

## Ep #347: Valuable Planning



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 347.

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 and welcome to the podcast. Such an honor to be here with you guys today. I love this podcast so much and I'm so proud of it because it provides all of this amazing content free every single week right in your email box. So I'm so happy that you're here. If you're new to the program, welcome. And I love giving you all the best content on this podcast. It's worth millions. And what I love about EPC is we go even deeper into these concepts.

So today I'm gonna dive right in, keep it short and sweet for you, and talk about valuable planning. You are in the thick of the beginning of the year and you are planning out your year. I work with school leaders on planning, and I think one of the things that happens is we greatly underestimate the value of taking time to plan. And I think that the way we define planning might look different, and some planning gets us results, and some planning isn't giving us the results we want. So there's productive planning and unproductive planning, but I wanna talk about valuable planning, what valuable planning looks like, the significance of planning and the outcomes of your planning.

So we are taught in education to set goals, very specific goals, and we put timestamps and dates on them, we write SMART goals, and we set all of these goals in education, but we don't necessarily develop a plan for the goals. We write the goal, we put out some strategies, we hope they stick, we hope they work, and then we feel like they're out of our control. I remember sitting in my office and filling in the blanks of the site improvement plan, but I had no idea if the plan was accurate, if it was

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strategic, if it was intentional, if it was going to work. I had no idea. I filled it out and I hoped it would work. I wanted it to work. I believed in the possibility of it working, but did I trust that we had a plan in place to execute the goal, to make the goal inevitable, to ensure that we could fulfill the strategies we listed out? No, in all transparency, I did not.

I filled out the site plan because, one, I had to. It was compliance. Two, I tried to make it meaningful, but you know how it goes. It's a big document, it's required, we have to present it to the school boards or whoever your governing board is. And then we go and we get into the weeds of the everydayness of being a school leader, and that plan sits there and we hope and pray that we're doing right by the plan and doing right by kids and doing right by teachers, hoping that we make some gains for our goal, towards our goal, right? That's typically how planning happens at a school.

So I've thought a lot about planning because it is the essential element of leadership. And when you're writing a plan that you don't really believe in, or you don't feel connected to, or you're not really sure if it's gonna work, it makes you feel anxious or it feels like high pressure or high stakes and you're afraid almost of this plan, no wonder we don't like to plan. We don't like to plan because setting goals and mapping them out, it feels constrictive. It feels scary. It feels like we're going to be held accountable for all of those actions, like implementing all of those strategies, ensuring everybody is doing their job, basically controlling or forcing an outcome.

So goals, for me, it feels very constrictive, and it feels very high stakes, high pressure. It doesn't feel good to write a goal that, one, I'm not super connected with or attached to, or even if I do have passion behind the goal and I believe in the goal, that I feel it's attainable. If you have to write a goal that you don't believe is attainable, then you're not going to believe in that goal and the energy that you're fueling to get to that goal, it's never going to happen because you don't believe that it's possible in the first place.

So we feel like we're on the hook. The minute we set a goal and we write out the strategies, we feel like now we're on the hook and now we're going

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to be held accountable to the goal. And if we don't hit the goal, we fear some kind of negative consequence is going to happen, or we're going to get our, you know, we're going to get a talking to, or the board's going to scold us, or we're going to lose our job, like we worry about all these things. What I notice is that when we focus on goal creation, it creates a negative relationship with planning, with goal setting and planning. So, what we do is we set goals that are either not a stretch, we're like, "I want to ensure we cross the goal. I want to make sure I get accolades for meeting the goal, so I'm going to make sure I set a goal that is 100% guaranteed attainable."

And we do that because it doesn't require us to grow and stretch and evolve and transform ourselves or to get curious and try new ways and expand ourselves. So we set the bar low to ensure we hit the goal because hitting the goal is more important than the expansion, or we set a goal to please somebody else. The goal is really because the district wants it, or your superintendent wants it, or the school board wants it. So you set a goal, even though you don't personally feel attached to the goal, there's no connection, you don't even believe the goal is possible to attain, you're writing it for the sake of compliance and getting it done.

But either way, whether it's too little or too much, the goal becomes the enemy. And the reason I say that is because it's the enemy in the sense of a too low bar stagnates us and the too high bar puts us, locks us into fear and pressure and forcing and trying to control external situations like other humans. Or we just are apathetic because we have no connection. We have no meaning.

We don't believe the goal is possible. So why would we put any effort into trying to hit the goal? And here's what I want to identify. There's a difference between a goal and a plan. So when you think about goal setting, people don't like to goal set because it automatically makes them feel insufficient, insignificant, incapable.

It makes them feel insufficient in some way. Like here's where you're at and here's the goal, but you're not there. There's a gap in your ability, so go

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figure it out. That doesn't feel good. Or people don't like planning and they resist the planning process because they don't really see the value in it because we think like, well, the district's always changing priorities or the plans are always changing or no one even follows the plan. I put so much work into the plan and nobody's following it and the plan doesn't even matter, so why put effort into it? Or if I plan, it's gonna take time, it's super tedious, all of those thoughts we have around planning.

And what I started to realize was, we don't have a positive relationship with planning. So our planning isn't valuable when we don't see the value in the planning, when we don't have a positive, healthy relationship with what planning is, what it actually is, and why we're doing it. Now, there are people who say, I've worked with many clients who are like, "Ooh, I love to plan." And what they mean by that is they love, like they put a two-hour block on their calendar and they get out their planners and their beautiful journals, or they get their computer out and they plan away. But what I see happening, the actual work that's happening during the planning session, is that they love the idea of planning, like they like the big picture versus executing on the plan.

So they love the feeling of mapping it all out on the calendar, but they don't necessarily love having to think through the details of all that's required for that event or that goal or that task to be accomplished or to be completed. So it's like, we like that 30,000 foot level where we're planning out the big picture, but the devil's in the details, right? And this is me, 100%. That's how I know the leadership type or the planning type of person, because that was me. I love to get out the pretty journals and plan and map out my year from, you know, August through June. Let's master calendar, map it all out.

But what I wasn't doing was I wasn't looking at those events. I was calendaring. I wasn't planning. There's a difference. One of the things we did was a Lemonade Social, so all the kinders would have a Lemonade Social to meet and greet their families for meeting, you know, our school for the first time. And so we did a little bit of extra TLC for our kinders, and then

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we had a big class posting party where we did pizzas and lemonade for the whole school. So everybody came and they found out who their teacher was and they got their class list and met their teacher and got the supply list and all of that. And then everybody got to pick a backpack because we were a school where we were gifted with backpacks.

So, but for those events to happen, you can put them on the calendar, but you're no more closer to that event happening if you don't plan it. What has to happen for the Lemonade Social to be executed with success? And how do we want this experience to feel for kinders and their families, for the grades one through five and their families? We've got to get work with Google and get those backpacks and get the pizza order and and we've got to get the lemonade order in, so I need to work with PTA. There are things that need to be planned out, okay?

So you can love the idea of this big picture planning and mapping out, but what I realized, mapping out is calendaring, it's not planning. So whether you avoid the planning because you think it doesn't matter, or you love the planning, but it's 30,000 foot planning, the details of planning is where our brains will want to run out of the room. Have you ever had that experience where you put it on your calendar for like, Tuesday, nine o'clock, from nine to 11, I'm going to plan. And you're so excited, and Monday night you're like, "Ooh, I have two hours to plan, I'm so excited." Then you get to Tuesday at nine o'clock, and the minute it comes time to plan, your brain starts to like, fidget, and all of a sudden you're just checking your emails, or you're going out of your office, you're checking in with the office staff, or you're like, "Ooh, I gotta talk to that teacher," or you're taking a moment to kinda check out the snack area, right? Your brain is like, "I don't want to do this."

And it finds sneaky little ways to distract yourself. I've watched my brain. I'm observing my own brain because it does this too. My brain does not want to sit down and plan because it's like, "This is going to be tedious. This is going to be hard. It's going to be uncomfortable. It's going to take so much time. I'd rather be doing something else. This isn't important," blah,

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blah, blah, right? Your brain goes on and on with all the reasons. It's like a little kid, it's like, "I don't want to do it." So we listen to that, that immature part of our brain, and we tend to avoid that planning. And we'll say, "Well, let me just put it on the calendar."

And then I know there's some big chunks, but what we're doing is we're putting the due dates and the vet dates, and then I'm planned. But calendaring isn't a plan, it's a calendar. So valuable planning is when you have a plan for your plans. So if your plan is to host the Lemonade Meet and Greet before the start of school, so that everybody has an opportunity to meet their new classroom teacher, you can put that event on the calendar, but I promise you it doesn't happen if you don't plan it. You've got to plan for that event and ensure that the details are in place for it to be a success.

Now, I realize that I'm preaching to the choir here, and it sounds like, of course we plan, but that's what we do, we're planners. And I know that you know you need to plan for the meet and greet or any event, I know that. You're going to let teachers know, you're going to let families know the date, the time, the location. You're going to have to have someone buy the lemonade. You're going to create the class rosters, campus maps. You know how to plan an event, okay? But then there's planning, there's the basics, the essentials, and then there's valuable planning. This is one level deeper.

Valuable planning is planning based on the value you want to create and the experience that you want to provide. And what I mean by that is the emotional experience and the memory that it will create for those who are participating in the event. So valuable planning is like, "How am I planning to create value? What is the value that I am providing in this lemonade social meet and greet? What's the value in it? What's in it for teachers? What's in it for kids? What's in it for families? What's in it for you?"

Now you're looking at it and you're actually planning based on how you want people to experience the event. You want parents to be satisfied. You

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want kids to be happy. You want teachers to feel connected. You want there to be a community experience. You want people to remember the Lemonade Social as the kickoff to school, as the first time they ever set foot on campus if they're kindergartners, or the first time those parents that are brand new to your community ever set foot on your campus. You want them to have a positive first-time experience. You want the returning families to love coming back and be excited to meet you guys and talk about your summers and reconnect with their friends who they didn't see because they're, you know, PTA mom friends or whatever.

I want you to think about a wedding planner. Now, the entire goal of a wedding planner or an event planner of any kind is to help create an experience. It's based on how the bride and the groom want to feel, how they want their guests and their families to feel about the wedding, to experience that wedding. They try to capture how they want to remember that wedding day.

An event planner does the same thing with any event. If it's corporate planning, we don't say wedding goal. They're not setting goals. The goal is to walk down the aisle. The goal is to have flowers on the stage of the church. The goal is to have a musician. The goal is to throw rose petals. They say, "We're planned for this. We're mapping out a plan to execute exactly the experience that you want so that you can have the emotional memories that you desire."

So there is a difference here. You can set goals. You can calendar those goals, but you also have to plan them with value. And in EPC, I'm going to teach you all how to plan and enjoy the process and the experience of planning, to get joy out of the actual planning itself, to create the experience and the memory. Remember when we planned this event, how fun it was to plan that event?

I want you to think about something that you love to plan, because what I want is for you to love the job of planning so you can enjoy your job. So think about things that you already love to plan. For some people, they love



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to plan vacation. Other people love to plan dinner parties. Some people love to plan celebrations, birthdays, weddings, baby showers, travel, your summer schedule. How much of you loved to plan your summer schedule? Way fun, right?

So I want you to think about what is the difference between planning those events that you love and then planning events and tasks at your school. My goal for you all, every single one of you who listen to this podcast, is to enjoy the process of planning. Planning and executing your plans is why you're paid to be a school leader. Think about this. You do not get paid more money as a school leader because you work longer hours as a principal. Money is not an exchange of time. It's an exchange of value. You get paid to create valuable plans and then execute on those plans.

If planning and executing your plan is how you as a school leader make that bread and butter, I want you to learn how to make the most of yourself as a valuable planner. I want to help you hone the skill and enhance your ability to create amazing plans that are highly valuable for you, your students, and your staff. Because you're a leader. You get paid to be a leader. You are a thought leader, a visionary leader, a celebration leader, a momentum leader, a results leader. You create results as a leader.

First, you imagine them. Think about this. Anything you've ever done, it starts with an idea. You have a thought. "Whoa, maybe we should do a lemonade social. Let's think about the value of that. Why would we want to put all this time, effort, energy, financial resources, blood, sweat, and tears into hosting a Lemonade Social for our students at the beginning of the year? What's the value of it?" Then you start imagining, "Wow, that could be a really good thing. This is a value, this would be great, this would be easier, this would be better, this is good for kids, this is good."

Then you're like, "Wow, I'm starting to imagine how good it would feel to offer this. How teachers would feel knowing they've seen the faces of their kids. They've already met the parents. We're going to calm the nerves before the first day of school." Then you start feeling the outcome of that.

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Now you have a valuable plan because there's value being generated. And then you decide we're going to do this because of its value. And then the planning becomes fun. It becomes meaningful. There's purpose behind it. You're not just creating a meeting, an event, you're creating an experience. You're creating a memory.

So, valuable planning is about enjoying the creative planning process. It's allowing the planning to be fun and delightful instead of ridden with stress and overwhelm and pressure and, you know, to be honest, sometimes it's even apathy or resentment when you're planning.

So, think about the things. Think about how you plan. How do you feel when you're planning? What is your relationship with planning? And here's what I'm going to leave you with. What if, instead of planning as though you were going to fail, meaning "I'm going to feel stress, doubt, fear, this isn't going to work, we're not going to hit the goal, why are we doing this?" Instead of planning from that energy, what if you planned as though you were guaranteed to succeed? If you were doing it for the fun of it, for the value of it, because you wanted to create an experience? How would planning feel differently if you knew that the time you're investing in your planning is going to provide you a return on investment?

Not only that, the more you plan and pay attention to detail as a school leader in designing the experience that you want to have, that you want your students to have, your staff to have, your community to have, the more likely your plan would succeed. I want you to lead this year as though you can count on being successful and creating an enjoyable experience versus leading as though you can count on failing and missing the mark and dreading the process.

I don't want you to lead as though planning is a chore because it's your job to plan. I want you to take delight in planning and see it as one of the most valuable ways that you spend your time. We are going to be diving in to valuable planning in EPC. This is the time to sign up for EPC right now. The doors are closing in September. If you want to gain all of the bonus

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courses, I'm creating a course on this, How to Become a Valuable Planner. I'm gonna teach you this approach in a way that's going to delight you, that's going to feel better, that's going to be fun, that's going to create memories, valuable memories of highly positive experience for you, for them, for everyone.

That's what EPC is about. We are up-leveling our game. Bonus courses are coming. They're exclusive only to EPC members. If you want to be a part of EPC, if you want to be a part of this group where you're going to learn and expand and grow your capacity to lead with passion, with love, with fun, with delight, with joy, with pleasure, and plan in a way that gets more done in less time, this is the day you make the decision. "I'm signing up for EPC, I'm joining, I'm getting all of this bonus material. I'm getting access to all of the Empowered Principle programming. This is my year. This is my time."

I invite you in. The doors are open. Let's go. I'll see you inside of EPC. Take good care. Have a great week. Talk to you soon. Bye.

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