

Ep #238: Time and Mind Management with First Year Principal Amy



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Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 238.

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.

Angela: Hello empowered leaders. Happy Tuesday, and welcome to today's podcast. I have a very special episode for you. I am interviewing one of my clients. She is a first-year principal. Her name is Amy Gerber, and she is just ending. Like as we're recording this, this is the end of May.

Technically it is the anniversary of her first coaching session with me. So, we started at the end of May last year. She just wrapped up her first-year. We're going to talk about her experience as a first-year school leader. I'm just gonna let her dive right in, introduce herself, and tell you a little bit about her and her school year and coaching and all of the things. So, Amy, welcome to the podcast.

Amy: Hi, Angela. It is so awesome to be here with you today.

Angela: This is so fun. This is going to be a huge celebration for Amy because she has had the most successful first-year of any school leader I think I've ever seen. It's a real tribute to her and her dedication to the work as a principal and the work as a coach and taking the coaching and applying it to her every day. Even the smallest of situations we would coach on. It really could change the trajectory of her experience as a school leader.

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So, Amy, dive right in and tell the listeners who you are, your position, your first-year experience, and your thoughts about your year now that you've wrapped it up.

Amy: Yeah. So I left a corporation this past year that I had been with for 20 years as an educator. Before that I was a student there. So love the corporation. I taught in that corporation for 17 years. Then after that, I moved to an assistant principal role, which they actually call teacher on assignment, but it was used as an assistant principal. So I did that for a couple years.

So I kind of took my leap of faith and I was ready to dive in to actually be a head principal. So I applied for this job. I got it. It is a perfect fit for me. It's a K-4 building. We have almost 400 students. Where I'm working now is just 20 minutes away from where I live. It's very similar community to what I was used to where I had grown up in. So it's just been a really good fit for me.

Angela: Good. That's good. You're a mom too. So you're not just leading a school you're busy leading a household with teenage children, right?

Amy: Yes. So my husband and I, goodness, have been married for almost 22 years. Then I have a 17-year-old daughter who is very active in sports, as well as my son who actually will be in high school next year. He's 14. So yeah. My husband is a head basketball coach, and I assist him, and my daughter plays on the team. Then we're also busy running around with my son doing all of those things too.

Angela: Yes.

Amy: So yeah, I lead a very active life outside of school as well.

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Angela: Yes. This is something that we coached on from the beginning was time management. There are so many principals out there who feel overwhelmed by all the all of the demands of the job, let alone how are they going to have enough energy by the end of the day to come home and then be active and engaged as a parent and as a spouse, as a friend? All of the other parts of our life. So can you speak to the process that you use to be able to manage being a school leader and having a really active life outside of that school leadership role?

Amy: Yes, that's one thing that Angela and I have coached a lot on, especially early on. Because it has always been really important to me to try to be the best at all of the different hats that I wear, whether it's being a mom or a wife or a daughter or an educator. So that was something that while I wanted to leave my school and be like a rock star principal, I also didn't want to sacrifice my family time or just time for myself. Because I know that that's equally as important too.

I still remember one of our first conversations. I think it was last summer. At some point, we were talking about planning, like Google Calendar, paper planner, that type of thing. I had both. I had like this really pretty pink sparkly planner that my husband had bought me, and I loved writing in it. But then I was also writing everything in Google Calendar.

I remember having a conversation with you about that, Angela, and you just asked, "Well, why do you do both? Not that it's wrong. Just why do you do both? I think my answer was I don't really know because I always have. The funny thing about that pretty pink planner is I never wrote in it after the day that we talked last summer.

Angela: Really?

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Amy: But I never threw it away till just this past week. It just sat on a really nice shelf in my office, and I would see it. Finally, last week, I was ready to part with it even though I had never used it the whole year. But just little shifts like that made the hugest impact on my life because I was able to be so much more efficient with my time and feel like I had time to manage all the different parts and aspects of my life. So that really was the huge thing.

Angela: Yes. This is so important because she was talking about the action she took around like why is she using two calendars and kind of doubling her time in terms of like scheduling out her day and her week? But it really comes down to a shift in mindset where you can have a lot of activity going on in your job and a lot of activity going on in your personal life, but that doesn't mean you have to believe that you're overwhelmed and that you're busy and that there's not enough time.

So I heard you saying something like I felt like I always had time. What was the mindset shift around time for you that really gave you the feeling of abundance of time?

Amy: Yes. You and I had done an activity one session when I was just feeling so overwhelmed. Like there's not a time. There's not enough time. I don't have any time. Where we just listed out everything I had to do and prioritized and scheduled it in. After looking at that list, it was like oh my goodness. You know what? I do actually have time.

That's one thing, even like as I've learned more this year about time management, I feel like I'm able to help empower my teachers with that too. Because that's something I see throughout my building with teachers also that they get overwhelmed. I don't have enough time. I don't have enough time.

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I've even become more conscious at home if I'm scrolling through social media. Like I'm making the conscious choice to spend my time on social media. I'm also going to make the conscious choice to not stay on social media all the time so that I can get to more important things that I want to spend my time doing.

So it's really been a mindset shift of do I have a lot of work to do? Yes. Do I have time to fit it all in? Yes. Then just prioritizing that when I leave at the end of the day, the most important stuff has gotten done. It's kind of like the dishes. If you don't get them all done that night, it'll still wait for you the next morning.

Angela: Oh, it's there. Trust us.

Amy: So it's there. So just yeah, getting those things prioritized. I think you even talked about it on one of your recent podcasts too. Like planning out what's the most important thing for this day? What's the priority? Getting to that as soon as you can in the morning so that you have other time for things throughout the rest of your day as well?

Angela: Right. Right. One thing I know we've talked about throughout the course of the year is that when you over schedule yourself, you're just disappointed that you didn't get everything done versus the reality of the job is people are going to come in. They're going to ask questions. You're going to get caught up in conversations walking down the hall. You will have interruptions. You're going to have student issues or a parent who needs to have a conversation with you. Those things are the job.

If we just embrace that part of our job then we know...What I love about what you said too is one, if it doesn't get done today, it will be there tomorrow, right? The dishes don't get done today. They're there tomorrow.

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Here's the thing. There are things that need to get done whether we do them today or tomorrow.

Sometimes we leave the dishes, and we come downstairs and somebody else did them. The job got done, and you didn't have to be the one to do it. It got done by somebody else. Or they're paper plates. You didn't need to do the dishes. There are so many things we think we need to get done in education or as a school leader that when we go through the prioritization process, we see that the bottom of the list didn't really need to get done. We just thought it needed to get done.

Amy: Yes. One thing also that's helped me with scheduling too that you taught me was set a timer. So if I'm working on the school newsletter, I'm gonna give myself this amount of time.

Angela: Yep.

Amy: It has to be done in this amount of time. Oh my goodness, that works.

Angela: It really does.

Amy: So that's been a lifesaver too because in the past, I'll type up an email, and then I'll reread it seven times to make sure that there's no typos or everything is like perfectly well said. So yes. Especially with teacher evaluations even.

Angela: Yes.

Amy: Setting that timer. I have this certain amount of time a lot has really saved me a lot of time too.

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Angela: Yes, teacher observations have been a huge topic of conversation in my coaching sessions, especially with my assistant principals. It sounds like a job that a lot of APs are required to do. They require some time and effort. But when you can get them down to like a science in terms of like I'm going to give myself 30 minutes per section or per observation depending on how long your evaluation documents are.

Like playing that little game with yourself and just for fun, like let me see if I can get it done in 25 minutes versus 30. You kind of play this game. All of a sudden, your brain is activated into believing that they don't take as much time as you were giving them before, and that you're skilled at doing the job. So you can just kind of get those things done in much less time than when you first started. Yeah.

Amy: Right. Yeah. Yeah.

Angela: Yeah, I feel like if I could just hand over the gift of time management to a new school leader, that would just be like the golden goose egg, right. Like the golden gift of the of the school year because it does really—it's not just about your time. It's about all your resources.

Your energetic resource, like your energy, how you use your material resources because you're making the decisions clearly and quickly about how to use your human resources, how to use your material resources, your funding resources, and then that frees up your mind for your brain to be able to solve problems faster. So I just love the time management piece because it really impacts all the other resources that you have available to you as a school leader.

Amy: Yeah and working through that stuff at the beginning of the school year I feel like really helped set me up for success throughout the school year.

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Angela: Good. That's good.

Amy: The timing of that was really good.

Angela: We did do a lot in the beginning. I remember that. Then once we got it down, we didn't—The end of the year, it kind of came up again, right? You didn't know what to expect. You can't know what you don't know in the first year. But we did. We worked through the overwhelm. Part of that overwhelm is a little more emotional and mental fatigue, just like decision fatigue, mental fatigue. Some of that just happens and it's okay.

I think like in one of our last sessions we talked about like it's just okay to be human. Right? I even used that on social media for people because I think we think we're supposed to be immortal. We're supposed to not ever let our guard down and not ever stop going. Sometimes we just need that break. So did you take the break by the way? Did you go home and take the break?

Amy: I did take a break.

Angela: Good.

Amy: I get home before my family, and it was so nice to just, yeah. In fact, it was a sunny day at home. I went out on our back patio and just sat out there in peace and quiet. It was amazing.

Angela: Good. Oh, I'm so glad you did that.

Amy: Yeah, yeah.

Angela: Okay. I want to shift gears and talk about, we've had many sessions where we've coached on working with other people. Right?

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Amy: Yes.

Angela: I think like once you get time management down, the next thing that's going to come up is the human management, right? Managing the people that we work with and managing ourselves through the process of working with other people.

So let's think back to some of those moments. I always say to people like this is the business we are in the business of people. Like education is the business of people. So what have you learned about working with other people and mentoring, guiding, coaching, leading? Like there's different hats that we wear in this position. So what are your thoughts on working with others?

Amy: Yeah, so I am very passionate just about leadership as a whole. I love leadership. I love building relationships with people, little people to big people, all of them.

Angela: Yeah.

Amy: Since I have been in the classroom for 17 years, I felt and I still feel very comfortable talking with students, working with students, looking at what's best for students, and even talking with parents. One area, and Angela and I coached on this a lot this year, was having those conversations with adults, like staff members in my building, that were first time conversations for me that I had never had before as a teacher or as an assistant principal.

Conversations that a principal would have, whether it's with wanting staff members to switch grade levels, or really looking into some data. Having data meetings, and maybe looking at data that really doesn't look the greatest, and how best to talk with teachers about that so we don't get into

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like a fight or flight mode but can really just have a good conversation and move forward.

So I mean I feel like that's probably been one of my biggest areas of growth this year because I was leading conversations with staff members that I had never had before. But I also knew that those conversations were going to be essential for my building that they were managed in the best way possible to have the best possible outcome that we could.

Angela: Yes. Here's the key to what we worked on. Whenever you have to approach a conversation, especially like an adult conversation, what happens is we have an emotional reaction to our thoughts around that conversation. We get caught up in like how we're thinking and feeling or whether we're frustrated about a situation or whether we're nervous about a situation or we're anxious.

We have our own set of thoughts and emotions and opinions about just the feeling of having that conversation, first of all, but then we're thinking about how the conversation is going to go and how the other person is going to respond and how they're going to be thinking and feeling in the middle of this conversation. We kind of get scared about what am I going to do if this happens or if that happens.

So what's fun about the coaching is we get to work through all of that ahead of time, right? We get to process how we're thinking and feeling about the conversation. I call it predetermining that outcome. What outcome are we looking for? Then, and actually, Amy helped me develop this thought. Like as I was coaching her, it occurred to me.

There is a part of this process where we've got to set aside our thoughts and feelings, our STEAR cycle basically, we've got to set that aside for a moment and take a little peek over at what the other person's STEAR cycle

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might be. Now, definitely it's speculation. But what it helps us do is it helps us kind of construct how we want to approach them from their perspective, right?

In terms of, I remember you talking with a teacher about maybe possibly a different assignment for next year and being worried about what that person might think or feel. In the end, we looked at well what if that is exactly what this person is looking for? How would you approach it if they were eager and excited to hear you offering this? That's how it kind of ended up rolling out.

I just think that was such a magical moment for you to be able to shift your thoughts and like being afraid of the conversation to being like oh what if this is exactly the conversation they want to be having with me? It relaxes you enough to have the conversation openly and honestly. I think the other fun thing about coaching is we were able to problem solve like okay, if a person does get emotional, how will we handle this? We kind of problem solved for that ahead of time. So like it's in your back pocket. Like if somebody does go off the rails, what are you going to do, right?

Amy: Exactly, yes. Looking at other staff members, like what their STEAR cycle might be, that was huge. I mean that's been a huge game changer for me, just looking through that and processing through it. Then also, after the conversation has been had, being able to kind of talk through that with you to look at like okay what went well? What didn't go well? What's maybe something like next time if I have that conversation again, what would be something good for me to do differently?

I feel like reflection is so key for all educators. But it's something that we don't take enough time on our own to like—Just really like I need to take 10 minutes and reflect on my day. But having that weekly scheduled time with you where I could take like a situation or a conversation that had happened

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and just process through that with you after it had happened to see what went well and what didn't, I just think that was so valuable for me as a leader as well.

Angela: Oh, good. I'm glad to hear you say that because I tried to front load principals like on the front end. Like let's plan this out ahead of time so that you're going in with clean energy and kind of we try to neutralize any like emotions that we have going into the conversation. But I really appreciate you saying like the time that we took to look at the after, like the result of that situation and what worked, take that with us, and then what are we going to adjust for next time?

You're right. I do think we're so busy like being in motion as a school leader, like making decisions being, physically being active and running from one to the next and being on campus, that we have to slow our bodies down enough to slow our brain down enough to be able to really stop and say what is working here? What am I learning? So I love that you said that. That is really an important part.

Amy: Also back to the emotion piece. I can think about one of my first conversations I had with a staff member. Boy, I bet it was August, probably. That I was going to make a schedule change. I had talked with Angela about it. Oh my goodness, that was like the best thing I ever did. Because I knew that the staff member probably was not going to be super receptive to the change. There's probably a good chance.

But what Angela helped me do was look at it like from a mathematical perspective, and like what are the facts? How can we take the emotion out of this so that we're just presenting the facts and the timepiece? It had to do with like a scheduling time issue. I would have never thought of approaching it the way that you had told me to Angela, but that conversation, I just remember, went so well. I think it was because I was

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able to come into it with clear thoughts and just able to present facts. That conversation just ended up going so well.

Angela: Oh, that is so fun. It's so beautiful to hear how—This is one thing I really want to highlight about Amy. Like I can offer coaching to a school leader all day long. Like I can give you the tools, the strategies, I can help you see your mind, but you have to like take that and then go apply the work.

Something about Amy that just really impresses me is we have 30 minute calls once a week. So it's not an extensive amount of time. It's 30 minutes. But in that 30 minutes, we cover so much content. Like she'll bring a problem, we solve it. She'll bring a problem, we solve it. Then she goes and she applies what we've talked about and then comes back the next week. She's like oh this worked. Here's what I learned. Even though this one was a little shaky, this is what I did next. Here's what came out of that.

It's really a testament to taking and applying this work, and honoring your own brilliance, your own knowledge, your own intuition about what needs to happen for your school. Like we don't talk about what I think your school should do. We're busy talking about what you think. That's why I call this the Empowered Principal™ Program because I want you to tap into what you know about your school and what you know about leadership. Just clarify in your own mind that you have all the answers. You have the solutions. You just need somebody to help you process down to what that solution is.

Amy: Yeah. One example I have of that is I had been given advice from a former principal about how she would handle a certain situation. You know, it just did not feel right. Like I don't know. Like I just had that had that feeling in my stomach like I don't know exactly. I've never had that kind of a conversation before, but it just really doesn't feel aligned to me. Then I

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remember talking with you about it. At the end of that coaching conversation, I knew exactly how I wanted to approach this staff member that was aligned with my leadership values.

Angela: Yes.

Amy: So that just felt so good.

Angela: Yes, yeah. Leadership alignment is step one. We have to be aligned to our own values because our values are what drives our vision as a school leader. Those values are also what impacts the way we make decisions and the way we take action and the way we approach everything in our leadership positions. So I love that you said that because—It feels great to be aligned in your leadership position.

There's no one right way to lead a school at all. The only right way is the right way for you, what feels right for you. When you're tethered and grounded in your values, it's easier to have hard conversations or to challenge somebody else's thought or to speak up when you're afraid to or scary. So yeah. Leadership alignment is everything.

So let's talk about challenges. Like I want to just tell you all that Amy had the most challenge free year, but that's not the case. She made it look challenge free. It felt like she was a veteran all the way through, but really like it was your first year, and there was a lot that you didn't know. So in your mind, what comes up for you is what was challenging about being a first-year school leader? How did you overcome those challenges?

Amy: So I can think of different things at different points in the school year. Like beginning of the year, even like late summer months into early in the school year, the challenge at that point was every time I walk in the building it's, "Hey Amy, where do you want this? Hey Amy, what should we do with

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this?" I mean it was like people just assumed I knew everything because I was the principal.

So then I'm struggling with like oh my goodness, these people think I know what I'm doing. I'm new to the corporation. I'm new to running a school and being a head principal. I have no idea what I'm doing. So working through that with Angela was huge for me just to know like how a new principal starts off the year when you don't have all the answers, and that it's okay that you don't have all the answers and kind of you know how to manage that.

Angela: Yes.

AMY: Then as the year started progressing, it was like you kind of got in a groove. But then that's when I felt like okay more of those hard conversations were starting to come up with staff members where I needed to have conversations. Like I said before, that was the first time for me to ever go through those. So that probably overall, I feel like was one of my biggest challenges.

Then end of the year it's brand new for me to do end of the year as a principal. So just looking at how I'm managing all of that and just being able to process it through with you, Angela, has just, I don't know. It's been amazing. It's just been huge for me to be able to do that.

It's so nice to be able to talk with someone every week that has no like emotional ties to anyone in my building or in the community. Because people will give you advice. You can ask lots of people for advice, but chances are like they might have emotional ties or know people you're talking about or whatever. You have to be very careful. So just being able to talk through that with you. Plus, with your background in coaching and in

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school leadership. I feel like just those three things right there has been huge for me.

Angela: Yes. Oh, yes. I agree. I think one of the best aspects of coaching, like for me as a coach, is that I'm completely neutral. I come in with very clean mind because I don't have any opinions about your district, or your superintendents, or your district officials, or, in your case, corporation officials. Like I don't have any information on them.

I just coach you on your mind. So I'm able to see through. This is why I like coaching so great because we all have blind spots. We all have interactions with people, which means we have stories about them and our thoughts and opinions and feelings.

I just can come in and show you that like a mirror. You're like oh, when I see it from this perspective, now I see why I'm thinking of approaching it this way or having this conversation in that way. We can just make an intentional decision about is this the approach that I want, that feels aligned for me, and that's going to ultimately result in the result I'm trying to create?

Amy: Right? Yes. So it was just nice. Even though, like you said, I didn't have anything huge or major, which I'm so thankful for, happen, I did have a lot of things, just a lot of little challenges, that I feel could have led to like anxiety or sleepless nights or just different things like that. But because I was able to talk with you about them every week, I could leave those conversations feeling confident about the direction I wanted to go.

Angela: I am so curious to know what do you think school leadership would have been like. Your experience as a first-year leader, what do you think it would have been like without having a coach?

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Amy: I think that I would have gotten to the end of the year and still said overall, I think that was a success. But I think there would have been quite a few pitfalls along the way with staff members where I had good intentions going into a conversation, but I wasn't like fully aligned or prepared or didn't really have as much clarity on what I should say, how to steer the conversation, how to think about their STEAR cycle, that kind of a thing.

That, in turn, I feel like affects the client it and culture of your building and something that I've worked really, really hard at doing this year. That was one of my goals for me as school leader was just building the culture of my building. So I feel like my first year as a school leader was very successful. I definitely don't think it would have been that same way had I not done coaching.

Angela: I think it would have felt different. I think the emotional roller coaster of the first year, it would have had like higher highs and lower lows, but it would have felt like a little less in control. Like you're on a roller coaster with your hands up and you're like ah. I think what one thing that coaching helps new school leaders with is it helps to like balance out the overwhelm. Then the time management, you'd probably still be writing in your pink planner.

Amy: I would. I would be writing in my pink planner. Yeah. I think also my first year as a school leader would have been much more reactive. Not that there still aren't different things throughout the day that you're reacting to, but I was able to be much more proactive. Even just clearing out my emotions and being confident in decisions that I've that I was making. Even knowing how to manage like decision fatigue. I was just able to manage that so much more than I would have beforehand because I didn't have the tools to do that.

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Angela: Yeah. What worries me about brand new school leaders especially is that you want to do a great job, and you get sucked in. There is so much coming at you that it's very easy to get pulled into overworking and overexerting yourself, which then throws your life off balance. Then you're exhausted, and you're missing things with your own kids, or you're too tired to engage with them at home or something got caught up at work.

So that time management piece, keeping that balance in check, like proactively thinking about your culture and your climate. I call it relational leadership, where you are focusing on having relationships, real relationships with people. Thinking about what's in it for them. How this conversation is a benefit to them in their life in their career. That really can help us stay balanced in these conversations as well. I love that. I love that so much.

Amy: Yeah.

Angela: Yeah. You've had so many wins. I can't even list them all out, but what do you see as your biggest wins? Like what feels like a win for you this year? How are you going to bring that into your future years?

Amy: Yeah. Well, I see, as a whole, my first year of school leadership as a huge win. I know that like statistics show that most principals only last a couple of years. I think it says maybe four years. I'm not exactly sure what it is.

Angela: Yeah. Like by five years, 50% of people leave the profession.

Amy: Yeah, yes.

Angela: It's insane. It's probably higher after COVID I'm assuming.

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Amy: Yeah, I bet so.

Angela: Yeah.

Amy: So I really see the way my first year went as a huge win for me. Specifically, I had three leadership goals for myself that I have hanging on the back of my door in my office. The first one was to develop relationships with students, staff, and community. I feel like I was able to achieve all three of those throughout the year.

My second one was to assess what's going well and what isn't and develop a plan. Really, I feel like I did that too, but I also feel like without you, Angela. Because I can come into a building and figure out what's going well, but then that's where some of those conversations come into play. Like I want to develop a plan, I want to do what's best for my students and staff, but I also want to make sure that I go about it in the best manner possible. So I felt like I achieved that.

Then my last goal for myself was just to build the culture and bring energy, enthusiasm, and excellence. I was able to do that just because of my mindset shifts, I feel like. That I wasn't like an anxious person. I was able to enjoy the ride. Like you said it wasn't like extreme highs and extreme lows. There's always road bumps here or there. But yeah. I felt like those were all wins for me. So overall, it just equated to a really good year.

Angela: That is so great. I have to ask you this. This is kind of sidenote. Just what is your STEAR cycle right now. Like what are the thoughts you have about yourself as a leader? Now that you've have one year under your belt, what do you think about? Like I'm looking at the self-concept evolution here. Like what are your thoughts and feelings as an end of first-year leader?

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Amy: So it has been interesting to think about my thoughts because just in the last month, I would say like I have really noticed that I can truly feel like I'm an empowered leader, and I'm an empowered principal just from all of the experiences that I've gone through my first year. I just truly feel empowered. Like I am good enough. I am good at my job. I have the right supports in place. I'm doing what's best for my students and staff, and it just makes you feel so good when you feel like you're doing those things. Your thoughts play such a critical role in just your daily mannerisms.

Angela: Yes.

Amy: That keeping my thoughts where they need to be has really just been a huge thing. Then it's led to mindset shifts like feeling empowered. Because I growing up, I was always the quiet kid. I would still say I mean, it's not like I'm loud, but I was never one to confront other people. If somebody was bothering me, I would use the strategy of just walking away and ignoring that person and never really like talking through it with them later. Like just let it go. It'll eventually just blow over, and we'll move on.

But as a principal, like you do have to have hard conversations if you want to move things forward. So just being able to do that and feel like they ended up being successful conversations. My goodness. Like it's a really good feeling.

Angela: Yeah, I love it. Because in the beginning of the year, your STEAR cycle was I don't know what I'm doing. They know I don't know what I'm doing. Then we just added the comment—Like at the beginning of the year, the self-concept is I don't know what I'm doing dot, dot, dot, and that's okay. It's okay to be new.

Like I teach school leaders how to be new, how to let themselves be new, how to not know, how to ask a lot of questions, how to have I call it

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kindergarten energy where you're just like I don't know anything. Let me explore and figure this all out and ask all the questions like a little puppy. It's okay to just to be new. For you what's been so crazy in one year's time is you went from I'm new. I don't know what I'm doing. To the end of the year you said wait a minute. I'm the veteran here.

Amy: Yeah.

Angela: I'm the veteran. I know what I'm doing. I know what I'm talking about. I have experience. I need to speak up. Like it was such an incredible shift in one year's time. Not even—Yeah, one year.

Amy: Yeah.

Angela: Almost the exact day. Right.

Amy: I agree. I think that's one thing that really is just so exciting to me. Because I mean you can try to predict where you're going to be after the end of the year, but you really don't ever know. So to be able to look back and just even see personally how much I was able to grow in one year. Yeah, it's exciting.

Angela: It's phenomenal. It is phenomenal. This truly is a celebration of Amy's growth and her progress and her success at school. It's magic. I feel like I've just watched a miracle take place. It's so magical. I just like to say like imagine the trajectory. Like if this was just one year.

This kind of leads me up to I'm curious to know your thoughts about next steps in your future. Because I talk about creating a three-year plan, like the life and leadership legacy plan, but we do that in three months segments, right, where I break it down to a three month plan. So it's very tangible. It's simple. It's easy. It's right there in front of you. So imagine the

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course of your career and the impact you're going to have, the legacy you're creating as a school leader for your future.

So I would love for you to share. What are you thinking about next year? Where you're taking your career, where you're taking your school? What's coming up for you?

Amy: So when you first talked to me about a three month plan, I don't remember what month it was, but I remember thinking oh my goodness. There is no way I can do that. Like I'm just so into the of my day to day. How am I going to do this three month thing? But by the end of our conversation that was like oh my goodness. Yeah, I can see how that works now. That also is another mindset shift. When you're able to look out three months, look at your Google Calendar, get some things on there and then it's almost like a backwards planning.

Angela: Yes.

Amy: It feels amazing. Especially when I think back to last August, that brand new feeling of I embrace like I don't know all the answers, and that's okay. Obviously I still don't, but going into next school year, I do have a better idea of what to expect or just how my school functions or different kind of ways that we want to go. So that's really exciting.

Just even looking with like my PLC leadership team. Looking at what we want to focus on, what our focus might be for next year, and then kind of like backwards planning of how that's going to lay out. We meet once a month with that. Or working with my PLC coach. It has been fun, and even empowering just to start thinking that way, feeling like you have time to think and plan ahead. That excites me. Then just like this morning, my PLC coach and I were having conversations about next year. So it's fun just to kind of get those thoughts moving.

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Angela: Yeah, no.

Amy: The other thing I should tell you too Angela is we had coached I think it was in January. January came, and my brain immediately went to oh my goodness. State testing is just around the corner.

Angela: Yes. That happens after break.

Amy: Oh my goodness, state testing didn't even happen until March was the first round. Then we had some in April and May, but like my brain was already going there. Like how much time is my superintendent going to get me to get my building to where I want to be? I don't want to like shove state testing down my teachers' throats, but like I do want to have conversations. So even with that, Angela, okay my fourth graders?

Angela: Uh-huh.

Amy: We just got the results back. In English language arts they improved 18% from last year.

Angela: Oh my gosh.

Amy: Yes. Angela, I didn't do anything different than what you told me. In the back of my head, I remember thinking like—I even listened to your podcast on it. I remember thinking is that gonna be enough? Like is that really gonna be enough? Do I need to do more, whatnot? But oh my goodness. Like just things like that. It's fun when you can see. You kind of reap the benefits of you go through something, and then you look back like oh my goodness. That was awesome.

Angela: Yes, I mean because that's ultimately what we're going for. But when we're so focused on the test scores, and we're not thinking about like

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the deeper reason, like the deeper impacts of how we create test scores in the first place where we lose focus, right. We spin out.

The other thing is that test scores are always a lagging indicator of our coaching work and our leadership work with our staff. So we don't get to— Like that's incredible that you created that result in one year's time, which tells people listening. Are you guys listening to this? It is possible to raise test scores by 18% in your first-year as a school leader. How do we know it's possible? Amy just proved that it's possible.

Which means your thoughts create results. So when you believe in your teachers and you believe in your students and families and you're working on empowering your teaching community, that is when the magic happens. It's it comes from belief. Test scores are the last indicator of that belief, the belief following all the way through down to the students. But instilling that belief in your teachers and in your kids. That is how test scores move. That's how the dial moves on the test scores. I'm so happy for you. I can't even stand it right now.

Amy: Yeah, I was pretty excited.

Angela: Oh my gosh. That's magic right there. Like I feel like that's just the bow on this podcast. Oh my god. That's so good.

Amy: Yep.

Angela: Oh my gosh. Okay. So before we close, I want to ask you to offer your insights. Like let the listeners know your thought process regarding coaching. Many of them are out there listening to this. Coaching is new. I feel like this is an innovative approach to school leadership. It's different than anything else I see being offered to school leaders because it is so personalized, and it is so direct to your specific needs. But people are not

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sure what to expect. So tell them a little bit about your process around finding coaching and implementing the coaching, all of that.

Amy: Yeah. So when I was an assistant principal is when I first came across your podcast. I can remember. I went back and started at episode one. I was like I'm gonna listen to all these podcasts in a row. I was learning about the STEAR cycle. I loved that. Then you had the Summer of Fun challenge.

For almost a whole month, I didn't participate in it just because of my own thoughts. I thought well, I'm not a head principal. I should not participate in that. But for some reason for the very last challenge I did. I can still remember that moment when you drew my name Angela because I won four weeks of--

Angela: Oh, that's right. I'm gonna do that again this summer.

Amy: I won four free weeks of coaching, and I was so excited. The timing of it could not have been better because we then started that free coaching in August. That would have been right after COVID. Schools were shut down in March, April, May.

Angela: Yeah.

Amy: So we were just going back to school from that in August, and my husband and I had gone to school for the first day. Then we both got quarantined for two weeks.

Angela: Oh, that's right.

Amy: We went out to eat with my parents that night, and then my dad ended up not feeling well that night, tested positive for COVID. My husband

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and I never had any symptoms. That was the first time, obviously, that I'd ever been told you have to stay inside your house for two weeks, even though I felt perfectly fine.

I'm getting all these emails and phone calls and everything from school because we're trying to figure out all these COVID procedures, and I'm not there, but I'm trying to still work from home. Oh my goodness. So I can remember. These would have been my first coaching calls with you. I just remember the feeling when I would get off the phone with you. It's still the same feeling I have now, but it's that feeling of being like in a relaxed, calm state.

I just remember getting off the phone and telling my husband like oh my goodness that was amazing. I never done anything even remotely like that in my life. I just remember saying when I get a principal job, I am coaching with Angela. I don't even know exactly how to put it into words except that I just knew that this was so valuable, that it was something that I needed to do.

Angela: Yeah, that's what I was gonna say. Think about the value that it's provided to you. I think for listeners out there who are interested in coaching, or this sounds really great, but you're scared. It's either the time commitment or the money commitment or you're just afraid you're not sure if coaching is gonna get you the solution you want. What would you say to that? If somebody was asking you about coaching, what your insight be to them?

Amy: So, funny story. W when I used to listen to your podcast, before I had the four free weeks of coaching, I would always think to myself this is totally silly. But I always think my husband is an educator. These people that sign up for coaching, their spouse, he or she must be in the business field and

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make tons of money to allow for an educator to do coaching. That was always my like thought process around that.

My husband and I, once I accepted the principal job, that was really like our biggest holdup was financially. Then he eventually said, "Amy, if you feel like this is really important, I'm going to support you." I knew that it was. It's very true. Even as I've had like mindset shifts with time, I've also had mindset shifts around money.

Angela: Yes.

Amy: It is very true that, in general, we spend money on things that we value, whether it is a new car or whatnot. I guess what I want viewers to know is like I am just a typical, like there's nothing extravagant about me. My husband and I live a very just, to most people, probably just the plain life.

But after those four weeks of coaching, I knew that this was something that I had to have if I wanted to be the most effective school leader that I could be. That this was something that I had to do. The thing about it, Angela, is if I hadn't won those four free weeks of coaching, I probably never would have done it. Because my mindset shift probably would have been well that's not for me. Whether it's financially or whatnot.

But oh my goodness. I guess I would just tell people like you really need to sign up for that year because I feel like it's been life changing for me, not just with education, but with my life as a whole.

The other thing that I think sometimes people might have a hard time with is that coaching isn't always necessarily something that you can measure objectively. Like on a math test, I got an A because I only missed two

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questions. I grew from the fall. One thing in April actually, it was spring break, and I was reading *Lead Like a Pirate*.

Angela: Yep.

Amy: They had an activity in there where you're supposed to analyze your daily schedule. So you were supposed to take three different sizes of sticky notes and look at your calendar and write down all of the tasks you do in a typical week. The tasks that you do that have a high impact on student learning and building a positive culture, you were supposed to put on a large sticky note. Then your medium impact tasks on a medium sticky note. Your ones that had a small impact on student learning on a small note.

So I can remember on spring break, I'm going through Google Calendar and writing down all my daily tasks. I got to our weekly coaching sessions. That, honestly, is when it really like became even more apparent to me because I had never really stopped to think about it in those terms before.

But I wrote it down on my big sticky note because I was like oh my goodness. This has had such a huge impact on me leading my school. I mean just with like my state standardized test scores, but even conversations with staff and meeting my three leadership goals that I talked about.

Angela: You're going to make me cry.

Amy: It's something I will never, ever regret. I wouldn't have jumped in if I hadn't had those four weeks. That's something that I would have always regretted. So I hope that other people don't wait to see if they win free coaching sessions, but that they just believe me that it is life changing, and they just need to jump in and do it.

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Angela: Yeah, yeah. Thank you so much. That is why I do what I do. What I want to say to the listeners out there is number one, the podcast is like coaching session week after week. You're getting the content. Like I create the content from my clients' conversations. I literally bring the coaching to you in the podcast.

Number two, we have the Empowered Principal™ Facebook group. So you can go in there, and I'm going to do Summer of Fun again. You're going to have an opportunity for coaching. The webinars I provide opportunities for coaching. So you can get a flavor of coaching.

But what I want to say, like most people get tripped up about the financial investment. Here's what I want to say to you. This is also a lagging indicator, but it's one of the biggest indicators. That's this. When you invest in your brain, you're going to pay money to invest in coaching for a year, but the return on that investment is that you become a more valuable leader. Right?

You are better able to manage all of your resources, time, finances, material resources, human resources, your energetic, your energy resources, work-life balance. When you do that, you become more valuable as a school leader. When you give value, money is an exchange of value. You become a more valuable principal to your district and to other districts who are looking for highly valuable high impact leaders. So you actually do create more income because you have more value to offer. What I want to say about Amy too, Amy got a mid-year bonus.

Amy: I did.

Angela: Right?

Amy: I did. Yes.

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Angela: I think you got back like half of your investment like in that one bonus.

Amy: I did. Oh actually over half.

Angela: Yeah.

Amy: Yeah.

Angela: So I know it feels scary to invest in yourself because this is new and it's different, but the return on your investment is going to be 10x of your initial investment. Because you can't not become more valuable year after year after year after year with coaching. Right? That's what I think is so magical about this.

Because what you've learned in just your first year, you're going to apply it to that second year, and the compound effect of your leadership legacy is it knows no bounds now.

Amy: Correct. Yes, I totally agree.

Angela: The other thing I want to say in closing, and I know we gotta wrap this up, I can't believe we've been talking for an hour. This is crazy. The last thing I want to say to listeners is that I highly encourage you to bring up these conversations with your school district and ask the question would they be willing to pay for even partial of the coaching? Would they be willing to pay for all of it or a fraction of it? Or would they be willing to pay for the first half and then you can save up for the second half?

Like one, if there's a will, there's a way. Two, I would never let money be the reason that people would decline themselves coaching if it's something they really want. There's always a solution. There's always a way to pay for

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it. Whether you have the personal resources available to you now, or you have access to money or the district. It's not that the district doesn't want to support you. A lot of times they don't either know this is available, or they haven't thought to allocate the money towards this type of coaching.

So I really encourage you. If money really is like the sticking point for you and you desperately want to have a coach, talk to your school district and see what they are willing to offer you. Because if they pay for coaching or a part of it, I consider that a pay raise because it's not coming out of your pocket, right? So play around with this. Like where can you find the money? Where can it come from?

Because the return on investment—Like look yes, I need to like make a living, but the reason I charge for coaching is because of the value that it gives to school leaders. It's the value that it creates in your life personally and professionally. I can't think of—If I had a better solution, I'd offer it, but for me right now this is it. Like I think it's the best solution out there for school leaders to have the life they want and to lead in the way they want to lead.

Amy: Agree. Yeah.

Angela: Amy, I want to thank you for this use of your time and really celebrate you. Like 18% I cannot even stand it right now. Like I'm so excited. Mid-year bonus. First great year. I think the beautiful thing about this is she has designed her experience as a school leader. Like lots of school leaders are like woo, that first year was horrible. Now I'm like learning as I go. But she got to design an experience that she loves, and she'll cherish this first year for the rest of her life.

Amy: I will. Yes.

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Angela: It's magic. It's really magic what you've done, Amy. So congratulations on all fronts.

Amy: Thank you.

Angela: I'm so happy for you. I look forward to continuing working with you and seeing what you're going to accomplish. If you did this in one year, where are we headed in the next three years? I can't even. Like the possibilities are limitless for you. So I look forward to seeing your progress.

Amy: Thanks for having me on the podcast. I was so excited to be here and just talk with you about my first year because you've been with me every step of the way. So.

Angela: It's so fun. It's been my honor. It's been my honor. Thank you so much. So listeners out there. If you are going into school leadership for the first time or maybe you just ended your first year and you want support, please reach out. Join the Facebook group. Amy's in there. So you'll get to meet her upfront and personal.

We are definitely doing—This podcast is going to air in July. So we're right now in the middle of Summer of Fun but get in there and let's have some fun and get planning our three month plan to get that beginning of the school year up and running for you. All right. Have a great week everybody. We'll talk to you next week. Bye.

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