

Ep #292: Embracing and Announcing Change



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 292.

Welcome to *The Empowered Principal® Podcast*, a not so typical educational resource that will teach you how to gain control of your career and get emotionally fit to lead your school and your life with joy by refining your most powerful tool, your mind. Here's your host certified life coach Angela Kelly Robeck.

Well hello my empowered leaders, happy Tuesday. Welcome to the podcast, and welcome to August. We're going to kick off the 23/24 school year. I can't believe I'm saying 23/24 school year. It's crazy. It almost did not come out of my mouth. But first, I want to share with you all of the excitement that's going on over here in the Empowered Principal® world. I'm so excited.

So at the time that this podcast airs when it drops the first week of August, the Empowered Principal® Collaborative, the group coaching program that I launched over the summer, starts tomorrow, Wednesday, August 2. So you're hearing this on August 1. Welcome to August. I am so excited for this group to get started.

Yes, I look forward to the coaching and mentoring and working with this incredible group of leaders that I have. But what I'm even more excited about is for them, for the experience that they are about to have. These principals are going to experience a school year in school leadership like they have never experienced before. No more isolation, no more suffering and silence.

These principals are going to be able to connect and make new friendships in this group with people they may have never met. These are people from all across the country. It's going to be so easy for these leaders to build friendships because they're already in a room with likeminded people.

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People who want to learn and grow. People who want to lead their schools. People who want to have fun, and enjoy the school leadership journey.

We're not working with people who are miserable and complainers and don't want to be school leaders. If you're struggling in school leadership, that's different. Do you see what I'm saying? So this group, you're already going to be in love with the people in this room because you want personal and professional development. They want personal and professional development. They want to talk about coaching and leadership, you want to talk about coaching and leadership. So there's already a match in this room.

Not to mention, it's going to be of the highest caliber of leaders. So I'm so excited because I just don't want school leadership to be the experience of chronically being stressed out, losing tons of sleep, overworking, over exerting, over scheduling yourselves, spending hours or weeks or months spinning out in confusion and doubt and overwhelm and worry. Wondering what to do and how to prioritize it, how to balance your schedule, and your time and your effort and your energy and attention and focus. Where does all of that go? How do you leverage all of that? How do you work with people?

This experience in the Empowered Principal® Collaborative, that is the content that we discuss. It's going to provide this group and entirely upgraded school leadership experience. I'm just so honored to be their coach, to be hosting this program, and to help them through what I believe is one of the most challenging positions in education.

The work you do as a school leader, I'm acknowledging you. You listener right now here. This work that you do is difficult. It's super difficult. It's difficult because the number of people that you work with is astounding. It's way beyond what a corporate leader has to contend with. They're not dealing with hundreds of staff members, hundreds of students, and

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hundreds if not thousands of parents. Let alone the school board or the county or the Feds or your district office officials. You are dealing with so many people.

The reason that it's so difficult is because humans come to the table with their humaneness. Their thoughts, ideas, opinions, emotions, decisions, their actions. Sometimes humans are extremely helpful and supportive. Sometimes they're not. Right?

Your job as a school leader is to be able to process other people's emotions, being able to hold space for other people to have their emotions without making it mean something about you. Having to process and hold space for your own emotions as a human, but to also be able to navigate other people's decisions and their actions. I think that is one of the most challenging things that we do as humans on the planet, let alone as school leaders.

This is one of the aspects of school leadership that we discuss in the Empowered Principal® Collaborative. So if you missed the opportunity to join, if you missed the open enrollment deadline, please don't freak out. Don't worry. What you can do is you can join the waitlist for the next round of enrollment. The link to join the waitlist is going to be in today's show notes. So be sure to check that out. If you want to get on the waitlist and you want to get into this program the next time I open it, then get on the waitlist because you're going to get VIP access. You're going to get first priority, it's like being first in line to get in the doors.

When you get on the list, you're going to get first access, you're going to get weightless content that's specific for you on the waitlist for people who want to get in the program. I'm going to be giving you some behind the scenes as to what's going on in the group so that you can get that information even though you're on the waitlist and you're waiting to get in the door.

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Okay. So I will see you there if you missed it. You can also just email me at AngelaKellyCoaching@gmail.com, or Angela@theEmpoweredPrincipal.com. Either one of those you can get directly to me, and I will respond personally back to you. Okay.

All right. Let's kick off the 23/24 school year, shall we? All right. First, before you start thinking about school and planning school and getting into the action line of your job, I want you to take a step back and slow down. Slow your roll just for a minute. Check in with your body and your mind. How are you feeling about the upcoming school year? Are you excited? Are you nervous? Are you dreadful? What are you thinking and why? What's coming up for you? You want to check in with yourself.

So are you looking forward to the school year? Why or why not? Write down the reasons why you're either looking forward to the year or you're not looking forward to the year. Ask yourself this. If you're not an eight, nine, or 10 on a scale of one to 10 with looking forward to the year, you want to ask yourself why? What do you think would make it a 10? What would make you look forward to the upcoming year? What do you think needs to be in place in order for you to look forward to this upcoming year?

Okay, just notice that. If you want support with that, reach out. I will help you. Join our Facebook group, get on the waitlist. You're going to be in a room. These are the kinds of conversations we're going to be having. School leadership, yes. There's a lot of action, strategy planning, techniques. There's all kinds of the action things you need to do, but taking action usually isn't a principal's primary problem.

What is more of a problem are the emotions and the thoughts. We have those obstacle thoughts in the way. So you want to identify what are your obstacle thoughts and what do you think would you need in order to remove those obstacles or be able to overcome those obstacles. Okay. So just think about that first, okay?

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Now, see if you can put into place what would make the year or 10 to look forward to. Maybe there's something you can do to create that momentum and excitement and energy, see if you can do that. If you can then decide I'm going to do this. I'm going to choose to embrace the school year and look forward to it. But if you can't, if you really can't, and you're dreading it and you're trying so hard to want.

Like you want to want to look forward to it, but you just secretly don't like deep inside. If you had to tell yourself the brutal, honest truth. You're like nope, not looking forward to this year. That isn't a problem unless it's causing you so much pain, so much resistance, so much dread that you might want to look into do I still want to be a school principal? You might find that something else is calling you. Be honest with yourself. Okay.

So for those of you who do want to go into school leadership next year, or you want to and you're dreading it, this program is definitely for you. But I'm going to talk about kicking off the school year. Then specifically this school year kickoff, we're going to talk about him racing, and being able to announce change.

This is one of the topics that most every client at some point during our coaching sessions, they have trouble with. They have fear in embracing change or announcing change to their teachers, specifically the changes that the district level administrators have made.

So your district leadership, for those of you who have never worked at the district level, here's what happens. I've been there. We spend a lot of time looking at data and then sitting in meetings and having conversations about how to improve the data. What's working, what's not, what do we need to change. That's what district officials are doing.

Some of them are collecting data from different points, right? They're having stakeholder conversations. They're asking for teacher input. They're

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talking to the school board. They're talking to the community. They're interviewing students and staff members. That might not be the case in your district because some districts just look at certain data points, usually on paper or on their computer screen, and then make some sweeping decisions about what they need to change.

I get it. I'm being honest. Sometimes it's just a very top down process. Most of the time, actually, it's a very top down process. If you happen to be in a district that really does include their stakeholders, that's awesome. Congratulations. But if you're like me, I know there were times where they didn't quite always do that. Or they would collect the data, and then they would already just make the decision they wanted to make.

Okay, so your district leadership is up there making decisions. That's what they're paid to do. You as the school principal, the site leader, you tend to be the middleman, right? You're the go between the district, the district officials up at the district office level central office, down to your site level, your staff, teachers, students, families.

Now, first of all, we want to assume positive intent. We want to assume that our district leaders are trying to make the best decision that they can make in order to make teaching and learning more successful. We want to get ourselves on the same page and remind ourselves that they're in the business of education just like we are, and everybody is trying to come up with ways for children to be as successful in school as possible. We're on the same train there. Okay?

Sometimes you'll agree with the changes and embrace them, which can make it easier to share the information and the changes with your staff because you are already on board. You have been sold on the change and you agree with it. You can see the rationale or the reason behind it. You see the data, and it speaks to the data. You see the potential value of that change. You might be able to like envision the benefits that will happen

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because of the change. You'll be able to get on board with the time and energy it will take to create the change. Do you know what I'm saying?

When somebody says hey, I've noticed this. We looked at the data here. Here's the tweaking I think that needs to be made. Here's the change that needs to be made or adjusted. You're like yeah, I see that. I'm on board. I agree. I embrace this. When you're fully sold 100%, and you believe in the change. You think it's a good change, and you think it's the right time with the right place and the right level of adjustment and all of that, it's so much easier to go back to your staff and sell them on the change, on the new idea.

Now, there are times when changes are presented to you that you might not agree with or be on board with for a variety of reasons. So I was trying to think about okay, what are the reasons? you might just number one, disagree with their theory completely. You might not think it's the right decision, or it's the right change, or they're not basing it on the right data.

Or you think it's going to produce a result that is not what they think will be produced. You might see something that district level is not able to see. Or maybe you just are in disagreement because it doesn't align with your personal or professional values. Or maybe your school vision, maybe it's way off whack, okay?

There are times when you're going to disagree with a change that your district has presented and has asked you to embrace and to sell to your staff. So there's kind of one situation. You're just completely in disagreement, and you want to understand why am I in resistance? Why do I disagree with this change? That's just phase one, right?

Another reason you might disagree is that two, you can see the potential of the change. Like you kind of get where they're coming from or why they made that decision. Or you can see how the data speaks to that change.

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But you might disagree with either the approach that they're recommending, like their new theory. Like we think that reading scores are low because of X so we're going to do Y. Maybe you don't agree with X or maybe you don't agree with Y or maybe you don't agree with both.

Or you do agree and you can see the potential of this possibly working, but the timing feels off. This is what happened. I'm going to share an example with you in a moment of a real client story regarding a change that needed to be announced according to her district. They asked her to announce, and it was at the very end of this past school year.

So I'm going to talk about that because this happens all year long. It's not just at the beginning of the year. You get a lot of changes at the beginning, but you get them in the middle and you get them at the end. So let's just talk about it now. Because your job, I don't think people realize this, but in school leadership, your job is to sell yourself and sell the people you're leading on ideas, on change. Because if there's anything constant in the world, it's change. We have to learn how to embrace that and how to be able to announce it and sell it to our staffs. Okay.

The third way that you might disagree is that you actually do agree, like deep in your heart. You're like yeah, I actually agree with the district here. I really do. I see the value. I see the benefits. I understand the rationale. I think it's the right change. I believe in this change. But I'm worried. I'm worried what teachers are going to think or how they're going to feel or what they're going to say or do.

Then you are afraid to announce it because you're anticipating pushback in some form from your teachers. Whether it's direct pushback where they actually like say no, or they argue with you, or they tell you I'm not doing that. Or they're more indirect, they're a little more sly about it. They just kind of quietly close their classroom door and go back to doing things the way that they were. We know what we're talking about right principals, okay?

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So we spin out thinking about this is a good change, but there's so many other things on their plate. Or they're so resistant to change, or we just had another big change, or we also adopted this curriculum, and they can't take one more change. We have a lot of thoughts about change, which can make it very difficult for us as leaders to sell our staff on the change.

If you're not fully bought in and sold on the change itself and you don't fully understand it, or you don't fully agree with it, or you're not in alignment to it, it is extremely difficult to then sell it to your staff. Actually, it's kind of impossible because your energy. Like your truth of what you believe will show through your words. So you can say all the right things technically, but if you don't really believe that they're going to be on board or you're not really sold or you're scared of what the teachers are going to think or do or say that is going to come through as nonverbal cues to the staff like she's not really sold on this. They sniff it out.

So I'm going to give you a quick little rundown of what you can do when you're faced with this. Then I'm going to share with you the example of what my client and I discussed. Okay.

So number one, you've got to determine where you are personally with the change. Just get honest with yourself. Don't lie to yourself. If you're not on board, tell yourself the truth. Why are you not on board? What would get you on board? What do you think is the obstacle in your way? How can you either solve for that or overcome it? Okay.

Number two, you want to identify the parts about the change that you do agree with. There can be components to this. You might agree with the approach, or you might agree with the timing or you might agree with the intended outcome, the intention behind the change. Find something where you can align to. Where do you agree? How is this change a good change?

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So that's number three. Look for ways in which the change is a good decision. Don't let your brain go one sided here. You've got to give equal airtime. You can list all the reasons why it's a terrible decision, a terrible idea, terrible timing, not the right approach, go for it. Write all that down. But as much time as you spend looking at all the negative aspects, I want you to try and find something positive. Okay.

Then number four, what are the obstacles in your way from embracing this change and being able to sell it to your staff? Number five, you want to turn those obstacles into strategies or simply write them off as opportunities to learn. Hey, this change might not be the right one. This might not be the right approach. I really don't know, but we're going to find out. We're going to embrace it because this is what our district wants us to do. We're going to learn from it. Are you in?

I'm sold on learning. I'm sold on growing and getting to know ourselves better as teachers. I'm willing to try an approach to see what does work about it and what doesn't and what we need to do differently because we can't resist it. We can't say no to it and reject it if we've never tried it. Right? I think there was a commercial in the 70s like Life Cereal. You can't like it if you don't try it. I think I totally botched that. Anyway, it just came to mind. I just said it.

So let me share with you kind of a summary of this coaching session I had with one of my clients. This happened at the end of the year. It was so powerful that I wanted to share it with you. So this client of mine was worried because it was the end of the school year, and she was going to have to tell her staff, this is how she worded it. "I'm supposed to tell the staff that during language arts block, they now have frameworks. That the curriculum director had prioritized how the teachers are supposed to use their language arts block."

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Now, this is a very common fear. Principals are afraid to tell teachers how to spend their time. They're more afraid to tell them that the district is now telling them how to spend their time. There is some merit to that fear because when we start to micromanage, teachers can feel like they have no autonomy, no professionalism. They're not being trusted. We can lose really good people when we over micromanage people. So there's merit to that fear.

In this case, teachers hadn't had those guidelines so strict in this district before. Now, the changes that the curriculum director had rolled out and asked principals to tell teachers, it was going to require the principals to change the master schedule again, which was another layer. It wasn't just one change. It was this rollout was creating a series of change. Does this sound a little familiar?

Principals who are tuned in to their staff, they can sense when the staff is feeling anxiety or dread. This principal was feeling that. She could feel the energy. She could feel the anxiety. I asked her what is your opinion of the change?

She said, "Well, I'm afraid to tell them. We haven't had changes for years. We're not a failing school so teachers are going to push back. Why do we need to change if we're not a failing school? What they want is freedom." Notice her thoughts. Her thoughts about what the teachers will think. This is her thoughts about what she believes teachers will think. We're not a failing school. Why should we have to change? We want freedom. This is going to be different. We haven't had changes in years. I'm afraid to tell them about the change because of those reasons. Right?

So I asked her to kind of shift over and ask herself what is her opinion of the change? Here's what she said. "It's needed. We're stronger in math than language arts. It does need to be overhauled. It is what's needed." Do you see? She actually agreed with the change, but she's nervous to tell

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them. Okay, I'm worried that there will be resistance to one more change. Notice her language, how she is saying so many changes. One more change. Master schedule change again. The brain likes to dramatize and like create lots and lots of pressure and stress around change and make it mean that it's a problem.

She said, "I'm afraid if I don't get by in that pushback is going to land on me." So I asked her brain to redirect and to look at the other side. What else is possible? How many people will want the change? Like looking at those questions. What's the problem with change? Why is it a problem? What are the obstacles that they think they will face? What are the obstacles you think they'll face? So what I do as a coach is I ask questions to get the brain out of that overwhelm cycle and spinning out into creativity and solution cycle, focusing on solutions.

So through the course of this coaching, we were able to get her brain to a place where she was able to acknowledge their feelings because hey, when I asked her how many people will want the change, she goes at least 50%. I said okay. So we're talking half the staff is already going to be on board. So now we're just looking at the other half. Then we broke down that other half in who were going to be mildly resistant, strongly resistant, who are going to be obstinate, right?

It usually comes down to one or two people who are going to be your hardest sells, which is normal. If you have one or two people or you have one grade level that tends to be a harder sell than others, that is normal. It's okay. There's not a problem. You want to look at how things aren't a problem.

What we were able to do is help her acknowledge the feelings, acknowledge that change can be uncomfortable. It can even be a pain in the backside. It can be a nuisance, but it doesn't mean it isn't warranted. It doesn't mean that we have to resist. We can be in the discomfort of change

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and embrace the messiness, embrace the again-ness, which is changing the master schedule again, having to change some of your classroom routines again, as people would say.

Let's just be honest. Give people time and space to be heard, to acknowledge their feelings, but also support them and hold them accountable to trying the change. They cannot know that they hate it if they've never tried it.

I just want to say this. I know sometimes it feels like district is coming top down. They are. We'll just acknowledge that. But the other part of the truth is that it's our job to sell ourselves, to get on board, to find the alignment. How is the district's decision, like they just basically created a theory. They're up there like here's the data. Here's what we think is best. We're gonna go top down. This is our job to make these decisions and changes. They roll it out with the best of intention. They know some people are going to resist. They expect that too, but you're coming in as the middle person.

So you get to coach up and say hey, here are some things to consider that maybe you're not thinking about at the ground level. You also get the benefit of talking to your teachers and getting input and feedback from them to bring up to the district, but then also to bring back some content for the teachers. Because the truth is that it's our job. We get paid to embrace change. We get paid to sell change.

We're not a stagnant organization. Learning is not stagnant. It's ever evolving. We're working with humans. So we have to look at all of the ways in which learning can be improved and that dynamic nature of teaching and learning.

So I just want to summarize here. First of all, you've got to get yourself on board. Look for the ways in which the change is positive. If you're really, really struggling with that, you want to explore why. Where's the resistance

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coming from? What obstacles do you think are in your way? Is it truly just out of character, out of alignment for you to the point that you just can't back it up? If that's true, you need to talk with somebody at your district, or come on into the program and get coached so you can learn how to talk about when you're out of alignment with your district. That's a huge topic we talk about.

You want to learn the skill of selling yourself to embrace change and to support yourself and be 100% sold so that you can sell your staff and have tools and strategies to work with the people who are also in resistance. Because when you acknowledge the times that you're in resistance, you're going to learn how to overcome resistance. When you learn how to overcome resistance yourself, you're going to be able to coach and mentor your teachers on how they can overcome and embrace their own resistance and their getting on board with change. Okay.

So what is the value of change? Why is it good in our schools? Why is it better for teachers? Why is it better for students? Why is change not a problem? It isn't a problem. Don't let your brain make it into a problem. All right. I hope this has been helpful. It changed the game for my client. She was able to get right back on board. She was already sold by the end of our call. We wrote out how she was going to announce it. She had a game plan. I can't wait to hear how it went for her. I look forward to supporting all of you on embracing and announcing change. Have a fabulous week everybody. Love y'all. Talk to you later. Bye.

Hey there empowered principal. If you enjoyed the content in this podcast, I invite you to join the Empowered Principal® Collaborative. It's my latest offer for aspiring and current school leaders who want to experience exceptional impact and enjoy the school leadership experience.

Look, you don't have to overwork and overexert to be a successful school leader. You'll be mentored weekly and surrounded by supportive like

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