

ERSEA Institute 2022

Session 1b

Family Advocacy and Leadership in ERSEA

Anita Harvey Dickson: Hello. My name is Anita Harvey Dickson, and I am the assistant director for the National Center for Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. I really hope you are enjoying the institute thus far. I want to remind you all that if you're interested in getting CEUs, and our certificate of participation, make sure you go to the Help Center.

I also just want to say, "How awesome is this?" All four National Centers are participating in this event. I know as a member of the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement team, I am so excited to be working this closely with all the centers around a topic that is so very important. With all that being said, I'd like to officially welcome you to our session entitled Family Advocacy and Leadership in ERSEA.

I want us to take a step back for just a moment and really begin to think about our past and what we've been going through for the past couple of years. As programs, as we continue to navigate forward, our way forward, we really want to continue the important work of enrolling families – thus, the reason why we are having this institute. The Office of Head Start, all of us in the National Centers, we are all in this with you. We understand the importance of enrolling families. We understand that it's a different way of doing this work, and we are excited to be in this process with you.

We're thinking with you about hiring and retaining quality staff. We're thinking with you about engaging families in creating safe learning environments. None of this work is new to any of us, but it has taken on a whole new dynamic as we work to move forward through a pandemic. In this session today, we really hope to acknowledge the important work that you have done thus far and encourage you to continue to move forward in innovative ways and review together some of those practical considerations as you're doing so.

We've got sessions designed for you to encourage opportunities for you to share and to network with others. We're going to talk a little bit about those practical application sessions, and we're going to talk about those networking sessions where you have an opportunity to come together with your colleagues and think together about some innovative things. Now, I've done a lot of talking already. There are two other outstanding ladies here on the panel with me, and I want them to introduce themselves. Leslie, will you introduce yourself?

Leslie Maxfield: I sure will, Anita. Thank you. Hi. My name's Leslie Maxfield, and I'm a consultant with the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. I can't believe it. It's finally here. ERSEA Institute is live. I'd like to bring on my friend, Jennifer.

Jennifer Olson: Thank you so much, Leslie. I'm Jennifer Olson. I'm the T and TA lead at the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. I'm thrilled to be here, too,

Leslie; and thank you for that great introduction, Anita, just grounding us in this really, really important topic. We're so eager to get started.

Anita: Thank you. I am so excited to be with both of you. As we get going in this conversation, I really want to ground ourselves or level set in terms of our learning objectives. For our brief time together today, we're going to discuss and share some research-based benefits of family advocacy and leadership on ERSEA activities and program outcomes, a topic that is really near and dear to my heart. We're also going to identify how to promote and encourage family advocacy and leadership to strengthen ERSEA in our Head Start program.

Before we get too far, I want us to get grounded in or reconnect to something you heard in the ERSEA foundation's presentation. It's the Parent, Family, Community Engagement Framework. It's our roadmap, our way of doing the work of parent, family, and community engagement. Now for this session, we are going to particularly lean into the blue column of the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework – the Family Outcomes column.

We define family advocacy and leadership as parents and families taking on leadership roles in Head Start and Early Head Start. Families participate in decision-making, policy development, and organizing activities in communities and in states. This is all in the service of improving children's safety, health, development, and learning experiences.

When we engage families in our systems in this type of work, we create stronger, positive program environments where, through our policies and ERSEA practices, we can support families as advocates and leaders in their homes and in their Head Start programs. Through our positive goal-oriented relationships, we can share and communicate the successful impacts of their enrollment on the child and family outcomes. Families become partners in our ERSEA process by sharing their experiences and advocating for those quality services and demonstrating leadership at the program and community level.

Here are some examples of the ways that families can do that – promoting partnerships with families. It helps to spread the word and support service delivery through our advocacy and leadership. Also, it helps to build relationships with families through the ERSEA service continuum.

When we think about recruitment and family advocacy and leadership, sometimes the most effective practice in recruitment is that parents and families talk to other parents and families about what they're experiencing in our Head Start programs. They talk about the services that they're receiving. They talk about their sense of belonging, and they talk about, proudly, of their roles as advocates and leaders in their programs and what they're taking back into their home.

Before we get too far down the road, it's important for us to come to a shared understanding. To ensure our shared understanding, we want to define these terms – advocacy and leadership. Advocacy is defined as an action that supports or defends on behalf of others. That's what an advocate is –; and leadership, very simply, is the capacity and the willingness to interact with a purpose.

If you remember, on the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework, advocacy and leadership share a space. But for our time today we have separated those, so when we talk about them, we'll talk about advocacy, and we'll talk about leadership. Jennifer?

Jennifer: Here I am to talk about advocacy. What we want to think about is, families can be advocates and leaders at home, in our programs, in their children's schools, in their neighborhood community, and throughout the whole society. When we really think about what a marvelous role that they can have, their advocacy and leadership can be far-reaching, shaping the development of children, programs, schools, their community, and the lives of other families.

What does it look like? Parent advocacy and leadership is all parents are leaders in the lives of their children. They advocate for well-being as their children grow and develop. We are so familiar with this because we watch this happen with the families that we work with every day.

Many parents enter our Head Start programs looking about and wondering if they might be able to be advocates and leaders. Others come in full bore. They're ready. They're already advocating and leading. Maybe they've even learned these skills from other programs or their other elements of their lives. But all of them grow and have the opportunity for a role in advocacy and leaderships. They mobilize sometimes to share around a shared concern or a crisis, like they have around the pandemic. They might also become advocates after realizing they have the ability to change a situation and make a difference. Leslie, let's take a peek at some of the research around advocacy.

Leslie: Great. Thanks, Jennifer, for such a great lead in. I just wanted to say – it's interesting because I've worked in different parts of the country. Some people say, as Anita and Jennifer say, ERSEA, others say ERSEA. It's up to you, we can mix and match as we go through the presentation. But what we know is that, when families advocate, everyone benefits. We have some research-proven benefits of family advocacy – that when they share their Head Start experience with others to promote Head Start services, it makes a difference.

Families provide program information to other families who are looking for family and child supports to meet their interests and needs. These advocacy efforts impact ERSEA through eligibility, selection, and recruitment linked to accessing and retaining more families; and recruitment and attendance, which we know is so important, which leads to improved family and child outcomes.

I wanted to share a story with you from my experience. For several years, I had the honor to work with a large migrant and seasonal Head Start program on the West Coast. Within this program, we really saw families as our support and leaders in terms of recruitment, because we had many seasonal families who lived in the area, and they were in touch with families who were migrant families who would migrate up the West Coast working on different crops. In our area they grow strawberries. They would let us know when the families were coming.

We might have had an idea. We figured, well, maybe they're going to be able to come on June 1. But if there was a change in weather or there was a change in the harvest that they were completing down in California, they would let us know. It was a great help because families were able to go out and talk to the new families that were moving in. They were able to tell the

program where they were staying, how many they thought were coming, how many children were coming, as well.

It was a great help because they not only shared their experience with others, but they provided the information to the program to help within decision-making about when recruitment would take place, which also helped with staffing, as well.

As we imagine an effective ERSEA process, one in which families have an active role and everyone benefits, some other examples are that parent-to-parent leadership development, learning, sharing, and support are often effective strategies for family leadership development. Father-engagement efforts also can give fathers an opportunity to become leaders who recruit other fathers. We'll have a story about that in a few minutes. Jennifer, back to you.

Jennifer: Thanks so much, Leslie. We get to talk a little bit more about other research-proven benefits of family advocacy. Let me get it up here for us now. We know, research tells us, that families themselves create those welcoming environments. If we think about that framework that Anita shared with us earlier, remember, welcoming environments is one of those impact areas. Our families are those that sometimes are our greatest advocates for creating a welcoming environment.

Families also use strengths-based attitudes and practices to foster parent leadership. We really, really see that linking back to that Framework, as again. When we create a welcoming environment, that can actually impact recruitment and attendance because if families talk about how welcoming a place is, or actually participate in welcoming other families, that can increase our recruitment and our attendance, which of course then promotes diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

Lastly, attendance is linked to family – when we increase attendance through the support of other families, it's linked to child outcomes and increased family leadership and advocacy. It's just like a self-fulfilling process where it continues on. What are some of these things that research tells us about when families create welcoming environments and use their strengths-based attitudes?

Children experience greater opportunities, both at home and at school. Parents develop knowledge and skills. Also they build connections for themselves with the community, and sometimes they build their self-confidence. Early childhood programs and schools are better able to meet the needs of children and families because they're more connected to families in advocacy and leadership activities.

Each family, as we know, that comes to Head Start has its own story. Those stories are very, very unique, full of experiences of memories and live events and their cultural values, dreams, beliefs, and daily practices. Let me tell you my story now. Leslie has been telling a wonderful story about recruiting for strawberries.

I want to tell you about a story. I live in the Northwest, and there's a program not very far from me that had a large increase in families from Somalia a few years back. They were very excited to see this new group, and they had lots and lots of attendance and participation. But they found that pretty soon the Somali families were so great at recruiting for their program that

they were probably between 40, 50 percent of their families for the next year were going to be from the Somalia population.

One of the moms asked if she could come in and be part of that welcoming environment for children. Could she volunteer in the classroom so that children and the families dropping their kids off – that was before a pandemic, that certainly was happening – that they would see a familiar face, or they may hear a familiar language. Oh, my gosh! The program was so excited, and they said, “Absolutely. Yes.” Two other mothers helped, as well.

You know what? In a few weeks there were books in the classroom that represent other cultures. There were songs sung. There were stories read or told at circle time that represented not only just the Somalia culture but others as well; and creeping into the drama corner were other bits of clothing and fabric that represented other cultures, as well. We could see these families advocating for a welcoming environment were actually advocating for diversity, as well. It was very, very exciting to see that example. Leslie, we’re going to talk now about the how-to’s.

Leslie: Great. Everyone wants the how-to – the how in supporting family advocacy in ERSEA: providing opportunities for open communication that validates parents’ concerns. When I was talking about the migrant story, it validated the experience and the expertise. We’ve recognized those families as experts.

Family advocacy in Head Start and Early Head Start can include a range of different activities. Parent advocates can act as a peer support for other parents. They can participate in parent meetings, advisory committees, parent committees, Policy Council, and other governing bodies, as well as in community or state coalitions. They can write a letter to the editor of the local paper to express a concern about a community topic that needs more attention and action.

We know that Head Start is a strong national model of family advocacy and leadership. Parents and families promote their children’s education and development. They hold key roles in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Parents have always been engaged as advocates and leaders, particularly through governance. They participate in decision-making, policy development, and activity organization in communities and states.

Many parents enter Head Start and Early Head Start programs with strong leadership and advocacy skills. Other parents have great potential to develop these skills. Their positive experiences with advocacy may further motivate them to advocate for broader systemic improvements.

I want to tell you a story about a young man named Rudy who he was one of the parents who has the great potential to develop these skills. Rudy is a father in Head Start, and he works on a construction site. There was a new worker who joined a few weeks ago, and his name is José.

On this one day, Rudy noticed that José was late, and that wasn’t like him at all. During their lunch break, they sat together, and he was checking in with him about what happened. “That’s really unusual that you were late.” José said he was worried. He didn’t want to get fired, but he didn’t know what to do because his child care provider was sick, and the only thing he could do

was take his little girl to the aunt's house, which was totally in the opposite direction of the work site.

Rudy thought that this would be a great opportunity to share about Head Start, and he shared the benefits that he and his family had been experiencing. He gave José the name of the program and the phone number. When he dropped his child off the next morning he was very excited, and he told the teacher that he's trying to recruit some guys on the job. They were very thankful and celebrated his efforts. They gave him some pamphlets that he could bring to work to hand out. They told him that they would be looking for José and welcome him when he came in.

We see there's so many ways that parents and families' leadership and advocacy efforts enable them to become stronger within the program and to reach out to each other as peers, just as Rudy was able to reach out to José. Jennifer, what's next?

Jennifer: It's more how-to and what the how-to's look like. Like you said, Leslie, everybody wants to see them. As we can see on this slide, that supporting family advocacy sometimes means providing families with information and the "rules of the game." Even when policies and government structures promote leadership, sometimes additional knowledge and skills needs to be present for families to really feel confident. One of those things is the "rules of the game."

Leslie, I loved your story about Rudy because what a wonderful example of one father talking to another father about the benefits of Head Start, and recruiting right there on the job. It was wonderful – and how fantastic that the Head Start program gave him the pamphlets to say, We're going to be so welcoming. What if he got there, and he's not eligible due to restrictions with income, or a variety of other things, or a waiting list? There could be many, many things. He could be, feel very welcome, but he may not be able to place his child for a variety of reasons.

Maybe perhaps when we're thinking about "rules of the game," that program could have said to Rudy, "You know. We are thrilled." Do everything exactly as they said, and – we need to let you know that we have eligibility criteria. Just as, when you came into the program, you remember you filled out those paper work. We looked at income, we looked at this, we looked at that, and we saw that you were eligible – and unfortunately, your friend may not be, or he could be, which would be wonderful.

But when you give him the pamphlet, you might want to mention that there's some eligibility expectation. There's some 'rules of the game' so that we're sure that we're meeting the needs of the most needy in our community – so that everybody's prepared and not disappointed. That's an example of the "rules of the game."

The other thing we need to do to make sure that parents are successful in advocacy is pay attention to how information, communication, and leadership opportunities are presented to families, are given to families, so that they can all have a voice and belong. Of course, we need to remember about our cultural images. We need to remember about our simple language. We need to remember about not using jargon, and we need to remember all of those things that go into us making sure that every family in our program has a voice.

We want to think, too, about some of the other things. We mentioned that eligibility was something that we wanted to share with Rudy. Well, there could be some other examples to share with families. We might want to talk about tax refund claims. We might want to talk about how to fill out forms. Again, we want to use the simplest language and have these translated into as many languages as possible. Keeping health forms in place.

You can see it just branches out all the “rules of the game,” that we’re constantly helping families connect community resources and gain their confidence in well-being, advocacy, and leadership. Back to you, Leslie.

I think it’s Anita, instead.

Anita: You did. That’s okay, Jennifer. No worries at all.

Jennifer: Unless I was having such a fun teeter-totter that I was just ... Please. It’s Anita. You go ahead now.

Anita: No worries at all. I actually wanted go back to some of the key points that you mentioned. I wanted to talk about that eligibility. We do know just how scary eligibility can be. If we share that information with Rudy, then Rudy can share that information with José, so when he comes in, he feels knowledgeable – just that anticipatory guidance, how comforting that can be for someone coming into our program.

Also we talked, Jennifer, about the Somali families. Just want to mention that Ramadan is coming soon. We really want to acknowledge that. I can just imagine how elements of that might even be attached to their experiences within the program. I just really wanted to call those two points out.

I’m running on again. It’s time for us to hear from you all. We’ve got this Q&A question up here. In your Q&A box, we really want you to think about and respond to this question – what do you think is the impact of family advocacy in ERSEA, in terms of, what can your program do to strengthen family advocacy efforts in ERSEA? We want you to chat away in our Q&A. Leslie, do you see anything in the Q&A?

Leslie: I do Anita. I see one that says, “Offering spaces for families of children with disabilities to connect and share stories and strategies.” What a wonderful idea to create a safe space where currently enrolled families can share their experience with families who want to enroll but may be a little bit hesitant or nervous because maybe it’ll be the first time they will have left their child. They want to make sure that people understand their child has a disability and might need some accommodation. I love that one.

Anita: Yes. That one is very, very powerful. I’m also thinking about Jennifer and the use of jargon. We use things like “IDEA” in Head Start and how that can be a bit of a challenge, so not falling into that jargon or those issues as we welcome our families, giving them that sense of belonging. Jennifer, do you see anything in the chat?

Jennifer: I do. The chat’s going like crazy, Anita. One that I can see right on top is to conduct program activities in the community where families can share with other parents, not necessarily link to Head Start but about the activities taking place in their program, such as wellness fairs, health clinics, and family literacy festival events – that sounds wonderful – that

other and practical activities and examples of what happens in the program. Staff and families and children can be part of the event. That's just a wonderful one, using our community partners, getting involved in community events where parents and families and children and their children may be attending.

Anita: Thank you. Leslie, do you see one more?

Leslie: Let me look. Well, we could invite parents to talk with their friends, family, and neighbors about the opportunities that the program offers for the development of their family and children – having opportunities where providing them with information, handouts that they could take, going to local grocery stores where they shop, and letting them know that Head Start has openings and is recruiting, because we know that we have peak times, but that we're also recruiting year-round. That sounds like a great idea, too.

Jennifer: Anita, we've got another one – programs may open spaces for families to volunteer in the classrooms. It's so good that, now we're getting back to in-person services, that we can see the parents volunteering and being in the classroom and other service areas in the programs. Remember the wonderful days where we had parent rooms that families could come and use. I'm so grateful to see that opening up again.

Anita: Oh, yes. It really is. That's exciting. I'm notorious for when I was a school director, it was very important to me that we always had coffee and tea available all the time. I understand the power of the parent room. Thank you.

Jennifer: I know too, Anita, we're not supposed to say sugar, but I know you had a candy dish on your desk as well. [Laughing] Not to minimize sugar, but I know sometimes the candy dish ...

Anita: You are telling my secrets. [Laughing] Alrighty. Everyone, please continue in the Q&A, adding ideas. We definitely want to hear what you have to share. I'm going to kick it over to Leslie.

Leslie: Thanks so much, Anita. Now we're going to transition from family advocacy to family leadership in ERSEA. Families can be strong and effective leaders in the ERSEA process. Family leaders use and develop resources and services to strengthen their own family. They speak and act from those experiences.

They have so many options for early care and education today, so it's important to know that we are recruiting in a new environment. There are more providers, more options for parents to choose from. We need to consider, how can Head Start programs be good collaborators in the community to ensure that all families are offered a good fit option?

It's important to shift the community dynamic from one of competition to one of collaboration. Talking with other parents and families can help newly enrolling families to make the choice that matches their circumstances and characteristics. Strong parent leaders tend to gather information and ask relevant questions. They begin to understand how the educational system is designed, and build relationships with and organize others. They can identify problems, propose solutions, and set goals. Let's look more deeply at the research. I'm going to turn it back to Jennifer.

Jennifer: Thanks so much, Leslie. Here we go again with our research-proven benefits of family leadership. Family leaders develop knowledge and skills, and they build connections with other families. We've been talking about that, that "rules of the game," the understanding, giving clear information to families so they can build upon that in their own advocacy and leadership.

Then family leadership helps programs in schools better meet the needs of children, families, and the communities that they serve. When we think about this, again, these strategies that families are using really influence ERSEA. They contribute to recruitment and attendance, which leads to retention and eligibility and selection, which are linked to placement.

When we have families as advocates and leaders on our Policy Council, giving us information about the community, helping us make decisions about eligibility and selection, that's really, really critical because they are our eyes and ears in the community. They have experienced enrollment. They've experienced recruitment, and they've experience what it's like to live in the community. Having their voice in eligibility and selection is critical.

Families who take on leadership roles recruit other families. As we heard earlier, families may recruit from where they work, where they play, and where they interact with others. As Leslie said, families are our strongest recruiters, and word of mouth is one of the most important tools. I think we know that when a bad experience happens to us, we're 10 times more likely to write up a comment or share it with someone else. Whereas we maybe only three times is likely to share a positive comment. But you know when you hear that positive comment, it means so much.

That's what Head Start's all about, those positive relationships, those two purple arrows across the Framework. They talk about how we build those positive relationships and hopefully create most positive experience for families so when they talk about our program, it's only in a positive way. Family leadership can open the door to promote program options throughout the community, not just with other families, but throughout the community. As a result, they themselves and other families in the program learn about resources and opportunities in that same community.

Let me tell you another little story. We go back to our Somalia families, and we have a couple of dads that wanted to take some computer courses. They went down to the community college, and they asked if there were any courses available. The community college said, "Yes. We teach computer classes. We'd be thrilled to offer something, but you'll have to wait awhile because we need 16 people in order to run that class."

Well, they said, "We're going right back to Head Start." They went right back to Head Start, and they said, "Hey, can we advertise the fact that if we get 16 people, we can actually have a course offered this term, right away? It could start in the next three weeks." The Head Start program was of course thrilled to hear this and said, "Absolutely."

The fathers recruited mothers and fathers. They recruited friends from the community, and actually they ended up with the 16 parents and the course was actually offered. They've connected people not only to that community resource but to the wonder of Head Start and how Head Start – that's what we do. We connect ourselves and families to partners in our community. Even parents not within that Head Start learned more about the community

college offerings and the “rules of the game” so that they too could participate more fully in opportunities. Leslie, back to you.

Leslie: Thanks, Jennifer. Here are some more research-proven benefits of family leadership. Family leadership supports stronger communities that understands the interests and needs of the people who live there. Family leadership impacts ERSEA through eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment – all of ERSEA – and attendance that leads to full enrollment.

Going back to the mom from Somalia who volunteered in the classroom. She’s now a member of the Policy Council, and she participates in helping to develop eligibility and selection criteria based on the community assessment and feedback from families within the program and within the community.

It recently came to her attention that a large group of families from Afghanistan had arrived in their area. She wanted to bring this back to the Policy Council and start a conversation to look at how could they include these families based on factors that might be associated with their lack of housing, making sure that they had others in the area that they could talk to, that they could find out where they could get foods that were familiar to them.

They started thinking about ways that the Head Start program could maybe check in with places of worship, community centers, and support these families who are brand new to the community. They were actually sharing their experience with a new group and really impacting the entire community.

As we said, also, we want to be sure to include that recruitment for children with disabilities is emphasized during that time when we’re doing ongoing screening and evaluation of children who may be already enrolled within our program. We know now that we are still recruiting in a new environment.

As we’ve said before, it’s a time for creativity to maybe look at some of the things that have worked, talk to our parents about how Head Start supported them through the past few years of the pandemic. I’m going to turn it over now to Jennifer.

Jennifer: Yes. Let’s go in for how again. Leslie, how do we do this in leadership while we support decision-making. I was hearing you talk about that on the Policy Council. We respect and recognize parents’ abilities, and we create space for their parent and family voices. We’ve been talking about this throughout our entire presentation about how to do that.

Then we genuinely consider and integrate the views and wishes of parents and families when program decisions are made. Often, we take the time to do focus groups or surveys, and we ask families all of these different things. I don’t know how many programs actually say to the families, “This was a result of the survey. This is what we learned from you. As a result, we’re going to enlarge our parent room, or we’re going to make some changes in transportation, or we’re going to broaden the options in our meals,” and families say, “Wow. I guess I better fill out that survey because they really listen to my voice.”

Or in those times when we’re not able to respond in ways that families are hoping, we explain that. We talk about it. We have it at a family meeting, or we talk about it on our website saying,

“You know that was a fantastic idea, but due to limited funds or this or that or standards, we’re not able to do that at this time.”

All of that leads to families becoming more and more confident in their advocacy and leadership. Sometimes we see it not only within our own programs and in our communities but at the broader level as well. I want to share with you this story of a father that shared his experiences with advocacy and leadership. He said, “One thing I found about that Head Start did for me was not only to enrich, empower, and educate me and my family, but it enriched, empowered, and educated everyone around me. That happened due to the support of the Head Start staff. About four years ago I spoke as a keynote speaker for the Parent Award banquet, and I went on to go to the State Association Board. Now I’m a member of the Regional Association board.” What a life, what a great story. Leslie, I’ll hand it back to you.

Leslie: Thanks Jennifer. When we think again about the how, we want to be sure that we encourage parent participation and decision-making in governance. But how do we build and sustain partnership with families to promote or encourage ERSEA outcomes?

What we’re going to do now is we’re going to take a look at an example of how in action. We’re going to show you a video, and we want you to be on the lookout for the how connections that you see, and be prepared to share it with the group afterwards in the chat opportunity in the Q&A.

[Video begins]

[Music]

Marcela: Building leadership skills goes back to the relationship that we establish with our families, and that starts from the moment they walk through the door.

[Children shouting; adults greeting children and each other]

Monique: It starts with making them feel welcomed, making them feel that their voice is important, and it counts.

[Children and adults enthusiastically talking in the background]

Donna: They know more than us. They are the first teachers for the children so that they have those beginning leadership skills.

[Adults talking]

Marcela: Part of that relationship is forming a really comfortable and open communication with families so that they do feel comfortable, whether it’s going to the family engagement specialist or to their child’s teacher, whether it’s a concern or an idea. So really creating, I think, a safe space for them.

Lizette: It’s really making them see it within themselves. It’s a little bit of a challenge, but it’s really just coming alongside them and showing them and demonstrating, like, “No. You’re the one who did this. You asked the question. I didn’t ask it. I didn’t plant this seed in your head. You thought of it and it’s a great idea, and let’s roll with it.”

Daisy (parent): They give you that boost, like, “You can do it. You can do it.” And that means a lot, like they empower you.

Marcela: The parent curriculum that we actually have chosen to use was actually bought from a parent who went to a conference. So really creating those opportunities where parents do feel like they’re being heard, and if they do have ideas, to really try to incorporate those.

Teacher: What do you want to do? Do you want me to read to you?

Norma: I’m actually the president of the Policy Council. So, yes. [Laughter] It’s a big title to hold, you know, but I love doing it.

Masedonio: Being a part of that team—it made me feel good because I know not just what’s going on in class, but what’s going on in the actual school.

Marcela: They look at our monthly financials, our budget, our monthly program report, and they also can offer ideas or solutions to different things that come up.

Masedonio: It definitely develops your leadership skills because you’re in a place where you have a voice. You have a vote, you know, and what you say does matter.

Donna: If at the kindergarten, you know, or at the elementary schools, they’re not going to offer these type of programs. So are they going to have that voice, or are they going to fall in the background?

Norma: I never thought parents had a voice, to tell you the truth. After being here, it has opened my mind; and my children, they see it. So it’s something that they will do the same because they’re seeing it through me.

Daisy: By seeing me, they’ll be part of their communities, and I see it already with my 17-year-old wanting to help his community.

Children in the background: Bye! Bye!

Donna: Having these leadership roles will encourage them to have a stronger voice as their kid gets older and older and they go to college, and they’ll be there for their whole education.

[Music ends]

[Video ends]

Anita: Wow! What a powerful video. We just watched a clip about families and staff partnering in program leadership. It’s a thoughtful piece and an outstanding example of partnering with families.

On that note, I want to leave us with these two awesome quotes: “Individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean.” “Together we give our children the roots to grow and the wings to fly.” On that note, we want to wish you all a happy rest of the institute. Go to the Practical Application, share thoughts, share energy with each other. Thank you all for joining us today. Bye-bye.

Leslie: Thank you.