

Michele Baker, Grade Level Leader- Participant of PTC Assessment 2019



“So just like me, everyone here has come here to become the best leader they possibly can. And just like me, I'm sure you've worked for a range of different types of leaders. I started my career in a Rudolph signer school, which is all seeming and painted rainbows and there are no leaders. We would all sign our belief that school should be run by and again, attain a collection of teachers. And my experience of that was that decisions took a very long time. The time you took, if they were made at all. After leaving the sirens school, I worked at an English state primary school, in that school. The leader I've worked for had an uncanny ability to make me cry every time I went into her office or the leadership style was such that she told you everything you were doing wrong and forgot to tell you anything you were doing right.

So after I endured three years of that leadership style, I decided there must be something in between signer with no leaders and this leadership style where they made me cry every day. So a Google search revealed to me a whole new world of international schools. I went from my first interview at the school, ACS Cabo international school in London and after meeting the head of the ECC and hearing how she talked about the children in her division and she talked about the way they were teaching in that school. I knew I had to work there. So today for my pearl, I want to tell you three key leadership strategies that I learned from the leader I ever worked for in an international school. So six months later I was a new member of the kindergarten team at ACS and it didn't take me long to notice that the leader of the division, she made it a point that every day she visited every single classroom.

I also started to notice that the door to her office mysteriously always seem to be open whenever you are passing by. Or maybe she just knew exactly when there was going to be high traffic and the door was always open at that time because whenever you needed to go have a chat or you just wanted to pass something by her, she seemed to always be available. She never made you feel that she needed to be somewhere else and you always felt heard and valued. So the first key leadership strategy I learned from her was that a good leader makes everyone feel seen, heard, and valued on a daily basis. Partway

through my first year, I went to Anne with a great idea with about incorporating our school into the pre-kindergarten curriculum. ACS was amazing for us and it was being underutilized as usual and she listened very actively listened and read the research that I gave her about why this was a good idea.

And not only did she support me to develop the program, but she also paired me up with other people in the division who she also knew were interested in the environment. So that over the next two and a half years we were able to develop a program that was sustainable. It has a positive effect on the children in the division and it remained long after all of us who started the program and had left the school. So the second key thing I learned from that is that a good leader is able to look outside themselves and see the true capacities and capabilities of the members of their team and to nurture them. In my second year at ACS, due to fluctuating numbers, I was asked to move to the preschool team. Now initially, unbeknownst to me, this was a bit of a strategic move because I was wanting to have some changes in that particular year.

So, not only did she ask me to move cause she knew I was doing a lot of requiring based learning, but she also paired me with a teaching assistant who had been working for the same teacher for 10 years and was very used to doing things in a particular way. Well none of us could have anticipated how challenging it might have been for this teaching assistant to change the way she was doing things. To the point that when I asked her to be in a different way, she put her hands on our hips and said, you want me to? And then at time when I went away on a course, I came back to find all of my furniture rearrange because she didn't agree with how I had had it set up. So after a few more of these incidences, I went to M for advice.

I think naively expecting that she would solve the problem for me. But she did not. Instead she asked me to think of how I might solve the problem and she also asked me to look outside myself and consider what must this feel like for the teaching assistant? What does it feel like to be asked to do things in a radically different way than she was used to? Once I did that, I was able to really stop and think, this must be a bit frightening. This must be challenging. And it helped me to slow down the pace of the change I was trying to make. It helped me to really clarify how I was explaining why I was doing things and how it was going to have a positive effect on the children in our class. And these changes helped me to create a situation in my class



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where by the end of the year that teaching assistant was asking if we worked together again fall.

So the third thing I learned from her is that a good leader doesn't pretend to have all the answers and creates a culture where the members of her team feel empowered to solve the problems that they encounter on a daily. And we made that. The reason it was really important to me to share this in a Pearl is that Ann sadly passed away this past year after long battles and was a very humble leader. I don't even know if she realized the impact that she had on others. And I really wanted to, through my pearl, let some of the wisdom that she passed on to me to live on in educators all over the world who will be going back to their leadership positions or starting new leadership positions. So I encourage you to remember to make sure that all the members of your team feel seen, heard, and valued on a daily basis. Make sure to look outside yourself and see the true capacities and capabilities of those on your team and nurture them. And lastly, don't try to solve everybody's problems. Just be create that culture where the members of your team feel empowered to solve the problem."