

Ep #456: A New School Leadership Architecture: Rethinking How We Lead with Lindsay Whorton



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Angela Kelly: Hello, Empowered Principals. Welcome to episode 456.

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. Welcome to the podcast. I have another wonderful conversation ahead for you today, and what I love about this conversation with Lindsay Whorton is that this is truly a collaborative conversation. This is not me interviewing somebody; this is Lindsay and I having a conversation around educational leadership.

She's sharing the work that she's doing in Texas with the Holdsworth Center, and we are all here on this podcast and as people out in the world. And you know, when I listen to podcasts, sometimes you forget these are real human beings out there doing the work, getting their hands dirty, working to support school leaders, working to enhance the quality of our experience as school leaders, and in the work that we do.

So, this entire episode is going to be about sharing ideas, sharing concepts, strategies, tips, ideas on what is being implemented by real humans in real time, and sharing that so that if you are in Portland or you're in New York or you're in California or you're over in, you know, the Midwest somewhere, you can listen to what's going on around the country and what people are working on and really explore these ideas and see what would work for your district or your area of expertise that you're working in. So, Lindsay, thank you for being here. Thank you for taking the time to have this conversation.

Lindsay Whorton: Thanks so much for having me.

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Angela Kelly: Yeah, I'm really excited about it. So, I'm going to turn it over to you. Introduce yourself, tell the listeners who you are, the story behind what you're doing, and I would just love to hear all about the work that you are doing down in Texas right now.

Lindsay Whorton: Excellent. So, I'm going to do this a little out of order. I'm going to tell you, I'm going to introduce you to the Holdsworth Center first, then I'll explain kind of who I am and how I came to be here. So, the Holdsworth Center is a nonprofit organization that was created in 2017 by a man named Charles Butt. If you are a Texan, that name will be very familiar to you because Charles, for most of his career, was leading one of Texas's most beloved companies, HEB. But Charles always had a passion for the business, you know, which he followed in the footsteps of his dad, but he also always had a real heart for service and in particular for public education.

And he had inherited that from his mom, and her maiden name was Holdsworth, so that's who we're named after. And she began her career as a teacher in the Hill Country of Texas and always instilled in Charles the sense that one, you have a responsibility, you know, when you are a leader in a field to pay it forward, to care for others, and two, that how we educate our kids is one of the most important things that we must get right if we're going to have a strong country, if we're going to have a strong state.

So, Charles has been a longtime champion of public education, and when I met him in 2015, he was sitting around feeling like he had not done enough to support public schools, which if you knew his background, it's an amazing thing and one of the things I love about him. And he had gotten advice from a lot of people about what more he could do. You know, he had a foundation, he gave away money, he had created an organization to advocate for public schools.

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You know, he got some advice that a lot of us are familiar with: teachers are the very most important thing, and in a state as big as Texas, with 5.5 million students and 1200 school districts, there's a lot of teachers. And so then, you know, folks said, and one of the most important things you can get right to help support teachers and effective instruction in every classroom is having a great principal. And that made a lot of sense to him leading a company that's structured a lot like a school district, you know, central organization schools.

And so, he set off to say, "How could we create a place that really is about building great leaders and enhancing the leadership skills of the people working in our schools and districts?" And The Holdsworth Center was born almost 10 years ago. And we, over the last 10 years, have launched a number of programs, but what they all have in common is how do we find, develop, and encourage people who are leading our schools and districts today and will lead them tomorrow.

So, I met Charles almost 12 years ago in 2015 when he was starting to think about this, and at the time, what I thought I'd be doing at this point in my life would be being a high school teacher. It was my passion, you know, from an early age. I trained to be a teacher. I had gone off to grad school to study international education. I'd come to the conclusion that like the one thing we must do to have a great education system is really invest in our education workforce.

And I met Charles, he had this vision, and kind of the rest is history. And so, I've been involved with Holdsworth from the beginning and I've been the president since 2019, and it's just such an honor to get to spend all of your time thinking about how you build up and encourage the leaders in our schools.

Angela Kelly: Yeah. Oh, that is so wonderful. When you told me this story in the meet and greet, one, I was a little bit enamored because I love HEB. I

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have friends and family who live down in San Antonio area and they are big fans. But just the genuine love and interest for education, but from the standpoint of the bigger picture, for the greater good, right? This is, yes, it's for us as the educators and for them as the students, but his, what's driving his decision to support this organization and to support the enhancement of school leadership is really for the greater good of the state of Texas.

And when the state of Texas does well, the nation does well. So, I love that his vision is so much bigger than just, "What's in it for my kid or my grandkids?" right? It's about, this is for all kids in this state. Obviously, that's where you have to constrain and focus somewhere, but we can be a model for other states in the union. So, that's wonderful.

So, tell us a little bit more specifically about the work that you're doing through the center.

Lindsay Whorton: Yeah. So, when we got started in 2017, we started, education leadership is vast and then you add to that a geography that is vast. And so, we had to pick a place to start. And we started with a real focus on the principal. And we created a program called the Holdsworth Partnership. We worked with districts over many years to one, directly invest in the principals leading the schools today and their teams, and then two, to help the school district think about how they can build systems to really identify and develop future leaders in a sustainable way.

And those programs, when we talk about our programs, the mental model, you know, I would, we have a physical place. We have a campus. Right across from me, there's like a hotel conference center, 180 rooms that are just beautiful and intended to convey to the educators who come and spend time with us about how important they are. And our programs tend to be pretty long and pretty intense. You know, so, those first programs were around 24 months. It was a principal and members of their team.

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Over the 24 months, they would come to campus eight to 10 times for a few days. So, kind of like, you know, an executive master's degree. People have told us they should get master's degrees for what we require them to do, but they come here, they are challenged and given new ways of thinking about their work as leaders, the work of serving students well, and they always leave with things to go back and do and put into practice. And it's one of the reasons we love working with sitting leaders because you can really tackle real work together.

But so that's kind of a picture of how we got started. And then as we've grown our capabilities, we've continued to add more efforts to serve leaders across the state. So, since 2021, we've had a real focus on identifying and developing future superintendents and supporting brand new superintendents when they step into that role. So, really proud of those leaders and the outcomes they're achieving for kids.

And then we've got a new focus going forward on, yeah, the principal's really important, and I think we're starting to see some ways that we need to think more creatively about school leadership and how it happens. And we need to think about more than just the principal. So, we've got some new work that we're doing, which we can talk more about, to really help people think creatively about how you might redesign school leadership to support teachers in an effective way and to get the results that we want for kids. So, that's a snapshot of kind of what we're up to.

Angela Kelly: I'm going to ask one question about the organization itself, and then we'll go on to more of the content and the deep diving that you have been exploring and researching lately. So, people who are listening, I think they're thinking, I'm wondering, that they're thinking, "Wow, this sounds amazing. Like, this would be great to have in every state where it's not, you don't just only have the option of getting your master's degree in order to follow a school leadership path, but there's this more creative

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opportunity to learn and deep dive and to get your hands in the work as you're learning."

So, you and I were talking about the funding for this, right? And the founder of this. We heard a little bit about his background, but people might be wondering, like, "Wow, this would be an interesting concept to explore in another, wherever I live." How does your organization handle the funding that's required to put forth this type of program?

Lindsay Whorton: Yeah. So, I think it is definitely a good thing to think about in other states, and you know, we're really focused in Texas and so happy to be helpful, you know, to anybody doing that exploration. For us, I mean, so we, we have three big sources of funds. Our founder, Charles, made a big investment in this place when we opened. He created the campus, gifted it to the organization, and will continue to be a big part of how we do what we do.

And then in addition to Charles's funding, we fundraise, and so there's foundations and individuals across the state of Texas, across the country who support our work. And then there are some of our programs where there are districts who pay people lots of money to support them to develop and strengthen their principals.

We do have some small fees associated with some of our programs, far less than you would pay other folks, but those fees help us reach more people. And so, those are kind of the three sources of funds. And it is true that investments in people are not little. These are big investments, but also, and so having a funder, a person with vision like Charles makes such a big difference in your ability to do this kind of work.

And if we think about it over the long term, an investment in a principal who stays in the school three to five years longer, gets ever better results for kids. You know, if you take the that investment in that principal and you

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divide it over like all of those students who are impacted over time, I mean, it's an extremely cost-effective, you know, investment.

Linda Darling-Hammond just released some new research about the importance of investing in principals and, you know, makes the argument that not only if, it can feel like a big upfront investment, but if you don't make it, you pay for it on the back end of like having to spend money on all these other things, like when you choose not to invest in people. So, I'm always trying to like help reframe these human capital investments because I think they feel scary to people, but they can be so impactful and such a good return on those investments.

Angela Kelly: I really love that you said this because we are investing something, whether that's time, effort, or financial resources, but we're investing it on the front end or the back end, whether we realize it or not. And so many districts, they are afraid to invest up front because they're afraid of like, "What if it doesn't work?"

But then they end up spending more time, more effort, and more financial resources on the back end, either cleaning it up or having to replace, I read a study that said every time a principal has a turnover, it's an average of seventy-five thousand dollars from releasing them to the hiring, the all of the work that goes into hiring, onboarding, trainings, recruitment, all of that. It really adds up. So, that's a chunk of change, right, to be replacing your principals just because they don't have the training they need to be successful. So, I love that you mentioned that.

So, donorship and the donors really do see the long-term gain and the long-term value of the work that you're doing. So, I think that's wonderful. Yeah. So, moving on to the content, a little more of the content about what it is you teach, how you teach it, the approach you're taking, and then the work that you're personally doing as in regards to the organization.

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Lindsay Whorton: So, across our programs, the thing I would lift up as being consistent and then we'll talk about, you know, the way it looks a little bit different in each one. I think all of our programs have an emphasis on kind of three big areas. One is personal leadership. So, we really think that what is happening kind of like in here, in your mind, in your body, like with your emotions, is a really significant part of how you show up and how you impact people around you.

And so, all of our programs in different ways have a focus on kind of that inner work of leadership, how you manage your physical energy, how you manage and regulate your emotions, how you protect and preserve time to think, how you think about your professional identity, how you stay connected and purposeful, you know, all those pieces. And I think we're not the only leadership development organization in the US that does that, but I think that is a real unique point of emphasis for us.

Then the other kind of through line is the work of leadership is fundamentally about influencing, supporting, helping, cajoling other people to achieve big results. And so, leadership is fundamentally enacted through others. And so, the second big strand is about how do you lead people and lead teams. How do you give and deliver feedback? How do you help a person grow and improve? How do you help a team be more than the sum of its parts? So, that's a big point of emphasis.

And then the third area is always about vision, strategy, and change. You know, how are you moving your organization forward, setting the vision and priorities, identifying what needs to look different. I mean, so those are kind of the three common areas. Now, that can look quite different depending on which program we're in. So, like when we're, we have a program right now invested in future principals who live in West Texas, the Permian Basin, a region that's really in need of strong future principals.

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And so in that program, when we talk about growing and empowering others, I mean, some of what we're focused on there is, you know, the art of feedback and coaching. How do you support a teacher? How do you see that need? How do you deliver the feedback? How do you do it in a way where they can receive it, where it's useful to them, where they grow?

When we're dealing with a brand new superintendent, hopefully, you know, they've now been through a variety of leadership positions, and hopefully, they've got some pretty good reps under their belt around feedback and coaching. So, that's less of an emphasis in that program. But when you're a superintendent, you're leading one of the most complicated, diverse, cross-functional teams, you know, that you've ever had, and it feels quite different to be leading a CFO and a chief academic officer and a chief of schools officer than it might have to be leading your school instructional team.

Angela Kelly: Yeah, and answering to a school board and the community, navigating all of that. Yes.

Lindsay Whorton: That's right. So, that's an example of like within those three themes, we're really tuning the specific learning objectives and the focus to meet the needs of where that leader is given what job they're in and the challenges they're facing, you know, in their career. But all of it, one of our big commitments is the Center for Creative Leadership published some research a long time ago that said when we look at how leaders are developed, it's actually not sitting in a classroom that is the main thing. It's not reading books, it's not listening to lectures. Those things are closer to 10%. The other 90 is made up of about 20% comes from mentoring, coaching, learning from peers.

But then the 70% is actually on-the-job learning, having hard challenging assignments, and growing as you take on those hard challenging assignments. And so, everything we do, you know, we want our kind of

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time on campus, which is the classroom part, to be really rigorous, really challenging, really practical. But we're really trying to figure out how to unlock that 70%, how to send people back with something challenging to do so that it's really practical and they get those reps in and at bat. So, I think that's another thing that is true across all of our programs is we're always trying to design around that 70-20-10.

Angela Kelly: Yeah. And do you have coaches, mentors that go onto their sites as well?

Lindsay Whorton: It looks a little bit different in each program, but most of our programs have an executive coaching component. Those executive coaches typically go and see the person in action a few times, but that's not the primary lens, you know, of the coaching. And honestly, if we think about a principal, they've got a principal supervisor who's watching them in action and giving them feedback on a regular basis. The executive coach tends to dig in a little bit deeper into some of those themes of personal leadership, "What's the root cause?" So, we have found that to be an extremely powerful lens.

And then when we work with school districts who are doing system change work, so when we talked about the principal work earlier and later when we talk about the school redesign, we have teams who are in the districts coaching and guiding the districts through that system change work. So, it's a combination of folks coming here and us following them back to their job to be a support to them.

Angela Kelly: Yeah, I love this. I wish I could gift every state with something this comprehensive. It's literally the business model that I've created here in California in a state of 42 million people and as a solopreneur, like I find this so fascinating because it can be done. And some of the avenues in which we need to take to give people options, to give districts opportunities for

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different styles of learning and different ways of growing and expanding their leadership capacity, this is a model that is working.

And it's exciting to discuss it here on the podcast, but also just to celebrate the work that you guys are doing, the innovation that's occurring here, and the impact that it's making. So, I find it uplifting and inspiring and hopeful that school leaders are being provided, one, the support, just the acknowledgment and the awareness that they need support, to leadership skills taught to them in a way that's real in real time, like in the actual work that they're doing.

So, it's not some hypothetical conversation they're having. It's like, "This is actually going on for me right now, and I have a touchpoint, a person who can come in and walk me through this before I make a decision and take actions on that." So, it's such a fantastic model. So tell me a little bit about the work you have personally been diving into and exploring in your role at the organization as president. Tell us what you personally are working on these days.

Lindsay Whorton: I released a book recently called *A New School Leadership Architecture*. And the book is both, you know, a personal project in the sense that I wrote it, and it's hard to draw the line because I have learned so much from the work that we've done and the interactions I have with our team.

Angela Kelly: Integrated into.

Lindsay Whorton: So it's like I wrote it down, and I sort of consider it ours as well. Because as we worked with principals, I think one of the things that I've witnessed, you know, getting to see incredible, hard-working, talented, passionate people in action, classroom level, campus level, district level over the last 10 to 15 years, is just how demanding, you know, these jobs are. I think one of the things that is hard to relay to people who are distant from public schools.

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Angela Kelly: Or watching from afar.

Lindsay Whorton: Yeah, is how hard people are working and how complex and demanding these jobs are. And particularly over the last eight years. So if we think about pre-COVID through COVID. We're seeing some really clear patterns emerge. And I would argue these patterns are a little bit more pronounced in Texas but are true nationally and I think represent where the nation may be headed. And if we look at the teaching profession over that period of time, the teaching profession is changing pretty dramatically. And in Texas, we saw a big spike in people leaving the profession over the 2018 through 2024 period.

And then what we saw nationally is if you look at young people going to schools of education. So I went to a school of education to be certified to be a teacher. There was a big drop off in the interest of high school graduates entering schools of education around the last big economic recession. So the housing crisis in 2008, 2009. We saw interest really drop off, which is common actually with recessions, but then it never recovered.

And so now, you have more and more teachers leaving the profession and you don't have large cohorts of trained teacher candidates graduating from our schools of education, ready to step into those vacancies. And so Texas is trying to fill more vacancies than it's had for many many years at a time when it has fewer aspiring teacher candidates than it had many years ago.

And so what that means is we're hiring a lot of brand new teachers who had very limited if any pre-certification preparation. And we know that those teachers are one, that nobody's their best in their first five years. Two, that it's going to be even harder if you didn't get development and support before you started.

And three, that those novice teachers with limited preparation tend to cluster in the schools that need great teachers the most. So where students are low income, where academic performance is currently low. So that's

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what we've seen in Texas and then we see that that population of teachers leaves the profession at an even faster rate than everyone else, right?

So we have a dramatically different teaching profession in '26 than we did in 2016. And so we know that that's a reality. And then if we look at the role of a principal, we know that the job of a principal has just gotten more and more complex over the last 25 years.

Angela Kelly: And layered.

Lindsay Whorton: Right? More things have come onto the plate, nothing has come off of the plate.

Angela Kelly: Right. Because we're subbing.

Lindsay Whorton: Right. And ultimately, the mind shift we made to prioritize instructional leadership, good, you know, we want our principals to be instructional experts. We want them to be focused on student achievement and learning. But the way that we introduced that mind shift sometimes got translated into a list of things that principals felt like they were personally responsible for doing. And one example of that is the principal is personally responsible for coaching and developing every teacher on their campus.

Angela Kelly: Under the umbrella of instructional leadership, right?

Lindsay Whorton: That's right. And Texas has really big schools. But so in Texas, that might mean that one person is personally responsible for the development of 25, 30, 40 teachers. And if we compare that expectation to what we would expect of managers who are supporting other knowledge workers, it's usually closer to six or seven people.

Angela Kelly: Like in the corporate world?

Lindsay Whorton: Yeah. It is close to mathematically impossible for a principal to provide the level of support that each of those teachers deserve

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with a portfolio that big. And now, we've layered on, in some schools, half of those teachers are in their first three years and the bulk of them didn't get any preparation before they started. And so it's no wonder that things feel close to impossible in all of the seats that you sit in in a school.

And so, I think I had been on this journey of coming to terms with that reality and then trying to figure out what does that mean for the kind of work that we do. You know, because we certainly believe that we want to help people improve their skills and bring their best effort to the work every single day, and that leadership really really matters and it can be grown and it can be developed.

But it's also true that if you are in a job that is close to structurally impossible to do within, you know, a 24-hour day, that just sending the message to people that if they just worked harder or were smarter or were more skilled, that all of these problems would go away, just didn't feel right to me.

And so that eventually led to this book that makes this argument that we need to rethink the jobs of school leadership. We need to share the leadership work beyond the principal. We need to tap the leadership capabilities of some of the great teachers we have in our classrooms. We've got to think differently about this.

And then, once we structure this in a way that is achievable and sustainable for all of these important, incredible professionals, then we can think more in a more targeted way about how to develop them to have the skills that they need to succeed. So that's the book project that has come to life and we're now working with a handful of districts across the state of Texas to put this into practice and to bring these ideas to life in schools across the state.

Angela Kelly: I am so eager to read that book because this is the conversation I have with myself, with my audience, with my clients all of the

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time, and just to know that we're not in isolation. I think a lot of school leaders and a lot of mentors of school leaders are having similar thoughts, but we're having them in isolation, separation, and I hope this podcast brings us together in these conversations because I think we are ready. We are ripe for having and we're open to change.

We're open to trying different things because we've tried the same thing over and over expecting different results and knocking our heads against the wall. So I'm really eager to read the book. We'll put the link to the book in the show notes for any of you who are interested in checking that out.

So Lindsay, can you share, like I always like to give leaders as they're listening to this, like something tangible they can walk away with and implement? So whether that's a strategy you teach in your programs or just some hands-on skills, wisdom, knowledge, information that you've learned over your tenure in this position, just what can we give our listeners that they can walk away with and leverage?

Lindsay Whorton: Yeah, I'm going to tease out one of the ideas in the book and then create an entry point where like even if you don't read the book, All right. you can take this and run with this. So one of the ideas in the book is we got to rethink this structure, and then there's this idea we encountered in another text called The Leadership Pipeline a long time ago that basically makes this argument that as you move into a new leadership role in your career, when you transition what they call leadership levels, it isn't just you doing the same leadership work that you've always done, but bigger and on a larger scale.

It's not just continuity that there's actually this big shift that you have to make because you've got a new assignment and that new assignment usually requires you to develop, demonstrate, or use new skills, to change the way that you spend your time, and to shift your professional identity. And professional identity I think of is like the highlight reel of things that

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you're really good at and you find value in and you've got a gravitational pull like, this is who I am, this is the kind of great professional that I am.

And for teachers who leave the classroom for the first time, you know, there's often this really big professional identity shift of like, I've always been the person who is personally making the eyes of students kind of light up. And they can really miss that when they transition to a role where your job is actually to support other adults to make that magic happen. And it's a real shift in how you see yourself.

And to me, like in the simplest terms, when we think about jobs that feel impossible, one of the things that we need to do is we need to get clearer about what are the most important things that each of us needs to be doing to contribute to the success of the school. And we break that down in a lot of ways in terms of the structure, but you can get to it pretty quickly by just saying a place to start is to say no matter what job you have in your school, what is the work that only you can do to support the success of the school, your team, the people you support?

And this isn't, this isn't a question that's about like how special you are. So if it's me, it's not a question of like what can only I do because I'm so special and I'm talented in these ways and these are my special gifts. It's a question of what is the work that only I can do because of the position that I'm in, the responsibilities that I have, the unique information and opportunities that I have because of that role.

Angela Kelly: Like what can I not delegate out?

Lindsay Whorton: That's right. That's right. And then if I don't do it, it doesn't get done, or it doesn't get done as well. So let's start by getting super clear about that. And then the next question is, how much of my time? So if we think about skills, time application, professional identity. How much of my time am I really spending doing those things? And for some of us, the answer is not very much.

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Angela Kelly: Yes.

Lindsay Whorton: So then we say, okay, well what are the things I'm spending time on instead? And we can list that out. And my guess is those things are going to fall into one of two buckets. One bucket of things are things that are important to get done and we need to find another person to delegate or to build capacity for another person to take the lead in that area. And right now we may genuinely be struggling to figure out if I stop doing this, how would it get done? And we need to spend a little bit of time thinking about, how could I build the capacity in someone else to take more of this on so that I could spend more time doing the thing that only I can do.

So that's one bucket. But then the second area, what I think we might find is there's a set of things that we're spending a lot of time on and the reason we spend a lot of time on them is because we love them. They make us feel good, we enjoy it, it's connected to our purpose. And there's not actually a good explanation of why we're doing it as opposed to someone else other than we're attached to that kind of work and we need to make a transition in our professional identity to embrace this new work that's our responsibility.

So I would just offer for all of our education leaders who are always feeling so stretched, I think a good routine is just to reflect on are you clear about those priorities? Can you name what feels like a barrier to shifting more of your time in those areas? And then can you notice where there's genuinely like an external problem that you have to deal with, like there's some external barriers you have to solve. But can you notice the places where actually there's something going on with you that's leading you to spend your time in that way and you can shift kind of your mindset and your motivations to really prioritize the work that only you can do.

Angela Kelly: Yes. Yes. Does this sound familiar, Empowered Principals? This is the work that we're doing over here as well. And it's the individual

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work, the internal work, the identity work. It is, I just recorded a podcast prior to this interview and I think it just comes down to that. Everything that I've been teaching the last 10 years, it really comes full circle to the internal work that we're doing, the identity of ourselves as leaders and what we believe our capacity for impact is.

So I love that you just reiterated all of that because like I said, time is a resource, our effort, our attention, our focus, those are all resources, our financials are resources, and it's what levers we pull into what capacities we do, but this internal work that we do and identity work. I do honestly believe, Lindsay, that is a missing component in the traditional administrative credentialing programs. I do think this component that you just spoke of is one of the gap areas in preparing school leaders for the actual work that they're going to be doing.

Lindsay Whorton: This is not unique to education leaders. I think this is true for everybody. I've experienced this in my job and one of the ways that we frame out the work of different levels of leadership is principals have to be thinking multi-year. You got to be thinking long-term, which means you got to get out of the day-to-day and the reactive.

And when I first moved into this role at Holdsworth, it was hard for me to release some of the details that I loved, both because there was capacity that needed to be built and because I loved it. And then to embrace the new work that I needed to do. And that was partly because some of that new work, I didn't think I liked it very much. Some of that new work, I wasn't confident or comfortable in those new skills.

But I think the encouragement that I would offer is that one, this is a long game, so I wouldn't want people to hear that if you can't make these shifts immediately, that you've really failed and you don't have what it takes. And I was really lucky to have an incredible board chair who I think was constantly setting a very ambitious, high bar for how I should be operating

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long-term, what the organization could do long-term. And at times that felt very stressful because it can feel like, how can I get there so quickly?

But if you hold that high bar long-term and you really work towards it, over time, you can really make these changes and it really does unlock, you learn that you can do things that you're not sure that you can do. You got to give yourself that time and space. You learn that you can love things that you don't know if you like yet. And you can see the rewards of the capacity of the organization really grows if you can find that right level of elevation for your leadership, and then figure out how to grow and empower other folks.

Angela Kelly: Yeah, that's so well said. It's like when you go from teaching to school leadership and you loved decorating your room and you loved the bulletin boards and you, so you end up going and doing that in the staff lounge, right? I we always joke about that in my in my cohorts where it's okay to do some of those things that you love to do, but we need to put some parameters and constraints around that, like how much time you're going to spend doing it and what you're actually doing it for and but giving yourself a little bit of that fun but just being able to release some of that to delegate that out because anybody can decorate the staff room, right?

But if you want to help out, you want to spend 15, 20 minutes in there, that's fine, being able to give yourself that pleasure. But I love how you talked about just the willingness and giving yourself a little grace and time to get to know these new parts of the job, right?

The new parts of school leadership where you're not in a classroom anymore and there's some sadness there, but then now you're in all the classrooms and finding ways to frame school leadership in a way that still fills your heart and soul, but you're also embracing the capacity of your impact and expanding that as you are continuing to learn and grow in the new position. So I love that you said that. That's really impactful. Any final

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words of wisdom, Lindsay, that you'd like to share with all those school leaders listening out there?

Lindsay Whorton: I always just want to express appreciation. I mean, I think as a young kid, I realized that teaching is the best, hardest, most important job that you can have. And feel some sadness that's not the work that I am doing right now, but find great joy in getting to witness and encourage and lift up people who are doing that work because it's just so important. And we as a society don't do enough to express our admiration and appreciation.

So just want to say, as we are starting a new school year, just that I feel so grateful for people who have dedicated themselves and their careers and their lives to supporting our kids. And so just appreciate what the listeners are doing and hope that there will be a nugget in here that will encourage, inspire and equip you to achieve all the things that you're trying to achieve for kids.

Angela Kelly: Wonderful. And if you happen to be a resident of Texas, please go check them out. Leverage this opportunity. They have so many resources, so many amazing programs and different ways to support school leaders out there. So if you are in Texas, that's wonderful. And if you're not from Texas and you're listening to this, a question just came in my mind. Can people from out of state come to this program or is it Texas only at this point?

Lindsay Whorton: The eligibility for our programs is almost exclusively Texas. There's a little corner of New Mexico that's included in a couple of our programs, but for now we're very focused on Texas, but we have a number of resources on the website. Our team appears at various national conferences and we're always happy to be a resource to folks in other parts of the country who are trying to do similar types of work.

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Angela Kelly: Yeah, wonderful. Wonderful. Lindsay, thank you for your time. I'm sure you're a very busy woman out there leading this charge and honoring the work of your founder and I do hope to collaborate in some capacity. I think this would be amazing for California and Texas to be in conversation around this and how we can establish this type of work in different states.

So if you're listening from another state, stay tuned. I'll keep you guys in the loop on all of the happenings in Texas and in other parts of the country. So, with that said, again, Lindsay, thank you for your time. Was a pleasure to have you on the podcast and we wish everyone a wonderful empowered week. Take good care.

Lindsay Whorton: Thanks so much.

Angela Kelly: Thanks.

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