

## Ep #426: A Rhythm Reset



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

## Ep #426: A Rhythm Reset

Hello, empowered principals. Welcome to episode 426.

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, and welcome to the podcast. Happy Tuesday. I am re-recording this episode in real time because I guess last week's episode did not upload correctly or my mic was off. Something did not meet the standard. And you know what? At The Empowered Principal, we show up, we do what it takes to get it right for you guys.

So, I listened to the raw recording that I had submitted and my producer was spot on. It was kind of funky. I used a different mic. Actually, my original mic that I used to use in the beginning, but now I have this new Yeti mic, and it's a little more compact so I can transport it. And I've been on the road a lot, so I have been using my smaller mic, and it seems to be working beautifully. So, here we are, ready to go. And it's kind of appropriate for this podcast because it's called A Rhythm Reset.

It's the time of year in the world of the principals and district leaders where you're ending out the winter season. Although, as I record this, we're having a major winter storm in the Sierras right now, but it's still the end of the winter season in the school world. It's the end of the observation periods, the evaluations have to get done. People are making decisions about their career for the upcoming year, if they're going to stay, if they're going to go, if they're going on leave, if they're retiring, if they want to change grade levels, if they want to change schools. All of that HR busyness is starting as you're wrapping up the evaluation process.

It's also the season that I noticed in the spring where a lot of conversations around IEPs, 504s, student success meetings, any kind of student academic progress, behavior issues, they tend to spike in the spring

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because people are saying, "Whoa, it's the spring season and we don't have the progress we were hoping for or we're not seeing the changes or we're not seeing the evolution of progress that we would like to see." And now we are a little panicked, we're concerned, and we want to request testing. We want to request a meeting. We want to request a 504. We want to request assessment for IEP. You will see an uptick of this as you close out the winter and open up your spring season.

So, you're at the end of a season. And at the end of each season, your plans and your approach to your plan, so in the world of the empowered principal, we create three-month plans. We have a seasonal plan. So, fall, winter, spring, summer. And at the end of a season, it can feel like you are enacting that plan, you are implementing your plan from a more reactive approach than proactive because as the plan unfolds and your work goes on a daily level around and around, it can feel like loose ends start to form and things start to get a little messy or a little tangled or a little chaotic. And we go from being a little more proactive in our approach and our daily decisions and actions into a more reactive approach.

So it can feel like this big snowball effect is happening where there's pressure mounting, there's tension mounting around getting things done. And as time passes, you feel this pressure of progress and performance and achievement and accomplishment. And if those things aren't happening in the timeframe in which you believe they should be happening, it can feel like the pressure of leadership, your job, and the expectations and demands that people have can weigh in and get a little heavy on those shoulders. And it can cause you to go into reactive mode.

So, what I mean by reactive mode is it feels like you show up to work and you're putting out fires and reacting to the day and what it's throwing at you versus feeling some sense of calm or some sense of control as things are coming up. So, this is a normal part of the planning process and the leadership process. I want to state that because it can feel like something's gone terribly wrong, that you've not honored your plan or that you've done

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something wrong or that everybody else around you is doing something wrong.

So, it is a normal part of the leadership process, the leadership experience, and the planning process to have moments where it feels like you are in front of the great big snowball coming down the mountain and it's chasing you versus you pushing it or you feeling like you're in control of navigating the leadership, the vision, what's going on in your school, okay? So just normalize that. Nothing's gone wrong. It's normal. You don't need to quit your job. You don't need to go back into the classroom. You're doing amazing, okay?

But the goal is to be able to acknowledge when you're in an overwhelm cycle and when you feel yourself reacting versus responding. And this awareness piece is the most challenging because when you're in an overwhelm cycle, you can also feel very productive. It's a little sneaky, but here's the difference. The key difference between being in a success cycle and feeling productive and an overwhelm cycle and thinking that you're being productive is that it will feel different. It will feel overwhelming. It will be exhausting. It will feel heavy, difficult, challenging. It will feel like you're spinning out, like stagnancy.

So you're doing and you're busy. It's not that you're just sitting at your desk not being productive. You're physically moving around, you're tangibly crossing things off of your list perhaps, but the feeling is overwhelm. The feeling is exhaustion. The feeling is maybe exasperation or a little desperation or a little hopelessness of like, what is the point here? Why am I spinning out? Okay?

They both feel productive. So just be aware of that. It's like, I'm doing all the things. So why do I feel this way? That's an overwhelm cycle. It's when you're in a cycle of reacting versus feeling stability and in control of your actions, decisions, and the day. Now, does that mean you never have wipeout days that you should always be in a success cycle? Absolutely not.

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It's about a 50/50, folks. So, if you're on the higher end of 50% between success cycles and overwhelm cycles, that's wonderful.

If you are at the end of your winter season and you're feeling like you're in a state of overwhelm, a state of chaos, a state of like flailing, you can simply invite yourself to do a rhythm reset. These emotions that you're feeling, especially at the end of a season here, at the end of a three-month plan, they are information. It's communication. It's the signals from your body to your brain, inviting you into awareness so that you can inquire as to what's going on for you. What's coming up? Why are you feeling the way you're feeling?

You might notice yourself really frustrated or exasperated or annoyed, kind of on the anger end, frustration end, or you might feel yourself in the doubt, overwhelm, anxiety, stressed out end of the spectrum. Or you might just be a combination of all of the feels. You might be one-third overwhelmed, one-third anxiety ridden, and one-third frustrated. It just doesn't matter. But these emotions that you're feeling, when you're feeling a little chaotic, and you're feeling frayed, and you're feeling pulled in a million different directions, all of that, it's an indication that it's time to slow down and do a reset and get back into a rhythm that feels more aligned for you, okay?

Something is just a little bit off, something's out of rhythm, something needs to be addressed, something needs some attention. Perhaps it needs you to zoom out and look at it at a more global level. And what I mean by that is these emotions are just an invitation to stop and slow down, take a breath, and then look inward into the problem behind the problem.

So for example, I coached on this last week, and this is why I made this podcast, and now I'm re-recording this podcast, this is the content that came up. It was one of my principals who's a one-on-one client. She's also in EPC, and she was feeling a little annoyed that everyone seemed to be coming into the office and asking for a room. They needed space to do this project or to test this student or to have this meeting. And the rooms were already full. Activities had already been planned in the extra little spaces

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around campus. So, the office staff and the principal were spending time putting out fires trying to figure out where they were going to put this person and where they were going to put that person, and then the person would be unhappy because they had a preferred spot. They wanted to be in their spot of preference, but that spot wasn't available.

So the principal was trying to appease the person asking while also annoyed that they didn't know that all of these spots were taken, okay? I feel this deeply because this happened on my campus a lot. Everybody thinks they can just get the spot they want when they want it, on demand. And the truth is that there are a lot of things going on in the spring and there are spaces being utilized when other people aren't aware. So, in the moment, we're reacting. We are trying to solve the surface problem, which is this person needs a space and these three spaces are taken. Where do I put them? Oh, there's a little nook and cranny in the library. Oh, there's a little nook and cranny in the resource room or you know, you find some little spot for them to go. They're not happy, but at least they can get their job done. And then you're annoyed because it took you 15 minutes to figure out where to put them. And now, you feel out of rhythm.

And this keeps happening. So, when the principal came to the group and brought this up, one, we could see that there was a problem behind the problem. There needed to be a system put in place or some kind of protocol or some kind of process that needed to be considered and implemented to eliminate the problem. But when you're in it, you've got blinders on. You're just putting out the fire. You're not thinking about what caused the fire the moment the fire's happening. You're thinking about putting out the fire. You're not thinking about what started the fire. It doesn't matter. What matters is there's a fire and you've got to put it out.

So that's what's so great about EPC. You can now analyze what started the fire. Why do I have all these fires? What's creating this fire in the first place so that I can address the core issue, the problem behind the problem, and

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eliminate the fire from starting, or at least keep it to a small little flame, right?

So, the initial problem in this scenario is that people are demanding a space. You're going to solve for it, find a spot for them, and go. Now, that external pressure can feel really annoying when you're having to take it on in real time. It's interrupting you, it's interrupting office staff, and it's taking you away from being in rhythm of what you had planned to do. Some people, some principals, they don't mind that. They can jump in and out of rhythm very quickly. They have a very short recovery time when it comes to like being interrupted, solving the problem, putting out the fire, and going back to business. And the fire approach does not bother them. That isn't a reactive approach to them. It's their proactive approach. They wait till the problem presents itself, they handle it, they move on.

If that's you and you're not feeling out of rhythm, then you're not in an overwhelm cycle. You're simply just addressing what comes up, handling it. It doesn't phase you, you feel okay about it, and you move on. For some people, it feels like it's throwing you off balance. It's out of rhythm. It puts you out of sync. It interrupts your day. It keeps happening as a pattern. And our reaction is to just put the fire out and then not want to think about it because we want to get back to what we were doing. We try to jump back into rhythm sooner than later. But then we get out of rhythm again, and then again, and then again, and then again, and we're like, "What's going on?" Okay?

So, sometimes, as I said, it's okay to just handle the problem and jump back into rhythm with the understanding with yourself, between you and you, that you're going to come back and solve the problem behind the problem at a later time that's more appropriate or convenient, depending on your plan. Other times you're like, that's it right here, right now, let's sit down as an office staff and figure this out. You hit a point of enough, no more. I don't want this to happen. It's throwing me out of rhythm. I'm in

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overwhelm. I don't like this feeling. It doesn't feel good. I want to adjust. I want us to go back from reacting and back into responding. Okay?

Now, what I have noticed with my clients and with myself is that when we stay in an overwhelm cycle for a longer period of time, when there is a week or several weeks or a month where we do not take note of the emotional signals, we're not acknowledging them, we're not listening to them, when we try to avoid and we just keep pushing forward and pushing forward without slowing down, without resetting our rhythm, without listening, what happens is that internal chaos, where we're feeling overwhelmed but we're pushing it down and we're not listening to it, and we just keep forging forward, when that happens for an extended period of time, the internal chaos becomes external chaos.

And if you've ever been a teacher, a mother, a principal, head of household, if you've got other stuff going on in your life, you're caretaking for family members or you have a lot of kids of your own or you are running two schools, which I was doing at one time, or you've got two positions, if you've got anything more than one thing going on in your life, which is just about every woman I know on the planet, you've been through this.

Work gets busy, the kids' schedule gets busy, your spouse is out of town, or you're single, or your best friend who normally picks up the kids has got the flu. Something like everything's in rhythm, but as long as nothing rocks the boat, everything is in flow. But the minute one little thing goes out of place, boom, the rhythm's off. You're running here, you're running there. It goes into reactive mode. The car gets a little messier, the house gets a little messier, your bathroom, you didn't quite put all your makeup away or there's clothing on the bed, or you come home and the dishes aren't done, your brain's just like, "Ugh, everywhere I look." The car is a little bit messy, my office, the piles are piling up on the desk, the, yesterday's coffee cup is still in the car, the kids, you know, backpacks have blown up themselves in the back seat, the dog leash, can't find it, all of that, that is an external representation, external manifestation of the internal rhythm reset desire,

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the need to reset that rhythm. And it will show up in the car, on the desk, in your office, at home.

It is another indicator that it's time to do a rhythm reset. And the end of a season like this, end of February, going into March, is the perfect time. It's an ideal time for us to sit down and say, "Hey, what's working? What's gotten out of rhythm? And where do we want to reset? Let's get back into alignment." And it can be very tricky to go from an overwhelm cycle to a success cycle, and I'll tell you why. And I've observed this in myself. I've been studying this deeply because there have been moments of my life that feel very stuck and stagnant. And I keep asking myself kind of the wrong question. Actually, I'm like, "Why am I doing this? Why can't I do this? Why?" Instead of, "Okay, here's where we're at. Here's where we want to be. What would feel like getting back into rhythm? What's one thing I can do to get back into rhythm?"

And the hardest part about this is the length of time between unawareness and awareness. So there's a period of time, there's a gap between when the overwhelm cycle starts and a little bit happens and then a little bit more, and we're not aware. We're kind of reacting and we don't even realize it. There's this space of unawareness. And what I've noticed is there is a length of time between the unawareness and the awareness where we're like, "Wait a minute, what's going on here? Let's take a stop. Let's take a stock, reboot, reset, and get back into rhythm." Sometimes that happens very quickly. It's like one or two things happen and already we're like, "Wait a minute, let's check this out. Let's go inward. What's coming up for me? What do I think the problem is? What do I think the solution is? And let's explore those options and see if we can reboot this quickly and get back into rhythm."

Other times, it feels like they're so subtle, we don't really notice it. We just react. You know, like something little happens at home and then something little happens at work and then another little thing happens at home and little, and then all of a sudden two weeks later, you're like, there's a moment

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of awareness where you're looking around, your car's a mess, your house is a mess, or you feel like a mess inside or you're up all night thinking and worrying, or you feel tired all the time, or you feel like you're spinning your wheels. There's a moment where you're like, "Whoa." You blow the whistle. Time out. Moment of awareness.

I have found that the trickiest aspect of empowered leadership is that point between unawareness and awareness and knowing when you're in the gap. And it's like saying, become aware that you're not aware. That's hard when you're in it. You have those blinders on, which is why it's so helpful to have somebody else who's looking in who can help you create that perspective.

That is why coaching is so powerful, why mentorship is powerful, why having a friend who's honest with you or a therapist who can walk you through or a psychologist or, you know, even a colleague who's got a third eye, a degree of separation to look in to say, "Hey, did you notice this or have you considered that? Or I'm observing this and I wanted you to know," to create that awareness. When someone's like, "I just wanted you to know," what they're saying is, "I'm here to create awareness. I'm here to help. I'm here to globalize your perspective, to help you zoom out." Because we get so in the weeds and we're trying to react and solve the fire of the day and the problem of the day that we don't feel like we have the time to slow down.

And that is where we get stuck. So it's from not knowing and not being aware there is a problem to then we react and put fires out as a pattern of solving the problem to that moment of awareness where our emotions, the experience, finally gets our attention to say, "Hey, there's something else going on here. There is a rhythm problem. We're out of sync. And there is something else we need to do besides react right now."

And the key to a quicker rhythm reset is to tune into our emotions daily, regularly, as soon as possible. Now, we don't like to do this. Why? We've got stuff to get done. We can't stop and feel our feelings. We don't like the

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way that it feels, so we don't want to shine a light on it and give it more attention. We don't want to amplify disappointment, discouragement, frustration, agitation, doubt, worry, fear, pain. We don't want to look at those emotions because we don't like the way they feel. But they don't go away. They just wait for us to acknowledge them.

So what we tend to do as humans is avoid and ignore and suppress and try to circumvent the uncomfortable emotions that come up to the surface. We try to outwork them. If I just put out fires faster, longer, quicker, work more hours, I try to work harder, try to expand the hours I'm working. I try to work more efficiently, I try to work faster, run between fires. We start to come in earlier and leave later. We work on nights and weekends. We bring that computer home. We're trying to put out fire, fire, fire instead of stopping and studying what started the fire to prevent this for the future or to reduce the chances that it could happen.

When we try to outwork, outrun, we're expanding the time that it takes to go from unawareness to awareness. We're trying to work from the belief system that more time putting out fires will create the solution of satisfaction. It doesn't, it creates the solution of overwhelm and working longer. It's so tricky, isn't it? But if we can tune in quickly, "Hey, how am I feeling? I know I don't like this feeling. That's why I'm going to address it. What's coming up?" Giving it a voice, giving it time to speak, letting it tell us what wisdom it has for us. The faster we can do that, the faster we can get back into a rhythm reset.

And I know the brain wants to counter you. It's very counterintuitive feeling to slow down when your brain says speed up. Do less for this next five minutes instead of do more. Don't put the fire in front of you right now. Stop, find the source so you can unplug the core of what's fueling this fire. That's counterintuitive. The brain is so clever and it will say things like, "We don't have time. There's a fire in front of us. We don't have time. We've got to put the fire out." It's not wrong to put out the fire as long as you create a

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rhythm reset space in between fires so that you can identify what's happening.

We know intuitively that slowing down and breaking down the issues that we're having will help us develop a protocol or a process or some kind of a procedure that will be more efficient in the long run. Yet our brain will tell us every single time, don't slow down. Don't solve the bigger problem. We don't have time for that. It will take too much time. It's not solvable anyway, so why bother? Putting out the fire is working for today, so why worry about tomorrow today? And again, if that feels good, you're in rhythm. Go for it. If it doesn't and you're frustrated, it can be very annoying to realize that our own brain is working against us from getting back into a rhythm that feels good for us, that feels satisfying, that feels fulfilling, and that feels productive in a positive way.

But this is why we have emotion as humans. This is why we have the emotions. It's to communicate within ourselves that something is out of rhythm, that we would like to get back into rhythm, that it is time for a rhythm reset. When we avoid rhythm resets, what we're saying is I went to the gym once, I should stay buff. I ate healthy once, I should have lost 10 pounds. I took one driving lesson, I should know how to drive. I've ridden a bike 20 years ago, I should be as agile on a bike. I used to ski, I still should be able to ski. Maybe that's true, but you won't know until you get on the skis. So, taking a few minutes to slow down and ask yourself, "Hey, what's the problem behind the problem? What am I feeling? Why am I feeling this way? What do I think the problem is? What do I think the solution is?" and just explore what's coming up for you.

So, as you're listening to this, if you're in the car, you know, take a gander. Is it messy? Is it organized? Does it need a rhythm reset? Your office, when you get to the office or did you just leave the office? Does it need a rhythm reset? Your home, does it need a rhythm reset? Your sleep patterns, do you need a little more sleep? Do you need a reset? Do you need a reset on the water you drink or the food that you eat? Do you need a relationship

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rhythm reset? There can be any aspect of our lives that could benefit from a rhythm reset. It doesn't mean something's gone wrong. It just means that it's time. It's normal. It's a part of the process.

And something I learned very early on in my leadership journey was that these external spaces in my world were a reflection of my internal world. So when my external space got messy, I knew it meant internal clutter. That there was chatter in my brain, that there was unprocessed emotion, that my body hadn't moved or exercised or gotten outside or breathed some fresh air. And when I saw that reflecting back to me, I knew it was time to organize that office space, to take five minutes, 10 minutes to clear off the desk or to clean out the car, drive it through the wash, whatever, get the laundry done at home, load up the dishwasher, do my laundry, get it off the bed, get it onto hangers. Just little bits every day. I didn't have to do it all at once. I just took one little project, the desk one day, the laundry the next day, the, you know, the car on the weekend.

And those little things helped clear up my internal world because I'm taking in the world through my senses. So everything I see feels like another mode of information. It's another layer. It's another tab open. Oh, I've got to do the dishes. Oh, I've got to clean my office. Oh, got to get the car cleaned out. Oh my gosh, the laundry, oh, the dishes, oh, the this and this and that. When things are cleaned and organized, your internal system calms down because your visual sensations, your sense of smell, your sense of taste, your sense of touch, your vision, all of your senses, like what you hear. You can be on audio overload, you can be on visual overload. That can add to a rhythm getting off course.

So, when I took the time to organize a little space here and a little space there, I felt better instantly. It's amazing to me how many people I've coached on this topic. And it's around this time of year, which is why I'm recording the podcast on it because it's coming. If it's not here already, it might be coming for you.

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And I observed this concept both with leaders and with teachers. You've been in a classroom where there's one that's organized and there's one that gets a little chaotic and a little more and it starts to get messy and it's like, whoa. And then the teacher spends an evening says, "I'm going to stay for a couple hours and get this stuff cleaned up." And then they feel better. You've probably done that as a teacher. I've done that as a teacher. It feels really good to walk in Monday morning and it's ready to go, cleaned up. But by the end of the week, it kind of starts to fray, right? That happens. It's normal. So we might be organized on Monday, but by Friday, it's like, whoa, reboot. Or maybe Thursday you stay late and clean it up and so you can go home early on Friday, whatever works for you.

But you know those classrooms. So we can have this conversation with our teachers. Is anybody in need of a rhythm reset? What is it you need? Is it your classroom? Is it your car? Like do something that feels good for you and your physical space can help you get into like a rhythm reset internally. It's pretty interesting how simple it is, yet how difficult it is to go from unawareness to awareness.

So, if at the end of this winter season, as it's coming to an end for you, if it feels out of rhythm, if it's a little stressful, if it's a little disheveled, if it's a little chaotic, it's not that you're not an excellent principal. It's not that you aren't an empowered principal. It's that you are a human being. It's that rhythm of life which gets out of rhythm. It's that time of season when all the loose ends get a little tangled, some chaos can ensue. It's normal and it happens. That's not the problem, okay? Don't believe that's the problem or that you're the problem. That's just normal.

You don't need to make it mean something's gone wrong with you or that you're not cut out. What it does mean is that it's just time to slow down and tune inward into your inside world. Check in with yourself. Check in on how you're feeling. Do a brain drain, write down all those thoughts, get them onto paper. Check in with the problems that seem to be an ongoing pattern for you. Ask yourself, what do I think is the problem? Could there be a

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problem behind that problem? Do I feel disempowered? Do I feel overwhelmed? What, how am I feeling and why? And then look around you. Notice if your external spaces are mirroring your internal feelings, your internal space, and see if some of the discomfort you are feeling is actually coming from visualizing and being able to see that external disorganization.

Also notice this, does any resistance come up regarding the desire to slow down and reset your rhythm? Because you can create awareness, but then have resistance. You don't want to slow down. You don't want to clean the car out. You don't want to take the time to organize your office. Your brain's like, "That's going to be too hard. It's going to take too much time. It's too much effort. I don't have time for this." But it's really like, "I just don't want to do it because I don't like to do it." But yet it feels so good in the end. So then you can ask yourself, okay, how do I want to feel and how will I feel when this desk is cleaned? Can I put on some tunes while I'm cleaning my desk? What would make it feel better now? Play that game with yourself. Let it be fun.

Or just say, "I'm going to set a timer for five minutes. I'm going to see how much I get done, and that's it. I'm only doing it for five minutes. Go. On your mark, get set, go." Boom. Timer goes off, you're done. You might find yourself going, "Okay, five more minutes." Or maybe you got it done in five minutes and you thought it was going to be two hours and it was five minutes.

The resistance into getting back into rhythm can be a challenge in of itself to overcome. And that is the beauty of one-on-one coaching. That's the beauty of EPC and group coaching. It provides you the luxury of an external perspective that can broaden and expand your perspective. It's like, let's say you're at a national monument and you're looking through those binoculars. You can't see because you're not looking through them, but your friend is, and then they say, "Hey, look through these." And then you see and you're like, "Whoa. Oh my gosh, that's incredible. I couldn't even see that from far away." But you get the magnifying glasses, the

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binoculars, and you're like, "I see so clearly. That's really cool. This feels good." I want more of this. Yes, please, okay?

So, group coaching, one-on-one coaching, any of the programs that we offer here at The Empowered Principal, it can provide you the luxury of time and the luxury of support to surround yourself with love and compassion and perspective so that you can overcome the resistance and turn it into desire and momentum and solve the things that will help you feel better and get back into the rhythm of your leadership style, your leadership intentions, and your leadership impact. And that's what we're here to do, guys.

Welcome to Rhythm Reset. For those of you who are aspiring to be a school leader, I've got an announcement. I am going to be offering Aspiring School Leader workshop on Saturday, March 7th, from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Pacific time. So that would mean 10 to 12 Eastern time. Saturday, March 7th. And there's a bonus waiting for you for those who sign up, register, and attend. I've got an exciting bonus waiting for you. Come on in, aspiring leaders, to the Aspiring School Leaders workshop Saturday, March 7th. Can't wait to see you there. Happy rhythm resetting. Have a beautiful week. Talk to you next week. Take good care. Bye.

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