

Ep #303: Creating Compassionate Norms



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 303.

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. This is a quick down-and-dirty, tangible, hands on podcast about how to plan out norms. So I know we're already in October, but I want to share with you, you still have plenty of time to establish norms or revisit norms. I was just talking with one of my clients, and I want to share with you a strategy that we came up with as it relates to planning out norms.

So as you can imagine, norms feel like that thing that nobody wants to really talk about. Everybody rolls their eyes when you do bring it up. Everybody feels like we do this every year. It doesn't really matter, or you don't want to take the time to do it. But it is important because it establishes a standard and an expectation for collaboration for meeting behaviors because adults don't always behave properly.

Their emotions get the best of them, and they react to their emotions. Because we're not teaching emotional regulation in schools. We haven't taught it to children. So we don't know it as adults. I'm here to help you with that. That's what we do in The Empowered Principal® Collaborative. But today, we're going to talk about norms.

So for you, if you have meetings or if your staff meeting or you want to establish norms for your PLCs, or your MTSS group, your intervention, any kind of meeting where adults are involved, I want you to consider the value of norms. Okay. So for you as the leader, here's what I want you thinking about.

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For yourself, answer these questions prior to having a conversation with your staff. Ask yourself what is the purpose of norms? Why do we have them? What is the purpose? What is the reason? What is the rationale behind establishing group norms? Number one, get clear on that for yourself.

Number two, what is the benefit of the norms? So there's the purpose of them, that's why we have them, but then there's the why behind the why. What is the benefit of the norms? When people follow the norms, why is that a good thing? What happens as a result? What's the net positive gain from creating norms, holding people accountable to the norms, establishing them, all of that?

So to go deeper into that, ask yourself why following the norms is better for us as an individual member of the team. How does it serve me as a member of this team to have norms established and followed? How is it better for the individual, and then how is it better for the team? Then ask yourself how do you feel about the norms? How do you personally feel about norms? Do they annoy you? Do you think they're bogus? Do you think they're helpful? What is your personal opinion?

You want to know this. You want to uncover this. Because if you're not establishing norms for your teams or for your staff meetings, there's a reason why. Your brain is probably like meh, I don't like to do them. I don't think they're valuable. You want to sell your brain on the value of norms before you go into a staff and try to sell them on the value of your norms.

Because if you aren't sold, you certainly cannot sell them. If you don't see the value, if you don't believe in them, if you don't think they're worth it, there is no amount of selling that you're going to do to get buy in for other people to believe it. You have to be so sold that your conviction to the norms sells them on why they should be convicted as well.

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You've got to know what's in it for them. Why is it better for your teachers? How do we want to feel about the norms? How do we want to engage with the norms? Okay. Those are the questions you want to ask yourself first, and then you can go in and have this conversation with your teachers.

What do they think the purpose is? What do they see as the benefit? Why is following the norms better for them as an individual? Why is it better for the team? How does it help them be more productive? How do they feel about norms? How do they want to feel about norms? How do they want to be implement norms? Okay.

Then once your norms are established in place, you've had these conversations, when things go off course because they will, because we're humans. Oh, the humans, especially the adult humans. Bless them all. We love them. But people are gonna get off track. So you can regroup and ask people why did we choose this individual norm? Why this particular norm?

Let's remember back to this norm in the moment, what were we thinking at the time? How are we feeling? What did we think it was going to produce? What is the professional value driving this norm? We have a school vision that's based on our leadership and educator values.

So what value was driving the norm when we made it? We want to get back into alignment. The reason we have this norm is because we value open communication. We've established this norm because we value a safe culture where we can share openly without criticism or judgment. You want to go back to the professional values that you have that drive your school and your school culture.

Why do we believe this norm helps us accomplish the goals that we have set for ourselves? The norms aren't like hard, steadfast rules where people make them or break them and get into trouble for them. The norms are

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there to keep us in alignment with our goals. We want to accomplish goals. Sometimes the brain wants to take us off course.

The norms just are like little bouncers. It's like when you go bowling, and they have those little bouncers that come up so the ball can't get in the gutter. The norms keep everybody kind of flowing forward and on track. Then you can ask yourself, why are these goals important? Why is this accomplishment important?

When you're establishing norms, you also want to ask yourself how will we know this norm is working for us individually as a team? How will we know if it's not working for us? Then how do we want to communicate or approach or problem solve when the norm is not working or not being met? You probably want to establish that ahead of time, but you can always use those questions to come back and problem solve if something isn't working.

Norms are actually very important, and they feel like they are kind of superfluous. But they only feel that way because we make them that way. We don't value them. We don't honor them. We don't use them. But what norms do is they establish safety and trust. They help people feel that they know what to expect. There's a certainty or a level of predictability that comes when people know that norms have been established and norms are going to be followed. We don't have to shame people or harshly criticize them or humiliate them if a norm has been not followed or honored.

We can look into why that person might have not followed the norm, what's coming up for them. Why did they have that emotional reaction? What's going on in their world with compassion and empathy? Okay. So just a quick little tidbit on norms, how to establish them, why we establish them, creating value with them, creating significance and importance.

Build them from your leadership values and your vision that you're making together with your team, and then talk ahead of time how we're lovingly

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going to hold one another accountable to them, including ourselves, what we will do, how we want to approach people with compassion and empathy when a norm isn't being followed, and giving people grace and space and permission to be human. All right, go have an amazing week. That's all I got for you. Short and sweet. Love you all. Talk to you soon. Take good care. Bye.

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