



EDITION 11: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LEAD?

Transcript

Ben Pisani & Agata Gervasi

Ben:	00:02	Hi, welcome to the graduate teacher learning series podcast channel. I'm Ben and I will be hosting this session. In this podcast series. We will be talking to graduate teachers, mentors and experts about a variety of different topics that relate to each editions framing question. We will also get the graduates and mentors to share some reflections on their practices that may assist you in yours. In each podcast, the graduates and mentors will be asked the same questions so you can hear the different perspectives on each topic. Okay, so sit back and relax and let's get into this edition of the graduate teacher learning series podcast, talking to a graduate teacher
Ben:	01:00	Who are you and where do you work?
Agata:	01:02	Hi, my name is Agata Gervasi and I work at Flemington Primary School. 'm the wellbeing lead here, so I work with lots of different children and teachers and I also mentor Emily in foundation team.
Ben:	01:26	In this first section of the podcast, our discussion will focus on the framing questions for this edition. What do you think makes a great teacher?
Agata:	01:34	Well, I think that you need to have a lot of enthusiasm and be very passionate for your job. I also think that you have to be relatable to your students, but also your parents, other teachers that you're working with and the services in the same field. So, we're looking at psych's, social workers, speech therapists, building relationships with others and be approachable by

		<p>others I think is really important. I think it's really important to be genuine and honest with everybody. It's a great quality and you do need to be able to think of on your feet and have really good problem-solving skills. A good listener, because kids want to talk to you all the time, teachers, parents, and of course it's going to be really helpful to have good organizational skills as well to make it throughout your day</p>
Ben:	02:40	<p>What do you think an effective leader is and how has it impacted on your development throughout the year?</p>
Agata:	02:47	<p>So my job as a, as the welfare lead involves a lot of listening to others. And, I'm listening to other teachers, listening to the people in my team, in the leadership team and I think to be effective, I need to have really good listening skills and guide others to, make improvements and change. An effective leader shows confidence and are prepared to take risks and challenge situations. So that happens a lot in my role as a leader. I aren't afraid to challenge situations, sometimes that's not necessarily, a good thing. It doesn't have a great reaction, but I have to be prepared to take those risks. And sometimes it works out and sometimes it doesn't.</p> <p>I've had to really listen to others and show understanding of their concerns. I've had to make time for the students, the teachers, the parents I work with and continually think of ways I can be supportive. Sometimes this means doing a lot and other times it means doing little. So, if I'm mentoring Emily, I can give her a lot of support in the areas that she needs it and then sometimes I'll back off and just let her go. I'm constantly using my problem-solving skills and trial and error to see change and I use what others already know along with my expertise to make improvements because as a leader I'm also learning from others. So, you know, Emily as a graduate teacher is also teaching me a lot and I can put that into place to help myself as a leader.</p>
Ben:	04:46	<p>What opportunities have you had to explore leadership? Is this an area you can see yourself developing in, in the long-term future?</p>
Agata:	04:55	<p>Well, I've been really fortunate in gaining opportunities to further my career in a direction that I really enjoy. I've attended many professional development days in areas that I'm</p>

interested in and also in the areas associated with our annual implementation plan and be able to come back and share what I've learned. I've had, I've been able to present at many staff meetings and curriculum days in my leadership role. I've held many information nights. I've worked with many collaborative teams and learn from others and then applied for positions, once I have felt confident to take a risk. I now feel confident to take risks and apply for positions. I feel that I've built up my skills, so I'm in a really good place where I've, I've built up my skills and I can lead others.

Ben: [06:03](#)

Inclusive classrooms are an important element of today's teaching practice. How do you embrace the concept of an inclusive classroom in your teaching practice?

Agata: [06:13](#)

Well, as the wellbeing lead, I encourage others to always consider the diverse needs and backgrounds of all students. It is important to acknowledge the different factors that contribute to our student's social learning and behavior. In this way we should create it a learning environment where all students feel safe and can learn. So, when I visit classrooms or when I'm working with teachers, I encourage, modification of the curriculum or even some of the resources that we use to make sure that every child feels safe and is able to access the curriculum. And I particularly want teachers to know and understand that our students come from a variety of backgrounds. So, I'm not just talking about cultural backgrounds, but they're home environments are quite diverse at our school and we need to have an understanding of our students. I think that that's really important and be able to make our classrooms inclusive.

Ben: [07:38](#)

What advice do you have for graduates out there?

Agata: [07:40](#)

Well, I think it's really important that we find out as much about our students as we can every day. So, every day ask your students questions so that you can have something that you have learned from each child, something personal, something that you can relate to, something that you can have a conversation with. If you can remember that they've got a pet, mention the pet, if you can remember that they went away for the weekend, then on the Monday, ask them about their weekend. So always try and find out something about the student and the family every day. Speaking of the family, I think,

some advice that I would give is try and get on side with the parents because parents can be really tough and if you can have a great relationship with your parents and they can see that you are genuine with caring for their child, it will make your year a lot easier. We do a lot, what we call the six to one and that the six to one positives. If you can try throughout your day to give your students some six positive, six acknowledgements throughout their day, it is difficult to do but sometimes we tend to focus on the negatives or they stand out to us more. But if you can go in with an open mindset every session and start fresh and get those positives in, you will see the difference in your students and then you can have the high expectations that come with that because once a child gets those positives, once the child sees that you care, the success and the rewards just start coming in.

Ben: [09:50](#) What are your time management tips.

Agata: [09:52](#) Okay. This is a tricky one - time management. You need to prioritize because sometimes you have a very long list of things to do and you have to be able to prioritize as to what's important, what can wait until after play, what can wait until the next day, what can wait until the next week, what cannot wait. So, you do need to be able to prioritize your work with that comes being organized so you know, have your planning ready. Have your planner photocopied and sitting there and go over it, read through it, ready for the day or ready for the following week. Have your photocopies already done. So be really organized, you know, do your research. Put in your ideas, is going to be really helpful. I think, I always make a list and make a plan and what I do is the list keeps growing, but it also, I cross off the list as I, you know, am I able to do things?

So, the list will be never ending and sometimes things stay on the list for a long time, but things do come off the list. It doesn't mean that the list is necessarily going to get shorter though because things always come on and sometimes you just have to say no. You have to say no to what others want. You have to sometimes say no to an email, so you know, not look at your email until the following day. Sometimes there's a phone call and you just have to say no because you just can't deal with that, it's not a priority at that moment. And I think you always need to be prepared to ask for help. If you ask for help, you will, it. Sometimes it's not straight away, but then make an

appointment. Um, depending on who you ask for help for and that will make your life a lot easier.

Ben: [12:11](#) What department resources have you found to be particularly useful in your classroom practice as a teacher?

Agata: [12:17](#) So at our school, the high impact teaching strategies is a guide that we use, we do something called instructional rounds where we, well I have given out a survey with the impact teaching strategies in it, which are setting goals, structuring lessons, explicit teaching, worked examples, collaborative learning, multiple exposures, questioning feedback, metacognitive strategies and differentiated strategies and teachers then pretty much rank themselves of where they would be, under one of the high impact teaching strategies. So maybe they're in the embedding stage, maybe they're in the established stage. So, they rank themselves under one of the strategies and then they have the opportunity to observe other teachers in a strategy that they would like to improve on. And that has been awesome because they get to go and do some peer observations. They look at the great things that are happening in someone else's classroom and then they come out with some ideas and make a commitment to try those ideas in their own classroom.

So, I think that using that guide has been super helpful. The guide also shows you what the teacher is doing, what the students are doing, so things that you should be able to see very easily in a classroom. So, it will give you also a guide of what to do in your own classroom. So, having those peer observations, looking at the hits has being fantastic and getting some coaching and ideas on how to use the hits in your own classroom has been fantastic. And I think when teachers are team teaching, like I've had the opportunity to do on multiple occasions, we can also give each other feedback on how we are using some of the areas of the hits. Once we've done that, we come back and we do another reflection at the end on how we've gone in those hits. And in the past when I've used it, it's been amazing at how confident teachers have become. And the visual that we've used, which is like a graph has really shown that teachers have gained a lot from the observations and choosing a goal to look at from one of the high impact teaching strategies.

Ben:	15:18	In a new career it can sometimes be difficult to ask for help. Who should graduate to turn to?
Speaker 8:	15:24	<p>You know, if you've got a good relationship with the people that you work with in your team. I think that your team leader should be, you know, someone that you should be able to feel comfortable to ask for help because they are in your team, they're probably close proximity in your classroom. So, you know, if things are going a bit haywire, you should be able to rely on them as the person to go to. Along with your team leader, I think the whole collaborative team that you work with, they'll always be someone in there who can be supportive to you, who can show you a different way of doing things.</p> <p>So, I think that relying on your team, you would gain a lot of benefit from. Graduate teachers all have a mentor and they come in and they don't know their mentors, so I think you need to establish that relationship and once you have that, your mentor, and I think, you know, not having a mentor in the same team is a good thing because if you are having trouble in your team, then at least you can go outside of your team, approach your mentor, by some things that are really bothering you. If you've been allocated a coach, then there is another person that you can go to, you know, just another person to talk to, another person to get ideas and another person to problem solve with. So, we've got, you know, quite a range of people from different levels, from your own team to, outside of your team to highly experienced people who could give you some, the help you know and support that you need. I think you should be able to support, to get the support and help any time. So, you know, if you're having a really tough session, you've got your team leader, or you've got someone in your collaborative team, or you've got someone from leadership who can come and help you. But you know, during team meetings, they're the times to ask for help. They're the times that, you know, questions, um, come up. You know and ask those questions. Sometimes you need, you know, help for the very next session. So, use your break times, you know, to ask someone in your team, or a mentor, a quick question.</p> <p>Staff meetings are great time that, you know, take that risk. It's really hard when you're a grad, but, you know, try and be a risk taker and if you're not sure about something that's been explained and, you know, in the department we use a lot of</p>

acronyms and sometimes we don't all feel that we can say what, what was that again? You know, what, what's, you know, PSD, what does that mean? And so, you know, put your hand up and in a staff meeting and ask, you know, what is that? We have these things, sometimes that we say, no question is a stupid question. Um, if you're thinking it guaranteed other people are thinking it as well. So, during the lesson and always, you know, go up to someone and say, I need help with. And as soon as you say that, you know, you'll get the support and if they can't help you straight away and it's something that can wait, then just, you know, say can I see you after school, just make an appointment. You know, cause it sometimes after school isn't a good time for everybody but or can I see you at lunchtime or you know, go for a coffee at the coffee shop. If there's one close by and you know, have that time to really discuss any problems that you're having. Because the worst thing is to come back to a class, to go back the next day and you've still got that problem, which if you only spoke about it with someone and got the help, it would just seem the load on your shoulders is a lot lighter.

Ben: [19:35](#) And finally, give us your words of wisdom.

Agata: [19:38](#) Well, I think patients, teachers need to be super patient people, patient with your students and you will have a lot of them in your grade, all wanting you, all wanting different things from you. So, patients with your students, patients with your parents of the students. And once again, you will have a lot of those. So, patients with your parents who all want a piece of you, and they think that their child is the only child in your grade, of course. So be very patient with them and patient with the people that you work with because everyone is just as busy as you are and everybody's going through pretty much the same thing. And sometimes we just have to stop and think, that, are all, I hate to use the word time poor, but, um, it's really difficult. So, I think be really, really patient with, with people. Never give up on your students will always show some sort of growth, whether it is that they couldn't write their name and they can write their name, whether it is that, you know, they weren't saying hello to someone and now they are, I think never give up on them because you will have made a difference at some point of the year.

Never give up on your parents. Parents are sometimes really tricky because you will have times where things don't go right,

and parents do have high expectations of you and sometimes they don't necessarily come to the party. So, keep trying, keep trying with parents, try and get signatures for consents if they're not consenting, try and get them to, you know, read with their kids. Just constant reminders will show the parents that you really care for them. So never give up on them and never give up on your team, I think is really important as well because your team is there for you and you are there for them. And the one probably, that I love the most is always having a sense of humor. There is always something funny that will happen through your day and the best thing about teaching I think is that every hour something different happens. So you can be in a really bad mood, one minute and then a child will say something funny, do something funny and it'll just change the way your lesson runs and it'll change you to switch from being a cranky teacher to a fun, you know, teacher. And so if you can see the humor in a lot of the things that frustrate you, you know, you will finish the day, you'll end the day in a better, a better way, better mindset, and you will enjoy your job, because there will be things that frustrate you. But if you can see the funny side of a lot of things, it just makes, I think your life, your job, really enjoyable.

Ben:

[23:13](#)

And that's it for the graduate teacher learning series podcast. Thank you to our guests for sharing their experiences. And thank you for listening. We'll see you next time. Bye for now.