Evaluation Re-imagined: The Parent Leadership Indicators Project
Parent Leadership Indicators
Project Background
The Parent Leadership Indicators Project

• We are researchers / evaluators working collaboratively with parent leaders, staff, funders, and other scholars to develop novel, engaging, participatory, and culturally responsive ways to evaluate parent leadership development initiatives.

• To this end, we:
  • Co-create evaluation tools with parent leaders
  • Build the capacity of parent leadership initiatives to engage in evaluation
  • Disseminate knowledge that advances the field of parent leadership
The Ripple Effect Theory of Change
Values

• Evaluation must use a racial justice lens
• Stories matter
• Participatory evaluation is rigorous
• The purpose of evaluation is not just to prove, but also to improve
• Systemic change takes time
Major Accomplishments

- Created Parent Leadership Ripple Effect Theory of Change
- Completed Parent Leadership Indicator Framework, featured on our website, http://parentleadershipevaluation.steinhardt.nyu.edu/
- Authored Concept Paper on parent leadership evaluation
- Launched Parent Leadership Evaluation Network with training by Project Impact in qualitative evaluation methods
- Co-authored with parent leaders and staff “The Ripple Effect in Action: What 7 Parent Leadership Initiatives Learned from Evaluation”
- Co-created and piloted Parent Leader Outcome Pre-Post Survey

Parents for Public Schools team works on their indicators during Project Impact training, March 2018
Parent Leader Evaluation Network

Project Impact participatory evaluation process & Development of the Parent Leader Outcome Pre-Post Survey
Parent Leadership Evaluation Network

- 7 PLIs represented in pilot network
- Each organization had 3-5 people on their team
- Training by Dialogues in Action (aka Project Impact) in qualitative evaluation methods

Parent Leadership Evaluation Network Convening
Denver, June 2018
PLEN Organizations
Project Impact Process

**Intention:**
What do we mean by impact?

**Inquiry:**
How can we measure impact?

**Implication:**
How are we different because of what we’ve found?

Citation: Patty, S. (2013). Getting to What Matters: How to Design and Develop Evaluation Portland, OR: Dialogues in Action.
Project Impact Process – Training #1

• 2-day in person convening in Denver, CO in March, 2018
• Learned about evaluation theory and the Heart Triangle method
• Selected existing indicators and created new ones
• Designed interview protocols and practiced interviewing
Heart Triangle Method™

Know → Believe → Love → Feel

Become

Do

Citation: Patty, Steven. 2013. Getting to What Matters: How to Design and Develop Evaluation Portland, OR: Dialogues in Action.
Project Impact Process – Data Collection (March-May, 2018)

• PLIs recruited additional interviewers who were trained via webinar
• Created list of possible interviewees, ensuring representation by factors such as location, race, gender, years of engagement
• Recruited interviewees
• Conducted interviews with parent leaders
• Conducted initial analysis of interviews, highlighting major themes
PLEN orgs conducted 169 interviews with parent leaders.

There were 49 interviewers across the 7 organizations.
Project Impact Process – Data Analysis and Reporting (June-February, 2018)

• Two day in-person convening in Denver to map themes, discuss how to respond to findings, and how to communicate about findings

• Continued the analysis process with other stakeholders at organizational site

• Wrote report
Parent Leader Outcome Pre-Post Survey

• Worked with the National Parent Leadership Training Institute to validate their existing pre-post survey
• Conducted focus groups about the survey questions with members from the 7 PLEN organizations
• Piloted the survey with Partnership for Community Action, where a parent leader and her son administered the survey and led focus groups for feedback
• Critically examined the demographics questions to ensure they were culturally responsive
• Revised the survey many, many, many times!
• Piloted survey across 5 organizations with 291 parent leaders (PLTI, Parents for Public Schools, ARISE, Partnership for Community Action)
Parent Leader Outcome Pre-Post Survey Measures

- Civic confidence (6 items)
- Social media for civic/political purposes (5 items)
- Knowledge about elected officials and community leaders (5 items)
- Civic knowledge (7 items)
- Civic actions (12 individual items)
- Sense of community in initiative (5 items)
- Peer connection in initiative (4 items)
- Leadership in initiative (4 items)
- Cultural responsiveness of initiative (8 items)
- Diversity and inclusion of initiative (7 items)

*All constructs have Cronbach’s alpha scores of .70 or higher.*
Results

Findings from the Project Impact process and the Parent Leader Outcome Pre-Post Survey
Findings: 7 Key Outcomes

- Social connections
- Worthiness and voice
- Shifting the blame
- Working across difference
- Community-level change
- An expanded vision of what’s possible
- Multi-generational benefits
Social connections

“Lo que me ha hecho fuerte es participar en grupo, y la confianza que me brindan las personas en ARISE.” (Translation: “What’s made me strong is group participation and the trust I am given by people at ARISE.”) – ARISE Parent Leader

Parents’ networks expanded, opening the doors to new civic, personal, and professional, opportunities, and giving them more people to count on.
Worthiness and Voice

“I deserve more and so do my children.” – Parent Ambassadors Parent Leader

Parents developed confidence, self-worth, self-love, resilience, social connections, support in times of need, and a vision and belief that change was possible.
Shifting the Blame

“I learned that I’m not broken. The system is broken.” – Parent Voices Parent Leader

“I came to understand racism and how a system can take away privileges. After learning this, I felt stupid, but PLTI created a safe place to learn. I came to understand that I had oversimplified people and my community. I came to understand what was greater substance and that my fellow PLTI cohort’s experiences were similar in many ways, and this gave me a sense of belonging.” – PLTI Rochester Parent Leader

Parents understood how their own experiences were related to larger policies, reframing stories of pain as stories of strength and resilience. This process cultivated empathy and relationships across racial, socioeconomic, cultural, and language difference.
Working Across Difference

“When I would have met you? When in my life would I have met women and men from different nationalities and gotten to know them? We wouldn’t have gotten to know each other if we didn’t have this.” – OLÉ Parent Leader

“After PLTI I am more open minded, [as] opposed to the tunnel vision that I used to have; I understand other people go through struggles, even those who don’t look like me.” – PLTI Rochester Parent Leader

Parents leaders described their PLI as a community in which they were comfortable sharing their opinion and disagreeing, and where they were able to work together towards a shared goal.
Community-Level Change

“Advocacy starts with one person and trickles to the next, and the next, and the next. True advocacy happens when one person is a voice for someone else, but then teaches that person to be a voice for himself.” – Parents for Public Schools Leader

“Yo he hablado con candidatos, con políticos a nivel local y nacional con Nancy Pelosi, también puedo hablar en foros, entrevistas, corte de comisionados y de la ciudad, juntas de escuela, universidad...Yo sé a dónde ir con quien ir, con quien hablar y que decir.” – ARISE Parent Leader

Translation: “I’ve talked to candidates, to local and federal politicians, to Nancy Pelosi. I can also speak in forums, interviews, commissioners’ and city court, school meetings, and the university. ... I know where to go, who to go with, who to talk to, and what to say.”

In the words of a PLTI Rochester leader, parents felt a duty to “live up to their civic potential,” rather than wait for others to make change. Identification with their parent leadership family helped parents translate their love for their own children into civic action on behalf of all children.
“I used to be a destroyer but having come through the prison experience, and come to COFI, with my new family, I have learned to be a community builder. My older children did not get my full attention but my youngest child will know his father and see me as a leader.”

– COFI Parent Leader

Parents dreamt about – and did – what they never thought possible. They designed projects and lead campaigns, told their stories in front of hundreds of people, met with elected officials, joined task forces and councils, ran for offices and school board seats. Their self-confidence spilled into other parts of their lives.
Multi-Generational Benefits

“Estamos desarrollando comunidades con valores y que sean transmitidos a las nuevas generaciones.” – ARISE Parent Leader
Translation: “We are developing communities with values and that are transmitted to the new generations.”

Parents’ confidence and cultural pride radiated onto their children, children looked up to their parents and also became part of a connected, civically engaged community.
5 Practices that Lead to Impact

Humanizing: Meeting parents’ individual needs and goals
Responsible: Creating stable and ongoing support
Familial: Building a community that felt like a supportive family
Empowering: Facilitating skill- and knowledge-building
Unifying: Developing solidarity across difference
Action steps in response to findings - #1

- Become more intentional about working toward racial justice and other forms of social justice.
- Parents gained a deeper understanding of inequitable systems, but in some cases, they felt powerless to fight racial inequities or did not connect their everyday experiences to larger systems.

- OLÉ proposed supporting parents to heal from experiences with racism and discrimination.
- Parent Ambassadors proposed hiring more staff of color.
- Greater Rochester PLTI proposed offering alumni opportunities to continue building their capacity to fight racial inequity.
- ARISE proposed developing sessions to combat “machismo” and encouraging couples to participate in events and sessions.
- Parent Voices reflected on how they could better intentionally engage parents who do not speak English or whose schedules prevent them from attending meetings.
Formalize or institutionalize powerful practices more broadly

The data validated many practices that PLIs were already implementing informally and encouraged them to formalize those practices.

- ARISE proposed integrating educational activities into events to explain their purpose and connection to the overall mission.
- COFI proposed further institutionalizing the notion of the “COFI toolbox,” a set of skills including public speaking, active listening, and time management. They also proposed formalizing mentoring relationships between seasoned and new parent leaders.
Action steps in response to findings - #3

Offer parents opportunities to take on a variety of leadership roles
Several organizations found that some experienced parent leaders wanted to do more but felt stuck.

- Greater Rochester PLTI proposed starting an annual calendar that includes networking opportunities, continuing education and skill development, and the opportunity to convene to examine and address current local issues.
- Parent Voices proposed connecting with more seasoned parent leaders to find out what they needed in order to stay engaged.
- Parent Ambassadors proposed regularly convening alumni through conference calls, or preferably, in-person annual reunions.
- OLÉ proposed better supporting leaders and organizers in developing their own path for growth in the organization.
Offer new content and experiences to enhance parent leaders’ skills

All of the teams learned about new information and experiences parents desired - particularly related to advocacy. They proposed to offer these through changing their own programming or forging connections with other organizations - community-organizing training academies, school districts, community groups focused on a particular issue.

- Parents for Public Schools proposed integrating existing policy and advocacy resources into the core training.
- ARISE proposed offering additional leadership capacity-building to accelerate leaders’ movement into decision-making roles.
- Parent Ambassadors proposed inviting in more trainers who focus on K-12 advocacy.
Parent Leader Outcome Survey
Pre-Post Results
Parent Leader Respondent Demographics (N=291)

**Gender**
- Female: 92%
- Male: 6%
- No answer: 2%
- Would rather not identify: 1%

**Education Level**
- High school/GED: 23%
- Education obtained outside US: 16%
- No answer: 15%
- Less than high school: 12%
- Bachelor's degree: 10%
- Associate's degree: 10%
- Graduate degree: 9%
- Vocational degree: 4%

**Race/Ethnicity**
- Hispanic, Latino/Latina: 69%
- Black or African American: 15%
- White: 6%
- No answer: 5%
- Asian: 2%
- American Indian or Alaska Native: 2%
Parent Leader Respondent
Demographics (N=291)

**Employment**
- Full-time work: 27%
- Managing household: 23%
- Part-time work: 13%
- Unemployed: 12%
- No answer: 11%
- Full-time multiple jobs: 6%
- Retired: 3%
- In school or training program: 3%
- Disabled: 2%

**Born in the U.S.**
- No answer: 3%
- Yes: 31%
- No: 66%

**Home Language Not English**
- No answer: 4%
- No: 35%
- Yes: 62%

**Ages of Children**
- 0-5 years: 41%
- 6-11 years: 35%
- 12-17 years: 16%
- 18+ years: 6%
- No answer: 3%
Civic Outcomes

- Civic Confidence: Pre - 59.9, Post - 76.7
- Civic Knowledge: Pre - 51.5, Post - 71.7
- Knowledge of elected officials: Pre - 43.7, Post - 68.6
- Social Media for Civic/Political Purposes: Pre - 40.5, Post - 51.9
% of Parents Who Have Taken Civic Actions in Past 12 Months
Voting Attitudes and Behaviors

### Rescaled (0-100) Factor Scores

- **Believes important to vote in all elections**
  - Pre: 87.9
  - Post: 92.6

- **Explains importance of voting**
  - Pre: 71.1
  - Post: 83.3

- **Votes in all elections (if eligible)**
  - Pre: 83.2
  - Post: 88.4
Reported Experiences in the Parent Leadership Initiative

![Bar Chart: Rescaled (0-100) Factor Scores](image)

- Sense of Community: 91
- Opportunities for Leadership: 90
- Peer Connection: 89
- Cultural Responsiveness: 88
- Equity and Inclusion: 84
Changes Parents Have Made As Direct Result of Parent Leadership Initiative
Reflections & Lessons Learned
Benefits of the Process

• Built stronger relationships among team members and between team members and interviewees

• Strengthened team-members’ investment in improving the work

• Supported individuals’ learning about the process of inquiry and evaluation
Participatory Evaluation Mirrored the Qualities of Parent Leadership Initiatives

**Parent leadership initiatives...**
- Meet parents’ individual needs, goals, and dreams
- Build a community that feels like a family
- Develop solidarity across difference
- Facilitate civic knowledge and skill-building
- Create stable and ongoing support

**Participatory evaluation...**
- Humanizing: Was dignifying, emphasized true listening
- Familial: Built stronger relationships among evaluation team and between interviewers and interviewees
- Unifying: Broke down assumptions about others
- Empowering: Strengthened active listening and critical inquiry skills
- Responsible: Catalyzed reflection on how to better support parent leaders
“Part of my concern always around evaluation is that we are not exploiting our parents’ story or telling their story in a way that doesn’t respect them and the wonderful people they are. I have less fear about that in this process than in any other process we’ve done. This feels respectful and supportive and it doesn’t feel like we’re exploiting their stories so that people will fund us.”

-- PLEN member
Challenges of the Process

- The participatory evaluation process was time-consuming for organizations, particularly the writing portion.
- Some PLEN members said it was at first difficult to create interview questions that weren’t leading, but were able to accomplish this in the end.
- Interpretation was provided for in-person convenings, but would have been helpful during virtual meetings.
- Several organizations did not use the pre-post survey because there was not an obvious “start date.”
Learn more!
Questions? Contact Joanna Geller at Joanna.geller@nyu.edu.

Parent Leadership Indicators Project: 
https://parentleadershipevaluation.steinhardt.nyu.edu/home

NYU Metro Center Policy, Research, and Evaluation Team: 
https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/center/research_evaluation

Dialogues in Action: http://www.dialoguesinaction.com/

Family Leadership Network at Choice for All: https://www.choiceforall.org/
or https://www.facebook.com/FamilyLeadsNY/
Learn more (continued!)

ARISE: http://www.arisesotex.org/

OLÉ: http://olenm.org/

Parent Voices: http://www.parentvoices.org/

Parent Ambassadors: https://www.wsaheadstarteceap.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=menus&menu_id=44&pId=8

COFI: http://cofionline.org

National Parent Leadership Institute: http://parentswholead.org/

Parents for Public Schools: https://parents4publicschools.org/
Acknowledgements

• Funders: Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kellogg Foundation, Peppercorn Foundation, & Hagedorn Foundation
• Parent Leadership Indicators Project team: Anne Henderson, Kate Gill Kressley, Sara McAlister, Wendy Perez, Ph.D., Joy Sanzone
• PLEN organizations: ARISE, COFI, OLÉ, Parent Ambassadors, PPS, PLTI, Parent Voices
• Advisory Board Members:
  • Danielle Asher, Family Leadership Network / Choice for All
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  • Patti Keckeisen, National Parent Leadership Institute
  • Irene Lee, Annie E. Casey Foundation
  • Lynda Parmely, Hagedorn Foundation
  • Karen Mapp, Harvard Graduate School of Education
  • Aurelio Montemayor, IDRA
  • Claire Reinelt, Leadership Learning Community
  • Ada Sanchez, Peppercorn Foundation
  • Deloris Vaughn, Everyday Democracy
  • Elaine Zimmerman, Administration for Children and Families