

# Ep #387: Tips for Meaningful Year-End Closure



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello, Empowered Principals. Welcome to episode 387.

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.

Well, hello my empowered principals. Welcome to today's podcast. So happy to be here with you today and to be celebrating the end of the school year with you. So, let's fire it up. Let's talk about creating closure for the year.

Now, I know, it's the end of May. You are running yourself ragged. You're rushing around. There's a lot going on. There are exceptional tasks that happen only at the end of the year. Most of you have wrapped up testing. You are in the process of finalizing hiring and closing out the end-of-year celebrations. There's a lot going on. And it can be a very tiring and exhausting few weeks at the end of the year, but it's also an uplifting energy.

When you are focused on all that's happened, all you've accomplished and looking forward to the end of the school year and the summer break and looking forward to all of the festivities that come with the summer of fun. And shameless plug here, Summer of Fun challenge is starting in June. If you are on Facebook, join the Empowered Principal Facebook group. We're doing our annual Summer of Fun challenge where we challenge ourselves and we support each other and cheer each other on to engage in life, to feel alive, to be alive, to be engaged, to have fun, to rest, to recover from the year, to reconnect with ourselves, with our friends, families, loved ones, and to do things that we love, to spend time embracing things that make us feel good.

The goal is to feel good, ladies and gentlemen. We aren't here on the planet to suffer. And I know that during the school year, it can feel like

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you're suffering. So, I invite you in to the Empowered Principal Facebook group. It's a public group. It's open to all school administrators or aspiring administrators. Hey, if you want to be in the energy of empowered principals, come on over. We'd love to have you.

Now, there is busyness and although I coach my clients to not use the word busy or to try and refrain from using the word busy, the energy output, the effort output at this time of year can be more intense than other parts of the year. And we can still decide to take stock of the year. To give yourself the luxury of reflecting back on the year and acknowledging at least one thing per month that you've accomplished.

Take a look at your calendar. Go back to August. Look at all you accomplished in the month of August, and then September, and then October, and how you got through the fall dip, and then November, you made it to Thanksgiving. And then we had December and the magic of the holiday season and all of the fun and festivities and the mid-year reboot and the celebrations and the reinvigoration and the rest and recovery, hopefully, that you achieved in the month of December and January.

And then we got into the winter season and we might have had a winter dip, but then we got back up and then it was March and here you are finishing observations and completing all of your evaluation work and coaching and mentoring your new teachers. All of that onboarding you did back in the fall. All of the coaching and mentorship you did, all of the conversations you had with staff and students and families.

All of the meetings you went to, the IEPs you were able to achieve and accomplish and connect with families and students. You have done an incredible amount of service for your community. And I want you to give yourself the luxury of acknowledging that. What felt good for you? What are you proud of in terms of how you handled something or just grateful that you had the perseverance to overcome something? Give yourself credit for the work you've done.

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And I know the urge is to give credit to your staff or to the team because we don't do this job alone. And that is correct. It is true and it's lovely and it feels good to celebrate, but I invite you to shower yourself with celebrations and acknowledgment and praise. Because we don't often give ourselves credit for the work we've done. Basically, we give other people credit for the work that we've done and we give them credit for the work they've done. We celebrate them. But it feels very uncomfortable to give it to ourselves. And I want you to question why that is. And this really matters. It matters as a leader and it matters as a coach and mentor to your teachers and it matters for student learning. Hear me out here, okay?

Think about this. Why do we not celebrate ourselves? Why do we not allow ourselves the luxury of closure, of acknowledgment, of closure, of being at peace with this school year and bringing the best memories with us and then moving forward and planning for next year? Why do we not do this? I've studied this. It doesn't feel comfortable to celebrate. We're taught that if you celebrate, particularly if you celebrate yourself, that it's unbecoming and that we should be humble. It's not socially acceptable. You're egotistical or self-centered or self-absorbed or narcissist. You know, you only care about yourself or you're looking for attention. It has a negative connotation.

We also think that, oh my gosh, other people are going to feel bad. They're going to judge you for celebrating. They're going to resent you for celebrating. I had a client say to me, "I can't celebrate myself because the teachers will feel bad about themselves because they're not happy and they will be resentful. Oh, it must be easy for you to celebrate the end of the year. You weren't in a classroom teaching all year." And so we worry what other people will think if we celebrate our success and bring some finality to this school year.

So, if that holds you back, if that's an obstacle in your way, I want you to consider that. What are the objections in your mind when it comes to celebrating? Is it your fear of being seen in a certain way by other people?

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Are you worried you're going to hurt their feelings? Does it feel like I get to celebrate, if I win, you lose? Is it an all or none thinking? What's holding you back? But I also really want you to consider your definition of celebrating. What does celebration mean to you? What does acknowledgment and validation and honoring your wins, what does that mean to you? What do you consider to be celebration? Do you envision throwing a great big party? Are you walking around campus wearing a tiara and a cape and asking everyone to clap for you?

Think about what it is when you say like, I don't feel comfortable celebrating or it's not polite to celebrate. What does celebration look like? Because celebration, true celebration is not about flaunting or tooting one's horn. And I think we get this image of, I think about sporting events where there is a win and a loss. There is a definite line in the sand. One team is considered to have won, the other team is to considered to have lost and the fans of the winning team celebrate while the fans of the losing team mourn. And we go out and we flaunt and we toot our horns and we get in people's face and yeah, you lost, you were a loser. We're the winner. It feels so good.

But does it feel good? Like to get in somebody's face who's not feeling happy about the outcome of a game, to get into their face and say like you're the loser and I'm the winner? A lot of people feel that, feel very justified in that. But when you watch it, it's not a celebration in the sense of I feel good and I get to feel good on my own accord and somebody else doesn't have to feel bad for me to feel good.

So true celebration is just feeling good, being proud, being happy with the outcomes. It's not about flaunting and acknowledging yourself so that others are in the shadow or in the loss of or in pain because of it. We think that if we celebrate ourselves, we're going to make other people feel bad. But you can see this is a very classic case of all or none thinking. Celebration is about the acknowledgment. You acknowledge yourself for the work.

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If acknowledging yourself feels too uncomfortable for you, let's try this. You can acknowledge the outcome that you've created. Celebrate the results that you have created, that you have produced, the lessons you have learned, the skills you have gained, the wisdom you have collected. Celebrate the lessons and the skills and the wisdom and the results and the outcomes. If it feels too close to home, too uncomfortable to celebrate you or you envision yourself celebrating in a way that might make other people feel offended or hurt or resentful, celebrate the outcomes.

And the other thing about celebrations is that you don't have to have other people witness you celebrating. You can celebrate your wins in complete isolation if you want to. You can celebrate them internally if you want to. You can have celebrations in private if you desire. Or if you want to, you can also celebrate publicly.

It is not criminal to celebrate. It's not criminal to honor and acknowledge your efforts, your work, your accomplishments, your goals, your outcomes. You can acknowledge it in any way that feels good. That's the key, acknowledging yourself in whatever way feels good for you, but to acknowledge it in some way, shape, or form. You can simply write it down if you want. But be sure this year, as you're closing out the year, to recognize yourself and the effort and your wins and your accomplishments and your gains.

And here's the truth. As you're creating awareness around self-celebration and acknowledging your outcomes and your wins for the year, it's going to feel a little uncomfortable at first, and that's okay. It's just because you're not used to it. It's new to feel celebratory about yourself if you have been told that it's not okay or it's not socially acceptable. So, the reason this is important is that you want to model self-celebration. You want to model what it looks like to bring closure to a task or an event or a program or a process or a school year. Right?

We go through the year and we want other people to celebrate themselves. We want our teachers to look back and say, what am I most proud of about

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this year? What feels good? What did I learn as a teacher? How did I grow? We want to practice self-reflection, not because we are egotistical, but because it's how we learn, it's how we grow. And acknowledging our skills that we've gained and the hardships we've overcome and the times where we did it right and we won and we accomplished something we didn't think we could accomplish, it feels good. We want to model this as leaders. We want to model this in classrooms.

Imagine students who went back through the year and looked at where they were in August, the skills they've learned, the friends they've made, the good times they've had. It's like looking through a memory book, a photo book where you're looking back at the year and celebrating, "Oh, I remember that great time. I remember this. Ooh, this one was really hard. Oh, I remember when we had this conflict and we solved it and I remember when our teacher did this and that." Creating memories with kids and creating celebrations to remind them of their growth and their development and their progress and the hardships that they have overcome.

So, when you're bringing closure to the end of this year, it's not just about us. And we tend to feel very uncomfortable when we think we're doing an activity or an exercise or practicing some kind of ritual or celebration. When we think it's self-centered and we think it's just for us, that feels very uncomfortable and we don't really understand the value of it. But when we look at when we do it and we invite others to do it and we see the value of closure, the value of celebration and its impact on our identity as leaders, as teachers, as students, then you will be more open to that discomfort. And I promise you this, you will get better at this. It's like being new. It's when you're new to celebrating, you will be uncomfortable at first because it feels a little clumsy, it feels a little awkward, but it will get easier because it feels very good to acknowledge ourselves.

And doing so builds up your confidence. It builds up your belief in yourself and it builds up what you believe is possible to accomplish. When you look back and you see all of the things that you've done, you're like, "Holy cow,

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look at all that I did." It builds up your belief in what's possible to accomplish in the future. You gain momentum when you celebrate and you look back and you acknowledge and honor yourself and validate, that was really hard and I did it. That year, this situation, that conversation, those meetings or this, you know, maybe you were fundraising to try and get a new playground or to get, I don't know, so many things schools need, right? Maybe you needed a new roof or you needed, you needed new safety measures put in or you needed a new platform and you're, you worked with your community and they were able to work with you and accomplish this. That wouldn't have happened without your leadership.

So as you acknowledge yourself and the wins, you expand what's possible for you and you tap into a greater potential. It becomes a win, win, win, win. A win for you, a win for teachers, a win for students, a win for the community, for the district. So it's worth going through the initial discomfort of celebration, even though it feels a little bit awkward.

Because here's what's true. There is a difference between arrogance and celebrating what is true. Celebrating the delight of the accomplishment is not about your ego or stroking your ego or as people will say like toot your own horn or focus on yourself. It's not that. There's a difference between celebrating what has actually been accomplished. That's not arrogance. Arrogance is maybe enhancing the accomplishment or celebrating it so that you can receive status, title, attention, and validation externally.

So just notice that there is a difference in celebrating out of arrogance and the need to be externally validated and celebrating what's just honest to goodness truth, what you have accomplished, what you have done, what you are proud of, what feels good, and being delighted in all that you were able to do this year.

Now, sometimes we fail to celebrate ourselves because we feel jaded. I want to point this out because it is a difference in where the celebration is coming from and the reason behind the celebration and what we're actually trying to accomplish in the art of celebration. Sometimes we feel jaded.

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We're like, "Well, I don't want to celebrate because others didn't celebrate me. I did so much throughout the year that went unrecognized or uncelebrated.

So I have to just sit here and celebrate myself for all the things I did and nobody even cared, nobody even acknowledged it." We feel a little jaded. And if you think about that, that's where our ego's kind of stepping in and saying like, "Hey, I worked so hard for you as your servant leader. I would like you to celebrate me and acknowledge me for all the hard work that I did." We want other people to celebrate us, but we're not willing to celebrate it ourselves. Just notice that. We want other people to acknowledge our efforts.

And I've thought about this. Like, it does feel so good when somebody acknowledges you or validates you or appreciates you. It's not that we need to avoid the receiving of compliments, the receiving of celebration from other people. But when we celebrate ourselves and acknowledge it, we are more likely to attract and receive external validation. So when we don't validate ourselves, we're kind of saying energetically, I don't really need celebration. I don't need acknowledgment, I don't need validation because I'm not willing to do it myself. And so other people kind of get a vibe like this, you know, no celebration, no validation, no accomplishments or accolades required.

I've contemplated this. Why do we crave acknowledgment from others? I believe that we crave the acknowledgment when the actions that we took were not taken from our own personal desire to take the action, but rather from the energy of having to or obligated to. When you think about that, when I have to do this job, I'm obligated to do this, I'm responsible for this. That feels very heavy, but we're doing it because of other people's expectations, of what other people desire of, of what we think other people want us to do. So stay with me on this. It's very sneaky and it's very subtle, but you will be able to start catching yourself doing this and you'll see it from within.

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Let me use an example outside of the context of education so that it's easier to see. This is something that I've observed in my personal life. I've observed people who donate extensive amounts of money and time to their favorite organizations. They choose to donate time and money because they want to do it. It feels good for them. They enjoy donating their time and their money. They take personal delight in doing so because it feels aligned for them. They decide to gift their resources because it's what they value. They are doing it from the mindset of this is what I want to do. This feels good. This feels right. It feels aligned for me. I would choose to donate my time and money to this organization for myself regardless of what other people think.

I consider resources in leadership, your time, your energy, your attention, your focus, how you prioritize based on what you value. When it's in alignment, you will do that work, you will take those actions, you will put in the effort, the energy, the time because it's what you want to do, it's what feels good for you, it's what you value, regardless of what other people think. And when you're very aligned, and I've seen this outside of the context of education, other people's opinion doesn't matter.

Someone could say, "Hey, you're giving so much energy and time to X organization. Why are you doing that? Or why don't you give less or maybe you need more or maybe give it over here." Other people have other values, other opinions. When someone's aligned to the way that they spend their resources, it doesn't matter what other people think. They do it because it feels good to them. I serve in this way because I want to serve in this way.

And believe me, people out in the world are going to have their thoughts and opinions about what you are doing no matter what. Some will agree, some will not agree. The people who love it tend to be the people who are receiving those resources and the people who dislike it very much tend to be the people who are not receiving the resources. Right?

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So if you're donating to cause A or to institution A because that's what you love or you're spending a lot of time and energy as a leader on this priority, the people who love that priority, the people who also are in alignment with that value of what you are doing and what you're working on will be in agreement and they will support you, they will clap for you and they will cheer you on and give you external validation.

But the people who aren't in alignment with that value or with that priority or with that project or task or however you're spending your time and your effort, your energy, your focus and attention and money and resources and human resources and all of those things are not going to be clapping for you. They're going to be trying to convince you to sell you to shift your focus, to shift what you value.

So you have to be in alignment with yourself because there will always be somebody who loves it and always be somebody who dislikes it. But the person, you, the person who's choosing to donate their resources and in leadership terms, how you spend your time, your energy, your focus, your attention, what you work on, where you put your work isn't interested or swayed by the opinions of others because they are in alignment with themselves. They are in tune with what they value and they are acting in alignment with what they value.

So when you're doing what you love people and when you're doing what you value, even though it's hard work, even though it's frustrating at times, even though you fail, even though you fall down, even though you get sucker punched or you there's a huge plot twist and you didn't see it coming, you still get up in the day and you go do the work not because other people are clapping for you. It's fine to receive that. And when you can allow that and receive that and not need it at the same time, double win. But you still get up and do it because it's what you value. It's an alignment.

So, I've seen this where when people are in tune with what they value and they're acting in alignment with what they value, no one has to

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acknowledge them or clap for them or list their name in the newsletter or the weekly bulletin or pat them on the back or have a celebration or bring them up on stage or give them a certificate.

In fact, when somebody's truly doing it for themselves, they often resist that external acknowledgment. There are people who donate millions of dollars and they do it anonymously because it's what they value and quite frankly, they don't want the clapping, the people who love it, they don't want the external validation, but they also don't want the hate from the people who aren't getting it, right? So they do it for peace because it's what they align to.

Then there are people who donate excessive amounts of their time, money, energy, attention, focus to an organization because they believe it's what other people want them to do. They're chasing the clap, the appreciation, the acknowledgment. They feel it's what they should do with their time or money or what they believe they have to do because it's what their parents did or what family members did or what they were told to do.

They do it because it's tradition. They do it out of fear. If they don't do it, what will happen to them? It's always been done this way. They do it because they want to help other people, even though they don't get personal enjoyment out of it. They feel that they should help in this way because it's the right way to help. They feel like they don't have another choice or that there isn't another way to serve in a way that they want to serve or to help people in a way that also feels good for them.

So it's not that they are not aligned to the cause, like they want to help people, but they feel pressured to do it or they feel compelled because of other people's opinions or because of tradition or because they have been told this is the right way to do it or the only way to do it or this is what you need to value. That's really what it comes down to. When you're told what to value and you're told how to honor what you are supposed to value. And they end up saying yes to things, not because it feels good for them.

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They say yes to things because they don't want to disappoint others. They feel like they can't say no. And they want to be seen externally as helpful and generous and gracious and nice and obedient. They want to feel helpful and generous and gracious and nice and in service, but internally, that's not how it feels. It feels frustrating. It feels controlled. It feels exasperated and it feels resentful.

And when you're in this zone, you're taking actions because you believe you have to instead of truly internally wanting to. And you've seen this. People donate publicly with the intention of other people noticing them. They volunteer because they want to be recognized in the bulletin or in the newsletter and they are not pleased if they don't get acknowledged. If they don't see their name on that list or they don't get a call out on the intercom or they don't get called up to stage or they don't get that certificate or somebody omits them, whether it's accidental or they just failed to acknowledge them, these people will be very upset and they might not choose to volunteer next time because they weren't acknowledged. And the reason that they would be upset or they would maybe pout a little bit or they would be offended is that ultimately, the reason they decided to take the actions of volunteering or putting in their time and effort was they wanted that external recognition.

And I've noticed this when I coach school leaders. Sometimes we find ourselves in the mindset of doing the work and showing up out of obligation or responsibility or because we have to and because the teachers are complaining so we try to fix it or the parent has a complaint, we try to fix it, or the kids are out of control so we try to fix it. And we're out there fixing all the things trying to make the people happy so that we can be happy and then we're frustrated because we're doing it for the people.

Now, we all got into this job because we were called to it. We love children, we love to teach. We enjoy being in the energy of a school environment. We value education and we feel good about the work that we do and the way that we contribute. But we also have moments where we tell

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ourselves, "Oh, I have to do this. I have to do that. There's no other way. I just have to do it. I can't say no to them. I have to do it. The teachers will be upset. Then they'll complain, then they'll file a grievance." And we start doing things that we feel we have to do, not because we value it, but because we don't want other people to get upset.

Or we do things that we value having done, like the volunteer tea. We want the volunteers to be appreciated and acknowledged and recognized, but we feel obligated to throw the volunteer tea and to throw ourselves in and spend hours prepping and decorating, picking up all the sodas and the beverages and the snacks and the teas and the sweets and the treats because we worry that if we don't validate and acknowledge them externally, that they won't come back or that other people should appreciate that we are appreciating them, right?

So just take a look. How have you been recently spending your resources? And I mean your leadership resources, your time, your attention, your energy, and your effort.

And think about this year as you're closing out the year and bringing closure to create a little memory, a mental memory book for this year. What actions have you been taking and what was fueling them? Was it alignment to what you value? Was the task completed in alignment for the duration or did your mind shift a little bit at some point into doing it for the recognition versus doing it for your personal satisfaction and your personal fulfillment?

I think about all the times where I went above and beyond for the end of the year events and it started with me enjoying the planning and the preparation, but as I dove into the event, my OCD mind and my little attention to detail and perfectionism tendencies mind started to add details and add tasks and create higher and higher goals and higher, higher expectations and standards for this event that shifted my energy.

I was no longer fueled by just personal enjoyment and letting it be what it was, shifted into perfection energy. What would others think? What if I miss

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something? Then I got fearful of was I doing this wrong? And I was thinking about what other people were going to think about the event, about me and it got into actions based on not wanting to disappoint others versus the joy and satisfaction of hosting the end of the year events that felt good for me, for us, for them, for the greater good, right?

So, as the school year ends, give yourself the luxury of personal closure. Celebrate what worked, what you accomplished, the effort you gave, the care and concern you put into each day, the conversations you held, the tasks that you completed, the love that you felt and shared, the happiness, the days that went great, acknowledge all of it.

And you can acknowledge what you didn't get done or what didn't go as planned or the hardships and things you learned, the sorrow, the disappointments, the mistakes, but they provided wisdom and knowledge so you can celebrate the outcome of those hardships. And there's a list of we didn't get to them or to-dos that didn't get done. That's okay. There's always next year. So let yourself acknowledge and appreciate and validate who you are, what you've accomplished, how you've grown, and the fact that you are an Empowered Principal.

Happy end of the school year. I love you all so much. Join us for Summer of Fun challenge. Be sure to join up for EPC. We are taking a break in June and July for rest and recovery and fun and we're going to get started the 1st of August. Can't wait to see you there. Looking forward to working with you. Have a wonderful week. Take care. Talk to you next week. Bye.

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