

Overview of Parent Ambassadors Program

- ◆ Parent Ambassadors is a year long leadership and advocacy program for parents of early learners. Historically, it was for Head Start and state pre-k parents only. We have grown, the criteria is for any parent with a child under 9 yrs old.
- ◆ We are also focusing on FCC and small providers
- ◆ The goal is to develop parent leaders, to advocate for their children, themselves and their communities.
- ◆ “Transforming Families, Policy and Communities”
- ◆ Each year approximately 20 parents are selected through an application and review process. This year we had 25. Next year we will have 30.
- ◆ WA will be implementing their 13th year of the program in 2021 and ME will be in year 6

Early Formative Self-Evaluation of the Parent Ambassador Program in WA

- ◆ Finding #1: My voice matters!
- ◆ Finding #2: I feel worthy.
- ◆ Finding #3: I am part of a big family.
- ◆ Finding #4: I am seen as a role model.
- ◆ Finding #5: A focus on racial equity.

Parent Ambassadors

*Centering Parent Voice, Building Leadership and
Advocacy Through Programming and Partnerships*

Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP
Educare of Central Maine
January 15, 2021
(part 2)

Today's Agenda

- I. Welcome Back
- II. Mission & Vision, Overview and Values- Recap
- III. Program Structure
- IV. Mentoring & Supporting Parents
- V. Training and Communication Opportunities
- VI. Partnerships
- VII. Alumni
- VIII. Cost/Sustainability
- IX. Discussion and Q&A

Mission & Vision

► Mission

Parent Ambassadors acquire knowledge about civic and community engagement and develop leadership skills to advocate for themselves, their families, and others to create positive change in early learning programs, schools, and communities.

► Vision

All families feel empowered regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status to engage in the process of policy & decision-making at local, state, and federal levels that affect their children's outcomes and family well-being.

Overview of Parent Ambassadors Program

- ▶ Parent Ambassadors is a year long leadership and advocacy program for parents of early learners. Historically, it was for Head Start and state pre-k parents only. We have grown, the criteria is for any parent with a child under 9 yrs old.
 - ▶ We are also focusing on FCC and small providers
- ▶ The goal is to develop parent leaders, to advocate for their children, themselves and their communities.
- ▶ “Transforming Families, Policy and Communities”
- ▶ Each year approximately 20 parents are selected through an application and review process. This year we had 25. Next year we will have 30.
- ▶ WA will be implementing their 13th year of the program in 2021 and ME will be in year 6

Values

- ▶ Parents bring truth to public policy and are invaluable to civic discourse.
- ▶ Parents are leaders in their families, programs, and communities.
- ▶ Parents are not a problem to be fixed.
- ▶ Parents are the drivers of solutions to societal problems.
- ▶ Every parent starts in a different place and has a different trajectory.
- ▶ **Parents lead the work! Parent leadership and voice is centered within the program framework or “container.”**

Program Structure

- ▶ Number of sessions – this varies by each program
- ▶ Content – See Guide Table of Contents & Parent Led
- ▶ Recruitment – Center and partners
- ▶ How much time are parents expected to commit – this varies by program
 - ▶ Training F2F
 - ▶ Ambassadors get together via conference call at a minimum of twice a month
 - ▶ Ambassadors receive regular mentoring support from the Parent coordinators.
 - ▶ Ambassadors receive email updates about what is happening with state and federal legislation

Program Infrastructure

Maine

- ▶ Parent Coordinators – Mentoring and support Parent Ambassadors and program coordination.
- ▶ Parent Ambassador Coordinator– Responsible for day-to-day operations and implementation of the program
- ▶ Educare School Director - Oversee Educare School. Maine State Parent Ambassador and Alumni Programs-
- ▶ RFTS Coalition Partnership

Washington

- ▶ Parent Coordinators – Mentoring and support Parent Ambassadors and program coordination.
- ▶ Program Administrator – Responsible for day-to-day operations and implementation of the program.
- ▶ Program Director and Co-founder - Oversee and directs the program, mentoring and technical assistance support of all staff
- ▶ HS State Association Executive and Deputy Directors – as the parent organization, provides infrastructure and support.

Mentor/Supporting

- ▶ Walk our talk- engage trusted parent leaders to be program Coordinators. Peer to Peer leadership.
- ▶ Listen to understand. Be compassionate and offer suggestion only if requested and if it's appropriate.
- ▶ Be respectful and honest. Do not judge. Be patient and flexible.
- ▶ Be reliable and consistent, do what you say you are going to do. Admit your mistakes and take responsibility. Say what you mean and mean what you say.
- ▶ Participate openly along with PA's. Be one with them and learn with them.
- ▶ Treat people with value and sincerity. Trust them, care for them.

Communication

- ▶ Ambassadors get together via conference call at a minimum of twice a month
 - ▶ Since COVID-19, we have switched to weekly conference calls
- ▶ Ambassadors receive regular mentoring support from the Parent coordinators.
- ▶ Ambassadors receive email updates about what is happening with state and federal legislation
- ▶ We are also very active on Facebook. Twitter and Instagram presence is increasing.
- ▶ We publish a newsletter that Ambassadors can use in their communities.

Training

- ▶ Attend a minimum of 150 hours of face-to-face trainings during a program year. This year has been a bit different with COVID-19.
- ▶ Training consists of the legislative process, communicating with policy and lawmakers, how to give effective testimony, knowing your audience and ways to develop grassroots mobilization. Parents also receive training in race and equity and financial literacy. Upon completion of the program, parents receive 16 college credits through a partnership with Skagit Valley Community College.
- ▶ Leadership training focuses on team building, conflict resolution, negotiation and presentation skills.
- ▶ We access top level speakers including lawmakers, campaign consultants, and leadership coaches in addition to PA Staff.

Partner For Impact

- ▶ Identify advocacy groups or groups with values that align with PA's and develop partnerships
 - ▶ State and Federal Advocacy groups
 - ▶ State and Federal Associations
 - ▶ Governor
- ▶ Administrative and other advocacy
 - ▶ State Departments
 - ▶ Taskforces
 - ▶ Roundtable
 - ▶ School District
 - ▶ Boards
 - ▶ Superintendents

Parent Ambassador Alumni

How do Parent Ambassadors stay connected and organized after the program ends?

- ▶ Historically, Parent Ambassadors graduate after one year and then stay engaged through Parent Ambassador Alumni network
- ▶ Parent Ambassador Alumni continue to support the new Parent Ambassadors through a variety of ways including local networking when living in the same communities and through social networking
- ▶ Parent Ambassador Alumni are often engaged in current policy concerns and issues

What does it cost?

- ▶ Parents are provided stipends or child care and mileage reimbursements to attend trainings.
 - ▶ During COVID-19, we provide child care to attend our conferences that are being held virtually so that parents may focus on the training.
 - ▶ When parents are enrolled in or representing a HS or ECEAP program, often the program will help with fiscal support. This program is an allowable using both program and T/TA funding .
 - ▶ 5 face to face meetings a year, lodging, meals and stipends are provided.
 - ▶ Traveling to testify or other advocacy opportunities are also reimbursed.

Questions?

- ▶ Find us on the web: bitly.com/learnmoreaboutwapa
- ▶ Find us on FB:
<https://www.facebook.com/wsa.ambassadors>
- ▶ Find us on the web:
<https://www.educarecentralmaine.org/maine-state-parent-ambassadors/>
- ▶ Find us on FB:
<https://www.facebook.com/MaineStatePA>

Lori Pittman
lpittman@psed.org
425.917.7759

Rhonda Kaiser
rhondak@kvcap.org
207.680.7210