

Ep #365: Next Level Results (Back to Basics)



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 365.

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 principals. Happy Tuesday and happy holiday season. We are here. We are here for the break. You've made it. You've made it to December. Congratulations. I wish you a restful, peaceful, relaxing, delightful holiday season, holiday break. May all of your wishes come true.

Please plan out the experience you want to have, make sure it's balanced with fun and activity and friends and family and self-care and rest and replenishment. This is your time to celebrate the first half of the school year, and we are going to be holding the mid-year reboot for empowered principals this coming January. You need to sign up. Get into EPC.

We're going to be talking about how to reflect and celebrate in December, and then we're going to reboot mid-year to rejuvenate and generate more awareness, clarity, momentum. We're going to talk about how to overcome obstacles for the second half of the year, get you planned and prepared so you can feel good, you can remain rested, you can stay inspired, and you can lead. We want you leading with empowerment.

Join the mid-year reboot and be sure to register for EPC. The doors are opening in January. You can pre-register here in December. We begin January 8th. The mid-year reboot is the first week coming off of the break in January. You'll want to be there. The registration links are in the show notes. So be sure to check those out and get registered for both the mid-year reboot and EPC.

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It's going to be fun, invigorating. We're going to get planned, prepared, energized, and ready for the second half of the school year. Have an amazing break. Enjoy the replay show.

I just coached one of my A++ student clients. She's amazing. She's wonderful. She is a first year principal. I am telling you, it is magic what's happening over here with the Empowered Principal® Program and the coaching results that these clients are creating. It is madness. I am so, so excited to talk with you about this today.

So the topic of today is next level results. We're going to talk about how to create the next level of results for your school. What I mean by that is going from good to great. So I was coaching a client this week, and she said she was working on her rubric for her school. They were creating their site plan and looking at their goals.

She said, "Actually, I'm struggling a little bit to find the lack in my school." She said, "We're in a really good place. There's a lot of good things going on, and it's hard to find the lack." Which I thought was so fascinating that her brain was struggling to find the lack.

Now, to be fair, she said to me, "Actually, I'm harder on our school than I maybe should be, or I'm not sure." This is her first year. So she's trying to figure out what that is, how to calibrate herself. But she was saying, "I tend to be harder on us. I tend to give us a lower rubric score. But then teachers will say no, we are doing that. This is how we're doing it, and this is what's working, and this is where we've improved it, and this is how it's being implemented." She's like oh, okay.

Part of being new, right? You don't know everything that is happening on your campus when it's your first year, especially when it's working, right. If it's not working, you know about it. People are talking about it or it's obvious to you or somebody is complaining, or you can tell that there's a system or a protocol that's not quite working as well as it could. Or if your test scores are not where you want them to be. There are certain things that you can definitely tell when you walk into a school if it's working well.

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Now, this client of mine, she's a first year principal. So when she walked into her campus, it actually is a pretty well-oiled machine. A lot of things are working well. She said, "I'm trying to figure out how to write the goals so that I'm not discounting or dismissing what is working and what people are doing well. I don't want to write a goal that's already been achieved, and I don't want to make problems up that aren't there just to create a goal."

So she said, "I want to find the middle ground." She goes, "I keep thinking it's too harsh. Then the teachers are telling me where it's good. We definitely have some things to improve upon, but I want to have goals that have high impact."

As I was listening to her talk, what came up for me as her coach was the brain is always trying to look for the next problem to solve, right? It's looking for what's not working so it can be fixed so that it can go on to the next thing that's not working and fix that.

Sometimes our brain wants to create a problem where there isn't one. So I want you thinking about your school. When you're writing goals for your school, are you writing the goal because you have to have a goal? You're kind of finding something wrong so that you can spend time fixing it? Or are you acknowledging all of the things that are working and asking yourself to push higher than what the rubric is asking you to do?

You might have a school that's functioning really well where kids are happy and teachers are happy and things are performing. You want to be honest with yourself if it's going well. Don't create success intolerance by creating problems that aren't there, or by looking to tweak something that isn't going to really give you the best bang for the buck. If you have a system that's working at 95%, 90%/95%, why would you spend all your time and energy for a full school year trying to get it to 98%? Do you see what I'm saying?

So if something is working, why don't we create new goals, next level goals? It's going from good to great. You guys know that book, I think Jim Collins is the author. We're talking about taking our school from a place that's working and making it magical, extraordinary. Sometimes the reason

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we don't do this is because our brain is like it's good enough. Things are working. Why would I break it down? Why would I change it? Why would I push people to work harder and think outside the box and be more creative and all of these things? Why do all of that extra work if it's working?

Well, option number one is to let it work. Let it work until it breaks and then fix it. Or my recommendation and the approach that I invite my leaders to take is where are things working? Celebrate that, and let's bring it with us, and then 10X that. Let's take what we're doing well and double down on that and go from good to great.

Sometimes we've got to tear down good in order to create great, which is why the brain is going to resist thinking about next level problems, next level solutions, the next level of being extraordinary as a school and as a school leader.

So I was talking with this client. She said, "I always score us a little bit lower because I don't see us being good enough." But that's just the brain telling you it's safer to stay here and play around with tweaking maybe a 2% or 3% or 5% because it's a known entity and staying in the middle road. But my personal coach calls that the miserable maybe, when you're staying in the land of maybe. You don't want to stay in the middle road. You want to go to the next level. You want to go to the freeway. You want to go to that higher level, okay?

So let me invite you to think about this. What if your school is simply ready for the next level rubric? One that goes off the charts of the current rubric and extends you into greatness? You can make up your own rubric. If something's working, don't piddle around with the old rubric. You can take yourself in your school to the next one. It might not even be out there yet. You might have to invent it to create it for yourselves. The fun part about this is that it gives you greater possibilities to aim for.

Here's the thing. You don't have to wait for everything to be perfect to take your school to the next level, to the next rubric. You get to design that

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rubric. You can bring your current problems with you and look at that rubric. So when I asked my client what's coming up for you as I talk about taking your school from good to great, she said, "Well, I can see that we are really good. There's lots of good things happening, but I wouldn't identify us as great."

I said to her there's where you need to create clarity because that's just your brain wanting to hold back from acknowledging the truth of what's working. I think we spend more time holding our school back when things are working and celebrating them and then finding other ways to take us to the next level of greatness versus when something really is broken. When something's really broken, you know right away we've got to fix this. It catches your attention. It just zooms you in, right? You can't not see it.

So for many of you out there, you know exactly the top three things you need to be working on in your school, do those things because that work is taking your school to the next level. But if your school is pretty high functioning, what else can you work on that's not the same thing over and over and over, rinsing and repeating?

So you want to be honest with yourself, but you also don't want to keep spinning on the same old rubric, shooting for the same results and the same middle of the road efforts. So if you knew you were taking your school beyond the current results of the rubric that is available to you now, if you were going to skyrocket past that rubric, what results would come next?

I'm not just talking about academic scores and test scores and all of the current ways you're measuring. Most of us measure by academics and performance based and we do our mid-trimester assessments, end of trimester assessments, state testing. We have lots of measurements already in place.

I'm talking about finding other aspects of your school that actually enhance the performance and the experience for yourself, your teachers, your staff, your students, your community. Think about what it would look and feel like

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if you were focused on enhancing the quality of the experience for all of the people that are involved at your school, for all the stakeholders. What would a school look like that is at that next level? What would it look like? What would it feel like?

So what we're doing here is we're asking your brain to project out into the future into your vision, and sit in a moment in that vision having been realized. What does it feel like? What does it look like? What does it sound like? How do you feel? How are you showing up? What are other people doing? How are kids learning? How are they engaging? What do parents think? How do they feel? What does your district think of your school?

This is going to require your brain to go out into a new portal of possibility. Stay with me. I know this sounds very meta, but what I'm showing you that it's almost like we're playing in the little leagues on the rubric of the little leagues, and we want to go to the big leagues. But we've never thought about going to the big leagues because we're so focused on looking at the little league rubric. I'm asking us to like even if we are in the little leagues, that's okay, but what about the big leagues? What would it take to get us to the big leagues?

So I asked my client. I said let's just have fun. I said we've got 10 minutes left on this call. I want you for the next eight minutes to tell me everything. So here's some of the things that she said. Teachers are prepared and excited and ready for their day. They have time to fit in all the curriculum. This is just her brain drain, by the way. I'll talk about her list in a minute here.

But they have time to fit in all the curriculum. They make learning fun with the kids. They're building relationships. There's a lot of trust building going on. There is an equal amount of time and behavior and emotional regulations for both adults and students. You hear me on that one? Parents are involved. Teachers are involved with parents. Teachers aren't afraid to engage with parents and invite them in and work with them as a collaborators.

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Parents feel valued. Kids feel valued. Teachers feel valued. Kids are feeling successful. They're excited to learn. Failure is the path. I loved when she said this. We're going to talk more about that in a minute. Two kids are excited to learn. Teachers are excited to learn. Everyone's feeling motivated.

The kids want to help their friends out. So they're learning collaborative skills. The topics of instruction are exciting for adults and students alike. We're celebrating wins along the way. We are a culture where struggling to learn is not a problem, and we celebrate the struggle. We have a clear vision and a clear path. We have permission to keep trying things until they work.

I just had goose bumps when I was listening to her brain go into that portal of possibility, and here's what I want to offer. Go back and listen to that list again. What I noticed was it wasn't about making the school board happy or the superintendent happy or the test score people happy or the state happy with all of the numbers and all of the percentages and all the awards. Right? It's not about the state awards. It's not about School of the Year, Principal of the Year.

It's about the way that people think and feel and engage with the environment, with one another, with the curriculum. It's how we function as a little society within our school that makes it so successful. These aren't the things we tend to measure.

Now, I know there's a lot of conversations about school culture and climate, and I want you to bring everything you know, equity, diversion, inclusion, all of it with the culture, all the culture work. Like, I don't know all of the work out there. There's a lot of work. Bring it all together. But what I'm noticing is that our brain wants to focus on the test scores and the assessment scores, but there are so many other rubrics we can use to measure our success. Be thinking about that.

Now what I asked her to do, her homework for the week was for each statement that we wrote down. I take notes for her. So for each statement

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that I typed up, her work this week was to ask herself look through each one of these. Define what that means so that you can create a tangible measurement that you will know if you're on the path to this achievement, to this goal, to the success. Right? So what would it take to create that result?

Solve for them. Just brainstorm all the ways that that might be possible to achieve. So back to the first one, right? Teachers are prepared and excited and ready for their day. We need to define what does that mean, prepared? What is how will we know they're excited? How will we know they're ready? What will that look like and feel like?

This is the tedious work our brain doesn't want to do, but actually this is how we create intangible results by making them tangible. Teachers have time to fit in all the curriculum. What does that mean? That would mean prioritizing curriculum, identifying what curriculum we're going to focus on, and what we're not going to focus on. It's around the time. It's how we use our time. It's what we make that mean. What does it mean to fit in all the curriculum? We have to define that really clearly.

Now, I know this was her brain drain, so I'm not picking on it. I'm just saying that you have to get yourself to a place where this isn't the final list. You have to weed this out and really define what it means. So it's very simple, clear, tangible, and doable. But I want you to notice that the list is a lot about how people feel at the school.

So I invite you to do this. What does your next level school look like? What are the emotions that people are feeling? What are the thoughts that they're having about themselves, about their school, about their instructional quality, about their students? What are students thinking about teachers? What are students thinking about their school and their peers? What are your thoughts? Think about all the angles here, right?

What are the decisions that are being made? What are the approaches that you're taking? That just means your actions, right? What actions are you taking? What are the behaviors that people are exhibiting? Now, we're not

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painting a fairyland with rainbows and daisies. Let's be realistic. The human experience is the human experience.

This is not an exercise to avoid or bypass or circumvent any kind of negative experience. I would invite you to ask yourself what are we going to do when unpleasant experiences happen, when emergencies arise, when tragedy strikes, when trauma hits, when kids are dysregulated, when something happens to a teacher.

Like I want you to think about real life scenarios, but talk to yourself about how do I want our school to handle this, right? How do I want my school to handle when a student is sick, or a teacher passes away, or something tragic happens in our community? How do I want to set up my school so that in the worst of times, we're still at our best? Supporting each other, allowing time to process and grieve, and to hold space for one another.

This isn't just about academics. Schools are about community in addition to academics. I would invite you to even reconsider like are these academics teaching kids the skills they need in this current day and age? Right? You can go down a pretty significant rabbit hole here, and that's okay. I invite you to do that. I want your brain to go for it. I want you to go deep. I want you to explore your thoughts and go deep and mind your mind, right? Dig down deep. What else is possible? What would work better? How good can it get?

So take your school to the next level, and that starts with your brain, your brilliance, and your ideas. Go into that portal of possibility, and let's see what can happen. Have an amazing week. I'll talk to you next week. Take care. Bye.

Hey 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.

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