

## Ep #295: The Value of Meeting with Teachers



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Angela Kelly**

## Ep #295: The Value of Meeting with Teachers

Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 295.

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.

Hello, empowered principals and happy Tuesday. Welcome to the new school year. Today, I want to talk about the value of meeting with teachers. I want you to decide at the beginning of this school year to have a plan to regularly meet with your teachers.

Look, I know your brain is going to say Angela, that's one more thing. I get it. It is one more thing, but it's a valuable thing. We're going to talk about that today. When you're planning out your year, you want to spend your time in the way that you spend money, which means you want to be intentional about how you spend those minutes. You want those minutes to be investments, not wasteful expenditures, okay.

So I'm going to share with you an experience one of my clients had at the end of this past school year. I'm sharing this with you because I want you to decide ahead of time and be proactive in planning and prioritizing regular check-ins so that you're not caught off guard at the end of the year.

I know this has happened to me where I didn't follow up or follow through with some teachers. At the end of the year, I got caught off guard. So I want to highlight this now at the beginning so you can be proactive. Now, I realize that you understand at a cognitive, intellectual level the value of meeting with teachers. We can rattle off a list.

We know it's a solid practice, but we also know that it can slip off our plates very easily as the year ramps up and things get busy. We get

## Ep #295: The Value of Meeting with Teachers

overwhelmed. There's emergencies. There are student discipline issues, parent meetings, unexpected appointments, whatever. All of those check-ins become less frequent when the other things rise to the surface, especially if you do not feel in control of your time.

So part of this conversation is a time management issue. The reason it's time management is we have to decide how we spend our time based on what we value. So the way that you keep something that you value a priority and keep it at the top of mind and assign actual time to what you value, you have to understand and remind yourself the purpose of meeting with teachers and be sold on the value. The benefit of meeting with the teachers, how it makes your life better, faster, easier when you invest time regularly checking in with your teachers.

So let's just do a quick review on the value. Then I'm going to share a story of one of my clients. Okay. So I just came up with a quick list. You can always add to this list. The more you add, the more valuable your list becomes, and the more sold your brain is on why you want to invest time connecting and spending time checking in and meeting with teachers.

So one, you definitely want to have a purpose to the meeting. You don't want to just check in for the sake of checking in. There needs to be some kind of value generated from that time investment. Okay. But with that said, here are some of the time investment values that you create when you meet with teachers.

Number one, it's just connection. You build relationships with your teachers. But what that does, the value of building a relationship with your teachers is to build that human connection. When you have that human connection, people value the time they spend with you because you're showing that you care enough to spend time with them. You care about them as people. You value their connection. You value that engagement, that interaction with them. People want leaders who care about them.

## Ep #295: The Value of Meeting with Teachers

When you spend time engaging with them, talking with them, checking in with them, having conversations with them, you are building a relationship that grows roots. Those roots can weather storms, right? It's what tethers you down during times when you have to hold crucial conversations, or when you have to address something with a teacher. But when you show you care by investing your time and energy and attention into people, they believe in you because you're believing in them.

Number two, spending time with teachers acknowledges them. It creates acknowledgement. It shows that you appreciate the work that they are doing. It validates their work as a teacher. When you think about your own boss, so many of my clients want that acknowledgement and the validation that their hard work is being noticed. That it's paying off, that it's creating value that it's contributing to the bigger picture, the vision of the district, the vision of the school.

The same is true for your teachers. They are working hard in those classrooms. Trying new things, trying and failing, working with kids, dealing with behaviors. They are in there working so hard for you and for your students. You want to spend time with them to acknowledge and appreciate the work they are doing and what they are doing well.

So when you're meeting with teachers and connecting with them, be sure that you're spending most of that time building a relationship and explicitly appreciating them as humans and for the work that they are contributing, and the value they're giving to that classroom and to your school at large.

Number three, you gain a depth of understanding. The value of meeting with teachers is about your own professional growth, you can now see issues, problems, solutions from a teacher's perspective. You gain insight into what's going on at the classroom level from a teacher's perspective, which helps you understand how to solve problems, create solutions, and respond to other teachers who also might be struggling with something.

## Ep #295: The Value of Meeting with Teachers

When you meet with all of your teachers, you can share that knowledge with one another. They don't always have the time to collaborate and connect because they're busy teaching. When you meet with teachers, you're going to gain depth of understanding as to how one teacher solving something and you can then share that with another teacher.

Number four, you can identify obstacles before they become bigger issues. So this leads me to an experience that my client had at the end of last year. So this was back in May. She was sharing that her own evaluation went really well. Her to-do list was being checked off. She was really excited by the end of the year. She was holding data conversations with each of her teachers.

One of her teachers had a drop in scores. It was concerning for the teacher and the principal to see how the kids had done. They were both a little surprised by it. My client was saying based on the things I observed in the classroom, I expected there to be an average growth pattern if not above average. She said she didn't expect to see that regression, and that the lower growth was in her higher performing students.

Now first of all, I want to say a little side note here. It's okay for teachers to have a drop, especially teachers who tend to perform at or above average. Everybody is human. Everybody has dips. Students have dips. Teachers have dips. We don't need to make it into a big deal when someone has a dip. We simply want to stay curious about it. We don't need to panic. We don't need to freak out. We don't need to come down hard on them. It's just curious to see what happened, and then to reflect on that.

In this case, my client, when I asked her what her theory, what she thought the theory of this dip in scores was. She said I think there's a good breadth of instruction, but it might be the level of depth of instruction. Then I asked her what do you think the teacher thinks happened? She said, now you got to remember this is my client's words.

## Ep #295: The Value of Meeting with Teachers

She thought that the teacher was going to put it back on the kids. That the teacher might blame the students thinking that maybe the kids did not put in the effort that they should have. But she also said this teacher does tend to be reflective. So she wasn't really sure. But what I do know is that my client did not want to come across in this conversation with her teacher as a gotcha. She wanted it to be supportive.

So we got into a conversation about checking in and meeting with teachers. We went back into my client's brain about what she was making it mean about her teacher, what she was making it mean about herself as a principal. Because here's the thing, right? When you see a teacher's scores drop, your brain is going to say what did that teacher do? Kind of go to what the teacher did or didn't do. The teacher tends to start with what the student did or didn't do. But at the end of the day, we have to come back and reflect on ourselves.

So for my client, we talked about the teacher, we talked about the students, but then we brought it back to the principal. I said if you were this teacher, how would you want to be approached? She said I wouldn't want my principal pointing her fingers at data. We need to both own the data. I said okay, great.

So I asked her, is there any discomfort for you and having this conversation? She said I should have caught it sooner as the principal. Do you see what I'm talking about? She felt caught off guard. There are multiple data points. If the kids weren't making growth, I should have caught that. I didn't. So my client was feeling a little guilty for not having caught the data.

Now, another side note here. You're not going to catch everything. You're a school leader who is looking at so many data points, and you have so many balls in the air. I want you to acknowledge that there will be times when something gets missed. That means nothing about your capacity to

## Ep #295: The Value of Meeting with Teachers

lead, or that you're a problem, or that you need to grovel, or you need to like swim in guiltiness that you missed something, okay? That's not a problem. It doesn't have to be a problem unless you make it one.

So there is an emotional aspect when you see something dip. Okay, it dipped. That's disappointing. That's not what we were going for. But telling yourself you should have caught it sooner, or you should have noticed it earlier, I want you to think about how that thought feels. It feels terrible. Then you get upset with yourself. Then how do you treat yourself when you get upset with yourself and you tell yourself I should have done this.

You start to erode your self-concept. I'm not as good of a leader as I thought I was. I didn't follow up. I'm not this. I'm not that I should have. Shame on me. Right? Yes, it's one thing to take ownership and to look at where we have dips in our scores. But it's another thing to make it mean something about you. Be very careful about that. Let the data be neutral. It is what it is. We just want to look at what it might be.

One of the things I asked myself. When I see a dip in my own business, I asked myself if it couldn't be my fault, what else would it be? What else in the programming or the system? What about the procedures or the protocols or the decisions we made? Like if it couldn't be my fault, what systematically do I need to adjust? I make that data neutral.

Okay, you want to teach your teachers to make data neutral. They will be so much more open to coaching and to mentorship and to PLC conversations and collaborations and data conversations when we don't make the data personal. We make it about the system or the process, not about the person. Okay?

So when you're meeting up with teachers, you want to have these regular conversations. Number one, so that you don't get caught off guard. But even if you do, you regroup and don't make it a problem about the teacher

## Ep #295: The Value of Meeting with Teachers

or about you. It doesn't mean that you or the teacher don't need to make adjustments in your actions. But it does give you information in order to inform your actions. Okay.

So when you're meeting with teachers, and you have something come up where there's a dip and it catches you off guard. If you have regularly met with your teachers, and you have built connections, and you've acknowledged them for their work, and you have developed and establish a consistent protocol and conversation with your teachers, right, and you have a depth of understanding from that teacher's perspective, you're going to be able to problem solve with them without them feeling bad and you feeling bad. Do you see that?

So in this case, my client was meeting with her teachers regularly. She simply didn't see this pitfall coming. These are called unanticipated obstacles. We didn't anticipate them. You can't know they're all coming. That's okay. But when you have met with your teachers on a regular basis, you build that connection and that acknowledgement and that depth of understanding from that teacher's perspective. Then as a team, you're going to be able to identify the obstacles behind the obstacles.

So what do we think the theory is of the problem? What's our theory of what happened? Why do you think the high students scored lower? What might have been going on? Then how do we adjust moving forward? That's it. That's all the conversation needs to be, okay.

So when you're thinking about this year, and how you want to spend your time, I want you to sell yourself on the value of taking time to meet with your teachers. You can meet with them as a grade level. You can meet with them individually. Whatever you think works best for you.

Look, there are so many ways to make this work. Here's the other thing I want to say back to the time management piece. You do have time to



## Ep #295: The Value of Meeting with Teachers

connect with your teachers and meet with them on a regular basis to develop connection, acknowledge them, create a depth of understanding, and identify obstacles in real time so that you can problem solve for them in advance before they become bigger issues. You have the time to do this.

Let me tell you this. When you do this proactively, you actually create more time. Because when you connect with teachers on a regular basis, number one, they know, and they trust that you're going to meet with them. So they're not constantly calling you, emailing you, looking for you, talking to you while you're running down the hallway. They know there's a dedicated time for them to say and ask what they need to say and ask.

So you actually establish more time, and you have more control over your time. You can say hey, I'm going to meet with you. This is the procedure. This is the plan. I'm going to meet with you on these dates at this time for this long. These are the things we're going to talk about. This is the purpose of the meeting. Ask your questions then. Then you don't have to worry about trying to find me and fit into my schedule at another time. Because you know you have a dedicated time.

So that puts you more in control of your time. It actually creates more time. So don't tell yourself the lie that you don't have time to meet with teachers. Tell yourself the truth that creating this plan to meet with your teachers actually generates more time and put you in control of your time. All right, everybody. That's it. I hope you found this valuable. Let me know how it goes. Have a wonderful week, and I will talk with you all next week. Take good care. 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.

## Ep #295: The Value of Meeting with Teachers

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 minded colleagues who truly understand what it means to be a school leader. So join us today and become a member of the only certified life and leadership coaching program for school leaders in the country. Just head on over to [angelakellycoaching.com/work-with-me](https://angelakellycoaching.com/work-with-me) to learn more and join. I'll see you inside of the Empowered Principal® Collaborative.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *The Empowered Principal® Podcast*. If you enjoyed this episode and want to learn more, please visit [angelakellycoaching.com](https://angelakellycoaching.com) where you can sign up for weekly updates and learn more about the tools that will help you become an emotionally fit school leader.