

Ep #388: Instruction After Testing



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello, Empowered Principals. Welcome to episode 388.

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. Happy Tuesday. Happy June. Happy summer. Welcome to this week's podcast. Oh my goodness, what a celebration. We just wrapped up EPC for the 24-25 school year, and we are launching into the Summer of Fun challenge. So, listen up, guys. Summer of Fun challenge is underway. And I want you to know there is something more energizing than simply reaching the finish line of the school year.

That feels amazing. And what's even more amazing, besides the fact that you've crossed the finish line and it's summer, because come on, who doesn't love summer? It's a wonderful season. It's knowing that you're going to have fun this summer. Yes, my empowered principals, it is that time. It is summertime. I'm so energized and so excited.

Summertime in the world of the Empowered Principal, for those of you who are brand new to the podcast or you haven't been through a summer with us before, you know it means that the Summer of Fun challenge is underway. So, come on into Facebook, join the School Leader Summer of Fun challenge. Just Google or search Empowered Principal. You'll find us, we'll pop up. It's an open group to anybody who's an aspiring school leader or current school leader, district leader, state leader. It doesn't matter what leadership position you're in, or if you're simply wanting to be around the energy of the empowered principals, come on in. Join us and let's have some fun.

This is a very supportive community. We're looking to bring fun back into school administration and into your lives. You guys, we're here on the planet to have some fun, to enjoy our lives, to engage, to feel alive. So this

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year's theme, this Summer of Fun challenge's theme, is being alive. What are you going to do each and every day during your summer that makes you feel alive and engaged with your life, with your friends, with your family, with yourself? This is about finding ways to bring joy and fun and happiness and delight and pleasure into your every single day.

It's fun. It's free to join. All you have to do is go out, have some fun, feel alive, do things that invigorate you, post pictures, share about your experiences. If you're having trouble having fun, you can share that too. We're there to support you and cheerlead you on and coach you and guide you. This group is completely free. It's so fun. Everybody's really supportive. It's really fun to see what everybody is doing and how different people get lit up by different things. I love this Summer of Fun challenge.

My dream come true would be to have a seasonal challenge, like the fall of fun, the winter of fun, the spring of fun, but I know people get busy with the school year. But the Summer Fun challenge, this is where it's at, folks. So, for every post you share and every comment you make cheering other people on, your name is added to a weekly drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card. And you also will receive 90% off on your registration fee into EPC, the Empowered Principal Collaborative, which is my group coaching program and mastermind program for the 2025-20256 school year.

You will get a 90% discount, which means instead of paying \$1997, you simply pay \$199.70 for the entire year of coaching. Incredible. That's the biggest gift. The \$50 gift card, it's just a little tease to get you in the door so that you can go buy yourself something to light you up and get you ready for the school year. But the real gift is the gift of the Empowered Principal Collaborative. So join us, okay? All right.

I want to share with you something that came up with a client of mine, and we have talked about it in EPC multiple times between April and June. So I know this may be coming in a little late for those of you who have already ended your school year. If you ended in May or early June, this might be

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dropping a touch late, but I want you thinking about it to put it in your plans for the upcoming year. And if you're still in session, if you've got one, two, three, four weeks left, consider doing this, consider having these conversations.

So, I was talking to one of my clients, and she was trying to find the balance between allowing teachers to have fun and to do things that are different, a little out of routine, but also maintaining structure. And we had held this conversation in EPC around testing, what happens after testing. So, for some schools, they push the testing clear towards the end, so there's only a week or two after testing, and people are basically just bringing closure, celebrating, wrapping up their classrooms, and then they're out the door. For other people, you test in March or April, and then you go for four, six, or eight weeks after testing.

And because of the culture of testing, we know that we live and breathe this test. As much as we don't want to believe that we live and breathe the test, we actually do, because there is an energy before the test as we're preparing for it, and as we're going through the school year. And then there's an energy right around testing and through the testing window where we're really focused, we're really serious, we're asking people to give it all they've got and focus and do their very best work, and everyone's putting in so much mental and emotional effort. And then there's after the test. So there's before testing, during testing, and after testing.

And after testing, the energy shifts, the energy changes, and you'll notice where people feel a little more lax or there's been this big buildup to the test, and after the test, it feels like everything falls apart. It feels like chaos ensues. And if you think about why this is happening, the simple truth is that your teachers, your students, and probably even ourselves as leaders, our STEAR Cycle has changed. And what I mean by that, if you're new to this podcast, the STEAR Cycle is simply thoughts, feelings, and actions, and how you approach your day with your decisions and your actions.

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So, what happens is, during the test, we have a different set of thoughts. We have a different kind of emotional energy that's in play, and our approach, our decisions and actions, the behaviors that we exhibit and the results that we create during that testing window, there's a particular way we're thinking, a particular way we're feeling, and an energetic way we're approaching testing.

And then, after the test, what you'll notice is a different set of thoughts that happen. Woo, that test is done. Oh, we no longer need to be so focused. We don't need to be so structured. We don't need to try so hard. We don't need to teach so hard. We don't need to learn so hard. We want to relax a little. We want to, we've given a lot of effort and energy and focus.

That mindset shifts. And what happens is when the mindset shifts and the energy shifts, we also notice behaviors shifting. So, administrators are coming to me and saying, "Oh my gosh, I hate the time after testing. Everything's so chaotic, behaviors are on the uptick, no one's on good behavior, everybody's tired, the routines are out of place, we need more structure, the kids need routine, but we're doing all these parties and doing all these other projects and celebrations." So, I just wanted to bring it to our attention here. We are simply noticing a shift in mindset.

So there's thoughts around before test, after the test, during the test, as you've noticed. And this particular client that I was working with, she was struggling. She said, I want to balance this. I really want the students to celebrate and have fun, but I also want there to be a structure where kids can feel they know what to expect, and they know what's coming, and they know how to behave, and the set of standards and expectations are still there while they're having fun. So she was looking for the land of AND here.

And I am really excited to have this conversation with you because I do believe it's possible for the instructional window between the end of the test and the last day of school to be a balance of fun and structure. Right? We

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want to have a set of consistency and a set of routines, but we also need to start with what is the STEAR Cycle that is happening that shifts. What are the thought shifts? What are the emotional shifts, energetic shifts? What are the behavioral shifts you're noticing?

And a lot of times it will be teachers are less structured, they're less planned, they are letting kids have a little less structure, a little less consistency, and the standards shift. So then the boundaries kind of shift, and this is where we feel the chaos. There isn't as much structure, there isn't as much consistency because there isn't as much planning going on.

So, really what this comes down to, as a leader, you have to decide what is my STEAR Cycle? What am I thinking and feeling about the test, after the test? What are my opinions about what instruction should look like after testing or what the school year, what's the energy that we should be aiming for between testing and the end of the school year? Is there the land of AND where we can have the fun, we can have the parties, we can have the celebrations, we can do reflections, we can do contemplations, and create memory books or reflect on the year.

There are so many activities that can be held between testing and the end of the year that include some academics, but also include all of the types of learning that teachers crave to do, but feel like they can't because they're so tied to pacing guides and curriculum standards and following the curriculum.

Perhaps this time of the year could be maintaining routines and structures, reminding students of the standards of expectations that we hold for them, and creating routines for May and June specifically that are a little bit adjusted and a little more flexible, but also have some structure to them so that kids and teachers still feel that they are able to function and regulate themselves.

So, what I want to offer is this. There is value in the last weeks of school, even though it may look different. So, when you're thinking about what you

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value and how you would like the focus to be on your campus between testing and the end of the year, consider that we can decide what the structure of May and June look like and make them valuable. It doesn't mean that you only have to focus on academics. People could be teaching kids life skills, human skills, reflection skills, contemplation skills, planning, goal setting, celebrating achievements, building up their identity, looking at where they were back in August to where they are now.

There are other skill sets beside curricular and academic and cognitive development tools and skills that we can help kids expand upon physically, mentally, emotionally. The skills that humans need to thrive, they can do. There's plenty of things that people can be teaching and creating structure at the same time. So, bringing mindfulness activities into the end of the year. How can we make the end of the year valuable for students and teachers, and also give them that flexibility of, they are tired, they have put a lot of effort and exerted a lot of mental and emotional power into their school year and into their learning.

The rigor of the academic work may shift, but teachers can still be prepared, maintain routines, and structures. It just might not be as focused on the academic piece, but it could be focused on celebrations, reflections, goal setting, creating memories, looking forward to the upcoming school year, and allowing teachers a little bit of flexibility. But here's the key: communicate these ideas and these routines for the end of the year in advance. Talk with your teachers in February or March, or April.

Have these conversations about what do we want our campus to look and feel like? What do we want the vibe to be? What do we want the experience to be? What do we want kids to learn after testing in April, in May, in June, once our testing is done? And what is the energetic, the emotional energy we want on campus? Do we want kids free-for-alling and getting all crazy and having no boundaries? Probably not. Do we want it to be so rigid that we stick to teaching academics only, and we hold kids and we don't celebrate and we hold them accountable to that pacing guide until

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the last second of the last day of school? Maybe not. Maybe yes, maybe no.

What feels good for your school? Where does celebration fit in? Where does allowing people to have their goodbyes and have their parties and reflect on the year and celebrate their growth and look back where they were in August and September and all the things they've learned and the memories they've created and the friendships they've created and how they've matured physically, mentally, emotionally, psychologically, academically, intellectually. There's so much to celebrate, but we can do celebrations in a way that is structured and fun and not exhausting and not so rigid that teachers just decide it's too much and they go into all-or-none thinking. It doesn't have to be all fun, and it doesn't have to be no structure. It can be the land of AND.

So consider that as you're thinking about what instruction is going to look like after testing, whether you're in it still now, or whether you're going to plan this and put a seed and plant that seed and cultivate this idea in conversation with your staff for next year. I think it's an amazing thing to talk about. It's something we have developed in EPC. We've come up with some plans and some ideas, and we brainstorm together. I hope you will join us for EPC next year.

Last year was epic. This coming July, I'm hosting my very first in-person event for members of EPC only. I am so excited to be coaching live for three days. We're going to be doing this work hard, play hard mentality where we are vacationing and relaxing, restoring our energy, recovering, resting, and we're also learning, growing, planning, and getting ready for the 25-26 school year.

So, with all of that in mind, I wish you well. Happy June, happy summer. Join us for the Summer of Fun challenge in our Facebook group, the Empowered Principal Facebook group. And I look forward to speaking with

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you all next week. Have an amazing week. Talk to you soon. Take good care. Bye.

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 where you can sign up for weekly updates and learn more about the tools that will help you become an emotionally fit school leader.