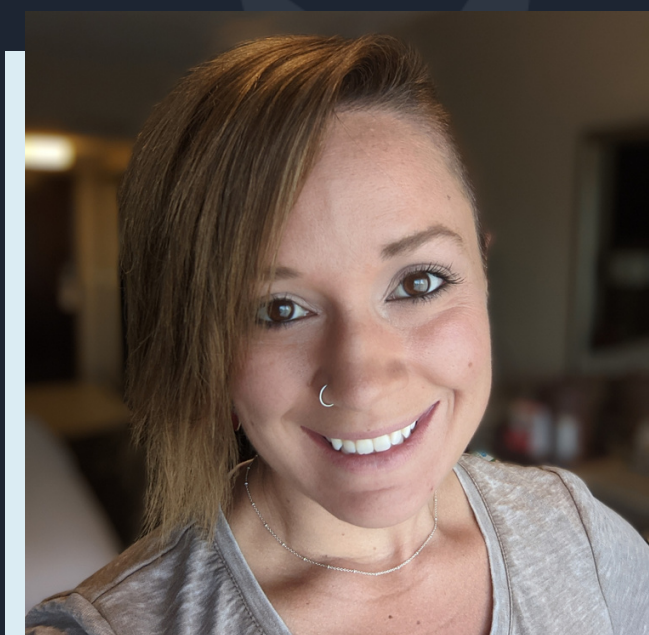




SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE

How Ashley Corthell Shifted her Mindset and Created a Culture of Belonging



“The membership has given me a lot more confidence in all areas of my life. I know that even if I don't have the exact right answer or know everything about a certain situation, I can still make decisions confidently and believe in myself.”

ASHLEY CORTHELL
Daybreak Academy



About Ashley & Her Business

Ashley Corthell is the owner of Daybreak Academy, an early childhood education school based in South Jordan, Utah. Her center serves children aged 18 months to 1st grade and provides additional advanced programs for gifted students. Ashley and her team pride themselves on offering a unique “whole child” education based on academics, music, and the arts.

CHALLENGES

“My relationship with the school was so heavy—it was almost burdensome. I would get very stressed just thinking about all of the things I had to do.”

Ashley opened her center in 2009 after struggling to find a school in her area that offered the quality of education she wanted for her own son. Her goal was to create a program that could maximize each child's potential through a “whole child” approach to education. So, after getting support from developers, she and her husband took on the challenge and opened Daybreak Academy.

On the education front, Ashley's center thrived. In its first ten years of operation, the school built a reputation for high-quality instruction and enrichment to children in the community. Beneath the surface, however, Ashley was barely surviving, and it was affecting her health, well-being, and relationship with her team.

Although she was ashamed to admit it, Ashley felt as if the school was sucking the life out of her. She worked more than 40 hours per week, and her calendar was a complete mess. She didn't have a clear understanding of where her time was going, and as a result felt perpetually busy but rarely productive. Without clear progress toward her goals, she experienced near-constant guilt that she wasn't doing enough, despite experiencing severe stress and exhaustion.

To make matters worse, Ashley's overwhelm was impacting her relationship with her team and staff, which in turn affected their ability to perform. In particular, the pressure she placed on herself to do anything and everything diminished her team's confidence to handle tasks that should have been their responsibility. With her plate overflowing, she had little time to dedicate to personal check-ins with her staff, which caused them to feel isolated and unsupported.

By the fall of 2022, Ashley was at a breaking point—physically, mentally, and emotionally. **Despite operating her center for over ten years, she felt incompetent in and undeserving of her role as an owner.** Ready for a change, she decided to apply for Owner's HQ, a program she had heard about earlier that year designed to help owners just like her.

“I really struggled with the limiting belief that I'm not enough—that I don't know what I'm doing. Feeling like I was a competent owner was a huge roadblock for me.”

Challenges

- Worked more than 40 hours per week
- Failed to delegate tasks to her team
- Struggled to find time to check in with her staff
- Felt incompetent as an owner

Solution

- Started using time management tools like time blocking
- Held conversations with her team about roles & responsibilities
- Implemented gratitude practices & one-one-ones with staff
- Leaned on other owners for support & guidance

Results

- Reduced her time at school to 10 hours per week
- Delegated the majority of her responsibilities to the director
- Transformed her relationship with her staff & the culture of her center
- Shifted her mindset surrounding her competence as a leader

SOLUTION

“The concept of time blocking has been huge for me. I feel like I’m much more intentional about the time that I spend at school.”

Ashley's first months in the Schools of Excellence Owner's HQ membership program were transformative for her leadership. Alongside other members who had just joined the program, **she focused on building new skills and strategies that could serve as the foundation for better systems and processes and a healthier culture within her center.**

Through training, coaching, and support from other owners, Ashley learned better time management skills—like time blocking—which helped her become more intentional about how and where she was spending her time. She also gained the courage to have difficult conversations with her team about their roles and responsibilities so she could begin to delegate more tasks and hold them accountable.

In addition, Ashley started implementing gratitude practices and holding one-on-one check-ins with her staff. This not only allowed her to feel more present as a leader, but it also helped her staff feel heard and supported in a way they never had before. They could share more about their personal lives and raise questions and concerns about their roles and responsibilities. Thanks to these new practices, a cultural shift began to take place within the center.

The part of the membership that had the greatest effect on Ashley, though, was having access to a community of other owners who she could lean on for support and guidance. **Being surrounded by others on a similar journey made her feel less isolated and gave her the courage to continue working on her leadership**—a significant mindset shift from before she had started the program.

“I love just getting to know people outside of the center, like what they like to do and what their interests are.”

RESULTS

“I'm excited to go into school now. I have a lot of fresh energy and can focus on bigger picture things.”

Ashley's life and leadership have completely transformed since joining Owner's HQ. **Between the skills and strategies she's learned, the support she's received, and the mindset shift she's experienced, she no longer questions her competency as a leader.** Now, she has the confidence to handle any situation that comes her way and make important decisions for her center.

Since improving her time management skills, Ashley's calendar looks unrecognizable. She's reduced her time at the school to just ten hours per week and has handed most of her responsibilities to the director. These changes were possible because of the difficult conversations Ashley had with her team about boundaries and accountability. Now, the director is confident handling tasks on her own, and Ashley no longer feels pressured to come to the rescue even though she lives close by.

Ashley's relationship with her staff has also experienced a significant shift now that gratitude practices and one-on-ones are fully integrated into the center's culture. She feels more connected to her staff as human beings, and they feel as if the school is a place where they belong. The environment is much more positive, and both Ashley and her staff feel energized and excited to come to school.

Ashley's team and staff aren't the only ones to notice that her leadership has transformed. The parents and families within her community have also noted a change in how she carries herself. The shift has not only impacted enrollment—which has remained high—but also retention, which was a significant issue before she joined the membership.

These days, Ashley couldn't imagine her school without the impact of her time in the membership. **The training and coaching she's received, plus the relationships she's formed with other owners, have created a ripple effect that has transformed not only her leadership but also the culture of her center and the people within it.** She's excited to keep learning so she can become the best version of herself and continue providing the best quality childcare in her community.

“I think that the parents and families in our community can tell that I have a stronger sense of self and inner peace than I used to.”



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uncover solutions, and
transform your
leadership.**

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