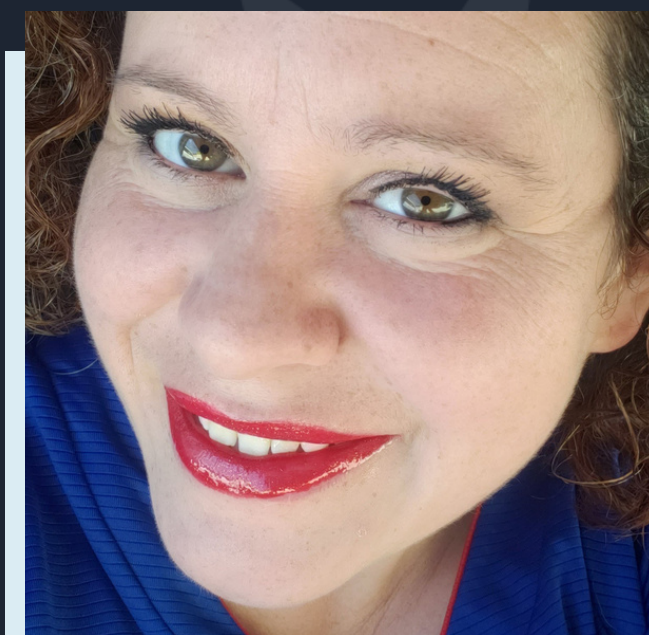




SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE

How Erin Owens Learned How To Manage Her Stress Levels And Lead Her School To Excellence



*"I've learned a lot about myself as a leader,
and my staff have grown tremendously
because of the ripple effect."*

ERIN OWENS

Little Lambs Daycare Ministry



About Erin & Her Center:

Erin Owens is the Director of Little Lambs Daycare Ministry in Rochester, Indiana, a Christian childcare and afterschool program that facilitates a variety of educational, recreational, and faith-based activities. Erin has directed the program for almost a decade and has been involved in early childhood education for 19 years.

CHALLENGES

"I cried myself to sleep just about every night."

Before joining the Schools of Excellence Director's Inner Circle program, Erin Owens was a different kind of leader at her school. With a tendency to take things personally and assume 100% of the responsibility for all the issues within her center, she was constantly under a significant amount of stress.

By early 2021, Erin was under more stress than ever before. Her school was struggling to find adequate staff, as well as keep the staff they already had. As usual, Erin couldn't help but blame herself for the staffing issues her center was facing, and the effect of her guilt extended far beyond the walls of her office.

Because of the stress that Erin carried with her on a daily basis, her staff couldn't help but to absorb some of the overwhelm. In addition, due to her insistence on assuming all responsibility, she was acting less like a leader and more like a parent to her staff. They had little practice in making decisions on their own or respecting Erin's boundaries, since she wasn't consistent in setting any.

Erin's personal life was deeply affected by her stress levels as well. Because she was too overwhelmed to be productive at school, she often brought work home with her, causing her to neglect her family. What's more, she spent almost every night crying herself to sleep, feeling as if her stress was inescapable.

Finally, Erin decided that enough was enough. Her staff was relying on her leadership, and that meant it was time to approach her role differently. So, in April 2021, she applied for the Schools of Excellence Director's Inner Circle membership program with the hope that she could learn how to become a better leader for her center from Chanie Wilschanski and other directors.

"That is one thing I was really taking to heart—that all the problems had to be because of me."

Challenges

- Assumed 100% of the blame for the issues in her center
- Struggled to find & keep quality staff
- Lacked the ability to set firm boundaries
- Neglected her family & home life due to poor work-life balance

Solution

- Changed her mindset from self-blame to accountability
- Learned to leverage her skills & knowledge to empower her team
- Set healthier boundaries with her staff
- Adopted better habits, like going to bed early & refusing calls in the evening

Results

- Transformed her leadership role
- Helped staff grow within their own roles
- Created a healthier culture with more staff who share her values
- Prioritized quality time with the people she loves at home

SOLUTION

"I already had a lot of the tools—it was just learning how to use them as a leader."

In the Schools of Excellence Director's Inner Circle program, Erin found community among other directors who not only shared her values, but also her desire for growth. While they provided her with plenty of guidance and support, they also prioritized finding solutions, which was exactly the kind of environment that could help Erin become a stronger leader.

After working with Chanie and her fellow directors, Erin came to the empowering realization that she wasn't missing any of the pieces that were necessary to elevate her leadership and improve the culture of her center. She already had the mindset, skills, and knowledge she needed—it was just about learning to leverage them in more productive ways.

For example, by making slight adjustments to her mindset, Erin managed to change her perspective of self-blame into one of accountability. Instead of taking responsibility for 100% of the issues that arose in her center, she started taking responsibility only for the things she could control—like setting better boundaries with her staff. In short, Erin realized that the way she could make the most impact on her center was to focus on the quality of her leadership.

Thanks to the support she received from her fellow directors, Erin also started to better utilize self-care as a tool for stress management. In addition to setting boundaries—like putting a lock on the door of her office—she began to spend more time caring for her mental and physical well being, including adopting healthier habits, like an early bedtime and quality time for herself.

The focus Erin put on self-care made a huge impact not only on her, but also the people around her. After adopting a calmer mindset, she saw that the happier and more stress-free she was, the more confidence her staff had in making their own decisions and the more they wanted to be at school. By caring for herself, she in turn was caring for her staff—a ripple effect that she could have never imagined before joining the Director's Inner Circle program.

"The less stressed I was, the happier I was, and the more staff started feeling confident in what they were doing."

RESULTS

"I don't take calls after 6pm anymore, I go to bed early, and I don't stress about the next day because I know that it's all about mindset."

The community Erin found in the Schools of Excellence Director's Inner Circle program has helped her grow into a stronger leader for her center. By learning to take accountability and leverage the tools she already had, she's been able to create a healthier relationship with herself—and a healthier culture within her school.

Now that Erin sets better boundaries with her staff, they've been able to grow within their own roles by practicing their decision making and expanding their independence. They're more excited to come to school and be a part of the community that Erin has created through her transformed leadership.

Firmer boundaries at school have also helped Erin create a healthier work-life balance. By increasing her productivity, she's finally able to leave the work behind her and be more present at home—refusing calls after 6pm and prioritizing quality time with the people she loves. Thanks to her newfound balance, she no longer stresses about what the next day has to bring and enjoys the moment she's living in.

Perhaps the most tangible win since Erin joined the Director's Inner Circle program has been the resolution of the school's staffing shortage. The ripple effect of Erin's leadership not only created a healthier environment that people wanted to be in, but also helped attract staff members who shared the school's values. The result was a slightly smaller but more values-aligned staff who were passionate about helping to build a school of excellence.

As far as Erin has come in her leadership, she knows there's so much more room for growth as a member of the Director's Inner Circle program. Looking toward the future, she hopes to take what she's learned to continue to build her center's school age program, develop their curriculum, and help her community through ministry. She's excited about the team she has now and can't wait to work alongside them to build a legacy for her center.

" There is so much more to unpack in this program, and I am super excited to see where that leads me."



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