

## **Lessons Learned About Parent Leadership**

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1. Parent Leadership is about democracy, democratic practice and the family.
2. Family civics is not a single action by a single agency, but rather a framework to assure the parent voice as a diverse and critical constituency for children.
3. Parents can be taught the civic skills to lead deeply and gracefully, and to impact change for children and youth. Parents can be very strong assets.
4. Parents who are concerned with child need are concerned with child outcomes. When they understand civics, they become child and family policy partners.
5. We are a nation based on service, rather than civics. Most agencies helping children provide services to children and families. They do not know how change occurs for children and miss opportunities to partner with parents for lack of social change skills.
6. Though we rely on the customer in market choices and trends, we do not rely on the customer in child policy. Agency has largely replaced the family as the voice for children.
7. Fathers and extended kin seek to offer voice to good child outcomes, but are often kept out of the discourse. Home visitation and other broad social programs are mostly for mothers.
8. Parents are children's most important teachers, but parents are not often considered a constituency or treated as an asset in education, health or safety.
9. Agencies working on child and family issues do not often know how to work with parents as partners. They do not see this as a gap in systems performance.
10. Once parents have the skills to improve contexts and to partner for children, they become a strong consumer voice for equity, quality and access.
11. Family policy is embedded in virtually every social and economic policy for children. Family policy is not just in policy about the family.
12. Language is not a barrier to family civics. Parents will work in their language of origin, with translation and or bilingually to acquire skills for their child's good outcomes.
13. Children are in awe of democracy and want to practice the core tenets with their parents. Many family civics initiatives that engage parents also teach the children civic tenets that endure.
14. When parents have the tools of public speaking, outcome data and policy context, they become a true gauge for what works for children. Thus, parent leadership may be threatening to some.
15. Since parent leadership is seen as ancillary, it is important to bundle family civics with community and policy domains regarding children. If one waits for the discussion of parent leadership in isolation, one will wait a long time.
16. Parents are able and willing to cross race and class boundaries for improved child outcomes. Family civics both helps child outcomes and community integration.

17. Intergenerational groupings of parents provide history, spirit, humility, and questions that might not ordinarily be asked. With parents having children at different ages and some grandparents raising grandchildren, the age span in family civics is viable.
18. It is as important to teach agencies how to work with parents as partners as it is to assure that parents have a civic toolkit for child policy. Both must be in place to affect family gains.
19. Parents are often the final step to making change. Their voice, well stated, often anchors or shifts policy direction.
20. Family policy, with the family behind it, offers depth and public accountability.