



SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE

How Kathy Cameron Transformed Her Center's Culture & Improved Staff Retention



"For me, 'excellence' means getting better each and every day."

KATHY CAMERON
Guiding Hands Christian Academy



About Kathy & Her Business

Kathy Cameron owns Guiding Hands Christian Academy, an early childhood education center in Sanger, Texas. Her center recently received a Texas Rising Star certification, which is awarded to childcare programs that provide exceptional quality of care.

CHALLENGES

“My staff go to lunch, and then they don’t come back.”

Kathy opened Guiding Hands Christian Academy in December of 2014 with the dream of creating a place where all children could feel safe and loved and grow to their full potential. Back then, her goal of reaching as many children as possible led her to believe that excellence meant growth and expansion—the more centers she could open, the more successful she would be.

But by trying to grow bigger, Kathy and her team were spread extremely thin. With no time to focus on building relationships with staff and cultivating a tight-knit community, turnover rates were higher than ever. At one point, Kathy had 14 employees but was printing out 50 W-2s—they were leaving faster than she could hire.

What’s more, in focusing all her attention at school, Kathy was neglecting her home life. She simply didn’t have time to dedicate to being present with her husband and kids, especially her oldest daughter.

Kathy knew something needed to change, but she couldn’t help but feel discouraged. She had tried everything she could think of to keep her staff happy, improve retention, and find more time to spend with her family. But it seemed that no matter what she did, no one wanted to stick around.

What Kathy didn’t realize at the time was that healthy communities are cultivated through the small, ordinary moments—not elaborate strategies and grand gestures.

By 2020, Kathy had decided that enough was enough. If she had exhausted all her ideas and nothing had worked, she didn’t have anything to lose by seeking help. So, she joined the Schools of Excellence Owner’s Only HQ program to connect with other like-minded leaders and find the missing link that was preventing her from building the legacy she had always dreamed of.

“I may have been home, but I wasn’t really home...I wasn’t truly present.”

Challenges

- Spread herself thin by trying to grow & expand her center
- Struggled to build relationships with staff & cultivate community
- Dealt with high levels of turnover
- Neglected her family & home life

Solution

- Delegated tasks to her team more consistently
- Traded grand gestures of gratitude for private moments of appreciation
- Developed the self-awareness to own her part of the problem
- Became receptive to feedback about her absence at home

Results

- Developed new, effective leadership skills
- Cultivated trust & support among her team & staff
- Implemented love languages in the workplace to appreciate staff
- Prioritized time at home to enjoy small moments with her family

SOLUTION

“For me, a lot of it was, ‘I’ve done everything else—what do I have to lose?’”

In Schools of Excellence’s Owner’s Only HQ program, Kathy found comfort among other leaders who had gone through exactly what she was experiencing. By leaning on her newfound community, she got the support, insight, and resources she needed to address the burnout, turnover, and neglect that had taken over her life at school and at home.

One of the first things Kathy knew she had to do was learn to delegate more consistently; she would never have the time to focus on her staff if she continued to spread herself so thin. Initially, it was a major challenge, as Kathy hadn’t yet transformed her mindset. She struggled to relinquish control of the tasks that she had been responsible for since the center opened, like maintaining school files.

But she also kept in mind that **developing the mindset of a leader is an ongoing process that requires discipline, compassion, and a willingness to learn**, and that kept her motivated to keep trying.

Kathy also came to realize that she had been approaching gratitude from the wrong angle. By having candid conversations with her staff, she found out that the strategies she had been using to show her appreciation—like walkie-talkie shoutouts—weren’t what they really wanted. Instead, they preferred small, private gestures of recognition that made them feel valued and seen.

Even at home, things began to change. When Kathy’s husband found the courage to have a difficult conversation addressing her lack of attention to the family, she was receptive to his feedback and resolved to make him and her kids a greater priority.

Most importantly, however, Kathy’s participation in Owner’s Only HQ taught her that lasting transformation had to come from within. **She needed to develop the self-awareness required to own her responsibility in the problem and address what she needed to change.**

“What part of this do I own? What do I need to fix about me?”

RESULTS

“Your fellow leaders change the business because they also help fuel you.”

Schools of Excellence’s Owner’s Only HQ program provided Kathy with the support and encouragement she needed to reorganize her priorities, cultivate a healthier culture at her center, and be present for the moments that mattered at home.

Previously, Kathy thought success for her center meant growth and expansion, but she now sees it as getting better, each and every day. She understands that while not every day feels like a step forward, her daily commitment to being the best leader she can be moves her toward excellence.

Kathy now delegates tasks more consistently to her team. She has realized others in her center have their own strategies for completing projects that are oftentimes even more effective, and that has taught her to trust in the talents and skills of her team. While she’s not always successful at letting go, the community of support and trust she’s cultivated at her center means that her team isn’t afraid to have difficult conversations when Kathy oversteps.

After listening to what her staff really wanted, Kathy now implements “love languages” in the workplace. This has allowed her to show appreciation for her staff in the way that they feel valued—such as through quiet notes in their cubbies or 1-on-1 check-ins.

This small but impactful change has resulted in a complete transformation in the culture of her center. Not only has staff retention increased, but Kathy is now able to see the happiness on their faces, and she even receives notes of appreciation in return. **This ripple effect has made her feel like she wants to be there with her staff, interacting with them on a daily basis.**

But perhaps most impactful of all has been the transformation at home. Because Kathy has learned to delegate more consistently and increased staff retention at her center, she gets to spend more time with her family. Instead of working long hours, she now enjoys simple things like having breakfast with her family and greeting her children when they come home from school. Kathy no longer worries that she’s missing out on valuable opportunities for family connection.

The center that Kathy runs today is unrecognizable from the one she ran before working with Schools of Excellence. Thanks to her dedication to developing her leadership skills and cultivating a stronger sense of community, she finally feels like she’s building a meaningful legacy for her center.

“Your business can’t grow unless you grow.”



SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE

**Nourish relationships,
cultivate community, and
build a legacy.**

APPLY TO OWNER'S ONLY HQ