

Ep #273: Hiring in 2023



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 273.

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.

All right my empowered leaders. Happy Tuesday. Welcome to the podcast. I'm gonna do a quick conversation with you about hiring in 2023. So if you're listening to this in real time, it is March of 2023. I have been working with clients from all over the country, having consults, talking to people. One of the topics that's coming up is your stress and fears and doubts and worries and panic about hiring people for the upcoming school year.

So I want to address this in real time. So it's currently the year 2023. We're coming off the pandemic. You have positions to fill. What most principals are thinking is that there's no one out there. There's not enough people available for hire. Of those people, there's not a lot of qualified people. They're not highly qualified. I'm going to have to just hire whoever comes in. I'm going to have to hire subpar staff or subpar teachers. Even the people I'm currently employing, people who are already on your staff, what I'm hearing is that the work ethic isn't the same after the pandemic.

Okay, so there are two approaches to this. I could offer you coaching on these thoughts. Because after all, the thoughts that I just listed, the thoughts that principals are tending to think. That there's nobody out there, they're not qualified, they're not highly qualified, they're not good enough, or that their work ethic, the people you do already have, their work ethic isn't the same meaning it's diminished. Those aren't facts.

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They feel like facts. You have evidence to prove. You might even have some data to prove your thoughts true. You might be able to defend in a court of law that there are less people coming to job fairs. There are less people signing up and applying and interviewing. There are mathematically less people, okay. But we truly don't know the numbers out in the ethers, right? The number of people in the world who are seeking teaching positions or seeking staffing positions within a school district or any position in education that you're trying to fill.

We don't truly know the number of people out there looking for a position in the field of education. We don't really know the hard facts, the actual number of qualified people or trained people. When you think about highly qualified, we're trying to hire highly qualified teachers and staff. That's also an opinion because it means different things to different people. So the truth is that we don't have the exact data.

We can't possibly know how many people on the planet are out there seeking positions and how many people are actually qualified because that definition is determined by you. What you're thinking means highly qualified is different than a different principal. Right?

High school principals have different expectations than elementary principals. Charter schools have different expectations than public schools. Private schools have different recommendations and expectations than other schools right. You can see there's no one definition. There's lots of people on this planet. So we can't possibly know.

So if you do want to coach yourself on thinking differently about the teacher pool, and the people available, if you want to really get into a cycle of success and create intentional beliefs around, there are people out there. I do believe I can get the people that I want. There are people available.

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If you want to go down that route, here's some thoughts that will help you get into this mindset, get into this energy of believing ahead of time and trusting the process and believing your people are out there and attracting the ideal teachers and staff to your school. Okay. So it's a want match is what I call it. It's when you want them and they want you, it's a match. It's an ideal connection and relationship that you're going into as teacher and leader.

So, here are some thoughts. I'm just going to hand them to you, and I'm going to let you do the self-coaching work. The people who are leaving your school, they were meant to leave. If there are people who are like, I'm no longer into this. This isn't what I signed up for. I don't like teaching post pandemic. I want to retire early, or I'm just not into it anymore. For whatever reason they're leaving, or it's just too intense, it's too hard. I can't keep up.

Whatever they're thinking that's creating the result of them leaving, I want you to know this. They're not leaving because of you. They were meant to leave. This is their journey, their career journey. If they're making a decision to go, it was meant to be. That's okay. That is a good thing for you, and a good thing for them, and a good thing for your students and staff. It's a good thing for your school.

Let them go out of love. Be happy for them, and let them go find their next chapter, what they're looking for. Let them go. Don't spin out in frustration and sadness and fear that you're not going to be able to replace them. People do want to work. If you are working, there are other people like you. Okay.

Focus on your best teachers, focus on the people who do want to work. They are working. There are lots of people who want to work and want jobs. They are figuring out how to adjust post COVID. Not everybody wants

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to quit. So you can focus on all the people who don't want to work, or you can think about the people who do.

How might it be true that there are people out there in the world waiting to work for you, waiting to work hard, waiting to work hard for kids, ready to figure it out, ready to try and fail and try again, ready to figure out how to manage parents and how to do classroom management and how to do a really good lesson and differentiate and do small group instruction. There's lots of people out there eager to bite at the job to do this and have this experience as a teacher.

My niece, I can give you an example. If you're a principal, and you live in Iowa, and you specifically live in the Des Moines area. My niece graduated from UNI, and she is an exceptional teacher. People love her. She has a beautiful spirit. There are millions of other teachers out there who can't wait to be in classrooms.

If you are in the Des Moines area, and you're a principal looking for an elementary school teacher, I think she wants to do primary. She's really into the littles, like kinder, first grade maybe. Hire my niece. She's out there. She wants to work for you. She wants to make money. She wants to be a teacher. There are millions of people like her. So Brenna Harclaw, I'm calling you out. I'm getting you a job on this podcast, okay?

But principals, listen to me. There are millions of people like her who want to work, who are just coming out of college. There are people who are moving. So many things happen between March and August. People are coming and going all the time.

People are moving. They're getting relocated. Their spouses are getting relocated. They're having kids and going on break. They're coming back from their maternity leave. They're sending kids off to school or off to

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college, and they now have time. They want to come back. Maybe they were taking a break, and you just have no idea. I want you to try on the thought people who you want to hire are pouring in. They're pouring into that teacher pool. They want to work with you and for you okay.

Now, for those of you whose brain is like meh, meh, and you have been posting positions and have very few applications or no applications at all. Or you've been interviewing over and over again, and you haven't met people who meet your expectations or qualifications or standards. I'm going to circumvent coaching. I'm going to go another route with you.

I'm just going to say I agree with you. Let's just call it true. I'm sure you could offer me lots of evidence to prove that your thoughts are true. So we're gonna go there. Let's just say that it's an actual fact of the universe that there are less people applying for teaching positions. Of those people, they're less qualified. Let's just say that.

Let's also go with the truth or the fact. Let's say that the work ethic of people, in general, is not the same post-pandemic. We're just going to call it a fact. Okay. So what that means if we're like nope, it's absolutely true. It's been true in my experience, and we want to argue that it's true. Let's just drop the arguing and say okay, I agree with you. It is true. If that's true, what that means is, it's the situation we're faced with. It is the circumstance we have been dealt. It's like if you're playing cards and you get dealt a hand, this is the hand we've been dealt with.

If it's true, and it's fact, and we cannot change it, we can't change our thoughts about it because it's a fact. If it's all true, then what? What do we do with this new set of circumstances? How do we think about it? What do we make it mean about them, about us, about our future.

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So I'm working with principals who are extremely frustrated with this new set of circumstances. They want to hire people like themselves who are high caliber. They want to hire high caliber teachers with extraordinary work ethics, people who are willing to put in those hours and go the extra mile just like them. They're frustrated because they're not finding the same caliber as themselves.

What they're telling me is that the teaching pool is dried up, and they're very little teachers available for hire. That of those teachers available, they don't have the skills they're looking for, and they're very frustrated. Oh, my blessed empowered principals out there, I feel you. Okay.

So let's look at the situation. We need to take a look, first of all, at why we're frustrated. We're frustrated because we're not getting what we want. Our brain's throwing a little tantrum, and that's fine. That's what it does. Not a problem. But what's happening is the situation that we've been dealt with, the facts of the circumstance does not align with our own expectations and our desires. That makes us frustrated. There's a dissonance between what the reality is and what we want it to be. Okay.

We're making that mean, when there's a difference between what's happening in reality and what we want to be happening, when there's a rub there, a difference. What we're making it mean is that if we can't get the kind of teachers we want then teaching and learning is going to be negatively impacted. The kids aren't going to get what they need. Then parents are going to be unhappy.

We're not going to be able to move our school forward. We're not going to be able to achieve our academic goals, and then people are going to be upset at us. That's going to mean that we're a failure as a school leader. Right? Do you see where the brain goes? It goes down this spiral of doom and gloom.

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Ultimately, it's about what it means about us. Kids aren't going to get served, teachers aren't going to be great, parents are going to be unhappy, the district is going to be unhappy, the school board is going to be unhappy, the community is going to go up in arms, and then everybody in the world is going to find out that we failed at our job as a school leader, and we are going to be miserable. Okay.

These thoughts will panic us. It will put you into fight or flight when you go down that spiral and that rabbit hole of what could go wrong, and then what and then what and then what, all the worst case scenarios. We dig in deeper and deeper. What we do is we try to solve all of those problems that we think are going to happen.

So if this is the absolute truth, that the caliber and the quality of teachers has, in fact diminished, then what has to happen is that we have to change our approach to match the circumstances we're facing. We have to reconsider what we need to think about and what we need to do in order to meet our goals.

Notice, I did not say we need to change the goals. We're not diminishing the goal. We're not watering it down. We're keeping the same goal. We're just going to adjust the way we approach meeting the goal. So think about the people you are able to hire and the people you do have available to you. They are a human resource that helps you achieve your professional goals, the academic goals you have set for your school, the cultural goals you have set for your school, the social and emotional learning goals you've set for your school.

Okay, all of the goals you've set, the things you want to accomplish professionally, you leverage the human resources you have available. So instead of thinking about what skills they don't have and how they're not of high caliber, what are they bringing to the table? If somebody's coming in

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and they don't have a teaching degree, but they have a four year degree and your state is allowing you to hire them, what are they bringing to the table? What strengths do they have? How is their skill set different in a good way? How might they be exactly what you need?

What if the demands in our schools require a different caliber of teachers? Require the new people coming in? What if that's exactly what we need? Then what? What if it's just about us recalibrating our expectations and what we defined as high caliber teaching? We might have to approach this in a different way. We might have to change our approach in the way that we market our school and advertise our positions and recruit for our school.

We might have to offer incentives for teachers and sell them on why working at our school is a really good decision for them. This isn't a one way street. It's not just about us collecting the best teachers, putting them in classrooms. This is a two way street. What's in it for them? Why should they want to work for your school? Why are you a good leader for them? It's not just about them selling you on them. It's about what you have to offer to the teacher. Okay.

The tides have turned. It's kind of like when buying and selling houses. Sometimes it's a seller's market. Sometimes it's a buyer's market. You want this to be both. What's in it for them and what's in it for you. You're going to have to change the way you think about recruitment and advertising and hiring and onboarding. You might have to change the questions that you ask the way that you interview, the entire interview process might have to be revised.

You might have to adjust how you onboard or how you train your teachers and staff when they're incoming. You might have to slow some things down. You might have to provide more training, more professional development, slow it down, change the expectations. We might have to provide them the

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skills that we think that they need in order to meet our standards and our expectations and to help us achieve those goals. We need to sell that person on why working hard to meet those goals doesn't just help us solve our goals and meet our goals but how it benefits them.

Why should teachers hustle and work really hard for your goals? What's in it for them? How does it help them achieve their goals? Every human on the planet is most motivated by what's in it for them. That's not being selfish. That's how our brain is wired. We're highly motivated when we understand the value of what we're doing and why we're doing it. Okay, what makes life better or easier or more enjoyable for that teacher?

Teachers have been working their tails off, you guys, for decades. Maybe the pandemic has given them a realization that all of that effort isn't quite creating the result they want. So maybe what they're thinking is I can put 10% less effort in, get some more rest and relaxation and enjoy my life a little bit more, and still get just about the same results. Think about that.

They want to maintain their energy and be able to teach and have a life outside of teaching, and they still want to get results. They're feeling the way you're feeling you guys have been burning the candle at both ends. So have they. We're on the same team. We've been approaching this in the same way. Maybe all of this is happening so that we adjust and we recalibrate what we are wanting, needing, and it might even be time to look at the goals.

Maybe the goal isn't exactly what it needs to be now. Maybe the goal is about how we sustain teachers and students, not about how hard we push them and how intense we can be and how fast we can achieve. Maybe it's about sustainability. Lifelong learning needs to be sustainable, or we will not keep up. You might not agree. You might think that teachers should be of high caliber and high intensity.

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That might be the way you design your school. That might be the culture of your school, and you will attract people who love to burn the candle at both ends, who love to work around the clock nonstop really, really hard, and they thrive on that. It's not a problem. But if you're losing teachers, if people don't want to come to your school, if they're transferring out or they're leaving your district, and you're having a hard time keeping them for the long term, that might be something worth exploring.

You want to gain your teacher's perspective. When we believe that a teacher's work ethic isn't the same as it was, meaning they're not working as many hours or they're not putting in as much effort, or they seem to care less about their work in general, what we're doing is judging them. We're making assumptions. Those judgments are founded in assumption. We assume they don't care. We assume they're not working as hard.

When we have these kinds of thoughts about our teachers, we try to solve for that problem. We try to figure out how to make them care more, or how to make them be more willing to work hard. When instead we're solving for a problem that has been assumed that may not even be true. We may be solving the wrong problem.

How do we actually know that teachers are less willing or care less about themselves, their work, their students? What evidence are you using to prove that to yourself? You might have some hard data, maybe not. I don't know. Is it because they're not staying as late or coming in as early? Is it because they're turning in things late or not getting things done?

Is it because they missed a meeting? Think about this. Is it just what they're saying? Is it how their body language, the nonverbal cues? What evidence are you collecting in your mind that is confirming for you your belief that their work ethic has diminished? It's just something to explore. Okay.

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An even more valuable question is why? Why might they be less willing or care less about what's going on? Let's say you have concrete evidence. Let's say a teacher walked right up to you into your office and told you directly that she is less willing to work long hours, or that she cares less about, I don't know, teaching or the district's initiatives. I can't imagine a teacher doing this, but I'm sure they're out there saying it behind your back. So let's pretend that they actually told you to your face. Okay.

The first thing I would wonder is this is fascinating to me. I would be fascinated to wonder why. Why does this teacher think and feel this way? What about their job has shifted for them? What about their self-concept has shifted? Do they still enjoy teaching? Or would they be more happy pursuing something different? What do they think the problem is? What do they think the solution is? What do they think would make their job more engaging and more enjoyable? It's curious, right?

You want to be fascinated by people's actions and behaviors and decisions. Because what's driving those actions and behaviors and decisions are their thoughts and feelings. When the thoughts and feelings shift, the behavior shifts, okay? So when we observe a teacher putting in contract only hours, or giving nonverbal cues during a meeting that we interpret as not caring or less willing or being resistant, there's always a reason behind those behaviors.

So instead of feeling like you have no control or have no agency or you're kind of a victim to their actions, you can get curious about them. Understanding what teachers are thinking, is how we know what motivates them and inspires them that informs our leadership style, and it informs our approach.

We don't know how to lead teachers until we understand them. Understanding them means understanding how they're thinking, how

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they're feeling, what decisions they're making, the decision process that they use. Consider approaching your current teachers with some curiosity versus judgment and see what you learn. Find out what happens.

For those of you out there who are in the midst of hiring, I feel you, I hear you. I have a lot of information in the Empowered Principal™ program about attracting and hiring your ideal teachers, creating a staff that's empowered and resourceful and positive. It's all in here inside the Empowered Principal™ program. All you have to do is say yes, and come and get it. I'm here for you. Let's go. Talk to you guys next week. Take good care, and good luck with that hiring. Bye.

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