

Parent Leadership: Building a Powerful Constituency for Children, Youth and Community



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Why Parent Leadership?

“I have gone from being hopeless, to being a champion”

– Parent Leader

Parent leadership is proven to improve education gains for children, decrease health costs and bolster community safety. Yet, currently there is a critical gap between parental desire to improve conditions for children and the capacity of systems to accommodate their leadership role and input. Often policy leaders state that it is hard to get parents to come to the planning or policy table on the local, county, state or federal levels. But, parents say they want to impact change and improve child outcomes. What they lack are the opportunities, and sometimes the skill set and civic tools, to do so. Similarly, community and government agencies sometimes lack the know-how to reach and work with parents as assets for children.

When parents, hoping to improve outcomes for children and youth, are offered the opportunities to partner with skilled agencies and organizations to develop high-level community leadership skills, the outcomes are strong. Self-transformation, two-generational, community, and model policy changes often occur for children and their families. Agencies begin to see parents as assets and missing partners. Children acquire hope in community change. Programs and policies offer greater access, equity, and utilization when parents are the gauge for constituency interest and quality practice.

Parents begin to work peer to peer, designing horizontal community networks. These networks often cross class, race, and education level. When parent engagement is seen only as a method to bring voice to a policy, it misses the strength of parents as partners to share information, develop innovative solutions to reach numerous populations, and to bring content to their informal networks. Children observe their parents transforming from a concerned parent to an advocate with a new hopefulness and a sense of accomplishment, purpose, and place in society.

Investing time and energy now in developing strong parent leaders will have a profound and lasting impact on the health and vitality of our communities. Parent leadership has the potential to improve public information, policy, quality programs for children, accountability, equity, and civic discourse for children.

Parent Network Summary

“We now have a platform to share and deepen knowledge of issues and systems.”

– Parent Leader

Over the last several decades, diverse initiatives have developed that bring in parents as leaders. These models represent parents across class, race, and culture. Coordination of these efforts could bolster the field itself, deepen the research, expand the parent leader referral base, and assist in bringing to scale what is working in parent leadership, with quality and sustainability.

On March 14-17, 2015, seven model parent leadership initiatives convened to discuss shared values, components of best practice, commonalities in models, differences and shared goals to expand parents as leaders for improved child and community outcomes. The agencies were COFI, Parent Leadership Training Institute, Ole, Opening Doors, Parent Ambassadors, Parent Voices, and Piqe. The models represented parent leadership strategies in Connecticut, Florida, New York, Illinois, California, New Mexico, and Washington. A template of each organization and strategy is enclosed.

This meeting was historic, in that parent leadership groups do not ordinarily convene together to discuss learnings. Those in attendance had been part of one or two earlier and larger meetings. One was a Casey Foundation meeting on family engagement and two generational strategies to reduce family poverty. The other was a White House convening on authentic and transformative family engagement. The parent leadership groups agreed that coming together would offer a resource-rich dialogue with focus on building strength and best practice for parent leaders across the states.

Desired Outcomes

“We learned to advocate for ourselves. What was not considered possible before, now is.”

Parents and agency organizers sought the following outcomes:

- An informal network of parent leaders and strategists to exchange goals, practices and outcomes;
- A write up of core findings , values, strategies and successful action steps, resulting from the convening;

- The focused questions and discussion, both among strategists, parent leaders, and grant makers, might lead to further exchange and writing.
- Communications among parent leaders, from different states and models, would launch through social media;
- Parent leaders, family civics strategists and philanthropists would engage in conversation on successful strategies to bolster authentic and transformative parent leadership.

The Three Day Summary

For three and a half days, forty- two parent leaders and strategists convened. The meetings were bi-lingual, allowing for participation of mono-lingual parent leaders to attend from seven different states. There was focused dialogue on how change occurs through parent leadership training and targeted activities on the impact of parent leadership at home, in neighborhoods, and in public policy.

Values were shared, with a theory of change in parent leadership discussed by parents crossing urban, rural, and suburban sites. The forty- two attendees reviewed common strategic ideas, action steps and outcomes. Differences were similarly analyzed. The groups learned from one another's proven models and family and community gains.

In each case, recorders mapped the findings. Notes were placed visually so attendees could see and share conclusions. Highly trained facilitators helped with syntheses of each step of the presentations, group dialogues, dyadic probes and small group convenings.

A lunch program was designed to create a candid conversation with philanthropists on examples of quality parent leadership, with parents describing experiences and outcomes. Parents and strategists offered a presentation on the shared context, values, challenges, and opportunities that would assist communities in parent leadership. The content was fully derived from the three days of dialogue.

An action agenda of priority items was posed by the group for discussion. Philanthropy similarly met to discuss action steps and strategies that might help bolster, sustain, and bring parent leadership initiatives to scale, across the states.

The Values of Parent Leadership

The least prepared kids have parents who need the most information .I work as a parent leader and organizer so that my family and community are not included in the bad and painful statistics about health and education. I work so that all parents have information and support they need- so no parent feels invisible and unimportant.

– Parent Leader

Parents shared their personal stories of steps towards parent leadership. Together they analyzed the implications of their narratives and the values embedded in them. Parents reported out components of their stories and shared a common ethos. The values of parent leadership are highlighted below and include a quotation from a parent leader.

Bring truth to public policy. Parents are invaluable to the civic discourse, bringing their lived experience of what policy constitutes quality, embraces diversity, offers access, and improves child outcomes.

“We are the experts because we are living it day to day.”

Lose fear. As a parent seeking improvements for children, once fear is set aside, you can accomplish improvements for families.

“As a mother, the main thing to lose is fear. Once you get rid of it, you can accomplish everything. I am an example for my children.”

Do not wait for someone to ask you. Parents must go out and learn, ask and look for what is right for the community.

“We bring transparency. We are the testimony.”

Partner with others, including elected leaders, schools and proven community agencies. Parent leaders can help to embed best practice and pass on this information to families.

“Other parents have confidence in me. I can more easily associate and connect now with other parents.”

Bring Connection and Care. Parents work well together with a mix of personalities and characters for a shared goal that is part of an agreed upon vision to improve child and community outcomes.

"We are connected by the same values. It does not matter what your income is. We all want what is best for our kids."

Parenting is a critical function, though not taken seriously.

"If I fix my family, I become a parent leader, because I want my community to work like my family."

Parents are the primary consumer, customer, and advocates of the family.

"By being a parent, we don't start out worrying about the backlash of pushback, because there is no title. We are the CEO, the president of the family. No one can kick us out. Sometimes that is the joy of what we do."

Diversity is crucial to parent leadership. The strong leader is comfortable and joyful with different cultures, language, races, family structures and education levels.

"Last week someone said, are you ladies really all single? This person did not know that child care had nothing to do with marital status. We all want the best for our kids and our community."

Civics matters. The tools of democracy can improve child outcomes in model policy and access for all families.

"When Head Start and preschool funding were in jeopardy, we knocked on doors, gathered information, figured out why kids were not enrolled. We brought in the mayor, providers, teachers. We talked together about challenges and with stakeholders at the table who were able to come to concrete solutions."

Training and sharing skills in leadership is critical to strong parent leadership.

"Once elected leaders realize you come to the table with something valuable and you are passionate about it, it becomes validating for them and they say, 'We worked together on this; your opinion matters.' The relationship for the elected leader and the parent leader is never the same after that."

Horizontal strategies, not all top down.

"When we bring parents to all those meetings, they realize we are stakeholders. Once they sit at a table with us, they realize we have the capacity to be leaders. We know our kids best, so value what we say and do. We all have one common goal at the end of the day...child success is what is most important. All the stakeholders finally realized me as a parent is as vital as you are."

Definition and Goals of Parent Leadership

“We work for the betterment of our communities and a tangible outcome is that the children of the leaders are having better results in their lives.” – Parent Leader

Sometimes parent education and leadership are considered the same functions and actions. Yet, there is a strong difference between them. One teaches how to strengthen parenting in the family. This is so important for all of us who parent, as this skill is not naturally derived. On the other hand, parent leadership is the capacity to lead and impact circles beyond one’s family, to improve child and community outcomes in the neighborhood, school house and in public policy. One is about parent child dynamics; the other is about democracy. Both are critical for children to thrive optimally at home and in community.

- 1) **Parent education** helps parents with information on parenting, ranging from information on child development practices to the brain science to actually modelling interactions to bolster attachment and quality communication.
- 2) **Parent leadership** is geared towards improvements for the family and the community both for the parent’s child and other children. This might include changes in quality in programs, policy recommendations and the coming together of parents as a constituency to improve the health, safety and learning of children.

Parent leadership is the capacity for parents to interact, navigate and lead within civic society, with purpose and positive gains for children.

Why parent leadership matters for children and community

When parents lead with intentionality and a civic tool kit, that provides skills and know-how in model policy, budget analysis, data outcomes and public speaking, they become powerful advocates for children and youth. Shared work for children, between parents, civic leaders and state and community agencies, leads to efficacy and collective impact. Some of the gains that we learned and shared together of parent leadership include:

A. A broadened and active social network

- Parents' social network expands incrementally as they find common interests. Public information that is useful to families and access points is shared routinely in an informal and successful manner. This bolsters use of community resources in an informal manner.
- Parents develop a horizontal strand, working peer to peer and creating a community that crosses barriers developed by historic patterns of funding, program, and policy design.

B. A successful reach to vulnerable families

- Parents become community messengers reaching those families that do not often receive community information. Parents are other parents most trusted messengers.
- Fathers are more engaged, with role and purpose in civic leadership for their children and other children.

C. Strong collective impact

- Exchange increases between and among peers for methods and strategies to improve child outcomes.
- Parents improve some programs and policies as well as alter resource distribution.

D. Core values and priorities

- Parent leaders offer common sense, they cross silos for the family as a whole.
- Parents often innovate, addressing problems in new ways that are to the point, creative and entrepreneurial, in the family's interest.

E. Quality and refinements for sustainability

- Parents know what is and is not working related to access and equity. They are particularly aware of program and policy gaps in health, safety, learning, and economic development.
- Parents ask about outcomes in program, policy, and budget, becoming a new force of accountability and a gauge of quality.

F. Peer to peer impact

- Parents want to see and hear about each other's success as peers. They want to learn from each other and support each other as leaders. Hopefulness abounds, reversing cynicism and low expectations.
- Social capital changes as parents become assets and are perceived differently within community and policy arenas.

G. Self -transformation and two- generational change

- Parents help themselves, in a transformational manner, when they find place and purpose in civic society. They begin to shed obstacles such as limited education, a health challenge, or a life partner who devalues them.
- Children see their parents impacting community and acquire a sense of hope and opportunity for community improvements.

H. Policy gains and changes in the community for children

- Community and state agencies begin to change internal culture to bring in parents as assets and chief informants on what is needed and working in policy and programs.
- Policy leaders change in attitude and expectation from the successful impact of parents as a constituency. They begin to see family leaders as assets.

I. Equity and access

- Parents advocate for their interests and address gaps in programs, through multiple linkages, which often include access, equity and cultural competence.
- Diversity increases between and among parents for shared child outcomes. Some racial healing begins.

Los niños menos preparados tienen padres que necesitan más información. Yo trabajo como padre líder y organizador para que mi familia y mi comunidad no estén incluidas en las malas y dolorosas estadísticas sobre salud y educación. Yo trabajo para que todos los padres tengan la información y el apoyo que necesitan, para que ninguno de ellos se sienta invisible y sin importancia.

– Padre de Nuevo México

Parents Found Critical Change in Leadership

Parents representing the seven parent leadership initiatives discussed their perceived changes, resulting from leadership skills and civic practice. They defined four levels of change in parent leadership. The four levels intersected and often worked in a continuum. They included:

- personal
- family, a two-generational impact
- community
- policy and collective impact

Personal Transformation in Parent Leadership

“I am more enlightened on a personal level. I can now inform other parents.” – Parent Leader

Parents spoke to the impact of leadership training on themselves. Civic purpose and place influenced one’s sense of self in both esteem and in social value. Many parents, across region, education and language, spoke to becoming more vocal and confident. Relationships expanded opportunity, vision and unlocked a sense of community.

Some parents shed obstacles, with civic leadership skills working as an unanticipated healer. For example, one parent lost 235 pounds and got out of a wheelchair. Several parents finished high school and/or community college. Leadership skills led many up the next staircase, whatever that was for them personally, in both learning and workforce opportunity. *“I want to learn more, to start a career.”*

Civic skill acquisition and purpose in community increased effective listening, perseverance, and improved navigation skills in seeking services. One parent said, *“Civic skills cause you to grow and to continue to grow.”* Advocacy skills are now used at home and in neighborhoods. *“It changed our family. Now the whole family advocates. We can tell our story in powerful and effective way.”*

Parents noted that their social network expended. Several parents changed how they behaved, resulting from parent leadership training. Some noted that they became more curious and interested in how things worked. *“I never used to venture out.”* Others articulated that their use of English as a second language improved.

Parents with newly acquired leadership skills, developed in a peer to peer setting described more trust, perseverance, and determination. Parents spoke up more and sought out peer

groups. They shared pride in having information, much higher expectations of quality in child care and education and in other programs for children and their families. Parents in attendance described a sense of opportunity, excitement, and a long-term commitment to leadership.

A Two-Generational Impact – Change in the Family

“I’m a superstar in my home.” – Parent leader

When parents find place and purpose in community, the gains are two generational. Children see what is possible in society and acquire a hopefulness that infects both their actions and peer cohort.

Parents shared that leadership training had an impact on their family. Parents lead at home in different ways. They are more focused; showing how much they value their children and expect more of their family as a team and as individuals. *“My family benefits from my skills to navigate systems and my ability to navigate.”*

Some parent leaders have changed their expectations of access, literacy, and quality schooling. Parents know their rights and tell children about their rights. They report more attendance and activity as parents in school activities. Many report changes in their own schooling. *“I model literacy to my children, taking them with me to college. Now they want to go.”* Another parent noted, *“We do things differently at home. We are close. I work hard with my son on his education.”*

Children are exposed to hope, constructive community change, and intergenerational conversations about policy. *“My children and family see my passion and determination for a good cause.”* Parents noted that their communication skills are having an impact at home. *“Kids are watching us being leaders and role models. My daughter has learned to talk and advocate for herself.”*

Some parents noted that they are more focused and engaged as a family. Several commented on a stronger bond, focus and improved communication. Goal setting as leaders helped some parents address family and relationship goals as well as individual and community goals.

Additionally, the parent leadership initiatives broke down formal and informal barriers. Parents were able to work across language, race, and expectation. Parents share more information at home about rights, equity and access. *“Parent leadership has motivated my whole family. They see a better future. They are using their voices, advocating for themselves and others.”*

Many parents expressed pride in the family, related to the change in parent peer group and civic roles. *“It has given my family pride. Given family pride in me, approval for my work.”* Children see a transformation in their parent, which has a strong impact on their sense of what is possible.

There is a two-generational impact in parent leadership. Parents are setting an example and expectation for the children. They are crossing barriers in culture, race, language, and education level. The children are seeing that they can develop a social network among their own peers and exposure to activity that is different and impactful for child outcomes. *“I exposed my kids to marches, legislative hearings. They have witnessed my public testimony.”*

Parent and child are valuing each other both at home and in the parent leadership community. One parent adopted two boys who attend the PLTI classes. *“They love the class. We’re all growing.”*

Parent Leadership and Community Change

“We impacted the Legislature’s Women’s Caucus’ understanding of Early Childhood Centers.”
– Parent Leader

Parent leaders can be the bridge between agencies and the family, offering information to community and policy leaders alike. When parents have skills in public policy and data analysis, they become a strong gauge for quality and child and youth outcomes. Parents know what does and does not work; they are the voice and eye for children.

Parents want the best for their children and other children and will work together to achieve goals when they have the civic tools. Many parents in attendance discussed their impact in early care and education policy and program. Several assured access, quality and supply in preschool. *“I developed relationships between my child’s preschool and my legislator.”*

Others worked on kindergarten to grade three or grade twelve issues. *“We organized parents to address school concerns and advocate for a new school. We did not get a new school but we reformed the current school.”* Others assured real school partnerships with parents as assets. *“I got the school system to include parents in more discussions.”*

Some parents chose to develop relationships with town, county and state leaders. Other developed their skills to build community coalitions for a shared goal. Many understood the value and asset of community networks and family voice and how often this voice is lacking in

policy determinations, influencing long-term accountability and sustainable programs. *“I developed a closer relationship with my town mayor.”*

Parents have led very specific actions to build program and policy access and cultural alignment, where it is needed and lacking. For example, one parent worked with her peers to visit the state capitol and acquire an advocacy center for the Indian reservation where she lives. She sought to develop cultural awareness in legislation and to bring diversity to the capitol in order for all voices to be heard.

Many parent leaders influenced policy to address community and economic development, family strength, juvenile justice, and educational excellence. For example, one cohort of parent leaders successfully made changes in the public benefit delivery system. Others work to develop parent peace centers in schools to reduce suspensions. One parent created a spray park, to bring water with more safety and less cost than a swimming pool, to her community. Other parents have worked on core civic skills such as voter registration, to get ignored voices heard and active.

Parent leaders built neighborhood and school networks as well as coalitions. They sought to increase participation in PTA and school councils. Several succeeded in breaking down barriers and misinformation. Others built relationships across generations and social groups, recognizing and respecting unique perspectives. Parent leaders, across the board, seemed to note the benefits of more stakeholders and more diversity for children and improved outcomes.

Collective Impact and Policy Change

“In my PLTI classes, Native Americans learned how to have a voice. We have always been told ... we have to become White. We have not.” – Parent Leader

Parent leaders at the conference reported learning their rights and practiced telling their stories. They reported increased confidence and validation through parent leadership training which, in turn, extended towards shared goals and collective impact. The various leadership trainings validated experiences and needs for many participants.

The cumulative impact led to the realization that the community needed to hear from parents. In a step by step process, self-awareness, self-actualization, family impact and community change, led to collective impact in policy and program. *“We bonded around trust, skill building and the need for resources. Doors began to open.”*

Shared action steps ranged in content area, age group and strategy. Some parents helped childcare to expand in both quality and access. One group succeeded in expanding pre-k for four year old children. Others worked on standards and quality enhancements in early care and in k-3 education.

Some parents worked together to be included in conversations about children's educational futures. Some family leaders taught other parents about quality choices in early care. Others worked on stopping federal sequestration in Head Start which would have harmed access for young children.

A group of parents together eliminated suspensions for kindergarten through 2nd grade by making recommendations for data transparency by the school board. Others helped to reduce suspensions from ten to five days for 3rd through 12th grade. Another group of parents worked to create policies that would help youth that were aging out in foster care.

Parents addressed economic issues impacting low income families such as payroll legislation and working with the governor and attorney general to address predatory practices and fees. Others worked on an increase in minimum wage and built collaborations with many policy leaders. Some parents brought awareness to issues such as children's savings accounts. One group of families helped build college capacity through saving for college by the statewide elimination of asset test limits in TANF. Another succeeded in moving model legislation to reform payroll cards.

Strong civic skills were manifest and shared. One group hosted and facilitated forums and round tables across the whole state. Civic skills in knowing who is who as a leader in policy and region included direct work with mayors, school board members, county supervisors, and state and federal leadership. Some parents expand their trainings to other organizations, service providers, and education agencies, understanding the strength of a network and coalition. Others reported parent leadership in their classes, becoming elected officials themselves.

Parent leaders are important to child gains in health, safety and learning for several reasons. The recession undid the economic gains for children over the last three decades. Congress has faced gridlock across ideology. Parents can break gridlock, as their shared interests often cross sectoral politics. Though they may not enter the field for this reason, parents find themselves working across race and culture for shared goals. This leads to changed habits and perceptions for both parent and children.

What are Shared Skills Sought and Taught Among Parent Leadership Initiatives?

“We helped bridge the gap between “powers that be” and community voices.” – Parent Leader

Among the seven models, the content of strengthening the health, safety, learning, and economic development for the family was consistently paramount. All models offered skills building for parents.

Some models focus on one issue; others have parents select their issues across a broad field of topics and concerns. The skills taught and utilized by parents were very consistent. Parents at the convening highlighted the following skills as critical for family strength and community change:

- navigating systems that impact the family and community
- knowing parental rights and responsibilities
- public testimony
- building relationships with stakeholders
- knowing and working with elected officials
- information gathering to really know the situation and the problem
- discuss findings with key stakeholders and leaders
- understand how to access and interpret data
- bring a diverse and broad range to the table to plan and make change
- partner with business
- hold onto primary values at all times
- evaluate which programs and policies work for children
- connect the dots
- become a catalyst
- show courage and humility
- focused intentionality
- explain and challenge biased assumptions
- know how to map out a plan and revise a plan
- understand and respect opposition
- consider both heartfelt narrative and data
- always work with diversity and across differences

How do Parent Leaders Communicate with Each Other?

"I like relationships. But I love databases." – Parent Leader

Parents want to support each other in making constructive change, over any other goal. Family leaders want to meet and stand by other family leaders who are committed and willing to work within the neighborhood and community for the public good.

Keeping information current and reaching all engaged parent leaders is critical. Most models of parent leadership in attendance had a mechanism for data collection. Parents shared their information and agreed and sought to be contacted over years, building a broad constituency of family leaders.

Some of the parent leadership initiatives have structures that enhance communication. Some have structured meetings for graduates. Parents make calls to parents to remind them of events, trainings, and parent nights. Others select an annual project to work on collectively, in addition to whatever they are working on within the community.

Some models have coordinators from different years who connect parents across projects and strategies. In some instances there are chapters with dedicated organizers. One model has a Power Pac option after graduation. There are alumni opportunities in training, social gatherings with families, and annual weekend retreats.

Many of the parent leaders use social media, including: text messages, Twitter, and Facebook. Many of the parents who rise to the surface to become leaders need to fill the basic needs of having a network, to not feel isolated in their day to day challenges, and to create that community that will work together for all parents. Social media is a low barrier to entry for the community that meets and then spreads throughout the country, to stay connected, energized, and to serve as a sounding board.

During our meeting we utilized Twitter to spread the messages of Parent Leaders beyond the room. Our results for a short conference were impressive. From 215 original tweets sent during our conference we received:

- 165, 014 Timeline Deliveries
- 17,805 Twitter users were reached by our posts
- 35 people were tweeting with us using the hashtag **#ParentLeaders**

We also had a very high engagement rate with 40.38% of tweets being retweeted. At the close of our event, we set up a Facebook Group for the participants and instantly saw people

connecting and sharing stories, pictures, and videos they captured during the conference. This engagement has continued.

The parents continue to model advocacy at work. They support one another and now celebrate the successes they have achieved. This is all done without formal moderation. We have provided the platform; parents are providing the content.

A Vision and Request to Build Parent Leadership Across the States

Parents and advocates together composed a vision and request for parent leadership to grow, in quality, access and supply. One set of agreed-upon next steps and a plan for working together to advance two-generational leadership and participation in community and systems change, developed.

The following five strategies and requests came together in a carefully wrought request to government and philanthropy.

1. Develop a National Parent Action Network - A series of convenings and conversations will take place to create a new multi-issue parent- led initiative dedicated to expand the parent leader network and to increase parent leadership skills. The National Parent Action Network would:

- **Showcase model and innovative parent leadership strategies**, curriculum, frameworks.
- **Develop a learning community among and between model parent leadership initiatives** for exchange of best practices.
- **Create a media strategy** to share this work including social media, speaker's bureau, and framework strategies, etc.
- **Create a national referral resource for parent leadership.** Parents seeking parent leadership could learn about models and venues to reach their goals.
- **Provide high level training and support to parent leaders** and the network of organizations supporting them.
- **Work to infuse authentic and diverse parent voices** at key policy making tables, serve as support to policy leaders, and advocate for parent and child friendly policies with elected and appointed officials.

- **Support the dissemination of model policies**, programs, best practices and evaluation models.

2. Expand model parent leadership training, strategies and curriculum. Bring proven practices to scale and offer replication, where useful. Most parents do not perceive themselves as a constituency and often lack the civic skills necessary for public impact. With acquired leadership skills, parents can partner with community leaders and agencies to improve family and neighborhood outcomes.

3. Train community and government agencies to work with parents as assets and partners. We seek to shift the culture of child and family policy from ‘service for’ to ‘partners with,’ where possible. Too many agencies do not know how change occurs for children and miss civic opportunities to partner with families. Similarly, most agencies do not know how to involve parents substantively in child and family policy or community development.

4. Braid parent engagement and leadership into child policy development. Parent leadership has enormous potential to improve how policies interface with families by involving parents in sharing information, implementing innovative solutions, and reaching deeply into the communities to touch diverse populations and informal networks.

Gratitude to the Host Funders

The Annie E. Casey Funds facilitated the convening of six of the seven model parent leadership programs including COFI, Ole, Parent Ambassadors, Parent Voices, Abriendo Puertas, and the Parent Leadership Training Institute over four days. The funds assisted in travel, hotel, meals, printing, and a shared lunch with government leaders, philanthropy, parents, and parent leadership experts to discuss findings and strategies. Some of the parent leadership models are lodged in one city or state. Others began in one locale and are now replicated elsewhere.

The Peppercorn Foundation sponsored translators, facilitators, and supported travel. The Campaign for Grade Level Reading sponsored one of the parent engagement groups and resourced one of the three note takers. This included their full travel, lodging, food, and materials. Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families’ Family Engagement and Parent Organizing Network co-sponsored the funder luncheon and meeting.

A focus group with parent leaders from seven models took place to determine and fine-tune a theory of change model regarding how parent leadership influences change on the personal, neighborhood and policy levels. This was led by Anne Henderson and Kate Kressley, affiliated with RMC Research, and supported by the Peppercorn and the Hagedorn Foundations.



Abriendo Puertas
Opening Doors



The seven parent engagement initiatives discussed include Abriendo Puertas (Opening Doors), Parent Voices, OLE Working Parents Association, Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI), the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI), the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE), and the Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP Parent Ambassadors.