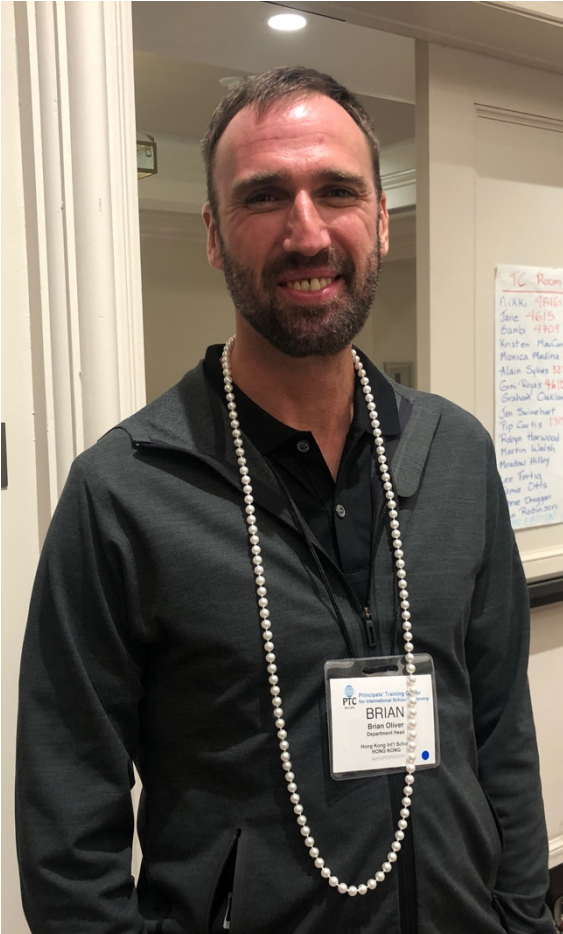


Brian Oliver, MYP Coordinator- Participant of PTC Curriculum and Creating Effective Schools 2019



“ I am very reluctant to be the last pearl of wisdom to you, but, what I'd like to talk to you guys about today is, is the power of forging good personal relationships with those that we work with. And of course congratulations to Vicki. And that was a great example of just how close you can get.

We find ourselves in the community that does kind of operate like an extended family. I, at least in my department and my school, we talk about family a lot. And I think that's important to kind of maintain that notion that we are adopting a new family, with those that we work with. And in many cases we do live in close proximity with them. And so that creates some different dynamics that I think we all have to kind of grapple with, especially when considering change management and those types of lessons that we're learning in here. It can create, situations that intertwined our lives in really powerful ways. People do get emotionally attached to what we do. And that's a good thing. That's a strength. And the nature of hard work and especially after, after a week like this is such that we're, we're asked about personalized learning for our students and depersonalize it for ourselves in some ways and so that we don't own something but it can be passed on.

That doesn't really change the passion that, we've got for what we do. If we're successful, we can foster a personal connection for our students, but also create authentic assessments to measure that success. And along the, path to those, it can surface those emotional attachments that we do have. And they're strong. One of the things that in my role as a department head that I've had to kind of do over the years is be in this position and building a bridge between faculty and administration and sort of navigate both of those waters at the same time. Sometimes I've had to bear the brunt of pushback from faculty on, changes, uh, while also being asked to kind of push those things forward, as smoothly as we can. For me it's been both in the context of curriculum and assessment over the last few years.

So this is appropriate to kind of reflect on, in these cases there were moments where, we brought strong emotional reactions from people, that were close to me, both personally and



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professionally. And I have to say that it was that personal connection that enabled me to navigate difficult moments and difficult conversations, in order to kind of diffuse those moments and move forward. It wasn't enough just to draw a line and say it's just business. We're not in business. Schools and education are rarely businesses, in a pure sense. Nor are these moments for me to abandon my professional role and dive into that emotional moment with them. It's what I've heard called courageous conversations and there's a protocol for it.

Sometimes, you know, you have to put really thorny, deeply held personal feelings on the table in front of people and have a hard conversation, in order to do that. You know, it surfaces issues about trust, intention, and the love for what we do. And that can be difficult for a lot of people. At one point there was a very emotional response to, one of the changes that, that I was helping to kind of guide through. Firstly it was public. It didn't seem to be about curriculum and assessment. It was about my friend, and it was personal. At that moment, I, you know, a close colleague of mine and I had known them as a friend and, and for some time. And I'd made a passing comment about the seemingly unrelated issue.

I made a passing comment, a dismissive one, and that caused a reaction, that I quickly realized that I needed to have a courageous conversation and surface what was really going on. It turns out it was about curriculum and assessment. It, you know, was tension over that. But it was also about trust and, without having that conversation, that trust could have easily been broken. But instead it enabled me to forge an ally out of somebody who could have been a point of resistance. And as a result of having a good open conversation I was able to not only build a stronger personal relationship, but also be able to move things forward in a way that worked out for everybody. So our school communities can be like families and it's important that we treat them with the kind of love and respect that we would treat our own family and others with.

I think that's important to kind of keep in mind when we're dealing with these kind of technical problems in some cases or very real problems and others. But we're also professionals and we're paid to educate and create the best learning environments we can for our students. So maintaining focus on both of these can be difficult, but we can get a lot closer to our goals if we remember. Uh my advice to you is that it's rarely just business. It's frequently, personal but our job as leaders is to make sure it's always professional. Yeah."