

Capturing the Ripple Effect: Theory of Change



THE IMPACTS OF PARENT LEADERSHIP

All parents, regardless of class, race, and culture, are motivated by concern for their children. When parents gain civic leadership skills, especially in marginalized communities, they can be powerful advocates for equity. Parent leadership initiatives around the country are starting to show how

P *I was just a mom. I had no platform to work from.*

the actions of parent leaders on behalf of their children ripple throughout the community.

1. PARENT LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE BUILDS CAPACITY.

Through hands-on learning and support, parents develop knowledge and skills: for example, developing a strategic plan, giving testimony before public officials, analyzing a budget, and running a committee meeting. The initiatives strengthen civic values, such as respect for others' opinions and appreciating cultural differences, and broker connections among parents, public officials, and community leaders. Supported by this "second family," parents gain confidence as they apply their skills.

P *We've become like family, and my family holds me accountable!*

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P : Parent

PO : Public Official

<http://annenberginstitute.org/publications/RippleEffect>

2. PARENTS UNDERGO PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION.

Applying what they learn to solve problems, watching their inner strengths unfold, attracting recognition as a trusted information source, and building networks that bridge race, class and culture, parents say, leads to profound personal transformation.

P *I can create the life I want, need, and deserve for me and my children!*

Parent leaders speak across race and class in a voice that is effective and authentic.

3. PARENTS TAKE COLLECTIVE ACTION TO ADDRESS INEQUITIES.

When parent leaders see opportunity gaps, they know the consequences for their children and take action, forming networks and joining forces with other groups. Using their own stories, backed by data and told in their authentic voices, they offer ideas that lead to more equitable policies and practices.

P *We brought officials, providers, and parent leaders together to talk through the challenges and come to concrete solutions!*

Parent leaders have become the eyes and ears and voices for our legislative committee.

4. PUBLIC OFFICIALS SEE PARENTS AS ASSETS.

As public officials listen to parent leaders, they gain new information, create new opportunities to learn from diverse parents about local issues, and consider parents' ideas. Support grows for greater opportunities for all children.

P *We're not "just parents," we're someone public officials want to listen to!*

My agency learned that important resources for children just don't exist!

5. PARENT LEADERS INVIGORATE DEMOCRACY.

As parents become key informants, community leaders open new forums for dialog, providing a platform to increase public support for better children's outcomes. Parents step up to be decision-makers on committees, boards, and task forces. Some parents run for public office; others join the staff of public agencies to provide a family perspective.

P *We pushed for improved standards and increased quality of childcare – and won!*

Well-coached parent leaders can make points that lobbyists can't, and they are much more passionate about it than lobbyists are.

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