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**With Your Host** 

**Angela Kelly** 

Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 228.

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 my empowered leaders. Happy Tuesday. Welcome to the podcast. Hope your week is going fabulous. I'm doing amazing. I love Spring. I love this time of year. All of my new clients are starting to sign. I love it. I love meeting new people and working with new principles. It's my favorite. So be sure to join us. Let's go.

All right. I'm gonna dive right in because this is a juicy podcast. This is part two of how to enjoy the last weeks of the school year. Last week, I talked about all of the reasons that we don't enjoy the school year. Now I'm going to teach you how.

So if you haven't listened to last week's episode, be sure to go back and listen to that one first so that you can tune into this one. I know everybody wants to jump to the how, but you really want to set your mind and your brain up for catching yourself on what you typically do to try and solve the problem and why that's not working so that you know why you need to do it this way in order to be able to enjoy the school year. Okay.

So what I ended with last week was the simple solution to enjoying the school year. Basically, the truth is that when you plan your future now, when you take time out of your day and your week to plan your future three months ahead of time, when you get to that moment three months in the future, you get to experience that moment with presence.

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You get to enjoy it because it's already planned. It's already been decided. You've already looked at all the obstacles and come up with solutions ahead of time. There are many less interruptions when we plan our work three months in advance.

Now, I'm going to talk about why we don't do this. I talked about that in the podcast last week, but here are three things that we're going to stop doing in order to enjoy the end of the school year. Number one, you're going to stop over scheduling so that you'll have plenty of space on your calendar to address and get to your top priorities. Booking yourself back to back doesn't work.

When you do that, you are lying to yourself. When you book meetings back to back to back to back and you don't give yourself any space in between, you tell yourself everything's gonna go just as planned, super smooth. I don't have to worry about any interruptions or anything going wrong or anything popping up in the day when we know that doesn't happen. That's not the reality of our jobs.

When you book yourself from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and you think you're actually going to get that all done. Then things pop up, interruptions happen, you have to go to the bathroom, or you have to cover yard duty because somebody's out. You feel very frustrated and discouraged at the end of the day when you look at your calendar and you only got to two of the 10 things that you scheduled.

What we need to do is we need to under schedule. We want to anticipate the little parts of life that actually happen. Things like travel time, meetings going over schedule, interruptions, student support time, parents coming in and wanting to talk with you, unexpected emergencies, putting fun on the calendar. Considering the other parts of your life that actually take up time

making phone calls, scheduling a dentist appointment, checking emails. We spend hours looking at our email, but we never put that on the calendar.

We want to under schedule. What I mean by that is choosing one priority for the day. You only get to pick one thing that gets done. That you're going to promise yourself, if anything gets done today, this is the one thing I want to accomplish. Put one thing on the calendar and then schedule it. I like to offer to my clients to schedule it when you personally have the most energy and focus.

So for me, it's the morning. My one thing gets done in the morning because I know if anything comes up throughout the day have already done the one thing. So I have the most time and energy and focus in the mornings. I create my schedule to ensure that I do the hard thing or the big thing or the essential thing that day in the morning. That way I've got plenty of time. It's not to say I don't plan other things for my afternoon or throughout the day, but my essential thing gets done in the morning. Okay. So we're going to stop over scheduling, and we're going to under schedule.

Number two, we're going to stop overexerting ourselves so that you have plenty of energy to enjoy the last weeks of the school year. What we tend to do is overexert ourself physically, mentally, emotionally. That leaves you depleted with nothing left to give yourself or your family or your friends. I have a client who said, "I'm so tired. I come home, and I just crawl straight into bed." And she's got two little ones at home. I don't want her to have that experience, and I don't want her children to experience their mother as someone who's so tired she can't come home and play with them.

We shouldn't be overexerting ourselves to the point that we can't live the rest of our lives. Nobody wants an overexerted principle. It's not offering the best of who you are and what you're capable of.

The solution? You're going to under exert. You're going to give your big energy to one priority. Then the rest of it, who cares? You're just gonna go with the flow. Let tomorrow's work happen tomorrow. This sounds overly uncomplicated. I know you're thinking to yourself, "Oh, sure, easy for you to say." This isn't easy. It's not easy to say, "I'm going to give my energy to this one thing, and I'm going to let go of a lot of the other things." I'm going to teach you how to do that in a minute.

But the solution is to under exert. To not put all of your energy and all of your patience into the job of the day. So by the time you go home, you're completely depleted, and you're snapping at your spouse or your partner, or you're snapping at your kids. Or you're avoiding them because you just don't have it in you, any more energy in you, any more mental or physical capacity to deal.

What we do is we over schedule, and then we overexert. We don't let tomorrow's work happen. Because when we do have time, we think, "Oh, I'll just get one more thing done." And we overexert. So we want to let tomorrow's work happen tomorrow. We want to schedule time in to decompress after we've had a tough meeting or a tough conversation.

A lot of times we don't feel like we have the privilege of taking time to be human and to cry or to process a really hard conversation. Give yourself five minutes. Close the door, close the shade, and cry or just feel bad or call a friend. You want to make sure that you're not suppressing emotion. Because when you suppress emotion, you're overexerting yourself by not allowing yourself to feel. Taking that emotion that's pent up and all of that

pent up energy with you to the next meeting or the next task you have to do is not going to result in higher productivity. It creates the opposite.

Step three, you're going to stop overworking so that you have plenty of time to do the things you want to do that include rest and fun and relaxation outside of the school day. Overworking yourself is not the same as over delivering. We confuse the two. Overworking means that you keep working past your work schedule boundaries. You say you're gonna go home at five. You go home at 6:30.

Doing this habitually lowers your efficiency as a principal because what you're training your brain is that if you don't get a task done within the work hours, that's okay. I'm just going to give you another 90 minutes after work. This is a very dangerous habit to form. You want to practice honoring your work boundaries. If you say you're gonna go home at five, make sure a task gets done by five. If it doesn't get done, if something huge came up and you didn't get it done, it's not a problem. Just put it on tomorrow schedule as the one essential thing, the top priority to finish and do it then.

Over delivering on the other hand, is when we meet and exceed our own expectations, and impress ourselves with our level of delivery and impress other people. It's when you say you're going to get a task done, and you do it in 60 minutes and you don't give it that extra 90 minutes after work. We think that over delivering means working ourselves to the bone, doing everything ourselves, doing everything to A plus work. That's not over delivering. That's called burnout. That's called exhaustion. Nobody can keep up that pace, not even the best of the best.

I have some pretty incredibly proficient and highly productive and highly efficient principals, and even they feel burnout when they think that overworking is the solution. What you want to do is over deliver. Meet your

expectations in the timeframe that you say you're going to get them done and allow yourself to do B minus work. You can be highly valuable and not be perfect.

Trying to be perfect is just trying to avoid disappointment and failure and discouragement and frustration and rejection and having other people have opinions about us. You're never going to avoid that. You can't outrun it and you can't overwork it. Allow yourself to feel the emotions that come with school leadership. Allow yourself to feel what it feels like to tell yourself I'm not going to overwork. I'm going to get done what needs to get done within the timeframe I said.

Practice that habit. It's going to be very uncomfortable. If it's uncomfortable, you're on track. It's a hard thing to do because our brain convinces us that just one more thing makes us a better principal. One more thing feels good to get it done. Yeah, you get the immediate gratification of checking that box, but that's very temporary. The long term cost of doing more and overworking comes at a cost to your health, your wellness mentally and emotionally, your family, the relationships you have with your kids and your partner and spouse, all of that. Be mindful of what overworking cost you. Okay.

So, I'm going to walk you through the process. Here's the how. Number one, list out all the outcomes required three months from now. You're going to project out what needs to be done by the end of July. So you've got May, June, July. Backwards plan, what do you need to get done in May? What do you need to get done in July?

Then you're going to prioritize that list. This is hard because we don't like to prioritize because it puts one task above another, but that's the whole point of prioritization. You're going to prioritize it out, and then you're going to

map out the details of those tasks. You're going to plan for pitfalls, and then you're going to determine delegation.

So the five steps are list the outcomes required three months from now, prioritize them, essentials down to non-essentials, map out the details, plan for the pitfalls, obstacles that can come in your way. What might happen? What might prevent me? What might become an obstacle or a problem? And how can I problem solve for that now? Then you're going to delegate. You're going to decide who else besides me can do this job, and you're going to determine who's a fit to delegate to. Okay.

So listing and prioritizing. You're going to prioritize based on your leadership values. The vision you've created for yourself, and the values driving that vision. Then you're going to decide what is essential. I want to caveat here and say this is what I was talking earlier in the last podcast about obligation versus choice and understanding the difference.

There are going to be many tasks that you are asked to do from your district. District expectations, district deadlines. You're going to feel like they're happening to you. That they're not your choice. That they're an obligation. I want to offer that when you think of them as an obligation, how does that feel? It feels very heavy. It feels very victim-y. It feels like you're out of control.

I invite you to consider that you do actually want to do those tasks. Whatever is being asked of you, you're deciding, you're choosing to complete and turn things in on time to your boss. You want to be an employee who does what they're asked, and you turn things in on time. You want to be that person. That's the type of leader you're choosing to be.

So don't tell yourself that you're just obligated to, and you have to, and you don't only want too because it feels like a burden. The district's requirements and expectations are tasks that you're choosing to do. That is the difference between obligation and choice.

So you want to understand why you're choosing to spend your time and energy on any given action throughout your day. This reminds your brain of the value of that time investment. Be very conscious and intentional about how you're spending your time. Even when you're just sitting down talking to a kindergarten student or you're working through a problem with a group of students. Maybe you're doing an investigation. Tell yourself this is important. This is valuable. I'm choosing to spend my time this way.

It will feel very different than ugh, I hate doing these. This is one more interruption. I don't want to have to talk to parents, and you go through all the reasons why you hate it. Talk about all the reasons why you're choosing to do it. Feels very different.

Finally, but not finally, give yourself time on your calendar for fun and rest and pleasure. Do not, not put fun on your calendar. When you put fun and pleasure and rest on the calendar, what it says is that it signifies its value. That it is as equally important as the work tasks.

You put meetings on your calendar. I want you to have meetings for fun. Going out with your friends, meeting your spouse for a date night, taking your kids to the zoo, all of that stuff should be on the calendar because it signifies it's valuable. It's important. Time is a highly valuable asset that you have. You want to be intentional about how you spend it, and fun deserves just as much attention as work.

Finally, you want to drop anything on your list that is not a valuable use of time, that does not create a high impact result for you. Lots of times we spend our time doing things that aren't truly necessary or that other people want us to do, but we don't want to do or things that aren't that valuable. So take back ownership by being intentional about how you're going to spend your time, by listing everything out and prioritizing it based on your leadership values.

Then you want to constrain. I just talked about this. You want to look at what's essential and what's the purpose. Is it a high leverage task? If there are things you want to do just for fun, that's fine. But if it requires overworking, I would question that. I would say it's a no. If your fun task requires you to overwork, then it's a no. Go do something else that's fun. If it's fun and you're overworking, but you don't feel like it's work, that's maybe a little gray area that you can decide to work.

But more importantly, stick to your work boundaries, prioritize, constrain. The art of constraint is so important because you have to do less in order to gain more time. There's only two ways you gain more time in school leadership: constraint and delegation. It's easier to constrain than to delegate because you don't have to put it on anybody. You're just gonna say it's a no, and it goes off everybody's plate. So what would you like to drop? Will dropping it be a problem? If it is a problem, for whom? Is there an alternate solution, if it is a problem, that creates a win/win? Be mindful of that.

Mapping it out, step three. You're going to map out for all of the essentials, don't do this for everything. Because if you're taking it off the plate, it's done. You don't have to think about it anymore. But for those things that are essential, you're going to map them out, the details of all that needs to be done. The details. The actions and the measurement of completion.

How you're going to assess and measure. What's the metric by witch you're measuring if this task is complete, okay?

You want to think about accountability. How do I hold myself accountable to get this done? Or how do I hold others accountable and getting it done? Then in this step, I want you to also think about who might take this on. Who might be able to do this task? Here's how I do it. If I weren't able to do the task, if I were out of town and I wasn't at school, who would I trust? Who would I count on? Who do I think has the skill set or has the desire to take this on for me? Who could perform this at a B plus level or a B minus level?

Remember, you're not delegating just yet. You're just coming up with ideas of people who might be willing to take it on. This process helps your brain start to release the reins a bit. It's not your job to do all of the heavy lifting. It's your job to know who wants to do it and who can do it so that you can delegate.

You're only going to delegate the essentials. You're not delegating everything just so you can feel good that your to do list gets done. You want to delegate only things that are essential, and things that you absolutely don't have to do. There are things that only you can do as the school leader. You own those, and then you delegate. Okay?

Now step four is obstacle anticipation. I call this pitfall planning. You want to consider ahead of time any potential obstacles or problems and solve for them ahead of time. Finally, step five is decide and delegate. This is where you are going to decide who is going to be responsible for this task. Am I going to do it? If so, what are my steps? What's my plan? How am I going to hold myself accountable? And if somebody else can take it on, you want to practice the art of delegating.

Delegating is not abdicating. Abdicating is when you give responsibility away without any thought about how to hold somebody responsible or the purpose of it. You're just like pushing it away because you don't want to do it. That is different than delegating. Delegating means you've thought through the process. You've created a system or a process for creating that task completion. You've thought mindfully about skill sets and interests and strengths of the people that you might be delegating to.

Now, when you decide to delegate something, you need to ask them. Ask permission to delegate. Don't assume they're a yes, and don't command that they must do something. Ask people's permission to delegate. Communicate with them. Make it as easy as possible for them. Communicate clearly and then confirm with them. Here's what we need. Here's when we need it by. Here are the steps. Make it as easy as possible for them by giving them the tools they need to be successful.

Another thought about delegation I want to share with you is that there are thoughts that make delegation and constraint easier because constraint and delegation are the two ways that you stop overworking. Here are some thoughts that make these two things easier. So thoughts on constraint, the priority is the only thing that needs to be done today. What doesn't get done didn't need to get done today.

Constraint is not under working. It's not under delivering. It's being highly effective and efficient. Do not think that because you're saying no to things that you're under working or being lazy or you're not being a proficient leader. It's actually the opposite. Constraint creates effectiveness. It creates productivity. It creates efficiency.

Now, thoughts on delegation. People want to help out. I know you think they think they're too busy, and she's dumping one more thing on my plate.

They only feel that way if you feel that way. If you think to yourself, I don't want to do this. I want somebody else to do it. I'm going to dump it on them. They're going to feel like you're dumping on them.

Versus when you ask somebody, "Hey, do you want to help with this? Is this something you enjoy? Do you want to take on the yearbook? Or do you want to take on the Fall Festival?" People want to help out. They have fun with that. Teachers are really energetic, really enthusiastic. They want to help you, and they enjoy helping you if you find the match for them. The right skill set, the right interest, they will enjoy taking on the delegation and the task. Again, as I said before, delegation is not abdication when it is done with intention.

After you delegate what's left on the essentials list, you need to calendar them, put them on your schedule, give them a time, a date, and a duration. Honor that calendar as much as humanly possible. I know things come up. But if you have under scheduled and something pops up, you do have time tomorrow to make it the essential element. Do you see how that works?

If you only have one thing on your plate, you do that thing and then the next thing. If something comes up, you've got space on your calendar. It's not like you've scheduled back to back for the next eight weeks and there's no room for error. You do not want to create that. You're setting yourself up for failure. So calendar, honor, and then follow up and follow through, and give yourself some grace and space.

Don't forget. I want you scheduling fun and silly time into your day. Go see the kinders. Go be silly. Go to the award shows. Go to the end of year celebrations. Have fun, honor that. Put on your calendar let's talk about everything we did right this year. Let's make a list. Let's celebrate. Let's have an end of the year party, whatever it is.

Now, here are some decisions you need to make. You need to make the decision about the one priority. What is your focus of the day or of the week or of the three months that you're working on? What are you going to eliminate? What are you going to delegate? How much time are you going to allot each task? You need to be a decision ninja. You need to be able to make decisions swiftly and quickly and trust that whatever decision you make, it's the right decision.

Then you're going to schedule some boundaries around work, around interruptions, around requests from others. And we're not going to overwork, right? Okay.

Four skills to develop that's going to enhance this process of enjoying the end of the year. Number one questioning. You want to ask and honestly answer your own questions. Don't look outside of you for the answers. Ask yourself. What's my opinion? What do I think is the priority? What do I think I should take on, and what do I think I should delegate? What's a non-essential in my opinion? Ask yourself and answer honestly. You'll be surprised at how much you know.

Number two, constraining. This is an art. This is a skill. You have to practice it. It's difficult. It feels uncomfortable. Sometimes you're going to nail it, and sometimes you're not. That's okay. Practice prioritizing and saying no to things outside of that priority.

Skill number three, trusting. This I feel like is a lifetime work for me is finding ways to build up my trust in myself and other people, in my plan, in my idea, in my resourcefulness to figure out a solution. I call this the trust triad. You've got to believe in yourself, other people, and the process. You've got to build that trust triad up as much as possible.

Then four processing. Really allowing yourself time and space to process the emotions that come with this current job, that come with prioritizing and letting some things go and constraining and honoring your calendar and saying no to people. There's a lot of emotion that comes up with that. And allowing yourself joy and pleasure and fun.

One of the things I've come to realize is that I was denying myself pleasure because I felt like work had to come first. And that work was hard, and it shouldn't be fun. I was separating fun and pleasure and enjoyment of my job and the work. I thought that they couldn't coexist. Letting them coexist is how you get to enjoy the last eight weeks of school.

Here is why this process works. You're going to train your brain to focus on the future instead of perseverating on the past. When you go to bed at night and you're thinking about the next three months and how excited you are and planning for them, you're gonna feel like you're ahead of the game. That you know what you're doing. You're not thinking about all the things that happened in the past.

You're not thinking about and perseverating on what you should have said or what you should have done and how you could have done it differently or how you should have known better. Because you're thinking about the future. You're like okay, here's what I learned today. Here's how I'm going to apply it to my future. That's a very different energy. This also works because it creates clarity and focus. You know what you're doing when you wake up every single morning because you planned it ahead of time.

It's such a fun feeling. I have done this in my own life. I feel so in love with my work, with my life because I'm always looking three months ahead. I know what's happening today, tomorrow, the next day, the next week, and

then three months from now because I've already planned it. So I get to be here today in the moment that I planned three months ago. It's so cool.

You understand the actions that you need to take and the results you're working to create. You have clarity because you know where you're going. So you're not like, "Wait, what am I doing again? Why are we doing this?" You don't lose your purpose because you're always looking ahead, and your eyes are on that target.

Then you weed out things that are a time suck. Spinning in low impact actions becomes irrelevant. You don't even want to spend your time doing that. It isn't inviting to you because you're so busy working on high impact things. You don't even give the low impact things time and attention. Okay.

It's so nice because you get to anticipate and solve for obstacles ahead of time, so you run into less problems along the way. You're not having to problem solve in real time because you've thought them through and you've built systems that automate the work, that automate solutions. Now it's not to say that you never have a problem that you run into, of course. But you have less of them because you've anticipated them ahead of time. And you've decided how you might solve for that ahead of time.

Doing this builds your trust up in yourself, which builds their trust in you. Ultimately, what I love about this process is that you gain time, you work less, everything gets done, and you get to enjoy yourself and enjoy your life and the process. It is a very win/win situation.

Okay, lastly, I'm going to cover three pitfalls to avoid. Number one is just not doing the process. It's not slowing down enough to start planning for your future. The reason you don't want to slow down and plan for your future is because you don't know what to expect and plan for. You're telling

yourself I don't know. This is the first time I've done this. I am not three months ahead. That's fair enough if it's your first year.

But if it's not your first year, don't let your brain tell you that. Even if it is your first year, guess. Just take a guess. Who cares if you get it wrong? Guessing gets you halfway there. It's better than not trying and not guessing. Your brain is going to tell you that you're too busy to plan ahead because you're so focused on today that you don't have time to plan for tomorrow. That it's too tedious and it's not urgent.

A lot of times my brain's like don't plan three months ahead. That's not important. Let's just focus on today. No, it isn't tedious, and it is urgent. We want to plan three months ahead because it helps us feel like we're always ahead of the game. I always ask myself this question. What's the cost of not planning ahead? It's all the fires. It's all the interruptions. It's all the stress. It's not being able to sleep at night because my brain is trying to hold on to what do I have to get done? It costs you more time in the long run. So what is the cost of not planning ahead? That's a very good question to ask yourself to get you into the habit of planning ahead.

Pitfall number two, avoiding prioritizing and mapping out details. The reason we do this is we want to believe that everything's important and everything's urgent. That's not true. Consider the purpose and impact of the task over what you think people think will be important or what they think is urgent for them. You've got to be the leader who's looking at the full perspective. Stepping out of the moment and looking into the future. That is what vision is all about. So ask yourself what your opinion is and then do that.

When we avoid prioritizing and mapping out the details, what happens is we also avoid troubleshooting in advance, which we think is time

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consuming in the moment. And we think oh, this isn't relevant. It's not really going to happen. Then when it does, we're like shoot now what?

Just pick a theory. Sometimes we know what to expect and we know how to problem solve. Other times, we just make a guess, and we run with it. But the more you tell yourself, I know what to expect. I can imagine what might come up, the easier it's going to be to have solutions in advance.

Finally, pitfall number three, not giving yourself time and not processing the emotions that come with under working, under exerting, and under scheduling. Those emotions are going to be surprisingly difficult because we fear that we're going to lose control. We fear if we let go the rains that everything's gonna go into the wild. It's gonna be chaos. We're afraid what will happen if we say no to things. That people won't like us or that something important is going to be missed. We're afraid to constrain. We think we need to do it all.

Do you want fear to be the reason that you continue to choose to overwork, overexert, and over schedule? Are you sure about that? What is the cost of overworking, over exerting, and over scheduling? Consider what doesn't change when you fail.

Here's what I mean by that. When you've had a failure, you feel terrible about it. You're sad. You're disappointed. You're embarrassed. Whatever feeling you're feeling. I want you to notice like what's really not any different because you failed. We have so many failures along the way, and we just keep going. I want you to see that not everything shuts down and stops. Like the world doesn't stop. School doesn't stop. Kids don't stop learning because you've had a failure.

So get out there and try. Be messy, have fun, play with it. Be delighted at the failures. It's like oops, that didn't work, but we gave it our all. We tried. We saw what worked. We saw what didn't. Here's how we're going to do it differently.

Finally, we have to sit in the discomfort of working less. It's very uncomfortable to work less because we feel like something's gone wrong or we're not doing enough. Your brain is going to tell you you're not working hard enough. You're not being good enough. You must be missing something. Nothing's gone wrong. It's okay to be constrained in your work and to have a life and have some fun outside of school. I invite you to have fun inside of school.

When you follow this process, here's what to expect on the other side. Number one, delegation becomes very, very easy. It's almost addicting because what's happening is you're empowering your staff and you're seeing them shine. You are inviting them to become the best version of themselves, to become teacher leaders, to take on tasks they didn't think they could handle. You're empowering your teachers when you give them the opportunity to be leading something. When they're empowered, they learn how to empower their students.

People are not going to do this perfectly, but you're going to be okay with that because the time that you gain and the energy that you regain from allowing delegation, allowing B minus work, done is better than perfect, right? When you allow people to get things done for you, you're going to see that everything turns out okay in the end.

Even if there are some hiccups that that person didn't plan for or anticipate, that's okay. They have to learn too. They have to make mistakes to know

what works and what doesn't. That allows you to relax a little bit more throughout the year when you can practice this at the end.

If you can apply this work to the last eight weeks of school, the last weeks of your year, you can apply it throughout the entire year. Hey, you're still going to have moments when you overwork. Don't make a big deal about that. Nothing's gone wrong. Sometimes overworking is the best solution to get done what you need to get done. I just invite you to not let it be a habit. You are going to have times where you over schedule, overexert, over work. Don't beat yourself up. It's just sometimes it's what we do.

Your goal in all of this, the reason you want to create a rhythm of planning three months in advance is because you are becoming a thought leader. You are becoming visionary. That's what leadership is. You have to be thinking ahead of where your school is right now. Three months, six months, a year ahead. You want to be visionary in your leadership. That is what leadership is all about.

Enjoy your last eight weeks of the school year or however many weeks you have left. Enjoy them with all your heart. Let go of all that isn't essential and really relish in the accomplishments and the celebrations for you, your staff, and your students. I love you all so much. Happy end of year. I'll talk to you next week. Take care, bye.

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