

Washington Alliance for Better Schools Natural Leader Project

Research has consistently shown students' success to be highly correlated with the level of their parent engagement. (Jeynes, Education and Urban Society, 2003). When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic/racial background, or the parents' education level.

Presently, there are many parent engagement projects. They all start with the same objective – helping all children succeed in schools. But most are top-down – they are school-directed training programs teaching parents how to help their kids succeed. While unintended, this sends the message that parents need to learn how to help their kids. The focus is on each parent helping their own child(ren).

The Natural Leader project is different. Parents take on a leadership role and focus on the many talents and gifts that families have. They build relationships with families in their community, identify what helps these families be successful with education and then implement their ideas. A driving focus is collaborative community organizing where parents are equal partners with schools and community organizations sharing a common goal of both adults and children achieving success in education. It is very powerful when adults engage in education themselves because actions speak louder than words. Children view them as role models and aspire to be like them. We recognize personal growth and transformation is an important outcome that leads to stronger communities and academic success for children (Warren and Mapp, 2011, A Match on Dry Grass: Community Organizing and School Reform).

The Natural Leaders Program was developed by WABS in 2003 with parents in Shoreline, Everett, Edmonds, Marysville, Monroe, Mukilteo and Northshore schools to create liaisons between schools and families. Natural Leaders are K-12 parents from within the participating school's community trained by WABS to coordinate parent engagement activities at the school. Because they come from within the school population, Natural Leaders have credibility to build trusted relationships with other parents and are uniquely situated to listen to families' ideas and needs and bring them together with the school to improve student learning and family/school relations. This is especially important for immigrant and refugee parents, whose language and cultural barriers often leave them feeling marginalized. Natural Leaders work closely with a designated school contact (typically a family advocate, counselor or English Language Learning teacher) as well as with community agencies to present school-wide activities. Natural Leaders bring families together to work on the shared goals of children's school success, parents' involvement in children's learning, and parents' continuing education.

Currently, there are nearly 250 Natural Leaders in 32 schools in seven districts (Edmonds, Everett, Marysville, Monroe, Mukilteo, Northshore and Shoreline), with teams of 10 to 25 at each school. Numbers of events in a school average once monthly over a school year and can be as numerous as two dozen. An average of 100 families at each school participates in these activities. . The accomplishments of these Natural Leaders are enormous as is evident by the thousands of parents that participate in school events and the many social and educational opportunities they sponsor. Program impact is great: results show that children of families that participate in Natural Leaders activities have greater gains in reading than children of families who do not particularly for ELL students .

The model requires these following steps to be successful:

- District support of the community organizing and parent leadership principles
- Principal support of the community organizing and parent leadership principles
- Staff member to coordinate a Natural Leader team that enjoys working with diverse families and encouraging them to grow in their leadership role. This requires 3-5 hours per week.
- Staff time to help recruit parents to be Natural Leaders such as making invitation phone calls, talking to parents before and after school about the project, and/or holding introduction meetings.
- Coordinator attend the initial training for the New Natural Leaders where parents and school staff will learn about recognizing and honoring talents, coaching, honoring diversity, and job responsibilities. Principal and other staff participation is also recommended.

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- Coordinator hosts team meetings at least 2-4 times per month to provide support to Natural Leader planning and implementation efforts.
- Coordinator and Natural Leaders attend ongoing professional development opportunities.
- Natural Leaders from multiple schools meet to share ideas and mentor each other.
- Encourage Natural Leaders that are interested to enroll in the Parent Mentor Certificate Program at Edmonds Community College.

Natural Leaders are recruited in many ways: some are recommended by school personnel; some principals hold open houses and share information; flyers are handed out to parents as they drop off their children, etc. We prioritize participation from parents of color, particularly from immigrant and refugee families, though anyone who is interested and able to make the commitment of time and responsibilities is accepted. All new Natural Leaders undergo a hands-on three- to five-hour training (led by one of two long-time Natural Leaders who have stepped into leadership roles as trainers) to learn about communications skills, how to work effectively as a coach to other parents, how to learn about and bridge cultural differences, and more.

Additional professional development is provided each year at regional meetings for all Natural Leaders, to develop professional skills. With support from the Gates Foundation, a year-long professional development training will be implemented during the 2013-14 school year. They will be trained both on the curriculum as well as how to teach the training to other parents in their school communities. Natural Leaders will be paid for their time as trainers.

An advisory committee of Natural Leaders, Community Organizations and school district staff is in the process of reviewing existing curriculum and designing the program based on topics the Natural Leaders have requested. With district-based Natural Leaders trained to lead these workshops for Natural Leaders in their respective districts, we will be able to offer all of our Natural Leaders trainings 20-30 times each year, a vast improvement over the three regional trainings we currently offer. (With more frequent skills-building sessions, our entire pool of Natural Leaders will be better able to respond to families' needs and organize activities that engage their school's parent population. With more parents actively engaged in how to support their children's education, students' academic successes will increase.

Several years ago, with support from the Gates Foundation and others, we were able to expand this program by giving participants access to a Parent Mentor Certificate Program that we created in partnership with Edmonds Community College. (Gates funding supported scholarships.) We established this certificate program in response to Natural Leaders' interest in enhancing their personal educational learning. To date, 20 have graduated, 15 are currently enrolled, and scholarships will be granted to more students in Fall 2013.

The Natural Leaders' work begins with weekly team meetings at each school to share what families are telling them, discuss families' needs, plan activities and coordinate school and community events. Natural Leaders also respond to families' needs by working with community partners to deliver programs such as Strengthening Multi-Cultural Families (Familias Unidas), Play and Learn (Volunteers of America), Family Institute on How to Help Children Succeed in School (Everett Public Schools ECEAP, RTL and ELL), ESL and GED classes (Everett Community College), Plaza Comunitaria (Mexican Consulate), and Computer and Employment Training (Snohomish County Workforce Development Council). While programs are organized to meet the needs of families already participating in Natural Leaders activities, they are offered school-wide and often serve as a way to introduce new families to the programs.

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Natural Leaders Family/School Connectors Job Description

Are leaders in their community. They work as a team with other family/school connectors, family advocates, family support center staff, and school staff to:

1. Build relationships/connections with families
2. Listen to families ideas on how to help their children be successful in school
3. Bring families and schools together to plan/implement the

NATURAL LEADERS VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION

Natural Leaders are volunteers meant to:

- Help develop community neighborhoods or groups
- Build social connections among families
- Listen to families about schools and their children so schools can have more information about families ideas
- Work with families and schools to offer activities that will help their children be successful in school

Natural Leaders are not:

- Solving family issues – they refer to advocates or community partners for this
- Solving school issues that families might have – they pass on information to school family support teams (of which they are a member)

Natural Leaders volunteers should:

- Be a social, friendly individual who likes meeting/talking with other people
- Be individuals who are reflective of the families schools want to reach out to (i.e., they should be of same culture, ethnic background, religion, live in same neighborhoods)
- Provide school outreach/be welcome wagon to families in community settings
- Spend social time talking to families to build relationships with each family and among families.
- Learn more about families by asking open-ended questions like: 1) how is school going for their child and them, 2) what their talents/skills and interest are, and, 3) what type of events/activities/programs they think would help their child(ren) be successful in school.
- Should be a coach to other families – listening and getting them to come up with ideas that will work for them
- Provide regular updates to the Natural Leader coordinator at each site to let them know what families they have been meeting with/what families have been telling them. Whenever possible, participate in school Family Support Team meetings.
- Work with families, family advocates, community partners, and school staff to set up events that families have told them they want, make personal invitations to families to attend, and participate in the events
- Attend skills trainings on topics such as family support principles, listening/communication skills, confidentiality, boundary setting, respect for cultures, and team building.

NATURAL LEADERS **WHAT SHOULD I DO EACH MONTH?**

What do I each month?

1. Go to trainings/sharing meetings with other schools for 2-3 hours per month
2. Meet with your school team for 2-3 hours per month
3. Spend 4-6 hours:
 - Meet families
 - Organize social events
 - Listen to how school is going for families and their child
 - Get families' ideas on how to help their children in school
 - Help families put their ideas into action
 - Translate written materials for the school
 - Translate for families

WHAT OTHER NATURAL LEADER TEAMS HAVE DONE TO MEET FAMILIES

- Hung up a poster with pictures of themselves in the front of the school building
- Sent a letter home introducing themselves
- Made matching t-shirts so they can be easily identified at school events
- Gone door to door in apartment complexes and introduced themselves
- Call families and talk to them
- Go to homes and visit families
- Send home hand-written notes to families
- Started phone lines at schools in other languages
- Natural Leaders return phone calls to parents that call the phone line
- Invited people to pot-lucks
- Invited people to cultural events (i.e., el dia del niño)
- Invited people to principal lunch or breakfasts
- Invited people to volunteer at school projects
- Sponsored a language exchange day on Saturdays with school staff and families
- Sponsored a pre-school literacy program
- Sponsored school break learning camps
- Created multi-cultural libraries in schools, apartment complexes and community centers
- Have weekly mother groups to share and volunteer at school
- Sponsored after school learning clubs
- Sponsored ELL classes
- Sponsored other activities that families asked for
- Sponsored celebrations of student successes
- Sponsored celebrations of family participation in their children's education

Boundaries

1. Follow the Job Description
2. Recognize your own values and attitudes
3. Be open to other values and attitudes
4. Know your role as a Natural Leader.
Be able to articulate that role with parents
5. Know your limits both personally and as a Natural Leader.
You can't be all things to all people.

Confidentiality Guidelines

1. Limit the information shared to what is essential for the specific situation involved. Always filter sharing any information about another through **“Needs To Know”**. What and who, if anyone, needs to know this information? Ask yourself, “Why am I sharing this?”
2. Share confidentiality policy of school with the family. Avoid giving the family the impression that absolutely no information will ever be shared with others. Always obtain their permission prior to sharing with another. (An exception would be life-threatening situations.)
3. You must follow the mandated reporting laws of the State of Washington regarding Abuse and Neglect. Each school will have an established process for you to become familiar.

Source: Adapted from Wasik, Barbara Hanna, Bryant, Donna M. Bryant, 2001, Home Visiting, Second Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications

Parent Mentor Certificate Program:

Parent Natural Leaders will attend Edmonds Community College, Family Support Studies Program to earn a Parent Mentor Certificate of Completion for 19 credits. The population served will be women immigrants and refugees who have not completed high school, or have no or little college education. Edmonds Community College, the Center for Human Services, and School District Family Support Workers will be crucial partners implementing the project. The goal is for the Natural Leaders to develop their own skills and become more employable in school settings, so that more immigrant and refugee or isolated families can be engaged in their children's education and increase academic success. Program objectives include: increasing Natural Leader reading and writing English skills, gaining a college certificate, and finding employment or continuing their college education further.

The activities provided to Parent Natural Leaders are enrollment in the Parent Mentor Certificate Program at Edmonds Community College, which is offered through the Family Support Studies Program. Helen Nissani, Program Chair, has created a series of 6 new, unique classes that would earn each Parent Natural Leader 19 college credits and a Certificate. The classes include: Parent Leadership Skills, Conflict Resolution, Introduction to Family Support Studies, Understanding Education Systems, Education Translation/ Interpretation Skills, and a Field Practicum. Simultaneously some students will earn their GED and receive ESL support to develop strong reading and writing skills needed for their new employment opportunities.

Short-term Impact

There is enormous personal pride that the Natural Leaders feel as they develop more skills and gain better employment. Schools are able to operate more effectively on a day-to-day basis when they employ diverse individuals with skills needed to engage immigrant and refugee or isolated families in their children's education.

Long-term Impact

The Natural Leaders will be able to help more children be successful in school. The Natural Leaders are important role models to the children, as well as other adults and community members. They are demonstrating the importance, value and benefits of a college education, and thereby encouraging others to follow in their footsteps.

Session One

Natural Leaders Training

Topic	Pages
Getting to Know Each Other	Pages 3-4
What Good Leaders Do	Pages 4-11
Using Encouragement Language	Pages 12-13
Homework and Evaluation	Page 14-15

Training Rules and Agreements:

- We listen when others are talking
- One person talks at a time
- All opinions are honored
- Everyone is respected
- Speak for yourself
- You don't have to talk if you don't want to
- Keep personal things confidential
- Humor is helpful
- Others:

Exercise 1: Getting to Know Each Other

Get together with your team. On one flip chart page, tell us about your team members:

Your school name/district	
Your names:	The countries you come from:
The number of children your team has that are: Younger than school age _____ In elementary school _____ In middle School _____ In high School _____ Older than school age _____	Your families' favorite holidays:

Exercise 1: Getting to Know Each Other

Now use a second flip chart page to describe your communities' strengths and talents. Use pictures or words...

The strengths and talents of our community are:

We Are Natural Leaders Because We:

- **Are warm and caring**
- **Enjoy meeting with other families**
- **Are hard workers**
- **Want all children to succeed in school**
- **Want our children to have a good future**
- **Know we can make a difference in kids' lives**
- **Know that some kids and families need encouragement to get involved with school**
- **Know that we can help schools and families work together in partnership**

QUALITIES FOUND IN EFFECTIVE LEADERS

Leaders each have their own style of facilitation and each group has different needs.

The leader's role is to create and maintain a positive environment in which communication can take place. The following four qualities help do that:

WARMTH

Effective leaders:

- Speak well of people
- Recognize and honor people's strengths and talents
- Trust rather than fear other people
- Establish warm relationships with people

INDIRECTNESS

Effective leaders:

- Let people learn things for themselves
- Refrain from telling people how to do things

ORGANIZATION

Effective leaders:

- Have a clear focus in mind
- They get agreement on what the group's goals are
- Let other people choose how to get the work done, but help coordinate their efforts

ENTHUSIASM

Effective leaders:

- Feel enthusiastic about people and their talents
- Are enthusiastic about the purpose of the group

The combination of these qualities is a powerful force for leadership. The warmth gives people permission to participate; the indirectness offers people the protection they need; and the organization and enthusiasm are reflections of positive leadership.

ESTABLISHING TRUST

Everyone must feel accepted. The parent leader can create an accepting atmosphere, emphasizing the fact that problems are a normal part of the process. Adult learning is ongoing, and we can practice and acquire skills at any time. The leader assures that all participants have the opportunity to share ideas, opinions and values without fear of criticism. This is easily accomplished by using Ground Rules so all participants are aware of their responsibilities. It is the job of the leader to make sure the Ground Rules are followed.

SHOWING ENCOURAGEMENT

The parent leader can show encouragement by praising and complimenting as often as possible what is said and done. Establishing a supportive atmosphere helps participants feel more open to discuss their concerns and share their ideas. By setting the example, the leader teaches others to encourage and support all participants.

RECOGNIZING STRENGTHS

It is important to recognize the strengths of others. Individuals have their strengths and their weaknesses. Personalities within the community/school have an impact on the collective group behavior. Notice individual strengths and recognize them whenever possible. Some people tend to "put themselves down" and dwell on their weaknesses. Reinforce often the positive qualities of people in the community/school.

UNDERSTANDING BODY LANGUAGE

Body language, gestures, and facial expressions often speak louder than words. It is thought that perhaps 70% of our communication is expressed non-verbally. It is important for a leader to be able to recognize positive and negative body language.

All people display body language at one time or another that alerts an observer that we might be saying one thing with our words, while we are thinking or feeling something quite different. Picture a person sitting back with arms folded across the chest, looking away from the speaker. The speaker intuitively knows this person is probably withdrawn and not actively listening. Such a conclusion may be accurate, however, it is important to remember that some behaviors appear to be negative, but in fact may not be. For example, the person leaning back in the chair with arms crossed may simply feel comfortable and still be listening well to what is being discussed in the group. It is always important to look for positive signs people may be showing, such as eye contact and facial expressions.

WORKING WITH INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITIES

Most adults come to a learning experience with a positive, respectful attitude and creative ideas. People usually want to be helpful rather than disruptive in the learning process. However, all people are different, and depending on the group, some personalities may have a negative effect. It is valuable for leaders to be able to recognize individual personalities within a group in order to maintain a positive learning atmosphere.

WHAT GOOD LEADERS DO:

1. Challenge the process

Improving the quality of life for children and families in your community means making change. Change involves taking risks and finding new ways of doing things. As community leaders, you may need to challenge old thinking and to be innovative in making the community a better place to live.

2. Inspire a shared Vision

The first step to building a better community is finding a common vision that professionals and citizens can work toward together. Leaders bring together partners who decide what they want their community to look like in the future and how they will proceed to make it happen.

3. Enable Others to Act

Community leaders build trust among groups in the community to foster collaboration. They create systems and processes in which power is shared, and develop the leadership capacity of other youth and adults.

4. Model the Way

Visions are abstract, but actions are tangible. Community leaders are role models that move others to new ways of doing things by setting an example. They tell stories, take opportunities to teach, and recognize progress as ways of maintaining the momentum of community collaborations for change.

5. Encourage the Heart

Community change requires hard work and persistence. Many participants are volunteers whose only reward is recognition. Leaders make sure that the contributions of individuals involved in community projects are recognized both publicly and privately. In addition, they honor the work of collaborators by finding ways to celebrate shared accomplishments on a regular basis.

*Adapted from Kouzes and Posner's Five Fundamental Practices of Leadership

Authentic Leadership

Both leaders and group members influence an organization by their behavior.

Authentic leadership happens when people are open and honest.

<u>Authentic Leaders</u>	<u>Inauthentic Leaders</u>
Do what they say they would do (i.e. “practice what they preach”)	Say one thing, but do another
Make mistakes and admit to them	Make mistakes, but blame others to save own necks
Recognize that rules sometimes need to be changed	Will only follow the rules. They do everything “by the book”
See themselves as a facilitator, and let others take turns leading the group.	Need to be in control and the leader at all times.
Let people find their own solutions, and let them find their own ways to do things.	Find solutions for others and tell them what to do.

What happens when you have authentic leadership:

- People trust and respect each other
- Staff are happier with their jobs and place of work
- Organizations get more high quality work done
- Managers do a better job
- Leaders get more done

Adapted from Henderson, J.E. & Brookhart, S.M. (1996). “Leader Authenticity: Key to organizational climate, health and perceived leader effectiveness.” The Journal of Leadership Studies, 3, 87-103.

What Kind of FOLLOWER Are You?

The Alienated Follower: critical and independent in thinking, but passive in duties. Can affect organization positively, because they think for themselves and often stand up for others. On the negative side, seen as troublesome, headstrong, and as rebels without a cause. Usually don't support leader.

The Conformist Follower (Yes People): dependent and seldom challenge the leader. On positive side, are team players, accept work assignments, and are committed to the organization. Negatives are that they lack own ideas and are unlikely to take needed but unpopular positions.

The Pragmatic Follower (Survivors): adapt to situations, stay out of trouble and try to survive. Positives are that they get things done, keep things in perspective, and play by the rules. Negatives are that they tend to play political games and pursue their own self-interests above the common good.

The Passive Follower (Sheep): look to the leader to do their thinking, need constant attention, and take little initiative. Is a product of the organizational environment, rather than having a personality flaw preventing more effective participation.

The Effective Follower: think for themselves and are active organizational players. Are enthusiastic, energetic, and seen by others as risk takers and problem solvers. Innovative, assertive and willing to stand up to leader when needed. They assume ownership, are self-starters, and use their talents to benefit the organization.

Adapted from Kelley, R. (1992). The Power of Followership. New York: Doubleday.

Five Dimensions of Courageous Followership (Chaleff, 1995)

- **The courage to assume responsibility.** Do not wait for the leader to tell them what to do. Accept ownership and actively pursue the goals of the organization.
- **The courage to serve.** Willing to work hard and serve organizational leaders. Accept new and challenging responsibilities for the purpose of benefiting the organization.
- **The courage to challenge.** Willing to voice discontent when they believe things are not right. Will "stand up, stand out, risk rejection, and initiate conflict" when actions of leader or organization are inappropriate.
- **The courage to participate in transformation.** Pursue organizational transformation. Willing to overcome resistance and struggle through change.
- **The courage to leave.** Recognize when the leader's actions and goals of organization no longer match the follower's individual principles. Willing to withdraw to benefit both parties.

Exercise 2: Your Strengths and Talents

1. Get together with your team. Have someone go first.
2. Have that person start. Take 5 minutes to tell a story about something:
 - you feel you did well
 - you did that you are proud of

Be specific and tell the details of what you did and what you got done.

Team members can ask questions like “*what did you do*” or “*how did you do that*”, but don’t ask “*why did you do that*”.

3. When you finish your story, take 5 minutes for the rest of your team to tell you what talents and strengths they think you used. Have one person make a list of your strengths to give to you.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 with the next person on your team.

Name:

Strengths and talents you used:

Leaders Use “Encouragement” Language

Leaders recognize that everyone has assets and strengths. Encouragement makes people want to give more of their strengths to the community.

When using encouragement language, do more than say “Great Job!”

Be specific, tell people in detail what you like about their work.

Types of Encouragement Language:

Phrases that show acceptance:

1. “I like the way you handled that, because _____.”
2. “It looks as if you enjoyed that, because I see _____.”

Phrases that show you have confidence in a person:

1. “I know you will do fine because _____.”
2. “I have confidence in you because _____.”
3. “I know you can figure that out because _____.”

Phrases that focus on how people have helped out:

1. “Thanks that helped a lot, by _____.”
2. “It was thoughtful of you to _____.”
3. “Thanks, I really appreciate _____ because it makes my job so much easier by _____.”

Phrases that recognize effort and improvement

1. “It looks like you really worked hard on that, because I see _____.”
2. “It looks like you spent a lot of time thinking that through. It shows because _____.”
3. “Look at the progress you’ve made. I see that you _____.”

***Adapted from “The Parents Handbook: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting”**

Exercise 3:

Spend some time giving encouragement and practicing how to accept encouragement

1. Find a partner

2. Have each person take a turn giving the other person encouragement or a compliment. Think about something that person has done or said tonight. Give specific details about what you like about what they did or said.

For example, *“I admire how you spoke in such a strong, confident voice. There are so many people here tonight, but it seemed so easy for you to do.”*

3. Have the other person practice saying, “thank you”, and accepting the compliment in a positive way.

For example, *“Thanks, I appreciate your comment about my speaking in a strong voice when I am in a new situation.”*

Don't say, *“Oh that was nothing”* or *“anyone could do that”*, or *“that is no big deal”*, or *“usually I do a terrible job”*

Natural Leader Training Evaluation Session 1

1. What did you like about the training?

2. What would you change?

3. Any suggestions for the next training?

Session Two Natural Leader Training

Agenda

Topic	Pages
Sharing Homework	Page 2
Communication Skills	Pages 3-6
Respecting Culture	Pages 7-8
Job description	Pages 9-12
Boundaries and Confidential Information	Page 13
Creating a Vision and Goals	Pages 14-15
Homework and Evaluation	Pages 16-17

Exercise 1: Sharing What We Learned From the Homework

Get together with your team. On one flip chart page, tell us what your team members learned from the homework:

Your school name/district	
<p>What did you learn from sharing stories/identifying strengths each other has:</p> <p>➤</p> <p>➤</p> <p>➤</p> <p>➤</p> <p>➤</p>	<p>What did you learn by using encouragement language:</p> <p>➤</p> <p>➤</p> <p>➤</p> <p>➤</p> <p>➤</p>

Communication – Talking and Listening to Others

Communication is when:

- Two people talk with each other
- The first person starts by speaking words that describe a thought or idea to the other person
- The second person listens
- The second person then restates what they heard to be sure they understand what was told to them
- The first person then confirms that they heard it right, or provides additional information to clarify

Important Aspects of Communication

1.) Listening:

- Listen for feelings and underlying message
- Restate what you heard
- Put words to the feelings
- Clarify – ask questions to gather relevant background
- Get and give feedback:
 - a. Check your own perception and interpretation. Did I understand you?
 - b. Share your own thoughts, feelings, and experience
- Try to understand others first before you seek to be understood.
 - a. Tell the other person that you want to know and understand what they are telling you.
 - b. Tell the other person it is important to share with each other

2.) Body language:

- What message are we sending with our gestures (face, arms, legs, body position...)
- Maintain appropriate eye contact – note cultural differences
- Lean slightly forward
- Reinforce speaker by nodding
- Actively move away from distractions
- Non-verbal cues are consistent with tone and content of what is shared
- Respect boundaries: stand at a comfortable distance or closeness
- What message are we sending with our gestures (facial, arms, legs...)

3.) Tone of Voice:

- Can be a communication blocker if tone is not friendly
- Does the tone match the words you are using?
- Does the tone encourage open communication and respect?

Things That Impact What We Say and Hear

- Our values and beliefs
- Our culture
- The space we are talking in (such as noise that could distract us)
- Stresses in our lives that affect our concentration

Please Just Listen

I want you to listen,

If you give me advice, I don't feel heard

If you tell me I shouldn't feel that way, my feelings get hurt

If you try to solve my problems, then I feel my strengths are not being used

If you do things for me, I feel inadequate

So please just listen and hear me. And if you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn,

And I'll listen to you.

Paraphrased from:
Ray Houghton, M.D.
Berkeley, CA

Leaders Listen and Coach Others

- Leaders spend most of their time listening
- Leaders avoid giving advice to others
- Leaders recognize that *“Ideas are like babies. We like our own the best. People are more likely to take action if they come up with their own ideas”*
- Leaders serve as coaches by helping people explore their own solutions

Leaders/Coaches Spend Time Getting More Information

There are 2 ways for leaders to gain more information

Use Questions

1. What do you think would help?
2. What do you think would work
3. What do you want to do?
4. What does that mean to you?
5. How does this affect you?

Use Comments

1. Tell me what works best....
2. Tell me more about it...
3. Tell me what you would like to do...

Remember: It often takes time for people to answer... they need time to think. Silence can be uncomfortable, but avoid the urge to talk. Silence will encourage the other person to talk.

Exercise 2: Operator Game

1. Have your team sit in a circle.
2. One person will start by reading the sentence on the piece of paper you are given by the teachers. Read it quietly in the ear of the person next to you. Read it slowly and clearly. Read it one time only.
3. Then the second person repeats the sentence they just heard to the next person. Keep repeating this with the rest of your team.
4. When you get to the end, have the last person say the sentence they were told out loud.
5. How does this compare to the sentence you started with? What does this tell us?

Exercise 3: Coaching Others

1. Find a partner.
2. One person chooses a dilemma that they or another person they know has. Describe the dilemma to your partner.
3. The other person acts as a coach. You use questions or comments to get more information. The coach tries to get their partner to solve their own dilemma. The coach needs to avoid giving advice or suggestions.
4. Swap roles – so each person gets a turn to be the coach.

Culture

It has long been recognized that culture influences how people present themselves, understand the world, and interpret experiences. Culture also affects our learning experiences.

Rules about communicating, how we display respect, and other patterns of social interaction vary widely across cultures.

- Different cultural groups are comfortable with differing amounts of conversation and, with silence. In some cultures, individuals who talk a lot are considered smart; in others, silent thinkers are.
- Eye contact means different things in different cultures. In some, direct eye contact is respectful, while in others it is rude.
- How close you stand also varies in different cultures. In some standing very close is common, while it would be uncomfortable to be so close in other cultures.
- How much personal information is shared. In some cultures, personal information is shared with family only and is considered nosy or rude to talk about these things with others.
- Adults expect children to be active partners during conversations in some cultures; while in others, children are quiet observers.
- In some cultures, information is passed on through shared activity or storytelling, while in others, it is shared with lessons or explanations.
- The acceptance of interruptions also vary across cultures. In some, frequent interruptions are expected as part of active participating in a conversation. In others, long pauses between talking are typical and respectful.

It is important that we understand our own culture and how that influences us.

We also need to understand the values of different cultures and respect those values when communicating.



Natural Leaders Family/School Connectors Job Description

Are leaders in their community. They work as a team with other family/school connectors, family advocates, family support center staff, and school staff to:

1. Build relationships/connections with families
2. Listen to families ideas on how to help their children be successful in school
3. Bring families and schools together to plan/implement the

NATURAL LEADERS VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION

Natural Leaders are volunteers meant to:

- Help develop community neighborhoods or groups
- Build social connections among families
- Listen to families about schools and their children so schools can have more information about families ideas
- Work with families and schools to offer activities that will help their children be successful in school

Natural Leaders are not:

- Solving family issues – they refer to advocates or community partners for this
- Solving school issues that families might have – they pass on information to school family support teams (of which they are a member)

Natural Leaders volunteers should:

- Be a social, friendly individual who likes meeting/talking with other people
- Be individuals who are reflective of the families schools want to reach out to (i.e., they should be of same culture, ethnic background, religion, live in same neighborhoods)
- Provide school outreach/be welcome wagon to families in community settings
- Spend social time talking to families to build relationships with each family and among families.
- Learn more about families by asking open-ended questions like: 1) how is school going for their child and them, 2) what their talents/skills and interest are, and, 3) what type of events/activities/programs they think would help their child(ren) be successful in school.
- Should be a coach to other families – listening and getting them to come up with ideas that will work for them
- Provide regular updates to the Natural Leader coordinator at each site to let them know what families they have been meeting with/what families have been telling them. Whenever possible, participate in school Family Support Team meetings.
- Work with families, family advocates, community partners, and school staff to set up events that families have told them they want, make personal invitations to families to attend, and participate in the events
- Attend skills trainings on topics such as family support principles, listening/communication skills, confidentiality, boundary setting, respect for cultures, and team building.

NATURAL LEADERS **WHAT SHOULD I DO EACH MONTH?**

What do I each month?

1. Go to trainings/sharing meetings with other schools for 2-3 hours per month
2. Meet with your school team for 2-3 hours per month
3. Spend 4-6 hours:
 - Meet families
 - Organize social events
 - Listen to how school is going for families and their child
 - Get families' ideas on how to help their children in school
 - Help families put their ideas into action
 - Translate written materials for the school
 - Translate for families

WHAT OTHER NATURAL LEADER TEAMS HAVE DONE TO MEET FAMILIES

- Hung up a poster with pictures of themselves in the front of the school building
- Sent a letter home introducing themselves
- Made matching t-shirts so they can be easily identified at school events
- Gone door to door in apartment complexes and introduced themselves
- Call families and talk to them
- Go to homes and visit families
- Send home hand-written notes to families
- Started phone lines at schools in other languages
- Natural Leaders return phone calls to parents that call the phone line
- Invited people to pot-lucks
- Invited people to cultural events (i.e., el dia del niño)
- Invited people to principal lunch or breakfasts
- Invited people to volunteer at school projects
- Sponsored a language exchange day on Saturdays with school staff and families
- Sponsored a pre-school literacy program
- Sponsored school break learning camps
- Created multi-cultural libraries in schools, apartment complexes and community centers
- Have weekly mother groups to share and volunteer at school
- Sponsored after school learning clubs
- Sponsored ELL classes
- Sponsored other activities that families asked for
- Sponsored celebrations of student successes
- Sponsored celebrations of family participation in their children's education

Boundaries

1. Follow the Job Description
2. Recognize your own values and attitudes
3. Be open to other values and attitudes
4. Know your role as a Natural Leader.
Be able to articulate that role with parents
5. Know your limits both personally and as a Natural Leader.
You can't be all things to all people.

Confidentiality Guidelines

1. Limit the information shared to what is essential for the specific situation involved. Always filter sharing any information about another through **"Needs To Know"**. What and who, if anyone, needs to know this information? Ask yourself, "Why am I sharing this?"
2. Share confidentiality policy of school with the family. Avoid giving the family the impression that absolutely no information will ever be shared with others. Always obtain their permission prior to sharing with another. (An exception would be life-threatening situations.)
3. You must follow the mandated reporting laws of the State of Washington regarding Abuse and Neglect. Each school will have an established process for you to become familiar.

Source: Adapted from Wasik, Barbara Hanna, Bryant, Donna M. Bryant, 2001, Home Visiting, Second Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications

Creating a vision and goal with your school group

Before groups start working together it is good to spend some time talking about your dreams -- what you want to achieve together.

That way we are all working together, for the same purpose.

There are 4 things to talk about with your team:

- **Vision** – what is your dream for the education of your children, families, school, and community
- **Community Trends** – what is changing in your community and school? what is changing for families and children?
- **Your Strategy** – what are some things that your team can do?

Exercise 5: Creating a Vision and Goal Statement

1. What is your team's vision – what is your dream for the education for your children, families, school, and community.

Our vision is:

2. What are the community trends? What is changing in your community and school? What is changing for families and children?

Community trends are:

3. What is your strategy? What are some things your team can do:

Our strategy is:

Homework:

1. Meet with your team. Identify parents you want to talk to. Talk about how to find parents that are not connected to school now.
2. Start meeting 2-3 new parents. (Each parent natural leader should try to meet 5-6 new families by then end of February and 10-15 by then end of the school year.) Ask the following questions:
 - Start by introducing yourself and explain what Natural Leaders are

“Hi, I am a Natural Leader at _____ School. The Natural Leader Program is a new program that reaches out to parents/. Research shows that when parents are involved in school, their kids do better in school. We want to help all kids in our school succeed. I am meeting families, and listening to their ideas. Then we can work with the school to do things that we think would help our kids. I would like to hear your ideas.”

- Get to know the other families
- Ask what social events they enjoy and would like to have at the school
- Once you know each other more, ask some questions about school:
 - How is school for your child?
 - What helps your child be successful in school?
 - What activities would they like to have for families that would help their child be successful in school.
 - What talents and strengths could they share with children, families or the school?

Share what you are learning from parents with your team and other school teams at the next sharing meeting with all the Natural Leaders.

Natural Leader Training Evaluation Session 2

1. What did you like about the training?

2. What would you change?

3. Any suggestions for the next training?



March 2012

A Natural Leader Outcomes Evaluation was undertaken at Hawthorne Elementary.

The school provided reading scores for all the students at the school, and identified whether each student is a Natural Leader Family, Involved with Natural Leader Activities or Neither.

Below are some of the preliminary results of children in grades 1-4:

- Children from Natural Leader families have the largest increase in DRA Reading level scores. The next largest is children whose families are involved with Natural Leader Activities.
- Children from Natural Leader families started with a lower percentage, but had the largest increase in the percentage of children that reached Mastery with their grade appropriate DRA Reading level. The next largest gain was for students whose families are involved with Natural Leader Activities.
- The gains are even greater for ESL students that are from Natural Leader families or involved with Natural Leader Activities.
- While only a small number of students declined at the school, none of them were students from Natural Leader families nor those involved with Natural Leader Activities.
- The change from pre-test to post-test is significant for the students in all three categories.
- The Neither category includes many students without matching pre-tests and post-tests because of high mobility. It could be hypothesized that these students test scores would be even lower. So the impact of the Natural Leader efforts could be greater.

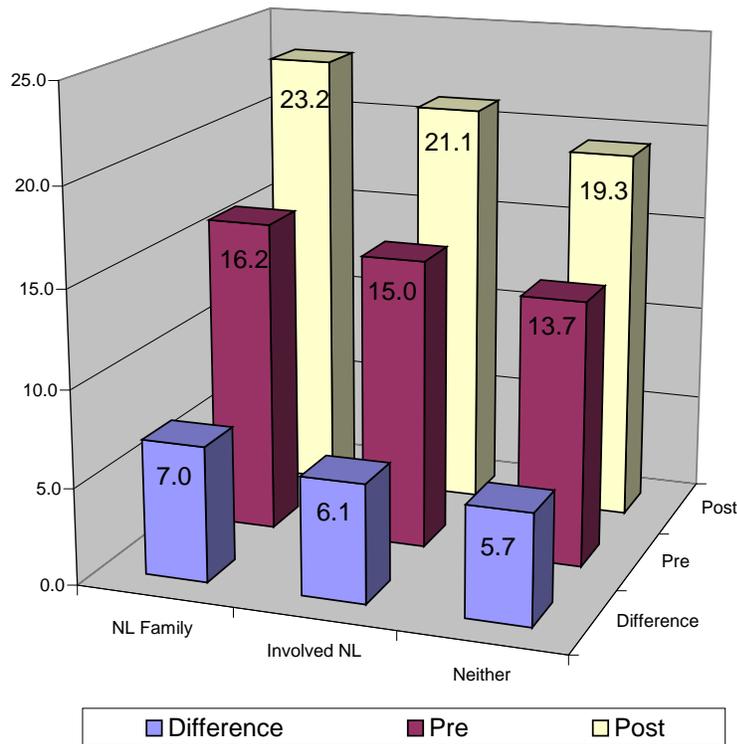
Sample Size = 234 students

- 23 Students from Natural Leader families
- 54 Students from Families Involved with NL Activities
- 157 Students from Neither

All Students

DRA Reading Level	Pre-Test Average Score	Post-Test Average Score	Difference
1-NL Family	16.2	23.2	7.0
2-Involved with NL Activities	15.0	21.1	6.1
3-Neither	13.7	19.3	5.7

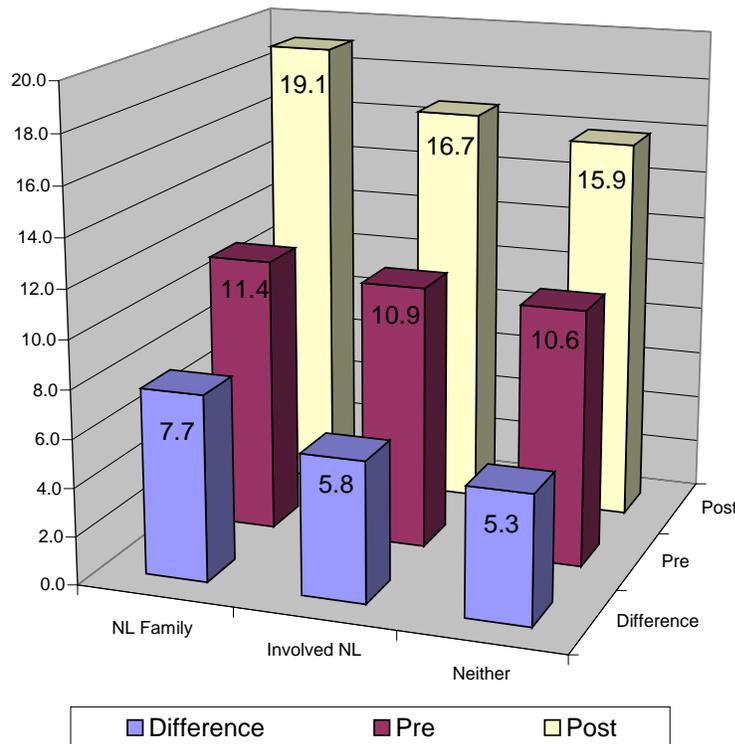
Grades 1-4 All Students -- DRA Reading Scores



ESL Students Only

DRA Reading Level	Pre-Test Average Score	Post-Test Average Score	Difference
1-NL Family	11.4	19.1	7.7
2-Involved with NL Activities	10.9	16.7	5.8
3-Neither	10.6	15.9	5.3

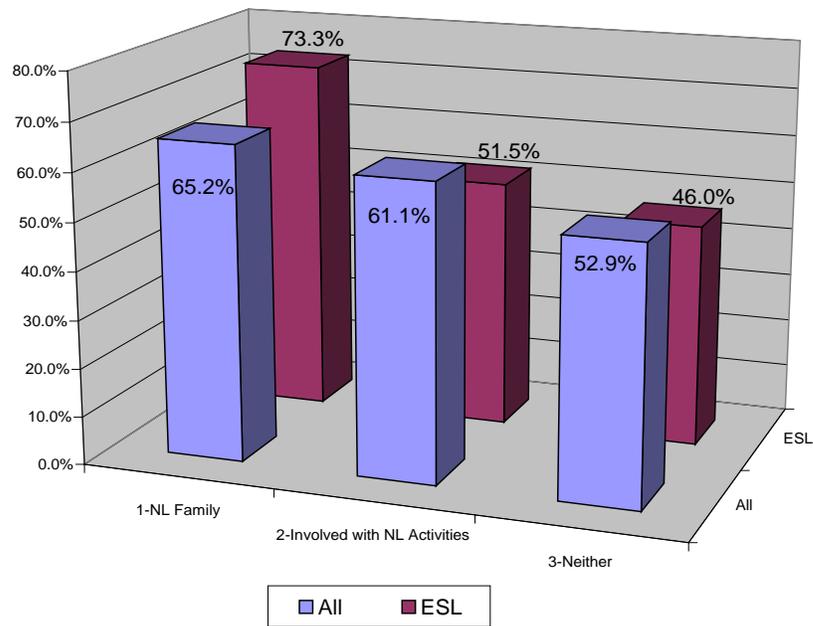
Grades 1-4 ELL Students Only - DRA Reading Level Scores





Percent of Students Whose DRA Reading Level Score Improved 6+ Points	All Students	ESL Students Only
1-NL Family	65.2%	73.3%
2-Involved with NL Activities	61.1%	51.5%
3-Neither	52.9%	46.0%

Grades 1-4 - Percent Students Gained 6+ Points - DRA Reading Level





Percent Students at Mastery for DRA Reading Level	At Pre-Test	At Post-Test	Difference
Natural Leaders	21.7%	39.1%	17.4%
Involved Natural Leaders	25.9%	38.9%	13.0%
Neither	33.8%	40.1%	6.4%

