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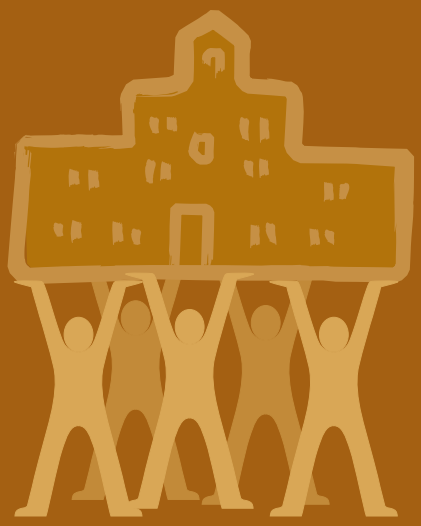
PROGRAM PROFILES

Building Local Leadership for Change: A National Scan of Parent Leadership Training Programs



Anne T. Henderson

in collaboration with
Annenberg Institute research staff

Annenberg Institute for School Reform
AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

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About the Annenberg Institute for School Reform

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform is a national policy-research and reform-support organization, affiliated with Brown University, that focuses on improving conditions and outcomes for all students in urban public schools, especially those serving disadvantaged children. The Institute's vision is the transformation of traditional school systems into "smart education systems" that develop and integrate high-quality learning opportunities in all areas of students' lives – at school, at home, and in the community.

The Institute conducts research; works with a variety of partners committed to educational improvement to build capacity in school districts and communities; and shares its work through print and Web publications. Rather than providing a specific reform design or model to be implemented, the Institute's approach is to offer an array of tools and strategies to help districts and communities strengthen their local capacity to provide and sustain high-quality education for all students.

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About the Author

Anne T. Henderson is a senior consultant for the Community Organizing and Engagement program at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Recently, she has worked with the Institute to develop a series of tools to help local communities prepare more students for college and a career. *Putting Kids on the Pathway to College* is based on a study of New York City high schools that are "beating the odds" in bringing low-performing ninth-graders to timely graduation and college entrance. The tools include a framework of effective strategies for improving college access, a rubric for evaluating current practices, and survey and focus group tools for gathering data from students and families. They are designed for a wide audience, including school districts, community and parent organizations, researchers, and policy-makers.

Henderson also recently worked with the institute to create a series of research-based workshops that focus on community organizing strategies in four communities. These "jigsaw" reading-and-discussion activities help participants understand the organizing efforts of one community, explore the implications those efforts may have on their own community, and identify next steps they want to take. The workshops are based on an Annenberg study of the impact of community organizing on student, school, and district outcomes entitled *Organized Communities, Stronger Schools*.

Henderson's research interests focus on the relationship between families and schools. Her most recent book, *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships* (written with Karen Mapp, Don Davies, and Vivian Johnson), was published by The New Press in 2007. Her publications also include the *Evidence* series, which reviews the research on parent involvement and student achievement. The latest edition, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, written with Karen Mapp, was published by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in 2002.

About the Series

Education Policy for Action: Education Challenges Facing New York City is a series of research and policy analyses by scholars in fields such as education, economics, public policy, and child welfare in collaboration with staff from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform and members of a broadly defined education community. Papers in this series are the product of research based on the Institute's large library of local and national public education databases; work with the Institute's data analysis team; and questions raised and conclusions drawn during a public presentation and conversation with university and public school students, teachers, foundation representatives, policy advocates, education reporters, news analysts, parents, youth, and community leaders.

Among the issues that the series addresses are several pressing topics that have emerged from the Institute's research and organizing efforts. Some of the topics covered in the series are:

- Confronting the impending graduation crisis
- The small schools experiment in New York City
- Positive behavior and student social and emotional support
- Modes of new teacher and principal induction and evaluation

Many thanks to the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation for its support of the public conversations from which this report and the other publications in the series grew.

For a downloadable version of this report and more information about the series, please visit <www.annenberginstitute.org/WeDo/NYC_Conversations.php>.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the research team: Deinya Phenix, Tara Bahl, Ivonne Garcia, Christina Mokhtar, and Courtney Hardwick. I would also like to thank all the people who came to the policy conversation, as well as the other panelists, Zakiyah Ansari and Kim Sweet, and the directors of the four example programs who provided such complete and detailed information – Beverly Raimondo of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence; David Valladolid and Patti Mayer of the Parent Institute for Quality Education; Andrew Lachman of the Connecticut Commission on Children; and Anne Thompson of the Parent Academy.

Introduction

These program profiles provide background for the research report *Building Local Leadership for Change: A National Scan of Parent Leadership Training Programs.* The full report describes four types of parent leadership training programs identified in the scan and gives examples of each. These four types are:

- Type 1. Parent leadership training programs
- Type 2. Parent training programs aimed at immigrant families and families with limited English
- Type 3. Parent academies or universities
- Type 4. Parent leadership training to understand and influence the system

This publication presents more detailed profiles of each of the program exemplars and the results of independent evaluations of the programs.

For more information about the study and to download the full report or the Executive Summary, please visit <www.annenberginstitute.org/products/Henderson.php>.

Type 1: Leadership Training – Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, Kentucky

> Our aim is to create an army of self-confident and well-informed parents to focus on improved student achievement for all Kentucky students.
>
> — Robert Sexton, Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence

Background, Development, and Design

In 1990, the state legislature passed the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), one of the first standards-based education reform laws in the country. At the time, Kentucky was considered to have among the lowest education outcomes in the country. The law was far-reaching, mandating standards and annual assessments of student performance, with triggers for technical assistance and support for schools that failed to make progress toward the goal of proficiency for all students by 2012. Among other features, such as Family Resource Centers in low-income schools, school report cards published in local papers, and an ungraded primary program, the law mandated school-based decision-making councils. Each council must have five members that include two parents elected by other parents.

Bob Sexton and the staff of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, a statewide citizens' organization that had advocated for the reform, decided that the state needed "an army of well-informed and highly motivated parents" for the law to work. In 1997, it launched the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, with funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Ford, Annie E. Casey, Edna McConnell Clark, Wallace, and Kellogg Foundations. Since then, the program

has graduated over 1,500 "fellows" (the term for graduates) from all income and education levels.

To determine how to offer the program and what it should cover, the Prichard Committee worked with several partner organizations and advisors representing major stakeholders in the state, as well as with national experts. The leading collaborators included the Kentucky PTA, the Kentucky Association of School Councils, the National Center for Family Literacy, and the Kentucky Department of Education, along with national consultants Norm Fruchter and Anne Henderson.

Under the direction of Beverly Raimondo, the director of the program, these groups formed a steering committee that met in several all-day sessions to hammer out logistical and content issues. The Prichard Committee also conducted focus groups with parents to determine their preferences on institute structure, timing, and information and skill needs. The program was piloted in the fall of 1997; the steering committee met again after that to refine the program based on the pilot experience. Through the years, the basic structure of the institute has remained the same, but curriculum content has evolved and been honed to reflect ongoing changes in education reform, specifically the implementation of a new accountability system.

Structure, Curriculum, and Instruction

The program is offered free to participants and is given regionally across the state. (During the period that it was fully funded, institutes were given in seven regions each year; now offerings, generally two per year, depend on donor funding and collaborations with partner programs and organizations.) Each Institute consists of three two-day sessions (usually Friday to Saturday) offered about a month apart, generally in the fall. Participants stay overnight at the training location (local college, state park, conference center, or hotel), and all meals are covered. By the end of the six days, participants draft a project to implement in partnership with their school; the project must meet the three criteria of involving more parents, focusing on improved student achievement, and having a lasting impact. Each participant receives up to $500 to carry out the project once a project design and budget are completed.

After completing the training, participants complete their project designs with support from a Prichard Committee coach who also conducted the training and implement their projects in their schools or districts. The Prichard Committee is based in Lexington, Kentucky, and the institute has three full-time staff at the state level. In addition, there are currently three community support coordinators who live and work in their regions. Each is responsible for organizing and leading one Institute per year, for supporting current CIPL participants through their project implementation, and nurturing the network of Fellows in their area.

The CIPL curriculum is organized around a three-part framework that guides participants in developing their projects.

1. Improving Student Achievement: Parents learn how to design and carry out projects that are designed to have an impact on student achievement. Specifically parents learn about:

- The state standards-based system and how it works as well as access points for parents to speak out and influence decisions.
- Using student achievement data to discover achievement gaps between groups of students and drive improvement.
- How children learn; new approaches to improve student learning; how to look at student work in the light of standards; and effective teaching practice.

2. Increasing Parent Involvement: Parents learn how to engage other parents, especially those who are not involved at school and whose children may be struggling. Specifically parents learn how to:

- Connect with families of all backgrounds, reaching out and learning what skills and experiences they can offer.
- Run effective meetings by using group process, identifying common goals, resolving conflict, and developing an action plan.
- Facilitate a constructive dialogue between parents and teachers.

3. Having a Lasting Impact: Parents learn how to help themselves and other families become powerful advocates for higher achievement for all students. Specifically parents learn:

- Who has power and how parents can have a voice in decisions.
- Ways to get a project or program adopted by the school and into the school improvement plan.
- How to find local or state sources of funding and use a mini-grant.

Recruitment and Expectations of Participants

Although CIPL is focused on parents, anyone in a position where they work with public school students may apply. All participants are expected to make a two-year commitment to the program, attend all training sessions, and complete a project. Each year, the institute has more applicants than openings; institutes are limited to thirty participants. A reading committee composed of non-CIPL staff (Prichard Committee members, community supporters, former CIPL participants) reads all applications and evaluates them against criteria of volunteer experience, leadership experience, grasp of education issues, vision for improving education, and ability to follow through on plans or actions. All applicants must attend an orientation where the expectations are made clear.

CIPL staff recruit participants through a variety of means: letters, e-mail announcements, flyers, press releases to local media, visits to schools, and personal contacts with parent, community, and district leaders, aiming to form teams at schools and across districts. Over time, CIPL fellows have become a potent recruiting force. CIPL has partnered with federal education programs such as Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR-UP) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), as well as state Early Childhood programs, modifying the curriculum somewhat to align with the goals and audience of those programs and capturing their participants.

Evaluation Results

A 2008 study by Corbett and Wilson found that CIPL fellows changed perspective from focusing mainly on their own children to promoting the best interests of all children. Many were elected to school councils and to leadership positions in school PTAs. Beyond their children's schools, fellows branched out to take part in district committees, school board activities, curriculum task forces, and regional and state advisory councils. This new activism, fellows reported, stemmed directly from the knowledge, confidence, and competence gained from CIPL training. Several fellows who were interviewed prefaced their reports with the comment, "never in a million years…"

While most CIPL graduates have some college education, less well-educated fellows were as likely to stay involved after completing CIPL. About two-thirds of projects that fellows designed and completed continued beyond their CIPL involvement (e.g., supplemental reading instruction, elementary-middle school transition activities, mobile science labs, outdoor classrooms, and volunteer tutors).

Sponsorship

Since the initial grants ran out, the program has operated with private donations, revenue from consulting, support from school districts, and contracts with state and federal programs such as GEAR-UP. The Prichard Committee is also exploring a line item for CIPL in the state budget. The program costs about $4,000 per participant; the graduation rate is 98 percent, and 80 percent complete projects.

For more information on the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, visit <www.prichardcommittee.org/CIPL/tabid/31491/Default.aspx>.

Type 2: Immigrant Families – Parent Institute for Quality Education, California

> "There is no force on earth more powerful than the love of a mother for her children."
>
> — Vahac Mardirosian, PIQE founder

Background, Development, and Design

In 1987, community activists Vahac Mardirosian, a retired pastor, and Alberto Ochoa, a professor at San Diego State University, invited Latino parents at Sherman Elementary School, the lowest-ranked in San Diego, to discuss their social conditions, the school system, and their children's low academic achievement. The planned dialogue with a few parents evolved into eight weeks of two-hour sessions with more than ninety parents. At the end, the parents recommended holding the same eight discussions at other schools. From this "parent mandate" came the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE). Since then, more than 400,000 parents — of children attending 1,500 elementary, middle, and high schools in urban school districts across California from San Diego to Sacramento – have graduated.

The program is designed to give low-income families the information and skills to support their children to do well in school, graduate, and attend college. Dr. Ochoa documented fifty-four separate issue areas covered in the discussions with Latino families, from which he developed a curriculum for workshops aimed at parents from kindergarten through twelfth grade. In general the goals of the program are to enable parents to:

- Create a positive home learning environment.
- Support a child's emotional and social development.
- Navigate the K–12 school system.
- Engage and collaborate with teachers, counselors, and principals.
- Make sure their children complete the college prep curriculum and encourage college attendance.

Structure, Curriculum, and Instruction

The program is offered in nine sessions, meeting two hours once a week. Size of classes is strictly limited to twenty to twenty-five people. The first session is introductory and allows parents to suggest topics they want to know more about; the next six sessions cover the curriculum; the eighth brings school staff, including the principal, together with parents to discuss how they want to work together to ensure children's success; and the ninth is a graduation, to which other family members, district officials, and community partners are also invited.

The curriculum is offered in six lessons:

1. Building children's self-esteem: giving positive feedback instead of frequent criticism.
2. Understanding the school system: key features of American schools and expectations for parent involvement.
3. Home learning strategies: supporting the child's education at home.
4. Communicating with teachers: getting to know the child's teacher and initiating meetings to track the child's progress.
5. Preventing gang affiliation and drug use.
6. Preparing for college early: college admission requirements, monitoring courses children take in junior high and high school, and financial aid.

A four-month follow-up program called "Parent Coaches" begins when a class ends. The instructor calls graduates each month to provide information, answer questions, and reinforce what was learned during the classes. A follow-up report informs the principal of issues raised by parents that need to be addressed.

PIQE recruits and trains facilitators from the same backgrounds as the families they will teach. Facilitators typically have other full-time jobs and work for a fee. To serve as an instructor, a person must meet several criteria:

- Be a parent and a PIQE graduate.
- Have experienced poverty.
- Have earned a bachelor's degree or equivalent college degree.
- Understand the U.S. school system and be able to explain simply how it works.
- Be able to listen respectfully (speak only 50 percent of the time).

Instructors are expected to call each class member every week to ensure attendance, wear dignified attire, and attend weekly staff meetings at the PIQE office. Compensation is adjusted by success. To receive full pay, the graduation rate must be at least 70 percent; if attendance falls to 50 percent, the instructor receives half the target pay and is not invited back to teach another class. Class attendance is strictly monitored each week.

Recruitment and Expectations of Participants

The target audience is low-income and immigrant families, and the program is open to all who make the commitment to attend the full nine weeks. Although the vast majority of PIQE graduates are Latinos, the program is offered in several languages, and includes Asian, Pacific Islander, and African American families. Parents must attend at least six of the nine sessions, including the graduation, to receive a graduation certificate. Over 80 percent of parents attend all nine sessions.

Evaluation Results

There have been several evaluations of PIQE. In a descriptive case study of two elementary schools, each with about 100 PIQE graduates, Chrispeels, Wang, and Rivero (2000) found that PIQE parents were significantly more likely to:

- Engage in home learning activities and contact the teacher after taking PIQE classes. These changes were sustained over time.
- Observe in class, initiate meetings with teachers, and volunteer.
- Redefine their role in child's education, shown by a major shift in attitudes about their ability to help their children be successful.
- Become stronger advocates for their child but still express strong deference for teachers' expertise.

There was no evidence that PIQE parents increased attendance at school-sponsored parent meetings.

A follow-up study (Chrispeels, Bolivar &Vaca 2000) in two high schools found that PIQE parents had less education than the control group, yet their children took 50 percent more A through G (college prep) courses. The children of PIQE graduates also had significantly higher grades and fewer absences than the control group students. Vidano and Sahafi (2004)

found that the high school graduation rates for children of PIQE parents (as reported by parents) were significantly higher (93 percent) than the graduation rates for:

- All Latino students in the San Diego Unified school district (63 percent).
- The state of California (69 percent).
- The U.S. (63 percent).

Sponsorship

PIQE is a private, nonprofit organization that partners with school districts, the California State University system, and federal programs such as GEAR-UP to offer the program. Typically, PIQE raises about half the cost from donors and foundations, and the district or other partner contributes the remaining amount. The cost per participant is about $180. In addition, schools are expected to offer space, childcare and food; the principal must welcome families at the first session and attend the graduation.

Related Programs

The National Council of La Raza has adopted the program and makes it available to local affiliates as Parents as Partners. Similar programs that have been inspired by PIQE include Parents as School Partners developed by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF); Parent Expectations Support Achievement developed by the Los Angeles County Office of Education; and Parents as Educational Partners developed by the Arlington Heights, Illinois, Adult Learning Resource Center.

For more information on the Parent Institute for Quality Education, visit <www.piqe.org>.

Type 3: Support Children's Learning – Parent Academy, Miami-Dade County

> "Demand Parents" understand that their children deserve a good education, and that it's their responsibility to make sure they get it.
>
> — Rudy Crew, former superintendent, Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Background, Development, and Design

Launched in 2005 under then-Superintendent Rudy Crew, The Parent Academy (TPA) has expanded from an initial focus on creating "demand" parents. The program is now fully integrated with the district-wide family engagement strategy, including coordinating professional development offerings for school staff with the district Office of Parent Involvement. In its first three years, the Parent Academy served more than 100,000 parents through more than 3,000 events.

The goals of TPA are:

- To educate parents to be "active partners" in promoting children's achievement.
- To strengthen the family.
- To unite families, schools, and communities toward a common goal.
- To inform parents of their rights, responsibilities, and educational opportunities.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) has increasingly used TPA as a key component of its reform initiative for low-performing schools, Plan for Success. In 2008, the district targeted nine of the lowest-performing schools for comprehensive reforms, including

partnering with TPA to offer Saturday workshops. Families receive training to help improve learning outcomes while their children attend extra classes. Although it is difficult to separate out the effect of the Academy from other interventions, district officials credit it as a key contributor to increased achievement in these schools. The district plans to increase using the Parent Academy in the Plan for Success Initiative in thirty-five schools.

A planning committee composed of 100 stakeholders (parents, businesspeople, community members, and school district staff) oversaw seven town meetings and seventy-five community forums throughout Miami and Dade County. The information gathered was processed by six committees, which together designed the program.

Structure, Curriculum, and Instruction

The original TPA curriculum was centered around three sets of workshops: Core Courses for parents to help their child, Growth Courses for parents to learn new skills and opportunities, and Certification Courses for parents to increase their employment opportunities. Certificates were awarded to participants after each workshop.

Over the past few years, TPA curriculum has grown to a "menu" of course offerings requested by participants, organized into five strands: Arts and Culture, Help Your Child Learn, Health and Wellness, Parenting Skills, and Personal Growth. Each strand features workshops that reflect parents' interests and appeal also to future parents, child caretakers, and community members concerned with children's issues. For example, within the Personal Growth strand are "Adult Education Courses" and "Financial Skills."

Workshops and training sessions are offered at various times and locations in different areas within the district. Support services such as transportation, childcare, and multilingual workshops are offered to maximize participation. TPA has long-term goals of partnering with higher education and offering open college classrooms in public facilities to parents all across the county.

The "campus" of TPA is purposefully spread throughout the community, and offerings have been held at schools, libraries, parks, colleges, private businesses, and local community centers such as barbershops. Family Learning Events are held at enriching venues such as museums and zoos so that families can learn and have fun together at no cost.

Many offerings are designed specifically for the Academy and are presented by school district personnel. Others are part of the district's Adult and Career Technical and Education program (EdWorks!). Still other events are sponsored by Academy partners, conducted at their location and taught by their personnel, such as "Academy Signature Classes," designed around specialized topics and for specific communities, or lecture series that featured well-known speakers such as author/columnist Leonard Pitts.

Recruitment and Expectations of Participants

Participants do not have to be Miami-Dade Public School parents; however, parents and family members of current and former students, or children under school age, have a priority. Additional guardians and surrogate parents are welcome, along with school volunteers

Under the original curriculum, graduation requirements were fairly clear, as there was a distinction between "core courses" and other courses. It would seem as though the new five-strand curriculum structure is intended to expand participation and work more as an ongoing program, rather than one with a distinct start and finish time. However TPA states that they envision "graduation ceremonies" where children will applaud their own parents for their success. Other future plans include online classes and live chats with experts, demonstration teaching, parent leadership training, and a parent media center for resource building. Whether this has actually been executed yet is unclear.

Evaluation Results

Two qualitative evaluations of the Parent Academy program (surveys, interviews, and document reviews) assess participant and school administrator perceptions of the program's value and impact. The consensus is that TPA has an impact on parent's attitudes, expectations, and behaviors that make a difference in their children's education, and that the program should be expanded (Chebbi 2008).

Sponsorship

TPA is housed in school district offices but supported entirely with private funding. Major funders include BlueCross BlueShield of Florida, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (in-kind), and Safe Schools/Healthy Students, as well as a variety of local businesses and corporations. Other community partners offer in-kind contributions such as space, materials, and instructors.

Related Programs

Across the country, similar parent training academies and universities based on the Miami Parent Academy model are under development in districts such as Houston, Boston, Philadelphia, and Prince George's County, Maryland.

For more information on the Parent Academy, visit <http://theparentacademy.dadeschools.net/>.

Type 4: Understanding and Navigating the System – Parents Supporting Educational Excellence, Connecticut

> Parent leadership is the capacity for parents to interact in society with purpose and positive outcomes for children. Parents, children, and communities all benefit from parent involvement.
>
> — Connecticut Commission on Children, The Values and Results of Parent Involvement

Parents Supporting Excellence in Education (Parents SEE) offers parents from a wide range of backgrounds a twelve-session program to learn practical strategies for working with other parents, educators, and community leaders to examine education policies and practices. By the end of the course, parents will be ready to address with confidence public policies and to be engaged in improving schools for all children. About 300 parents have graduated from the program since 2006.

Background, Development, and Design

The program is run by the Connecticut Commission on Children, an arm of the state legislature, and the Connecticut Center for School Change, a private nonprofit organization. Parents SEE is a recent offshoot of the Commission's flagship program, the Parent Leadership Training institute (PLTI), which has a civic engagement focus. PLTI has been offered since 1992 in communities across the state; Parents SEE has been offered since 2006.

The goals of the program are to:

- Provide parents with the skills and understandings necessary to become leaders, change agents, and active participants in education policy development and governance, at the school, district, and state levels.
- Facilitate partnerships between school personnel and parents in developing policies and programs to improve student learning.
- Help parents develop and express their interests within a public policy framework, as individuals, with peers, and as members of groups.

Connecticut Commission on Children staff shared several drafts of the Parents SEE curriculum with stakeholders such as school board members, school district superintendents, principals, and community leaders and then piloted the program with a class of parents. At the end of the first pilot, Parents SEE staff invited parents and other community members to a dinner meeting to get feedback.

Structure, Curriculum, and Instruction

The program begins with a five-hour Saturday retreat, followed by twelve weekly three-hour evening sessions. Each class is limited to fifteen to twenty participants. The program is offered in collaboration with a local community with the support of the school system. A Local Community Design Team that reflects the demographic profile of the community oversees and supports the course. The responsibilities of the Design Team are to:

- Secure funding for the course through grants, donations, and in-kind contributions. (The Center and the CT Commission provides the facilitators and materials.)
- Assure supports are in place for parents to attend (childcare, transportation, etc.).
- Recruit and interview a diverse group of participants.

- Designate and support a coordinator who will plan, organize, and coordinate the course and graduation.
- Secure space, food, and childcare providers.
- Monitor contracted services for each session.
- Follow up with absent participants.

Classes focus on leadership, partnership, change, and educational policy and practice, and cover what to expect from schools, how to understand data, and how to be successful civic leaders on education issues. During each session, participants acquire knowledge, engage in dialogue that encourages understanding of diverse viewpoints and experiences, and practice the skills needed to effect constructive change. By the end of the course, parents are poised to address with confidence public policies and civic engagement to improve schools for all children.

The curriculum covers questions such as what effective schools look like, how and why schools change, how a school district functions, what roles a parent/citizen can play in a school district and in improving student achievement, why some children succeed and others don't, what improvements are needed in schools, and how parents can become leaders.

Sessions have two facilitators: one with a background in education and one with experience in parent leadership training. Facilitators are trained, certified, and matched with communities by the Parents SEE Steering Team from the Connecticut Commission on Children and the Connecticut Center for School Change. In addition to preparing and guiding activities in each session, facilitators provide support and individual resources to participants.

Recruitment and Expectations of Participants

The program is open to parents and grandparents who must complete an application and personal interview. To support participant attendance, the program provides:

- Dinner and childcare, along with transportation as needed.
- All general materials and resources for each session.
- Practical, active, learn-by-doing activities.
- Opportunities to practice and apply skills to personal interests.

To graduate and receive a certificate, participants must attend the retreat and at least ten of the twelve sessions and take part in session activities and outside practice assignments.

Evaluation Results

A 2009 study by RMC Research consisted of pre- and post-training surveys of fifty participants administered in eight sites during school year 2007-2008, as well as two community profiles. Parents perceived growth in all categories surveyed: knowledge, skills, leadership, and experience. The greatest gains were in knowledge of how the education system works, comfort level in using skills, and parent leadership in using data to make decisions about school improvement. Parents intend to use the training to become more involved in their children's schools, work with others to increase parent involvement, and become more active in the parent organization and school board activities.

Sponsorship

The Connecticut Commission on Children is an arm of the State Legislature. This program is the only one in our scan that has state funding. The Connecticut Center for School Changes is a private, nonprofit organization that consults with school districts on improving student outcomes and supports comprehensive reform through leadership development, research, technical assistance, conferences and seminars.

For more information on Parents Supporting Educational Excellence, visit <www.cga.ct.gov/coc/parents_see.htm>.

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