

Ep #276: How to End the School Year Smoothly



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 276.

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. Happy April. I hope things are going splendidly for you. Today we're going to talk about the end of the school year. You guys, the end of the school year is coming like a bullet train. Here it is around the second week of April. Some of you go through the end of June. Others of you only have maybe a month left. I want to offer this right now right here because I want to give you the most smooth ending of the year as possible.

So if it's the middle of April, lots of you have just finished testing or you're in the middle of testing. You're also super stressed out. You're tired. You're fatigued from the year. There's testing going on, staffing to be dealt with, hiring, letting people go, planning for next year, doing master calendars. If you have construction at your school site and you have to move people around and teachers are moving classrooms, that's a whole nother layer. I feel for you. I've been through that three times in my career.

There's also all of the end of school year events. It just feels like there's a little added layer between testing and the end of the school year. So let's talk about it. If your brain is like my brain, I know what happens. The very last thing your brain is going to want to do is slow down enough to map out the details of the end of the year, but I'm here to tell you why this happens.

I want to sell your brain really hard on why slowing down and mapping out the end of your school year is the best thing you can do not just for yourself but for your teachers and your students and your parents, okay? You

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slowing down and taking time to map out, not just throwing the events onto the calendar, but to map out the details of them, to slow yourself down, to not be rushing, and to give yourself a nice block of time to really map out the details of the end of the school year.

It's not just so that you can feel calm and prepared. It's so that you can communicate effectively with your teachers so they know exactly what is going on and when and who's doing what. Everything's in place. Everyone can calm down. Then teachers can communicate that to students, and you can communicate that out to your school community.

This, I call it the June plan. You can call it the three month plan. If you guys are my clients and you have access to the three month plan, all of those resources, you can use your three month plan. For those of you who are not yet clients and you want to be clients, come on in. I'm taking whoever I can until my schedule is full.

This is called the June plan. The title of this podcast is How to End the Year Smoothly because I want you to slide into summer rested and ready for your vacation. I don't want you so stressed out that you get sick or you feel depleted and you don't have energy in time for yourself and your friends and family. You need to be fully loaded with energy ready to go for summer, all right?

Don't forget. If you're on Facebook, be sure to join the Facebook Empowered Principal™ group because we're going to do Summer of Fun year three. Let's go.

So, I have to say this. From time to time, I pop into other school leadership Facebook groups on social media just to check in on principals who aren't in my group, and I want to see how y'all are doing. So if you're not in my Facebook group, come on in because I'm checking on you and your wellbeing and making sure you're taken care of.

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When I go into these other groups, people are sharing. It's so painful. It's painful for me to see you all suffering so much. Mostly because I can fully relate to it. I was there. I have been in your shoes so many times. I will tell you. When I was in it, just like you're in it, I couldn't see around it. I couldn't get my brain on a different track. I couldn't get my emotions on track to a different way of feeling and thinking. I just couldn't do it because I couldn't see around it. So I hear you. I see and I hear the exhaustion and the discouragement through people's posts. You can just feel it. It's visceral.

I go into those groups, and I do my best to offer support and coaching, but I know that the truth for the suffering to really end is that it requires a true shift in the way that you're thinking because your thoughts generate your feelings, and your feelings impact how you show up and what you think about yourself, what you think about other people, what you think about your capacity to lead, and the impact that you're making.

Lots of people right now at this point in the year are feeling like I didn't do enough. I should have done more. We failed. We didn't get this done. We didn't get that done. I'm going to talk a little bit more about forgiving yourself in a future podcast. Right now you're in it, and you're not going to want to forgive yourself. So we're going to talk about that in May, but I want to offer this.

Shifting to more empowering thoughts, it doesn't happen overnight for most people most of the time. Now, it can happen. It can happen. You might listen to this 20 minute podcast and have a profound transformation in your brain. If that happens, please let me know and I will celebrate you on this podcast. It can happen. It's happened for me. When you do have that experience, it is the most relieving experience imaginable.

I've had shifts in my thoughts that have occurred very quickly where I got on a coaching call with my coach, and within 20 minutes it was like oh, totally gone. All the pain points that I brought to the call or the problem that

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I was trying to solve. The problem melted away. Either I saw it wasn't even a problem, or the solution was just so obvious. I've had those moments. They can occur really quickly. Many of my clients get those transformations super quickly.

Other times, it requires a little more time and a little more, I call it wiggling. I think about like you have a loose tooth, and you want that tooth to come out. It's kind of painful at first and you don't want to wiggle at first, but we gently, gently work it. Eventually the tooth wiggles and it gets really loose, and all of a sudden it just slides out like it was no problem.

So sometimes your thoughts require a little more wiggling, right? I like to share the moment I had a massive transformation with a member of my family. So it felt, in the moment when it happened, I can literally remember where I was. I can remember what we were talking about, and I remember it absolutely leaving my body. It felt like it happened in a second.

The truth is that it did in some ways, but this particular thing I'm thinking of, there were shifts in my thoughts where I felt the fear or the pain or the defeat melt away. But what really happened was that it was a culmination of over a year of coaching on the topic where I had been in just extreme duress over a relationship with one of my family members, and I was having such a hard time letting it go.

My brain did not want to forgive and move on. It did not want peace. It wanted to keep the conflict. It wanted to be the victim of this person. It wanted that person to be the villain in my story. My story about this person, it couldn't let go, but there was a moment where my coach was able to coach me in just the right way where that story completely dissolved.

I was washed completely free of the story, and it felt so much peace and so much calm. But the other thing that happened was happiness. When I stopped thinking about that story in that way and I let it go, I literally slid into

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happiness because I realized I didn't need that story to be safe anymore. I didn't need that story to protect me anymore. I was free. I was independent. I was safe, and I was happy. I didn't need to protect myself. It was just the most magical thing.

She so skillfully coached me through the emotions that I needed to process and helped me see that I could drop that story and be completely at peace and forgive this person for being human and doing what they did. I could forgive myself for holding onto this story for so long. But what really happened was the culmination of a full year of coaching.

I share that story with you just to tell you the truth. There are moments when transformation happens in an instant. In a 10 minute session, 20 minute session, 30 minute session. I currently offer 30 minute sessions every single week for school leaders.

So some of those sessions were fast and furious. We get through two or three topics at a time. Other times other topics require multiple sessions week after week. My clients will come to me and say, "Why am I still coaching on this? It's been a month. I thought it was gone and it came back." The truth is that sometimes our brain isn't ready to let go, and that's okay.

So if your brain is holding on to thoughts about time and being super busy and feeling overwhelmed and feeling overloaded and feeling like you don't have control over your time and other people's priorities, you have to get to all of them. You need to be the solution master and the problem solver and be there for everybody, and you don't feel in control of your time. You feel almost a victim to the job and a victim to a lack of time management, I want you to know it's okay.

So today I'm going to talk about how to manage the end of the school year and allow it to be smooth because you can let it be smooth. You can just

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decide and get to work to making it smooth by believing it's going to be smooth and doing the work necessary to make it smooth. If you feel resistance, that's okay too. I'm going to do my best to sell you on this podcast to see if you can produce a better, faster result over the next four to six to eight weeks depending on how long the rest of your school year is, okay?

So I just want to say that because I just want to honor the fact that your brain might be resistant to what I have to say today. That's okay. If it is, let it be resistant. Just explore why. Then ask yourself but what if I weren't resistant? What if this were this easy? What if it were this simple? What if I did try this? Just try it on and see. Okay, here we go.

So here's what's currently happening. I'm going to sell your brain on why what you're doing now isn't working for it. It's not bringing you the result you want. So what currently happens, for most of us, is that we kind of have an outline. We know all of the things that go on at the end of the school year from April until June. We have an idea. So we put those major events on the calendar.

Maybe you are so awesome at calendaring. Maybe you put them on at the beginning of the year. Maybe you already had it mapped out. That's amazing if you did, by the way. Kudos to you. For most of us, we're kind of chugging along maybe a month at a time, two months at a time. My goal for my clients is the three month plan where we do 90 day chunks. So if you put the major events on the calendar, A plus, plus. Gold star, okay.

Then usually what we do is we make a little to do list for each of those events. You're like okay. There's the eighth grade promotion ceremony. We've got to make sure we get the multipurpose room reserved and ready. The chair's got to be up. The invitations have to go out. The certificates have to be printed. We need to get the cake. Those kinds of things. Like we have a to-do list.

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Then we kind of do those things as we think of them or as they come up, but the to-do list tends to be a little more like as it comes into our awareness or as time starts to get a little tight, right? We think about that to-do list and we do the actual tasks when we have time for them, when we think we have time to slip them in, okay?

What happens, as you know, interruptions come up, emergencies arise. Sometimes those to-do lists, they kind of slip. We forget about them or we do them last minute or they just don't get done. What we end up doing is we try to keep the to-do list open in the back of our mind, and that is where we're always in a state of alertness.

We feel like we have to be on 24/7. The brain can't shut down at night and on the weekends, when you go to sleep at night. Your brain is still running that to-do list over and over and over because it doesn't want to forget anything. It doesn't want anything to slip. If that's where your to-do list resides, if that's the space where it has to live, your brain can never turn off. If it can't turn off, that's where stress goes up, anxiety goes up, and also exhaustion and fatigue, okay?

What we do is we hold all of this information in our brain until the end of the year. We tick things off. That's why the end as we get closer, it feels a little bit better. Because testing gets done. Then oh, then hiring gets done. Then all of the movements and placements and staffing gets done. Whoo. Then we, oh gosh, the master calendar. Oh, okay. Then we just keep checking the boxes hopefully that eventually we're going to feel better only to find out that at the end of the year, you have another set of to-do lists.

That's why we feel perpetually on, perpetually stressed out, and we feel like we're never ahead and that there's always something to do. Okay? That's the approach most of us take. It's because that's what we've been taught to do.

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Here's why it doesn't work. I think at an intellectual level, we all know that this approach, it doesn't work as well as we want it to. How do we know? By the way that we feel. We don't feel calm. We don't feel prepared. We don't feel ahead. We feel behind. We feel stressed. We feel overwhelmed. We feel defeated.

If you're not feeling ahead, prepared, energetic, on top of things. If you're not feeling in that arena, that tells me that your approach could use a little tweaking if you want it to, if you want to feel that. But why this doesn't work is we don't think we have the time to slow down and plan because we're so busy. So it's very counterintuitive. We also don't believe that we can manage or reduce interruptions.

So we're afraid that if we put a block of time on the calendar to plan that it's going to be interrupted with behaviors or interrupted with teachers or interrupted for a meeting. We have all these reasons why we don't put planning time on the calendar because we're afraid we can't control the interruptions. I beg to differ. I teach my principals how to manage emotions and reduce them, okay.

We also stay in reaction mode. Why? It actually feels really good to the brain. When we walk in without a plan and we're just firing off left and right fix this, whack a mole that, and we stay in reaction mode, it can feel very productive in the moment. Our brain loves the dopamine hit and the adrenaline rush that we get when we're in reaction mode all the time, okay?

The problem with that is that things tend to get overlooked. We tend to focus on what's urgent rather than what's important. You guys know the four quadrants, right? That sometimes the nonimportant but urgent gets attended to more often and with more effort and energy and attention than do the high importance but low energy, right?

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So things get overlooked. We end up reacting. What we find out is that because we didn't plan or because we didn't anticipate any obstacles, I call it pitfall planning. If you don't anticipate what could go wrong and plan ahead for that.

Like rain. Let's say you're going to do eighth grade promotion outside. Well, if you live here in California, you're planning for rain this year, I'll tell you that. But most years we don't, let's be real. We just expect it to be nice out. We might have a backup plan, but a lot of us don't because we've been in an eight year drought. It's been sunny 24/7 for the last eight years. So if you don't have a backup plan, you might find yourself extremely stressed and hustling when skies are cloudy and drizzly on the day of your outdoor promotion, you see what I'm saying? Okay.

What this leads to is tons of stress, tons of overworking. The worst part is that it actually costs you time. It costs you time. It costs you your mental energy, your emotional energy. It costs you your wellbeing, your piece of mind. You get stuck in the overwhelm cycle. So we know we can tweak and adjust our approach to make it faster and better and to save us time. So why don't we? Why isn't our brain fully sold on doing this work?

Here's the truth. We don't like to do it. I don't like to do it. I don't like to do my own three month plan. It's boring. It's tedious. It requires my brain to grind. It requires it some blood, sweat, and tears. It doesn't want to do it. My brain throws a tantrum because it's boring, and I don't like boring. I don't like tedious because you have to get in the weeds, and that's gross to me. I'm a big picture thinker.

It's also really hard when we are people pleasers because we believe that other people's demands or needs or emergencies are our own. We value them, and we take care of them above planning out our own work to be done. Okay?

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So we like to please. We don't like to plan. Having to say no to people in order to protect that sacred planning time is really uncomfortable. Because we're like well, it's just planning time. I could go help out in this fifth grade classroom, or I could support this student, or I could meet with this teacher right now. It's not that big of a deal. We dismiss ourselves, and we dismiss our time.

If there's anything I can sell you on, it's the value of your time. I would rather teach you how to make more money so that you could put your money into creating more time for yourself. If there's anything I could do, it's I teach people how to leverage their resources. Time is the one resource you've got that you can't get back. You can create more money. You can create more energy, but you cannot create more time. So if there's one resource you want to protect with all your might, it is time, okay?

But it's hard to do it because it's uncomfortable. It requires things like being bored and being tedious. To be fair, we just haven't been conditioned to value planning time as much as we value time in action, time in productivity, and time helping other people. Okay?

Here's the truth. Scheduling time to map out the details of the last six to eight to 12 weeks of your school year saves you time. If you feel like you don't have time, do this, and you will have the time. Get it out of your head. Get that to-do list out of your head and onto your calendar. Not just paper, calendar. Because when you do this, you are assigning a time, a date, and a duration to your to-do list.

So your brain's like oh, I don't have to hold all of this open 24/7. My brain doesn't have to be on all of the time because the calendar is now the placeholder. It avoids last minute rushing, missing things. It allows you to delegate more often because you've planned ahead. You know what you want. So you can teach somebody how to run with the tasks, and you don't

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have to do them all. Then you have less hiccups and problems last minute because you've anticipated them ahead of time.

I also love to sell you on the value that you become. Who you become as a leader is more valuable. You are the asset. Your time is the asset. Your brain is the asset. We've got to protect the asset, right? When you effectively manage your time, you as a school leader, the human that you are, you become more valuable. How is that possible? When you manage your time, you manage your priorities and you manage your deadlines. They get met. Priorities get met, deadlines get met.

You anticipate problems ahead of time and solve them before they're problems. Decisions are made. Time is not wasted in indecision, in procrastination, in avoiding, in resisting. You just make decisions and move forward. Communication is planned out. Because you've planned, your communication is concise, articulate, simple, and on time. You get more done in less time because you know exactly what needs to be done and who else can take things off your plate. You just avoid last minute problems and expenses. It's the best thing ever.

So here. I'm going to just tell you the June plan. Write out all the events, name the events, and then I want you to name the purpose of the events and the benefit of that event. Why are you doing what you're doing? There's a ton of activity at the end of the year. First of all, do you need to be doing it all, yes or no, and why? Why are you deciding this or not? What's the benefit or value add to you, the school, the students, the staff? Who's responsible, and what can you delegate?

But you have to go back and start here. Do you even want to do this event? Are the outcomes worth the effort? Why or why not? Is this event necessary? Do you have to do it, or is there another way to create this same outcome with less events or less effort? Think about that. We just start doing things and all of a sudden they become tradition, and we're

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doing 200 different end of the school year events. We're exhausted, and we can't figure out why. It's because we haven't assessed the value of the event.

So think about it. What events are you holding? Are they worth the time and effort and energy and resources that we're putting into them, yes or no? What are the problems with this event? If you didn't have to do it, would you do it? That's a great question. Potential solutions to those problems, and then what's the simplest, easiest, B minus way to hold this event. It doesn't have to be perfect.

If you take the time to evaluate your events and decide which ones are essential and which ones are non-essential, be willing to do the uncomfortable thing and cancel things that aren't essential or don't add value, you're going to find yourself having a lovely, peaceful, calm end of the school year. You're going to feel so ahead of the game. It's going to feel amazing.

I hope this has been super helpful. Let me know how it goes. Join the Facebook group. Tell us everything. If you're ready to start coaching for next year and get your three month plan in place, let's go. Sign up for your consult call, and we'll get started as soon as you say yes. I love you guys. Talk to you next week. Take good care. Bye, bye.

If this podcast resonates with you, you have to sign up for the Empowered Principal™ coaching program. It's my exclusive one to one coaching and mentorship program for school leaders who believe in possibility. This program is designed for principals who are hungry for the fastest transformation in the industry. If you want to create the best connections, impact, and legacy for yourself and your school, the Empowered Principal™ program was designed for you. Join me at angelakellycoaching.com/work-with-me to learn more. I'd love to support you in becoming an empowered school leader.

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