So be thinking ahead of time how you're going to handle it.

Having said that, most adults don't go down the crazy route. You want to know what you're going to do if somebody has an emotional reaction. They might beg or cry or go silent or shut down. They might roll their eyes at you. They might argue back, or they give you a list of reasons why you shouldn't move them. They might just say, "Hear me out. Let me share my perspective." Or they might blame you.

So there's a lot of things people might do. Just make a list of them and be thinking about how am I going to handle the range of human reactions. Then you won't be so afraid of them. Like if someone's rolling their eyes at you, let them. They're just processing information that they haven't had time to decide how they're going to react. They're just having a visceral reaction. If they're crying, same thing. Many of these you can allow space for without reacting to.

So a lot of times people will say, "Well, you didn't support me, or I didn't get what I need." They'll start to blame in an effort to defend themselves because they're feeling inadequate. Okay. Here's a little tip on this one. If someone tells you, "Well you didn't do this, and you didn't do that, and you didn't support me, and you didn't give me what I needed to be successful." This is not the time to argue that do not get into a debate and get into conflict with them.

Remember the purpose of this meeting. It's to remind them we're on the same team. I'm thinking about you. I'm considering what's in your best interest. Here's where I think you're going to be fabulous. You don't want to get into a gridlock with them about who did what and who didn't. Know that they are simply sharing with you why they believe the situation is happening to them.

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Remember, this is a situation that they've created themselves where you have decided they are a better fit somewhere else. Allow them to share what they're thinking without correcting them or defending yourself. Just receive it as this is their perspective. This is what they're thinking. This is how they're feeling. That's okay. It doesn't make their words true necessarily.

So if they're blaming you, it doesn't mean that they're right if you don't say anything. You don't have to defend yourself, but it also might not be false. So just let it be neutral in the moment. Don't go down that rabbit hole.

The meeting will also feel less difficult for you and for them if you've been in conversation with them throughout the course of the year. As I said earlier, if you haven't done that at this point, don't worry. You still can go through this process.

Make a clean decision based on data, clear up any thoughts you have about particular conversations with certain teachers, be sold on yourself as to why this is the best decision for them, and list out the reasons if you need to. You want to think about the short and long term impact on their happiness, their wellbeing, their teaching impact, and their career journey, the big picture for them, right.

So once you've had the meeting and you've processed the conversation, you've held space for their emotional reaction, eventually that meeting will end. When you are grounded and aligned to the decision, and you've considered their best interest, and you've told them that, and you're in the space of loving them and considering their perspective, letting them share with you all the emotional reaction they're having without making it mean anything about them or anything about you.

Then what will happen is this conversation will come to an end. They will get up and leave. They're going to go off and process their emotions.

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They're going to think about it, feel the feels, process the emotion. Eventually they will come to a decision, either subconsciously or consciously. They're going to decide how they're going to handle this reassignment. Some are going to process the decision, and they're going to see the value and get on board and move forward. Those are great people. Those are your people. Those are the people you want because they know how to process an emotion, get on board, and move forward in their career.

Other people are going to spin out. They're going to be angry and bitter and frustrated and indulging in self-pity and feel like a victim, okay? I want to show you that if you've sold them on the benefit, and you've truly thought about what's in it for them and how it's going to benefit them in the short term and the long term, you've done your work. It's not your job to clean up their emotional reaction.

I know it's not comfortable. It feels uncomfortable when somebody's upset with you, and they're bitter and they're angry. But it's not your job to clean up their steer cycle. How they feel about themselves, how they feel about you, or the reassignment, or even their career. Your job is to do your work, clean up your mind, inspire them, and paint the vision of success for them. You can coach and model for them, but you can't make them feel a certain way. You can't make them adopt a different way of thinking. So just be mindful of this. Your job is to do your part, and then to hold space for them to do their part.

For those teachers who don't transition their thinking, you're going to have to hold space for a long time, from now until the end of the year. It's okay. You can do this. I want you to stay focused on the reasons why you made this decision, stay grounded in those reason, and then shift your energy to spending time with the people on your team who do want to focus on the future and the possibility that it holds for them and the school and the students.

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Teachers who want to be there and serve in whatever position they're in are the people that you want to spend your time with. Don't get sucked in to the one or the two teachers on campus who want to spin in drama. They're going to talk. They're going to whisper. They're gonna gossip. They're going to talk about you. Observe all of that from a distance. Don't get sucked in. Let them show their true colors.

What happens is if you think they're ruining school culture. They're being toxic. Teachers can tell. When you're being the leader and you're holding space for that person, people can see what's going on. Just trust and have faith that other people can see that person's true colors as well. Okay? Remind yourself this is temporary. It is temporary. Even if it takes you clear to the end of the year for this person to process this, this too shall pass.

Hey, if it doesn't, if they come into the next year pouting and dragging about and whining, this is where you want to decide what you're going to do. You want to check in with them. You want to have a conversation and be open to hearing what isn't working for them. You want insight into what they're thinking.

Maybe perhaps there is a better position for them, but you want to understand why are they continuing to drag this out? Why are they resisting so much? What thoughts are they having? How are they feeling? What do they think is the solution? Because you want to understand that so you have more perspective on whether it's the position that's the problem for them, or whether it's their thinking that's the problem for them.

P.S, it's always their thinking. But there might be another position out there that's better for them, but you want to be open to that. You also are going to hold them accountable to this is where you've been assigned. I'll support you all the way, and I need you to show up. I need you to meet me in the middle here. Right? You want to have that conversation.

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I want to close out by saying every aspect of school leadership is impacted by emotions. I talked about this in last week's podcast. Teacher assignments only feel stressful when we think about how people will feel and react to those feelings. When we're caught up in what they're going to think and what they're going to feel and how that's going to make us feel, that's when we get stressed out.

When we go in as the leader of the school who's confident in her decisions, who's sold on those decisions, and who's got our teachers back, and we tell them that. We tell them about the reassignment out of love for them and compassion and perspective of the bigger picture, we can hold space for them to kind of catch up to agreeing with that change. Okay.

So for those of you who love this work, and I just want to say by the way that you can apply this process to any conversation. Parent meetings, student behavior, having conversations with your boss. You can apply this to any conversation, okay?

I want you to know that I am in the process of creating tools for you all as school leaders that you can implement in these different scenarios. I want you to be able to understand what's happening in those moments that feel stressful so that you can walk in and feel confident as the leader and assured that you're able to handle any emotion that comes your way.

Now, it doesn't mean school leadership is going to feel easy all the time, but these tools will help create understanding and perspective and focus on the cause of the behavior versus treating the symptoms of the behavior. Student and adult behavior is not the root cause of the problem. It's the symptom of reacting to their thoughts and emotions.

So if you want to get your hands on these tools, I highly encourage you to sign up for a consult and say yes to coaching. For those of you who sign up now, I'm adding a bonus month of coaching for you. This is going to ensure

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that you have all the coaching tools that you need to plan for the end of this year and be prepared for all of next school year.

When you understand emotion and how it allows you to understand others, when you understand how to process it yourself and how to hold space for other people to process it, and how to use it to create results for yourself and help others do the same, you are going to be the most valuable school leader on the planet. Let's go. I can't wait to work with you and support you in becoming an empowered school leader. I'll see you guys all next week. Take good care. Bye, bye.

Hey there empowered principals. Listen up. It's the end of the school year, and you guys are running around like a puppy on Red Bull. I see you. My clients are doing the same thing, but let's stop the madness. You know what's going to happen. You're in the process right now in this moment of overscheduling, overextending yourselves and overworking, which will cause you to start overlooking things, missing deadlines, under communicating, and staying in constant motion until you cross that last day of school finish line. Then you drop from complete exhaustion.

Look, I've been there. I have done the same race. I want to offer you a different solution. What if you could get it all done and slow down enough to enjoy the last weeks of school without working yourself to death? Welcome to the land of and. I'm offering a new live training on Tuesday, April 26th at 4:00 p.m. Pacific Time/7:00 pm Eastern Time on how to enjoy the last eight weeks of the school year.

I'm going to show you a process you can use to help you map out the end of your school year to ensure that things get done, and that allows you to work at a pace that's fun and relaxing and enjoyable. Because let's face it, the end of the year is all about celebrating. Celebrating the year, the students, the staff, and yourself. Let's focus on the accomplishment of

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what's already been done just as much as you're focused on all the tasks and the projects that still need to get done.

The link for the webinar is in the show notes. So click on the link and register for the webinar. You must register to be able to attend. So click on the link in the show notes, register, and let's go enjoy those last eight weeks of school. I promise I'll show you how to do that. See you there.

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.