

Anna-Marie Brunskill, Principal- Participant of Assessment 2019



“Hi, I'm Anna, I'm secondary credit support at the international school of Havana. Before that I was head of secondary at the Anglican international school in Jerusalem. And before that I cut my teaching teeth, uh, in the innocence in Bristol in the UK. And before that I was an ex Pat brat, so my parents dragged me around the world. So it feels very normal for me to be doing this as an adult. And I was reflecting on what I wanted to share to a room, of such diverse people. And really the problem I have is about meetings. Um, I don't know about you, but meetings are a fairly frequent occurrence in my life. I'm sure there are regular parents in your life and as a leader of meetings, um, there are certain strategies that I've had to develop to help them meet and run more smoothly that I just wanted to share that might seem like minding the obvious.

But for me, they were a revelation. So the first one really is about being purposeful in your meeting, having a plan. Music, I've always been a bit kind of fly by the seat of our pants, hope for the best, but all of the notes just rock up and see how you do. And um, actually for me I tend to have the outcomes that you wanted to have a plan is really, really useful. So now what I try to do is I try to sit down and think about what are the intended takeaways for people in this meeting. It doesn't matter whether it's a meeting of the coordinators, whether it is a whole staff meeting, whether it's just me and a parent, what are the intended outcomes, what do I want? And then how am I going to get that?

We think about how our teachers do that with students every day. And it's equally useful as a strategy in planning meetings. Um, I notice that when I don't plan meetings, they tend to not go the way that I would hope that they would go. Um, so that's, kind of the first part of my plan is really consider a plan for your meetings. The second part is, um, I don't know. I, again, I'm sure this experience is common around the room. They may or may not be members of staff at your school who have loud voices that are often negative, that occasionally will hijack your meeting. So you'll walk into your meeting thinking this is great. We're going to look at some data or I'm going to have some great outcomes. It's going to be awesome. And then one person who has a very strong personality.



Principals' Training Center

quality training for international educators

He goes, I think there are flaws with this data. And they said it to the whole room and then the whole room goes, Oh maybe they're all throws with this data. And then all of a sudden the meeting that you planned with this outcome has gone in a totally different direction. And so really my mother tells me that needs to be more Machiavellian. I tried to work out how I could give those people a voice without letting them speak because this is really important that they feel heard. But it's also really important that my meeting doesn't turn into a griping session because three people have decided that they've got one issue. And they're going to talk about that issue only. So I've started, instead of having group feedback, like we'll do an activity and then you feed back to the meeting facilitator.

I've started doing that feedback and small groups around the room. So instead of everybody having two or three minutes to talk about the data and have some conclusions and move on and let's talk about it, they get five minutes and they get a bit longer to talk amongst themselves and then they write their feedback down on a piece of paper and then we move onto the next activity. And so what happens at the end of the meeting, it might take a few little shout outs here and there, but at the end of the things I'd gathered that paper together and I try within a week to create a doc. So I email out that information so that the feedback loop is closed. And so that people feel that they have been heard, the what they said and thought and felt, was validated and listened to without the meantime, sort of wandering off down the garden path to totally different directions. So those, like I said, they're very simple strategies, but they've been a revelation for me. Um, the first one about making sure you're meeting has a purpose and a plan. And the second about, um, making sure people listened to, even if they haven't actually spoken.

Thank you very much.”