



**SOUTH CAROLINA**  
PARENT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM  
————— "CARE IN ACTION" —————

## PLP Program Sponsor Guide

2024

# Parent Leadership Partners (PLP) Program Sponsor Guide

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# Welcome and Introduction

## 1. Welcome! . . and why we need parent leaders and the PLP program.

On behalf of the Carolina Family Engagement Center, I would like to welcome you to the SC Parent Leadership Partners (PLP) program. The SCPLP program is a parent-focused leadership program that focuses on developing parents as change agents, advocates, relationship builders, and educators. To ensure this end-goal, we have developed a curricular that focuses on key issues and topics that can aid parents in navigating the k-12 public school system.

Steven B. Sheldon (2019) noted that the overall academic success of students as measured by report card grades and performance on achievement test, depends on such factors as exposure to high-quality teachers, safety and maintenance of the school environment and the dedication of the teachers. “Equally important are out-of-school influences such as family involvement and home environments that support student learning and academic achievement” (p.43). In order to ensure academic success for k-12 students, families and schools must work together.

It is this realization that served as the catalyst for launching the SCPLP program. By targeting some of our most vulnerable student populations, we endeavor to build the capacity of families and communities as it relates to supporting children in their academic achievement. So, again, we welcome you to the team and we thank you for your willingness to engage in this all-important work.

Yasha Jones Becton

## 2. Meet the developers – CFEC and Dr. Yasha Becton

**The Carolina Family Engagement Center (CFEC)** is the Statewide Family Engagement Center (SFEC) for South Carolina; we are funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Every Student Succeeds Act. CFEC is housed within the SC School Improvement Council, located in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina (USC).

CFEC’s primary goal is to strengthen the abilities of families, schools, and communities to work as partners in supporting children’s learning and development from cradle to career. We do this by providing families and schools with high-impact training and technical assistance and connecting them with community resources. We serve all families and schools in South Carolina with a focus on those families who face unique challenges to engagement. Our “families of focus” include low-income families, families from racial and ethnic minorities, migrant families, homeless families, families of children with disabilities, multilingual families, foster families, and grandfamilies or kinship care families.

CFEC’s Project Director, Karen Utter, J.D., serves as the overall coordinator for the Parent Leadership Partners (PLP) program.

**Yasha Becton, Ed.D.** is a Clinical Associate Professor in the EdD Curriculum Studies program where she also serves as the Online Program Coordinator in the Department of Leadership, Learning Design and Inquiry in the College of Education at USC. She is also a CFEC content area

Specialist. As it relates to working with families, Dr. Becton has served in the capacity of a secondary teacher and administrator, a community pastor, and a youth advocate. Dr. Becton served as the primary curriculum developer for the SC Parent Leadership Partners curriculum which is organized into seven modules and includes learning objectives, related research, and engaging activities for program participants. The curriculum was developed in close collaboration with the CFEC leadership team of Karen Utter, Dr. Gina Kunz, and Dr. Theresa Harrison and is uniquely designed to engage parents and families who have been historically underserved.

## **Part I. What is the PLP Program**

### **1. PLP goals**

Like all family engagement, the ultimate goal of the PLP program is improved learning and developmental outcomes for children. CFEC designed PLP to forward this goal by:

- increasing parents' confidence and capacity to advocate for their own children's educational needs and school improvement for all, and
- increasing parents' awareness of beneficial tools and resources available to them through their schools and the community.

When deciding whether to sponsor a PLP program, it is important to make sure that these goals align with your hopes and expectations for the program and the needs expressed by your families.

Depending on your local context and the unique needs of your parents, you may also want to articulate one or two specific objectives within these broader program goals. For example, there may be a specific aspect of parent capacity-building that you want to emphasize such as building a particular type of knowledge or a specific set of skills. Or, your parents may especially need to increase their social capital by building parent support networks. Don't forget to consult with other stakeholders – including your parents -- when developing these objectives to ensure that they reflect your shared priorities.

It is important that you communicate with your facilitator about program goals and objectives from the outset to ensure that you are both on the same page. Your facilitator's decisions about how to prioritize content in each session should reflect these goals and objectives. You will also use these goals and objectives as standards by which you measure the success of your local PLP program.

### **2. Main PLP components**

The PLP program is designed to provide groups of up to 15 parents with a supportive, welcoming environment in which they can acquire the knowledge, skills, confidence, and connections they need to serve as effective parent leaders at home, among friends, and in the school and community.

- PLP participants meet for an orientation, seven 2-hour facilitated sessions, and a graduation ceremony.
- Facilitated sessions are built around learning modules developed by Dr. Becton that are contained in a participant workbook. The modules are research-based and specific to the education system in South Carolina.
- Topics covered include parent leadership and leadership skills, the basics of the education system in South Carolina, high school graduation requirements, impactful parent engagement practices, the basics of special education, discipline challenges, bullying, athletics, and issues impacting diverse and vulnerable student populations.
- Parents develop a small leadership project during the program to address an education-related need in their school or community.

The PLP program was not developed for parents who are already accomplished leaders. It is intended for parents who want to know how to better support their children’s learning and development but who are still emerging parent leaders. The program is especially relevant for parents of all backgrounds and education levels who have one or more children enrolled in Title I schools or who qualify for an early childhood program such as Headstart or First Steps.

### **3. How to access the PLP program for parents in your school or community**

CFEC’s goal is to make the PLP program available to any organization or individual who wants to sponsor a group in their district, school, or community.

As we scale up this program, we envision that local sponsors will use this Guide to organize and coordinate PLP groups across South Carolina. These groups will operate independently of CFEC, but CFEC will serve as an ongoing source of support. CFEC will:

- continue to update participant workbooks and guides for sponsors and facilitators and make them available for purchase at cost.
- provide regular training sessions to prepare individuals to serve as PLP facilitators in their local schools, neighborhoods, and communities at low or no cost.
- offer ongoing technical assistance to sponsors, coordinators and facilitators at no cost.

CFEC expects to hold at least one annual training program (12 hours) for new PLP facilitators that is open to all interested individuals from across the state. It will be conducted in Columbia over a two-day period. Information regarding these sessions will be posted on the CFEC website at [cfec.sc.gov](http://cfec.sc.gov). CFEC will also consider individual requests for facilitator training from districts, schools, or community organizations during the course of the year.

For more information regarding facilitator training or if you have questions about any other aspect of setting up a local PLP program, please contact CFEC Project Director Karen Utter at [utter@email.sc.edu](mailto:utter@email.sc.edu) or 803-777-7658.

## Part II. Becoming a PLP Sponsor

### 1. Who can sponsor a PLP?

Any organization, group, or individual parent or community leader with sufficient capacity can sponsor a local PLP group in their community. Types of likely sponsors include:

- **Early childhood and pre-K – grade 12 districts and schools:** We envision that districts and schools will want to sponsor PLP groups to encourage and support the development of parent leaders who are prepared to partner with their school to support their own children’s learning and development as well as all children in their school.
- **School Improvement Councils (SICs), PTA/PTOs, or similar groups:** PLP can serve as an effective way of identifying and strengthening the abilities of parents to be effective members and leaders of advisory councils and other groups that seek to support their school and enrich students’ educational experiences.
- **Local community organizations or agencies who serve families.** Community organizations or agencies may want to sponsor a PLP as a means of building parent capacities to help improve their children’s educational outcomes. These groups may also have existing bonds of trust with marginalized communities that can help connect these parents to the PLP experience.

**We encourage districts and schools to partner with other groups inside or outside the school system in sponsoring a PLP program.** As mentioned above, community organizations who serve marginalized families may be well positioned to serve as a bridge between the school and parents who would otherwise be hesitant to participate in a school-based program. Such partnerships can also defray costs for both organizations and enrich the PLP experience for both facilitators and participants.

### 2. What is needed to sponsor a PLP?

#### A. The minimum:

- Meeting space for up to 15 parents and the facilitator to meet for an orientation and seven sessions. In-person groups will need a physical meeting space. Those meeting virtually will need access to an online meeting platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Keep in mind that some parents may, for any number of reasons, be uncomfortable attending an event like PLP if it is held in the school building. Finding a community partner who is willing to donate space for your program is one way to address this issue.
- PLP workbooks for each participant.
- Paper, office supplies and access to a printer/copy machine to make paper copies of promotional flyers, registration or application forms, group contact lists, supplemental handouts, graduation certificates, etc.
- At least one facilitator or pair of co-facilitators who have completed CFEC’s PLP Train-the Trainer program.

- A PLP coordinator who will perform necessary administrative or logistical tasks for the group such as publicizing the program and recruiting participants, coordinating the registration or application process, communicating with participants, locating meeting space, creating a session schedule, and other administrative or logistical tasks. The facilitator and the PLP coordinator can be the same individual. Alternatively, the sponsor can take responsibility for seeing that one or more staff members are available to carry out these coordinator tasks.
- Space and supplies for an in-person or virtual graduation ceremony. The cost involved will depend on how elaborate a ceremony is planned, the location (virtual, indoors or outdoors), and the number of guests allowed. Examples of items that may be needed include folding chairs and tables, a podium, audio-visual equipment, refreshments, decorations, graduation caps, etc.

The minimum amount of funds needed to sponsor a PLP program will depend on the cost to the sponsor of these services, materials, and other resources. CFEC makes the PLP workbook available at cost through Amazon. Currently, the price per workbook is approximately \$25. There is not a licensing or user fee associated with the PLP program.

Title I districts and schools will want to check to see to what extent their Title I family engagement funds can be used to cover the cost of the services and materials listed above. Sponsors may also want to consider partnering with other entities to share costs or seek small grants or donations from local businesses or foundations.

#### B. Supplemental Items

For in-person PLP sessions, sponsors will also want to consider providing:

- a meal or snack depending on the time the group meets.
- childcare.
- a transportation voucher or reimbursement.

CFEC also recommends that the sponsor provide an incentive to parents to complete all PLP graduation requirements. The type and size of the incentive will depend on the sponsor's overall available budget. An incentive can -- but doesn't necessarily -- require additional funds. Incentives might include things like school spirit items, gift cards donated by local merchants, special recognition on the school website or marquee, free passes to school sporting events, a special parking pass or spot in the school lot, or arranging for parents to have lunch at the school with the principal, an athletic coach, or local celebrity.

*To assist sponsors in estimating the cost of hosting a PLP, we have provided a draft budget calculation form in Appendix A of this Guide.*

### **3. When is the best time to hold a PLP?**

The PLP program consists of an orientation, seven 2-hour group meetings, and a graduation ceremony. When CFEC piloted the program, we scheduled the orientation and group meetings monthly during the school year beginning in October and held graduation ceremonies in June. The day and time of these meetings – Saturday morning – was selected based on feedback from all participants as well as the availability of the facilitator. We believe that taking parent feedback into account in scheduling these sessions was a factor in maintaining strong attendance throughout the program.

CFEC designed PLP to have maximum flexibility in scheduling to fit the needs of different types of families and communities. Sponsors, in consultation with facilitators and parents, can make their own decisions about the time of year to hold a PLP program, the length of time between meetings, and meeting days and times.

It is necessary to allow about two hours of meeting time to cover each of the seven modules. We would not recommend extending the length of a session beyond two hours – particularly if you are meeting virtually. It may be possible, however, to reduce the length of each regular meeting from two hours to one hour and increase the number of meetings to 15 (1 orientation and 14 regular 1-hour sessions). CFEC has not piloted the program using this schedule, but we believe it could be successful in situations where, for example, the only available meeting time for parents is a 1-hour lunch period.

*See Appendix A of the Guide for PLP Sponsor's Decision Checklist and Draft Budget Calculation Form.*

## **Part III. Getting your People in Place**

### **1. The PLP facilitator(s)**

#### **A. Eligibility and selection criteria**

Any individual who has completed the CFEC train-the-trainer program is eligible to serve as a PLP facilitator. *(See Part I, Section 3. above for more information about facilitator training).* This individual could be:

- any individual designated by a school, district, CFEC or community organization sponsor to lead a PLP group, or
- an individual parent or community leader who wants to lead their own PLP.

While there are no additional eligibility criteria for facilitators, sponsors are encouraged to seek out individuals who have one or more of the following attributes or skills:

- a strong commitment to serving parents and the PLP program.
- trusting relationships – or the ability and desire to build trusting relationships -- with the specific population of parents you hope to serve.



- good communication (particularly listening) skills.
- an ability to view all parents through an asset lens.
- an ability to relate to parents as partners in learning rather than requiring rigid adherence to an instructor/pupil relationship with parents.
- some familiarity or experience in navigating the education system and/or engaging in children’s learning and development.

A facilitator who already has a reputation as trusted individual within the community of parents you are hoping to serve, such as a school’s parent liaison, a staff member from a trusted community organization, or an existing parent leader will be an asset in both recruiting participants and creating a safe space for parents to learn. This is especially important when you seek to serve parents who currently lack the self-confidence or know-how to successfully navigate the school system or find it challenging to trust the school and its leaders because of past negative experiences with schools or other systems.

**While it is not required, it can be very helpful to all involved if you are able to secure two individuals who are willing to co-facilitate a PLP group.**

#### B. Duties of a facilitator

The primary duties of a PLP facilitator include:

- sending a welcome communication to participants notifying them of the orientation date and time.
- clearly communicating graduation requirements to parents at orientation.
- planning and leading the orientation and PLP sessions.<sup>1</sup>
- creating a welcoming and safe environment for all participants to learn, share, and grow.
- serving as an individual with whom participants can form a trusting relationship in the context of their own journey to become a parent leader as defined by the PLP program.
- following up with participants after or between sessions to answer questions, address logistical issues, provide needed encouragement, or to remind participants of upcoming sessions and assignments.
- soliciting regular feedback from participants by means of a post-session survey or other method and adjusting future sessions in response to parent concerns or suggestions.
- collecting demographic, output, and survey data for reporting to CFEC.
- recording attendance and any other data needed to establish whether parents have met graduation requirements.
- developing a plan for the graduation ceremony within the budget set by the sponsor.
- attending graduation ceremony.

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<sup>1</sup> Individuals who have completed the PLP Train-the-Trainer program will have received instruction in how to use the participant workbook and supplemental materials to plan sessions based on the needs and interests of their unique group of parents.

- maintaining contact with graduates after graduation to the extent agreed upon with the sponsor.

Facilitators (and sponsors) can always contact CFEC staff should they have questions or need information or guidance at any point in the PLP process.

### C. Compensating a PLP facilitator

CFEC recommends that sponsors compensate facilitators for their time and effort unless the facilitator is already compensated for these duties as part of their existing employment with the sponsor or partner organization. Districts and schools may be able to use monies allocated to family engagement, including Title I family engagement funds, for this purpose.

We recognize that, in some instances, it may be necessary and appropriate to use the services of a volunteer PLP facilitator. If this is the case, don't forget to express your appreciation for your facilitator's contribution of time and effort in a meaningful way.

## 2. The role of the PLP coordinator

### A. Eligibility and selection criteria

Depending on who the PLP sponsor and facilitator are, the tasks that make up the duties of the PLP coordinator may be performed by:

- an employee of, or volunteer for, the sponsor or partner organization
- the facilitator
- some combination of the above

It isn't necessary to designate a separate individual as the "PLP Coordinator", It *IS* important, however, to recognize that there are logistical and administrative tasks that can be time-consuming but that must be undertaken to support the PLP program. Because these tasks do not automatically fall within the role of either the PLP sponsor or facilitator, it is important to consider at the beginning who will be responsible for seeing each of them through to completion.

### B. PLP coordinator(s) duties

- Design and disseminate parent recruitment materials for the upcoming PLP session using multiple methods of communication.
- Create and distribute paper and/or online application or registration forms (using content provided by the sponsor).
- Collect and confirm receipt of applications or registration forms from interested parents.
- Respond to inquiries from parents about the program and the application and/or registration process.
- Notify all parents who apply or register whether they have been accepted.
- Create a contact list of participants and send to the sponsor and facilitator.
- Coordinate purchase and distribution of participant workbooks (if being purchased by the sponsor).

- Scan or photocopy supplemental materials for parent sessions.
- Secure meeting space and/or use of online meeting platform for all PLP sessions.
- Ensure that all registration forms and program fees (if any) have been received.
- Arrange for any meals or snacks, childcare, transportation vouchers, or other supports for participating parents offered by sponsor in connection with program sessions.
- Assist sponsor and facilitator in troubleshooting any administrative or logistical issues that arise during the program.
- Create and distribute graduation certificates for program completers.
- Coordinate the logistics of the facilitator’s graduation plan by arranging for the venue, equipment rental, invitations, refreshments, or other items.
- Arrange to acquire and distribute any incentive items offered by the sponsor to program completers.
- Transmit final program data to CFEC office.

### C. Compensating the PLP coordinator(s)

As is the case with the PLP facilitator, we recommend that individuals performing PLP coordinator tasks be compensated for performing these tasks if they are not part of the their scope of work as an employee of the sponsor or partner organization.

To the extent that your facilitator agrees to perform one or more of these tasks, you should take this additional work into consideration when determining your facilitator’s rate of compensation. If a volunteer agrees to perform one or more of these tasks, be sure to recognize and acknowledge these important contributions to the success of your PLP program.

### **3. Recruiting parent participants**

If you are not providing the PLP program to an already-existing group of parents (e.g. parent members of a school advisory or school improvement council), you will need to actively recruit parents to participate in your group. This process may require significant effort at first, especially if existing levels of engagement are low with the population of parents you hope to serve. As you continue to offer the program, however, recruitment should become easier. You will learn what works and what doesn’t, and you will be able to draw upon the positive reputation your PLP program develops in the community. You will also have graduates of the program who can help recruit new participants.

Keep in mind that the PLP program can be an effective capacity-building opportunity for an existing group such as the parent members of a School Improvement Council (SIC) or other parent advisory council. Districts and schools might also ask a community organization who serves their families to help with recruitment. For example, a large employer in the community might be willing to partner with a school district to provide PLP to a group of parent-employees on site after work hours. Or, an apartment complex that is home to a significant number of families from a school or district might be willing to donate space for a group of its residents/parents to form a PLP group.

## A. Identifying the parent population you seek to serve

The only mandatory eligibility requirement that applies to PLP participants is that they be the parent of a child enrolled in school and working toward a high school diploma, credential, or their equivalent. PLP defines a *parent* as “*anyone* who provides consistent care for a child; this includes, but is not limited to, married couples, single mothers, single fathers, grandparents, stepparents, foster care parents, aunts, uncles, or other family members, and legal guardians.”

Beyond this basic eligibility requirement, it is up to you as the sponsor to determine the segment of the parent population you wish to serve. You may decide to open your group up to anyone who meets the definition of a parent. You may, however, want to limit participation in a PLP group to parents of students of a particular age group or grade, or a particular school or district. Or, you may want to serve a subgroup of parents who face certain common challenges that are unique from other parent populations, such as parents of children with disabilities, grandparents raising grandchildren, or foster parents.

There are benefits to creating PLP groups for these types of parents. For example, parents whose children attend the same school may find it easier to stay in touch than parents who do not live near each other. Parents of children in the same age range will likely have more shared concerns than a group of parents of varying age ranges. A father may find it easier to share and connect in an all-male group than he would as one dad among a group of moms.

On the other hand, a highly diverse group of parents presents an opportunity to connect individuals whose paths might not otherwise cross. It gives them an opportunity to discover those common aspects of parenthood that transcend age, geography, and other differences. As parents of children in general education get to really know parents of children with disabilities in their school, for example, it can create new connections that lead to a more inclusive school community. Parents of younger children can learn from parents who have already experienced what they are going through. When parents become aware of the challenges faced by parents in circumstances different than their own, they can better serve as allies and advocate on their behalf.

In sum, when deciding on the parameters for your PLP group, consider the potential benefits and drawbacks of imposing additional eligibility requirements and determine which approach best aligns with your PLP goals and priorities.

## B. Getting the word out to potential participants

Once you have identified the parent population that you want to serve, the next step is to decide how best to communicate with them about the opportunity to participate in PLP.

- First and foremost, let parents know how PLP will benefit them

When crafting your message inviting parents to participate in your PLP program, it is always important to include basic information about what PLP is, who is eligible, the cost (if any) and how to apply or register (*See Appendix B of the Guide, Sample Text for PLP Recruitment Flyer*).

First and foremost, however, make sure you clearly state the ways that a parent can expect to benefit from this experience. Why should they carve time out of their already hectic lives to take part? How can this opportunity translate into improved outcomes for their child? You may want to enlist the help of one or two parents to help you develop a message that will hit the right notes. If you are providing participants with childcare, meals, or other supports and incentives, be sure to mention those in your outreach materials as well.

- Use multiple methods of communication

If you haven't asked already, now is a good time to ask parents by survey or other method about the best way to communicate with them. Unless you are limiting your recruitment to a very narrow slice of the parent population, it is likely that the parents you want to reach use different ways of communicating depending on a variety of factors such as age, the availability of internet access, and social norms. It is important to know (rather than assume) what the most effective mix of communication methods is for the parents you are seeking to reach.

You may also want to consider creating a short promotional video. Dr. Yasha Becton and CFEC staff can provide you with suggestions and guidance in developing such a video. For more information, contact Karen Utter at [utter@email.sc.edu](mailto:utter@email.sc.edu).

- Reach out to opinion leaders and trusted organizations

Even the most well-worded invitation will not generate a response if it is not delivered by a trusted messenger. If you are still working toward developing trusting relationships with your parents, you may need to enlist the help of someone who parents already look up to and trust. Who among your parents are the opinion leaders? Engage them in face-to-face conversations about the program and why you think they and their friends would find it valuable. What about athletic coaches? Would they be willing to encourage parent participation? Are there trusted organizations or individual leaders in the community who would be willing to champion the program? Would local churches, for example, be willing to publicize this opportunity and encourage parents in their congregations to take part? Partnering with one or more trusted brokers can help you make an initial connection with families who have not yet engaged with their school.

- Don't underestimate the power of the personal ask

An important factor in whether a parent decides to engage is the degree to which they feel genuinely welcome and invited. While you always want to make a genuine effort to reach all parents who may be eligible to participate, relying solely on a generic flyer or automated invitation to "all parents" is not always effective. Some parents experience these types of blanket invitations as intended for the parents who already serve on all of the parent boards or are part of a group of parents who are always involved.

It will likely be impossible to extend a personal invitation to every parent you are seeking to serve – especially if you are recruiting from a very large population of parents. To the extent you can do so, however, you will be more likely to get an affirmative response. Put yourself in

your parents' shoes. Which type of invitation would you be more likely to respond to? A flyer, robocall, or social media post, or a personal call from your child's teacher letting you know about the PLP program and why she hopes that you will sign up. Enlist the help of your colleagues in reaching out individually to parents. Many hands make light(er) work.

- Offer enrichment activities for children while parents are in PLP

Making PLP a family affair can help with parent recruitment and retention. Consider whether you can offer additional student tutoring, or enrichment activities such as art, music, chess lessons, or athletic activities for children while their parents are participating in a PLP meeting. If children want to participate in an activity you are offering, they may persuade their parents to register for PLP for that reason.

### C. Conclusion

In most cases, you will need to do more than just send out an automated email or text message about PLP to get a strong response, especially when the program is new to your community. Successful recruiting requires a strategic approach to communicating about the program. It also requires knowing (or getting to know) your parent population, including their needs, priorities, and preferences.

## **4. Selecting parent participants through an application or registration process**

CFEC recommends that sponsors limit the size of individual PLP groups to 15 (or up to 18 to allow for attrition). This does not mean, however, that you must have 15 parents to have a group. Local sponsors can decide on the minimum number of parents needed to form a group.

There are two ways that you can select your participants. You can either create an application process and select from among those parents who apply, or you can open registration and accept parents on a first-come, first-served basis.

If you are offering PLP to an already-existing group of parents such as members of a parent advisory board, you will likely not need to use an application or registration process.

### A. Using an application process

CFEC recommends that sponsors require interested parents to complete some type of application form prior to acceptance into the program. This does take more time and effort for both the sponsor and the parents. The fact that a parent is willing to take the time to complete an application form, however, is itself some indication of the parent's level of interest in and commitment to participating in the program. Just make sure that you make the application easy for all parents to access, including those who may not have internet service.

The application form need not be lengthy. We have included a sample of the application form that CFEC used when selecting parents for its pilot PLP groups. (See Appendix C). Applicants were asked to provide their contact information and their children's grade levels and schools. *You will*

*also want to use the application to make sure that parents meet any additional eligibility requirements you have. (See Part III, Section 3.A. above).*

In addition, we asked two questions:

- In two to three sentences, tell us why you are interested in participating in PLP; and
- If you could wave a magic wand and make one positive change to your school or district, what would it be?

Parents were also invited, but not required, to share information about knowledge, skills, and experiences they already had that were relevant to serving as an effective parent leader in education at home or in their school or community.

Sponsors can add to or modify the CFEC sample application form to suit their needs or create their own.

If you receive more applications than you have available spaces, create a rubric or other objective criteria that you will use to assign a score to each application. It is a good idea to ask at least two individuals review the applications and then discuss any scoring differences until they reach a consensus on who will be accepted. It is suggested that you keep a record of how you made your selections so that you can demonstrate that you applied objective, permissible criteria should anyone ask.

Once you have selected the successful applicants, be sure to notify them as well as those who were not selected in a timely manner.

#### B. Using a registration process only

If you are planning to accept parents based on who signs up first rather than going through an application process, here are a couple of tips:

- Be sure parents provide a best contact method/number when they register.
- If registration is limited to a certain subgroup of parents (see Part III. Section 3.A. above), make that clear and ask parents who register to confirm that they meet your eligibility requirements.
- Use a registration process that is easy and accessible to everyone.
- Unless registration is in person, let parents know that they are not officially accepted into the program until you confirm receipt of their registration information. Be sure to close registration as soon as you have filled all the available slots.

## **Part IV. Evaluating Your Work**

The only way that you will know for sure whether you are achieving your goals and objectives for the PLP program is to collect data that will allow you to evaluate your results. CFEC too wants to know how the PLP program is working for sponsors, facilitators, and parents so that we can continue to adjust and improve the PLP model and curriculum.

The information below and the tools in the Appendix to this Guide will help you collect basic data about your program with which to evaluate your results. We ask that you also provide this data to CFEC. It will be used solely for the purpose of assisting us in the continuous improvement process. Any data you provide will remain confidential and any information that would identify your site or individual parent participants will be removed prior to use.

## **1. Data to be reported to CFEC**

### A. Aggregated parent demographic data as reported by parents:

- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity (optional)
- Relationship to student(s) (parent, foster parent, guardian, grandparent, other extended family member, etc.)

### B. Outputs

- Number of parents enrolled as of first session.
- Number of sessions held.
- Number of parents who complete the program.

### C. Aggregated Results of End-of-Program Parent Survey

- Appendix D to this Guide includes a copy of the end-of-program parent survey that CFEC will provide to your facilitator in their training to administer at the end of the program. This survey is aligned with the two central PLP goals listed in Part I, Section 1. of this guide. If your site has developed additional goals and objectives or other items that you want to measure, please feel free to add them to the survey. You need not share them with CFEC unless you choose to do so.

This information can be reported to the Project Director, Karen Utter, by email at [utter@email.sc.edu](mailto:utter@email.sc.edu).

## **2. Additional recommended data collection**

CFEC strongly recommends that your facilitator allow a few minutes at the end of each meeting for parents to complete a very brief satisfaction survey. A sample will be provided to your facilitator as part of the PLP facilitator training and a copy is in Appendix E to this Guide. This data need not be reported to CFEC. It is important, however, that you regularly request feedback from parents on how the sessions are going so that you can make needed adjustments or course corrections. If you wait until the end of the program to ask for feedback, it is too late to make changes that could improve your retention rate and overall results.



## **Part V. Graduation and Follow-Up**

### **1. Establishing Graduation Requirements**

Prior to the beginning of the program, the sponsor, in consultation with the PLP facilitator, should establish clear criteria for determining whether a parent has met the requirements to receive a program certificate, attend the graduation ceremony and receive any incentive award or other acknowledgement promised to graduates of the program.

It is recommended that you base your graduation requirements on (1) attendance, and (2) completion of their culminating project. (PLP Workbook Module 4). In its program pilots, CFEC required that parents attend a minimum of 80% of the PLP sessions. In cases of emergencies where weather or other unexpected disruptions occurred, alternate sessions and make-up sessions were scheduled. If parents participated in a make-up session, they were provided the opportunity to demonstrate that they completed the workbook activities in the module(s) they missed. An alternative to requiring perfect attendance with make-up opportunities could be to simply allow each parent a certain number of excused absences.

Whatever you decide upon, be sure that you communicate your requirements to participants at the beginning of the program and be sure that your facilitator takes attendance and keeps any other records necessary to document which parents have met graduation requirements.

### **2. Planning the graduation ceremony**

CFEC has observed that holding a graduation ceremony – rather than just mailing out a certificate to each participant – is well worth the effort. It is a rewarding way to conclude the program for parents, the facilitator, and the sponsoring organization.

Your facilitator will receive guidance on how to plan a program for the graduation ceremony as part of their facilitator training. This should be done within the budget you as the sponsor have set for this part of the program.

CFEC's most recent graduation ceremony was held outside on the grounds of the College of Education. Graduates were allowed to bring family and friends to help celebrate their accomplishments. The ceremony was approximately 40 minutes and included short messages of congratulations from the CFEC Project Director, the PLP facilitator and the CFEC Liaison assisting with the program. The primary speakers were two of our parent graduates who shared inspiring messages to the group about their PLP experience. Each parent's name was called as they walked up to the podium to receive their certificate wearing the graduation cap we provided to them. The event concluded with an opportunity for pictures and light refreshments.

While simple and relatively brief, this time together allowed parents to reflect on and celebrate what they accomplished together. It didn't mark the end of the program so much as it signaled the beginning of the next step in these emerging leaders' journey.

### 3. Keeping in touch with PLP graduation

The year after two of CFEC's parent participants graduated from the PLP program, we invited them to speak about the program and their views on parent engagement to a group of educators and non-profit organization staff. After it was over, one of the parents thanked us for not just saying that their voices were important – but showing that we meant it by inviting them to take a seat at the table.

It is critically important that you as a sponsor be prepared to nurture your newly emerging parent leaders and provide them with meaningful opportunities to use what they have learned. This is particularly true when the sponsor is a district or school. Be prepared to show your parents that you really do value the funds of knowledge they have to contribute and view them as an essential partner in their children's learning and development and the school improvement process.

Keep in mind, too, that ongoing communication is a necessary part of maintaining any trusting relationship, including those that you have begun to develop with your PLP graduates. Although it is not a required component of the program, it is highly recommended that sponsors designate an individual – preferably the facilitator or other person associated with your PLP program – who will periodically check in with graduates with a friendly message or a link to a resource of interest. Ideally, this individual will also be available to PLP graduates if they reach out for additional guidance and support.

## **Part. VI. CFEC Supports for Local PLP Programs**

As discussed in Part I, Section 3. above, CFEC expects to continue to provide support to Local PLP programs by providing access to updated PLP workbooks and PLP facilitator training.

Our CFEC staff, including our regional family engagement liaisons and leadership team, will also be available at no charge to answer your questions and provide advice and guidance to PLP sponsors, coordinators, and facilitators as you work to adapt and implement your own local PLP program. For more information, you can contact Karen Utter, CFEC Project Director, at [utter@email.sc.edu](mailto:utter@email.sc.edu) or 803-777-7658, or visit the CFEC website at [cfec.sc.gov](http://cfec.sc.gov).